

The street is empty.

The breeze is low and peaceful, whipping around his ankles, yet powerful enough to slide his jacket a little further down from where it rests on his shoulders.

Perhaps in another circumstance, unlike this one, he would have already picked his muddled brain out from the muck and dragged the irritating piece of clothing back up again, if he didn't feel so much like he was going to faint right there in the middle of the road.

Not that he would be in any danger.

The street is empty.

Save a few empty crisp packets, the occasional clatter of a crushed can, its completely silent.

His breathing should be there too, but he can't seem to find the air that he needs to *do* that.

The front door into his house is swinging on its hinges, sending low thumps echoing in his brain every time it hits the wall.

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He wiggles his fingers to check he's still here. They do what he tells them to.

He's tried the phone. No one picked up. He stood there for ages. Listened to it ring. No one picked up.

He's knocked on all his neighbour's doors. Even the ones he's never talked to before. He would never do that normally, no matter how many times his mum pestered him to stop being scared all the time. No one opened the door.

Now he wishes he'd stayed in bed. Maybe if he had, Mum would have woken him up by now. He'd be sitting in the kitchen, listening to the radio, having a foot right with his sister under the table, humming to the sound of the kettle, tapping his fingers on the table and thinking about school.

He supposes he won't have to go to school anymore. He won't have to share his favourite seat in the living room. Won't have to wake up when other people tell him to.

He'll miss his friends the most, and their nonsensical chatter, he thinks. But it's fine. He's big. He'll be fine.

Breakfast. Big people have breakfast in the morning, and they make it themselves.

His footsteps are loud on the empty road. He walks quickly. Even though no one is watching, he knows they can't be.

He cannot reach the cupboard Mum keeps the bowls in. He'll have to do something about that. Dad has a wooden step somewhere in the shed. He can get that later. He grabs an apple. It's a bit squishy, but it's the right colour so he thinks it should be fine.

The sound of the chair scraping against the kitchen tiles is loud. It's familiar. It makes him feel a little more stable, as if the noise is gripping a hold of him, tight, and tethering him to the ground.

The kitchen is too quiet after that. He love's silence, love's relishing in those moments of peace where everything is still, but this silence is deafening, like a burning on his neck from piercing eyes.

He goes back outside, apple clutched tight in his hand, the crunch of the sweet flesh warming his brain.

The wind has picked up a bit. Sound is beaming out here, in every rustle of litter, every dull footstep, every gentle hum into the air.

A new sound startles him.

It's her.

He smiles, as she stalks up to him, swerving between his feet and rumbling quietly. Leaning down, his hands scratch softly behind her ear, her tail flicking his face gently.

He lets out a small giggle, and he likes the way it sounds in the quiet.

She twirls away from his petting, leaping up onto the brick wall, pawing at the gate's latch.

He watches her as she stills.

She stares at him with wide eyes. Sitting daintily on her brick throne.

Throat tight, he steps forward and bundles her up in his arms, where she snuggles down into the soft fluff of his unzipped jacket. Warmth blooms in his chest, and he smiles, his hand unlatching and pushing open the gate once more.

The creak of hinges. The crunch of pebbles. The low whip of breeze. The clattering of crushed drink cans. The ring of the house phone, dangling on its cord. Tapping his fingers to the sound of the kettle whistling. His breathing, slow and steady. His heart, beating. Him, laughing.

Small purrs of happiness against his chest.

The street is empty.

But he can fill it with sound and make it his own.