

## AUNT SUSIE

Her west side apartment used to show her passion for painting, shopping and food. The walls had been smothered in her rich, colorful, abstract canvases. The kitchen cabinets and refrigerator were once filled with the Famous Amos cookies, cheese curls, and chocolate ice cream that she used to comfort herself with. In the living room were some of the antiques that she had picked up at the flea market during her stay at our summerhouse in the mountains, while others came from New York City street fairs. I remember the bathroom, crammed with hair products and nail polishes that showed her love for fashion and style. Aunt Susie also loved her family, her nieces and nephews, her two brothers, her youthful looking red headed mother, and her jolly father whom she outlived by only a year. Susie is also gone now.

Today we open the door to her apartment. It isn't the same as before. The living room that was once full of her clutter and art deco furniture is now barren. The walls are not covered in her beautiful paintings, now they are sterile and stark white. My voice bounces off these walls; the echo comes back and slaps me in the face. The counters are no longer covered with her favorite treats. The floors are simple, smooth and shiny now, not hidden by her festive oriental rugs. All that remains of Aunt Susie now are the splattered swirls of light blue, bright green, and deep red paints, on the dark wood floors, that she left behind after creating a work of art.

I sit in the corner reminiscing, as my parents hold an open house trying to sell Aunt Susie's apartment for as much money as they can. A short woman with gray hair pulled back into a bun walks through the vacant space, looking at everything, every little thing. The frail old lady is annoying and frumpy. She says the word "nice" a lot.

In walk a middle-aged man and woman in long matching trench coats. I overhear them speaking rapidly in a British accent about how this location would be terrific for their twenty-something-year old son. He stares out the window towards the park. The dead expression on his face tells me he's elsewhere.

The next couple that comes in is a young woman and her boyfriend; they are both stylish. They have that city look, sophisticated and chic. They strut in carrying motorcycle helmets. She flips her long bangs out

of her eyes when as she enters the living room, he tucks his t-shirt deeper into his skinny black jeans. I notice them, but I don't know if they notice me. She summons her boyfriend asking, "Hey! Honey, why don't you check out the bedroom?" Looking at them, I just want to scream, "This isn't your place! This isn't yours. It is MY Aunt Susie's!" They keep snooping and finally leave. I exhale.

I feel as though the next one to walk in the door will be Aunt Susie. I can just see her coming in, dropping her bags of art supplies on the floor, and taking off her clogs. Then she will look around and wonder what has happened and where all her stuff is. She definitely won't recognize her once beloved apartment. To see her again would be wonderful; we would have so much to talk about. She would be enthralled by my stories of eating and shopping my way across London last year, stopping at beautiful art museums along the way. I would share my dreams and tell her that someday I hope my whole life will be as great as her very short one. Then she would leave forever. I would never see Aunt Susie again, but at least I would have said goodbye.