

RUNNING

BONNIE LACY

FROSTING ON THE CAKE PRODUCTIONS

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Look for my work everywhere books are sold: Released and Rescued. My blog site is www.bonnielacy.com.

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RUNNING

TESS JUMPED OVER A LOG, her sweaty shirt clinging to her back. Gasping for air, she slowed to catch her breath. Her lungs threatened to burst.

That's when she heard and felt an almost imperceptible zing.

A dart hit its mark.

Her feet slipped, her body collapsed into a heap. She shuddered and dragged herself upright. Every cell vibrated with fear.

Another hit cut deeper.

Old wounds opened wide, exposing her tender flesh.

Poison from the darts defiled her tissue. She covered the newest injury as best she could.

Glanced right, then left.

And ran.

Someone screamed.

She caught herself. The scream had burst from inside her.

The fear.

Rage.

Yes. Terror.

An arrow pierced her chest. Her hands flew to the wound. No blood oozed. Nothing stained her shirt. She teetered, arms outstretched, dizzy from pain.

Stumbling, she burst through a doorway. Her hands gripped the doorjambs as she peered out at the street. Fuzzy lights. Distorted shapes edged toward her, past her.

Tess checked the street again.

People driving, walking.

Multitudes.

All eyes ahead. No one saw.

She sucked in a deep breath and darted out the door, down the street.

Another doorway.

Run through.

A door stopped her but she burst through.

Run!

Always running.

Another doorway.

A room.

She gasped and leaned over to slow her breathing. Her eyes noted the furnishings, placed just so. Everything in its place. Clean. Unfamiliar--yet she knew this place.

She lived here.

She touched a table, a lamp. Curious. All hers. Arranged carefully, fearfully.

She remembered. Then choked and couldn't breathe.

The room began to move.

First one wall edged closer. Then another.

Stinging sweat poured into her eyes. She wiped it away. It flooded back in.

Tears?

The last wall pushed in. Total darkness. She stood and bumped her head. Almost blacked out.

Her outstretched fingers explored the walls.

Bumps. Holes.

Splinters pierced like knives.

Her fingers reached a corner and then into another corner. Her body rotated into another. Then another.

It was a box. A box of wood. She pushed against the sides and top. Nothing budged.

She kicked at the walls.

Trapped. She opened her mouth to scream, but tears flowed instead.

Quiet.

No, wait. Mumbling. Someone mumbling.

Never mind. No one cared.

She could live like this. Keep herself tucked in.

Hidden.

Tess felt along the top again.

A latch. Smooth--no metal spurs to catch in her flesh. She started to open it.

Why was there a latch on the inside?

She moved to open it again. No ... leave it. She'd stay here and not have to run anymore.

No more darts. No more hits.



TESS KEPT to herself at the office. She bought her favorite coffee drink, double chocolate mocha, and headed back to her desk.

Tough work day, but she didn't want to think about going home alone, either.

Someone bumped her.

Andy. Old Andy.

The old man squinted at her over his eyeglasses. Bushy eyebrows almost obscured his eyes. Old man never did anything but push that broom. And mutter. He maneuvered the broom around her desk, muttering the whole time. Probably clocked out at the end of the day and found a bar stool.

Someone cleared their throat. Vice President Morton.

Andy disappeared.

Mr. Morton, her boss, badgered her from the moment she walked into the office. "Aren't you caught up yet? I need those reports on my desk before you leave."

Tess caught sight of Old Andy behind Mr. Morton, clear on the other side of the room. Arnold and Gordon were taking turns tossing paper scraps onto the floor right behind Andy. He'd been in trouble more than once because of those two jerks.

She scrambled to gather the papers from her desk, scattering some on the floor. "I ... I'm just about done, Mr. Morton. I'll have them to you before I leave tonight."

He walked away, throwing a last comment over his shoulder. "I don't want to dock your hours."

Tess froze. No! She needed every hour to make her life work.

Mr. Morton passed the beverage bar and out through

the hallway. Employees loitered around the coffee maker and the copy machine, whispering. Sally pointed.

Tess knew what they were saying. People always made comments behind her back.

Even now, Ernie and Carl stooped over a desk and snickered, then laughed together. Leering.

Did they think she couldn't hear?

She did her work, day after day. Rarely did she talk to anyone. She closed herself in and didn't interact. She needed to get her work done, but it was more than that.

If you didn't talk to anyone, you didn't get into trouble.

If you didn't interact, you didn't get hurt. You didn't get wounded.

She could mind her own business and keep to herself.

An alien in her own world.



HEAT POURED into Tess's flesh, soothing the pain.

What is that?

Hide. Take cover.

All she heard was breathing, muttering.

She put her fingers on the latch, hesitating. She took a deep breath and opened the box, stepped out. A wave of peace hit her--jarred her.

Frightening quiet.

Then ...

"Father, in Jesus' Name, through Your Holy Spirit, give her peace. Quiet her pain and pour down Your love. She is running and scared. Running for her life and wanting so much to hide. Please Father, give her your touch. Father ... help her ... love her ... keep her."

She knew that voice.

Oil poured down. Through her hair, onto her skin, into her wounded heart.



OLD ANDY PLODDED ALONG, pushing his broom. Always averting his eyes. Always muttering. No one ever asked how he was.

He moved chairs and swept up the paper bits tossed there. "Father ..."

Tess gulped. *Father?*

He shook the waste basket over his janitor cart. "Help her see ..."

Tess had never been able to hear him before.

She blinked.

And paused, forgetting the documents in her hand.

He peeked up at her over his glasses, hiding behind those bushy eyebrows. Always whispering, "Father, keep her. Jesus heal her heart ... never let her go ..."

End

THIS SHORT STORY may seem kind of weird, unless you have dealt with this kind of fear. Fear was the foundation for anger I operated in for so long. Interesting how those two emotions can mix, twist, work together.

If this story resonates with you or someone you know, you might be interested in reading my blog. This is the subject I am pursuing--fear and anger. When you read my novels, you'll see anger in the main character, Clarence. Oh, just a heads up--Clarence is me.

Ick.

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to leave them on the website--www.bonnielacy.com

I hope and pray you are well and blessed.

~ Bonnie

