

Kiss of Death

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FADE IN:

1 EXT. SCHOOL BUILDING - DAY

ZOOM slowly across a grass field into an INNER-CITY SCHOOL while somber acoustic MUSIC is played. The focus is a WINDOW.

2 INT. CLASSROOM

CHILDREN acting like children. Playing, coloring, reading and running around. We see ALI, a slender blonde 8-year-old girl, holding a gerbil and talking to it.

ALI

Aren't you a good boy, Doozer? Aren't you? Yes, you are.

MRS. WHITE

(nodding a boy standing close)
Ali, honey, let other people play with Doozer too.

Ali glares at Mrs. White then notices MARK, an average looking albeit small boy, coloring at his desk. She KISSES Doozer and hands him over to the eager boy.

She walks over to Mark and stands next to him, watching him color two figures.

ALI

(pointing to one of the figures)
Who's that?

Mark WRITES his name above the figure.

ALI

(pointing to the other)
Who's that one?

Mark WRITES her name above the other character and Ali smiles. Mark continues to color in the figures as Ali watches.

REVERSE ANGLE - We see the boy in the background look around as Ali watches Mark color.

Mrs. White is breaking up a fight.

The boy slowly grits his teeth and tightens his grip on the gerbil until it stops struggling. With a terrified look on his face he puts Doozer back into his cage and runs off.

ALI

(to Mark)
Do you want a turn with Doozer? He's back in his cage.

Mark exits view as Ali sits down to look at the picture.

MARK (O.S.)

Ali!

3 INT. BEHIND THE BOOKSHELF - DAY

Mark and Ali kneel on the floor. Doozer is on the floor between them, motionless.

ALI

I told you he would die. My mom says that you give people your germs when you kiss them.

MARK

Doozer isn't a person.

ALI

Maybe animals can get germs too. (beat)

We better sneak him back into his cage.

Mark picks up Doozer and peers around the corner of the bookshelf.

MARK'S P.O.V. - The teacher is helping a girl with her back to the camera.

Mark quickly puts Doozer back in his cage and returns to Ali.

ALI

Did anyone see you?

MARK

No.

ALI

Good. Your dad would get mad at you again if he found out we killed a gerbil.

MARK

I know.

ALI

Does your neck still hurt?

MARK

(Rubbing the back of his neck)
Not really.

ALI

(trying to cheer him up)
Wanna walk home after school today? It's Thursday, your dad won't get home until

dinner.

MARK

Okay.

4 EXT. SCHOOLYARD - AFTERNOON

The BELL rings and children of all ages spill out of the building. Mark and Ali exit the building and walk together across the grass.

5 CITY SIDEWALK - AFTERNOON

Mark and Ali walk along.

MARK

What do you have?

ALI

Have what?

MARK

The germs you gave to Doozer.

ALI

I don't know. My mom hasn't said that I'm sick and I haven't been to the doctor's. Wait!

They have arrived at a street crossing.

MARK

What?

ALI

We should hold hands.

Mark TAKES Ali's outstretched hand.

(Cont.)

My mom says to always hold hands so you can look out for each other.

They cross the street and continue to walk holding hands.

ALI

My sister holds her boyfriend's hand on our steps. They kiss too.

MARK

My mom and dad don't hold hands or kiss.

ALI

Do you think they love each other?

MARK

I don't know. I love my mom, but not my dad.

ALI

You could come live at my house if you want.

MARK

I would miss my mom.

They arrive at Ali's front steps.

ALI

Do you love me, Mark?

MARK

How do I know?

ALI

If we kiss, you'll know. My sister says that you know if you're in love when you kiss someone.

MARK

Won't I get sick?

ALI

You'll take my germs and I won't die.

MARK

Didn't Doozer take your germs?

ALI

He's too small. I can still feel them in me.

MARK

What if I die?

ALI

You just have to give them to someone else.

MARK

I don't want anyone to die.

ALI

I'm going to die if you don't do something.

After a moment of consideration, Mark leans in and kisses Ali.

As they pull away, Ali's mom pokes her head out the door.

ALI'S MOM

Ali, come inside now, sweetie.

ALI
(to Mark)
Bye.

We watch Ali walk up her steps and disappear into her house from behind Mark.

SWIVEL around to see Mark with a bewildered look on his face.

With head hung, he shuffles home.

6 INT. MARK'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

MARK'S MOTHER slices vegetables at the kitchen counter. She wears a waitress dress and has darkness around her eyes from tiredness or bruising- or both. Though she works quickly, her mind is elsewhere.

OFF CAMERA we hear the door open and close.

Mark drops his backpack just inside the door and walks past the kitchen.

MARK'S MOM
Oh, honey, don't leave your backpack there. Daddy might trip on it.

Mark looks at her as though he might say something, then just picks up his pack and takes it up the stairs. The bedroom door SHUTS.

7 INT. MARK'S BEDROOM

In a very plain bedroom Mark sits at a small desk looking at the picture he drew at school. A quiet KNOCK at the door.

MARK'S MOM
Honey, it's time for dinner. Let's not keep Daddy waiting.

MARK
I think I'm sick, Mom.

MARK'S MOM
What? Let me feel your head. (feels his forehead) You don't feel warm-

The front door OPENS downstairs.

MARK'S MOM
(As she gets up to leave)
If you still feel sick tomorrow maybe we can go see the doctor. Right now it's time for dinner.

6

Mark watches her leave and then puts the picture into the desk and goes downstairs.

8 INT. DINING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

MARK'S FATHER removes his jacket, revealing a mechanic's jumpsuit, and sits at the small table.

Mark climbs into his chair looking defeated.

His mother brings dinner to the table and sets it near the center of the table but nearer to Mark's father than to her and Mark.

MARK'S FATHER
I had to skip lunch today so I hope
today's is better than yesterday's.

MARK'S MOM
(attempts cheerfulness)
Well, let's not wait.

She SERVES her husband first, then Mark and herself.

As they are about to eat, Mark beams up and blurts out-

MARK
Can we say grace?

MARK'S MOM
(looking at his father quickly)
Mark...

MARK'S FATHER
Where did he get that idea?

MARK'S MOM
I don't know where he heard that, maybe
on TV...

MARK'S FATHER
Fine. You two say grace and I'll get
myself a beer.

Mark's mom reaches out and TAKES his hand.

MARK
Will you say it?

MARK'S MOM
Sure, honey.

She begins to pray but we do not hear the words. We see Mark looking at his mom's hand and thinking hard.

Voices from Mark and Ali's previous conversations.

ALI (V.O.)
Hold hands so you can look out for each other.

MARK (V.O.)
I love my mom, but not my dad.

ALI (V.O.)
You give people your germs when you kiss them.

MARK
What if I die?

ALI
You just have to give them to someone else.

Mark looks up at his mom who continues to pray.

Instead of the words we hear music build.

With his free hand, Mark grabs his father's fork.

He puts it in front of his face and CLOSES his eyes in silent, fervent prayer and then kisses it.

He quickly RETURNS it to the table.

MARK'S MOM
Amen.

MARK
Amen.

MARK'S FATHER
Can we eat now?

Mark's mom nods with a forced smile.

Mark watches out of the side of his eye as his father picks up his fork and takes his first bite.

Then, for the first time, we see Mark smile.

FADE OUT