**Jarring Obsession**

Arline Votruba

The familiar sound of glass crashing against the pavement (or door, or countertop, or kitchen floor) comes as no alarm to myself, yet the dismay of no longer having my water for the afternoon does strike a chord of sorrow in my heart. I suppose I can only blame myself for finding such an impractical container to be so desirable. Something about the cursive lettering diagonally displayed across the glass entices me, not to mention the several colors on which the writing might be displayed. Although traditionally clear, both blue and green glass can be found. With the advent of the sip top lid, Ball Mason jars have become something of a mania for myself. Perhaps it is their versatility that leads me to pause and look each time I pass a package of brand new Mason jars in the isle of my grocery store.

“They are BPA free,” I tell my mother, who assumes I have a slightly irrational, borderline unhealthy obsession over the metal screw topped containers. “They speak to me. I can not help what I like!”

As if using them frequently to house my ice water or chocolate milk was not enough, I have been collecting all shapes, sizes and colors of the glass dreams. Once at Target I was beside myself in awe as I came across the largest jar I’d ever laid eyes on. With no use for it at the time, my impulsiveness led me to dish out the $15 I should not have been spending for this supposed necessity. Months of this gigantic jar taking up space on my bedroom floor passed with no benefit. Then the day came when I brought home Finley, my pet beta fish. Rummaging around the kitchen to find him a comfortable habitat I began to exclaim to my mother, “If only I had a giant mas-!“ That was it. I sprinted upstairs and mentally congratulated myself for forever trusting my gut and making that illogical purchase several months prior. Finley now resided happily in a home trendier than any fish I had ever met.

The jars help to organize and keep safe my many crafting materials. A jar of buttons, a jar of hot glue sticks and an array of jars filled with various styles of beads are aesthetically appealing to myself while in my creative zone. The security of the glass avoids any concern that my materials may be invaded by bugs or bad weather.

As I browse antique stores I am tickled when I come across a vintage Mason jar that appears different from the many in my collection. I like to imagine what kind of knickknacks the fellow before I may have put inside the glass sanctuary. Perhaps some nails in his garage or homemade jam made from her freshly picked blueberries. The idea that this jar has had a past life and will soon be resurrected to hold an assortment of new trinkets delights my soul.

Then came the day when my Grandpa Holmes passed away. He was a bit of a hoarder and as he spent many years smoking cigarettes from the comfort of his living room couch, I had not spent any time in his home for as long as I can recall. As I stepped inside to see what treasures might be hiding inside the confines of the yellow smoke-tinted walls I wondered if obsessions were hereditary. Mason jars held everything- kitchen utensils, tools, pens and candy. Boxes in the basement presented me with more glass jars than a person should ever be able to say they own.

Sometimes when I add a new jar to my collection I imagine the classic stereotypical woman with her crazy frizzed out hair and thick glasses, scrambling around in her nighty trying to manage all of her feline friends. The thing that we fail to recognize about that zany cat lady is that she is happy in her obsession, as I am happy when I am able to put an empty jar to use.

8/27/14