

The Welcoming Dark

by Oisín MacMahón

Dark, calm, a little dangerous, but I'm not scared. As I walk along the streets in this foreign land, they're unfamiliar, yet I feel at home. It can be scary to be so far into the deep with no way of getting out.

Squeak.

Looking deep down the endless street as I walk, I pass beautiful old houses with one or two lights on in the windows; many of the inhabitants have gone to bed. I walk alone, no one around; it feels like there's just you in the world.

Squeak.

Calm. I put on my headphones and find a relaxing song. I have a long way to walk alone.

Squeak.

But that's okay, it's not cold out. I've never been in anything like this, this sort of dead silence, but it's not a bad silence; it's peaceful. Almost as if there's nothing bad in the world and, to me, there isn't right now. For me, there isn't anything bad, nothing bad *should* happen; but I keep an eye behind me. Just in case.

Squeak.

I look up at the stars; they're so clear. Glad there's only a couple of street lamps guiding my way. I remember when I was younger and my family would go camping. We'd be able to see everything because we only had the fire to light up our site. You could see how far the darkness went, almost forever. That was a different sort of darkness though, much colder and more threatening, like there was something bad waiting out there. Something that could take you if you turned your back for too long.

Squeak.

I get a beer out of my bag. I always have a bottle opener on my keys for this sort of thing. This stuff is really good. Both me and my brother love it, but you can't get it back home. I don't get to see him much, we live in the same house but our schedules are so different, we never see each other. I joke sometimes with my parents that I'm an only child 'cause we barely see him.

Squeak.

I'm almost there, grand. Another two minutes and around the corner. A nice bed for the night and I'll be gone tomorrow. It's so dark here but it's a nice dark, a comfortable dark; like being under your duvet, a welcoming dark. And even though I'm alone I have the squeak of my

shoes to keep me company, as if they're the footsteps of a walking partner.