

# DAREN'S CRY

by Ken Bradbury



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**Daren's Cry**  
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*(Ms. Mills is working as Daren enters)*

**MILLS:** Good morning. *(no response)* You're Daren, right? *(nothing)* Look, just have a seat. *(he says nothing, staring at the floor ... Ms. Mills very deliberately moves a chair near him ... nothing)* You want to stand? Fine with me. *(a pause as he smiles to himself and sits, arms crossed)* *(she picks up a note and reads)* Daren Parker ... You went to Bethaldo Middle School? *(nothing)* How old are you Daren? Daren, it won't hurt you to answer a simple question. *(nothing)* Look, do you want me to leave you alone for a few minutes?

**DAREN:** Would you come back?

**MILLS:** Of course. This is my office.

**DAREN:** Then what's the use?

**MILLS:** What?

**DAREN:** If you're just gonna come back, what's the use?

**MILLS:** *(a pause, then)* How long have you been expelled from Bethaldo?

**DAREN:** Everything you want to know is on that piece of paper you got in front of you. Are you gonna hassle me with these stupid questions all day? You got a smoke?

**MILLS:** I want to make sure the information is correct.

**DAREN:** No, you want to establish a para-mutual relationship, you want to break the ice with some coercive interaction, you want to get an opening paragraph for the psychological profile you're going to have to write after you get hacked off and send me outta here because if you don't, your butt is gonna be in a jam with the Bureau of Children and Family services. You know damned well how long I've been expelled so why don't you stop all the stupid questions.

**MILLS:** (*a pause, then*) Well, at least you can talk.

**DAREN:** Do you guys ever come up with something new? The last three shrinks just copied off the idiots before them. “Daren displays anti-social characteristics typical of a wide range of behaviors including explosive temper tantrums, physical aggression, fighting, threats or attempts to hurt others including homicidal thoughts, use of weapons, cruelty toward animals, and intentional destruction of property and vandalism.”

**MILLS:** You forgot the fire setting.

**DAREN:** I wanted to see if you were awake.

**MILLS:** You’ve read all this?

**DAREN:** Didn’t have to. I lived it.

**MILLS:** Daren, it’s my job to ...

**DAREN:** It’s your job to refer me to somebody else and it’ll be their job to put me somewhere else and once you go to your boyfriend’s apartment tonight and you get a couple of drinks in you, you really won’t give a purple kahootie about anything we talk about today. What’s he like? Does he blow in your ear? Does that turn you on, Doc?

**MILLS:** Daren ...

**DAREN:** I noticed in the phonebook that you’re single. What’s a matter? Have a little trouble with men? Need to lie down on my couch for a while so I can examine your anti-social behavior? (*she stares at him ... not sure how to proceed*) You know, I’ll bet that’s the hardest part of your job.

**MILLS:** What’s that?

**DAREN:** Control. Trying to keep your temper when faced with a little pervert who tries to work your girdle loose. Did you take special classes in that? Or do you just comfort yourself knowin’ that this appointment is only scheduled for a half-hour and tomorrow you’ll get a check from the state for typing up a report that says what everybody already knows?

**MILLS:** You’re intelligent, aren’t you.

**DAREN:** A stinkin’ genius. Just read your report lady.

**MILLS:** And you’ve heard it all.

**DAREN:** Bingo.

**MILLS:** Fourteen years old.

**DAREN:** Twenty-seven. I'm a midget. I can't believe they left that out.

**MILLS:** So ... where do we go from here, Daren?

**DAREN:** That's good. Try to put the solution in the hands of the patient. Give him ownership of his situation. And use the subject's first name as often as possible. So what's yours?

**MILLS:** Julie.

**DAREN:** Cool. Well, Julie, I don't know. I just don't know where we go next. How about Disney World? I've never been there, you know. I don't think I'd be where I am today if my old lady would have taken me to Disney World. Do you? You think a good shot of Goofy and Minnie and seven-dollar hamburgers might have saved me?

**MILLS:** You want to talk about your mother?

**DAREN:** Do you walk up to people on the street and say, "Do you want to talk about your mother?"

**MILLS:** We don't have to. That's fine. Look Daren, you're a smart kid. Let's talk about options.

**DAREN:** Yes, Julie. Let's talk about options.

**MILLS:** You have none. There's not a behavior disorder school, a counseling center in the country that will take you with your record and attitude.

**DAREN:** Homeless. I think I saw this in a movie.

**MILLS:** Why do you start fires?

**DAREN:** I like heat.

**MILLS:** Why Daren?

**DAREN:** Hey. Fire's pretty.

**MILLS:** November 16<sup>th</sup>, four children critically injured and one dead. (*a pause ... Daren is nonplused*) One child dead, Daren.

**DAREN:** And have they found arsonist, Miss Mills?

**MILLS:** (*a pause*) No. But you know who set the fire.

**DAREN:** Hearsay is inadmissible.

**MILLS:** You know who set the fire, Daren.

**DAREN:** (*he rises and goes to the door*) I'm not goin' through this again. (*pulls*) The door's stuck. Hey, lady, you gotta let me out.



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