

SOFT NOISE, HARD LESSON

By John Bartimole

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CAST: *one male*

AT RISE: *Male enters stage, with arms clasped behind his back.*

I don't look like I get scared easily, do I? I'm a pretty rugged-looking guy...maybe even the kind of guy you wouldn't want to mess with. I work out...I exercise...I like to pump iron. Hey, the women love muscle, right?

But when I was growing up, I used to be afraid of drums...any kind of drum. In fact, all loud noises used to scare me. I used to start crying and make my mommy pick me up and hold me. She always made me feel better...always made me stop crying...always wiped my tears away. She used to tell me she was taking that loud sound and putting it where I couldn't hear it. And it worked.

I sort of wish that could happen now, because last night I got scared again, but not by a loud noise, but by one of the softest, saddest noises I've ever heard in my life...and it's a noise I never want to hear again. Even now, when I think about it, it's as clear to me as when it happened. And it scares me even more than drums ever did. It scares me right to my very soul.

My girlfriend and I went out last night. Nothing spectacular. Just to a movie and then we went for a drive. We've been going together for about six months now and well, you know, things have been getting better. A lot better. She's not quite as cool in her views about what a guy and girl should do together when they've been dating for six months, but that was OK. I mean, anything good is worth waiting for, right? And believe me, she's so pretty, she's definitely worth waiting for.

I mean, she would kiss me and everything, but whenever I tried to go any farther, she'd get all uptight. I just figured she was waiting for the

right time...for the perfect moment! I guess that's the difference between men and women...women are waiting for Mr. Right...men are looking for Ms. Right Now!

But last night...even though it didn't start out as anything special, I really thought there was some magic in the air. During the movie—we went to see one of those schmaltzy movies that she loves to cry through—she held my hand a lot and she even kissed me—really long—during a few of the romantic scenes. That's not like her...she usually likes me to start things for her. Even then, it would take her a while before she got into it.

Well, after we'd been riding around for awhile, she said her parents wouldn't be home until about 2...and they said it would be okay if I stopped in because they trusted me. I took that as a real compliment, because I know how protective her parents are.

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