

At 3:52 a.m. Giles sat up in bed, hacking and coughing; I'm sure his eyes watered uncontrollably from the dense smoke... Suddenly, as being hit with a sledgehammer, in a nanosecond, sheer terror overtook him... his castle was on fire! In the same instance he also recognized the smell of smoke-the tree! He ran from the bedroom to where the flame thrower of a tree was torching the ceiling; he then ran back to the bedroom to wake Jess, who was already at the kid's bedside. He grabbed the comforter on the bed, and returned back to the tree for no explained reason; hurriedly he tried to suffocate a portion of the flames with the comforter... His skin ignited from the flames like a grilling steak; weakened and near death he dropped to the floor, subdued... Jess meanwhile dragged their two kids, in duress-all of them coughing and wheezing-toward the landing; they collapsed close to where Giles laid. Giles moaned and wheezed, and Jess whimpered his name as she caressed his smoldering face in her lap. The look she gave him was of disgust, fear, and eternal sorrow for the loss of their family. "But I love you," she managed to proclaim.

Suddenly, the second floor gave way, imploding onto the first floor family room. By then the whole castle was nothing more than a blazing furnace consuming everything... As the four family members collapsed with it in one thunderous impact, it rolled them onto their sides, leaving them charred and huddled together. I heard faint groans nixed with painful cries, even amongst the roaring fire and crashing beams; their bodies ill-covered in ash and chunks of red hot embers, with steam emitting from within...there was very little life left. Another fat tear welled up in my eye. I rushed over to them, pushing aside anything that would hinder me from holding their hands; but this time I didn't hold onto their hands! Instead I encompassed them with my arms and body, as a mother hen would her chicks.

I meant to protect them, so I held them tight -even tighter- as if to somehow summon life back into their exasperated bodies; but in vain...there was no more life, no more breath... only the chill of a tainted finality; Yet at the same time there was peace, even with hell-fire burning all

around us... and though I was only partly aware, I felt a comforting hand on my shoulder and a voice say, “gather them up and bring them back home.