



## Billy Straight

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*Jonathan Kellerman*

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Présentation de l'éditeur

Rien à faire, Billy, un gamin de 13 ans qui préfère les rues de Los Angeles aux coups qu'il recevait chez lui, a bien vu, à 1 heure du matin, une jeune femme se faire poignarder à Griffith Park par un homme qui s'est ensuite enfui dans une voiture immatriculée PLYR 1. L'anonymat dans lequel l'enfant trouvait sa sécurité n'existe plus. Sûr que le meurtrier l'a vu, Billy a tellement peur qu'il quitte sa cachette sans prendre le temps de faire place nette.

Vite alertée par les gardes du parc, l'inspectrice Petra Connor découvre l'identité de la victime, Lisa Ramsey, l'ex-femme d'un acteur célèbre dans les milieux de la télévision, soupçonne aussitôt ce dernier et, plus grave pour Billy, comprend que quelqu'un a vu le crime.

Peu après, dans une villa qui tombe en ruine, une vieille dame se met à lire le journal avec une assiduité qui surprend beaucoup sa demoiselle de compagnie...

Auteur de douze romans, dont *When the Bough Breaks* qui lui valut l'Edgar du policier, *La Clinique*, *La Sourde*, etc. Jonathan Kellerman est un spécialiste réputé des problèmes de l'enfance. Il vit à Los Angeles avec son épouse, la romancière Faye Kellerman.

Amazon.fr

Battu par l'amant de sa mère, Billy Straight, petit garçon courageux et astucieux, tente d'échapper aux perversions des adultes. Témoin involontaire d'un meurtre depuis la grotte d'un parc, il comprend vite que son identification lui ferait perdre la protection qu'il avait trouvée dans l'anonymat de la vie urbaine. S'engage alors une course poursuite au cours de laquelle le garçon doit fuir à la fois devant la police et devant son meurtrier qui dispose, grâce à l'appel à témoin, de son portrait robot, sans oublier son tortionnaire motivé par la récompense promise pour sa capture. Sans doute l'un des meilleurs romans de Jonathan Kellerman, désormais au sommet de son art. Le roman décrit avec émotion un enfant décidé à survivre face à des adultes trop faibles pour le défendre ou trop occupés à profiter de son dénuement. Le suspense de l'intrigue est renforcé par la rage désespérée de vivre qui anime le héros dont le salut dépendra de sa capacité à faire enfin confiance aux adultes qui cherchent à le protéger. --*Madeleine Sorel* Extrait

In the park you see things.

But not what I saw tonight.

God, God . . .

I wanted to be dreaming but I was awake, smelling chili meat and onions and the pine trees.

First, the car drove up to the edge of the parking lot. They got out and talked and he grabbed her, like in a hug. I thought maybe they were going to kiss and I'd watch that.

Then all of a sudden, she made a weird sound--surprised, squeaky, like a cat or dog that gets stepped on.

He let go of her and she fell. Then he bent down next to her and his arm started moving up and down really fast. I thought he was punching her, and that was bad enough, and I kept thinking should I do something. But then I heard another sound, fast, wet, like the butcher at Stater Brothers back in Watson chopping meat--chuck chuck chuck.

He kept doing it, moving his arm up and down.

I wasn't breathing. My heart was on fire. My legs were cold. Then they turned hot-wet.

Pissing my pants like a stupid baby!

The chuck chuck stopped. He stood up, big and wide, wiped his hands on his pants. Something was in his hand and he held it far from his body.

He looked all around. Then in my direction.

Could he see me, hear me--smell me?

He kept looking. I wanted to run but knew he'd hear me. But staying here could trap me--how could he see anything behind the rocks? They're like a cave with no roof, just cracks you can look through, which is the reason I picked them as one of my places.

My stomach started to churn around, and I wanted to run so badly my leg muscles were jumping under my skin.

A breeze came through the trees, blowing up pine smell and piss stink.

Would it blow against the chili-burger's wrapping paper and make noise? Would he smell me?

He looked around some more. My stomach hurt so bad.

All of a sudden he jumped ran back to the car, got in, drove away.

I didn't want to see when he passed under the lamp at the corner of the parking lot, didn't want to read the license plate.

plyr 1.

The letters burned into my mind.

Why did I look?

Why?

I'm still sitting here. My Casio says 1:12 a.m.

I need to get out of here, but what if he's just driving around and comes back--no, that would be stupid, why would he do that?

I can't stand it. She's down there, and I smell like piss and meat and onions and chili. Real dinner from the Oki-Rama on the Boulevard, that Chinese guy who never smiles or looks at your face. I paid \$2.38 and now I want to throw it up.

My jeans are starting to get sticky and itchy. Going over to the public bathroom at the other end of the lot is too dangerous . . . that arm going up and down. Like he was just doing a job. He wasn't as big as Moron, but he was big enough. She trusted him, let him hug her . . . what did she do to make him so mad . . . could she still be alive?

No way. Impossible.

I listen carefully to see if she's making any sounds. Nothing but the freeway noise from across the east side of the park and traffic from the Boulevard. Not much traffic tonight. Sometimes, when the wind blows north, you hear ambulance sirens, motorcycles, car honks. The city's all around. The park looks like the country, but I know the difference.

Who is she?--forget that, I don't want to know.

What I want is to put tonight on rewind.

That squeaky sound--like he took the air right out of her. For sure she's . . . gone. But what if she isn't?

Even if she isn't, she will be soon, all that chucking. And what could I do for her, anyway? Breathe into her mouth, put my face in her blood?

What if he comes back while I'm doing it?

Would he come back? That would be stupid, but there are always surprises. She sure found that out.  
I can't help her. I have to put this all out of my mind.  
I'll sit here for ten more minutes--no, fifteen. Twenty. Then I'll get my Place Two stuff together and move.

Where to? Place One, up near the observatory, is too far, and so are Three and Four, even though Three would be good 'cause it has a stream for washing. That leaves Five, in the fern tangle behind the zoo, all those trees. A little closer, but still a long walk in the dark.  
But it's also the hardest one to find.

Okay, I'll go to Five. Me and the animals. The way they cry and roar and smash against their cages makes it hard to sleep, but tonight I probably won't sleep anyway.

Meantime, I sit here and wait.

Pray.

Our Father in heaven, how about no more surprises?

Not that praying ever got me anything, and sometimes I wonder if there's anyone up there to pray to or just stars--humongous balls of gas in an empty black universe.

Then I get worried that I'm blaspheming.

Maybe some kind of God is up there; maybe He's saved me lots of times and I'm just too dumb to know it.

Or not a good enough person to appreciate Him.

Maybe God saved me tonight, putting me behind the rocks, instead of out in the open.

But if he had seen me when he drove up, he probably would've changed his mind and not done anything to her.

So did God want her to . . .

No, he just would've gone somewhere else to do it . . . whatever.

In case You saved me, thank You, God.

In case You're up there, do You have a plan for me?

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