

Becka

By Kathleen Dale

JUNE 20TH

My name's Becka Day. Doctor told me to write this here and see if it didn't make me feel better. I guess since we get free doctorin, we oughta do what he say.

It all started when the neighbor called the police on us cause my husband Ray was yellin at me. He don't hit, Ray, but he yells a fair bit. When he's been drinkin he breaks things too and that's what nosy Mrs. Warren next door heard about a week ago. It's not the first time, but it made my stomach bite at me.

One time, last year it was, they took him away and I had to go down next mornin and bail him out. I spent that whole night awake, just me in the bed, waitin, feelin my stomach bite like it'd grown teeth. Ray pure hates cops. I kept waitin for the phone to ring, for some police voice to tell me Ray been shot tryin to get away or hit some officer and got his arm broke.

Course, none of that happened.

Ray was mad, but not showin it and I got him home all right. So far, he's always been meek to the police, even when at his worst. And he was meek last week, when Mrs. Warren called em round midnight.

Thinkin on it now, it was the knife that done it.

I had a bad feelin when Ray got it at the mall. It was huge, a foot long and curved all whichaway, with the handle shaped like a bird's claw. Ray thought it was the coolest thing ever. It made me afraid. Oh, not that he'd use it -- the fool thing wasn't even sharp. Plenty sharper ones in the kitchen drawer. It was just for show. Maybe for one second when he lifted it up off the counter to show me I was scairt of the way it made him look, curly black hair cross his forehead, yellow eyes all lit up with a big knife in his hand. But no. Ray Day might have a lotta harm in him, just not for me.

It's trouble I was feared of.

I didn't say nothin when he took out his leather wallet and bought the knife. I known Ray three years now and there's no tellin him sometimes. You get to recognize when.

By the time those two cops banged on our door, the shoutin was over. Ray'd stomped off to the bedroom, where he'd be sleepin in ten minutes usually. And I was standin in the kitchen with a broom, cryin as quiet as I could and tiptoein around the big pieces of drinkin glass so I could sweep up the little pieces.

Then *bang bang bang* on the door and Ray yankin on his pants and my stomach bitin down hard. They came in, watchful and swaggerin like they always are and Ray went meek. We apologized and swore it was just arguin and we wouldn't do it again. One of the cops -- they was no older than us, twenty-two maybe -- took me aside in the kitchen. He was lookin at my face and I realized I still had a bruise there, apart from the cryin makin my nose all red.

"Are you okay, ma'am?" He said it just like my sister Susie always does, with a pause and heavy on the okay, as in are you...*okay*, Becka? Meanin does he hit you, Becka? Does he beat on you? Why don't you come on home and be safe with us, Becka? As if she didn't know no better.

"I'm fine, officer," I said. Bite, went my stomach. I tried to smile at the policeman, with his hair all cut back to heavy stubble, like he thought he was a cop in the movies. I'll be finer when you go away, I thought.

The bruise was from when Ray was drivin and I was asleep in the passenger seat. He'd hit the brakes real hard. I swung forward and hit my cheek on the dashboard. He doesn't hit me. I said that, didn't I?

So then the cops turned to go and there was the knife, hangin over the front door on two nails. Ray says it defends the house that way, makes bad people stay out. It didn't work on those two cops. I saw em look at one another as they went out. And two days later, when I got home from my job -- Ray don't work cause of his bad back and he don't answer the door when I'm gone -- there was a note on the door from the social services people. I had a bad feelin about that too, but I called em back anyhow and they told us we got to see a shrink, which we could get for free. So we did and that man Dr. Gravely told me to keep a journal. That's what I'm doin and it makes my hand hurt. So that's all for this time.

Love, Becka

JUNE 21ST

Okay, I lied. He did hit me one time, but that was the only time. I guess this'll be the real journal. I'm writin another one for the doctor, all