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extra

Just a room

Clare Wadlow

I am a room. Just a room. Nothing peculiar about me. Well, I don't think that I am special. Though you might say that my walls are dull and my paint is peeling a little, yes. You may comment that I don't seem very cosy. I imagine you think me rather sparse. You might point out that I haven't a curtain rail or a bar in my wardrobe to hang a hanger. My coat hooks are rather unusual and I seem to have mislaid my bathroom plug. Yet I am proud of my en suite wet room, well wouldn't you be? I have a big window, though it doesn't open very far. Look, I have a box of tissues and another of chocolates. There is a picture on the wall. That blu tack might make my paint a little worse but I think it's worth the risk.

She put it up the day before yesterday. I think she's doing better. The first painting never quite made the wall but I saw it on the floor, beneath the bed. It was dark and foreboding. This one seems more hopeful, maybe it's the sunrise, perhaps the glint of gold in the green on the trees. She laughed this morning. I heard it, I'm sure I did. Short and abrupt, but sweet. I was proud of her. The radio was on and someone made a joke, she must have been listening today. She must have been able to hear it.

I am filling up with objects now, at first she was barely here. I didn't know whether she would come back, she left nothing behind. Hardly a dent in the bed sheets. But now you can see it all, the two well-fingered books, the jumpers, a hairbrush and a bottle of moisturiser. The radio was the most recent addition. I am beginning to feel homely, purposeful, glad.

I don't like to think of our first few days together. I know I should be used to these things by now but I never know what to do. She cried of course. Not sobbing or screaming. It was a quiet cry, an exhausted, soft and unending echo which I bounced about my walls hoping someone would hear and come to help. But I couldn't make it loud enough. Sometimes she slept, but not for long. I tried to be calm, quiet, warm and dark; but nothing helped. She tossed and turned and wept again. I felt her deep desolation and I wanted to comfort her but I couldn't, no one could.

It's often like this. I am just a room but I have a big job, a heavy job. I'm glad there are others to help. I don't understand everything, but I've seen most of it here. Things always change eventually, somehow. I want to write on my walls in big yellow letters 'this too shall pass'. I want to tell them that I know life can become dark, confused and twisted. But that it can uncurl and the sun can come out again. There is calmness inside all of us I think. Somewhere. I am just a room, but this I know.

The British Journal of Psychiatry (2015)
206, 121. doi: 10.1192/bjp.bp.114.159020