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Moving Up and On

Karrington Tabor

“All mankind is divided into three classes: those that are immovable, those that are movable, and those that move.” –Benjamin Franklin

18. 15. 7. 8. 4.

I have moved 18 times in my 19 years.

I have lived in 15 different homes.

I have perched in 7 different apartments, condos, townhomes, etc.

I have stayed in 8 different houses.

I am known in 4 different states.

I can sit here, and I can tell you about how I lost my childhood. I can sit here, and I can tell you how I became familiar with living in and out of every size of cardboard U-Haul boxes. I can sit here, and I can tell you about how well I got to know the bruises on my arms gifted to me by my first ever high school boyfriend. I can sit here and tell you about how I was both saved and destroyed by my first love. I can sit here, and I can tell you about the nights I've spent debating whether life is worth living, or whether I was worth it. Or, I can sit here, and tell you about what could've been. About what should've been. About what my life would look like if we had stayed in the House on Treyburn Drive.

You get a strange feeling when you're about to leave a place...like you'll not only miss the people you love but you'll miss the person you are now at this time and this place because you'll never be this way ever again." – Azar Nafisi

Karrington Tabor's Know-How of When to Move:

If your lease is up, move.

If your house gets foreclosed, move.

If you start to become more aware of the back of your knees, move.

If you start to feel that itch in your legs like you need to actually go for a run, move.

If you start to hate the fact your couch is leather, and your chairs are fabric, move.

If you start to become wildly aware of your neighbors' lives, move.

If you start hate going home, move.

If you fuck up, I mean really fuck up, move.

The Sixth House (Really House Three, but c'mon do I really need to define which place was an apartment?) I ever lived in was ruled by evil. Ironic, looking back, that this was the *sixth* house I've ever lived in and that somehow, this was the *first* house I ever learned about evil. It sat the second house on the right of the cull-dasac Greenbriar Dr. Driving in, after two years of heavily anticipated construction, and over the handpicked limestone shaped in rectangles and hexagons laced as a brand-new driveway, you wouldn't think anything about this simple one-story home, and this simple two child Midwestern family. My earliest memories were built in this house. I can't remember them anymore, but I know they were. Hell, I can hardly remember anything other than the feeling of a grown man's hands, dressed in deep blue, ripping me from my father. I can hardly remember what it felt like to derive joy from playing house with the beautiful Barbies with their beautiful Blonde hair like Mom's, but instead how that beautiful blonde hair had hands raking through it with her a strangled yell and red painted nails flying into a point towards the men putting silver bracelets around Daddy's wrists. I can hardly remember anything other than the nights spent in the master bed, curling up with a silver-framed wedding photo of my parents as Mom lies in the hospital in Delray Beach, Florida, holding onto Dad, as he lays in a cot in the great State of Louisiana. I can hardly remember anything, but

I can remember those years. I can remember those teachers who picked me up Saturday mornings to take me back to Art class, and the families who adopted me for a couple weeks, and the two makeshift parents who stayed in the house when Dad called at night, and Mom couldn't move away from weird machines.

That was the Sixth House. With the olive-green paint, and the ugly green wall that was supposed to protect us from burglars, from hurricanes, from any dangers lying *outside* the wall. The wall didn't protect us from the men in blue, or the people who lived down the street (the same ones who swore up and down they loved me like a sister, and Donovan like a brother as they spread rumors around to house moms who cut us out of their child's lives immediately), or even the disease that created tumors the size of softballs in her colon. That was the Sixth House. Not the Seventh House, where the state of Louisiana housed us. No, That Seventh House is the house that caused my ten-year-old brother and an eight-year-old me to become adults in the Sixth House. But we did what we did best, we get up and get gone. A new place to live is a new way to live, and a new way to live is life without any screwups. That's because I was the one getting screwed up.

We moved to the Tenth House the summer going into middle school. Granted, it wasn't a home, but a luxurious beach condo rented out the back pocket from one the few friends of a Karrington Tabor's Know-How of When to Move: If your lease is up, move. If your house gets foreclosed, move. If you start to become more aware of the back of your knees, move. If you start to feel that itch in your legs like you need to actually go for a run, move. If you start to hate the fact your couch is leather, and your chairs are fabric, move. If you start to become wildly aware of your neighbors' lives, move. If you start hate going home, move. If you fuck up, I mean really fuck up, move. Tabor 3 friend remaining. Beautiful, perched right on Highland Beach, with its rolling sand dunes and green ocean, seaweed piling along top of washed up shells, a picture on a post card screaming New Start. This is Dad's favorite house we've ever lived in. This is the house Mom's chemo ceased and Dad was rightfully found not guilty. This is the house Mom learned how to paddle board, and Dad befriended God. This is the house I saw little of Donovan, and even less of myself. This was not a home, but one of our legendary pitstops: a place where we perch until The Perfect House comes to rent. We stop here, for almost a full year, before moving up and on.

The past is behind us, right?

Wrong.

We lived in and out of the Town House (Home Eleven) for a year, leaving, and coming back to it. This house was definitely Donovan's favorite. His room was huge, with a walk-in closet and a private bathroom. The hallway leading to his bed was paved by signed athletes' jerseys and sneakers he had collected. His bedspread was plain black, but his mattress I swear was more comfortable than mine as it molded to fit the curves of your spine. His flat screen hung up on beige walls surrounded by pretentious street art Mom bought him for a pretty penny, and his Xbox sat on top of glass shelves with artful controllers next to a brand new stereo system which connected to your phone (I had just received his CD playing hand-me down). He had his first girlfriend, (that was good enough to introduce to the family), in this house. His muscles were bigger than my head, he had finished being a Freshman in high school at the old house, and the girls all said he was the best-looking kid they had. It didn't take long for those who followed him from childhood to follow him in there too, but that was House Fourteen. He stood, already 6'2 at 15, in the front of classes singing deafly the lyrics to Romeo & Juliet as punishments and patronizing any and all teachers he came in contact with. Ever the god, Donovan Tabor was omnipotent. And then, the Sixth House came back in all its haunting glow. He just hadn't really wanted to smoke, he only had one functioning kidney and he had to be careful of that stuff, ya' know? Kids are ruthless.

A better way.

Moving gives you an organizing do over. As you set up house again, you can improve systems that didn't work so well before, and create that place for everything. You can round up all the coffee supplies and put them next to the coffeemaker, get all your office supplies bundled and binned, corral your cleaning supplies, and tie your sheets and towels in sets with ribbons. You learn what works through trial and error.

By Sophomore year, we tried to move schools but then they were too vigorous with rules and we'd both cry as he drove us home in his black BMW m3 with subs pounding away our sobs. He tried to go back to the other school, but was met with taunting and vigorous hate from the same kids who called him their best friend to the girls they spoke to. Finally, he transferred to online school, we transferred to a new house.

The final house we lived in South Florida; this house was everything. On another damn cull-da-sac, filled with fellow Hoosiers by coincidence, sits a house notorious in three cities for the best damn parties you'd ever be lucky to get into (*You're welcome*). Two stories high, light purple paint, and framing

windows. The staircase leading to two grand windowed doors only has one railing, thanks to my less than perfect driving skills. (For the record, my car has this push to park thingy, and I swore I pushed it when I got out of the

“Childhood is what you spend the rest of your life trying to overcome.”

car. I was grabbing my stuff from the backseat when suddenly, BOOM, bye-bye railing and bye-bye front bumper. I cried.) The back of the house is full of floor-to-ceiling windows which gave the wrap around leather couch warmth, and the hanging tv a glare. The kitchen had white countertops with white drawers, and white cabinets, each stained by make-up fingerprints either by Mom or by me. The fridge was always stocked with green juices that smelled like sewer and tasted like a snake bite, fruits that were hand cut and stuck into a plastic bowl, and some sort of onion dip just because it was my favorite. The freezer in the garage held most of my dinners, lean cuisine and oven pizza really do get the job done. Dad’s-turned-Mom’s Office sat in the nook of a room behind the living room, with beautiful oak desk and grand handcrafted wooden cabinetry which held every file we owned behind paned glass and a picture of Mom’s mom who we lost the year before.

The first door leading from the wooden stairs you slipped on if you wore socks was the white wooden door with its silver door handle which opened onto, yep, you guessed it, my room. Donovan and I had decided to paint my room pink and brown for that homegrown hick-girl vibe and Hubba Bubba pink (the color before you chew the gum) splattered onto wood floors and on one single wall behind a luxurious dresser and Donovan’s hand-me-down TV. The wall to the right was littered with this hand-crafted, hand-painted, heavy-as-shit mahogany cabinet that was littered with random clothes in drawers, books on fashion design, an old record player which George Straight’s Top 10 played on loop

10 THINGS NO ONE TELLS YOU ABOUT MOVING AWAY FROM HOME

1. People won't visit as often as they say they will.
2. Put aside 1/2 to 2/3 of your vacation days to travel back home.
3. It's a BFD when you come home.
4. You have to decide who is priority.
5. You need to make the effort to keep in touch.
6. Smaller holidays are pretty quiet.
7. No one ever has any idea what time it is where you live.
8. Your life seems very glamorous.
9. Small tasks may be a lot harder
10. You become a lot more independent.

next to a Bluetooth speaker used for sleepless nights, and pictures of people I don't hardly talk to, but Mom wanted framed. The other wall was sliding doors masquerading as windows behind three layers of pink and white curtains. My bedspread was pink lace with a dozen throw pillows and hardly any warmth. But the wall behind my grey clothed headboard was wallpaper shaped like wooden planks underneath a COCO&CHANEL logo and flowers from one of my exes.

**Zac Brown Band's
"Roots"**

My roots,
even when I'm a
thousand miles away
from my roots
I'm home

Don't give up
Hold on a little longer
What don't kill you
Only makes you
stronger

But man, this was the house. Both of us had countless garage parties filled with good music and better people. That garage held a handmade beer pong table Brandon and Zach, Donovan's friends, built among posters they stole from restaurant drive-through's and Donovan's hand-built gaming table and mom's least favorite couch. This house is where I mustered up enough courage to dump my boyfriend of two year's whose hands had kindly left permeant scars along my frame, and whose heart was always mine, just as long as his body belonged to other people. This house I fell in an indescribable love which to this day pangs my heart to think about what could've been (Remember how I mentioned Brandon? Yeah, word of advice, don't date your brother's best friend. You'll love each other too hard and your very protective brother will hate you. Then he'll get sick of the sneaking around and you'll get sick of the threats, and he'll cheat, and your heart will stay broken for the next two years. Instead of dating him, just move). This is the house I started my last year of high school in; This is the house I threw my last party in; this is the house I cried and laughed and just *lived* in.

We moved halfway through its second year, a running record for this family to have lasted that long, and Mom and I lived in and out of air b-n-b's, past the prom Dad missed for work, and until a week after Graduation. Then, and now, we're here. In Sunny Orlando, on a tourist's dream of a neighborhood, a block from Universal and behind Restaurant Row (a street where on both sides is an array of every kind of food joint you'd like). In our last condo, Unit One, where Donovan and I's bedrooms share a wall and a bathroom. Where Dad's office doesn't have a door, and Mom doesn't work. Where the two puppies are fed lobster mac and cheese, and Donovan's

girlfriend becomes my lifelong best friend.

This is the first house where my entire family, my brother, my mom, my dad, and I *live together*. Dad is not in and out of hotels and learning how much you need to live with by how much fits into a suitcase. Donovan is not sharing motel bedrooms with Dad as he figures out how to best help the company, and how to land the girl of his dreams as his girlfriend while not being able to take her to a place he lives. Mom is not being eaten up from guilt for not being able to live where her husband works, and stressing about raising her last kid so she doesn't become a complete lost cause. And then, there's me. I am not angry at Dad for not being around, not angry at Donovan for taking away the one person who has ever showed me what it means to love someone, and not angry at Mom for taking out all the emotions piling from years of estrangement on me. Sure, we're all here. And we're all together. And if I hadn't lived the soap opera version of life, maybe this is the part of the essay where I'd tell you that it's okay now. Moving up and moving on, it's easier. Moving up and moving on is exciting because at least we've all decided to stay here.

But it's not. This is the part where I tell you about what could have been. This is the part about my *home*.

In Fishers, Indiana in a neighborhood known as Windemere in circa 1999, there was something called House-A-Rama. An event hosted by home designers and banks who show off the most luxurious, expensive, well-crafted homes they manage to build. Phil Myers, an extremely well-established architect in the state of Indiana, built around three to four homes on one cull-

“HOW TO MOVE AWAY” BY LYNN PEDERSEN

It's best to wake early, four, five a.m., while the neighbors sleep and the moon floats like a pearl in a pool of ink. In half-light the empty house is less familiar, less sad—the walls with their nail holes, the carpet—its patterns of wear, curtains with no job to do. I sit on my suitcase, eat powdered donuts; a napkin for a plate, juice out of a paper cup. Make one last check of the cupboards, the drawers. Run my hand along the countertops, the stair rail, trace the walls with my fingertips, each scar proof of my childhood, my initials carved into the tree of this, our sixth house.

My family could write a *Handbook for Leaving*—the way we pack up during summer solstice, disconnect from people and places like an abrupt shutting off of electricity. My father has convinced himself that the unknown is always better, the way the retina sees images upside down and the brain corrects.

da-sac in that neighborhood for House-A-Rama. He built ours. The beautiful white and tan brick home with slanted roofs and a single column framing the doorway to oak double-doors. A pond surrounded by boulders of rocks and pebbles lays neatly in the left corner behind an old tree and a standard mailbox. Inside, every piece of furniture and fabric was hand designed and hand-picked by my mother after Donald Tabor brought Melissa Tabor home as he said, "Well, baby, I promised you'd be queen. I just bought you a castle." The back, truly in a grand castle style, was stone brick and large windows that faced acres of an old golf course, and a swing set would be built for Donovan's (and mine's, once I was born), recreational use. It was home, our home, designed by our mother. It's now owned by some dentist or doctor or another who bought it from a then-retired Dad. It's now a symbol of what could've been, what *should have been*, to my family. Every time we drive passed, both parents get this heartbreaking, wanton face and neither can hold eye contact as they hide their faces and turn up the stereo. Their eyes say it all: WE were supposed to live there until college, they were supposed to grow old there, that was supposed to be our *home*; WE were supposed to grow up in the long run, Donovan was supposed to play sports, not grow up in and out of surgeries, I was supposed to find some Senior my Freshman year who'd marry me after I became a doctor, not grow up in between fits of anger and pure apathy; WE were supposed to live together, not in and out of homes and hotels, of boxes and suitcases. That was supposed to be *our home*. And they hate that it isn't. I hate that it isn't.

Here I smoked
candy cigarettes, my breath
in winter passing for
smoke, pale green of my
bedroom. I counted the
number of intersections on
the way to school (four). I
bundle memories together,
weight them with stones
like unwanted kittens
drowned in a creek.

What kind of animal
constantly moves? The
point of migration is the
return. We're nomads
without the base
knowledge of where to
find water. These moves
are like arranged marriages;
economics now,
love later. Maybe it's not
against nature to move.
Most of the body is no
more than ten years old
and blood renews itself
every 90 days. But leaving
disturbs the fabric of a
place. I'd rather stay and
witness change. My mother
always wanting to plant
perennials that we never
stay to see. I pour some
water on the marigolds
clattering around the
mailbox, Aztec flowers of
death, their strong scent a
beacon to lost souls. Then
we drive away, the blank
windows like the blank
eyes of the dead, waiting
for someone to seal the
past with a penny.

I hate that my roots are firmly planted in a house I will probably never own again, in a state I never got to live in, and with people who hate themselves for moving. But that's the glory. Remember how I started this essay, that I could take you through every pathetic thing that has happened to me or that I've created, or I could tell you about Treyburn. Well here's what I'm going to tell you: I have learned a lot by looking at what ifs. What if we lived there? What if I grew up normal? What if I had stayed with gymnastics and made it to the Olympics like they had once planned? What if Donovan hadn't had kidney failure, and he was able to play the sports he was so damn good at? What if he was able to love people without being terrified they'd use his past against him, and what if I was able to stand alone without constantly berating who I am? What if we were happy, like the easy happy, where thoughts don't crush your spirit and actions don't make you afraid of God? What if?

If, all that happened, we wouldn't be *us*. I wouldn't be the straight-up, know-it-all who likes to have fun and Donovan wouldn't be the hilarious, protector who loves with every fiber of his being. My mom wouldn't be the careful, strong-headed powerhouse who everyone can't help but love, and my Dad wouldn't be this wise, hard-working man who tries his hardest to help anyone who crosses his path. So, if all that was real, and I was writing this out of a place of triumphant self-pity, I wouldn't be able to see how far we've come. I ask a lot of question to my dad right now, since we are working on writing down his roller-coaster of a life. I ask him about all the houses he lived in before me, and all the ones we lived in together. And I ask him why we move. His response: "We move because we are made to move. We don't settle, not in our jobs and not in our homes and not in our lives. We moved because God moves, and we move because why the hell not?" So, word of advice: move. Move again, and again, and again. Every time you become oddly aware of the back of your knees and you get an itch followed by tingles up and down your legs as excitement blows a wide bubble around your heart and your brain hollers to get up and get going, move. And never stop moving. Now that I am starting to sound like that one guy who tells you how to get your life together on an infomercial, just hear me out: I will never be able to live in just one house, in just one town, with just one job, but I will be able to live with just one person. Why? Because no matter where you go, or how much you change, people are the only reason to stick around, and people are the only things that can create, feel, and be in *love*.

"Beginnings are scary, endings are usually sad, but it is the middle that counts the most. You need to remember that when you find yourself at the beginning, just give hope a chance to float up."-Sandra Bullock, *Birdie Pruitt, Hope Floats*

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