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Silence

by Rosalyn Hurst

They had moved house in the first week of March.

They had not taken the departure from Greenwich lightly, but a move essential as both shuddered at the cost of the local private school, had recoiled in distaste of the idea of subjecting the children to the local primary school. The Evening Standard daily reported on illnesses and deaths from air pollution and gang violence. It seemed they were ever surrounded by noise, constant traffic in the main road, music blaring from the nearby 'aaffordable' and social housing and just the incessant noise of people. When did Londoners start just shouting at each other?

They had researched the move for some months. Their final choice, made in that dark month of February, was somewhat hastened by the cash offer on their small house for just over a cool million. Delighted they found house with garden, backing onto fields, a village primary school only a mile away, peaceful, no near neighbours, no chain and still leaving a substantial amount in the bank.

She, however, had been hesitant, not courageous enough to voice her doubts. The fields were empty, the narrow lane was hidden behind tall hedges, the barren trees devoid of leaves, birds or even squirrels that were such a permanent feature of the London parks and gardens.

The day of the move was full of drama, their London removal drivers were reluctant to enter the lane and had only just made the turn into the driveway of the house. The children raced around squabbling over the rooms, trying to find their toys, then over excited and tearful. They finally dropped into bed surrounded by unpacked boxes.

Until.

She suddenly sat up, found her phone, 3 am. Just what had woken her? Panic, something was wrong, she listened, and nothing. No comforting murmur of the all night traffic, no lights from the street outside, no music from the neighbours next door.

All black, all silent.

She looked at him, beside her, no snores, no muttering in his sleep, still. She leant over, was he breathing, was he dead and unsure, gave him a nudge, movement, relief. She lay back, pulled the duvet up to her chin, plumped the pillow around her head. Thoughts crashed in like a tsunami, what were they doing here? what would happen if they got sick and no doctor for miles? She put her hands over her ears to drown out the silence where the voices screamed at her.

Three hours later the comforting sound of a motorbike, planes circling overhead waiting for their landing slot at Gatwick, the lone sound of a train rattling along the distant line.

He opened his eyes, turned and lazily stretched.

“Listen darling, isn’t it quiet? Isn’t it peaceful?”

And, with the horrors of the night receding, she smiled and agreed, as she always did.