

A Walk in the Dark

by Marilyn Reeves

Well, this was a mistake. Why did I decide to walk home tonight? And it's such a dark night. Look at those dark clouds! No moon, no stars. Almost pitch black. I didn't expect the meeting to last so long – it's so late, most of the people have turned out their lights and gone to bed. And what's with those street lamps? Not nearly enough of them. I hate feeling my way along in the dark!

What's that sound? Is there someone walking behind me? Don't turn around. Show no fear. Just walk a little faster. Is it a man, do you think? What if it's a coyote? They come out at night, don't they? Or even a mountain lion! Most things that have ever lived have died from predation. Why should I be any exception? There have been sightings ... oh, stop that! You're getting yourself all worked up. Just keep going. One more block and you'll be at your doorstep.

What was that? A cough? A growl? Come on, hurry up! Walk faster ... just don't run! Footsteps coming up fast behind me. Heavy breathing! I break into a run. I run and run, but it's catching up with me. It's right behind me!

Oh no! My toe hits something. I'm flying through the air. I'm going to hit the ground ... I can't stop myself!

Pain! Elbows, knees, chin – scraped and bleeding. And my throat! A horrible, sharp pain in my throat! A tooth? A claw? I can't breathe. Something has ahold of me. Fear and pain overwhelm me. I plunge into darkness.

I drift into the void. There is no sound, no fear, no pain ... only peaceful nothingness, like a long, dreamless sleep. I am floating – drifting, drifting toward the light. Is this the light at the end of the tunnel? Am I dead?

A face. A beautiful, glowing face. Warm brown eyes. Is this Heaven?

“Are you an angel?” I whisper.

A radiant smile. Long white teeth. He is saying something about a hospital, a sharp stick, a security guard. Go back to sleep.

Once again, I am running ... the creature right behind me. I hear him breathing, smell his fetid breath. I am flying, falling. Something grabs me! It is holding me down. And the pain. Oh, the pain! I can't breathe.

Darkness consumes me.