

A Lucky Escape

by Sho Botham

Lala was expecting the decorator to arrive so she didn't peer through the peephole before opening the front door. He was huge. She'd forgotten how imposing he looked and became conscious that she was alone in the house with him. It didn't help that this man was there to decorate the main bedroom.

The huge man followed Lala upstairs. She confirmed the work he was there to do and left him to get his tools and materials in. At one point Lala held the front door for him so he could get into the house easily with his hands full. Her face looked a picture to anyone watching. Her eyebrows were trying to hide in her hairline and her eyes were as wide open as they could be. She'd assumed that he would turn up in a van. But he'd turned up in a white Porsche. That seemed so wrong although perhaps it just depends on your point of view. Lala wondered how he'd managed to get all his decorating equipment in such a low-slung sporty vehicle. Then there was the enormous height and breadth of the man. She thought to herself how he folded his body up sufficiently to be able to get into the driving seat of the small, expensive, sporty classic car.

The bedroom to be decorated was a large room with four windows, two at the front, two overlooking the back garden and the graveyard beyond. As an experienced home decorator herself Lala was keen to see the man get a good start on his first day with all the preparation.

Back then it was all the rage to put up ready-pasted wallpaper. A deep tray of water, the length of the roll was needed for soaking before affixing it to the wall.

The sheer size of the man in her bedroom made Lala feel uneasy. So much so, she hardly went upstairs that first day. She made him cups of tea and he came down to have them in the kitchen. Lala didn't like the fact her husband was away working leaving her to cope with man mountain all by herself.

Lou along the road popped in later in the evening to see how the first day had gone. The two women went upstairs to look at what had been done. The room was a mess with stuff strewn all over the floor. No dustsheets were laid on the carpet and although he'd sanded down the window frames and sills, he'd simply painted the undercoat on without first getting rid of the sand and dust. Lala was not happy. She knew she would have to speak to him in the morning. Lou volunteered to come along early the next day for some moral support.

Man mountain arrived in a different Porsche the next day. A black one. He'd left all his tools scattered in the bedroom. He said it made sense to leave everything on the job.

Man mountain turned out to be a nightmare worker, leaving leaking trays of water on the carpet overnight that Lou and Lala struggled to deal with. From day two Lala and Lou were convinced there was something very strange about man mountain. He gave them both the heebie-jeebies. Lou supported her friend by spending all day with her having endless cups of coffee in the kitchen whilst he was upstairs decorating. By day three, Lala telephoned her husband and told him that he had to sack man mountain because he was too scary for words and she didn't want him in the house any more. Lala ended up finishing the decorating herself.

That was not the end of the story. A couple of years later Lala was working in Japan and Lou sent her a newspaper clipping all about man mountain. He turned out to be a Satanist who borrowed fancy cars from his friend who owned a classic car showroom and never paid for them. Lala and Lou knew they'd had a lucky escape from man mountain.