

Ruin

by Steven Gowin

We keep a ruin of a house. That's certain, and I suppose it's all right. But I wish it were like one of those joints you'd rent on vacation at Paris France...

Can't you just see the entrance door all split and weathered oak and just barely hanging from thick rusty hinges? You pass through and spiral up creaky steps with paint flaking off the walls all the way to the sixth floor the way they count, which is really the seventh.

But then you're inside and... merciful heavens! Every mod com you can imagine, all efficient and stylish, beautiful parquet floors, perfect furniture... tiny lights fixed to make the place look twice as big as it measures. All immaculate because of a Portuguese maid three times a week.

I'd get a Portuguese maid too if I lived in Paris France. But, we're not like that. We're not that kind of ruin, I tell you. We've nothing of glamour. Let's start from the bottom up. First, the garage door's almost shot. We gave the kids the code. Now they use it as a front door. So does she.

Open and close and open and close all day long. Last time the spring snapped (happened a couple of times now), garage door guy says this door's about shot. Can't last forever the way you do it. Put some WD40 on it time to time.

Let's move on. Furnace burnt out an igniter a couple years back, and now the fan motor clicks and squeals. WD40 calmed it down, but you don't have to be a rocket surgeon... it's a bearing shot in there, that's what, and the kids always take that WD40 so I never find it and have to buy new cans all the time.

The laundry... washer switch went down a couple months ago. Fixed that, but now the thing grumbles on slow, and that's either the motor or the drive, so you might just as well buy a new machine. Yet the old one's got a steel drum; you pay top dollar for steel now or accept plastic, Chinese made.

Dryer belt sheared three weeks ago. She thinks that's something I should be able to fix, and I could fix it, just like when I put in the new garbage disposal. If Dad were alive, he'd walk me through the tricky bits. He could fix anything... M tractor to a commode for the john.

But, if I had a couple of tools I'd need, and I had three days to do it, and I found the parts, and I bandaged up my sliced and bloody fingers from the sheet metal cuts, why yes, I could fix it. But the dryer man does it in an hour and gives ten percent off for cash. So I say no and HELL NO.

Now the kitchen. I already told you about the garbage disposal, but a couple of the cabinet draws keep coming off their rails, and although I've adjusted and adjusted, they're at the end of adjusting, and what they want is replacements. And there's way more I won't mention here.

She'll come down on me about it all eventually, it being what she thinks is man's stuff that I didn't look after. In the meantime, I'll have been busy grocery shopping, and cooking, and doing laundry (I'm good at getting it washed, but can't organize the putting away), and keeping up with the dishes.

It's ok though... our division of labor. She spends lots of time getting the kids into college because they're not lazy about school and are bright and deserve a good education and are doing fine so far except for garage doors and WD40.

She works the vacations and plans them artfully. That's where she puts the money and the energy. She's had us all overseas... had us to Paris France Europe more than once.

I try not to worry about everything going bad. In the end it won't matter. In the end we'll all be ruin... that's for sure... all of us.

