

## SILENT CRIES

by Tiena Prater

Someone had been in his house again and it wasn't the first time. For weeks there were too many times where he had come home to various things out of place inside and outside. Baby toys littered the inside of his house and front yard. Sometimes, things were missing that he knew *for sure* should never have been moved. Today, his door to his room was left slightly open. He didn't like open doors in his house. It brought back memories that he didn't care to remember. Paranoid that someone would enter while he was sleeping, he decided to sleep on the couch.

*Then the crying started again.*

James looked around the living room in a slow motion, careful not to miss any section. It seemed describing the sound as crying was an understatement. The baby had started screaming since the first time he laid down earlier during the night. As he turned over the breeze of this movement was refreshing on his damp skin. It was the third time tonight that he broke his sleep and woke up sweating.

He rubbed his eyes then slowly sat up and looked around in the dark again. Then he got up and went to the window for some air. The wind felt great on his still damp skin as he stood there for a few minutes. The moon gave a slight glow to shed some light for him to see next door. The crying commenced, now louder. As he continued to look at the neighbor's house, he saw that there were no lights on. He couldn't see anything inside; he only heard the crying.

James looked over at the clock on the oven from his position, it was 2AM. The crying was already well underway since 9PM. He was getting even more angry as the seconds passed by.

He started getting dressed, pulling his shirt over his head and his pants securely on his waste. *This had to stop.* He couldn't take anymore crying or screaming. *No more noises.* Tonight, he was going to get some sleep, even if it killed him. He walked out his house and headed for the neighbor's house.

Upon reaching his destination, he paused and looked around. He thought he heard footsteps behind him but when he turned around there was not anything there. The wind blew the chair off the neighbor's porch and he watched as it blew down the street. *Serves them right.* He thought to himself.

He finally knocked on the door and waited a few moments. *She was always so quiet, so nice.* There was no answer. He knocked again, this time a little louder. *Was she playing games with him? Was she doing it on purpose? She knew he needed peace and quiet.* Still, no answer. It was starting to get a little cooler than when he initially came out the house. His before damp skin had now dried and became cool, at the same time lowering his body temperature.

James shivered.

*How dare she.* He thought as he banged harder, still no answer. The crying was even louder than before now.

He took a few steps backwards and used all of his force to kick the door in. The door broke from its seal, bouncing back in the direction that it came as he caught it with the tips of his fingers. He let himself inside and proceeded to look around. He searched high and low, but he couldn't find the source of the crying, nor his neighbor. He took another look around the house, turning lights on and off as he entered and exited each room, violently tearing each room apart.

James finally returned to the main level of which he first entered the house. He went and sat on the couch, the crying invading every inch of his mind as he held his head and let out a

scream of frustration. He held his head in his hands as he took deep breaths and tried to breathe. His chest started to rise and fall as he continued to take deep breaths to calm his thoughts.

*The crying ceased.*

A few moments after the crying stopped, he felt a hand on his shoulder. He looked up to see his neighbor leaning down looking at him. He hadn't noticed her come in.

"Are you okay?" she asked him.

"Semaje, the baby wouldn't stop crying," he said as a tear slid down his cheek.

"I know," she said as she sat down beside him on the couch and wrapped her arm around him. She started rubbing his shoulder to put him further at ease. She glanced around at the aftereffects of his own personal tornado but didn't linger on it for too long. It would only further anger him. "There's no baby. She's resting forever peacefully with your wife. Don't you remember?" she often needed to remind him.

He nodded then laid his head on her shoulder. "I just wanted peace and quiet. That's all I wanted," he started to sob.

"Has the crying stopped now?" she asked him.

He nodded, his sobbing now silenced, "For now."

"Good, how long has it been?"

He looked up at her clock and watched for a few seconds as it ticked. It was now 3AM. "6 hours," he said.

"Then you can try and sleep for a few," she got up and took the clock off the wall and handed him a blanket from the corner of the room. "We can go to the gravesite later if you would like."

“Thanks, Sis, I would like that.” He laid out on the couch with his head on the arm rest and closed his eyes. He wondered how long he would be able to sleep this time before the crying crept itself back into his mind to interrupt his slumber. But for now, it was quiet. Just the way he liked it.

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