

## In Defense of Original Sin

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### *The Abduction*

Whenever one wants to start a questionable inquiry, it is best to wait until the night has a certain depth; gravitas, in political jargon. It is only from the bowels of the night that the true secrets of the universe can be unearthed. Accordingly, the experiment began in the middle of the night. Starting at noon wouldn't have been the same.

Everything began with a normal child. It was clearly stated in the experiment's parameters that the child wouldn't be especially bright or precocious. Just a child. They chose Kenny. He was quite ordinary. Brown hair, brown eyes, average height, intelligence, and kickball ability. There were plenty of graphs and tables that showed the extent to which Kenny was average. Later, some would say that destiny chose this particular boy, that in fact there was something very special about the way that he was average. These people are ninnies. He was just average. (We are sensitive about these things because we know that his name was just pulled out of a hat.)

Kenny's house was dark and silent when Mr. Samuel Kane (No- there are no sleds in this story) walked up to the stoop and rang the doorbell. Mr. Kane was thankful it was a simple Ka-Bong type doorbell. The electronic versions that played "Greensleeves" made his skin crawl. Because it was the middle of the night the house was dark and silent. Kenny's parents found themselves strangely compelled to answer the door in spite of the lateness of the hour. As Kenny's dad opened the door he pointed the family revolver at the man who stood on his step.

Mr. Kane was a middle-aged man. Handsome, but not particularly memorable. There was a streak of grey running down his left temple through what was otherwise flat black hair. He wore a stylish European suit and expensive looking shoes.

Kenny's Dad was discombobulated, middle aged, and wearing his wife's bathrobe. Mr. Kane began to talk before Kenny's dad had a chance to issue any threat that he didn't have the nerve to back up. Mrs. Kane came down from the bedroom to see what was going on and when she arrived Mr. Kane told them a tale, an epic tale if the truth be told. When he finished an hour and a half later, Kenny's parents talked briefly and agreed that Mr. Kane could take their remarkably normal son away. First they wanted some documentation that Mr. Kane was who he said he was. It was provided and Kenny's parents agreed to let him go, although more than a tad reluctantly.

Kenny slept soundly, wrapped in his warm and time-tested red comforter. During its long history it served a myriad of purposes- from tent to parachute, whatever his average imagination required. Kenny's room was typical of a little boy's- there was crap everywhere. Battles on far away planets tended to get interrupted by dinner and bedtime so it was natural that the war zone remained cluttered.

He woke to the sound of one of his little cars being crushed under someone's foot. (Help! Help! I'm being oppressed!) Kenny sat upright in bed to see who had caused the pre-mature destruction of one of his toys. Kenny was just getting ready to complain aloud when he saw his parents. They had weird looks on their faces, a mixture of both pride and fright. Kenny also noticed that there was a stranger in the room that he had never

seen before. It was the stranger's foot that committed the assault on the toy car whose parts lay strewn around what Kenny thought were very nice shoes.

Mr. Kane seemed pleasant enough for a stranger who crushed children's cars in the middle of the night. He was smiling broadly at Kenny with a mouth full of perfect white teeth. Yet something was not quite right. There was something disturbing about his eyes; they seemed eternal and not altogether sane. A chill ran down Kenny's spine followed promptly by apprehension and mild melancholy. Kenny thought that the man's eyes looked like Darth Vader's at the end of Jedi. They were old and sad because of a lifetime's worth of terrible mistakes. Kenny's dog "Boulder" was looking up at the man from the foot of the bed, his enormous tongue dangling and dripping like a water logged pendulum.

"Kenny," began his mother, Pistis Sophia, "This man is going to take you on a little car ride. You have been chosen to go to a special place."

Although she was smiling, she had the same tone in her voice Kenny heard when he stuck one of his toy cars into a light socket. After his mom had calmed down enough to talk she had explained how dangerous electricity was. Her voice then, as now, was filled with a weird terrified love that Kenny did not understand. Why she would want the family to go away with this man who she treated like electricity? It slowly dawned on him that his Mom had said that he was going but had actually made no mention of herself.

"Are you coming too Mommy?" He asked, trying to send her his fear through the tone in his voice. His eyes took on the best imitation he could muster of Boulder when he really had to go out and pee. (Or more commonly when he wanted whatever food it was that anybody was eating.) Alas, his mom only said,

"I'm sorry Kenny, but you have to be a big boy and go alone. You'll be fine. In fact, you will probably really enjoy yourself. Remember when your cousin Eddie went away to camp. He really did not want to go but was so happy there he did not want to leave at the end of the summer." Her voice was strained.

Eddie told Kenny about his summer at camp. He said they told ghost stories every night and there was no way Kenny wanted to hear ghost stories. He had almost convinced himself that he would throw a full-blown temper tantrum to try to avoid going anywhere with this old man. He figured that if he made a big enough brat out of himself perhaps the man would not want him anymore. He could go step on some other kid's cars in the middle of the night.

Kenny looked at his Dad. His Dad didn't have any of the fear in his eyes that his Mom did. He looked sure that Kenny's leaving was OK. He smiled confidently at Kenny who felt his tears dry up.

"Don't worry," his Father mouthed silently, "you'll be just fine."

Kenny sniffled once and set out towards his closet to find some clothes to wear. He was still scared but he trusted that his father would never do anything to harm him. In this assessment he was correct. He picked out his own clothes and socks. Kenny was very proud of the fact that he could match his colors, his teacher said that maybe someday he could be an artist.

Once Kenny was dressed he kissed his parents 'Good-bye' and got into a long black Cadillac with the man who introduced himself as Mr. Samuel Kane from Bad Ass,

Texas. Kenny was asleep before the car was out of his driveway, stretched out across the black leather backseat wrapped in his familiar crocheted red blanket.

### *The Experiment*

When Kenny woke up the sun was shining and the car was pulling up to an enormous wrought iron gate. It was ornately decorated, with odd geometric patterns that seemed to be moving. Past the gates was an enormous modern (although unremarkable) looking Business building of the standard type that you see on the outskirts of large cities. They are the kind of places are made of glass and look like anything could be going on within, from marketing research to something even more insidious; like experimental military disease warfare research. The letters SRI were emblazoned in huge blue letters down the side of the building. Kenny realized that Mr. Kane was looking at him intently.

"Kenny," he said, "There is nothing to fear, I bet that you will actually enjoy the time that you spend here. I want to let you know that what you are doing here is incredibly important. You are going to be doing something that is good for all of mankind. You may even become famous if everything goes the way that I think that it will."

Kenny remembered the way that Mr. Kane looked the night before. Through sleepy and confused eyes Mr. Kane seemed a little scary. Kenny remembered the sadness that he had seen in the man's eyes. He compared that vision to what he was seeing now. The sadness was gone and Mr. Kane seemed like any other adult. The only thing that marked him from other grown-ups was that this one had taken him away from his parents. The long car glided up to the front door of the building where a doorman in a crisp red doorman's uniform opened Kenny's door and helped him out of the car. The doorman surprised Kenny by greeting him by name. There were several people outside smoking cigarettes. They all smiled warmly at Eddie and offered him "Good Morning." One man even offered him a piece of gum, which Kenny refused. He knew that he shouldn't take candy from strangers. Mr. Kane led him through a large set of sliding glass doors. Kenny knew that he wasn't allowed to swear. However, when he walked into the lobby of the building he whistled 'Damn!' as his jaw hit his chest. The lobby of the place looked as if someone had dropped FAO Schwartz on Disney World. There was a gigantic chocolate waterfall like in Kenny's favorite movie Willie Wonka and the Chocolate Factory. There were thousands of toys everywhere. Any kind of Action figure, video game, toy car, board game, child size vehicle, sporting equipment, and virtual reality figgamajobber that ever was. When Kenny turned back to Mr. Kane he looked more like Santa Claus than anyone who was even mildly frightening.

As Kenny eyes roamed across the delights that lay before him he recalled one of his favorite stories, Pinocchio. He would often get both of his parents to read the story together. They would change their voices to match the different characters. Kenny remembered the evil circus were the boys smoked, ate too much candy and eventually turned into donkeys. Kenny eyes fell on a barrel filled over the brim with gummi bears. On it was a sign that proclaimed 'help yourself.' This place reminded him of the way that the story described the evil circus. It was so similar that Kenny stopped in his tracks and walked slowly back to Mr. Kane. "Excuse me sir," he asked again invoking Boulders eyes "But. . . What kind of a place is this?"

"It's a toy factory Kenny." Replied Mr. Kane; "I make toys. All kinds as you can see. You are here to help me make my toys."

"You mean like a job? Isn't child labor illegal?" Kenny asked innocently.

Mr. Kane laughed. "No hard labor Kenny. All you have to do is play with the toys. You know how there are commercials when you watch television right?"

Kenny remembered. He often found himself humming the songs that were on the commercials-he even knew the words to a lot of them. Mr. Kane continued,

"Let's just say that I am the guy who makes the toys that the commercials are all about. As a result I need little boys and girls to tell me what kinds of toys to make. Do you understand?"

Kenny did.

"It gets better."

Kenny didn't know how that was possible.

"If you think of a toy that doesn't exist, just ask for it and I will try to figure out a way to make it."

"How about a virtual reality Power Ranger that teaches karate!" Kenny offered mischievously, he knew about virtual reality from the VR Troopers. You know like Zordon (the big head on Power Rangers)- a hologram." Seconds later a virtual reality neon green Ranger was doing Aikido on an unsuspecting Teddy Bear that leaned against an enormous Leggo Fort. The ranger punched the bear a couple of times and with one final roundhouse kick knocked off its head in a shower of stuffing.

"That's the coolest thing that I have ever seen." Kenny said, truly impressed.

"Everything in the factory is yours to enjoy. All of the staff knows that you are allowed here and will give you any help that you need. Mr. Kane pointed out a buzzer that Kenny could push to summon a cook that would prepare anything that he asked for.

"Anything?" Kenny asked. "Even Pizza?"

"Sure. Anything you want."

"What if I want pizza every night?"

"Like I said, whatever you want."

"Wow." It was all this average boy could say at the prospect of eating pizza for dinner every single night.

Satisfied that Mr. Kane wasn't going to turn him into a donkey Kenny turned back to his garden of delights. He had only taken one step when Mr. Kane cleared his throat and uttered the two syllable word that always comes immediately after something that sounds too good to be true.

"Except"

"Except what Mr. Kane?" Kenny asked distantly, he was anxious to explore.

"Do you see that ladder over there?" Mr. Kane asked, pointing to a ladder that led to some higher level.

Kenny did.

"Well, if you climb the ladder and continue down the path for a little while you'll find a red ball sitting on a wooden table. You may never, never, ever, under any circumstances touch the ball. Don't pick it up. Don't bounce it. Nothing. OK?"

"Why?" Asked Kenny quite reasonably he thought.

"Because I was nice enough to bring you to this wonderful place and I told you not to touch the ball." Mr. Kane responded in a not-so-friendly tone.

"But I can play with anything else right?" Kenny asked, unsure of himself.

"Anything at all with the exception of the red ball on the table your every toy wish is my command. "

"Okay, thanks a lot Mr. Kane."

"Sure my boy. " he replied, his eyes taking on the characteristic tinge of sadness as he turned and left Kenny to explore.

Naturally, Kenny headed straight up the ladder. He found the Red Ball- it seemed totally ordinary. With all the other toys lying around why would he care about this stupid red ball? He turned and went to get karate lessons from the virtual reality Power Ranger. However, as he left he couldn't help a quick glance back at the forbidden toy.

Kenny played for several days in total contentment. He was never told what to do, and was allowed to play with and eat anything that he wanted. Kenny really surprised himself when he asked for a cheeseburger with bacon and mayo for his fifth dinner. Every day Mr. Kane would bring in several new toys for Kenny. Kenny would get to name them whatever he wanted. He even named one truck "Poop-mobile" and Mr. Kane didn't say anything. Kenny created one toy named a platypus that was part duck and part beaver, except it was a mammal that laid eggs and put them in a pouch.

Often Kenny would hide from Mr. Kane who would walk around the factory calling, "Keennny Where are yooouuu?" It was great fun. He was happy alone for about a week. All of the people who worked in the factory were really nice to Kenny. He noticed that a lot of the people had scars on their wrists or on their necks. Kenny wanted to ask where they were from but he remembered that his Mom told him that asking about people's deformities was rude. Nevertheless Kenny was lonely for someone his own age to play with. Kenny decided to tell Mr. Kane about his problem the next morning. Ironically, the moment he decided to tell Mr. Kane...

Mr. Kane appeared. "Hello Kenny, guess what? I have a surprise for you."

"Great, but Mr. Kane, I'm lonely and want someone to..."

"Well isn't that just synchronicity? It just so happens that I was bringing you our latest toy. It is an android playmate that we hope to have perfected by this Christmas. We call her Lillith. A perfectly lifelike little girl came walking out from behind his back. She walked directly up to the virtual reality Power Ranger, bowed once, and quickly did what Kenny had been trying to do unsuccessfully for the whole week; she knocked it on its virtual neon butt. Kenny was appropriately impressed.

"Well, I'll leave you kids alone. " Mr. Kane left Kenny to his new playmate.

"What's your name?" Kenny asked. He knew it was Lillith but he wanted to be polite.

"My name is Lillith. I am a R.I.B. unit, a robotic intelligent buddy. It is my function to play games with you and just generally be your friend. What would you like to play first?" Lillith was remarkably lifelike and the lonely Kenny soon forgot that she wasn't a person but a robot. She was so real that it didn't make much difference anyway. They played all over the building. Hide and seek, video games, they watched movies, and drank too much soda. It was essentially like a happy montage scene in a cheesy romantic movie except that it was just kids playing and instead of making out they played Laser Tag.

One day after a long afternoon of swimming in the chocolate pond Lillith asked Kenny a question that had been gnawing on his own mind for some time.

"Have you ever been tempted to play with red rubber ball?"

Kenny would have been lying if he said "No." He thought about the ball a lot. He couldn't help it. He really, really wanted to know what possibly could be so special about such an ordinary looking ball. It didn't seem special, but why else would he be banned from ever touching it? When he had attempted to get more information about the ball from Mr. Kane he only repeated the rule and warned Kenny that the punishment for playing with the ball would be severe indeed. Curiosity itched at him. It was like that spot in the middle of your back that you cannot reach no matter what level of yoga that you master. At night he would sneak through all the toys and stare at the ball, trying to guess its secrets.

"Yes." he answered finally. Kenny was really happy to get the truth of his fascination off his chest. Keeping secrets was a real labor.

"Do you know what it's for?" he asked Lillith.

"I do now. " she said, looking at him guardedly.

"How?" he demanded.

"I picked it up and bounced it." she replied, kicking at the ground sheepishly.

"Well, what does it do?"

"Nothing at all. "

"Nothing?"

" Well nothing important. It bounces. It bounces like a regular red rubber ball, nothing special."

"Then why are we not allowed to touch it?"

"You're not allowed to touch it. I am only not allowed to touch it in front of you."

"Wait a minute," said Kenny, suddenly feeling very set up. "If your not prohibited to play with the ball, then why did you ask about it? And if it doesn't do anything, why would Mr. Kane make such a big deal out of me leaving it alone?"

"That's a good question-why don't you tell me the answer."

"All right, I will. " Kenny was livid. He turned on his heel and made a beeline for the ball.

It sat quiet and unobtrusive on its table. Red like fire and passion, round like a ball. Kenny's heart, while filled with anger; also contained a little glee. He was finally going to satisfy the curiosity that had plagued him since the day he arrived in this place. He reached the ball, picked it up and threw it into the ground with all of his might. The ball bounced high into the air. Upon reaching its apex instead of falling (like, for instance, an apple) it just floated in the air. The red ball began to glow. It's light grew in intensity until Kenny was forced to avert his eyes from the brilliance. He felt the warm light overwhelm him and the whole world began to slip from beneath his feet. Kenny closed his eyes and everything turned white. . .

### **The Trial**

Kenny opened his eyes. His mother and father were standing in front of him. He was propped up in a big leather chair in what appeared to be a courtroom. Mr. Kane was sitting at a big table wearing a familiar hand made suit. A hairy naked man with a big

forehead and a slightly less hairy woman also sat at the table with Mr. Kane. They had their hands politely folded over the fig leaf that protected their tidbits from public view. He looked rather uncomfortable.

At the table opposite sat an old man who was a dead ringer for George Burns. He was wearing a white suit with a white tie, white shoes and white socks. He was dressed like Corneal Sanders. He also had a white beard, white hair, and bushy white eyebrows. He looked very upset and was glaring at Kenny. A man who reminded Kenny of Judge Wapner (or is that Mayor Koch?) from People's Court sat high above the proceedings behind a beautifully carved wooden judge's bench. A real woman stood on a pedestal dressed as Justice. She looked very uncomfortable. Kenny asked his Mom why she had to hold up those big heavy scales but she just hugged him and said that she might not have to hold them much longer.

The Bailiff was a pudgy old white guy with a nametag that said Rusty. He brought Kenny a copy of the Bible and asked, "Do you swear to tell the truth and nothing but the truth so help you that guy at the table over there?"

Now Kenny knew from TV that God is whom you were supposed to get help from. Unless that terribly dressed man was God. And if he was God then Mr. Kane must be...

"Satan, your witness." Declared Judge Wapner.

Kenny couldn't believe his ears. The toy guy was the devil. His parents let him go away with the devil!? They must be like those people in that movie where the parents are Satan worshipers and they eat their baby. (Kenny liked to watch TV really late at night after his parents had gone to bed.) Kenny wasn't sure what he should do. He swore to God that he would tell the truth so that is what he figured he had better do. Especially since he was right over there and looked like he wanted to eat Kenny and spit him out.

"Kenny, you're just a regular kid living a regular life-isn't that correct?"

"Yea." Kenny replied. Mr. Kane stepped out from behind his table and approached Kenny. He really didn't look evil; he just looked tired and sad.

"We got along good together at the toy factory didn't we?"

"Yea."

"You respect your elders as much as any other kid. I gave you anything that you asked for didn't I?"

"Yea."

"In fact, would it be fair to say that the toy factory was paradise?"

"I missed my parents. But other than that I had a lot of fun. But then again it was a little boring after a while."

"Boring?" Mr. Kane looked confused, "But you had everything that you wanted."

"Not the red ball. I wanted to play with the red ball. Lillith was allowed to."

"So you didn't think that the toy factory was paradise because although you could have any kind of toy, any other ball, you had to play with the one that I told you to leave alone. Why?"

"It was fun at first, when you would bring me the different toys and I could name them whatever I wanted. That was fun. And playing and eating ice cream and stuff was fun. But I wanted to play with the ball. I figured if I was allowed to play with all of these amazing toys and I wasn't allowed to play with the ball; then the ball must be the most amazing toy of all."

“But a grown up had told you not to touch it. Did you think that I was keeping it from you just to be mean?”

“No, I figured it was like when I put my toy car in the socket in the wall. Mommy told me that she told me not to because it would hurt me to do it. I thought that the ball maybe was like that.”

“But you picked it up anyway.”

“Yea.”

“You knew that by picking up the ball you would have to leave the toy factory?”

“Well I hoped I would just get yelled at for a few minutes, but I knew that getting thrown out was a possibility.”

“In your opinion, did you do anything wrong?”

“No. I couldn’t help it. I’m sorry. I’m just a kid, I was curious.” Kenny started to cry now. He felt really bad and now Mr. Kane was mad at him, and God was sitting over at the other table looking mad at him. Mr. Kane had turned his back to Kenny who sat with snot running down his nose. His Mom came over and wiped it off.

Mr. Kane began again.

“I know this is hard Kenny but it’s gonna get harder. What if I told you that if you hadn’t picked up that ball you would have lived forever? Everyone on earth would have lived forever. That as a result of a touching that ball God over there sitting at that table is going to condemn every man, woman, animal, and plant on earth to die.”

“That’s not fair!” Kenny said, sobbing now.

“Oh it gets worse! What if I told you that I knew before I even met you that you would pick up that ball. That I knew you would do it as well as I know my own name?!”

“I hate you!” Kenny screamed. He threw himself out of the chair and went after Mr. Kane. He was intercepted by his Dad who grabbed him and pulled him into a bear hug. His father was crying. “You did it. Nobody will ever suffer or die again.” He whispered into Kenny’s ear.

Judge Wapner was beating his gavel and yelling for order. Kenny’s dad carried him over to his mother and together the family watched the rest of the trial unfurl. Mr. Kane looked proudly at Kenny and rested his case. Wapner asked if God had any questions for the witness. God muttered under his breath something about ungrateful bastards. Wapner declared,

“In the matter of Adam vs. God in the case of Original Sin I find in favor of Adam. It is clear that this “existence” thing was rigged from the beginning. In addition, I have done some research and it turns out that this cranky bastard over here isn’t actually God. His name is Ialdoboath. People found out about him back in Christ’s time but all the records were “expunged” by that jackass Constantine. So in addition to one charge of creating a universe without a license we have an additional charge of fraud and impersonating a supreme deity. As a result of my decision I further order that the universe be put back in its original condition whereby all people and things are One.

Judge Wapner’s gavel hit the bench and the universe promptly vanished in a puff of nirvana.