

A House is not a Home

We live amongst the brickwork, inhabit the ancient beams, squat and hide, between the cracks of crumbling plaster. We favour the shadows, abhor the light, and reject the material world from which we have long departed.

But still we are here.

'Are you happy, darling?'

I nodded, raised a glass of the vintage red we promised we would keep for just this occasion.

'Blissfully! It's all we ever dreamed of. You clever man!'

David clinked his glass on mine then joined me on the sofa, his arm laying lightly across my shoulders.

'A lick of paint here, a touch of varnish there, and it will be exactly as we pictured it. It had our name on it, calling us to rescue it from terminal dilapidation. How old did the estate agent say it was, again?'

'Let me think,' I said, putting my wine down on the packing case doubling as a table, '1690's, so...over 300 years old. She's a grand old lady.'

David turned to me with a quizzical smile.

'How do you know it's a 'she', Bethany? One of those 'Me-Too' things?'

'No!' I said, genuinely annoyed, 'houses are like ships – they have walls that surround you, protect you, hold you in...'

He snorted, and drained his glass.

*We hear, but cannot see. We feel, but would fain be left untouched. We listen, but will not say.
A sigh, a murmur, the merest glimpse perhaps.*

And then we are gone

The evening passed in warm contemplation of things to come. Snuggled up, surrounded by cases and boxes, the totality of our eight years lovingly wrapped in newspapers and old clothes, we spoke dreamily of the times to come: of the parties we would hold, of the children we would have, of how we would decorate the nursery next to our bedroom, overlooking the old walled garden.

'Right, Beth, I don't know about you, but I'm bushed.' His voice echoed in the emptiness. 'An early night perhaps, then we can make a start on this lot,' he added, with a dramatic sweep of his free hand.

I yawned, and pecked him on his cheek.

'Our first night under our new roof – just the two of us.'

Then we switched off the light and tiptoed our way upstairs to the bedroom.

*They come and they go but never stay.
This house is too crowded, they say.*

It, never a home can be.

The excitement of the day, and the contents of the bottle now left empty at the sofa's edge, tipped me into an early slumber. I slept, then a little later awoke, the familiar warmth of David's hand around my waist, his thigh pressed into mine. I heard his breathing close to my ear.

'Goodnight, darling,' I murmured into the darkness, 'we'll talk more about paint in the morning.'

'Oh, night night dear - was that you?' I heard David's voice returning from the en-suite, 'Just having a pee. I'll be with you in a minute.'

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