

The House with the Beautiful Garden

a 20 minute timed exercise

by Sho Botham

Tears pricked the back of her eyes. The wall was disintegrating. They told her that the damage was only superficial and easy to fix. How she wished she'd listened to Chas. He'd said it looked more than superficial. But she didn't listen. She wanted the old house with the beautiful garden. Chas said that she was being led by her heart and not her head. And this was the result. It wasn't just the paper peeling from the wall. The wall was coming off in places too.

There wasn't one room that they could sit in and forget the state of the walls. And the ceilings. And some of the floors. Floorboards were distinctly dodgy in some rooms. All soft and crumbly and not like floorboards are supposed to be. Chas would be home soon. She needed to cheer up otherwise he would be telling her that he told her so, again.

She heard the big heavy front door open and close. Chas was home. She heard a rumbling and several thuds and she screamed at Chas to make sure he was okay. He met her at the door into the kitchen. He was looking upwards.

"What was that?" she asked him, shaking on the spot.

"I don't know." I'll go upstairs and check.

"No, don't leave me here on my own. I'll come with you," and she grabbed his arm.

Together they went up the beautifully curved staircase. Chas opened the door into the main bedroom, then the second bedroom and the third and the fourth and the bathroom. Everything was okay. Then another rumble and plaster and dust surrounded them. The ceiling of the second bedroom fell in pieces around them onto the floor, their heads, their feet.

Chas looked at Janis and laughed. She looked like something from a horror film covered in plaster dust with just her eyes peering through. Janis looked as if she was going to burst into tears when suddenly she collapsed into peals of laughter. The yellow paper on the wall downstairs didn't seem nearly so bad now.