

When B moved in

When B moved in, the wall became a talking skin. I never saw the man, just heard his meaty grunts and groans as he lugged his stuff upstairs, then the smooth click of a freshly cut key in the lock next door. Late that night the soft creak of another bed a wall away from mine, the slide of warm flesh on cool accommodating sheets, fat ice clinking in a long glass, a moan, a sigh, then music kicking in. Soulful tenor sax blowing close, arcing high to low and back again in the rich milky darkness. B's slow and sultry murmurs ebbed and flowed, a strange tongue millimetres from my ear, chuckling low and coaxing. For thirty nights I prayed I wouldn't sleep, stroked the painted plasterboard, cooed and purred and gasped as lovers do, swore I saw our breath mingling like whispers in the deep wall cavity. Then B moved out. Never saw the man, just caught the thud of something hefty thumping down the stairs and a woman's laughter spilling out in cadent waves.