

# Dust

by Kate Solomon

It was the absence of small sounds he felt most. The clink of a spoon against china, a floorboard's distant creak, the swish of that old, broken-toothed comb through her hair. A thousand tiny sounds that had proved he wasn't alone.

They had been so far apart at the end. Inhabiting the same blank rooms while swapping meaningless words and empty gestures. He hadn't cared for her then. But now the silence beat down on him and he ached with loss.

He found himself talking to her as though his cracking voice could end the cacophonous quiet. Her imagined replies were full of warmth and a tenderness he hadn't felt for a long time — happy moments that ended abruptly as the silence broke out over him again.

Wandering from stagnant room to stagnant room, he'd finger the dusty shelves still pregnant with perfumes and notebooks, jewellery and ornaments. How much of her was in this dust? How many millions of molecules that once made up her body, her smile, her self must remain on these cluttered shelves?

He began to cherish each feathery clump, every gentle beach of grey. The Hoover lay dormant, the windows closed. Visitors were left ignored lest their worthless particles dilute his last precious vestiges of her.

As the silence raged on around him, he settled in the shady bedroom and smiled, knowing his own dying cells were slowly settling with hers, together powdering the room as though they had never been apart.

