

BABY STEPS

Written by

Eric A. Dyson

Babysteps5250@Gmail.com

(626) 676-1169

INT. KENNY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

This apartment is cluttered. Piles of unopened mail are scattered about. Only a few dimly lit fixtures and television off set the orange glow of the outside sodium vapor lights.

KENNY MEADOWS (African American, early 30's) seems like he's high because he is. Following through with normal activities feel laborious, disjointed and unsteady. He fills a glass with ice. He turns on a burner to warm up some day old Mac and cheese. Kenny grabs a large pitcher and dumps maybe too much purple flavored Cool-Aid into it. As the pitcher fills, the drugs he's on kick into overdrive. Kenny is frozen in place. An empty pill bottle falls from his hand.

From Kenny's perspective, the world grinds into ultra slow motion. He becomes hyper aware of this feeling. The sounds of the outside world, his blinking eyes. The movement of his hands seem painfully slow. He wants to take a step but he cannot move his feet.

This state of suspended animation is broken by the sound of a screeching smoke alarm. An immeasurable amount of time has passed. The glass full of ice has melted. The water filling the pitcher has long since overflowed. The Mac and cheese on the stove top is charred and burning. Smoke fills his apartment.

Kenny runs around wafting a towel at the alarm. He opens windows. In the melee things get knocked over.

KENNY

Oh shit. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck! No! No!
No!

Kenny tosses the burning Mac and cheese into the flowing water of the sink. In doing so he burns his hand.

INT. HALL - DAY

The sounds from Kenny's apartment echo into the hall. A neighbor door opens. MS. MAYBELLE (late 80's African American) uses her walker to get closer to Kenny's door. CHAUNCEY (11 year old, African American, thick glasses, on the spectrum), Maybelle's grandson, pops his head out.

CHAUNCEY

Gramma. Is Kenny ok?

Maybelle has stopped outside of Kenny's door. The noise has stopped. She nods her head affirming he is ok. But the look on her face holds deep concern.

Ms. Maybelle makes her way back to her apartment. Only the sounds of her walker fill the hallway.

A split second before she is back to her door, a cacophony of screams and crashes erupts from Kenny's apartment.

Chauncey rushes past his grandma to Kenny's door.

CHAUNCEY

Kenny... Kenny it's me... Open up.
Kenny.

TIME CUT:

INT. MAYBELLE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Chauncey looks out the window. On the street below, a police officer takes notes as he talks with Ms. Maybelle. Moments later, Kenny is wheeled out and taken away in an ambulance.

Chauncey retreats to a kid sized table. From a shoe box, he pulls a stack of blank index cards and a sharpie.

INT. AMBULANCE - NIGHT

Kenny is barely conscious. A paramedic calls out Kenny's vitals.

PARAMEDIC

BP is 140 over 90.

With a flashlight, the paramedic checks Kenny's pupil dilation. He attempts to keep Kenny communicative.

PARAMEDIC

Can you tell me your name? What's going on? Did you take anything? Stay with us. We're gonna get you some help.

A vitals machine begins to beep rapidly. Kenny's eyes roll back into his head. He begins to foam at the mouth as a seizure starts.

PARAMEDIC

Administering two milligrams of Naloxone.

The ambulance races to get Kenny to the ER.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Kenny in a hospital bed. His arms secured to a railing. Slowly Kenny's eyes flutter open. As things come into focus, he see's a man in the restroom taking a leak. The man flushes the toilet. He turns and see's Kenny watching him.

DR. WILLIS

(busted)

Oops. Almost forgot. Yes I'm a doctor. Yes I should be better about washing my hands. I'm working on it.

He turns back to wash his hands.

KENNY

Aww shit.

This is Doctor Willis. Mid to late fifties. Not your typical doctor. If not for the white lab coat he dropped on the floor, you would think he's in a biker gang.

DR. WILLIS

You must really like this place to be back so soon.

The doctor pulls up a chair next to Kenny's bed.

DR. WILLIS (CONT'D)

Wow. They got you tied in here pretty good. Hi Kenny. It's good to see you still breathing. But it's not good to see you again. I mean it is good to see you again. Just not here.

Dr. Willis awkwardly shakes Kenny's strapped in hand.

KENNY

Hey Dr. Willis.

DR. WILLIS

Don't call me that. Reminds me of my old man. We got a few issues we're working on. It's better than it was. But still. Anyhow. Just call me Henry.

KENNY

Hi Henry.

DR. WILLIS
Hi Kenny. You look like shit.

KENNY
And that's exactly how I feel.

DR. WILLIS
Let me know if you need to...

Kenny lurches up in his bed. His mouth fills with vomit. The doctor quickly grabs a trash can.

DR. WILLIS (CONT'D)
Yepp. There it is. Let's just keep
this close.

After a few good pukes, Kenny sits back in his bed.

DR. WILLIS
You good? All done?

The doctor unlocks one of Kenny's wrists. He offers him a cup of water and a few tissues.

DR. WILLIS
Do you know what day it is?

KENNY
Saturday.

DR. WILLIS
Do you remember when you got here?

KENNY
Last night sometime.

DR. WILLIS
Do you believe in time travel?

KENNY
What?

DR. WILLIS
I'm just screwing with you.

The doctor takes a more serious tone.

DR. WILLIS
Today is Tuesday. You've been out
of it for a while. As shitty as you
look right now is actually an
improvement.

KENNY

Great. So what's next?

DR. WILLIS

What's next is up to you my man.

The doctor makes a note in Kenny's file. A nurse enters. The doctor hands her the file.

DR. WILLIS

He's clear for transfer.

Dr. Willis leaves.

KENNY

Transfer? Where am I going?

MONTAGE:

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Kenny is in a wheelchair. He's being transported from the "regular" hospital. Soothing colors. People bringing get well wishes. Open air atriums make way to an underground hallway. Bleak overhead fluorescent tubes are all that adorn this part of the hospital.

INT. COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH HOSPITAL - DAY

The aid transporting Kenny gets buzzed in. He hands a guard Kenny's paperwork. The aid goes back through the door he came in.

Kenny and the guard are alone. The guard looks mean as hell. All business.

KENNY

Do you know how long I have to wait for?

The guard pulls out a cell phone and shrugs his shoulders.

KENNY

Do you know where they're taking me?

Again the guard offers no help.

KENNY

(agitated)
Do you understand English?

GUARD

Do you understand, shut the fuck up
before I bust you in yo ass!

KENNY

Am I in jail?

GUARD

For the next seventy two hours you
are.

INT. KENNY'S APARTMENT - DAY

All is quiet and still. The burnt Mac and cheese, the now broken glass sits in a puddle of water. Purple Kool-Aid powder has stained the sink. Ants have begun to invade as well as cockroaches.

Under the mail slot in the door is a pile of mail.

The mail slot pushes open. A set eyes peer in. In a sing songy voice, Chauncey calls for Kenny for an awkwardly long time.

CHAUNCEY

Kenny! Hey Kenny! It's me.
Chauncey. Kenny? You in there?
Hellooooooooooooo. Are you sleep?
Are you wearing headphones? Are you
practicing holding your breath
underwater in the bathtub? I do
that sometimes. I'm up to ninety
seven seconds. That's the same as
one minute and thirty seven
seconds. Did you know that? Kenny?
Well... ok. I'll come back later.

The mail door flaps shut then opens again.

CHAUNCEY

Bye!

The slot closes again. Moments later an index card with writing falls through the slot.