

AGES 9 – 14

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CHAPTER 10 · THE HOUSE WE COULDN'T LEAVE

Last Night in the Yellow House

A story about the homes that live in us

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The night before the move, Inês could not sleep.

She walked through the empty rooms in her socks. Without the furniture, the house looked different — larger and more serious, like it was remembering how to be just a building again.

She stood in the kitchen doorway. She had eaten breakfast at that table for nine years. She had done homework there. She had cried there once, over a friendship that ended badly, while her mother made tea and didn't try to fix anything, just sat across from her and let her cry.

She walked to the living room. The wall by the window had the pencil marks from when they measured her height every birthday. Her mother had said they would paint over them before selling, but they hadn't, and Inês wondered what the next family would think of them — a series of short lines with dates and a name, a small record of a girl growing.

She saved her bedroom for last.

Nine years of sleeping here. Nine years of that particular quality of darkness, the sound of traffic on the street below, the way the morning light came in at an angle that made squares on the floor in summer.

She sat on the bare floor where her bed had been and tried to memorise it. The creak of the floorboard near the window. The way the radiator ticked

when it came on. The smell of the wood and the old plaster and something else she couldn't name — the smell of a place that knew her, she thought, even though she knew that was not quite a real thing.

She heard her father come to the doorway. He sat down next to her on the floor without saying anything, which was exactly right.

After a while he said: "You know what the strange thing about houses is?"

"What?"

"They don't really stay behind," he said. "You carry them. I still know exactly what my childhood bedroom smelled like. I can hear the stairs from my grandmother's house. These rooms — they come with us."

Inès leaned into him.

"Promise?" she said.

"Look," he said. "You're already doing it."

*The homes we love become part of us — and that part travels
wherever we go.*

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A companion to “The House We Couldn’t Leave”

Contributions help fund The Invisible Roots Scholarship —
supporting students who carry invisible roots.

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