

***The following is an excerpt from No Rest At All by Brian Keene. This story is copyrighted by Brian Keene, ©2003. All rights reserved.***

## THAT WHICH LINGERS

Sarah awoke to the incessant wailing of the alarm clock. Blurry eyed and still half asleep, she went for her morning run—from the bedroom to the bathroom. She was getting quicker, she thought as she ran. Three seconds later, she knelt, retching as she'd done every morning for the past two months.

Finished, she collapsed onto the couch and lit the day's first cigarette while the coffee brewed. A dull ache was all that remained from last night. Sarah frowned, trying to recall the exact details. She remembered arguing with the bartender. He hadn't wanted to serve her, commenting on her obvious *condition*. After some flirting, she'd managed to hook up with several men who were willing to buy a girl a drink in exchange for a hint of things to come.

At least she hadn't gotten completely smashed and ended up bringing one of them home. Her empty bed testified to that. She hadn't shared it with a man since Christopher walked out on her four months ago.

She inhaled deeply, letting the acrid but welcome smoke fill her lungs. She fought back the single tear that thoughts of Christopher had brought.

Sarah showered, trying to relax and wake up as the water caressed her pink skin. Trying to lose herself in a

flood of happy thoughts. Trying not to notice the swell of her abdomen as she lathered her lower body. Trying to cope.

Wrapping her long, chestnut hair in a towel and another around her waist, she grabbed breakfast. The coffee was needed, but a single bite of the granola bar made her stomach churn again.

She let the towels drop to the floor and caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror. This too, reminded her of Christopher.

They'd dated for years. The pregnancy had been unplanned, but welcomed by Christopher. He'd been ecstatic—and crushed when he learned that she didn't feel the same. How could she not want it? She'd tried to explain how she felt. How the timing wasn't right. She still wanted to go back to school and get her bachelor's degree. She wanted to do more with her life than working as a waitress.

What she hadn't told him was that she worried about his drinking and of how he was turning out to be just like the father he hated. She didn't express that she had come to seriously doubt their relationship.

Christopher was completely opposed to the abortion.

Sarah paused in her thoughts, noticing how her breasts were becoming fuller. Echoes of Christopher's plea rang in her ears.

The abortion had devastated him, killing whatever chance of love they'd still had. A part of both of them had died that day.

That was four months ago.

Sarah felt a distant stirring within her womb.

Collapsing onto the unmade bed, she began to cry. How could she possibly deal with what was happening to her alone? She needed Christopher.

She'd considered having an ultrasound, but knew that nothing would show up during the procedure.

She wasn't crazy.

She was being haunted.

Deep inside, Sarah felt something kick.

## **AFTERWORD**

Like every author, all of my fiction is autobiographical to some extent. In our stories, we battle our personal demons. This is one of those. While not my personal favorite, this story is one my fans seem to enjoy. It has definitely gotten the biggest response over the years, and for that I am grateful. When I committed this one to paper, it helped me through a particularly bad patch. It was written in a run-down apartment in the hood of York, Pennsylvania, fueled in equal parts of Jim Beam and tears. Sometimes, when I re-read it, I can still taste the gunmetal at the back of my throat. Writing this story saved me from that.