Cat Eyes

Weak rays of the setting sun cast long, haunting shadows across the junkyard. Haphazardly stacked tires become long spears, rusted cars transform into faceless monsters, and piles of perilously stacked junk are unquestionably mountains—home to beasts of the wild.

As I slowly walk deeper into the metal, untamed jungle, my combat boots meet with scattered shards of glass and tin that crunch hazardously. I tell myself not to shiver—this is nothing new, after all. Climbing over the remains of the junkyard fence, bravely ignoring the ‘No Trespassing’ sign, and tip-toeing through its gems of dirt is something I do every Sunday night.

But there is a breeze in the air, bringing autumn along on its crest. The changing of the seasons is never an easy time for me. The uncertainty of the forecast after an entire season of the same weather is just another reason I hate any and all changes. The moves, the name changes, the destroyed hope— it is enough to tear anyone to their emotional bone. With every step, the deeper I breathe, the more it smells like fall, and the more my heart aches. There is a bitter sharpness in the air, an extra kick to the previously gentle air.

I press on, pulling my jean jacket tighter around my traveled body. Turn left at the green car with the abstract art that adults call graffiti. Duck at the basketball pole that has fallen horizontally across the walk way. Climb at the faceless washing machine. Grab hold of the flag pole. Pull up. Say “Thank you, America” and continue to climb, using dresser drawer frames as hand holds and broken piano benches as footrests. Halfway up, sit down on the puke green sofa that has been protected from the elements and nature by its plastic grandma covering.
One line commands. That’s all it takes to escape the pressures of home and the world.

Up this high, the air smells less like rotting garbage tinged with neglect and more like freedom. But just a little.

The sun is gone now. It has moved on to shine its light for a billion other people, leaving my hemisphere in complete darkness.

When I run my palms across the plastic covering, an angry farting sound erupts into the darkness, startling a group of hunting birds from a treasure trove over. Now I am alone.

I sit quietly, listening to the creaking and settling of the world around me. Even with no one to tell them what to do, the objects around me still find a way to get along—to continue on with their rusting and bending. With my eyes adjusted to the night, I scan the uneven ground beneath me. The shadows are gone, replaced by engulfing darkness that shows no want of light. Yet the light is there, and it grows closer.

“…and go. Damn sparkplugs aren’t sold… ’48 and thank the Lord.”

I squint into the darkness at the approaching figures illuminated by a single orb of light. There are three foreigners. The one in the lead holds the flashlight, the other two shuffle along behind. All three are dressed in complete black—the obvious clothing choice of ninjas. They come closer still. I watch with untamed curiosity.

They break up, the leader and one of the followers peeling away in search of their much needed sparkplugs, but the third stays at the foot of my mountain. My courage falters as he speaks.

“Do you come here every night to feast your cat eyes upon the disposed items of the world, or is it just a weekend thing? I myself have never seen you grace these yards before.”

I don’t reply. My heart begins to beat heavily in my chest. I tell it to stop. How can this decidedly male person know I am here?

He begins to climb. I turn to run.

With the stealth of the night behind me, I quickly descend the mountain that is no longer my fortress. The assaulting noises from the other side grow distant and then stop all together. A smile plays across my lips. This outsider can’t keep up with me.
A sudden explosion of light blinds me the moment my triumphant feet reach marbled dirt and I stumble backwards into the hood of a lawnmower.

“Not only do you have the mysterious green eyes of a cat, you also climb like one. But don’t let it get to your head, kitty cat, you’re not that good.”

I want to strike out at the voice, but I am only comfortable in the darkness when I have seen the same object in the daylight.

“Who are you?” My demand is offensive. With tantalizingly slow steps, I begin to edge away.

“Not a hound, that’s for sure. I see myself more as a fun-loving shih tzu/poodle mix, or perhaps—”

“Who are you, really?”

“A fellow prowler of the night.” The light falls a few inches, and I can see the excited eyes of a young boy staring back at me. A bandana is pulled tight across his forehead, and dark curly ends of his hair pop out. His eyes look me up and down, taking in my outfit and guarded expression.

With a quick smile he says, “Happy hunting.” Without another word, he turns on his heel and disappears into the night.