

A House Full of Whispers

Sharon Wallace

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Every book and blog dedicated to the craft of writing repeats the same mantra: show, don't tell. Sharon Wallace, author of *A House Full of Whispers*, got the message. She impales the reader with descriptions of the abuse she and her brothers, Paul and Mark, endured when they were children.

Wallace writes as if she is still in that dark moment. She is clear, concise, and does not ask for pity. The physical and psychological pain inflicted by her manic mother was no less brutal than her mother's denial of the girl's nightly molestation by her stepfather. The author's unflinching reportage of the beatings and mental abuse is heroic. The eleven-year-old Sharon Arscott, who dubs her stepfather the "night devil," wonders how her half sister sleeps through the nightly episodes. By extracting her soul from her physical being, she manages to survive his abuse. Eventually, she rises above the injuries that left her bloody, bruised, and humiliated and successfully returns to her body years later, when she feels safe again. "I never felt safe in this period of my life and not for many years after," says Wallace.

The author focuses on the years from 1956, when Arscott was born, through 1974, when she was sixteen, and uses her own poetry, written from the age of eleven until the present, to link each chapter. The memoir would be better served if the poems were collected at the end of the book, where they would not interrupt the story of the mind-bending terror that befell the Arscott children.

At sixteen, the author writes, "I wanted to close down all my emotions and become a brick—solid, unmoving, unfeeling; these emotions, thoughts and scenarios running inside my head were making me ill." Arscott somehow survived, thrived, and created the family (as Sharon Wallace) she wanted and deserved.

Her writing career spans three decades, and her voice is confident and unflinching. A published poet and photographer, she resides in the United Kingdom with her husband and seven children. She lectures about her childhood experiences and the happiness with which she has broken the cycle of abuse. *A House Full of Whispers* is Book 1 of the Whispers Trilogy.

DINDY YOKEL (May 12, 2011)

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