

Waterfront Windmill Right on the Bay

There's a distinct Easter morning feeling, much like Christmas but less intense, less tangible, more about the way the sun hits my windows and how the chill spring air lingers as my brothers and I search for baskets around the house. Behind the piano in the sunroom, on top of the bookshelves in the corner of the living room, we find the baskets filled with chocolate and small gifts. After getting ready for church, we go outside to hunt for plastic eggs filled with Rolo's, Reese's, and nickels. Plastic eggs that we'd find in the front yard into the heat of the summer.

With my brother in Boston for college, our plans had to change. To my initial dismay, we started going there for Easter, leaving our extended family gatherings behind in Pittsburgh just to make sure our immediate family stayed together. That first year, we stayed in Boston and found a Catholic church a few blocks away from his apartment in the Back Bay. The next year, we took to the mountains of New Hampshire, and went halfway up Mt. Washington; we enjoyed bread pudding in a ski lift chair in a restaurant my parents have a history with, listened to live music, and woke up in a Bed and Breakfast to a fresh layer of and still falling snow. We replaced Sunday morning church with waffles at the Inn at Ellis River. My brother's third and my first year in college, we stayed in Sandwich, drove to the end of the Cape to have Easter dinner at a restaurant called Napi's in Provincetown.

This Easter, the fourth one away from home, we ended up "settling" for Cape Cod. Mom made the reservations last minute because she was trying to make Nantucket work for my brother's last year in college, maybe last Easter in New England and last with us. My mom has been everything as "the last" although the closeness of our family made it unlikely. Home base

will always be Pittsburgh and we all are much too interdependent. After multiple reservations fell through, we ended up in a windmill in North Chatham, with one bed, barely a bedroom and 650 square feet for six people.

Tucked into the trees, at the corner of a bending road, Sea Pine Road, the mill's overgrown stone sidewalk lured me to the front door, weathered gray shingles, and white lattice sails. Love at first sight. It felt like a writer's retreat, snug, cozy, and perfect for one, maybe two people, hoping to be inspired by the calm of Crows Pond.

We had six to cram into the space. Mom brought an air mattress to put on the floor of the living room. The grounding view of slow water drew me to the three long windows of the living room when I walked through the door. One of the best parts of renting a house is when first walking in the door. It had been something that excited my brothers and me since we rented beach houses in the Outer Banks every summer when we were younger. Running through the house to claim our space, and discover the coolest corner became a game. The view of the water swept us in before we could discover the intricacies of the windmill. The wall of bookshelves, and little oddities, a porcelain cat on the top shelf of a corner cupboard, a wooden National Biscuit Company box, made the space homey. A dollhouse and old school desk sat at those three windows at the end of the living room. Sailboats floated across the coffee table. It reminded me of our house in the way the little things around made the space feel smaller and more lived in. Antique oil cans and pale vases made our home back in Irwin safe and warm. Items placed imperfectly around a room made me feel more comfortable in it, made me feel okay sitting down to mess up the pillows, and about being just as cluttered and messy inside.

The dining room replaced the mechanism, if the windmill had been functioning. The slanted walls forced pictures to hang off of the walls at the bottom. A floral painted cupboard sat oddly in the unclear corners of the round room. A table just big enough for us to play Clue at and dye hard-boiled eggs but not without bumping elbows sat there too. A ladder in the dining room led up to the second floor of the windmill, the single bedroom with a mattress laying on the floor, where my parents would sleep and my dad would make comments about how the place would be a great place to live but not one to grow old in. A rounded ceiling hugged you into the slim kitchen and windows lined the entire right side of it above the sink and counterspace. They allowed for a clear view of the patio and pond. It made for a space that would make washing dishes enjoyable, would make any household chores tolerable if one were to stay there long term.

We arrived on Saturday and took our pieces in the windmill. Mom arranged four suitcases in the dining room, and took hers and Dad's up the ladder. She brought a container of snacks, bunny shaped Reese's Puffs, chocolate eggs, eggs she had hard boiled at home, crackers and cheese, cream cheese and red pepper jelly that she set out next to the fridge. She filled the kitchen with pieces of us quickly, placing our things next to outdated coffee making equipment and an arrangement of provided spices. Then, we crammed ourselves into the car for the ten minute drive to Chatham. We walked the one main street of the quaint town, with nautical home decor stores, a used book store, a rubber duck store, and ice cream shops still closed for winter. Mom searched for a memory of the trip in the decor store, while my little brother bought color changing slime in the rubber duck shop.

On the Easter morning, the rising sun came in the three windows in the living room, beating directly onto my body covered with blankets on the pull out couch. A sun more

aggressive than the one that gently woke me on Easter mornings at home. The change in scenery and the water just outside remind me of the day.

My feet hit the air mattress on the floor of the living room when I shifted my body to get out of bed. Mom and Dad brewed coffee in the kitchen, a whole pot compared to the single cups at home. They had already come down the ladder from the second floor room in the windmill. Four baskets sat on the dining room table, packed with chocolate eggs filled with coconut creme or peanut butter, and a wrapped gift. That morning we colored eggs, and ate chocolate ones. My brothers smashed dyed ones they didn't like with pieces of a cinderblock found outside and we got dressed to drive up from the elbow of the Cape to the end of it.

On the way to Provincetown, we stopped at beaches and lighthouses we drove past. We walked the streets without purpose. We entered stores that caught our eye, jewelry stores, handmade soap, specialty gift. The greasy smell of pizza from the open doors of a small place provoked my brothers' hunger. They ate pizza by the slice and went back several times for more. My dad asked me if I wanted to go inside a candy store when he saw the window writing announcing fudge and cookies. And without hesitation, we all ended up with mid-afternoon gelato, coffee flavored with cookie pieces.

We made it to the end of the cape to the National Seashore, to sit on the sand for a few minutes before the sun set. There, I let the sand fill my sneakers again and wrapped myself in a blanket before curling up on the sand. We spotted whales in the distance when they blew water onto the painted sky and the search for the next whale to point out became more thrilling than any hunt for plastic eggs. At this moment, I felt more whole and connected than the time spent mouthing along to unknown words in a crowded Easter morning church. The clear air sharp

against memories of nauseating perfumes of freshly readied church goers, that made me unable to last until communion.

It must be the pastels, the blues and tans, the cool breeze off of the water that made it feel like morning on that beach, and made the air feel silent. Something about the coloring of Easter makes the holiday, it may not be a straight forward red and green, but it's the beginning of hope after a winter, the feeling of sun on a chilled morning, pale blues, shades of yellow. A feeling tangible on a beach in Cape Cod.

Once the sun fell behind the clouds enough to call it a sunset, the breeze became too chilled to bear. The gelato wore off and it was time for dinner.

We already made the decision to eat Easter dinner at Napi's. It's the kind of place where expectations and memories of the food are better than the food itself. The menu claims it's Mediterranean inspired but has grown past that to include other favorites. International appetizers. A vegetarian section. Jewel in the Crown, vegetable curry dish, Tofu Sante Fe. I looked over the seafood entrees to skip right to the vegetarian section.

The entrance is nestled into a long shingled building with high bushes laced with string lights. A large wooden fish marks the entrance on the uneven street of Provincetown. Streets that take on a different feel at night, mellow and dreamy, making you feel like you're lucky to have happened upon this restaurant, that you're one of the few here, that you're a local.

Stained glass, string lights, and tiffany style lamps warm the space while mermaid figurines and other quirky items add interest and charm. The atmosphere holds a warmth of a comfortable house and makes me feel welcome. The stained glass is built into the windows and walls. Intimate tables are tucked into corners and spread across the carpet. It has the feel of an

antique store with funny items and figurines, and the disorder makes it that much warmer. A type of disorder I was used to because of the style of my family's home, my aunt's home, charmed with antiques and filled with original pieces ranging from collections of cookie jars and cake plates to colored glass. Crosses and halos sit in the stained glass above the bar under beautiful arches of yellow and orange. The bottles light up in front of the glass.

We sat in the same round table in the corner as the year before. We've started to develop a tradition to make our new idea of Easter tangible and recognizable.

It's my mom, dad, two brothers, and another girl added to the family. It's her claiming this is the best Easter she has ever had. It's Napi in the corner of the restaurant reminding me of Uncle Dave, it's the warm lighting and unusual antique objects of Napi's that put me back in my aunt's house where we'd spend Easter, the stained glass crosses over the bar that have been the only religious symbols I've seen all day, it's this family around the table on the tip of the Cape, nestled into the corner of an odd restaurant, breaking bread from the basket they've brought us, together, here together.