



Any Harm That Violence Can Do, Fear Can Do

By:
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Out in the front yard Rafe and Paul watched Paul's image gazing back at the house. "It is a lovely house," Paul said to Rafe, "more than I can afford, but it makes Joan happy. It doesn't really matter now, though, because we're going to lose it all anyway."

Rafe sniffed one of Joan's roses. "*Fear is also a thief.*" "*Fear isn't going to steal my house, Rafe, the bank is.*"

Rafe looked firmly at Paul. "No, your fear is preventing you from admitting weakness, chancing rejection, and asking for help.

"Fear is stealing from you your freedom to act, your desire to succeed, your willingness to stick your neck out, even your capacity to care. Once it has stolen those things, it's only a matter of time before it takes your possessions as well."

Paul rolled his eyes. "Give me a break."

Rafe continued. "Fear is a killer, too."

UNDERSTAND YOUR FEAR, BUT NEVER SURRENDER TO IT. THE FIRST BACKWARD STEP CAN CAUSE A DOWNWARD SPIRAL OF PANIC, RETREAT, AND FAILURE.

"Oh, right. Fear is a coward. Fear is a liar. Fear is a prison. Fear is a thief. And now, fear is a killer."

"Sure, it happens all the time. There's a crash on Wall Street, someone panics and sells out at the bottom in reaction to fear's false presentation of the facts, loses everything, and then jumps out the window. First he let fear rob him of his money and then he let fear push him off the balcony.

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“Fear, you see, can’t hurt you by itself, because it’s not even real. It needs a weapon, and the weapon fear most often wields is panic. Panic is simply an unreasoned reaction to fear. More often than not, panic is not only an inappropriate reaction, it actually causes the very thing of which you are afraid.”

At that moment the children came out. Jeff, big for an eight-year-old, and strong, and Sandra, the six-year-old towhead. “Children,” Rafe said, kneeling invisibly beside them, “fear is going to take your father tonight, perhaps. Be brave. Fear can’t hurt you unless you let it.” The children stopped for a moment, as though some exotic fragrance had touched their nostrils, hinting of distant lands to be explored. Then the school bus pulled up and they sped off, backpacks bouncing as they raced each other down the sidewalk.

Rafe stood silently watching the yellow bus round the corner. Paul now thought looked like a man who had seen many children lose their fathers.

“Fear is a thief and a killer. Any harm someone else can do to you by violence, fear can cause by your reaction to it. But remember that fear is also a coward. It likes to work under the dark of doubt. Like other thieves and killers, fear shrinks away when you shine a light on it.”

“Shine a light on it? How do you shine a light on fear?”

“You’re leaving now,” Rafe said as he hopped through the door into the backseat. The familiar backfire cracked the air as his engine cranked up the engine. “Hop in the car and we’ll talk at the office.” Paul climbed in. He was getting used to not having to open the door.