

THE COCKROACH DANCE

Written by

Auriol Reddaway

Auriol.reddaway@gmail.com  
07946486187

© Auriol Reddaway 2022

EXT. OUTSIDE SHOP - DAY.

A dreary small town in Somerset.

A traditional village shop, red paint and gold lettering. The county's number one stop for all your pest related needs.

BETH (15) dumpy and forgettable, and MAGGIE (15) shy and mousy, sit cosily on the kerb, sharing a packet of cheese and onion *Walkers*. A pile of fliers, advertising a sale at the shop, lies forgotten beside them.

Beth is dressed as a giant cockroach.

BETH

They shag back to back? Really?

MAGGIE

Sort of. It's more like a dance.  
Before they shag. To be like, yeah  
I fancy you, ya know?

BETH

Like this?

Beth shimmies her back against Maggie's. Laughing.

Maggie doesn't laugh.

MAGGIE

I think it's kinda beautiful.

Beth nods, thoughtful.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I feel like bugs have it easy  
though, just do a little dance and  
you're in.

BETH

I try not to think about them too  
hard, given, you know.

She gestures at the shop. The window proclaims that they sell hundreds of different bug extermination bundles.

MAGGIE

I don't really think about all  
bugs, only cockroaches.

Maggie watches Beth closely. Beth is intent on her crisps.

BETH

When does your break end?

MAGGIE

In like 5, but doubt there's going to be a wool emergency. Why?

BETH

I dunno, was just thinking it's nice that we have the same breaks.

MAGGIE

Yeah.

Pause.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

I'd miss you otherwise.

BETH

Me too.

An awkward smile. A moment of eye contact.

MAGGIE

I've been thinking about the summer, and how we'll have so much more free time. I guess I wondered if you wanted to -

A car skids to a halt near the girls. Drowns out Maggie's train of thought.

Out jumps AMELIA (17) cool and knows it. Bleached hair, fishnets, fuck you attitude.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

So, as I was saying, I've been thinking -

BETH

Amelia's back?

MAGGIE

What?

BETH

Amelia. Fit neighbour Amelia.

MAGGIE

Yeah I think she's at her dad's this summer.

A moment's bafflement from Beth. How does Maggie know that?

Amelia slams the car door, and stomps towards the girls.

BETH  
She's going to be next door again?  
Sharing a WALL with me?

Maggie sighs. She has missed the moment. Again.

AMELIA  
Alright?

BETH  
H-hey Amelia! So good to see you!

AMELIA  
Still wearing that costume I see.  
Aren't you a bit old?

Beth is aghast.

Maggie jumps in. Defensive.

MAGGIE  
All the tourists love it.

Amelia makes a face. Shoulders her bag and trudges to her front door.

Beth stares at the floor, trying not to cry.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
I'm sure she didn't mean it like that.

Beth shoots her a look.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)  
I like your costume! I think you look sweet!

BETH  
Sweet?

MAGGIE  
Yeah?

BETH  
Like a kid!

MAGGIE  
No no not like a kid, like...

Beth does not listen.

She flees inside, cockroach arms flailing.

INT. SHOP - DAY.

The shop is crowded, people are thronging to colourful displays on ecological bluebottle control and perfume that doubles as a mosquito repellent.

Beth's mother, JULIA (40s) distracted but well-meaning, stands behind the counter. She is wearing a pesticide helmet and fondling the lid to her jam jar wormery.

She watches Beth careen through the shop.

JULIA  
Everything okay?

Beth ignores her.

She hurtles past, dashing upstairs to their flat.

Julia doesn't follow her, but has noted the drama.

INT. BETH'S ROOM - DAY.

Beth lies on her bed, facedown into the pillow. The bottom half of the cockroach costume hangs off her knees.

She sobs.

Through shaky breaths she looks up.

She stares at herself in the mirror. Face streaked with tears and mascara. Self critical in the way only a teenager can be.

Stuck to her mirror is a photograph - a school production of Grease. Maggie is Danny, she stares at Beth, frozen in longing. Beth is Sandy, grinning at the camera, oblivious.

Beth is focussed on the costumes not the emotions.

She has an idea.

She pulls the costume off her knees and grabs a pair of scissors.

EXT. OUTSIDE SHOP - NEXT DAY.

Beth is dressed as a sexy cockroach.

Maggie leaves the wool shop opposite. Two crisp bags in hand.

She stops, startled.

MAGGIE  
What are you wearing?

BETH  
Do you like it?

MAGGIE  
Do you?

BETH  
(uncertain)  
Yeah, I do. I look hot.

MAGGIE  
I guess. It's just different.

BETH  
I wanted a change.

Maggie realises why. Resents it.

MAGGIE  
Have you seen Amelia?

BETH  
She's not been past yet.

MAGGIE  
Well, I'll leave you to it then.

BETH  
Nah, don't leave, we'll hang out.

Maggie is torn.

Amelia comes out of her front door. Stops short.

AMELIA  
That's a choice.

Beth tosses her hair, she has practiced this exchange.

BETH  
Not such a kid now?

AMELIA  
I never said you looked like a kid.

Maggie slinks away.

BETH  
What do you think?

AMELIA  
Somehow it's weirder. Really  
legitimately creepy now.

Beth is still trying.

BETH  
You don't think it's kind of...hot?

AMELIA  
No. I really don't.

Amelia walks on, unaware of the power of her words.

Beth looks around. She suddenly realises that Maggie left.

She is humiliated. And alone.

INT. SHOP - AFTERNOON.

The shop is shut for lunch, no customers.

Julia is halfway up a ladder, perfecting a hanging mobile  
made of fly swats.

The shop bell rings. Julia looks up.

Beth enters. Dejected. Her costume hangs off her.

JULIA  
Goodness.

BETH  
(mumbling)  
I wanted to look sexy.

JULIA  
As a cockroach?

She is not critical. Just curious.

BETH  
It seemed like a good idea at the  
time.

Beth is downtrodden. She plods through to her room.

Julia becomes more concerned.

INT. BETH'S ROOM. DAY.

Beth sits on her bed. Forlorn.

Julia pokes her head through the door.

JULIA  
You know, Maggie's lovely, but you  
shouldn't have to wear a costume to  
impress someone.

BETH  
Maggie?

JULIA  
You wore the sexy cockroach for  
Maggie didn't you?

BETH  
No...

JULIA  
Really? I thought you two were so  
close?

BETH  
It's not really like that.

JULIA  
What is it like?

Beth considers for a minute.

Julia knows exactly what she's done.

Realisation slowly dawns on Beth.

MONTAGE:

Maggie grins at Beth over their crisps.

Maggie laughs at something Beth's said.

Maggie slinks off after Beth talks to Amelia...

END MONTAGE.

Beth looks at the photo stuck to her mirror. Takes in her  
laughing face. The carefree expression.

She turns to the miniature Maggie. The hopeful eyes. Wistful  
smile. The longing gaze.

Beth has a lightbulb moment: she's been an idiot.

She dashes back downstairs.



INT. SHOP. DAY.

The shop is empty. Starkly so.

JULIA

You go. The shop will be fine.

Julia opens the storeroom cupboard to reveal a whole rail crammed with cockroach costumes.

She begins the methodical process of putting on her own costume.

Beth turns to leave. Catches sight of herself in the mirror. A moment of pause. She considers.

EXT. OUTSIDE SHOP - AFTERNOON.

Beth runs across the street, an ungainly racing cockroach.

She clutches a bulging plastic bag.

INT. WOOL SHOP - LATE AFTERNOON.

The shop is dark. Eerie. Piles of wool leave grotesque misshapen shadows on the walls.

Beth stumbles over a wooden sheep. Nervous.

A creaking noise comes from deep within the darkness.

BETH

Hello?

A lamp turns on at the counter. Lit from below is MARY, (70s) gaunt and skeletal, piles of hair and nimble fingers. She is hunched behind the counter, knitting furiously.

Her needles click clack like weapons.

BETH (CONT'D)

Hello Mary! How are you?

The needles work faster. A violent frenzy.

BETH (CONT'D)

Is Maggie here?

Mary pointedly ignores the question.

Beth deflates.

BETH (CONT'D)  
I came to apologise.

Mary's scowl softens slightly.

BETH (CONT'D)  
Please.

Mary gestures behind her with a knitting needle.

INT. BACK OF WOOL SHOP - LATE AFTERNOON.

Maggie is sorting patterns into neat piles. She looks miserable.

BETH  
Hullo.

Maggie focusses on finding the right pile for each pattern. Seemingly immersed in her work.

BETH (CONT'D)  
That one doesn't go there.

MAGGIE  
Yes it does.

BETH  
They're different patterns. That one's a jumper.

MAGGIE  
You don't even know what the system is.

Maggie quietly moves the folder to another pile.

Beth is smug but doesn't say anything.

BETH  
I was a dick before.

MAGGIE  
Yup.

BETH  
I shouldn't have ditched you.

MAGGIE  
No.

BETH  
I'm sorry.

Maggie considers. Realigns her face into feigned nonchalance.

MAGGIE  
How's Amelia?

BETH  
I wouldn't know.

Maggie is interested despite herself.

MAGGIE  
What happened?

BETH  
She doesn't get it. Not like you do.

Maggie looks up. Shocked.

MAGGIE  
You're not together?

BETH  
No. And I don't want to be.

Beth struggles with her plastic bag. Pulls out a second cockroach costume.

She holds it out to Maggie.

BETH (CONT'D)  
What do you think? Wanna do the cockroach dance with me?

Maggie grins.

She tries to play it cool but eagerness gets in the way.

She grabs at the costume. Starts to put it on. Beth tries to help, fumbling awkwardly. There is nowhere near enough space.

Both girls laugh.

Beth grabs Maggie's hand and they hurry outside.

EXT. OUTSIDE SHOP - EARLY EVENING.

The girls stand, both in their cockroach costumes, rubbing their backs together and laughing hysterically.

Julia watches through the window. Dressed in her own cockroach costume.

Amelia walks past the girls, rolling her eyes.  
They do not care.