

HIS BROTHER ' S KEEPER

by

LISA D. MERRILL

Lisa D. Merrill
619-252-1831
Info@whatifentertainment.net
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FADE IN:

And the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?"

And Cain replied: "Am I my brother's keeper? Is it my responsibility to know where my brother is?"

And the LORD said, "The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you shall be marked, and become a fugitive and a wanderer on the Earth."

And the LORD put a mark on Cain, to be upon him til the end of his days, lest any who came upon him should kill him. Then Cain went away from the presence of the LORD, and his soul dwelt in the Land of the Wandering, east of Eden.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ESTABLISHING SHOT - STREET - DAY

Three BOYS toss a football on a quiet suburban street.

KENNY, 11, wiry with large green eyes, dimpled cheeks grips the football in one hand. He brings his arm back.

KENNY

Lance! Go long.

LANCE, 11, serious, despite the smattering of All American freckles across his turned up nose, rushes up the street away from Kenny.

Lance has

an unusual birthmark

in the shape of a sloped number nine on the right side of his neck.

ALEX, 12, big boned boy, races after Lance. Kenny throws the football. Still running, Lance turns, arms outstretched.

Lance catches the pigskin!

Alex SMASHES into Lance, causing him to fumble the ball.

Kenny winces.

The football hits the pavement, bounces twice and lays still.

Lance turns on Alex.

LANCE
Why'd you do that?

Kenny, worried look on his face, moves toward Alex.

ALEX
(shrugs)
Just goofin' around.

LANCE
Well don't.

Lance trots over and retrieves the ball.

Alex looks over at Kenny. Kenny shrugs.

Lance brings his arm back. He launches the ball at Kenny. It goes over Kenny's head. It bounces against a

window...

. . .falls onto the hedge. . . and topples to floor of the hidden hedged walkway.

KENNY
Damn.

Mr. SEBALD, 50s, paunchy, glasses watches them from the window. He's not happy.

The boys come closer to the front of the house.

LANCE
Go get it, Kenny.

KENNY
No way!

ALEX
(to Lance)
You go get it. You threw it.

The boys shake their heads and mumble.

EXT. HOUSE - HEDGED WALKWAY

appears on the walkway. He picks up the ball.

The boys stare back at him, wide eyed.

He waves it at them, mockingly.

MR. SEBALD
This yours?

Kenny and Alex nod. Lance doesn't react.

MR. SEBALD
(sneers)
Well. . . it's mine now.

He turns around and disappears. He goes inside, closing the door tightly behind him.

Kenny and Alex exchange glances.

Lance's head is down slightly, eyes up, glaring

at the door that Sebald disappeared through.

KENNY
Come on. I have another one. It's not worth it.

Lance doesn't move.

He moves his fingers slowly over the mark on his neck.

Kenny frowns.

EXT. SIDEWALK OUTSIDE SEBALD'S HOUSE - LATER

Lance kneels on the sidewalk. He's drawing something.

EXT. SEBALD HOUSE - WINDOW

Mr. Sebald leans out the window.

MR. SEBALD
HEY! YOU! That's defacing public property. Get outta here!

Lance keeps drawing.

MR. SEBALD
Get outta here before I call the cops!

Lance draws on.

Mr. Sebald leaves the window and walks out onto the walkway.

MR. SEBALD

You better stop right now, boy! You hear me?

He strides toward Lance.

Lance whips out a hand towel from his back pocket. He swipes it over whatever it is he's drawing.

Mr. Sebald reaches the sidewalk. Lance LEAPS up! He takes off at a gallop down the street.

MR. SEBALD

DON'T COME BACK! YA HEAR ME?!

Mr. Sebald frowns down at the sidewalk. He looks in the general direction of Lance's disappearance. He winces slightly, and puts a hand to his forehead.

He squints down at the sidewalk.

EXT. KENNY'S HOUSE - PORCH

Kenny sits on the front porch. He ties his shoes. From inside;

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Diane? Did you hear what happened?
(pause) Hard to believe, isn't it?

Kenny perks up. He listens.

CUT TO:

INT. LANCE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Lance shovels scrambled eggs. DIANE MCDERMOTT, early 40s, speaks on the phone.

DIANE

Yes, and so sudden. (pause) Anna said it was a stroke. (pause) Yes, he was a mean one, especially to the kids. (pause)

Lance looks up from his eggs.

DIANE

I know, but you don't wish that on anyone. (pause) Okay. 'Bye.

Diane hangs up the phone. She turns to Lance.

DIANE
That was Kenny's mom. Mr. Sebald
died last night.

Lance stays silent. He continues to eat.

Diane sits down beside him. She touches his arm. He doesn't react.

DIANE
I know it's been hard for you since
your dad died. Maybe we can get
away this weekend. Go down to
Ensenada. You like it there, right?

Lance shrugs.

Diane squeezes his arm. She stands. She gives him a motherly look.

Lance concentrates on polishing off the eggs.

EXT. STREET - LATER

Lance and Kenny, packs on their backs, traipse down the street.

KENNY
You hear about Sebald?

LANCE
Yep. Serves him right. He shouldn't
have taken our ball.

Sebald's house comes into view.

The boys start to pass the house. Suddenly, Kenny halts.

Lance walks on.

Kenny stares down at the

**remains of a headless chalk stick figure, football in one of
its hands.**

Kenny cocks his head, studying the drawing. He looks up. His eyes follow Lance. He frowns.

Lance stops. He turns around.

LANCE
You coming?

Kenny nods. He hurries to catch up to Lance.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

MISS JOHNSON, 30s, no nonsense type, writes

MISS JOHNSON on the white board.

Alex leans in to Kenny.

ALEX
(whispers)
My mom says Mrs. Armstrong's in a
coma.

A GIRL next to them leans in.

GIRL
(whispers)
My dad says her brain's dead.

ALEX
(whispers)
Your brain's dead!

The girl makes a face at him.

Miss Johnson turns around to face the children.

MISS JOHNSON
Hello, Class. I'm Miss Johnson.
Mrs. Armstrong is going to be out
for awhile, quite possibly
indefinitely, so I'll be your--

FIONA, 11, pipes up.

FIONA
When's she coming back?

MISS JOHNSON
And you are. . .?

FIONA
Fiona Jane Cuttledom.

MISS JOHNSON
Well, Fiona, first of all, please
don't interrupt me.

Secondly, I don't know when Mrs. Armstrong will be back. I may very well be with you until the end of the year.

Alex and Kenny exchange glances. Alex mouths the words, "I told you".

MISS JOHNSON

I'm going to call roll, and then I thought we'd start with math this morning.

The room erupts into one big GROAN.

LANCE

Mrs. Armstrong never makes us do math before lunch.

MISS JOHNSON

I'm not Mrs. Armstrong.

LANCE

(sarcastic)

You can say that again.

MISS JOHNSON

What's your name?

Lance stays silent.

MISS JOHNSON

I asked you your name.

Not a peep out of Lance. Miss Johnson smiles sweetly.

MISS JOHNSON

Okay. . .I'm going to count to three. If I get to three and you haven't told me your name, you'll stay after class today. One. . .two. . .

Kenny looks troubled.

FIONA

It's Lance Cain McDermott!

LANCE

SHUT UP!

MISS JOHNSON

Lance. We don't tell fellow classmates to shut up.

And Fiona telling me your name,
doesn't save you. You'll stay here
and help me clean up until four.

LANCE
But I have a game!

MISS JOHNSON
Should've thought of that before
you kept your mouth closed.

Lance glares at her.

Miss Johnson ignores him. She calls roll.

MISS JOHNSON
Alex Abalin.

ALEX
Here.

MISS JOHNSON
Kenneth Abel.

Kenny looks up.

KENNY
Here.

EXT. PLAYGROUND - LATE AFTERNOON

Lance flips

a dry erase marker

back and forth between his fingers. Kenny watches him.

KENNY
Sorry you have to miss the game.

LANCE
Who says I'm missing the game?

KENNY
Um. . .Miss Johnson.

LANCE
Think so, huh? She won't be around
for long.

KENNY
What do you mean?

Lance shrugs. He starts to walk off.

KENNY

WAIT!

Lance turns. The two boys stare at one another.

LANCE

Go to the game, Kenny.

KENNY

No.

LANCE

No?

KENNY

I know what you do. I don't know
how you do it, but I know.

Lance flips the marker more agitatedly.

KENNY

Johnny Menton last year. Mrs.
Armstrong. Mr. Sebald.

(beat)

Even your--

LANCE

(grins)

Coincidences, Kenny boy. That's
all.

KENNY

I don't think so. Please don't draw
the stick figures anymore.

Lance studies him.

LANCE

All right. You got it.

Lance hands him the marker, smug smile on his face.

Kenny stares at **the marker**

like it's about to burn a hole in his hand.

Lance trots off backward.

LANCE

Gotta go help Miss Johnson. Have a
good game.

Kenny hesitates. He looks down at

the marker in his hand.

He looks up. . . in the direction that Lance went. He throws

the marker on the ground.

Kenny runs off.

EXT. CORRIDOR WALKWAY

Miss Johnson walks along the corridor. Kenny rushes up behind her.

KENNY

Miss Johnson!

She turns.

MISS JOHNSON

Kenny? How can I help you?

KENNY

I need to talk to you.

She looks at her watch.

MISS JOHNSON

For a moment. What is it?

KENNY

Lance.

MISS JOHNSON

He should be back in class by now.
He had to use the bathroom. Is he
not there?

KENNY

I don't know. Look. . . Miss
Johnson, you need to get rid of all
the white board markers in the
classroom.

MISS JOHNSON

Why?

Kenny glances behind him.

KENNY

You have to trust me. Don't let
Lance draw anything on the board.
Don't let him use a marker.

MISS JOHNSON

I think maybe you better explain.

KENNY

I. . . I can't. You'd never believe
me anyway.

LANCE

Miss Johnson?

Kenny WHIRLS around.

Lance stands there.

LANCE

Aren't you coming, Miss Johnson?

Miss Johnson frowns.

MISS JOHNSON

Yes. I'll be right there.

LANCE

Better get to the game, Kenny.
Coach won't like two of us missing
it.

Miss Johnson puts a hand on Kenny's back. She gives him a
reassuring smile.

MISS JOHNSON

He's right. Go on. Everything's
under control.

Kenny looks at her helplessly. He turns around, to see Lance
slowly circling the mark on his neck with his index finger.

MISS JOHNSON

Lance? Coming?

Lance gives him a sly grin, then follows her down the
walkway. Kenny watches them for a moment.

With furrowed brow, Kenny turns to leave. He drags his feet.
He turns his head, glancing back, unsure of what to do. He
halts. . .

and recalls.

EXT. STREET - FLASHBACK

Kenny walks down the street with JOHNNY MENTON, 10, sporting a football jersey with a number on it.

Lance stands across the street. He waves

a towel at the two boys.

Kenny waves back. Johnny doesn't. He glares at Lance. The two boys move off down the street.

Lance bends down. He swipes the towel

over the mid-section of a chalk stick figure

wiping away the football jersey with the same number on it. He stands, sneer on his face.

Suddenly, Johnny bends over. He SCREAMS in pain.

KENNY

What's wrong? Johnny? Johnny?

Johnny SCREAMS harder. Kenny glances around frantically.

KENNY

HELP! SOMEONE HELP US!

END FLASHBACK

INT. CLASSROOM

Miss Johnson halts when she sees what awaits her on the white board

a stick figure

in a dress similar to hers, along with a like hairstyle. .
.and an arrow pointed to the heart that is drawn inside the torso.

MISS JOHNSON

What's this?

LANCE

A present. For you.

INT. CLASSROOM - FLASHBACK

MRS. ARMSTRONG, 60s, gray haired, petite, flowered top, white pants, stands in front of Lance. There's a

stick figure drawn on the white board behind her.

It has a huge grinning mouth with pointy teeth. There's an arrow pointing to the lower abdomen.

Kenny stares at the drawing.

MRS. ARMSTRONG

I can't turn my back on you for one second, Lance, can I?

LANCE

(sweetly)

I drew it for you Mrs. Armstrong.
It's you.

MRS. ARMSTRONG

I can see that. Flowered top and all, huh?

LANCE

Spittin' image.

MRS. ARMSTRONG

You must like detention, Lance. Cuz that's where you'll be after class.

She points to the figure.

MRS. ARMSTRONG

Get over there and erase it. NOW!

Lance gets up. He goes over and picks up the eraser.

He turns around to face her.

LANCE

It will be my pleasure, Mrs. Armstrong.

Lance swipes the eraser over the abdomen.

He leaves the rest. He puts the eraser down and walks away.

MRS. ARMSTRONG

Stop!

Lance halts.

MRS. ARMSTRONG
ALL of it please.

Lance takes a step toward the board.

MRS. ARMSTRONG
Now class, if you can please--

She puts her hand on her stomach. She groans.

Lance looks at her, cunning look on his face.

Mrs. Armstrong sits down, breathing hard.

MRS. ARMSTRONG
Someone. . . get the nurse, please.

Kenny JUMPS up, headed for the door.

Mrs. Armstrong SCREAMS!

END FLASHBACK

INT. CLASSROOM

Miss Johnson walks over to the white board. She glances nervously at the

markers in the tray.

She picks them up and dumps them in her dress pocket. She glances around, looking for. . . .

Miss Johnson turns around.

MISS JOHNSON
Where's the eraser?

Lance holds the

eraser up.

MISS JOHNSON
Let me have it.

LANCE
Oh it's okay. If you really don't like it, I'll erase it.

MISS JOHNSON
Don't trouble yourself. I can do
it.

LANCE
(grins)
Oh, it's no trouble at all, Miss
Johnson. Really.

Lance walks toward the white board, eraser in hand, large
smile on his face.

Miss Johnson watches him come closer. . .

INT. LANCE'S BEDROOM - FLASHBACK

In Lance's bedroom, Diane shows Kenny

a stick figure drawing of a man on a small white board.

An arrow is drawn to what would have been the upper torso, if
it hadn't been. . . erased. This figure has a name. DAD is
written underneath it.

The left foot is erased also.

DIANE
This was the last thing Lance drew
for his dad. I accidently erased
the foot. See.

She points to the

erased foot.

DIANE
When I did that he kept asking his
dad if his foot was bothering him.
Lance has such a quirky sense of
humor, you know. He kept us going
with that.

KENNY
Did his foot bother him?

DIANE
No.

She stares at the figure,

tears in her eyes.

DIANE

His dad died later that day.
Massive heart attack. I think Lance
erased the torso out of anger
afterwards.

Kenny frowns at the drawing.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. OUTSIDE HALLWAY

Kenny comes to!

He runs off!

INT. CLASSROOM

Lance stands at the white board, arm poised and ready, eraser
in hand.

The door CRASHES open!

Lance WHIPS around!

Kenny rushes in. Miss Johnson steps back, wide eyed.

MISS JOHNSON

Kenny! What are you--

Kenny YANKS the eraser from Lance! In one swift move, he
erases the figure from the board. He turns to Miss Johnson.

KENNY

Are you okay?

MISS JOHNSON

What?

KENNY

Do you feel all right?

Lance gives him a smug look.

MISS JOHNSON

Yes. I'm fine. What's the problem?

Kenny glances at Lance.

KENNY

No problem, Miss Johnson.

Unnerved, she looks at her watch.

MISS JOHNSON
All right. Both of you. Go. Just. .
. go.

The two boys leave.

Miss Johnson touches

her index finger to the white board where the figure was.

She stares at the doorway where the two boys disappeared.

She frowns.

EXT. PARK

Kenny walks beside Lance.

LANCE
How'd you know?

KENNY
It wasn't hard.

LANCE
I would've done it, you know. Still
might.

Kenny stops. So does Lance. They square off.

KENNY
I know.

They eye one another.

Lance rubs the mark on his neck. He shrugs.

LANCE
Eh. She's not worth it.

Lance strolls off.

Kenny keeps his eyes on him for a moment, then reluctantly follows him.

His walk is slower now, strenuous, small shoulders bent with the weight of great burden.

Eleven going on eighty.

FADE TO BLACK.

And Cain's soul still wanders. . . reborn again and again on the Earth with Abel always near, eternally watching, evermore his brother's keeper. . . in the hope that Cain will one day get the meaning of thou shalt not kill, and his soul can one day rest at last.

Trouble is. . . he's not getting it.

FADE OUT.

CREDITS ROLL

THE END