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CREATIVE WRITING

Missing Mother

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In every war a bomb is dropped on a warring house, the walls blown in so you can see the guts of each room.

The bedroom floor is floating in space.

The furniture juts out to offer up a seat and a sideboard.

This is where she keeps her hair, the tin box of astonishing hair he tore out when he returned from war.

He is not happy – not at all. He wants to know – 'I want to know why you should think –'.

He stops in the middle of the floor, the middle of the flower where he once crawled, a boy at the feet of his father. He picks up his foot to crush the flower.

'To think I left you here, and you betrayed me with that man. You liar. Lie down – is that what he said?'

He moves off from his place and aims at her head. Her hair comes out like petals – *Love me, love me not*. Her hair comes out and clings to his hand.

'Get up. Stop crying. Clean this house. Looks like a bomb's been dropped. My mother kept this place spick and span despite that other war.'

Their daughter in another room covers her ears with her hands to block out sound.

Her father raises his voice again and says to her mother: 'They'll be no more gallivanting. You'll keep this place spick and span.'

It sounds like a slap to the skin. Both cheeks are slapped, one after the other. Then the wife, the mother, bothers to clean the house. Does she curse it as well? Set a bomb with her rage?

Is that why the walls have blown in, gone away?

She has gone away; and her daughter stands in the street alone to look up at the missing wall, the floor sticking out.

'Father will be angry,' she says. 'Who will he blame?'

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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