

Darkness

How strange, the difference between night and day. With the sun rises hope, with darkness comes fear. Yet beauty emerges beneath the moon's soft glow. So dark, so quiet, so strange. A whole other world is born in the dark of night. No sound penetrates the air, but those made by the creatures of the dark, hidden from prying eyes. The night once held such mystery; it was a time to be afraid, to look behind you as you walked. It was a time when predators went in search of prey, and if you weren't careful, you could fall into their trap.

There was a girl once. She feared the night, feared its dark secrets. She knew the dangers, knew what lurked, yet she couldn't help the way it called to her. It beckoned her with its alluring sense of calm. She tried to ignore it, tried to fight its siren call; but one day, she could resist no longer. She stepped outside and followed the sounds of the night. Her footsteps echoed on the pavement, reminding her how alone she really was. The path stretched far ahead, eventually turning to gravel, then to dirt. Still she walked on, entranced by the beauty that was not visible in the light. Crickets chirped, the birds sang a haunting song; were they calling to each other, or calling to her?

Her feet carried her further than she wished to go, but still she couldn't ignore the call. Minutes stretched on and she walked, far beyond familiarity, until it was impossible to continue. Before her stood a cluster of boulders that rose up to meet the sky. She stared, confused and unnerved by how suddenly they had appeared before her. Still, the night called her further, almost begging her to scale the rocks and face whatever fate awaited her on the other side. Who was she to ignore such a call?

Her feet were bear, but that didn't deter her. She felt no pain as she began her climb. There came a time when she no longer knew what was up and what was down, she simply moved

her feet among the rocks until at last she could see a glow of light far below. She sat, perched above a silent city, lit by the soft glimmering streetlights. This, she thought, is a place I can love. She sat there until the glow of the lamps began to dance with the light of the rising sun.

She went back many times, always at night, and would stay until the darkness gave way to light. She said it was her special place, where there was no right or wrong, yes or no; there was only her and the lights and the crickets singing their songs. Night is a time of magic she would say, when the impossible becomes possible and everything that seems so hard becomes so simple. She would come home with stories of creatures, like no one had seen before. The animals of the night, so mysterious, so silent and beautiful.

The stories she told spread like fire, crossing the country; twisting and changing, mixing with tales already told. Everyone listened when she told her stories of the hill where she went to escape, where the signs of civilization melted away until there was nothing but trees on the ground and stars in the sky. There wasn't a single person who hadn't heard of the place, yet no one seemed to know where to find it. People searched, night after night, trying to find the tower of boulders, or even just the dirt path where the crickets sang, but it was not a place for them to find. The girl's place was forever hers, untouched by others, and she knew it.

There came a day when the stories stopped, as suddenly as they began, the beautiful tales of the mysterious sanctuary ceased to be. And with them went the girl. No more did she entertain us with stories of the night creatures, nor did we hear of the dancing lights that were only visible from her rocky perch. Search parties were sent out, but we all knew where she was. She was in the place that couldn't be found, where the night revealed its beauty, where the crickets sang their song, and the city slept and glowed. That was the place where she

lived, the place where she sat and watched and listened and waited. That was where we would find her.

Eventually we could search no more. There was no point in looking for someone who didn't want to be found. We knew she was happy; we knew she would thrive in her own little world. She would live in peace, sitting night after night atop those rocks, and watch over us as we slept. In a world of her own she would live, where night is day and day is night. Where up is down and there is no right or wrong, only here and now in the moment forever. That is where she will one day be found, after we are all gone, there she will be, sitting and watching, thinking, learning, living. That is where she will be, in the dark of night.