

## **A Fear of Fur, by Sean Coughlan**

There it was, lying motionless in the shrubs, and there he was, standing menacingly poised for attack. I knew one false move and the ball was history. It stood no chance against those filthy yellow choppers. All went quiet. I did not make eye contact. Quickly I ran through the options in my head. The owners were at work and wouldn't return for hours. I knew he would have the ball punctured by then.

I had forgotten my fear, until now that is. I was trembling from head to toe. A bead of sweat began to form on my brow. My fear of course was of dogs. This was no longer about the ball. It was about conquering a fear I had had since I was very young.

Slowly, my trembling hands seized the railing. The dog growled but didn't move. I decided to make a more risky, sudden move. I hoisted myself on to the wall using the railing. One leg over the railing. Another leg. I looked, at this point as if I had run a marathon during the monsoon season.

My feet touched the ground on the other side. I looked up and that was when I made my mistake. You are always taught by the experts not to make eye contact with the enemy. I found out why... the hard way!

The muscles in the hound's hind legs tensed and he launched his colossal frame into the air momentarily. Then he came back to earth and everything began to shake. Time slowed down as he bounded towards me. I stood rooted to the spot. Fear holding me there like the earth's gravity. I had long - since forgotten about the ball. It was now a matter of life or death.

He pounced on me with me with a force I thought impossible. I actually saw the transfer of kinetic energy from him to me. The ground met me and knocked my breath out for someone else to enjoy. This was the end for me.

It stood over me, panting. I braced myself, waiting for the death blow to come from those icicles like canines. But it didn't come. Instead I felt a slobbery tongue caressing my cheek. Confused, I opened my eyes and they confirmed that he was indeed sparing my life.

I felt rather embarrassed now, for hiding behind people whenever there was a dog around. After all, I had been given no reason to. His fur was as soft as snow but with a warmth that only a fire on a bitter winter's night can bring. A surge of love began to flow through me. I hopped over the fence, ran inside and begged

my family for my own pet dog. That wish was never realised, but I had conquered a fear and made a friend.