

# 2 You and Your Mother

CHANCES ARE, YOUR MOTHER CREATED YOUR ORIGINAL HOME. Because of that, to you she is the expert of all decorating experts, the Decorator's Decorator. Consequently, every woman, proud of her new home, naturally wants her mother to walk into it and say, "I love your home. I really do love it. It's so lovely."

Instead, this happens: You've spent nine months working with a professional designer who came highly recommended by all your friends. Everything is in place and you're ready for the grand unveiling. You telephone your mother, who lives out-of-state, and invite her to visit. Your mother is delighted to come. In the course of the conversation you tell her about your relationship, about work, about the baby. You do not tell her about the living room because you want to be there in person when you see her reaction to your beautiful, newly decorated

home. You can't wait to see her face when she walks through the front door.

At last the day dawns. You dust and vacuum. Fresh flowers are in your favorite crystal vase on the coffee table. You even wipe off the top of the picture frames just in case she checks.

You watch the clock anxiously. Finally she arrives. You throw open the front door to greet her and lead her into your newly carpeted and upholstered living room. Your pride and joy. She looks around. Then she turns to you and says, "It's nice."

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It's nice? After all your anticipation of showing your home to your mother for the first time, the only comment she has is "It's nice." To you, "nice" sounds like the kiss of death.

You try to tell yourself that it doesn't matter that she didn't give you a rave review. You remind yourself that you always hated that awful blue sofa in her living room. But nothing works. All you hear is "It's nice."

Worse yet, later that evening when you go over her reaction, reliving every difficult detail, you suddenly remember "the eyebrow." Your mother raised her right eyebrow a fraction of an inch as she uttered those awful words, "It's nice." Between the eyebrow and "It's nice," she has drained all the joy you were feeling about your new living room.

Every daughter knows that a mother's look says more than the Bible, the Magna Carta, or the Constitution of the United States. The mother gives "the look;" the daughter panics, thinking, "How can I please her?"

## We All Want Mother's Approval

Our mother's approval and acceptance is something that all of us desire. Whether we are fifteen, thirty-five, or fifty-five, we always wonder about our mother's reaction. Our need to have our mother's approval has nothing to do with whether or not we like our mother's taste—or even our mother.

When I was growing up my mother lived by one motto: "Protect the Upholstery." Every piece of furniture in our living room was slip-covered with plastic. I distinctly remember my mother's living room "occasional" chairs—an appropriate name for them because we used the living room only on special occasions. The chairs were upholstered in a lovely shade of turquoise and the seats were so tightly sprung they looked like twin derby hats. As were many other pieces of furniture in our home, these chairs were slip-covered in clear plastic. This meant that, depending upon the season, we either stuck to them or we slid off of them.

As so many women of her generation did, my mother took covering seriously. My mother's "covering" practice has led to my forming some unusual color associations. For example, my brother and I never read the Friday paper sitting down. We always read it kneeling on the floor, on our hands and knees because Mother used it to cover the