

## Beans of Thanksgiving Past

Black beans and soft, little corn tortillas should have been the perfect way to kick off Thanksgiving Day, but the paper plate collapsed halfway between the microwave and the clean, glass cooktop and the last scoop of beans she'd been hiding behind the sour cream in the fridge slid across the glass in a sludge that reminded her of cleaning up after flu-stricken kids.

How long ago had that been, the Thanksgiving they'd all come down with a bug and spent the holiday wrapped in quilts on the family room couches, staring at the parade and taking turns in the disinfectant-clouded bathroom? Had it been twenty years already? She really, really needed it to not have been that long ago.

"We had black beans left over?" Leave it to Marty, standing behind her in the grubby t-shirt she'd tried to throw away last week, to go straight to the accusation.

"I just wanted some beans and tortillas to start the day, honey."

She heard him shuffle off to the basement and in a minute she could hear the mindless chatter of this year's celebrity parade announcers. "That's okay, I'll clean up the mess." As if Marty had ever cleaned up a mess in the thirty years they'd shared this kitchen. Her sons, thank God, had married women who wouldn't stand for lazy husbands and she'd done her part by teaching them to cook and clean and do laundry during all those years Marty had been gone on business trips. At least she had the legacy of useful sons, if she couldn't figure out how to get her own husband to pick up his underwear after he showered.

"I made coffee." Her announcement down the stairs didn't make it past the noise of a half million freezing parade spectators as the first giant balloon appeared. She did, however, gain

Marty's attention when both she and the coffee mug flew over the last four steps, courtesy of the cereal bowl waiting for someone to take it upstairs.

He was standing above her as she came to rest on the carpet she'd meant to vacuum for the last week. "Can ya get up?" He reached down and pulled her upright, picked up the broken pieces of the coffee mug and deposited them on the steps, to be taken upstairs later, by someone. When she didn't answer, "Did you break a bone this time?"

For about a minute, she considered limping up the stairs and out the front door, leaving Marty to figure out how to roast the turkey and live without his built-in servant. And then he squatted down and brushed the carpet lint from her cheek. "I'm sorry I left the bowl on the steps. I'll get us both some coffee and then I'd like you to snuggle with me under that quilt until the parade is over. Sound okay?"

They shared a look that had some heat to it and she smiled like she had a long time ago in the high school cafeteria when the new boy had asked to sit next to her. "Sure, Marty, that sounds nice. I'll make some more black beans while I'm cooking the turkey."