

This house is so empty now. Everything is collecting a thin layer of dust. Even my arms - ah, how black and shiny they used to be! - even my arms are coated with those accursed flecks of decay that swarm to the unloved and unused.

It's been so long since I've rocked anybody. Perhaps I deserve it. Empty, dusty rocking chairs are bad omens. Of death, of loneliness, of forgetting.

But it wasn't always like this.

I remember when she brought me home. She was so happy to receive the chair I was then. I was so beautiful. You won't understand if you see me now, but I was. Beautiful, polished, unscratched, undented. I even had a plaque that dedicated me to her, and I was so proud. I was so lucky to get to rock this woman - this kind, smiling, soft woman - and bring her and her children and her grandchildren comfort for generations.

I don't remember when it changed, but something changed after her husband died. She started forgetting things. Small things at first, but I watched as the sickness crept up on her like vines crawling up a building.

That was the worst part - just watching. She became terrified of the sun setting; she yelled at her grandson - or nephew? She could never recall as time passed - despite all of his patient efforts to cater to her every need.

But all I could do was rock her. And as she sat with me, she would forget. Conversations, yelling matches, she had mere minutes ago would slip out of her brain into thin air as she sat with me and rocked and rocked and rocked.

Good things never last.

I remember the day very clearly. She sat down with me and we rocked together for a long time. But when she tried to stand up, she couldn't. My arms were too thin, my body too unsteady to support her. She struggled to push herself up, and I saw the look in her eyes. Of panic, of fear.

Her grandson had to come help her up, and I knew from the way he looked me over that something had to change. Sitting with me was no longer a comfort. Only a hindrance.

And change it did.

He brought another chair into my room. A lawn green, run of the mill, completely ordinary garden chair. I was horrified. How dare this commoner ruin the sanctity of this space?

"Why are you here?" I snapped at the usurper the first moment we were alone together.

“I’m not meant to be beautiful or comforting like you,” the chair replied. The tone was pitying, and my fury dissipated because I suddenly understood. “But my legs are strong and my arms are wide. You’ll see.”

And I did. The first time she saw the garden chair, she sat down in it - and stood up from it. Without a problem.

I understood now. But she kept coming back to sit with me. I was familiar, I was her favorite. And it brought me so much joy.

She was struggling to stand after rocking with me one day, and the garden chair said quietly, “That can’t go on forever, you know.”

There were so many things that I wanted to say, but the only emotion I could muster was defeat. “I know.”

Her grandson took me away one day, and it felt so horrible to understand why. He hid me away on the first floor of the house, where she could never get to me from her prison on the floor above.

I don’t know how long I sat there, alone. How long I thought about how she was going to forget about me. How long I believed that I was destined to rot in this dark, empty room forever.

But it wasn’t forever. I can’t even describe the joy I felt on that wonderful day when her grandson brought me back to my room. Back to her. Had she gotten better? Could she stand on her own again? Had the sickness unhooked its black claws from her mind?

I waited. The garden chair remained silent. Out of humiliation, probably, for being wrong about me. About her. She loved me more. She always would.

When she laid eyes on me that first time after that long absence, we were both so overjoyed. I could see that spark of pride in her eyes as she turned to her grandson. “You found my chair!” And as he smiled at her, I thought everything was alright in the world.

But she never sat with me again.

She would stand around and admire me with pride. The sight of me brought her joy. But that was all. She would sit with the garden chair, but never with me. She hadn’t forgotten me, but she had forgotten the comfort I had brought.

I wanted another chance more than anything. It pained me endlessly that our last time sitting together had been filled with fear and frustration as she struggled to stand. I just wanted one more chance. But I never got it. And now, I never will.

It's been many, many days since I've seen her. Months, maybe even years. I don't think she's coming back.

I just hope that maybe, in her last days, she remembered - even for the briefest moment - a sliver of the comfort that I brought her. That, and only that, would let me rest peacefully.