

She bent down to pick up a thread on the floor. It was so minute I hadn't noticed it, not until she had bent at the waist as if in a dance.

A friend and I were visiting an older member of the small town where we lived and played. Our children were with us on this visit. Had I but known how clean she kept her humble abode I would not have arrived on her door step at 8:30 a.m., especially with three sticky little ones under 4 years old. My friend also had two young ones in tow.

As I watched this retired mommy pick up debris, seen or unseen, I kept tugging at my brood keeping them at my side. "Don't touch anything," I whispered. "WHAT DID YOU SAY, MOMMY?" Whispering was not learned in my house, yet. A lesson would soon begin, however.

Taking five children to visit a lady whose son was living in New York and earning a living as an understudy in Broadway productions was planned. She was on the same Fourth of July committee as we were and had invited us to "go over" plans for the parade. As we paraded passed the front White Door with the Golden Bell Ringer we encountered powder blue carpet and dark blue parlor furniture. "Tip toe," I told my troupe. And again, "Don't touch anything."

We stomped into a huge kitchen which hadn't seen the fry pan on the stove top in ages. I was agog with the AGA. Here, everything was wooden. No harm could be done. "Just sit quietly and color in the books we brought," I ordered. "We will be done soon." Sitting didn't take long. The other two children started wondering around. Mine followed, except for the baby in my lap, of course.

Time to go, I thought. We concluded our visit and headed back through the wonderful magazine fold-out. "Someday this could be mine," I had thought, my mind swirling at the possibility. Before I knew it my two ambulatory girls were giggling. They had found a set of stair steps that led into a wall. The six stairs went nowhere. "This is fun," the oldest said as the others joined in the "dance of the damsels on the staircase." Up and down, up and down they danced. Remodeling caused the discrepancy.

That was all in the past. The five little favorites have grown and danced away on their own.

Now, I could have powder blue carpet and bright red sofas and yellow easy chairs if I wanted them. I could have a spotless kitchen, too. However, I choose to quilt.

The kitchen is handy to store cookies on the countertop, ready for snacking. The parlor is for my husband to watch a ball game or read a book, take a nap. The sofa has a tiny bit of powder blue in the design but it is well worn and has been playground for many grandchildren. The dining room table is my studio; the living room floor is my design wall.

I do not take time to pick up bits of threads off the floor, seen or unseen. The pins are another story. It was a thrill to step into pages of a magazine, so long ago. Sometime I may begin the bend over dance and pick up a thread or two but not anytime soon. I am woman and I quilt.

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