

The old reliable needle moved across the beat up vinyl. Tanya Tucker's scratchy voice was lamenting for the umpteenth time:

"Delta Dawn, what's that flower you have on  
Could it be a faded rose from days gone by  
And did I hear you say he was a-meetin' you here today  
To take you to his mansion in the sky?"

She was all alone in her safe haven. The place that used to be their home. It was so quiet there now, she heard re-runs of her and Julie bantering in her head. Their lines bounced back and forth like a ping pong ball at the neighborhood bar down the street. Lou sat on the edge of the bed. She took a swig from a cold can of Bud Lite and closed her eyes tight. If she concentrated real hard, she could almost hear a car door slam shut, footsteps coming down the path in the back and stopping on the landing as the key juggled in the lock of the back door.

"...All folks around Brownsville say she's crazy  
'Cause she walks around town with a suitcase in her hand  
Lookin' for a mysterious dark-haired..."

Sometimes Lou belted it out with Tanya. This particular afternoon she just let her tears flood her face as she choked down her beer. She crumpled the can like a wad of tissue, then heaved it overhand into the basket by the dresser. It was already overflowing with a white cloud of Kleenex and empty cans. Some day she'd actually have to get off her duff and take out the garbage.

She kicked off her black Nike work shoes and slid down underneath the purple knit afghan and down comforter. She curled up into a ball in a corner of the queen size bed. She was fully dressed and did not care. She pulled the covers over her head and shut her eyes again. Then she heard the arm of the record player slide towards the center of the record and park itself off to the side.

No, no, no. Not another wave of quiet. It crashed down on her like a giant compressor squeezing the air out of her lungs. She could hardly breathe. Thank God for her Grandma's old phonograph. How else would she have been able to get through the last six months? She could not imagine facing her life right now without her Delta Dawn time. It was as if Tanya Tucker massaged her broken heart right through the speakers.