

The White Couch

By Emma Moneuse

The couch was white. It was just so white moments ago. I vacuumed it yesterday. I spread apart the cushions and sucked up the remnants of Thursday night's pizza dinner. Thank God my spill didn't leave a stain, but the crumbs sure found their way into the crevices. The smallest pieces always find a way to make a big mess. I tried to tell him that it was much too risky to have such greasy food anywhere near our perfect living room, but he wasn't good at taking no for an answer. He jokes that I've only ever said yes when it mattered most—when he asked me to marry him. It's a joke not quite as funny at night.

I pride myself on a white couch. So many people are too afraid to have a white couch—afraid it won't stay white for long. I work hard to keep this thing spotless. We even have a white rug on the floor in front of it too. I keep a clean house. I keep a clean rug and I kept a very white couch. Of course, when you keep a white couch there has to be some ground rules. No coffee, no wine, no juice. No chicken wings, no dips—chips are fine. No ice cream, no yogurt, only sometimes if it's vanilla and American Idol is on. Cookies are fine, just no chocolate chips. Crackers, sure. Spaghetti, never. Pizza, absolutely not, unless it could save your marriage. See, it's really not so hard to keep a white couch clean.

Usually when he comes home late he brings nothing except the faint smell of another woman and the desire to take off my clothes even when I've already been asleep for two hours. It's okay, I know he just misses me when he works so late. He's told me so many times. It's a blessing he ever wants me at all when we're both so tired. I doubt I look pretty when he comes

into the room so late, but he never turns the lights on. He wants me to keep sleeping. He doesn't even say a word.

He came home late again on Thursday, but with pizza. The pizza was pepperoni, which I've never liked, but he made sure I knew how thoughtful it was of him to stop so late and get me dinner. I didn't mention the pepperoni. He made a simple mistake is all. It must have slipped his mind. I know he could see the look on my face that I tried so hard to conceal when he brought his plate into the living room.

“What? Are you serious? I can't sit on the couch after such a long day?”

I said nothing.

“I bought you this pizza. Come and sit with me. This fucking couch. come and sit with me.”

I sat.

We sat watching his show as he chewed his dripping slice of pepperoni pizza on the white couch, next to me. He's right. It was sweet of him to bring home dinner, I thought as I saw the pink lipstick smeared across the outside of his pinky come centimeters away from grazing the couch. His hand was so close to making a stain. If he put it down, there would be pink goo streaked across this perfectly white linen. He had pink lipstick on his hand, while sitting on my couch. He was sitting on my couch that I try so hard to keep white, eating pepperoni pizza on a paper plate, with lipstick on his hand.

I said nothing.

I used to get upset when he would come home so late and disregard how clean the living room looked. Everything was perfect until he would bring the outside world in. I know I was overreacting; he made sure I understood that. He said it was my fault for wanting a white couch

in the first place—only an idiot would buy a white couch. I shouldn't be upset if a white couch doesn't stay white for long.

Last night I went to bed without him. I sucked up the memory of pizza dinner from the night before. No crumbs, no lipstick, no stain. It's like it never happened. I had already been asleep when I heard him come in. I didn't move when I felt him touch me.

The couch was so white it glowed as the sun rose that Saturday morning. I was awake long before I watched him bring his black coffee into the living room. He didn't even think twice. This was the last time he would sit on my white couch.

You can remove any stain if you try hard enough, but I think I liked the way red made the white carpet pop.