

ARTISAN DWELLING.

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I've never been one for materialising although a nice bit of wafting never did no harm. Live and let live I say - in spite of the circumstances. Our old mum always said I was the sunny soul of the family. But thanks to my new tenant, I'm a spectre of my happy go lucky self. Still, while I might have no say in who moves in, there's a ghost of a chance I can get her out.

I started seeing red when I heard her describe our house as 'an artisan dwelling.' A two up, two down with an outside privy shared by the neighbours! She's got to be having a laugh. To be fair, it ain't like that no more but it's how I always picture it. You get attached to the home you was born in and I've been lucky to witness changes there over the years. I've welcomed them all until Moon moved in.

Moon? I ask you? Not even her real name. I seen her birth certificate. She was christened Jemima. What's wrong with that? Or Ethel? Or Maud? Proper names like what our mum gave us.

Anyway, I was wafting about when I overheard Moon talking to that hoity toity barrister next door.

'I was too lucky to find such an adorable artisan dwelling,' she boomed in her air raid siren voice. That weren't the only thing what annoyed me. She'd left mud across the step mum got down on her hands and knees to scrub every day. And she was wearing a ridiculous outfit. Carrotty hair tied up in a spotty red bandanna. Navy boiler suit. Hobnail boots. Who does she think she is? Rosie the Riveter?

I got more even more worked up when she said, 'Bethnal Green's proletariat past is so inspiring.' On and on she went about reconnecting to her working class roots. Working class? Her? Calls herself an interior designer. House looks like it's been

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burgled. No antimacassars. No nicnacks. Bricks exposed. Furniture like sticks with glass on top.

We never had much in the way of furniture. Mum and Dad did their best though.

Poor old dad. Up in the dark every morning looking for work down the docks. Mum's fingers bleeding from cobbling boots by candle light. My sisters, worn out and half deaf working Waterlows printing presses down London Wall. Being the eldest, I took care of the young'us. Loved babies I did. Mum had one a year but could never keep the boys alive. Turned out, I was just the same. Always a coffin on the kitchen table in our house.

So don't talk to me about the working class and artisan dwellings. The likes of them what lives in the street now ain't done a hard day's graft in their lives. Especially this Moon, with her fat husband who works in something called 'Futures' and them pasty twins, Star and Sky. Too vain to 'ave 'em 'erself so she got what they call a 'surrogate' to do it for her. She calls them poor little mites 'Theybies.' Not children or kids. Says they can decide for themselves if they're a boy or a girl. Call me old fashioned, but if you've a winkie you're a boy and if you haven't you're a girl, and that's all there is to it.

Oh yes, you'd be amazed what I discover when I'm having a good old waft.

Sometimes, I amuse myself by hiding a gold earring or knocking over them diffusers she likes what makes the place smell like a brothel. Poking around in wardrobes and peeking in fridges teaches me a lot. The amount of clothes and food they waste is wicked. We wore hand-me-downs and ate every scrap of food put in front of us. Not like Star and Sky. 'Don't want it,' is their constant whine, fussy little beggars. Not

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surprising really given the rabbit food Moon dishes up. They could do with a nice bit of liver and kidneys. Put some roses in their cheeks.

You should see the size of Moon's fridge. Like a bleedin' tomb filled with funny shaped vegetables. We only had a pantry but that went in the 1970's when they put in fitted kitchen units and a tiny bathroom. Up til then, the house didn't look all that different to when we was there. Most of the tenants have been sweethearts like that sad Jewish family and them Bangladeshis who made the house smell spicy and warm.

Then Moon moved in. A woman who lectures her kids about saving the planet before leaving them with the nanny to go on first class flights to countries I've never heard of. Moon what won't pay a decent wage for her cleaner, a poor bag of bones who's escaped gawd knows what in her war torn land. Moon who wants to bash my home about, build an extension and dig up the garden. Sorry, can't have that. Can't have her disturbing my boys.

Over all these years, I've never felt the need to materialise. But she's driven me to it. Cos of her plans, I feel agitated so I'm wafting about more than usual. Mostly in the children's room. I find it especially comfy there cos it's where I shared a bed top to tail with my six sisters. Moon's packed Star and Sky off to boarding school on account of the building works are about to start. Didn't they cry! Twas pitiful when she drove them away in her car the size of a tank. I swear little Sky who, despite the dress and long hair is the boy, saw me waving goodbye from their window, cos he made starfish shapes with his hand.

So I gets to work. Moon's on her own, on account of Fatso Futures being in Geneva with his mistress – see how much I discover doing a bit of wafting. The first night I

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turned the furniture upside down, threw cushions about and wrote obscenities on the ceiling with the children's crayons. I hate bad language as a rule. Suffice to say, I learned them from those hairy, reefer smoking students who lived here in the eighties.

For good measure I emptied the fridge and hid the contents all over the house. The kippers behind the radiator was a stroke of genius, you must admit. Especially when I turned the heating up. You should have seen her face when she came down, sniffing and gagging. Satisfying? I should Coco. Even better cos the cleaner had quit (I'd deliberately left out an advert for a company what paid proper wages) so Moon had to clear it up herself.

The next night, while she was watching some rubbish called Grand Designs on telly, I did the old lights flicking on and off trick. When she got up to investigate, I levitated the fruit bowl and tipped it out at her slippered feet. Next I sent a couple of sharp knives whizzing past her ear. They made a satisfying thwack in the wall where our old black range used to be.

A few more nights of this and she was right frit. I heard her call one of her posh mates, Nyree or Nyad, to ask if she could recommend 'an exorcist'. I couldn't help but let out a big laugh. WHOOHOOOOAAA. Her head jerked up. She dropped the mobile and let out a foghorn scream.

I hovered about watching her get into bed. With trembling fingers, she tried calling Fatso Futures but of course he didn't answer. I sat on the edge of her bed, stroking her cool satin sheets. Her little nose twitched as she smelled my scent of carbolic and wet earth. When she leaned across me to get a sleeping pill from the side table, I felt her shiver. I waited all excited for her to lean back on the soft pillows and see

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the words 'LEAVE US ALONE' appearing in big scrawly red letters across the ceiling. When she leaped from the bed, I materialised in the doorway wearing my funeral shroud. Naughty really, as there weren't much of me left when I copped it in that Zeppelin raid on Stepney Green. The Sunday Best outfit I wore courting my Georgie before he left for the Somme just wouldn't have had the same effect.

I wafted away allowing Moon to run bare foot down stairs like a frightened fox. From the landing, I watched her fiddling with the umpteen locks on the front door. I don't know about keeping people out, but they was certainly doing a good job of keeping her in. Once she managed to fling the door open, she woke the street up with her screaming, she did.

Of course, I didn't like having to do all this in the room where our dear mum gave birth to us all and later on where I had my little boy. Born out of wedlock he might have been, but mum said he was still one of the family. He didn't last the night but he's out there buried in the garden beside his tiny uncles. And, as always, it's my job to keep them safe - whatever it takes.

Beverley Byrne

3rd Prize in the Short Story Category

2021 International Competitions - Wells Festival of Literature