

COMPROMISE



This neighborhood is big and sunny. New. The yards are a full half-acre and the trees are these spindly little things planted last year. Directly across the street is a colonial two-story with a ridiculously wide driveway. The pudgy woman who still lives at home with her parents is washing her blue Prius again. Every time I sit on my porch, she runs out with a bucket and a sponge and lathers up the car. It has crossed my mind that she's trying to place herself in my field of vision, as if I could miss her. Still, she's more subtle than Mrs. Genoa, my next door neighbor, who has told me six times already about her niece, a graphic artist who's "a proper girl, a real lady."

I was supposed to get married last weekend. No way I would have moved out to suburbia on my own. Beth and I picked this house out together six months ago, five months before she walked out on me because her former fiancé, Brad, called and she was having second thoughts. Second thoughts? About me or him? Crying, she buried her face in her hands and sniffled, "Second thoughts about *ev-ev-everything*."

So here I am driving home from work every day to Butternut Estates, a wonderful neighborhood "to raise a family in," just ask our real estate agent. I'm living alone in a place five times as large as the apartment I gave up in Boston. What I'd give to be back in that cramped place with the cracked plaster walls and a dinky view of the Charles River. Here, my voice could echo off the cathedral ceilings, that is, if there was someone around to talk to.

This house was not my favorite. It was the compromise house. Beth liked an even bigger place in an even newer development, and I wanted to get a townhouse in the city. But we were planning on kids fairly soon and the school district here is supposed to be tops.

I was able to cancel a bunch of the furniture we ordered, but the kitchen set and bedroom suite were already paid for and delivered. Every