

a lot of my friends have been throwing housewarming parties lately,

but i have yet to host my own

i have been planning one for years, much longer than anyone i know

i started at 15,

naively plastering prints of rainbow-colored magical creatures

and monocled, mustachioed faces

high up on those blank-white walls

like my mother's prophecy foretold, i outgrew them

and traded the silly, fussy remnants of my early high school years

with what my 17 year-old self thought was *trendy* and *mature*:

fake-faded photographs of flowers,

a couple uneven triangles cut from sparkly rose-gold paper

i still hadn't thought about dishes or cutlery until 19,

when i threw out everything and started again from scratch,

this time fixing my palette to earthy greens and browns and tans, some gentle blues and creamy off-whites

i hung strings and streams of multicolored beads,

curly rolls of parchment with my favorite poems scribbled on one side

finally remembering, i laid out deep-brown and blue plates at each setting

my cutlery brass, my napkins a tasteful beige,

the placemats beneath were beautifully woven in shades of burgundy, burnt oranges

and mustard yellows

pitchers of strawberry lemonade and bottles of sparkling apple cider and a jar of halfway-sweetened tea all cooling in the fridge,

and lined up brown-tinged glasses on the countertop next to a delicate bowl filled with ice rounded into perfect spheres

all that was left was the food, and i trusted that my guests would oblige and provide

so i sat and i waited

i watched the candles on the dining table burn and die as i did,

saw the spheres in the bowl slowly melt into one shapeless clear pool

the sun in the window dipped below the sill, leaving a bloody stain in its wake

soon i sat in the darkness, in the shadows,

but no one came.