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Takeaway

by

Kate Venables

When she first moved to the town, she tried the Indian takeaway on the corner of her road. But the deliveryman stood too close to the threshold and looked over her shoulder in to the hall as he handed over the pitifully small bag of foil containers, *On your own, innit?* So of course she never went there again. There was another restaurant not far from the bus stop and she got in the habit of calling in on the way home from work, ordering, then settling back in at home before the ring on the bell announced her evening meal. Always enough for at least two. The freezer took the surplus. Sometimes she could eat for a week from the one order. The implied other was never clearly articulated. It was, *We like to share*, or *We're hungry this evening*.

She grew relaxed with the idea of sharing her house, her life. On more than one occasion, it got her out of a potentially unwise purchase when *Ah well, I'll have to consult back home...* was met by a wry *So do we all, love, so do we all* from the disappointed salesman. She found herself hinting at family celebrations as the checkout girl rolled wine bottles past the scanner. And on the train once, after a long day in London, she pulled out her own phone when every other passenger did and rang her home number. *Hello, it's me... No, it'll be late... Don't wait up... Mm hmmm... Mm hmmm... OK, love... See you... Bye... You too...* And when she got home, she picked up the handset and smiled as her own voice filled her ears. *See you too, love*, she said, and deleted the message.

She hadn't felt the need for quite a while. Something about being so busy at work, she supposed. But then her main project ended and one evening on the train she found herself fiddling with her phone and dialled home as before. There was no recorded voice. She started to talk, then stopped, listening to the rustling and hissing on the line. Quickly, she ended the call and glanced around the carriage. She looked up the fault-reporting number, asked if there was some problem with the line, *Uh huh. So the network's only down temporarily, then? Well, it's good to know.*

Back at home, she lifted the handset and listened for a long time to the faint whistling. Unsettled, she took out her laptop and distracted herself with Facebook. Then she browsed her discussion forums and read long threads about property prices and house moves. Then she played around with Google Earth. Tapping in her own postcode, she zoomed in to street view, manoeuvring the viewpoint along her street. She could just see the corner of her house and the spare bedroom window. What was that shape? Some kind of reflection in the glass? She took the zoom in as far as it would go. It must be the mirror propped against the wall in the spare room. Had she been at home when the Google car came round? How would you know?

Closing down the laptop, she picked up her wineglass and walked unsteadily upstairs and across the landing to the spare room. She was wrong about the mirror. It was lying on the floor, face down. She took another mouthful. She really must move.