

## The Dust

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I died horribly. I'm bound to this dusty house until justice prevails.

My brain surgeon husband, Sam, bought me a fabulous hundred-year-old mansion in the country. He said that was a gift for me putting him through medical school. In less than a year, gossip of the brilliant doctor and his nurse was on everyone's lips.



Even my best friends told me, so I confronted him about 'her.'

"Dottie, you're crazy. I've been swamped. I'm the best at what I do and in great demand."

I knew what 'great demand' he was talking about.

"I'll divorce you, and you can have your mistress, but I keep the house and half your income for life."

His face reddened, and veins stood out on his temples. "You don't tell me the way it's going to be. I'll see that you...."

He stopped in mid-sentence, stormed out, and slammed the door.

He spoke little to me the following week. I wondered if I should go to a lawyer but decided I'd wait a bit longer until he calmed down and see if he might prefer me.

Three days later, he was out of town. I got out my tin of dry spiced tea mix and fixed a relaxing hot cup to drink. The pain was immediate and excruciating. I broke out in a rash—stomach in knots. My sweating head felt like a sledgehammer beating on it. My last thought was he'd gotten to the tea mix and poisoned it. *That son of a bitch.* I lost consciousness.

My spirit's been in this house for thirty years. Trapped. All I wanted from life was a happy marriage and children. I had neither. And until my murderer is revealed, my soul can never be free.

Sam has a third new spouse, Ginger, who seems smarter than the rest. She's fifteen years his junior.

Over time, I learned the only thing I can move is dust. I can trace on a dusty surface or gather some magnetically in my palm and deposit it elsewhere.

My first effort to warn Ginger was when I wrote on a dusty coffee table, "Sam will kill you." She ignored it and just brushed it all away. Then I deposited dust on the dining room table, the path from the entrance hall to the kitchen. I wrote in the dust. "I'm Dottie, Sam's first wife. I didn't die of a heart attack."

Later, when she came in and saw the writing, the color drained from her face. She'd dusted the table the previous day. Ginger looked around everywhere for someone. She looked right through me as always.

"Where are you?"

I walked through her body to the table. She shuddered and crossed her arms around her waist, but otherwise, no notice. I wrote in the dust on the table's edge near her thighs, "Next to you."

She watched the tracing in the dust, screamed, and passed out. When Ginger regained consciousness, she staggered into the living room and sat in an antique chair. On the table next to her was a kerosene lantern with a clear glass globe showing the liquid inside. Sam kept them for nights when we lost power. Good standby light that matched our antique décor.

I blew dust on the table and wrote, "Calm yourself and listen to me."

Over the next several days, Ginger eased her fear of communicating with a ghost. She finally believed how Sam murdered me.

It was a frosty night when Sam came home late, told Ginger he'd had a long surgery, a snack, and was going to bed. She followed him to his bedroom, where he'd just started a blazing fire in the master bedroom fireplace.

She told him everything she knew of how he killed his first wife, Dottie, and was going to have her body, my body, exhumed. He was furious, grabbed her, and threw her against a bedroom table with a kerosene lamp sitting on it. Dottie grabbed the neck of the lamp and threw it at him as he stood in front of the fireplace mantel. It hit him in the head, smashed, and the liquid kerosene splattered everywhere as he collapsed to the floor. Flames from the fire licked toward him and the room in moments. He lay, barely stirring, fire creeping over his body. Sheer curtains and drapes caught---a blazing inferno.

Ginger called the fire department before she ran outside.

I stayed in the bedroom. Screams erupted from Sam before flames silenced him forever. I felt free.

The house was fully engulfed in flames—sirens in the distance. I drifted towards the heavens when I thought of the adage, *Dust to dust. Ashes to ashes.*