

The Scent of *Fear*

By Mari Wells

She walked down the dark sidewalk. *Why did I stay late tonight?* she thought to herself. A chill ran down her back, and she looked over her shoulder. Nothing was there. She sighed. *Why am I always so afraid? Seriously, what's going to happen?* She wished she was cozy at home, snuggled into her bed and peacefully asleep. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw a shadow.

She stopped and spun around. The can of mace was ready in her left hand. Again, there wasn't anything. She rolled her eyes, frustrated with herself. Her apartment was only two blocks away; she almost ran, bumping into a man walking down the street. "I'm sorry," she said.

"No problem, honey. You shouldn't be out alone in a place like this. Get yourself home."

She nodded and started on her way.

He watched her a moment before he started walking.

Another tall, thin man stopped where the incident occurred. He bent down and touched his fingertips to the cement. He raised them to his nose and inhaled deeply.

"Not yet," he whispered as he licked his lips.

Slowly he started walking in the same direction the woman had gone. He saw the door close behind her. He leaned against the building across the alley for a short moment scanning his surroundings.

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She pushed her door open, flicked on the light, and dropped her bag beside the door. Latches and locks were pushed and pulled, each one double-checked before she was satisfied they were locked. She took a step backwards. Her eyes followed the top lock across, locked, the second lock, the third, the fourth, and finally the deadbolt and knob lock.

She pulled off her jacket and hung it up. In the kitchen, she put the kettle on the stove, pulled out a saucepot, and dumped in a can of soup. Then she walked to her room, unbuttoning her shirt.

A chill ran down her spine as she undressed. Quickly she spun around to look at the window. *Why am I so*



scared tonight? How would someone be in my window? It's the third floor for crying out loud. She pulled on a pair of sweat pants and a T-shirt and then bent down to pick up the pile of clothes. A draft caressed her back. She carried her pile to the bathroom and dropped them into the hamper.

The tall man bent; his fingers dragged across the bedroom floor.

He inhaled deeply. "Soon."

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She stood in front of the mirror, pulling her hair into a ponytail. A dark figure floated behind her. She froze. Her heart pounded against her ribs. Slowly she moved from the sink. Very slowly, she walked into the hallway.

I know something is here. I'm not over reacting, she thought. Her hair stood on end as she walked toward her room. The kettle screeched. She jumped. Shaking her head and laughing at herself, she went to the kitchen to remove the kettle. The tall man inhaled again. He smiled

and nodded.

He went to the kitchen. The room felt colder. She turned to turn up the heat, when she saw his tall dark figure leaning against the doorframe. Her heart dropped to her stomach and thumped once within her belly. She gasped for air.

“No, that won’t be fun,” he said shaking his head. “You must continue to breath.”

Her heart pounded now in her throat. She forced herself to breath, to think of some way to escape. *The boiling soup; could I throw it at him?* she wondered. Her hand wrapped around the pot handle.

“There, that is better now,” he inhaled again. “Yes, now it will be fun.”

She flung the pot at him. Steam came off his body.

He chuckled. “You are feisty. That will make this that much more enjoyable.”

She climbed over the counter dividing the kitchen from the living room. She picked up the receiver and punched at the numbers. He pulled the line ripping it from the wall and shook his head from side to side. She threw the receiver at him. He accepted her effort of self-defense; it hit him in the chest. The tall man looked down at the phone, bent and picked it up, and crushed it in his hand.

She ran toward the door. Catching her by the hair,

he started to raise her from the ground. Ice cold fingers wrapped around her throat. He carried her a few steps until her back pressed against the wall. He moved his head close to her neck. His cold smooth tongue ran up the jugular vein on the left side of her neck.

“Hmmm, close, but not yet.” He flung her across the room.

She landed on the side table; it cracked under her. He moved closer. She scurried on her hands and knees to the corner of the room. Tears burned in her eyes, blurring her sight. *There was no getting away from him now,* she thought.

He bent down beside her. “Yes.” His voice vibrated through her body. The freezing fingers weaved into her hair. He pulled her head to his. His mouth pressed to hers. She tried to pull away from him. Hands pushed into his chest, her feet dangled helplessly. His right hand caressed her left cheek. He dug his fingers into her cheek, holding her in the position he desired. His lips forced hers open.

“Please, don’t,” she tried to say, breathless.

With his mouth pressed against hers, he inhaled deeply. Her body went limp. He pulled away from her lifeless body. He looked down at her, crumpled on the floor, smiled, and then vanished. ♦

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