

Stories of Stuff

Crushed Velvet
by Shelley Trower

Based on a conversation in Liskeard library

We had black DM boots for painting silver dragons on, and velvet coats and vodka in coke cans. Saturday night guaranteed a rugby team's fight in black and white glaring light until the riot police came. We'd watch from a shop door drinking our teenage vodka.

Sam had a crushed velvet coat, black like the boots. Picked it up for £2 and wore it everywhere. It was five centimetres longer than her miniskirt, so quite useful at times. She wore it on the circuit round the town of grey granite and grey days of rain, wore it at the bus stop waiting and waiting for the bus that sometimes came, and was surprised how waterproof it was. Who'd have thought of crushed velvet for its waterproof qualities? Nowadays there's all that expensive clothing for off-grid mountaineering that tourists wear for going to Waitrose.

Sam made the most of her velvet coat, walking miles in the mizzle. She wore it through blizzards and floods, up trees and across seas. She got stopped by the police, to check she was OK. She fought beasts in that coat. Mostly though, it helped her endure those long miles home in the dark rain, when she missed the bus and had to walk the lanes, when the warm glow of her youth could be seen from the stars.