

The Coward

by Cerrid Wynn

George was the biggest coward alive. But he was too afraid to admit it. But that therein was his cowardice. He couldn't face the truth. He couldn't face his weakness. It made him uncomfortable, the thought that he might need to change.

It was why he couldn't hold down a job. He'd sooner quit, or do something to get himself fired than to try to resolve interpersonal conflicts with his co-workers. Learning to recognize other people had ideas and voices too, some contrary to his own made him insecure. He hated to be wrong.

It was why he was evicted or chose to move over and over and over again. He couldn't talk to a Landlord and admit he needed more time. He'd rather duck them, avoid talking to them, or lie to them outright in order to buy more time, rather than be honest and try to work something out. He couldn't follow through on a promise to pay to save his life. Being unable to hold a job tended to have that affect on bills. He was afraid if they knew he didn't have a job they wouldn't work with him.

It was why he left the country. Heaven forbid he admit that he'd fucked up in his marriage, at least as much as his ex had. His idea of conflict resolution was to try to bully his ex-wife into submission with words and threats, rather than appear weak and give any sort of ground towards compromise. And he'd be damned if he paid any child support. He was terrified she'd go after it, so he had to leave.

It was why he chose not to be a part of his children's lives. He couldn't face them, when they would eventually ask him why he always had horrible things to say about their mother and her family... their family. Or when they asked why he chose not to live close enough to visit, or why he didn't call when he was allowed to. He couldn't face them when they asked why he sent flowers to the oldest for her birthday, but sent little or nothing to the rest of them. He wanted them to believe he was perfect, and that their mother prevented him from being an active participant in their lives. He

didn't want to admit that it was too much work and too frightening to have to try to be amicable with their mother to arrange visitation. That would make him look weak. He wasn't going to pander to that bitch. he was too strong for that. Visitation was on his terms or no terms at all. Fuck the court order. He was afraid they would see through his lies.

Most of all he was afraid someone would see his cowardice, and that they would make him look at it. It was easier to believe his employers were unfair, and his work environments caused him undue stress, affecting his health. It was easier to tell himself his landlords were stripping him of his rights, to claim he was paid on his rent, and he had no idea why the locks were changed. It was easier to believe his ex-wife was a bitch, the court system was rigged in her favor. It was easier to believe his current wife, the one he was dragging through all of the same messes, because he didn't want to face the truth, was so much better than his ex-wife. Heaven help him if his wife ever saw through it. No. No. He had a plan for that too. If she saw through it, it would be her own fault. It would mean she was too weak to do the right thing and put up with him. It would mean she couldn't support the dreams he built for himself on his falsehoods. It would be her fault if she left. It would be because she was a coward, not him. She would be the liar for saying she loved him.

He was the strong one, the brave one, the honest one. He had no use for the coward in the mirror. As long as he didn't look, he didn't have to admit it was him. His plight would forever remain everyone else's fault, and he could happily exist in his comfort zone, ignorant of being the biggest coward alive. He hated cowards.

