

Dust 2

by Juliet Robinson

As she crossed the street, one she had walked along nearly every day of her life it occurred to Allie that we don't walk down the same street as the person walking beside us. How could she have been so mistaken about Ava? It made no sense, two such different realities.

'You stupid, stupid girl,' she muttered.

She unlocked the front door and gave it a good shove, it was sticking thanks to the damp weather Ruaridh would have sorted that, but Allie hadn't a clue how to. Once inside she shed her coat, dropped her swim bag and went to the kitchen for a cuppa.

*The tether pulls, friend, lover wife, colour returns.
Sad, such sadness.*

Allie sat at the table clutching her tea and stared at the diary. Why had Ava been like that? She sipped her tea and blinked back tears.

*What causes the watering of the eyes? Closer, closer, can almost feel can almost touch.
So cold, but if I could reach out, feel the warmth. Remember it, I remember the fiery heat of
blood, the roar of a pumping heart, the pressure of air, pulled in and out. So close.*

She picked up the diary and opened it, flicking ahead to a date she remembered well, June 10th, her birthday.

Allies' birthday party. Sixteen. She was so excited. I wanted to be happy for her, and I almost was. But then the spoilt princess opened her presents. A trip to Paris. Paris. What is that square going to get out of that holiday? Nothing. She only wants to go because I want to go. I hate that she takes everything from me, dresses herself in me, my ideas, my personality, mine. She hasn't had an original thought in her life, she is a copy, a pale imitation of me.

I snuck up to her room and hid her new Bob Dylan record. Forced it down the back of wood panelling in the hall. She only likes Bob Dylan because of me.

Allie grunted. She had blamed her brother John for that. It had been one of their biggest fights. Well, the wood panelling was still in the hall. She picked up a blunt knife and went upstairs, slowly she walked the hall, running her hand along the top of the panelling seeking a gap big enough to push a record through. And there it was outside her childhood bedroom. She peered down it, but couldn't see anything, so she wedged the tip of the knife in and tried to pry the boards away from the wall. To her surprise it moved, and something shifted, falling further down behind the boards.

'John?'

'Allie how are you?'

'Yeah, yeah, all good. Could you come over? I need some help.'

'Right now?'

'That would work.'

'Give me twenty.'

'Bring your toolbox.'

Pacing, back and forth, back and forth. The freedom of movement. Follow, but with no physical momentum. A thought on the breeze, a memory swept along. Does she still smell the same?

Allie marched round and round the house as she waited for John. She kept returning to the kitchen and the diary, which she would flick open, but she couldn't bring herself to read anymore just yet. She needed to know if the record was back there, somehow that would be more real than Ava's cruel words. She still couldn't bring herself to believe what she was reading, the record would be a kind of proof.

'Allie?'

'Upstairs John.'

She waited next to the 'crime scene' for her brother. John was younger than Allie, but you wouldn't think it to look at them. He was stooped and walked with a pronounced limp which he had earned when HMS Antelope went down. He appeared at the top of the stairs, toolbox in hand, he frowned when he saw Allie.

'What's wrong?'

'Look can you pull the panelling here? Get it off the wall?'

'Why? What's gotten into you Allie?'

'Something Ava said.'

'Ava? I didn't know you were in touch.'

'We aren't. Anyway, can you,' Allie gestured at the worn wood, 'use something like a crowbar?'

'Bit over kill.'

He bent lowering the toolbox to the ground with a grunt and pulled out a small gadget which looked a bit like a potato masher to Allie.

'It's a pry bar,' John explained.

'Is it big enough?' Allie asked.

'You ladies and your obsession with size.'

'John!'

He chuckled and got to work, the boards came away easily, dust and lint and all manner of yuck exploded all over the place as the panels came down and in their midst was the record.

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