

# DARK BEAR



A SCREENPLAY BY BEN KREIS

EXT. PARK - DAY

A boy sits on the swing set, not moving. His mother sits nearby on a park bench smoking a cigarette. She doesn't seem to be watching the boy, but he's watching her. She finishes her cigarette and flicks it away. The boy gets up and goes over to her. She looks down at him. He smiles, taking her hand in his he tries to pull her to her feet.

Her dark expression breaks into a semi-smile and she allows him to lead her to the swings. He climbs back onto the swing and she starts pushing him. As he soars higher and higher his smile breaks into a toothy grin and he even laughs. She smiles at the sound of his laughter.

Nearby a car horn honks. The boy and his mother both look over. A man is just getting out of his car which is idling by the curb. He's looking over at them. The boy's mother waves to the man and runs off to meet him. The man meets her on the passenger side of the car. They embrace and kiss. He holds up a small bottle. The boy's mother grabs it in excitement. The man opens the door and she gets in. Just before the man closes the door she hollers out to the boy.

MOTHER

Go home when you're done.

The man slams the door closed. A moment later the car is gone, the swing has stopped moving and the boy is just sitting there.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

The sunlight is coming into the room through a nearby window. The boy is awake, but still in bed, half of his face buried in his pillow. His one visible eye is wide open. He gets up.

SERIES OF SHOTS

A) The boy slips into a t-shirt.

B) Shoves books into his backpack.

C) Cereal pours out of a box.

- D) The boy reads a book while he eats his breakfast.
- E) The boy washes the bowl and spoon.
- F) The boy puts the bowl and spoon into the drying rack.

END OF SERIES OF SHOTS

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The boy stops in front of the hallway. He contemplates the door at the other end. Then he notices that the door is slightly ajar. He creeps down the hallway towards it.

The boy pushes the door open slowly. His mother is still in bed asleep, her back to him. He pushes the door open a little wider. The man is standing at the end of the bed pulling his pants on.

MAN

Get out you little faggot!

The man slams the door closed, hitting the boy. The boy sprawls backwards onto the hallway floor, holding his face. A moment later the man appears, dressed. He steps over the boy slapping his head softly.

MAN

Stop crying.

The man leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAYGROUND - DAY

The boy sits alone on the curb while the other kids play. The left side of his face is bruised. A book hangs limply in his hands. His eyes are glazed, his mind far away.

SERIES OF SHOTS

- A) Exterior shot of school; the bell rings.
- B) Boy walking in a wooded area.

C) He throws a large stone into the water.

D) The boy smacks a stick on a tree, his teeth gritted. He hits the tree again and again until his stick breaks.

END OF SERIES OF SHOTS

EXT. WOODS - LATER

The boy is sitting by the water. He pokes what is left of his stick into the soft mud at the bottom of the stream; his mind still far away. His stick gets caught in the mud under an oddly shaped glob. He pulls on it with the stick. The water washes enough of the mud away for the boy to make out a small stained teddy bear. The boy's mind snaps back to the present at the sight of the bear.

He drops the stick and pulls his shirt sleeve up. Crouching down, he reaches into the stream and pulls the bear free of the mud.

The boy holds the bear under the water and works the mud away with his hands. When the last of the mud is gone, he lifts the bear out of the water. Dark stains cover the bear. The boy stares at it for a moment, thinking, then he gets up.

EXT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - DAY

A car at the drive-thru window pulls away. The boy appears. He runs over and grabs dropped change off the ground. The car next in line honks at the boy and he runs off, dropping some of his loot.

INT. LAUNDRY MAT - LATER

The boy is leaning over a trash can, foraging. He pulls out a small box of soap and shakes it. It's empty. He throws it back. He finds a big box with a little left inside. He tears the top off.

He walks over to a nearby washing machine, pours the soap in and closes the lid.

He pulls the coins out of his pocket and sorts out several quarters. He feeds them into the washing machine. He pushes the knob and the machine starts.

INT. LAUNDRY MAT - LATER

The boy is standing in front of the dryers, the bear dripping all over the floor in his left hand. The bear is still stained. The boy is examining the remaining change in his right hand. A nickel and two pennies, is all that remains.

He glances up. A woman finishes putting her clothes in a dryer. She inserts quarters and the machine starts. The boy watches her take her empty laundry basket, go out to her car and drive away.

INT. LAUNDRY MAT - LATER

The woman is back, emptying her clothes out of the dryer into her basket. She pulls the last of her items out then stops, puzzled. She takes the last item out of the dryer. It's a small stained teddy bear. Slightly disgusted, she throws it into the trash can behind her and leaves. The boy appears out of nowhere and snatches the bear out of the trash can. He brushes it off.

BACKPACK

The bear is nestled inside the boys backpack. The boy zips it closed and the bear disappears from view.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

The boy ties his shoes. Several books are strewn about on his dresser. He gathers them up and stuffs them into his backpack. The bear is sitting nearby. The boy grabs him and starts to stuff him into his backpack. He stops. A small tag is tied around the bears neck. He flips it over. There is a handwritten note on the back. It reads: Take the yellow folder. He glances around but doesn't see any folders.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The boy is seated at his desk reading his school book. His mouth moves as he reads. Through the windows behind him we can see the other children playing on the playground equipment outside. The teacher is seated at her desk going over some papers. She glances up and sees the boy. She puts her pencil down, slides her papers into her desk drawer and gets up. She walks down the aisle to where the boy is seated.

TEACHER

Aren't you going to go out for recess?

The boy glances up.

BOY

I didn't read the chapter last night.

The teacher smiles.

TEACHER

That's alright, you've got time. We're not taking the test until after recess.

The boy nods and goes back to the book, his mouth reading the words silently. The teacher exits the room. The boy puts his book down and closes his eyes, his mouth reciting something.

The boy opens his eyes and freezes. His eyes are locked on a stack of colorful folders on the teachers desk. The top one is bright yellow. It's the only yellow folder in the stack and it seems to stand out from the other items on the teachers desk.

The boy glances over at the door. He's still alone.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

The school building towers above. The bell rings.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

The boy is sitting on a rock under the bridge. His back against a concrete support, feet dangling over the shallow water. His backpack is sitting on the rock beside him, unzipped. Open in his hands is the yellow folder.

Inside the yellow folder is a drawing of a unicorn, obviously drawn by another student. There is nothing particularly unusual about the drawing. The boy flips the drawing over, a name is scrawled on the back. He looks the yellow folder over. It's unmarked. The boy can't see anything remarkable about any of it. He pushes the drawing back into the folder and closes it. For a moment he just sits there thinking. Then he crushes the folder in his hands and stands to throw it into the river.

As he gets up his foot catches on his backpack, pulling it off the rock and into the water. The boy drops the folder and snatches the contents of his backpack out of the shallow water.

He pulls the stained bear out of the water, grimacing at how wet it is. Then he notices something. A new tag is tied around its neck. It reads: Hide it.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALLEY - DUSK

The boy is walking home alone. The dogs bark at him as he passes by and for a moment the boy looks back over his shoulder to see if anyone is following him before moving on.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The boy slips the wrinkled yellow folder under his socks in a dresser drawer and closes the drawer.

CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS

A) The boy sits on his bed eating, not taking his eyes off the bear on his dresser. The last tag is gone.

B) The boy sits at his desk, pencil in hand, school books open before him, but his eyes are still glued to the bear.

C) The boy digs through a pile of toys on the floor of his closet. He finds a toy safe with a little plastic key. He takes it over to his dresser and puts the bear inside. It just fits. He closes the door and locks it.

D) The boy ties the key onto a string.

E) The safe sits on the boy's dresser.

F) The boy sits on his bed watching the safe, the key hanging on the string around his neck.

G) The boy fights to stay awake, but his head falls forward as he dozes. He rouses himself.

H) The boy is slouched over, asleep.

END OF SERIES OF SHOTS

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

The boy lies awake on his bed. His clothes from the previous day are still on. He sits up smoothing his clothes. He glances over at the safe still sitting on his dresser. He breaks the string around his neck, goes over and unlocks the safe with the key.



He pulls the bear out. A tag is around its neck. The boy hesitates. Then he turns it over and reads it. It says: Put it under the blue jacket.

The boy glances around the room. His coat is thrown over a chair in the corner, but its green not blue. Dirty clothes are piled on the floor next to his dresser. But none of them are jackets. He thinks.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - LATER

The boy exits the house, closing the front door behind himself. He turns to leave. The man's car is in the driveway. He grits his teeth, hesitating for a moment. He walks down the driveway, glancing over at the interior of the car. Suddenly, he stops. A bright blue jacket is thrown across the passenger seat.

The boy glances at the front door of his house. No one is in sight. He steps around to the passenger side of the car, watching the front door the whole time. He slips his backpack off, unzips it and takes out the yellow folder. He opens the car door, slides the yellow folder under the blue jacket and closes the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

The school building towers above. The bell rings.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

The school day is just ending. The children are making their way through the halls and out the front doors. The boy strolls among them in no hurry. A girl brushes past him knocking into him slightly. She keeps going but turns to him.

GIRL

Sorry!

The boy watches her go. She runs out to the curb to a waiting car and opens the passenger side door. The boy stops suddenly. It's the car of the man who has been visiting his mother. The man grabs the blue jacket off of the seat and tosses it into the backseat, when he does so the girl sees the yellow folder, wrinkled and soiled.

GIRL

You took it?

The man looks down at the folder, obviously puzzled by its significance.

MAN

What?

GIRL

Why did you take it? I got marked down for not having it!

MAN

What are you talking about, I didn't take anything.

But it's too late, the girl grabs the folder and runs off. The man jumps out of the car.

MAN

Stacey!

But she's gone. The man glances around awkwardly to see if anyone is watching. He sees the boy and his expression darkens. He climbs back into his car, reaches over to slam the passenger side door and drives off, a little too fast for a school loading zone.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

The boy is perched on his rock, staring into nowhere. His face looks peaceful. The bear hangs limply in his hand, a new tag around its neck. It reads: Now you know I can help you.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK PORCH - NIGHT

The boy's mother is sitting on the back porch smoking a cigarette. The boy appears inside. He pushes the screen door open and pokes his head out.

BOY

Hi Mom.

The boy's expression changes. His mother's lip is split. Her eyes are puffy and red from crying.

BOY

What happened?

The boy steps out onto the step, and kneels down beside her.

MOTHER

I didn't make any supper, you'll  
have to find something for  
yourself.

BOY

But your face...

The boy's mother mashes her cigarette out on the stair. She turns to him and looks him in the eye.

MOTHER

There are some things little boys  
can't understand.

BOY

Who...did he, did that guy hit  
you?

The boy's mother smiles patronizingly at him.

MOTHER

Go inside.

The boy looks like he's going to cry.

BOY

But your face.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

The boy is sitting on his bed staring into nowhere. Outside the boy hears a car pulling into the driveway. The boy gets up and goes over to his window. The man's car comes to a sudden halt, one tire on the neighbor's lawn. The man gets out, stumbling slightly. He disappears from sight. A moment later the boy hears him banging on the front door.

MAN

(yelling)

Open up!

INT. STAIRS - SAME

The boy runs down the stairs, taking two at a time.

INT. LIVINGROOM - SAME

The boy's mother is already moving toward the door. The boy grabs her arm.

BOY

Don't open it!

MOTHER

It'll be fine.

The man bangs on the door again.

BOY

Please mom, don't...

MOTHER

Let go of me!

She is still moving towards the door despite his efforts.

BOY

Please mom...

MOTHER

LET GO OF ME!

She pries her arm free and unlocks the dead bolt, swinging the door open. The man stumbles in. His clothes are disheveled. He wraps himself around the boy's mother.

She struggles to close the front door before any of the neighbors can see.

MAN

Please forgive me, baby. I'm so sorry.

MOTHER

It's alright, I...

The man is in such a drunken stupor he kisses her before she can finish her sentence, his hand grasping for her breast. She pushes his hand down and turns to the boy.

MOTHER

Go upstairs, everything is fine.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The boy enters his room and closes the door. For a moment he just stands there, a dark expression on his face. Then he sees the stained teddy bear on his dresser. He walks over and stares into its dark glass eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

The boy is lying awake in his bed. All is quiet downstairs. He gets up and walks over to his window. The man's car is gone. The boy goes downstairs.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The boy stands listening. No sound is coming from his mother's room. The boy opens the door quietly and peeks in. His mother is lying in bed with her back to him.

INT. MOTHER'S BEDROOM - SAME

The boy walks around the bed to where his mother lies asleep. He's enraptured by her. A small bottle of clear liquid and a needle is on the nightstand. The boy takes them.

DOOR KNOB

The boy's hand pulls the door closed, latching it softly.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The teacher is talking at the front of the classroom. The boy is staring into nowhere. The teacher asks a question of the class but the boy doesn't hear.

TEACHER

Yes, Stacey?

The name jerks the boy out of his reverie. He looks over to see who the teacher called on. It's the girl from yesterday, the one with the yellow folder.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The boy is walking along the street opposite Stacey and a group of her friends. The kids laugh and talk loudly. They come to an intersection. Stacey hugs one of the other girls in the group and they all wave goodbye as she walks away down a separate street. The boy waits for her friends to move away then dashes across the street.

EXT. STREET CORNER - LATER

The boy is standing on a corner, partially hidden behind a telephone pole, watching the girl walk up the front steps of a house about half a block down. She disappears inside.

EXT. ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

The boy is walking along the alley looking over the bushes at the back of the houses beyond. He stops suddenly. The girl's house looms just ahead of him. He glances both ways down the alley before squeezing into the bushes. He comes to the girl's backyard. He stops. The back door bursts open and the man comes out a bag of trash in one hand and a red cup in the other. He walks across the yard towards the boy. The boy looks over to his right.

The garbage can is right beside him. He holds his breath as the man drops the trash into the can, replaces the lid and goes back into the house. He swings the door closed behind himself but it doesn't quite latch.

The boy just sits there for a moment. Then he slowly extracts the bear from his backpack. A new note around it's neck says, "Put the drug into the red cup". The boy glances back up at the ajar door.

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

The door swings open softly and the boy enters. He closes the door behind himself and just stands there for a moment listening. The house is deathly still. He glances around. Just ahead is the kitchen. The red cup is sitting on the counter.

The boy walks into the kitchen. He digs into his pocket for the little bottle of clear liquid he stole from his mother. He pours the whole bottle into the cup. The sudden noise of footsteps coming down the stairs scares the boy. He drops the bottle into the red cup. He slips into the pantry closet pulling the door closed. He can still see the red cup on the counter through a crack.

The girl appears. She climbs up onto the counter and retrieves a box of cereal. She sees the cup as she is climbing down from the counter. She listens for a moment. Then takes a quick gulp of the liquid in the red cup.

She coughs. She coughs again. Her expressions tightens. Her hand goes to her throat. She hacks painfully and falls down on the floor writhing in pain. The liquid in the red cup spills and the little bottle rolls across the floor.

The boy hears the man come into the room.

MAN

Stacey?!

The man appears in the boys crack. He lifts the girl into his arms. The man sees a small bottle on the floor nearby.

MAN

(frantic)

It's alright! Just drink some water, okay.

The man lifts the girl off the floor in one arm. He grabs a cup with his other hand and fills it at the sink. He forces the girl to drink. He refills the cup again. The girl is sputtering from all the water.

MAN  
(frantic)  
Your fine. You just need to  
drink water. Let's get you  
upstairs!

The man refills the cup and disappears from view taking the girl and cup with him. A moment later the stairs creak overhead.

The boy bursts from the pantry, runs down the hallway and out the back door not stopping to close it behind himself.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

A light rain is falling. The boy stops halfway across the bridge. He throws the bear against the railing and sinks to his knees, his head in his hands. After a long moment, he gets up and walks over to where the bear is lying. The bear is precariously close to the edge, just between the railings. Below the boy sees the river rushing past. With his foot, the boy pushes the bear off into the darkness below. It disappears from view. The boy slumps against the railing and cries.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSE - LATER

The boy walks up the sidewalk to his house, his mind far away. He stops suddenly. On the front step sits the bear.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

The boy jerks a drawer open. The random contents slosh to the front. The boy digs through until he finds a pair of scissors. He slams the drawer shut.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The boy enters closing the door behind himself. The scissors are in one hand and the bear in the other. He walks over to his dresser and cuts the bears head off.



The head rolls off the dresser and falls to the floor, bouncing softly. Then the boy cuts off an arm and then a leg.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

The boy is sitting on his bed staring at the bear on his dresser, whole and unharmed. The boy grabs the bear by its legs and beats it against the dresser. He throws it into his closet and slams the door.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The teacher is lecturing. The boy isn't listening. His eyes are glued to the empty seat where the girl usually sits. The school bell rings.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The boy is sitting by the stream, his mind far away. A stick snaps behind him. He turns. The man is standing not far off looking at him. He holds a stick.

MAN

So this is where little shits  
like you hang out, huh?

The boy gets up slowly.

MAN

(continued)

I take care of your mother. She  
needs a strong man to screw. I do  
it. She needs a little something  
to take the edge off life? I  
provide it.

The man swats some tall grass with the stick.

MAN

Funny how the very little bottle  
of joy I give her ends up on my  
own kitchen floor. And in my  
step-daughter...

The man's expression darkens. He runs forward. The boy runs out into the shallow stream but the man catches him throwing him down on his back. The man sits on the boy, pinning his arms. The water is flowing around the boys head. The man's hand is over the boys mouth so he can't scream.

MAN

Your short little life is about  
to flash before your eyes, kid.

The man pushes on the boys mouth, forcing his head deeper into the soft muddy stream bottom. The water rises over the boy's ears. The boy's eyes widen. The water rises over the boy's face. He panics but can't move. The man smiles at the boy's terror.

The man gets up suddenly. The boy bursts from the water gasping for breath, his body soaked, mud dripping from his hair.

MAN

See you around, kid.

The man smiles and walks away. The boy just sits in the stream watching him go.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET CORNER - NIGHT

It's raining. The boy is standing partially behind a telephone pole wearing a hooded rain coat. His eyes are fixed on something down the street.

EXT./INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

The garage door is wide open, lights on, music blaring from a boom box. The man is jacking his car up with a floor jack. He sets a floor creeper down beside the car and goes around to his tool cabinet. He digs through a couple drawers taking out some tools and slams the drawers shut. The man lies down on his floor creeper and slides himself under the car.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

The man doesn't hear the boy come in. The boy walks around the car on the opposite side from where the man is sprawled under it.

He walks to the front where the floor jack is holding the car up. He reaches out and takes a hold of the jack handle.

With a sudden twist the car drops. The music is too loud to hear anything more than a slight thud. The boy crouches down and looks under the car. The man is pinned beneath it. His head is being crushed between the concrete floor and the cars undercarriage. He sees the boy but can't speak because he can't take a breath. Blood spreads on the concrete floor around him. The boy watches him for a moment then he gets up and leaves, the music still blaring.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVINGROOM - LATER

The boy comes in, shaking himself off. He takes his coat off and drapes it over a chair. He stoops and unties his shoes.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The boy enters. He opens his backpack and takes the bear out. He tosses his backpack onto his dresser and goes over to his bed. He sets the bear down on his bed against his pillow and leaves.

EXT. MOTHER'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The boy's hand twists the door knob slowly. He opens the door. In the darkness, he can just make out his mother lying in her bed, her back to him. He enters.

INT. MOTHER'S BEDROOM - SAME

The boy walks around to her side of the bed and kneels down beside her. She is asleep.

He adjusts her blankets. Her arm falls limply out of the bed, hanging at an awkward angle. The boy reaches out to slip it back into bed beside her but his hand recoils at the touch of it. It's wet. He glances down at his hand. There is something dark on his fingers. The boy leaps to his feet and runs out of the room.

INT. BATHROOM - SAME

The boy switches the light on. He stares at his hand. Blood is running down his fingers. He looks like he's going to faint. Then he sees the bathroom. Blood covers the sink. A trail of it goes out of the bathroom into his mother's room. A bloody razor blade lies on the vanity. The boy runs out.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The boy bursts into his bedroom. He stops. There is nothing on his bed but his pillow. The bear is gone.

FADE OUT.