

Buzz Kill

by Teri Pastore

Blood had soaked through his Converse All-Stars, and into his cotton sox. It was the smell of metal, of iron more specifically, that nudged his mind out from the fog of shock and denial, closer to the reality of his circumstances. The now familiar roar of the buzz saw once again sputtered as steel met bone.

In the foggy marshes of his mind, a nerve seized control of its dendrites and forced a hot shock that coursed one word through Felix's body: "Run!"

Felix dared only to lower his eyes. His legs looked like they were growing apart from him; like they weren't part of his body; truly, they were appendages. His nervous system fired off another signal; a warning flare screamed, "Run!" but Felix continued to stare at his legs and All-Stars. Spread across the wooden floor was the stringy viscera of either Charlotte or Juan. It was dark in the room, even with the candles. The bloody sinew looked like wet yarn, slick red, with steam rising from it. Its length reminded Felix of a dress his mother wore to a dinner party recently. The dress had red and black streaks in its pattern. His mom wore her hair down, in soft waves that fell around her neck. When she hugged him good-bye, a soft cloud of her lavender perfume engulfed him momentarily; that's when Felix loved his mother the most, in the cloud of her smell. For the first time that night tears gathered in his eyes, but fear prevented them from taking shape.

Felix raised his eyes, and made it look like he was looking at nothing, when he was actually looking at where the Terror stood. Juan's torso slumped against the wall, one leg was gone up to the hip, and the other was sawed off at the knee. Both hands had been taken off at the wrist.

Felix felt the blur of the fog roll in again. Its colorless comfort tempting, but instead he focused on the image of his mother's dress and the hot nerve screaming "Run," this time in the voice of his mother.

His mother had told Felix to stay out of the abandon cabin. He'd heard the gossip from the neighbors about the so-called curse. But he didn't believe it. Felix was a rational guy. "Prove it," he had said. Felix hadn't believed the stories of ghosts, and atrocities that happened on certain full moons at the abandoned cabin. The three of them, Charlotte, Juan and Felix, had set out to prove his mother wrong.

The buzz saw let up and swung in his direction. Wet specks of blood hit his face, jean jacket and pants in the same way he remembered the cake mixer flicking icing when his mom made the cake for his thirteenth birthday. "That was over two years ago," he thought, as he stared without expression.

The buzz saw revved up and went back to tackling the thick density of Juan's hip. Across the room was a closed window. The glass was old, a single pane. The door was closer, but Felix knew the door was locked. He'd made it to the door in the beginning when Charlotte was cut in half, and Juan slid down the wall and puked. That's when the fog first slammed into Felix's mind like a mist made of bricks. His body had gone limp. He'd lost control of his bowels, and of his will.

Charlotte had worn a dress that night. Pink with a ruffle at the hem. The funny thing was the pink fabric was harder to cut through than her flesh and bone. The Terror had to stop the saw and pluck the shredded fabric off its jagged metal teeth, along with bits of Charlotte's liver. He had turned slightly toward Juan and Felix, and said, "They don't make these like they used to."

The Terror cleared the snag of fabric, and returned to his work dissecting Charlotte's body, leaving Juan and Felix unattended.

To his credit, Juan could not have gotten up if he had tried. The Terror had tossed Charlotte's left arm, then her head, then her right arm, then her feet, on top of Juan as he sat in his own vomit. The first cut took off Juan's head. Blood gurgled from Juan's neck like a water fountain, and spread as far as the door, soaked into his All-Stars, past his ankles. Felix was the last one standing.

When Felix turned toward the window he felt warm, sticky bubbles of blood wedge between his toes. He calculated nine paces to reach the window. Head down, shoulders forward, Felix could break through the window and take his chances. Facing an uncertain death was better than facing a certain one.

The buzz saw gunned back and forth over the same spot, stuck in a rut of the pelvic bone. The Terror lifted his boot and held down one side of what remained of Juan's hip. Slowly, Felix began to point his All-Stars in the direction of the window. He visualized his escape; how he'd make his approach, how he'd curl into a tight ball and bash through window, arms crossed in front to protect his eyes. The saw had made its way through the thick part of Juan's pelvic bone, and as it did, it released the smell of bone marrow into the air; it was the smell Felix remembered from his visits to the dentist. Felix knew it was now or never.

In seconds that seemed like days Felix heard the window break, the glass shatter, and his jacket rip; he imagined himself as he had visualized it, free, airborne, tumbling, knees furious, heart pumping, lungs on fire, running, and running and running, getting further away. Felix needed to catch his breath, but he kept running and running. He wanted to stop. Why couldn't he stop running? He couldn't breath. That's when Felix woke up for real, and the Terror turned the buzz saw toward him.

