

It's late at night. I'm walking home. Ahead, the twin clumps of gorse marking the track to our cottage. It will be black as pitch, but I have walked it times out of mind, in all weathers and at all hours. The door won't be locked and the dogs won't bark. They know my footstep. But wait - someone is walking ahead of me. What's he doing here at this time of night? I don't want to catch up with him. I slow down. He slows down. I feel my scalp tingle. I stop. He stops, swings round. 'Oh, Christ!' he says, 'Oh, it's a woman!' I see him clearly now. A soldier. 'There's no bloody street lights!' he squeaks, 'It's so bloody dark! Is it far to the camp, do you know? 'No,' I say.' Just keep straight on.' 'Ta,' he says. He walks on, turns back. 'You OK, Miss? Want me to walk with you?' 'I'm fine, thanks. I live here.' 'Bloody 'ell,' he mutters, before slouching off. I wait until he's out of sight, slightly unnerved by this encounter with a stranger, although I'm pretty sure he won't be following me down the track, into the darker dark of the overhanging trees.