

Every time I saw those kids coming out of the building it looked the same to me and always brought a smile to my face; the teachers would be trying so hard to control the kids and make them walk safely outside while the kids, knowing that they only had half an hour to play and would happily run over those teachers if they got in the way.

They understood and tried to be safe but there was too much fun to be had and too little time to enjoy it and they were just kids after all.

I would sometimes look at those kids and wonder, which of them is a future president? A senator? doctor, lawyer, Baker or candlestick maker, and as I was thinking that, the word

“Killer”

Was whispered into my ear so softly that I thought it was my imagination; a distortion of the wind or something, and I looked around but there was no one else there.

There was no one close enough to whisper in my ear or say that loud enough that I might overhear it or even to suggest that, and then I wondered, who in the hell in their right mind could envision one of those innocent children as a killer, or see those sweet and trusting faces and see that kind of personality?

But when I didn't react to it, I felt it building up again, ready to shout louder this time so I covered my ears because I didn't know what else to do. Instead, it whispered more intensely into my ear and I felt the breath of something long dead and oh so very cold touch my skin which caused me to jump to my feet as I shivered. I looked around quickly again, not sure if I wanted to know what it was or not but there was still no one there though I heard it just as clear as the first time:

Killer

But this time I heard a laugh that was fading away as I caught it, I thought if I saw who was saying that word I would see the teeth of the Cheshire cat floating out there and grinning at me; though those teeth would have been many more in number and razor sharp, but I also knew that if I did see them, I would start laughing too; but I would never be able to stop once I did.

Then I heard the bell, the doors flew open and there was Jake, clapping and shouting about being “Orn Ree” which was his version of “Born Free” which was his favorite movie and I forgot about the voice I heard before because I was laughing because he looked so happy.

I picked up my bag of chips and returned to my lunch but I wasn't hungry anymore so I just put it down and tried to enjoy watching my son as he ran and played without a care in the world, I envied him that window of time, that freedom and the joy that was infectious and I was glad I was able to have this time to share that and witness it.

As I sat down to watch him play, I thought about how much fun this was for me, sharing his life without influencing what he did, not ruining or intruding on it but once again I got the feeling that something was very wrong; it crept into my thoughts again and I could not shake it.

I looked around me for the first time since the kids came out and saw three teenagers there, they were about 16 or so, and yet they didn't look very sweet as I watched them sitting on swings and smoking something they passed between them.

Further into the park, there were some guys practicing their infield moves on the diamond as they hit grounders at each other, shagged them and called out the bases to shorten their reaction times and make the moves routine and perfect.

In the other direction was a woman with a stroller and two kids playing on the merry-go-round, taking turns making each other fly off or throw up as they went faster and faster.

Beyond those kids and he was another teenager who was reading a book and I could see the name "Ann Rice" on the cover but not much else and a little farther there was a couple trading air but they weren't paying attention to anything or anyone else.

Nothing unusual in any of them, and yet I still felt a strong sense of danger; that I needed to warn the kids, the danger was not from the lovers, intent on swallowing each other face first, not from the nanny who was trying to keep her kids close and in some order but they were doing their best to ignore her.

I looked back at the kids again, safely behind the fence and I felt a stronger sense of danger that I must warn them about, make them run back into the building but I had no idea why the hairs were standing up on my arms and I felt chills spreading through my body.

Feeling a strong sense of dread, I looked up at the sky and the sun turned blood-red, the clouds quickly swept in and darkened everything else; there were no shadows, something that I thought would help a vampire but I didn't know why I thought of that just then.

I looked around again, checking all of the people in the area and swept past each of them as if I was checking them off a "safety list" but kept returning to the kid reading Ann Rice, and when I looked at him for maybe the third time he stood up and threw the book aside as if he was tired of hiding from me.

He turned towards me and walked slowly and deliberately towards me, and I realized that this kid was the threat all along though he paid me no attention until now.

As he got closer to me I saw that his eyes were blood red, skin white as alabaster as if he stepped out of a grave and jet black hair which was swept back and away from his face, and as I watched his fingernails grow to the point of being claws now; long and sharp as they extended towards me.

He looked right at me and growled like some mad beast that was closing in on it's prey and I thought I was going to fight the beast as he began to run towards me; looking me in the eyes and snapping his jaw as he ran, his hands coming up to rip into me, I could hear his teeth slam together with bone-crushing force.

There was no where to run and no time to think of anything but to put my hands up and try to defend myself somehow, as I braced for the hit he passed right through me and kept going as if he didn't even notice me there.

I looked at him as he ran past me, still running and not slowing down a bit and I was thinking, hoping that this was just a daydream and that I was fast asleep on that bench and would wake up soon with the danger over, and the kids already back inside; safely learning the lesson for the day. I even thought I saw Jake, who upon seeing me there and calling at me through the fence until he was forced to go back in with the others.

To my horror I realized that the boy was not stopping, nor was he slowing down, and then he scaled that ten-foot tall fence in a flash and then through the concertina wire; hardly noticing as it ripped at his flesh and he left parts of him hanging off there but it never showed him down and now he was on the other side; searching through the kids that were too busy having fun to notice the danger they were in and no one that was in charge seemed to have noticed him either.

I ran to the fence and began to shake it, making as much noise as I could manage while trying to get someone's attention but no one seemed to hear me or even notice that I was there, not knowing what else to do I began to shout at my son, "Get away from him! He's going to kill you!" I shouted, Jake! Jake!" as loud as I could but he never even turned his head.

"Jacob Lingstrom! Don't you ignore your father!" I shouted at him while I shook the fence even harder in my frustrations and I was looking in both directions but there was no opening except through the office and that was on the other side and would have taken too long.

If I was in charge of the safety of these kids, I would have noticed the commotion I was making with the fence, yet I could see that they were talking and smiling among themselves with the occasional "Johnny! Stop pulling her hair this instant!" at one of the more energetic boys but not even so much as a nod in my direction.

Then the beast saw what he wanted and started to move slowly towards my son, he was running around at full speed and almost fell over himself as he turned to the right looking at Jake until he was sure that he'd found him.

Finally, one of the teachers saw it and started to get in the way and she tried to make it stop; not realizing the danger she was in or what she was facing or maybe it was her love for the kids because she couldn't stop it and yet knew that she had to try. She raised her hand as if to say "Stop!" and started to blow her whistle but the whistle died as he moved in for the attack.

He stepped closer to her and dropped to all fours and ripped into the side of her leg and yanked her to the ground and as his head struck the floor she was still trying to blow the whistle so he ripped into her throat until she stopped.

Then Jake finally saw me, he waved and started running towards me and laughing hard as he always did when he saw me. He always made me so happy when he did that because he was so happy to see me but I shouted at him to go the other way but he never heard me, the beast grabbed him by the back of his shirt and slammed him hard onto the ground face first.

Then it stopped and looked right at me, making sure that I saw this and that I knew that I was helpless to prevent it from happening; it howled in triumph and pounced on my unconscious son, I turned away from him as I cried and slid down the fence, still calling to him as seeing his face as he ran towards me.

"Hey man! No sleeping in the park!"

"What?" I stammered as I opened my eyes and looked at the officer standing in front of me, I turned and looked towards the school thinking that they were there to help, though it was too late for Jake but they were all filing into the building now, Jake among the stragglers, trying to squeeze as much fun as he could out of the time he had.

I looked where the kid was reading and he was gone but the book was still there, the pages flipping over and back with the wind.