

Sue Lanzon

Something in the Water

Reading excerpt

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of [Sue Lanzon](#)

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Shut Up And Talk

The week before Christmas and it's raining hard. There are boys all over the house. Tyrone, plus four of his extremely adolescent compadres, and Ricky, who is, to his disgust, still only seven. The teenagers loll on various bits of furniture toying with various bits of electronic equipment, guffawing at each other's fart jokes, grunting and Spilling things on the floor. Ricky whines constantly to be allowed to have a go on something, anything, and keeps kicking his brother, who retaliates by periodically banishing him to the hall so that he can keep kicking the door instead.

Meanwhile, Tina is holding court round the kettle with two of her girlfriends. Yes, they will be staying for dinner, thank you. No, they don't speak to smelly boys who are younger than them and who are hogging the TV, which just isn't fair, Mum, actually.

Sitting at my kitchen table, immersed in the realm of online paperless billing but with a clear line of vision to the hall, I am outwardly calm, transcending the melee, offering occasional words of comfort to Ricky - who, in demonstrating his preference for negative attention, tells me to mind my own business - and placating Tina's more regal tendencies with a shrug.

With a reverberating thwack, something wet and feline crashes through the cat-flap and, before anyone can do anything, leaps towards me and lands in a very imprecise, un-cat like splat on the keyboard, deleting all my online paperless receipts and, who knows, maybe short-circuiting the entire system with deluge. It's Violet, on the run from

the elements. I get an old towel and rub her dry while Tina and her cohorts scream into their mobile phones.

Before I've had a chance to recoup my losses, Jack, our lodger, arrives home with his girlfriend, Suze, who is in urgent need of a shower, a homeopathic remedy and possibly a lawyer, having just slipped on the wet pavement and fallen into an open, muddy trench left behind by Thames Water as part of their modernization programme of the Victorian mains System. I give her Arnica and Rescue Remedy, get Tyrone to make a photographic record of her contusion and, with a hug from the girls, she limps happily upstairs to use all the remaining hot water.

What none of these glorious beings are aware of is that three days ago Carlo and I decided finally, categorically and definitively to call time on our relationship. Not through rancour or disillusion, but prosaically due to living in two different countries with neither of us wanting to move. Despite the loving nature of our break-up, done mostly by email, I howl in the shower daily. It's the only time I can guarantee privacy, although there is often a watchful cat perched on the sink but that doesn't really count. The cats and I share so many secrets - this is just one more. In trying not to expose my grief to my family, to protect them from the news and therefore from my feelings, am I also trying to protect myself? Probably, but then I think, "I'm supposed to be the grown-up of the group. I just have to handle this."

However, the Wise Woman within me, my Inner Crone, knows this is not really an enlightened attitude, more a gritting of teeth.



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