

Silence

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I listen intently, but hear nothing. I glance round, wondering what caught my attention enough to wake me but not enough to have me grabbing my axe and leaping to my feet. Once sounds in the night would have been the sirens of fire engines or the rattle of the last train pulling into the station behind my house; now they're more likely to be the low guttural moans of the dead as they hunt the living. I hear the sound again, and realise what it was that woke me in the first place – just the cry of a fox out seeking a mate. I fall back onto my mattress, trying to get some rest but knowing I'm now too much on edge to get back to sleep before dawn.

I lie in the dark, thinking about how the world sounds different now: no more jumbo jets roaring overhead as they start their descent into the airport across the river; no more taxi engines idling below my bedroom window while they disgorge their laughing passengers; no more car doors slamming in the night, or car alarms going off in the small hours of the morning; no more kids kicking an empty tin can down the street or drunks screaming at each other outside the pub across the road. I'd hated all those noises before everything changed, but now I'd give anything to hear them again. Now all I hear is the silence of the deserted city, weighing me down, stifling me, only broken by the occasional cry of an animal or, more frequently, by the sound of the dead as they stagger through the streets in search of flesh. I don't know why, but every now and then they let out a groan or a snarl, each one setting off the next in some ungodly chain reaction. If I didn't know they were dead, I'd have sworn they were communicating, letting each other know where they are and whether they've found anyone to feast on or not. If they could communicate, it would explain how so many turn up so suddenly the moment one of them works out where you are, but surely being dead they couldn't be doing anything as purposeful as that, could they?

The fallen city surrounds me, fencing me in on all sides and this means I must keep quiet too: never speaking, being careful where I tread so I don't send the creak of a loose floorboard out into the night and towards those long dead but ever-listening ears, making sure I make no noise at all. All I can do is cower silently in my attic, where I've been since it all started, working my way through my ever-dwindling supplies, hoping against hope that the dead will somehow disappear before the last of my food is consumed and I'm forced out into their

world by the need to find more. If I have to do that, I know my silence will no longer be enough to keep me safe, as it has done all these months, because even though their eyes are dead, somehow they can still see, and it'll be only a matter of time before I'm spotted. Then, as they descend on me, heads thrown back, roaring to let others of their kind know food is near; the chase will begin, and it's one I know I'll never win.