



## **Blitz Spirit**

by Jenna Burns

The wail of the siren, that dreadful rise and fall. The ache of it pulses in your head, your teeth. Slip on the second last step down to the underground. Sharp pain in your ankle. Find a free spot on the platform; curl up against a tiled wall and survey the damage. Dried crust of blood in your shoe, the skin around your ankle growing puffy. It'll turn an ugly purple by morning. You shouldn't walk on it but you will, cowed by scolding government advice. *Go by Shanks' Pony. Leave room for those who have longer journeys.* But surely there are so many who have longer journeys than you – so you'd better walk damn well everywhere, just to be safe.

Close your eyes. Breathe through the smothering fug of other bodies, too close, too close. Someone's drunkenly singing songs from the last war. The piercing cry of a child, a replacement siren; the sound of fear.

When you open your eyes, you are suddenly too exhausted to keep the world in focus. Watch everything pass in a blur: people lying down on the tracks, fashioning makeshift beds out of folded coats. A peeling advertisement on the wall of the tunnel, *lightweight meals for night-long raids.* You feel at once too sick to even consider eating. Gingerly ease your foot back into your shoe. Scraps of torn paper stuck to your sole: pages from an abandoned ration book.

As ever, sleep seems impossible until it somehow finds you, drags you down. Wake to a dry mouth. The rush of movement around you; let yourself be swept up in it.

Back to the surface. Taste smoke in the air. One long, high note. The all clear. *It is over,* it lies. All of this will happen again.