

views

Home is where the torment is

Little did we know that buying a house would turn us into our parents

BUILDING A LIFESTYLE

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tHE TRUE TEST OF A relationship isn't the ability to endure a partner's predilection for Shania Twain twang, the patience to put up with a raucous snorer or even learning to respect differences of opinion about money (she saves, you spend).

No. The true test of bedded bliss is surviving moving into a new home.

My significant other and I just celebrated our nine month anniversary. We've been together for years, but none of that counts. We only really started to know each other since the summer when we bought a house together. An old house.

Before then, we had trouble settling on which restaurant to go to, spent hours aimlessly walking the aisles at Blockbuster, and generally let the process of mutual decision-making slide by — eventually something just sort of worked out.

After a year of looking, dithering and driving our real estate agent mad, we fell in love with a brick semi circa 1905 and situated in a vague eastern, north of Gerrard community with no name. The selling agent was reaching when she described it as Upper Beaches. Seagulls die this far inland.

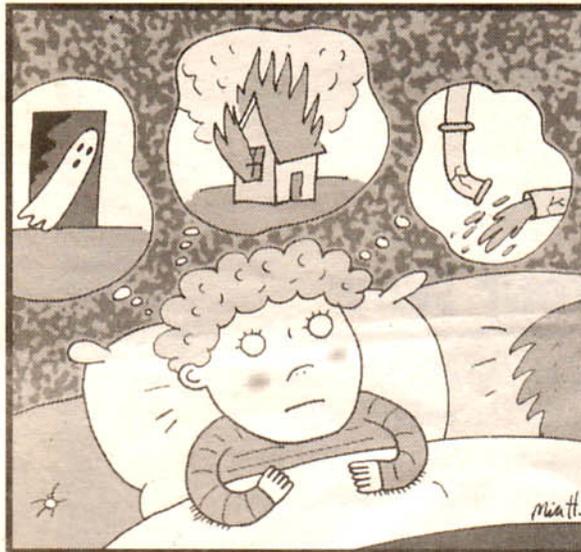
I didn't care. I was taken by the light switch in the newel post.

"Cool!" I unwisely exclaimed in our agent's presence, flicking it on and off. My lover was almost in tears in the kitchen. "It has a pantry!" she managed to squeak out, before her emotions completely took over. I now know what our agent heard that moment: Ka-ching.

We had plans. Big plans. Hours were spent pouring over our hand-drawn schematics of the house, planning which

basement, should we expose the brick, where would the laundry facilities go?

We prematurely visited paint stores and fabric shops, drooling over decor. I discovered my lover had a penchant for the Victorian warehouse look in the bedroom, right down to a potted fern and tasseled lamp shades. I found myself keeping the weekend paper inserts from Home Depot and Canadian Tire. I even looked forward to them. I began to plan the deck I would build. Not just any deck; this would have a pagoda with beveled edges from which would dangle purple wisteria in spring.



So we got a little ahead of ourselves. Who could blame us? Our parents tried.

"I don't think you girls ought to be knocking out any walls," from my lover's father.

"Don't be silly," from my mother.

"Live with everything just as it is for a few years," from my mother-in-law.

"Jesus Christ," with a shake of his weary head, from my dad.

What do they know? We smugly dismissed the collective advice of 240 years, and went out to purchase a sledge hammer.

In those two months leading up to the big

ent my partner and I are on a cellular level. Meticulously labelled boxes started to appear, stacked in neat, manageable piles carefully placed in corners so as not to trip passersby. I compared these cardboard monuments of efficiency to my own packaged goods. No tape? No problem. I overstuffed CDs with photos and other unrelated articles willy nilly. I even mixed the contents of two different rooms into one box before loved one intervened.

I would have happily packed everything that way. I willfully vandalized cardboard, neglecting to ensure that all four tabs were unfolded from the inside of the box before stuffing. I wrestled many a three-tabbled beast to the floor, admonishing its bulging sides with "Stay!" And invariably it did, sort of, listing port side against an organized stack of very fragile itemized dishware. I would only label "books" on one side with a thinnish magic marker that had seen inkier days. My better half eventually stole the markers from me, claiming that she couldn't read my handwriting.

When the big day arrived, along with a short-lived but vicious heat-wave, we were like a couple of kids on too much sugar with no Ritalin handy. We were pumped. We needed to be. The move took three professionals (I use the term loosely) and 15 hours, 12 of which we actively spent humping boxes and endless crates of stoneware clay (my partner is a potter, and the studio came with us) into our two and a half storey dream home.

The first night, collapsed on our mattress framed by boxes, I experienced my first panic attack. What if the foundation crumbles? What if there's asbestos? What if the place burns down in the night? What if there's a ghost? I was too tired to sit up and check for ectoplasmic residue, and fell asleep dreaming of exploding pipes and water damage.

I had become my father.

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