

Always Bad

By

Zach Jansen

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Zachary R. Jansen
1066 4th St. E
Saint Paul, MN 55106
(952) 232-7415
zachary.jansen@ymail.com

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Raining. Pitch black with no moon.

KEVIN, 40, a meticulous man with a deep widow's peak and medium build, kneels by the garage and pushes the muddying dirt into a hole.

INT. BASEMENT

A single bulb emits a flat white light. Shadows stretch and distort, reaching across the floor and tool bench, on which something red has been spilled - paint? blood?

A large cage occupies a darkened corner. There's an empty water bowl, soiled blanket, and torn up teddy bear inside it.

Kevin mops the cement floor inside the cage.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Meagerly furnished and decorated.

Kevin sits on the couch, stuffing and sewing the teddy bear.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Just as miserable as the living room.

Kevin cleans the teddy bear in the sink.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A different kitchen. This one looks lived in.

MARY, 33, a tired-looking, sometimes ambivalent woman, washes dishes in the sink.

She looks out the window at a small wooded area about a hundred yards away - a small figure is visible.

She goes back to her dishes.

EXT. WOODED AREA - DAY

A random area of trees in the suburbs. The sparse foliage sways in the breeze and is beginning to bud and blossom.

An apartment building stands about a hundred yards away.

ANNA BETH, 6, a naive girl in a well-worn second-hand Easter dress, sits on the one patch of grass and plays with some mud. She has a doll with her.

A twig SNAPS.

Anna Beth looks up.

Kevin walking towards her. He stops about ten feet away.

KEVIN

Hi there.

ANNA BETH

Hi.

Anna Beth goes back to her mud.

Kevin grabs a stick and pokes at the mud.

KEVIN

What are you making?

ANNA BETH

Cupcakes - for my party. And no one else can come.

KEVIN

What about your friends?

ANNA BETH

I don't have any.

KEVIN

That's too bad.

ANNA BETH

It's okay. They're mean and I don't like them.

KEVIN

I don't have any friends either.

She studies Kevin.

ANNA BETH

For true?

KEVIN

For true. I did have one friend.
His name was Rex.

ANNA BETH

That's a funny name.

KEVIN

Not for him - he was a dog.

ANNA BETH

Why aren't you friends now? Was he
bad?

KEVIN

No. No, he was a good dog, a good
friend. We went for walks and
played all the time.

ANNA BETH

He sounds like a good dog.

KEVIN

He was. But he got sick. And I
tried to make him better, but he
was too sick.

ANNA BETH

Did Rex go to Heaven?

Kevin nods.

ANNA BETH

Mommy says my daddy's in Heaven.

KEVIN

Really? Well, I hope your daddy
and Rex are friends in Heaven.

ANNA BETH

Me too.

Anna Beth returns to her mud.

Kevin takes a few steps towards her and squats to her level.

KEVIN

I'm Kevin.

ANNA BETH
(automatic, how kids do)
My name's Anna Beth Walker and I'm
six-and-four-months old.

She picks up her doll.

ANNA BETH
And this is Princess Buttercup.

KEVIN
It's nice to meet you, Princess
Buttercup. And you, too, Anna
Beth.

He offers to shake her hand.

ANNA BETH
Mommy says not to talk to
strangers.

KEVIN
But I'm not a stranger
anymore. You know my name. That
means we're friends, right?

She mulls it over.

ANNA BETH
I guess so.

She reaches out and shakes Kevin's hand.

KEVIN
Good. Say, Anna Beth... Do you
know what friends do sometimes?

She shakes her head.

KEVIN
They help each other.

ANNA BETH
I like to help.

KEVIN
Good. Then maybe you can help me.

She smiles and nods.

KEVIN
Now, what happened was this: Rex
and I were taking a walk out here

KEVIN
one time - before he was sick - and
we lost his favorite toy.

Anna Beth glances about their surroundings.

KEVIN
Oh, it wasn't right here. It's
back there a little ways.

He gestures the way he came. Anna Beth looks past him.

Then behind her: the apartment building.

ANNA BETH
Mommy says to stay where I can see
our window.

Kevin follows her gaze and for the first time notices the
tenement.

He springs to his feet and backpedals behind some bushes.

He stares at the building.

Anna Beth considers him.

ANNA BETH
What's wrong? Did you see a bug?

KEVIN
No. No bugs. I'm sure your mommy
won't mind if you leave to help a
friend.

ANNA BETH
I guess not... What kind of toy is
it?

KEVIN
It's a teddy bear.

Anna Beth stands up.

Kevin offers her his hand. She takes it.

Kevin leads her into the woods.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Mary vigorously scrubs a pan. After a moment, She hurls the pan and scrubber into the sink.

She looks out the window - no one in the wooded area.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Mary jogs toward the wooded area.

She's anxious.

She hastens her pace.

EXT. WOODED AREA - DAY

Mary searches around the trees and bushes.

MARY

Anna Beth? Anna Beth, can you hear me?

She finds the mud patch where Anna Beth had been making cupcakes. She sees Anna Beth's doll, picks it up.

MARY

Young lady, if you don't come back here right now I swear you're going to get it.

Doll in hand, Mary explores deeper into the woods.

MARY

Anna Beth? Anna Beth?

EXT. STREET - DAY

A suburban street that borders the wooded area.

Mary stumbles out from the brush.

She's frantic.

MARY

Anna Beth, where are you?! Anna Beth?!

She rushes past a telephone pole. On it is a tattered flyer: Kevin's face recognizable under the words "PROTECT OUR CHILDREN; HE LIVES AMONGST US".

Mary turns a corner - and sees Kevin and Anna Beth walking hand in hand. She sprints toward them.

MARY

Anna Beth!

Anna Beth looks over her shoulder, smiles and races to Mary.

ANNA BETH

Mommy!

Mary wraps her arms around Anna Beth, relieved.

MARY

Don't you ever go off like that again. You hear me?

ANNA BETH

But Mommy, I was helping my friend.

MARY

Your friend?

Kevin comes to a stop by Mary and Anna Beth.

MARY

What the hell is wrong with--

She looks at Kevin...

MARY

--You.

KEVIN

Hi, Mary.

ANNA BETH

This is Kevin, Mommy. He's my new friend.

MARY

I saw you were back in town.

KEVIN

So did I.

ANNA BETH

We were looking for Rex's toy. He was sick, but now he's in Heaven.

MARY

Rex? You're not supposed to come around us.

KEVIN
I just wanted to see her.

MARY
I don't care.

Mary grabs Anna Beth's hand and hurries away from Kevin.

MARY
Come on, sweetie.

KEVIN
She's getting big.

Mary and Anna Beth continue walking.

KEVIN
Why'd you tell her her daddy was in
Heaven?

Mary drops Anna Beth's hand and rushes to Kevin.

She slaps him.

Hard.

She heads back to Anna Beth.

MARY
I see you again, I'm calling the
police.

Kevin rubs his face and watches Mary and Anna Beth turn a corner and disappear.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Mary and Anna Beth march towards the apartment building.

ANNA BETH
Mommy?

MARY
I don't want to talk.

ANNA BETH
Why?

MARY
Because!

Anna Beth starts crying.

They stop walking.

Mary crouches and hugs Anna Beth. Mary holds tight to her and kisses her on the forehead.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

Kevin sits on a bench and looks over the empty slide, monkey bars, and swings.

His eyes dart throughout the playground.

Searching, hoping, longing...

FADE OUT.