**The Darkest Hour is Just Before Dawn**

I looked down at my phone screen, the time was now 03:00. I knew it was a bad idea to stay up so late, because of the imminent alarm I’d set for work, but tonight there were bigger things on my mind, and deep down I knew I wouldn't be turning up tomorrow. I walked out of the front door and headed for one of the local parks. This one in particular had a fantastic view of the sea; was very dimly lit, so the night sky was always perfectly visible, and was always uninhabited by humans at this hour of the night.

I walked down desolate street after desolate street. Normally I'd be a little afraid, a little anxious. But tonight I didn't feel an ounce of fear, in fact I welcomed any external dangers. I thought to myself, isn't it strange that in times like this, nothing scares you, nothing worries you, you are well and truly in the moment, well and truly *alive*. Those minor positive thoughts quickly subsided however, and the issue at hand rose to the front of my mind once again. The person I'd connected with most in this life was no more, gone, and it all happened so quickly. There were questions I wanted to ask, opinions I needed to hear, but this was no longer possible. I thought to myself as a child the world appears so pure and full of love. And every year you move away from that - the harder reality hits you.

I finally reached the park. I slowly made my way to one of the benches and sat down. The view was mesmerizing, it was always mesmerizing. There wasn’t a single cloud in the sky tonight. Heavenly lanterns filled the celestial canvas above, and the body of water which lay before me glistened like a disco-ball. The multi-coloured lights from the ferry terminal in the distance, were the angel on top of the Christmas tree. A lightshow of beautiful synthesis, natural and man-made.

The positive emotions swiftly subsided however, as I reminded myself once again why I was here. I couldn't help but think back to our final conversations, and a promise he'd made me keep. Which at the time was strange to me, but now made perfect sense. Looking back now, I feel a deep deep sorrow imagining how he must of felt knowing it was soon to be over. And I couldn't decide whether it was selfish or kind that he'd kept it a secret. I began to think back to some of our deeper conversations...

I've always leaned towards the agnostic/atheistic side of belief. Whenever we had spoken on the matter, he'd always said that he believes in 'something'. And whenever I pressed him on the issue, he wouldn’t elaborate, but just say that he ‘thinks there's more’. At the time of conversation I put it down to religious optimism. But something happened the day that he died, that forced me to question this…

Three months back, he'd purchased a pair of lights (two squirrels, each holding a nut, which were supposed to light up) to put on his shed, a pair he’d purchased purely for aesthetic reasons (as he knew they did not function). These had never worked, he'd even attempted fixing them himself - but to no avail. The night he died, one of them turned on. And every night since then, it has continued to light up. Whenever I'd heard of stories like this before, I'd always dismiss it or put it down to coincidence. But now it had happened to me. In that moment, a supernova of emotion caused goosebumps to rise to the surface. I’ll never forget it.

I looked down at my phone again… 05:58.

I looked up and could see Venus shining brighter than ever. I got up to head home, and as I did, I noticed the most heavenly white feather on the bench beside me. It hadn't been there when I sat down, I was sure of it. Whether the feather’s appearance was supernatural, or just a kind set of circumstances laid out for me by the Universe (or existence as a whole) I didn't care. I made my way towards the park exit with a euphoric glow, and reminded myself that, ultimately, life is beautiful…