

**A Cry for Help
by Krista Fink**

Please, God, I hope she didn't hear. Oh, but please, God, I hope she did hear.

If she heard, I will be mortified, so embarrassed; but maybe, just maybe, I'll be saved. That's what I want, isn't it? To finally, finally, be saved from this chaos that I call life.

It was my second year of teaching, and I had only this year been assigned a beginning teacher mentor. It was she who called me on this evening. I cannot remember the purpose of her call. I think she was just calling to check in with me; maybe about some paperwork we needed for the beginning teacher mentor/mentee program, maybe to give me some information she thought may be helpful, maybe just for an encouraging chat. Whatever the reason, she called, I answered, and he immediately started mouthing silently to me "who is it?" He didn't know Nora, so it wasn't like I could just mouth a quick "Mom" or something like that. I would have to explain it, and as I was trying to concentrate on what Nora was saying to me, I simply held up a finger in reply. He did not deem this an acceptable response. He continued to ask, and very shortly, to demand who was on the phone. The demands became louder. I blocked the demand out as I simultaneously struggled to hear what she was saying yet strived to keep her from hearing what was going on in front of me.

"Who the fuck is on the phone!" In one motion he ripped the receiver out of my hand and from the phone itself with one hand, and with the other he grabbed the footrest of the recliner where I sat and flipped the entire chair upside down. I covered under that chair, scared, mortified, embarrassed, hysterical. I felt like a rabbit who had just escaped

the mouth of a ravaging wolf, and had found a shelter that would only temporarily save it from its horrendous destiny.

I knew what was to come. I was in trouble. I had embarrassed him. I had humiliated him. I had caused him to have to take control of the situation. But most importantly, I had defied him.

I was not allowed the shelter of the chair for long. “Come out of there you stupid bitch,” he bellowed as he rolled the chair from atop me.

He picked up a bottle of Ranch dressing from the coffee table in front of him and hurled it across the room into the wall, and it sprayed all over the ceiling. The pizza box was also tossed across the room with the remains of our dinner still inside. “Clean that up bitch,” he spewed.

As I hurried toward the kitchen, some feeling, something in my peripheral vision, told me to move. I jumped into the laundry room as quickly as I could and heard a crash at the end of the hall as the glass that had just whizzed past my head exploded on the dining room floor.

I quickly moved out of the laundry room and rushed to the kitchen to grab a wet rag. The rag was hardly sufficient for cleaning up the mess I had caused, but in my confused state I just frantically grabbed the first thing I saw.

By this time he had settled back onto the couch, watching TV, beer in hand; I was sobbing as I scrubbed, my shaking hands moving the quickly soiled cloth about hopelessly, helplessly.

The racking sobs soon ceased, though, as he demanded I stop crying. Demanded that I had no reason to cry as this was all my fault and I’d better shut up and clean the

mess quietly. Insisted that I had no right to cry; he was the one who had been wronged, and I was just trying to be dramatic and create a scene by crying.

“Why did you make me do that? Why wouldn’t you just tell me who was on the phone?” I never realized it before, but at this point, I don’t think he was even asking who it was anymore. It’s not like he really cared who it was, it was probably just a fleeting curiosity; but the fact that I did not immediately respond with obedience is what set him off.

I don’t remember much about the rest of that night. I remember that I left the glass in the dining room in my rebellion against being the one to clean up the entire mess; but a day or two later, I ended up having to take care of that, also.

I dreaded, no, anticipated going to school the next day and facing Nora. I entered her room timidly to gauge her reaction to my presence. I apologized for the night before and she immediately said she just figured we were disconnected or something happened to my phone. “So you didn’t hear anything?” I asked. Nope. Nothing. Was she telling the truth? Did she hear and just didn’t want me to be embarrassed? Did she hear and just didn’t want to get involved? And even if she didn’t hear, she had to know something was wrong, and she had obviously felt there was some reason she shouldn’t call back.

Could she have had no idea? As she had listened to a dial tone in her nice suburban home, with her beautiful children running about her feet, and her honest, hard-working husband preparing the week’s work, as she enjoyed this life that so many take for granted, I cowered under a chair, praying that she was the one who had decided to be my heroine and had the police rushing to my door as that animal raged above me.

She had to have had some idea.