



## FROM THE EDITOR

RICHARD DAVID STORY

# PAINT IT... WONDERFUL!

I had just turned 30 years old and was in the process of getting a divorce and moving out of my apartment. I was a freelance writer, having given up a very good job as a contributing editor of *Esquire*, and while the divorce was not ugly at all, and while my ex-wife is still one of the loveliest women on earth, I was bereft of a job (full-time), much less a place to live (unless my friend Joe planned to let me stay in his apartment for the next couple of years).

That's when I met Dorothy Kalins, the longtime editor of *Apartment Life*, later to become the legendary *Metropolitan Home* magazine (see page 58). Dorothy would go on to fame (as in a clutch of National Magazine Awards) and...well, I don't know about fortune. But for one vulnerable year, she helped save me. She gave me a column on home and design to write at the magazine, and she gave me something else: the name of a paint. Let me explain. *Metropolitan Home* had a studio on lower Fifth Avenue in New York where it constructed all the elaborate sets for its still-life shoots. It was there that the staff experimented with new paints and fabrics, where they stored furniture, coffee tables, even ovens and refrigerators. When Dorothy heard that I might not have a place to live for a while, she offered me that studio. Fortunately, I had found a place: a dump about the size of a shoebox on Jane Street in the West Village, which I...loved. It was my own place, and I was starting over from scratch. It was charming, with ceilings so low, I couldn't stand upright in the living room. I had to store my clothes on bookshelves that connected the one big room to the teeny little bathroom. It was cozy, kind of genteel and more than a little shabby. You get the picture, right? But it was my own place, to come and go as I wished. And, as Dorothy told me, the size of the apartment didn't matter; it was whether I could turn it into a place I could really call home.

"Go over to our studio, look around and see if there's anything you'd like to use until you sort it all out," she offered. I didn't have the nerve to tell her that my place was so small, it couldn't even accommodate one of the brand-new, just-

on-the-market Alessi lamps or Michael Graves teapots. "And don't ever forget," she added, "a fresh coat of good paint can cover a multitude of sins. It can solve so many problems."

And so it did. The broken heart healed. I eventually left the freelance world behind and took a proper, grown-up job. Dorothy and I have remained friends, albeit ones who live three blocks away but, this being New York, never get around to seeing each other. As I look back on this issue, I think, We take our cues in life from so many places—heartbreak, work, colleagues, even from a can of paint, which, as Dorothy said, can make a difference.

Oh, and I almost forgot: I called her as I was writing this column to ask if, by chance, she remembered the color of that paint. Even though her own living room to this day is still painted in THAT shade, she told me, she couldn't remember the name. The next morning she called back and said, "It was called Rich Cream and it was made by Benjamin Moore. We painted everything RICH CREAM back in those days. Alas, they discontinued it and substituted something called Soleil."

Close for sure, but alas, not the same. ♦