

Housesitting

By Celia White

Abra calls her boyfriend, John, from the place where she's housesitting. She wants him to come over. He won't.

"It just seems weird," he mumbles. "Someone else's house." Hooky, cherry wine, sin.

"A fireplace, John," she coaxes. "An Oriental rug and a kitchen bigger than a bathroom. Beer in the fridge...."

She comes. Storm, doorstep, signed sealed delivered.

She gets drunk. Sipped, swallowed, taken. Consumed.

Abra feels aimless and happy in the house. Afterschool, childhood, stoned.

On the bathroom wall there is a series of pictures of the girls as babies and toddlers. Picture: imagine, capture, see. They never smile, but they are bare-chested or popsicle-faced or just plump and blue-eyed enough to seem happy. Every time she goes in there, Abra finds herself gazing up at these photographs, her head bending back so far it almost tips. Daisy, girl in a swing, worship.

She sits up in bed slowly, like a mummy. Horror movie, insulated, parent.

She goes home. Sweet, at last, summer.

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