

Father's Day

By

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Concerning the case of Donnie Jessup, most people would say he coped with Kay's accident well. Some might say he coped with it too well. But he had no choice. He had to be strong. Annie was depending on him.

He and Kay had met in college. They held off on getting too serious until they graduated; Kay, with a degree in management, and Donnie, in web design. They had many of the same wants and needs, with the exception of children. Kay was in no rush to have children, but Donnie had wanted them since he himself was a child.

Of course, being young comes with passion, and passion often comes with risks, and Kay did, indeed, find herself pregnant. She was angry, at first. Felt something had been stolen from her. Donnie was ecstatic, and as time passed and her belly grew, Kay soon realized she was happy as well. Donnie often thought back to Annie's birth, and he couldn't think of any happier or sadder moment. Four months ago, Kay had been the victim of a hit and run.

She had been driving back from the grocery store, when, for some reason, she pulled over on the side of the road. The police thought that perhaps she had run over something and had gotten out of the vehicle to check the tires. While she was down on her knees, a car driving much too fast swerved too close to the shoulder and hit her car, killing her instantly. Killing was a kind word; the other driver had effectively *smear*

Kay Jessup along the highway. Her shoe was found 2 miles down the road. The other driver was never found.

Dreaming, Donnie saw Kay step out of her car. She walked around the side and knelt over, examining the tires. She was below Donnie's line of sight. He ran towards her, knowing what was about to happen, even before he saw the headlights come around the bend. He shouted at Kay. She looked up at him, puzzled, and then saw the brightening lights. She turned towards the car, and began to rise, and then it was over. Donnie heard crying coming from the backseat of the car. He looked, and there was Annie, crying. She stared at him. The tears became blood, creating red tracks down her plump cheeks as she wept. Her mouth opened wider, impossibly wider and he woke up.

Annie really was crying. He could hear her through the baby monitor. She was probably hungry, and most likely soiled. He sat up in his large bed, so empty. There was static on the monitor, and then a man's voice, speaking softly.

“Ssshhhh. He'll hear you.”

Annie stopped crying. Donnie stared at the monitor for a moment, and then sprang out of bed. He grabbed a bat that had been leaning against the wall, and burst into Annie's room, bat raised, ready to strike at— nothing.

There was nothing in the room. No strange man, certainly. Annie was staring straight above her, little fists waving in the air as if trying to catch something, cooing happily. Donnie checked the closet. Finding nobody hiding there, he stepped out of Annie's room, and closed the door.

He searched the rest of the place, but it was a small apartment, not conducive to hiding. There was no-one in the apartment but Annie and himself. He went back to his

room and lay down in bed. Snuggling into Kay's spot, he glanced at the clock on her dresser. It read 2:15 am. It was June 16th. Four days until Father's Day, he thought, bitterly. He closed his eyes, and sleep finally caught up with him. There were no more dreams.

The next morning, Donnie awoke with a start, and ran in to check on Annie. She was fine, of course. He realized someone else's monitor must have come through into his, but he was still shook up about it, and spent most of the day playing with Annie, when he should have been working. Donnie was fortunate. He had turned his web design degree into a lucrative freelance career, and he could pretty much set his hours as he wanted. He worked from home, and while he had deadlines, he had no qualms about working late into night.

It was around 11 pm that Donnie finally managed to finish up a code problem that he had been troubleshooting since the day before. Satisfied that he was now back on schedule, he saved his project, and shut down the pc. As the screen went blank, he looked at the monitor. In the reflection, he saw a man standing at Annie's door, staring back at him. The man smiled at him, and then walked into Annie's room and closed the door.

Donnie jumped out of his chair, and ran to Annie's room. He turned the knob, but it was locked. He began pounding on the door, and he heard Annie's laughter come from inside. He heard her bedroom window open. Donnie braced himself, and then threw himself at the door, as hard as he could. The door exploded inwardly, and he landed with a grunt on Annie's floor.

The room was empty. The man was no longer in here. He looked at Annie's crib. She wasn't in it. A moan escaped his lips. He ran to the window, but it was closed. He tried to pull it open, but it wouldn't budge. He looked, and saw that it was still locked, *from the inside*. He stared at it, trying to understand how this could be, when he heard something giggling softly, behind him. Heart pounding, he twirled around and saw—

Annie. She was sitting up in her crib, staring at him, and smiling. His first inclination was to race over to her, but something stopped him. She wasn't there before. He would have seen her. Did his mind play a trick on him? He walked up to her, and rubbed the fuzz of hair on her head. She cooed and raised her arms, wanting to be picked up. He took her in his arms, and she nuzzled in to him. His panic subsided, as he felt her loving him. Donnie knew he was very tired, and he was obviously wrong. Annie had been there the whole time. He took her into bed with him, and together, they fell asleep watching Letterman. Only once did he wake up. He thought he'd heard a woman crying in the room, but looking around, he saw no-one. Assuming it was the TV, he rolled back over and went to sleep, and in his dreams, he heard children laughing. And it terrified him.

The following morning, Donnie played with Annie, fed her, got her to take a nap and then completed his work project. He arranged for a sitting service to send someone over to watch Annie. He could have called someone he knew, but he wanted someone who would be detached about the situation. He needed to get out, take a break, but he also wanted to see if anyone else would see or hear anything strange. He had to know.

Around 6 pm, the sitter, a girl in her twenties named Kira showed up at his doorstep. She was a pretty girl, a college student who was trying to earn some extra

money. She had him sign her agency's paperwork, which included documentation of Kira's experience, work history, and security checks. She put him at ease, even flirting with him. He wasn't prepared for the attentions of any women, much less someone so pretty, and so he quickly ducked out of his apartment, telling her he didn't want to be late for the movie.

He actually did go into the movie, some crime drama about a necklace, but he couldn't concentrate on it. The darkened theater was making him nervous, as well. Several times, he could have sworn that he saw other patrons turn and stare at him, annoyed looks on their faces. He was sure it was in his mind, but it made him uncomfortable none-the-less, and within 30 minutes into the film, he left and found an out-door café where he could grab some coffee.

After several cups of coffee, feeling he had waited long enough, Donnie made the trek back to his building. He took the elevator up to the fifth floor, and stepped out.

As Donnie walked down the hall towards his apartment, he heard Mrs. Wiesz working the locks on her door. He picked up his speed, but it was too late; the door opened, and she poked her face into the hallway.

“Oh, Donnie! It's you.”

“Yes, Mrs. Weisz, I'm sorry if I was making too much noise.”

“No, Dear, not at all.”

She leaned in, confidentially.

“At my age, people assume the hearing's shot and the eyes are blurry, but they work just fine on me.”

She took her very thick glasses off and stared at them.

“Well, my hearing’s fine, anyway.”

Donnie laughed.

“I could hear a mouse creeping by my door. But never-mind that, Donnie Jessup, when are you going to let me see that daughter of yours?”

“I’m sorry”, he said, a bit ashamed with himself. “I meant to have you come for dinner, but I just haven’t felt much like company since... you know—Kate...”

“I understand, Dear. When Mr. Weisz passed on, it was a year before I started going out into public again. You just take your time. Things will seem normal again, I promise.”

Donnie stared at her.

“Mrs. Weisz—“

He hesitated. Should he tell her? She’d think he was crazy. But what if she was seeing them too?

“Yes, Dear? What is it, Donnie, you look worried”, she prodded.

Mrs. Weisz, have you seen or heard anything... strange? Lately, I mean.”

“I’m not sure what you mean.”

He tried again.

“Have you heard anything in your apartment? Like voices; voices talking?”

“Well, sometimes I hear that couple on the first floor fighting. The floors are so thin, and they scream at each other. Is that what you mean?”

“Not exactly; no”, he replied. Then he lowered his voice, even though no-one but the two of them was around.

“I’ve heard voices.” He leaned in closer to her, and whispered. She had to strain to hear him.

“Mrs. Weisz, there’s something in my apartment.”

“Something? You don’t know what it is?”

“I only glimpsed it once. I saw it’s reflection in the TV as it darted behind me. But I’ve heard it. Or them.”

Mrs. Weisz looked at Donnie, sharply.

“Them?”

I heard a man’s voice coming across Annie’s monitor. He shushed someone, and then said, ‘He’ll hear us’. When I ran into the room, there was no-one there. And Annie was... Well, she was in her crib..”

“You said ‘them’.”

“Later, I woke up to the sound of a woman. She was crying.”

“My God, Donnie.”

He saw the way she was looking at him.

“I know; don’t you think I know how it sounds? But I heard it!”

“Donnie, is it possible you just picked up someone else’s baby monitor on yours? I’ve heard that happens all of the time.”

“But I saw it, Mrs. Weisz.”

“What did you see, exactly?”

“I was doing some work on the computer. I switched off the monitor, and I saw the reflection of someone behind me, staring at me. It looked human, but... well, not human. I can’t describe it. It looked *wrong*. When I turned around, it was gone.”

“It had left?”

“No, it was just gone. I never heard a sound; no doors closing. I searched the house, but it was as if it had never been there.”

Mrs. Weisz put her hand on Donnie’s arm, soothingly.

“Donnie, with all that’s happened to you; Kate’s death, the strain of raising Annie by yourself, it’s no wonder that your eyes played tricks on you. Plus, with those voices bleeding through into your monitor, well, I don’t blame you for being upset.”

Donnie admonished himself. He should have known better than to try to explain to anyone what he had heard. What he had seen. What she said made sense, he admitted, but anyone who had seen that... *thing* would never doubt that it existed.

“You’re probably right. I’ve been so tired. It’s just exhaustion.”

“Sure, and withit being Father’s Day tomorrow, yor emotions are running sky high. I’m going to come over and babysit for you, and you are going to get some sleep. No excuses.”

Donnie ran his fingers through his hair..

“Annie’s with her grandparents tonight”, he lied. “So getting some sleep will be no problem. But I promise to have you over soon.”

“You’d better”, she said firmly, but with a smile. “Or I’ll call the cops; don’t you know it’s a crime to keep a baby away from anyone over the age of 70?”

Donnie hugged her.

“You got it.”

He turned and walked towards his apartment. He let himself in. Once inside, he leaned his head against the door, listening to the sounds in the hallway. He heard the

echo of Mrs. Weisz' door closing. He stayed listening, until he heard the click of her lock. Then he went to check on Annie.

He stepped in to his apartment, and Kira came up to him.

“Hey, Mr. Jessup, how was the movie?”

“Please call me Donnie”, he said, shutting the door. “The movie was terrible.”

He walked past her, and through his keys on the table. He walked to the kitchen to get himself a drink.

“How was Annie”, he asked.

“Annie's dead in her crib.”

He stopped and turned sharply towards her.

“What did you say?”

She stared at him, her eyes growing large, her mouth turning into a wide grin. He walked up to her and grabbed her by the shoulders.

“What the hell did you say to me”, he shouted.

Even as he shook her, she just stared, smiling. He slapped her, and her smile slowly went slack.

“You shouldn't have done that”, she said, in a deep voice.

Her smile slowly faded, her mouth going slack. Her features seemed to melt away; to change. Kira's hair turned blonde and the style changed. He watched the brown color in her eyes swirl into deep blue. He had seen those eyes before. He shrieked and jumped back.

Standing before him was Kay. She was pale, translucent. He could see through her to the door behind her.

“Kay”, he said, tears pouring down his face. “Kay?”

Her mouth opened and closed as if she was trying to say something. Was it “no”?
“Don’t”?

“Don’t...”, she said, as if she had heard him. “Don’t... forget...”

Slowly, she raised her hand and pointed to the room past Donnie. He looked at the room.

“...Annie.”

He gasped and bolted into Annie’s room. She was there. He picked her up and held her to him tightly. He switched her around so that he held her in one arm, picked up a diaper bag, and began filling it with necessities. He grabbed diapers, some extra clothes, more blankets, various ointments. Picking up the bag, he started out of the room, and then stopped. He slowly peered out the doorway. Kay, or whatever that had been, was gone. The apartment was dark and empty. He quickly headed to his bedroom.

He placed Annie down in his bed, and headed to his closet. He grabbed a suitcase that was sitting on the top shelf, and through it on the floor. He began pulling clothes out of his closet, and throwing them into the bag, but his motions began getting sluggish.

Donnie could barely keep his eyes open. He was exhausted. His movements slowed even more, and then his thoughts began to drift. He looked at the shirt he was holding in his hand, and tried to remember why he had pulled it out of the closet. He looked towards Annie, and saw she had fallen asleep. He stared at her, envious. So tired.

Donnie dropped the shirt he was holding, and crawled into bed next to Annie. He shut his eyes, and was out.

Donnie awoke in the dark. The clock's red numbers showed that it was 3:00 am. My first Father's Day, he thought. He could feel Annie snuggled up against him. He rolled over and put his arm around her. Instead of her smooth sweet skin, he felt something matted, and hairy, and large. And there was a smell in the room. He turned on a light. And saw a large dead dog in his bed. It was covered in sores, and had been decaying for a while. He could see its skin rippling, an indication of something inside of it, feasting. Its eyes were glazed over, and a dry, rough tongue lolled from its mouth.

“Jesus Christ!”

He stumbled out of bed, and began heaving. The contents of his stomach flew against the carpet, splattering against the wall. Strings of saliva dripped from his mouth as he struggled to draw in breath. The room smelled like sour coffee, and decay. It smelled like death. Then he realized, Annie had slept with him last night. Where was she?

He stumbled out into the living room, but she was nowhere to be seen. He heard her laughter come from her bedroom. He went in, and saw Annie sitting on the floor. He collapsed in front of her, as the tears began to come. She reached her little arms out to him, and smiled. Crying freely now, he picked her up, and held her to him for a long time. Standing up, he rubbed her head, and his hand felt sticky. He looked at his hand. There were sticky webs of goo dripping slowly from his hand. He looked at Annie.

Staring back at him was what looked like a large zygote. Black lidless eyes stared back at him. Its mouth, not fully formed, lipless, made a noisy wet smack as it opened. Her arms were short and stubby, her fingers were webbed. She reached out to him. One hand brushed his chin, and left a slimy trail. Disgusted, he threw the thing as far away

from him as he could. It hit the wall with a thud, and made a sound. It dropped down to the floor, and didn't move. Against the wall was a bloody splatter where it had hit.

Donnie fell to the ground, head dropping to his hands as he wept.

“Too much”, he wailed. “This is too much.”

He looked up at the ceiling.

“Why are you doing this to me”, he screamed. “Leave me alone!”

He looked over to where the thing was laying, but it was a thing no longer. It was Annie. She was lying on her stomach, her head facing him, eyes staring at him accusingly. Blood was seeping from her nose and mouth, and puddled beneath her, growing larger. Donnie began screaming, eyes wide, hands clawing at his face. He crawled towards her, screaming louder. Donnie picked up her limp body, and cradled it, wailing and crying out for Kay to help him. But there was no answer, except for the sound of his cries.

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Mrs. Weisz sat up in her bed as she heard the commotion coming from the hallway. She went to the door and opened it just as a policeman ran by. She jumped back, startled.

“What in God's na—“, she started to say, then heard screams coming from down the hallway.

She peered out and saw Donnie Jessup's door was open. She heard screaming, and other voices shouting. Suddenly, four police-men struggled out the door, dragging Donnie with them. He out of control, screaming and trying to swing at them with his

arms, but he was cuffed. They dragged him past her. He looked at her, but didn't *see* her. She saw no recognition in his eyes.

“Donnie...?”

She heard a ding as the elevator doors opened, and the officers pulled Donnie in with them.

Mrs. Weisz heard a door close, and turned to see an officer still at Donnie's apartment. She walked up to him.

“Excuse me, what happened here? What happened to Donnie?”

He looked up to her with his sad eyes.

“I'm afraid Mr. Jessup isn't... feeling well.”

“Isn't feeling well”, she asked incredulous.

“I'm sure you know what happened to his wife. I guess it was too much for him to bear.”

Mrs. Weisz looked at him, and then at the door.

“I don't understand. What happened to Annie?”

“Annie, Ma'am?”

“Annie; the baby! Where's the baby?”

“I don't know what you're talking about Ma'am; there's no baby.”

“Of course there was. Donnie and his wife had just had a baby before she died!”

The officer shook his head.

“No, Ma'am; I'm afraid you're wrong, there was no child. I was the officer in charge of Mrs. Jessup's accident. She died while she was pregnant. There was no baby.”

Mrs. Weisz sobbed once, as a tear fell. The officer put his arm on her shoulder.

“I’m very sorry, but I have to go with them. Will you be okay?”

“Yes”, she said, barely listening to him.

He let his hand drop from her shoulder and walked away. Mrs. Weisz heard the elevator door close. She sighed, then began to head towards her apartment, when she heard a sound. She leaned her ear towards Donnie’s apartment. She heard a baby crying. She tried the door knob, but it was locked. The baby continued crying, then, faintly, she heard a man’s voice.

“Ssshhh. She’ll hear you.”

And the crying stopped.