

## The Joneses.

“And this is the kitchen, and that’s the lounge up there,” Trish said pointing up the spiralling industrial-style staircase.”

“Wow! So, you have the dining-room and lounge on the first floor, and your bedrooms, bathrooms and kitchen in the basement. That’s so cool,” I said, running my hand along the smooth steel handrail. “Don’t you think, Miles?”

“Yeah. Real cool,” my husband replied flatly, giving me his ‘get-me-outta-here-quick’ look.

“We call it our *Upside-down House*, don’t we, darling?”

“Certainly do! Come on, grab your vino and we’ll show you the rest of the place.”

With that, the grand tour commenced...the bedrooms, all en-suite, with views of the grounds; the nursery, playroom, library, and the mezzanine: surround sound and original works of art that even Miles recognised.

Following a meal, straight from The Ivy, we withdrew for coffees and brandy to the upstairs lounge where Trish’s husband, Ashley, regaled us with stories of their time working for the diplomatic service somewhere in east Africa. The evidence was everywhere - in the brightly coloured wall hangings, the beautifully carved head of a local woman, complete with elongated ear lobes, and the tasteless elephant-foot table. They had certainly lived a life before they arrived in Surrey.

Trish was hugging her knees and clearly desperate to say something.

“Sally, Miles, before you go, I *must* tell you something - we’ve bought the house next door!”

“What? You mean you’re moving?”

“No! We’ve bought it *as well as* this place! Come, let me show you around!”

And so, the second tour of the evening began – the guests’ bedrooms; gymnasium; cinema, and music room for little Sadie...

Half an hour later we were driving home.

“Miles, I *had* to invite them back. It would have been rude *not* to.”

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A month had passed when the doorbell rang.

“It’s them,” I said, smoothed down my skirt and made sure the bowl of nibbles was full.

“Trish! Ash!” Mwa, mwa, - I showed them in and told them to make themselves comfortable. Miles poured the drinks and soon we were sitting around the dining table enjoying a meal of Tempura Nobashi Prawns, Cote de boeuf, and Lemon posset, all washed down by two bottles of Condrieu, St.Cosme, 2019.

“Well, if we’ve all finished, let me show you the house,” I said. “And then coffee.”

First, I showed them the indoor pool, the sauna, and the games room with full-size snooker table and omni-directional treadmill. Then, onto the patio from where they could just see the outdoor

pool and summerhouses. Lastly, the twin garages: the Porches, Maserati, and vintage Silver Shadow...

After they'd gone, we flopped ourselves down – Miles on the sofa, me on the recliner.

“Well, I think that went well, darling,” I said.

Miles yawned and nodded.

I searched for and took out the front-door key.

“Time to go home, but first I'd better feed the bloody cat and get the place cleaned up. Tom and Tara's flight is due back in a couple of hours...”