

Home Thoughts from Abroad

by Victoria Cooper

“How quickly do you think you can sell it?”, he had urgently enquired down the phone.

She sat back in her aeroplane seat remembering his oily voice saved for clients and elderly aunts, and it repeated inside her head on a cruel loop.

Forgotten sunglasses had made her rush back to collect them. There she heard him upstairs as she rummaged inside the overfilled drawer of keys and pens. She knew the idiosyncrasies of this house like the lines on her face. The smoothness of the mahogany bannister underneath her palms as she flew down the stairs. The side step on the last tread to avoid the squeaking board. The gurgle and belch of the boiler burning up after a cold night. It was a symphony to her and she knew each movement down to the bar and note.

“Please keep your lap table in an upright position madam.”

Audrey jumped as she was brought back to the flight to Paris. The stewardess smiled with lip lined precision and moved onto the next row with a weary sense of determination.

Audrey turned her gaze to the neon jacketed baggage handlers scurrying outside in trucks, trying but failing to avoid the morning drizzle. She longed for the safety of home and the sweet dusty smell of the tea bag jar as the cork lid dutifully popped open. The late night sterilised click on the bathroom cabinet welcomed her along with the slow release on the light cord. The brass door handles though cool to the touch fitted her cupped hands like a hip joint and the small sigh that both she and the sofa made as she sat down after a long day. It was hers and it was home.

Just hearing his voice barking out orders on For Sale boards and viewing arrangements had removed the air from the hallway. She had stood there, caught out in a solitary game of musical statues as he sucked up the air with his cruel greedy instructions and forced her eyes to bulge like a drowning cat.

She knew the perfect portrait of the garden from the living room bay window; the dripping dew off the brown blousy deadheads of hydrangea and the delicate scattering of bright lemon willow leaves lying on the lawn. Her grandmother's clock with its arrogant chime that Adrian hated so, was the beating heart that reassured her this was not an insentient thing of stone, brick and wood but was alive and watching, keeping its protective eyes on her.

"Would you like me to pass you your bag love?"

She saw a kind face with clear eyes and chapped lips hover over her and knew she must answer.

Her mouth opened to speak and simultaneously she saw his stealth at her beloved home disappearing from view and wondered if her marriage was next.

"Yes please" she shakily replied; just managing to return a weak smile; and in that moment knew only one truly mattered.