



FLOOD DAMAGE by Sherri Turner.

[This text is read aloud at the beginning of this video:]

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The rain had been torrential for days and the small riverside bungalow that Jenny had bought out of her half of the divorce settlement was starting to look like a foolish purchase.

To be fair, the summer had been idyllic, sitting on her patio in the glorious sunshine, sipping wine and watching the ducks, with no-one to tell her she hadn't dusted properly or she'd put on weight. No one to make her feel small and worthless and unloved.

It was just like the rain, she thought. A drop at a time made a deluge and then hopes and dreams got washed away. Thank goodness she'd found a way out before the last shreds of her self-respect had drifted away, too.

Now she watched the water lapping at the paving slabs a few feet away. She'd bought a pair of waders last week and it seemed sensible to put them on before she ventured out in search of more sandbags.

The waders were like green plastic dungarees with wellies attached. She had just dragged them on over her jeans when the doorbell went.

"Hi, Mrs West?" The man at the door was drenched, but still managed to look attractive. His hair was plastered to his forehead and his yellow hi-vis jacket was hardly fashionable, but his smile was genuine.

"Miss, actually. Miss West."

Why had she said that?

"Oh, sorry, Miss West. I'm from the council – just checking that people are OK, got enough sandbags and so forth." He looked Jenny up and down, taking in the waders. "You seem well-prepared. Though I don't think you need to wear those indoors just yet."

"I was just going out," she snapped. "To get sandbags. I can look after myself and I don't need anybody telling me what to do or criticising or..."

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Her face began to crumple.

“Hey, I’m sorry – again!” he said. “It was just a joke. Everyone’s rather stressed out at the moment and I thought... I should have known. My ex- used to say I talk too much. ‘Mike’, she’d say, ‘not everyone thinks you’re funny.’ And after a while she didn’t either and...oh, I’m doing it again, aren’t I?”

Jenny was laughing now, which made a nice change from the way she’d been feeling lately.

“No,” she said. “I’m the one who should be sorry for overreacting. It’s Jenny, by the way.”

“Jenny,” Mike said. “Nice name. And the waders – it’s a look, isn’t it? And some people can carry them off,” he hesitated, “inside or out.”

“Enough!” Jenny laughed. “You said you had sandbags?”

“I did.”

He fetched some from the van and explained how to position them in case the waters rose.

“It’s just a precaution,” he said. “We’re hoping things will be getting better, but I’ll be back tomorrow.”

“Thanks,” Jenny said. “That’s kind.”

“Just doing my job,” Mike said. “Although...” And he blushed, just a little.

“Testing the water?” Jenny asked, surprised at her own bravery. “It can be deep and dangerous, you know.”

“I’d better wear my waders then,” Mike said, and left with a wave.

Jenny closed the door and smiled. The outlook was certainly for brighter days ahead.