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## A Broken Promise

by Sho Botham

Walk through that open door and you'll never be the same again.

It's only a door.

It's not just a door. That's why you mustn't go. You'll be a stranger.

I promise - nothing will change.

He stood tall watching her elegant back. She shook her long glossy hair and headed for the open door.

The light was dim as she went through. The sound of her footsteps changed to a soft crunch and then a quiet padding as she walked. She was aware of a coolness in the air around her. It made her shiver and wish she'd worn a jacket. She picked up the pace of her walking in an attempt to keep warm.

An hour had passed since she left him. He continued to watch the door. He knew it was fruitless. She would not be the same when she came back. He had no idea how long it would be before he would see her again. A few days, a week or more. He knew he had to go home and find a way to be by himself.

She could see the light at the end of the corridor. It seemed bright, almost white. She continued walking towards it.

At home he sat in his comfy chair, looking at where she would usually sit. An old Victorian chair upholstered in a floral tapestry fabric.

It looked out of place without her sitting in it. He felt alone. When it became dark, he remembered he had not eaten. In the kitchen he looked in the fridge and found some chunky, sliced ham. He picked up a slice and put it in his mouth as he stared at laden shelves.

In the bright, white light, she saw other faces, staring at her. She stared back, half smiling. This was her choice. She wanted to be here. She couldn't go back now.

Dust on the table reflected his lack of motivation. He didn't watch TV or listen to the radio. His phone had run out of battery. He didn't understand her need to go. He wasn't sure if he could forgive her. Post piled up behind the front door. On day 15 he decided he had to stop feeling sorry for himself and found the vacuum cleaner. He picked up the post noticing a fragrant envelope. It was her favourite fragrance. With an energy he'd not possessed since she had gone, he ripped open the envelope.

He was right. I am different. I didn't believe him. But he was right. She was nearly at the door. She could see him waiting on the other side. Watching for her.

Their eyes met as they walked towards each other knowing everything had changed. They held each other stiffly. They didn't know what to say. They seemed to be greater strangers than before. Flashlights popped in every direction. TV cameras rolled catching signs of the usual discomforts when someone leaves The Big Brother House.