

The 0th Parallel

by Stuart Millard

The drive to the park was quicker than any of them had thought. In fact, before they even realised, they'd just *arrived*, finding themselves at those lush green fields, unpacking picnic baskets and clanking bottles and setting up base beneath the cooling shadow of a tree. The sky was powder blue and clear as a freshly decorated wall, with a whisper of a breeze to just take the edge off of the heat. It was such a perfect day, that none of the three friends had noticed they were missing the forth.

These are the days, with good weather and better company, the days that keep you going through the rest, drenched with tears and the knotted fists of frustration, the memories that exist purely to remind you how great life can really be. These are the days you wish would never end.

Before making their way back home, to the cock-tagged walls and stale factory air, they decided to stay and watch the sun set. "We never get to see that in the city," they'd said. But nothing happened. The sun didn't set. Bright and warm, it hung in the air like the wedding day smile of your one true love, poised and tranquil, there it stay, for hours; days. It was almost a week before anybody spoke the words they'd all been thinking since that first dusk that never was.

"We're dead, aren't we?" she said, laying back on the grass, head resting lightly on her hands.

"Yeah," replied one of the friends, tossing a strawberry into the air and catching it in his mouth, "I suppose we are."

Elsewhere, Rory, alone and shivering under a cold moonlight, wondered if the dawn would ever come.

