

FESTIVAL WRITING PROJECT

The Darkness

Lauren Harmesen

U11073048

The strap of her bag dug into her protruding collar bone, her thighs were aching and with every step tough leather of the new leather shoes her grandmother had given her rubbed against her already raw heels. Alice knew that she had no choice but to keep fighting the urge to stop, she didn't have much time left before the darkness came and she knew what horrors it would bring with it.

The streets were so full she could barely move everyone like her were fighting to make it indoors before the light gave way to the darkness. She pushed through the crowd, elbowing and shoving relentlessly; she had to look out for herself. Her heart pounded unusually quickly against her chest, she forced herself to inhale deeply, and she knew she needed to be clam. She would stand a chance if she could keep her head clear. She increased her pace with every passing moment as the crowded streets quickly became deserted. The only light left now was a thin orange strip outlining once grand city, she was shocked by how beautiful it was, she had never been out at this time before, and she had only seen the city during the day when all its broken windows and aged dirty walls could be seen. She had heard many stories about how beautiful the city had been but she had never thought them to be true until now, it seemed so different from the filthy decessate ridden place she now knew it to be. Only vagrants and gangs inhabited the city now.

She forced herself forward, urging her body to move faster, her thighs ached in protest. She was exhausted; there wasn't anything she wouldn't give to be safely behind the latched steel doors of her grandmother's house knowing the horrors of the darkness couldn't touch her. It was only a matter of minutes before she would be noticed. There wasn't a sole in sight and she could hardly make out the shapes in front of her but she knew she had to keep moving. She could tell she was getting close now, she recognised the shapes of the buildings, it was just a block or two now.

Alice was breathing hard, every breath felt like a dagger scraping the walls of her throat, all she could hear was her heart hammering against her chest but her fear of what lurked these streets prevented her from stopping. No one could save her now, the only people willing to leave their homes or even open their doors when it was dark would only mean her harm. She had no friends now, she was on her own. The city was run by gangs, they were the only authority now. She slid her hand down to her pocket she pressed her hand against the shard blade, she could feel the coolness of the metal through rough warm material. Its presence was strangely calming, it made her feel empowered.

Her grandmother always spoke of a time when people lived without fear, when people had to answer for the actions and when there were rules in society. All she had ever know was this lawless time where people all lived in suspicion of one another. She had long ago accepted that she could only expect to live to thirty, she was very lucky that her grandmother had lived so long, if she hadn't then Alice would have been taken away to do factory work or worse. Her mother had become a druggie when she was only six and her father was killed in a shooting a short while later, so her grandmother was all she had. If she did not return her grandmother would never know what happened to her.

She could see her building now; she didn't have much further to go. For the first time since the sun had set she felt like she might survive the night, she just had to push herself that last little bit. Suddenly she realized that her plan wasn't properly thought through, what if her grandmother had already given up on her and locked the door, what would she do then? All she could do now was hope.

The heavy iron doors were almost in reach now, she forced her exhausted to move even faster, she had never been this exhausted. She ran straight into the iron door, slamming her whole body against it, the heavy door gave way sending her flying into the hallway. Her grandmother who had been waiting there for her fastened all the bolts with the speed of light. A huge grin spread over Alice's face, she had made it, she thought that this would be her night to go.

THE END