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A Puff of Smoke

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A Puff of Smoke

Jillian Kratish

Cough. Cough. I listen to his hacking cough. I hear his body wheezing for breath. His chest rattles, attempting to take in air. I don't turn around. I can't bear to see that horrid face, those red-streaked eyes, the yellow teeth. Who wants to look at a person's mouth and see shapeless skin hanging down where half of a jaw was removed because it was cancerous? Who wants to smell that foul odor emanating from his mouth as he talks and coughs and wheezes? To watch that black tongue try to force sound out of a throat that was ruined from smoking? He should have listened when I told him smoking was bad. I begged and pleaded with him; once I even threw out all of the cigarettes in the house. I dared him to quit for a day. I asked him why he was so weak-willed that he let a mere cigarette control him, an addiction consume him? But he didn't get the message.

Dinnertime. I handed him his burnt toast. He didn't complain. Why should he when he couldn't taste it anyway? Smoking had ruined that, too. And if he were annoyed that was all he would have for dinner, he should think of why we had no more to eat. he had spent most of our money on cigarettes and surgeries, attempting to save his life when the tobacco smoke ruined his lungs. Not that living had much of a point to it now.

Oh, why hadn't he listened? God help me! Why?