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## House Agent

by Sue Hitchcock

The girls you meet off Tinder like to have the first date in a public place, like a drink in a cafe or a pub. They have to check you out before they meet you alone, or they refuse that same evening if they don't fancy you. This latest is a bit odd, called Vanessa. There she stood all threaded and embroidered, pierced and tattooed. She was like a black and white film, no touch of colour, even in her face. I suppose she liked a bit of pain, getting all those piercings. I'm not that type at all, quite smart actually. It's part of my job, as an estate agent. The rumour is that we like to have it off with girls in empty properties. Sometimes you get into it when a buyer tries it on. So if you pretend your girlfriend is a buyer, it's a nice daytime date and it gets you out of the office.

Anyway, Vanessa was more than enthusiastic, when she found out we had the old Georgian manor, Alucard Hall on our books. She said she had heard it was haunted and it turned her on. I made a date with her there at four o'clock the next day, because I knew the electricity was off and it gets dark pretty early in January. It would give us an hour before dark and it would be too cold to stay long.

I was early so I let myself in, out of the freezing wind. Previously the lock had been troublesome so I left the door ajar. The shutters in the rooms were closed, and as I went into the room to my left, I heard a gentle click behind me. The front door had glided shut. The window behind the shutter was filthy, so I cleaned a spyhole with my fingertip and peeped through, no Vanessa to be seen, only the hollies and leylandii blowing in the wind. The floorboards creaked, as I returned to the hall and a clatter made me turn to see the shutters had closed by themselves. There was something strange about the house, I could feel it.

Maybe there would be something soft to lie on upstairs, so I climbed the polished staircase, lit by only a glimmer of light from the glazed cupola above.

The four bedrooms were each as bare as the rooms downstairs, only valuable broad wooden floorboards and shutters, closed to the world. It would sell easily, but for a date, it was bleak. Oh well, Vanessa was small and I am strong, so we can do it against the wall, if she's up for it.

I peered out of the bedroom window at the drive. She must have welched, stood me up. Girls do get cold feet sometimes and it was nearly dark. I don't get paid overtime, so I should go. As I turned to leave, the bedroom door opened slowly and I wasn't sure if it was the wind, but she stood there, almost invisible in her black coat. Her eyes were shining. Maybe she had been there all the time, closing doors and shutters. Well if she's willing, I'll give it a go. Her breath was strange, smelling sweet, like those violet cachous old ladies used to suck or maybe with licorice too mixed in. She reached up and held the nape of my neck, pulling me towards her open mouth. I closed my eyes and opened my lips, but it was my neck which received the kiss, the bite, the dream.