

Leila Chapter 46

Leila shifted uneasily as the sound got closer. On the estate there was always a street light, or a light on in someone's window, or just the orange glow that hung over a town. Here, nothing. She struggled to see the hand in front of her face.

They were still out looking for her.

But she didn't want to be found. She nestled further down into the little hollow and pulled some bracken over her head, thinking it would give her protection, and perhaps a little warmth. It did not. No matter, it felt like she was more hidden.

The noise carried on, coming closer, a bit louder.

Tramp, splash, tramp.

Someone's coming. To find me.

But she still did not want to be found. Not yet anyway. She would stay out.

It's getting colder though.

She wrapped her coat and some of the vegetation more tightly around her. If she died, who would notice? She'd heard of bodies being found, frozen solid, weeks after they had disappeared. She thought this momentarily and then moved on. She would not die. A bit cold perhaps. Home in the morning.

If I make it through til morning. Maybe I should go back.

Splash, tramp, splash.

Closer now, it was almost certainly human. But no human could know she was there. If it was the police, they would have lights and would be talking with each other. Combing the place, noses to the ground.

?Maybe they'd do that for me. Maybe they wouldn't bother.

She couldn't move.

After two more tramps and splashes, silence.

She could hear her own breathing, and the wind through the leaves. And her own heartbeat. Nothing else.

She listened for two or three minutes. The footsteps had gone, or at least stopped.

Has it gone? Or is it very very close now?

Looking up her eyes clutched at the outline of a giant tree. In the darkness, she crawled towards its trunk. Her fingers reached up and traced the outline of five or six little crosses.

She almost hugged it and felt the snake-like scales of its bark, ivy intertwining, grasping at her fingers.