

TARE-BEAR

A lonely man spirals and hallucinates an encounter with his childhood toy as his roommate goes out on yet another date with his girlfriend.

Written by

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INT. APARTMENT - DUSK

CHARLIE (22M) suave yet thoughtful, is about to shut the door before calling out to TANNER (23M), an uncomfortable person in everything he does, he's too tall, breathes too loud, he is covered in acne and light jagged scars:

CHARLIE
Oh, Tanner?

TANNER
Yeah Charlie? What's up? Did the woman cancel? That's a bummer man, but hey! We could still catch that movie, let me just grab my jacket-

Tanner begins circling to find his stank ass flannel. *

CHARLIE
No Tanner, Louise did not cancel. I was just going to ask if you could refrain from texting tonight? Please? It's our anniversary and-

TANNER
Anniversary? Anniversary of what, your first week together?

Tanner snorts, too loud.

CHARLIE
Our first year, actually. So don't text unless there's blood or fire; a real emergency. *

TANNER
(snorting)
Got it so I have to start cutting or burning before I hit send? *

CHARLIE
(heavy)
...Not funny, Tanner. *

The door SLAMS. The snorting stops. Silence is heavy. Tanner hangs his head, drops his jacket, it does not crumple but stays rigid. He hits his head against the wall saying:

TANNER
Stupid stupid stupid Tanner stupid!

Tanner bangs his head for a minute, then stops. Montage of bored Tanner: Tanner stares at the ceiling. Tanner tries to do a handstand. Tanner falls. Tanner plays video games.

Tanner loses video games, breaks the controller. He tries to fix it with Elmer's glue. Tanner makes noodles. Tanner spills the noodles all over the couch and his lap and the floor, he takes his crusty flannel off to soak it up. Tanner spots a muted colorful kids teddy bear with a blue shirt, BERNIE, under the couch and pulls it out. Tanner is surprised. *

TANNER (CONT'D)

Bernie? Where did you come from?

Bernie remains motionless, Tanner's voice comes from the toy.

BERNIE

I'm from Papa, remember? *

Tanner stumbles back, dropping the toy. A flash of a face of a man we do not know. Fear is palpable from Tanner. *

INT. TANNER'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS *

He runs to his room and slams the door, breathing heavy.

TANNER

Oh no. Nononononono. *

Tanner goes to his bedside table full of medication bottles for various mental qualms, he searches for one, pops 2 pills. *

TANNER (CONT'D)

I'M calm, I'M cool, I'm strong,
it's just Bernie... just Bernie. *

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS *

Tanner creaks the door open, using a book as a shield. He sprints to the fridge, looking at the list of emergency contacts, different doctors and departments. Different stipulations for each: in case of fire, in case of episodes, in case of property damage, etc. He calls Barbara, under In Case of Episodes, category. *

No response, sent to voicemail: *

BARBARA VOICEMAIL (V.O.) *

You have reached Doctor Zychowsky,
if you are having a medical
emergency please dial 911- *

Tanner hangs up. *

BERNIE

Hey Tan, don't you wanna come talk
to me?

*
*

Tanner calls him mom, no response.

*

BERNIE (CONT'D)

Come onnnn Tanner let's play!

*

Tanner pops his head up over the counter.

*

TANNER

You're a toy! I'm not talking to
you! (To himself): Pull it together
Tanner, think!

*
*
*

BERNIE

I don't see anyone else talking to
you, but I'm *always* here for you,
Tanner.

*
*
*

Tanner lights up, grabbing his phone. He calls Charlie.

TANNER

(to himself)

I have someone else to talk to.

*

He gets voicemail, sees do not disturb on for Charlie, snorts
lightly.

*
*

TANNER (CONT'D)

Oh Charlie you silly goose your
phone is off.

*

Tanner clicks "disturb anyway", tracking Charlie as he calls.
Voicemail again.

*

BERNIE

Come on Tanner, you know he's not
really your friend, right? I've
told you the real reason he hangs
out with you.

*
*
*
*

TANNER

He is my friend! He is...(pause)
You're just a lying toy, Bernie!

*
*

Tanner calls again.

TANNER (CONT'D)

(to himself)

He always answers. I am calm I am
cool I am-

BERNIE
(Teasing)
Do you still do those cute mantras?

*
*

TANNER
Knock it off Bernie! I *said* I don't
want to talk to you, and you have
to listen to me. I am in charge
here. I am in control of this
situation.

*
*
*
*
*

Tanner is not in charge here, as much as he pretends he is.
Charlie picks up, he sounds scared.

*
*

CHARLIE (O.C.)
Are you okay??

TANNER
Yes, Tanner-

CHARLIE
Is there blood? Fire?

TANNER
No, Charlie listen: did I ever tell
you about my toy, Bernie-

*
*

Charlie sighs and hangs up.

TANNER (CONT'D)
DAMNIT we got cut off!

BERNIE
Oh Tan, you know he hung up right?

*

Tanner stands up, nostrils flaring, shoulders square.

*

TANNER
I told you to stop talking.

*

BERNIE
Look at you, big man! Finally
standing up to your childhood toy.
Why did you bring me to college
just to shove me under a couch for
a year anyway, Tan?

*
*

Tanner stomps over, picking Bernie up.

*

TANNER
Why are you still talking?! I am
strong, I am in control!

*
*

He puts his phone on the table to inspect Bernie routinely:
no wires, no buttons, no batteries. Just a "Love, Dad"
embroidery. He can't be talking.

BERNIE

Why are you still talking to me? Is
it because you don't have anyone
else?

TANNER

I have other people... I have
Charlie!

BERNIE

Oh sweet Tanner, you know your mom
pays him, right? Why else would he
room with you?

Tanner shakes his head, dropping Bernie, putting space
between them. He knocks on the wood table three times.

TANNER

You are a liar Bernie, Barbara says
you lie.

BERNIE

You still talk to that quack? How
long has it been, 10, no, 11 years
and you still have no one else but
your *child* psychologist?

TANNER

I'm supposed to step away from you,
say that you are just a figment of
my imagination, you aren't really
talking. 5 things I can see, 4
things I can hear...

Tanner trails off, squeezing his eyes shut. It's not working.
Bernie says nothing. Tanner trembles.

TANNER (CONT'D)

I have friends, I have people!

BERNIE

I didn't say anything.

TANNER

Yes you did, Bernie! Stop it!

BERNIE

(morphing to Bobby's
voice)

I didn't say anything, Tare-Bear.

TANNER

Don't call me that! Don't call me that!

Tanner sees his phone home screen, his family. His dad, BOBBY, tall man in his 40's with kind eyes, wearing the same blue shirt. Bobby's voice saying Tare-Bear overlays. Tanner steps back and whips his head around, shaking. Reality is breaking, the furniture seems to switch places every time he blinks.

TANNER (CONT'D)

Stop it! STOP IT BERNIE!!

BERNIE

I didn't say anything! God look at you. He would be so disappointed.

Tanner falls to his knees, gripping his hair as if it will keep him closer to reality. Bernie's voice morphs to Bobby's voice, his face from the photo flashes over the screen. It flashes again with the mouth twisted upside down uncannily. Flashes flipping back and forth, happy, sad, happy-

BERNIE (CONT'D)

I would be so disappointed if I were alive to see you now. I'm so fucking happy you killed me before I saw the man, no- the DISAPPOINTMENT you've become.

TANNER

YOU'RE LYING YOU'RE LYING YOU'RE A LIAR. LIAR. LIAR.

*
*
*

Tanner pulls his hands away, he has ripped hair out, he scratches at his arms. He tries to reach his phone, he is shaking too hard to call, he presses random buttons; the beeping morphs into the beep of an EKG machine before slowing flatlining. He hyperventilates. The phone clicks:

CHARLIE (O.C.)

(quiet on phone)

Tanner I said- Tanner?

TANNER

It wasn't my fault it wasn't my fault. Charlie Charlie please pick up.

BERNIE

You thought you and him were friends? Your mom has to PAY him to room with you, you pathetic weasel.

Tanner is on the floor in the fetal position, there is blood on his arms now. He tries to crawl away from Bernie, his voice just gets louder.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

He can't even look at you, I can't even look at you, you're that disgusting. All the times I call you pizzaface? Those weren't jokes. You're hideous, *Tare-Bear*.

The world swirls around Tanner. Bobby's uncanny face flashes, distorted audio saying "pizza face" play. Tanner screams, banging his head against the floor.

BERNIE (CONT'D)

You're a pathetic excuse for a son.

Tanner keeps banging, blood forms, tangling his hair. *

BERNIE (CONT'D)

(increasingly intense)

You know what's even sadder than your pathetic life, Tanner? You know how pathetic it is. (in Tanner's voice) This is YOUR voice, these are YOUR thoughts. You hate yourself just as much as your dad would've if you hadn't KILLED him. *

BERNIE (CONT'D) *

YOU'RE LYING YOU'RE A LIAR. *
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA! *

Knocking on the door mixes with Tanner's bangs. *

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Tanner? TANNER?!

The sound of keys struggling in a lock as Charlie bursts through, SLAMMING the door behind him. He spots a bloody, shaking, muttering, Tanner immediately throws a blanket over him, swaddling him.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Tanner, Tanner it's okay. You're okay, you're calm, you're cool, you're strong. It wasn't your fault.

Tanner's breathing slows. Charlie repeats the mantra, there's blood on the phone, on Bernie, now on Charlie.

FADE OUT. END.