

From *A Beautiful Girl*

Cassandra Ulrich

(from 'The Horror Continues')

Word Count: 372

"Oh, no. My bus," I yelled, pushing him away. "I can't miss my bus."

"It's ok, Sara. I'll take you home. Maybe I can get you there when the bus pulls up."

"You don't understand. He watches me walk off the stupid thing," I said breathlessly, immediately running down the hall and out the front door.

Once outside, I nearly fell flat on my face when a mental fog temporarily blocked all reason.

My bus was gone.

I felt like screaming, but the sound wouldn't come.

I had to run, run fast and get home. Maybe he won't be there.

Maybe he'll be busy raking the leaves.

"Oh, God, please don't let him notice I'm not on the bus."

I breathed deeply as my heart pumped faster. I decided to run the equivalent of ten zigzagged blocks home. My feet stumbled twice along the way, but I pressed on. I saw the bus once, crossing a path I had yet to reach. Waving, I realized the bus driver didn't see me. Liquid fell down my cheeks, and it seemed as if I looked through a glaze.

When I finally arrived home, I saw my bus bouncing down the street in the great distance ahead. I turned to look at my house and gulped hard as two blue eyes glared back at me. Sweat ran down my face, and my chest heaved from lack of air. Although my feet stepped onto the pavement to cross the street, my brain screamed at me to continue running down the street.

The urge to throw up increased when Chuck stood only ten feet away. I could see the sweat on his red face now and his fists, clenched tight. I kept walking toward him, my body now shaking intermittently.

Chuck's fists started to release. My throat went dry, trying to squeeze the life out of me before he had the chance. I had trouble breathing.

Chuck grabbed my braid and started yelling curses at me. My hand rose to my defense, fighting to keep my braid attached to my head.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry. It won't happen again. Please don't. I promise..." I begged, but my knees gave way, and he dragged me into the house.