



**Doing
Business as
Kevin
Templeton
by Kiley Riley**

A Novel

by Arthur S. Newman

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The events are real, at least some of them, but the names have been changed to protect the not so innocent. However I do declare that there is some fluff in this story.

Some of you who will read this story will probably recognize some of the events that occur in this work of fiction as actual truth. Please do not bring undo attention to these factualities that are related herein.

A story about a highly inventive character but based on true events. Although I was able to track down some facts as told by the narrator of this book. Confirmation of other facts was not forthcoming.

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*Live life with the reality that you can only do it once,
anything after that is a gift.*

Kevin Templeton

Prologue

I was born of this; I am sure. I did not have a say in the matter. I am here without my consent!

If left up to chance, that would be my story. My name is Kiley Riley, yes it rhymes, and yes, it is real. How I got my name is not the result of two parents who loved me. Since I do not have a father or mother. Do not marvel at the previous sentence. There are more people like me than you can count on a government census.

This story is about grit and determination.

Kevin Templeton is my brother but not by blood, as his beginnings were similar to mine. No mother and no father to claim as his own. I first met Kevin in a foster home. It was there that he liberated me from loneliness and the thought of never having a real family to call my own, although we had not become brother and sister at that time. Because our acquaintance was short lived.

It was a few years later in another foster home that we bonded and became brother and sister, family. Our final

8

foster parent, Patty Mabel Forrester, would tell us, 'I am your parent but not your mother and neither shall we muddy those waters.'

I want you to know, although I tell this story, it is not about me. It is about an extraordinary person, who lives life not only for himself but for others with a determination that no one should ever feel alone and helpless.

1

The streets are not fair neither is life. 2019

“

If you think you deserve a better life but you have never done anything to own a better life, then you do not deserve anything.” I quoted something Mabel would tell us all the time. Mabel had her own way of speaking and sometimes her words came out a little parabolic.

“Even if I am sent away, I should not doubt that I have lived a better life than the one that is promised to most individuals.” Kevin still smiled while trying to put his spin on Mabel’s words of metaphorical wit, even though he was weeks from receiving a sentence for thirteen counts of insurance fraud. And to add to that calamity, he is being hounded by a scrupulous FBI agent who believes he is a serial killer.

“You will not be sent away even if the wolves in sheep covering are howling at your door. As long as there is

breath and fight left in me, I swear you will go free.” I was more sure of this than anything in the world.

“That sounds like something Mabel would say.”

“This is my business! What do my business do? My business is your business.” I tried to mimic Mabel. Kevin spoke the same words along with me.

Kevin smiled!

“You know as well as I do that the streets have never been fair to me and life has certainly not catered to me either.” Kevin spoke the truth, more so in his case.

“And yet you have always risen above the streets and life. Why should this be any different?” I asked.

“I’m afraid I don’t feel much like myself these days, ever since the accident. Something is different, very different. It is different this time, and I am tired of the fight.” Kevin acquiesced.

“All rise, the Honorable Judge Milford Watz now presiding,” the bailiff spoke with a somber voice.

The judge took his seat.

“You may take your seats,” the bailiff spoke again.

“In the case, The People versus Kevin Templeton, are all parties now present?” The judge spoke as he scanned the courtroom.

“Yes, your honor,” Kevin’s lawyer turned his back to scan the full courtroom. Not an empty seat was to be found.

“I take it Mr. Templeton will not change his plea of not guilty to insurance fraud, which, if found guilty, would make him liable for five years per false claim. In Mr. Templeton’s case, there are thirteen false claims.” The judge spelled out the consequences.

“That is correct, your honor, Mr. Templeton still holds to his innocence as stated.” His Lawyer was brief.

“I will warn you and Mr. Templeton that the prosecutor has made a compelling case, and during the process of your rebuttal if any evidence comes forth that suggest foul play beyond the charges already filed in these proceedings, I am compelled to enforce the full measurement of punishment. The floor is yours, Mr. Caine.” The judge spoke as if the prosecution had already persuaded him. I hoped the Jury was still open minded.

“I assure you and the people that Mr. Templeton acted completely in the confines of the law in all of his dealings, which I...” Artisan looked back at me, “we will prove. If it pleases the court, we would like to call our first witness.” The profession considered Artisan Caine a backwoods country lawyer with a tenacity for the underdog.

I will pause this story here because it is only fair that you understand how Kevin ended up here. The more important fact is the person I know Kevin to be the person he truly is, and what he means to me.

Kevin and I met when I was ten years old, going on eleven. He would arrive at the Foster home where I was an imposed monetary void taking up space for two years, at precisely the right time. When I first arrived there, my proposed guardians were cordial. They did not dote over me, but there was a considerable kindness.

However, as the two years passed by, my foster parents had run afoul and there was a challenge making their bills. Forcing them to take on another foster child to make ends meet.

The male foster parent was the dominant person to treat me with contempt.



2

When we first met. 1986

“Why don’t we just give her back to Social Services so they can find her another Foster home? What sense does it make to keep her here? The older she gets, the more she eats. Not to mention that she’s starting to go through the change.” John, my Foster father, spoke with a sharp discontent.

“If you had not gambled away our money, that would not be necessary, would it?” Sienna, my Foster mother, clambered back.

“It was a sure thing.” John looked down in disappointment.

“It’s always a sure thing, and you can bet it’s a sure thing that she is not going anywhere. It is a permanent check that keeps the food on the table and then some.” Sienna was referring to the check they received monthly to be foster parents.

“Then keep her out of my sight.” John looked at me with disdain as he walked away.

John never wanted a Foster child; his wife had talked him into it as an alternative way to bring some extra income to the table. That is what they said whenever the two had a disagreement about me.

Although Sienna initially signed up for the money, I had grown on her.

“Don’t worry, Kiley, we will figure a way out. Your social worker is coming tomorrow with a possible solution. I just hope John can deal with my proposal and the new addition.” Sienna spoke but had gotten used to me not saying anything in return.

I had learned at my previous placement that a child was to be seen, not heard, the hard way. I was just glad these people did not hit first and ask questions later.

The next morning, John went to work as usual, and I went to school. I could hardly concentrate. The anticipation of a new arrival at the house was all I could think about. Would it be a girl or a boy? What baggage would come with her or him?

As a Foster child who has lived in multiple homes. I had grown accustomed to either being a new arrival or seeing new arrivals.

“Kiley, Kiley, are you going to answer the question or get a lower grade on your oral exam?” Mrs. Lessenger asked, awakening me from my willful inattentiveness.

“I am sorry. Can you repeat the question?” I was a different person at school; the fear of reprisal was not present in the classroom.

“I am glad you can rejoin us. Name two world powers that dominated in world history?”

Social Studies wasn't my strongest course. I was a speller and word-smith. At least that is what my teachers said about me. But I could manage this question, as long as she did not ask for the year or anything to do with dates. Most of the time I would treat names of places as if it was a spelling question.

"Egypt or the Egyptians and Greece or Grecians." I would have to admit Sixth grade and Social Studies were not as hard as I thought.

I had skipped a grade because of changing schools at the start of a new school year in a new school district. My social worker felt the change was necessary because of the abuse of my former foster parents. That is how I landed in sixth grade a year before I was supposed to.

"That is very good. Ok, Phillip, can you tell us two more world powers from history that dominated?" Mrs. Lessenger went to the next student.

I was glad when the bell rang to signify the end of the last class for the day.

When I got home, there he was.

"It's a boy," I mumbled under my breath.

"Hi, Kiley, I want you to meet Kevin, the new addition to our household." Sienna smiled as her head dipped, causing her neck to crunch.

This was certainly a sign that she was seeking my approval, but the actual test was to come. I was fine with meeting new additions. I could tell that he was, too. John, on the other hand, would be a completely different story.

We lived in a three bedroom apartment, but John was uncertain how long that would last because of the possibility of having to downsize. At least, that was the plan.

The three of us sat at the table. The conversation was mostly one sided. Kevin obviously did not believe in the rule that children should be seen and not heard.

“My previous placement was too full. So, that is why I am being moved, besides I was told that it would be temporary. I am grateful for the opportunity to come here. Hopefully, I will be allowed to stay awhile. I will not get in the way and I do not eat that much. I have no problem completing my chores...” Kevin spoke for what seemed like hours about everything.

I knew the moment of truth was coming, the reckoning. I could see the tension on Sienna’s face.

“Well, children, I think you should go to your rooms. I will call for you when John gets home.”

I knew John was on his way home. John had never been violent towards Sienna or me. However, lately he has shown some signs of stress, usually resulting in him taking long walks.

“Kiley, why don’t you show Kevin your room? He has already seen his room, but I did not want to take any liberties as far as your privacy is concerned.” Sienna continued to encourage us to our rooms.

Kevin got the hint as we moved down the hall. It did not take us long to open up to one another. He proved to be a well rounded soul for a thirteen-year-old boy.

“I have been here for almost two years, the longest placement to date.” I said.

“But,” with a drawn out but, Kevin showed insight.

“I do not know how much longer... John is a... I mean... was a nice guy, but lately he has been stretching the limits of his tolerance.” I was uncertain how much to tell Kevin. It is important for one foster kid to try as much as possible to

stay positive to another foster when they are a new placement.

“You can spit it out. I know the routine. I have been in one placement after another. I have learned to judge matters for myself.” Kevin soothed the atmosphere.

“John has a gambling problem and some weeks he spends his whole paycheck before he gets home.” Kevin stopped me by raising his hand.

“You mean he loses his whole paycheck, sorry?” Kevin corrected me but he showed by his demeanor he was not trying to be a know it all.

I accepted his interruption.

“Yes, also they brought me on for the money. Although Sienna appears to be developing some emotional attachment for me. Okay, enough about our situation. Tell me what is really going on with you.” I had said enough.

“I am tired of being a punching bag for people who only see me as their next payday. So, as soon as I see trouble, I get out. I run and eventually they catch me and reel me back into the system. For my own good.” Kevin shook his head up and down and I appreciated his sarcasm.

“You do not strike me as a troublemaker.” I needed more input.

“If you don’t count the time that I got caught shoplifting a candy bar, which I had to do three months of community service, which included doing time working at the store that caught me. Then no, I am not a troublemaker,” Kevin smiled.

“Community service for shoplifting, come on I am ten going on eleven, but I know in the eyes of the law shoplifting is a little thing. Especially for a child,” As fosters,

every home we go into, the Foster parents always brief us on the ends and outs of the law.

“The store manager who caught me, a nice guy, but a stickler nonetheless. He wanted to make an example of me, to teach other kids that shoplifting at his store would not be tolerated. He asked for my address but I did not have an address really, because I was on the run from an abuser. He called the police, when they arrived they asked for my address again, but I was not going back to the abuser. So, I did not give him one.” ‘I am willing to write this report, but you have to see this thing through,’ the officer said to the store manager. The store manager wanted to press charges. ‘I want to make this kid an example so he will tell his buddies shoplifting will not be tolerated in this store, not as long as I am the manager.’ Kevin changed his voice for the police officer and for the store manager.

Kevin smiled and then continued.

‘Look kid, if you don’t tell us where you live we will have to take you to the jailhouse and then call social service or worse, you could end up in juvie.’ The officer threatened.

“I told him I would rather go to jail than return to a home where I will certainly be a punching bag.”

“All for a candy bar?” I was trying to be an active listener.

“Long story short. I ended up in a courtroom with my social worker and guardian ad litem. The store manager and the judge struck a deal to teach me a lesson. And that’s how I ended up doing community service.” Kevin stopped.

“Circumstances and consequences, some skate, others hit the ice.” I spoke what I thought, but really I was practicing using different words to express myself.

“Yep, the judge said there are consequences for every action. I like that, circumstances and consequences. It’s like incidents and accidents, hints and allegations. There’s a song in there.” Kevin quoted a song I heard a couple of times on the radio and I would hear it a lot more from Kevin’s perspective.

“Okay, what is your worst placement?” I knew I was opening up a can of worms, but fosters like to spill the beans and rat out really bad foster parents.

“I was five years old and my...” Kevin stopped because John had come home.

We listened to the ensuing conversation.

“I am not mad. I am just disappointed that you did not consult me first.” John was not yelling, but his pitch was heightened.

“We need the money and he needs a place to stay. If in six months our financial situation isn’t any better, we can reevaluate. It is a win, win.” Sienna talked a good game.

“Well, at least we will catch up on one month of rent. That should keep the eviction hound off of our backs.” John took the news better than I expected.

“He seems like a good kid, truly.” Sienna was still trying to sell the proposition.

“Well, call him out so I can see what we are up against.” John was really taking Kevin’s advent well.

“He must be high on another gambling euphoria. He normally gets happy after he gets a good tip, or purchases a lottery ticket. The euphoria lasts until he receives the results.” I said in a soft voice.

“Kiley, Kevin, come here. Let’s have a family discussion.” Sienna called.

It was time for me to go back into my shell. I was eager to see how Kevin was going to react.

“Kiley and Kevin, well, if that ain’t an Andy and Ann combo.” John tried to make a joke.

“Hello, my name is Kevin. It is nice to meet you.” Kevin appeared to turn on his charm, but it seemed genuine.

“I hope you are not an Eddie Haskell kid because we like to keep it real around here.” John spoke the truth. He felt as if he could say whatever he wanted, regardless of our feelings.

“No, I am more like the older brother and beaver mixed.” I do not know if Kevin was trying to be witty, but so far, the interchange was amusing.

“What do you know about Leave it to Beaver?” John smiled, as if he was enjoying himself.

“I pay attention to the old stuff, besides Leave it to Beaver is non-offensive to adults. Two placements ago, they fed me a regular diet of the oldies but goodies.” Kevin was handling his own.

“I like this kid.” Maybe John was happy that there was a boy in the house. Maybe he liked boys more than girls.

“Who is ready to eat? We are having pork and beans, hotdogs, and fish sticks.” Sienna chimed in.

This was a standard meal for the midweek. If you wanted a really fancy meal, you had to wait until Sunday.

3

My worst foster placement as told to me by Kevin.

“It was a Friday night. I was five years old. We (two other foster kids and I) waited for the reckoning. We knew our foster dad was going to come home drunk and when he did, it was not going to be good. Our Foster mom had the bags packed. Normally, we would leave and get out of dodge before the reckoning. We would’ve been on our way to our foster grandparents’ home. But she could not find the spare keys to the car.” Kevin paused.

“Why was it not going to be good?” I asked.

It had been a month and Kevin had now settled in, but this was the first chance Kevin and I got to revisit our initial conversation. John would keep Kevin to himself. But tonight John was late getting home. Not to mention it was a payday weekend and Sienna was a little on edge.

Kevin picked up where he left off telling his story after he answered my question.

“When my Foster dad would come home drunk, he would hit my foster mom. That is why it was not good. It had been a little over a month since the last episode. That was the time we had to wait in a post office until the Foster

grandmother arrived to take us to her house for safekeeping.” Kevin stopped again.

You could tell he was pondering the event.

“Did the abuse start when you first got there?” I was now hooked.

“I was five, and within months of my arrival, it started. It likely was a common thing before I got there. I can tell you this: my step mom took several beatings before I had to leave.” Kevin stopped again.

“You do not have to relive those memories if you don’t want to. We can talk about something else.” I knew from experience some placements could rip a kid apart. It can become a dark road if you keep having to relive the bad placements.

“No, that’s not it. Sometimes the memories are really vivid and other times it is a little fuzzy. Right now, it is real vivid, and it is like reliving the moments all over again. Anyway, my last day with them was a Friday. We knew it would be a night that we would have to run. Luanne was her name. She would have to wait until she got the keys to the car from Frank. That was his name. I looked out the window when the car pulled up. He could barely get out of the car. He stumbled up the steps. When he reached the door, that is when I went to hide. He yelled, ‘why is the door locked? I will knock this door down.’ And then there was a crash. ‘Where are you at? Come and take my shoes off and get me a beer,’ he commanded. Luanne answered, ‘I am coming.’ ‘Hurry it up then. Did you think you could lock me out of my own house?’ He shouted. ‘I do not know why the door was locked.’ Luanne said. She never screamed or cried out when she was being hit. She would just take it. She was a tough woman. But that night I decided no more. I

had to do something. By the time I was down the stairs, he had already hit her. She was holding one side of her face. I ran in between the two of them. I was hit with the back of his fist and then thrown up against the wall. That is all I remember. I woke up at my foster grandparents' house. My older foster brother said that a little while after the beating, my Foster dad passed out or blacked out. 'I must've blacked out.' That is what he would say after every episode. My Foster grandmother took me and my foster mom to the hospital and then reported my foster dad to the police. My Foster mom suffered two cracked ribs that night. My Foster brothers and I never returned to that house again." Kevin stopped this time as if to reflect and then smiled.

He did not shed one tear, but my eyes watered a little.

"Well, I guess you did not sustain any permanent damages, cause you are here now." I knew it would be futile to say how terrible that must have been or patronize him, besides the past is the past.

"Yep, I survived, but the next time a Foster parent tried to hit me was a couple of years later and I hit the bricks. Okay, what was your worst placement?" Kevin switched gears like a champ.

"I was touched in a wrong way, the man denied it. After that, he hit me, and my foster mom gave me back to the system. That's it." I was still thinking about Kevin's story.

"And here you are." Kevin and I both smiled.

"You seem to be hitting it off with John. He likes you." We both knew it was time to change the conversation.

"Speaking of John, do you think he will be different when he gets home tonight?" Kevin asked.

"If he lost his whole paycheck, yes," I looked out the window.

“What’s wrong?” Kevin saw that I was trying to hide my feelings.

“Before you arrived, John wanted me to leave because he thought I was costing them too much money. He thinks I am going to be trouble because I am eating more and going through what he says is the change. With you being here, I may become obsolete.” I was not doing a good job keeping my feelings in check.

Sometimes the walls do talk, and John had made some allusions as to why they needed two children.

“It’s just talk, because you are irreplaceable.” Kevin tried to comfort me.

“At least the money they get for me cannot be replaced, but that always seems to not be enough for him.” I retorted.

“Don’t worry, I will be old enough to get a job soon and help them make some more money.” As Kevin finished speaking, John came through the door.

We listened. But there was nothing.

The next morning, on our way to school, a police officer stopped us.

“Boy, what are you doing with this little girl? Little girl, are you okay? Is he harassing you? Do I need to teach him a real life lesson?” He asked.

Kevin smiled.

“You can wipe that silly grin off of your face before it gets you into some serious trouble.” The police officer was not being polite.

“We are on our way to school,” Kevin answered.

“Boy, you speak when spoken to. Let the little girl tell me what’s going on here.” The officer spoke snidely.

“We are on our way to school, just like Kevin said.” I spoke up.

“Why are you walking to school with him and not...” He paused as if to change his thought, “Other little girls? Aren’t you a little young to be boyfriend and girlfriend?” He imputed.

“She is my foster sister. My name is Kevin, and this is Kiley. What is your name, sir?” Kevin asked.

“Now, that is none of your business. What is your parents’ name? And this time you had better let the girl answer.” The officer asked.

“John and Sienna Gaskins we live at,” I was cut off.

“I know where you live. I am very well aware of the Gaskins. You two had better get to school. I will check your stories out with Mrs. Gaskins. I will be keeping my eye on you, smiley.” The officer walked towards our apartment building.

“He seems to be troubled. I wish there was something I could have said to him to make him feel better.” Kevin did not let the officers’ inconsiderate behavior affect him.

“You know he was trying to harass you, right?” I said with a heated fervor.

“He was probably just having a bad day. The next time, he will probably be feeling better.” Kevin seemed so oblivious.

“Some people are just who they are and that’s all.” I looked back at the prune.

Later in school, I saw two kids pushing Kevin, and he did not even retaliate.

He just smiled and asked the kids. “Is there something I can do or say to help us become friends?”

“Yeah, why don’t you just give us all of your candy and money? That will be a good start.” One of the boys requested.

“You two can leave him alone right now before I call the principal, or better yet, I can just take care of this matter myself. I will start with you, freckles.” Most of the kids did not want anything to do with me.

They went on their way.

“Kevin, why did you let them push you around?”

“They would have stopped, eventually. There is no need to retaliate. Eventually I would have won them over and probably made some real good friends,” Kevin smiled.

“You are certainly living in a different world than the one I see.” The bell rang, and we were off to our different classes.

At the end of the school day, I went to get Kevin at his last class.

I overheard Kevin talking to one of his teachers.

“What are all of those football schedules for?” Kevin inquired.

“They were for a special sales campaign, but some of the other teachers decided to sell chocolate candy bars instead. I was just about to discard them.” She replied.

“Can I have them?” Kevin asked.

“Sure, they are all yours. We will see you tomorrow, Kevin.”

“Look what I got,” Kevin said as he met me at the door.

“What are you going to do with those?” I asked.

“There are a lot of people who like football in our neighborhood. I could probably make a little money with these.”

“Nobody is going to buy those pieces of paper,” I gestured.

“You never know.” Kevin smiled.

4

Kevin's First Real Deal

“

I am selling these football schedules for my school.

We are trying to win a trip. Would you be interested in helping us out?” Kevin was a natural.

“How much are they?” The lady asked.

“Three dollars for one and five dollars for two,” Kevin smiled.

The lady said, “Wait right here, young man.”

I didn't say anything. All I could think about was, what if we get caught?

The lady returned with five dollars.

“Thank you so much. I will let you know if we win the trip.” Kevin turned and smiled at me.

We went to several more doors and sure enough, Kevin did it again and again.