

Primrose Crescent

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Appreciate what you have, because you could lose it all in a moment. A short story about a young girl who discovers that she has lost everything - and not only material wealth - to a tragic fire.

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1. Primrose Crescent

Not that great. It was just some Year 8 English homework. -T

Sunlight spilled over Primrose Crescent like water - trickling down the moon shaped road, crawling into long forgotten places and steadily flooding them with gentle warmth. I look out the window now; rain is lashing down in sheets, whipping at the stone paving slabs and churning with mud from the lawn.

I remember that day so clearly. If I close my eyes and walk through long grass, the way I did when I was young, I'm carried on a tide of memories to that afternoon when I sprawled out in the paddock. Seeing flowers always reminds me of the way that the poppies tickled my bare feet as I danced back towards Primrose Crescent, and every time I see a horse with a coarse, auburn tail, I think of Chestnut. I fed him an apple that day, from a tree in my grandma's garden. I don't think I ever saw the old mare after that occasion, and I've hardly thought of him until tonight.

Those are all clear memories; I've preserved them in the back of my mind and replayed each one a thousand times, yearning for those few short years of blissful happiness before everything turned around.

I have other recollections of that day, however. Try as I might, I will never be able to forget the charred carcasses of barely recognizable houses that littered the street, and the bleating of sirens as a dozen or more police cars flocked towards the most scalded house of all; My house. My home. Destroyed.

From the throng of firemen and police officers emerged a familiar face.

"Megan! Megan!" In a flurry of red hair and unsightly cardigans and scarves, my aunt enveloped me in her arms and sobbed into my green-clad shoulder. When, at last, she managed to control the streams of tears, she held me at arms length and looked me in the eye. "Megan," she choked. "Why weren't you in the house?"

I couldn't talk. I tried, but my throat was dry and my head was numb. I was vaguely aware of movement around me. More sirens. another fireman pushing past me. My aunt was speaking again.

"There was a gas leak at your house. When your dad tried to light one of his cigarettes..." Her beetle black eyes welled up with fresh floods of grief. "It happened last night, and spread quickly. They only managed to fully put it out this morning. But where were you Megan? I've been worried sick..."

My head was still spinning, but I forced myself to speak. "I've been with grandma the whole weekend. They cut her electricity because of her bills... She wouldn't have been able to answer calls, or watch the news."

I scanned my watering eyes down the road. The post office at the end of the street was so far from the remains of my former house that it was almost unscathed, but the smouldered plaque in front of it now read 'Imrose Crescent'.

I never heard from my grandmother after that weekend; she was taken ill soon after the fire and never fully recovered. Some of my remaining kindred say it was the shock of losing both a daughter and a son-in-law in the same disaster.

The impact of that day has always been ingrained on my memory, however many times I've tried to erase it and start again with a clean slate. In the end, I just accepted what had happened and realised that I had no power to change it.

The remains of my childhood home were eventually cleaned up by the council, and replaced by a new estate. The new estate is called Imrose Crescent, as a reminder of what happened here all that time ago, and I live right at the end of it. There is a house built on the foundations of where I once lived. No occupant has lived there for long - they all find out about the gas leak sooner or later. The current landowner inherited the house from an elderly relative, and doesn't even live there.

The downpour is over now, and it's morning again. I can see clearly out of the window. Sunlight is spilling over Imrose Crescent like warm water, trickling down the moon shaped road and filling those long forgotten spaces, just like it did thirty years ago, when I lost everything.