



## You wake in the night

by Sophie Kirtley

and the house is so quiet it's like a spell has been cast,  
turning the world to ice, turning the world to glass.  
Through the window the garden looks made of metal:  
grey and gleaming and still. So you open the back door and step  
outside, where the air is cool as milk and nothing moves,  
only the pale silent clouds of your breath; you fill the night with it,  
like you are half-dragon and you wriggle your bare toes  
on the dew-wet grass, then you crouch and look at grass close-up –  
just leaves really; lots of long leaves, all standing tall and crowded  
together, like how people used to do. You touch a bead of dew.  
It slips from the leaf to your fingertip and shines bright;  
you lick it; it tastes of cold and moon and night and –  
Shhhhhhhh!  
Something is rustling!  
You freeze and squeeze your eyes up tight to peer  
deep into the dark forgotten part of the garden where –  
Shhhhhhhhhh!  
Something rustles again!  
Your heart beats noisy B-BOOMS. You try to swallow  
but your throat is tight. You watch the shadows  
shift as a fox walks out from dark to light.

A fox!

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She pauses, one paw lifted, mid-step, like she's turned to stone.  
A small breeze shivers through her fur. The fox holds your stare.

For a forever-long moment you both share an invisible thing  
as big as the air, as blue as the dark, as alive as a wish.  
She blinks. You blink.  
Electric-quick the moon-fox leaps. And vanishes.

You breathe your cloud of dragon-breath while the moon smiles down,  
quiet as milk. You walk back across the wet lawn and yawn your way  
into the kitchen where the cat sleeps on, on her chair unaware,  
as you close the door soft behind you and tick-tock-tick-tock tiptoe  
up the stairs, and past the clock, and you barely breathe as you peek  
through the crack of Mum and Dad's door but they're still snoring  
so you simply pad across the floor and slip back into bed.

You lie there in the strange blue-quiet air, thinking  
of that moon-fox stare and of that unnameable thing you shared.  
Are secret worlds always there, silent, dark and deep?  
You sigh a spell and close your eyes and softly fall...

