

# The city at night



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Finished last autopsy of the day. Completed all paper work. I am sure I have forgotten something. Did I put the body away? Yes. Is it all in one piece? It was not when I started. Oh no! I left my wallet behind again.

I dash around my office and search for my missing wallet. Of course, it was next to my keys, which I also left behind! Typical, I am always doing this. I finally leave, forgetting nothing (I hope).

I exit the building and enter the high street, filled with last minute Christmas shoppers. This year I am glad to say I am not one of them. I bought all the Christmas gifts in early November and they have been sitting, wrapped, in my cupboard ever since. This year I am prepared.

I make my way along the street towards the underground. The windows of the shops glisten with glitter and tinsel. It starts to rain but only softly. I speed up, the streets are less crowded now but millions of umbrellas automatically open. I have to dodge them so as not to have my eyes skewered. I reach the underground station and dive down the stairs as the rain begins to pelt down.

Inside the underground I dive into my pockets, find enough change and naturally, it all falls over the floor. I pay for the ticket and then distribute the rest of my change amongst the less fortunate. I wait at the platform next to a businessman and teenage girl, who is deeply hypnotised by her music.

The train arrives. It is already packed and I am not helping the congestion. The door shuts an inch away from my nose. Every one is pushing and shoving to get some breathing space and instantly the space between my

nose and the door disappears, and just when I thought things could not get any worse the young punk girl coughs into my ear.

As the carriage draws slowly to a halt, the doors slide open and I stumble on to the platform. Nobody else gets out, as usual. I make my way to the surface whilst whipping the spit and mucus out of my ear.

The street is less crowded. It is full of pubs and the mixed smell of alcohol and chips is intoxicating. I must resist though, I am on another diet, though they do not do anything.

I arrive at my apartment building. It looks a bit run down but it is all right once you get inside. I punch in the code and pull the door. It does not open. I do the code again, kick the door and wrench it open. The security guard on duty gives me an evil look. I check my mail nothing but bills and junk. I get in the lift, by myself, and go up to my flat.

The lift stops at the eighth floor. I depart the lift and make my way to my flat. It is not hard to miss; the entire door is bright red. I unlock my apartment and walk inside dodging the various pizza boxes and coats. I dump my belongings behind the empty coat stand, make my way through various obstacles on the floor and change my clothes in the bedroom.

After changing, I look out of my kitchen window as I make my evening meal. I grab the phone push redial, the phone rings for two seconds and then: "Hello this is Dave at Dominoes Pizza! How can I help you?" I order my usual; a large, deep pan pizza with onions, spicy chicken, sweet corn, mushrooms

and pineapple, and give my details to Dave - who assures me that it will be delivered ASAP.

Now that my meal is cooking, I walk to the living room and switch on the TV, but there is not really anything of interest on.

Therefore, as compensation, I look out of the window, trying to find a source of entertainment through its cold glass panes. The night sky, only just visible above the surrounding buildings looks like a pitch-black canopy with holes punched in it. There is no traffic on the road - probably because it is a pedestrian zone.

Drunkards start to pour out of the pub below, singing rude versions of the carols sung by children. There are teenagers, throwing up in the street, praying that their parents will not find out about tonight's activities at youth group. If they carry on like this, they will be in need of my services.

The view directly across from my flat is completely different; a small family consisting of mother, father, and their three-year-old son are just sitting down to dinner. They bow their heads in prayer and...

A buzz from the phone releases me from my trance. I lift the handset and buzz the pizza guy into the building. 2 minutes later, there is a knock at the door. I pay the boy and give him a decent tip. He looks pleased as he disappears and I am pleased because I am finally alone with the two Ps - peace and pizza.

I retreat into the living room again, curl up in a ball and eat. In the corner of the room stands my measly excuse for a Christmas tree. The tree is one of

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those cheap, plastic trees that can be bought from any store; mine was from Woolworths along with the six ornaments and a metre piece of tinsel. On the top of the tree there is my handmade angel created from a Fairy Liquid bottle, a ping-pong ball and many pipe cleaners.

I usually love Christmas but this year will be different. This will be my first Christmas away from my family. I think I will really miss them; I will even miss my irritable little brother complaining about his lack of presents even though he is twenty-three. My mother was not very happy when I told her I was not coming home. I am having second thoughts about staying but I have to work on Christmas Day. It only fair, I am the "kid" of the pathology department and the only one without children or a family of their own, so I felt obligated to stay over Christmas. Don't get me wrong my job is really interesting and unpredictable and I love it. It just that the flat that I bought, which seemed small when I first purchased it, now feels far too big. It makes me feel lonely at the best of times but that is not always a bad thing. Is it?

My apartment is badly decorated because I have neither the time nor the money, nor the inclination to doing anything about it just yet. However, my bedroom is covered from ceiling to floor with old posters saved from adolescence. I guess I do not really want to let go of that part of my life just yet.

After finishing my meal, there is not much left for me to do. Of course, the pizza box finds its home amongst the rest that now carpet the entire floor space. I feel so tired after work and never really feel like going out. I switch on the telly again, but there is still nothing of any interest. I change over to a

music channel to give a little noise to the silent flat. An old rock band start to play and I slump into my armchair and stair out of the window once more. At this time of night, there are not many people out.

A boy, about 16, walks alone, slumped and hands stuffed into the pockets of his oversized ripped jeans. He tries to look brave and unaffected by his loneliness but it is obvious that he does not want to be outside any longer than he has to be. A cat knocks over a nearby bin; the boy jumps and then accelerates quite considerably. His hair, all spiky, makes no movement as it is clearly cemented in place with gel. He flees around the corner and vanishes from sight.

A homeless person pushes a trolley full of trash - her treasures. She hobbles over to the bins, stroking the cat that scared the boy earlier. As she paws through the garbage, the cat caresses the back of her long, tatty coat and weaves in and out of her legs begging for more attention, but the woman is to captivated by the trash to notice. She pulls out a pile of newspapers. Overjoyed, she carefully lays the paper down piece by piece until she has a thick, paper mattress with enough left for a cover. She lies down stroking the cat, which immediately cuddles up to her and falls into a deep sleep. The woman smiles at the cat then, coughing violently, she lays her head down to rest.