

LESLIE PIETRZYK

WHO HERE LIKES THESE COOKIES?

1972

T*his is how you clean: Spic & Span. Lysol. Pine-Sol. Brillo. S.O.S. Bon Ami. Comet. Clorox. Mr. Clean. Scrub baseboards, wipe cupboards, sweep that sponge hard and wide across the counter, shine up the sink. Hands and knees and rags to the linoleum; mops miss dirt. Wax and polish to a glow. Don't walk there or sit there or touch that. Don't track in mud. Out! Out! Make it sparkle.*



Donna's mother looks her husband in the eye. They're the exact same height, to the quarter inch, which means she's tall while he perpetually feels short (which isn't her fault). Usually she slouches a tad, allowing him to imagine an advantage, but, well, right now she doesn't. She stares at his dark, deadened eyes. Like a fish on ice. Better than what he must see looking at her: Donna's blue eyes, Donna's red hair, pieces of their missing daughter. Donna's mother says, "How do we 'get through this'? Nothing's ever going to be the same."

He's not listening. Rather, *more than usual* he's not listening. She could say, Your hair's on fire.

Two policemen left the house twenty seconds ago. They've been by every day. She brews a fresh pot of coffee (feeling expected to), and arranges store cookies just so on a paper doily. But no one eats or drinks; the four of them sit there, plop, in the living room, same seats each time, like they're assigned, she and her husband in armchairs and the cops side-by-side on the couch.