



I bought a white sofa cover when I moved to Palm Springs. It seemed to complement the trees that swayed just outside my living room window. In the weeks that followed, I built up a home around it – oversized ceramic vases that matched in a neutral shade of beige and a Persian rug that offset the monochromatic tones with vibrant patterns in magenta. It was everything I wanted for a price I could afford. Then, I got a dog.

I found her at the Palm Springs Animal Shelter, a short-haired Catahoula that seemed like the perfect addition to my home. But she was an incessant self-groomer and had a habit of licking her paws to the point of open wounds. She shed and bled all over my bed sheets – and the cushions on my white couch.

You should know that in the months leading up to her adoption, I didn't allow friends to drink wine on the sofa. It remained pristine until she arrived and favored it for naps. When I threw the entire cover into the washing machine, it only further secured her hair into the fibers. Stain remover pens only worked if I happened to be home in the immediate aftermath.

I was embarrassed the first time I had people over. I lint-rolled like a madwoman only to realize it was an impossible task. Finally, an allergy medication relieved my pup's anxiety a few months later. But when I thought about purchasing a new couch, I passed. Companionship is worth the cost of perfection, and if 2016 taught me anything, it's that facades are overrated. In the best of times and the worst of times, I want 2017 to be the year when I meet others – and let them meet me – exactly where we're at.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristin Scharkey'.

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