

The Drowning

By J. H. Walker Guérard

She wouldn't let go.

She was clinging to a buoy in the middle of a vast wild, ocean. The clouds were low and black above her. The winds whistled like words from the voices of demons. "Let go," they'd say. And the waves rose and fell like the horrible faces of these demons. She could feel the currents pulling at her, trying to force her to let go of this, her only source of hope . . . of life. Then she realized that she couldn't hold on to the buoy because her little girl was slipping from her and was sinking. So she let go of the buoy and pulled her daughter to her; to sink and die together below this merciless, raging ocean.

No matter how much they pleaded with her, she kept clutching it as if it were her life. A young lady with hair pulled back in a tight pony tail was kneeling in front of her, pleading gently: "It's over now, Lisa, you just need to let go. Please ma'am, just let go"

But there was no EMS tech in front of her nor house behind her, and no grass below nor blue sky above. There was only the deep, dark sea beneath a low, black sky, and these people standing before her were not the police and medics who were trying to pull her clenched arms apart enough to retrieve the child; they were wave after wave trying to drown her; they were the currents pulling at her with a force that could only be resisted through the tightest grip to this, her final source of life.

Lisa stared at nothing. Her well-trimmed eyebrows were furled-in deeply above her aquiline nose, and her gray eyes, fierce orbs beneath pools of water, were locked in a horror no one else could share. Her mouth was gripped into a contorted grimace and her chin trembled. In this way, she knelt on her lawn rocking and moaning a lullaby with the body of her four year old girl pressed tightly to her chest.

She was an older mother, in her forties, and divorced almost a year ago. She had worked as an analyst in the Agency for the last sixteen years, but after the divorce she sank into a deep depression. Several job complaints and successively poor reviews later, she was finally determined a possible security risk and given a position at a lower security level. So, since the demotion, she'd leave her menial job each day to a home with no husband and spend what precious hours she could spare with her only child.

Now she kneels, like a fountain statue of a mother protecting her child, on her neatly kept lawn that fronts a handsome, two story brick house. There is an EMS tech kneeling in front of her, trying to persuade her to release the corpse. In the street directly in front of this house, there is a white Buick. Behind the car is a set of black skid marks that begin a hundred feet back, and in the grass nearest the Buick is a soccer ball.

The police arrived first and, finding Lisa there holding her child in her arms, tried to convince her, to plead, and even tried to gently pry the corpse away. Though her eyes never veered from their stare into nothingness, the police's attempt to separate mother from child caused such a low, primitive growl to emanate from her throat that they instinctively drew back and returned to their cars to reconsider their options. Now, fifteen minutes later, a much larger group of police and neighbors stand

back while a young lady, the tech, gently speaks to this deranged woman with a lifeless child in her arms.

The tech keeps talking, low and soothing, while her partner comes around behind Lisa. "Ma'am," she said, "we're here to help you . . . and the child, but I can't help your little girl unless you let me hold her." She smiles, "Please Lisa, let me hold her so I can help."

Through clenched teeth Lisa says "No. You can't help her; no one can." The technician's eyes widened in surprise, *So, she knew?* But before anything else was said, the technician who had crept up behind Lisa stepped back and put an empty syringe in a disposable bag he had clipped to his belt.

Then Lisa's terrified expression dulled, and she sunk deep into the lawn to drown with her child.