

FRIEND

by

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Is freedom worth the loneliness?

Kat is an odd little girl, new to this town in the forest, with a family who can't be bothered. When she ventures deeper into the woods than ever before she discovers the only entity more lonely than she is. She finally has a FRIEND, except this friend only wants Kat to itself. Kat has to find the Indigo Child power in her she never knew existed and risk everything to be free.

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FADE IN:

EXT. AINSLEY HOUSE - MORNING

Establishing - the house, perched up a hill lined with redwoods, looks something like a cross between a cabin and a tree house. The canopy is thick so the neighborhood is shady and cool. Even on the hottest days.

INT. AINSLEY HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

1980 - Northern California. The house is furnished with a dissonant combination of bohemian and classic, elegant antiques. It has a couple of moving boxes stacked around. They are marked "Kat" or "Roger."

KATHERINE, KAT, AINSLEY (a young 11, white, tomboy, dirty, weird haircut, striking dark-blue eyes) wears her favorite Miss Piggy T-shirt and eats a bowl of cereal. The family dog, RUFUS, watches her closely for any bits that might fall.

Kat's brother, ROGER, (15, as gorgeous as Kat is not, pissed) digs through one of the boxes and argues with their mother, an impatient LAURA MAYHEW(40's, selfish, omnipresent cigarette dangling from her lips).

ROGER

This sucks! I can't find anything.

LAURA

It'll show up!

ROGER

No, it won't. It's gone. Or I left it at Dad's house and I'll never get it back.

LAURA

Hey! Knock it off already. I get it! Feel free to go back to your dad's and get it.

ROGER

He's in Chicago. 10,000 miles away.

LAURA

(sarcastic)

Yep. Exactly 10,000 miles away. Good math. Knock yourself out. I'll just go back to court for you at huge expense, and give him full custody again.

ROGER

I don't know why we're even here!
You don't want us! You just don't
want Dad to have us! You just want
the child support!

LAURA

I'm your mother you little ingrate.
And this is the deal: six months
there, six months here. It's all
your dad would agree to. You're
lucky to be here at all.

ROGER

Stupid California. Stupid new
school. Stupid boxes.

Roger kicks a box. But it's marked "BOOKS - ROGER" and he
smashes his toe. He grimaces.

Kat grabs her bookbag and scratches Rufus's head.

KAT

(to her mom and brother)
I'm gonna get to the bus stop.

But Laura and Roger both have their heads buried in boxes and
ignore her.

ROGER

It's not in this one!

LAURA

You already looked in that one.

KAT

K, bye.

Kat passes along the edge of the argument and heads outside.

Laura reaches into a box and pulls out Roger's baseball mitt.
She holds it out to him.

Somehow this makes him more angry.

LAURA

This baseball mitt?

ROGER

(snatching it away)
Thanks.

Laura lights a new cigarette.

LAURA

Jeez.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - PLAYGROUND - MORNING

Nestled into a wooded area, the elementary school is housed in a few buildings with outdoor passages. There is one old building, nearly 100 years old, but the other buildings are more modern, the '60s.

Kat's classroom is in the old building.

INT./EXT. SCHOOL BUS - CONTINUOUS

Kat sits in the middle of the bus and waits until the KIDS pass by. Kat takes a deep breath, steeling herself, and rises to exit.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DRIVEWAY - SAME

KIDS exit buses and head into school.

Kat exits her bus but trips on the lowest step and face-plants in the gravel. The kids laugh.

JASON

Have a nice trip?

HEATHER

Yeah! See you next Fall!

More laughter. Kat laughs too, in defense.

KAT

Haha! So funny! I did it on purpose!

HEATHER

Yeah, right.

The kids shake their heads at her. She picks herself up, dusts herself off. Her hands are scraped. Her pants are ripped. Not only are her pants lame, now they're dirty and ripped. Great. She trudges into school.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MR. GREGOR'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Kat sits in an old desk off to the left near the back. The STUDENTS are all doing a worksheet while MR. GREGOR, (40's, comb-over, barrel-chested, dissatisfied) corrects papers at his desk.

Mr. Gregor just wants to do his job and head home. He doesn't have room for peculiar. Especially not Kat's brand of peculiar: Kat is humming to herself, making up a little song narrating what she's doing.

KAT

(singing softly)

"I'm doing math. Math-math,
mathing, math. Seven times eight,
eight times seven - fiftee-si-icks!
Fiftee-ee si-ii-iicks... Carry the
five!"

The students sitting near her shake their heads. Haylie (11, cute, mean) stares at her.

HAYLIE

(under her breath)

Weirdo.

The bell RINGS for recess and the kids all bolt for the door.

MR. GREGOR

(sarcastically)

You're excused!

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - PLAYGROUND - SAME

The KIDS scatter across the blacktop, playing handball, jumping rope, shooting marbles.

Kat is off by herself jumping rope. Haylie, QUINN (11, good-looking, athletic), JAKE (11, stocky), and AMY (lanky) come over to investigate.

HAYLIE

Hey, new girl, what's your deal?

KAT

What deal?

QUINN

Are you retarded?

KAT

No, I'm not retarded.

JAKE

If she was retarded would she even know she was retarded?

QUINN

(re: her shirt)

Just stupid, Miss Piggy?

KAT

No.

HAYLIE

Why don't you have any friends?

KAT

(shrugging)

I don't know. I just got here.

AMY

Where'd you come from?

KAT

Chicago.

AMY

Where'zat?

Kat shrugs.

QUINN

You don't know where you're from?

KAT

Chicago, Illinois.

AMY

Where's that?

HAYLIE

The East Coast. Like, New York or something.

AMY

Oh.

KAT

No, it's not.

HAYLIE

Yes it is. Everybody knows that.

KAT

Oh, ok.

JAKE

You're weird.

KAT

No I'm not. I'm just--

QUINN

"No I'm not. I'm just--" Special?

JAKE

Like Special Olympics?

The kids all laugh.

KAT

Yeah, you wanna see my medals?

Huh?

KAT (CONT'D)

Never mind.

JAKE

That doesn't even make sense.

AMY

Yeah.

HAYLIE

I don't like you. You better watch
it, weirdo.

Haylie pokes Kat in the shoulder.

KAT

Ow.

The kids walk away.

Kat goes to the swing set and gets in a swing. She's surrounded with younger kids who run around happily playing tag.

Kat halfheartedly swings and watches other kids play.

A FIRST-GRADER comes over.

FIRST-GRADER

These swings are only for the
little kids. You can't swing on
them.

KAT

Jeez.

Kat gets up and wanders away.

INT./EXT. SCHOOL BUS - AFTERNOON

Kat heads home. Another day over, finally. She rests her forehead on the cool glass and watches things pass by. She sees a dog lying on a lawn and waves to it. The dog does not notice.

Around her the KIDS are talking and laughing and roughhousing.

Over Kat's shoulder, in the very back are a BOY AND GIRL who chat and look over to Kat, curious. The boy shrugs and they start talking to other GIRL near them.

INT. AINSLEY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kat lies on the couch reading a children's book. Roger enters from school.

ROGER

Hey, dummy. You make any friends today?

KAT

(quietly)

No. How was your day?

ROGER

Awesome. Like always. I mean, c'mon. Look at my hair! It's perfect.

It is perfect.

KAT

Yeah. You're making friends?

ROGER

(borderline convincing)

Tons. This place is awesome.

Kat frowns.

ROGER (CONT'D)

You reading?

KAT

Yeah.

He grabs the book out of her hands.

ROGER

This is a baby book. Why are you reading this? You read at a 10th grade level? That's stupid.

He tosses it back to her and heads to the kitchen.

KAT

(to herself)

I like this book.

(calling after him)

Roger, you wanna play something?

Roger ignores her.

KAT (CONT'D)

Roger? You wanna play something!?

Roger emerges with a push-up pop.

ROGER

No. I do not wanna play something with you. What would we play "Chutes and Ladders?" Play with blocks.

KAT

No, we could play cards or Monopoly or Backgammon.

ROGER

That sounds stupid. I'm gonna listen to records.

KAT

Can I come?

Roger crosses to the big stereo and picks up huge headphones plugged into it. He points at them.

KAT (CONT'D)

Oh.

ROGER

Why don't you go play with your friends?

Roger chuckles at his joke. Kat looks at the book she was reading. She shoves it under the couch cushions and leaves.

EXT. REDWOOD FOREST - FAMILIAR CREEK-BED - DAY

Kat and Rufus, and two of the neighborhood dogs, BINGO and DOTTIE, all pick their way along the small, slow-moving creek, stepping through the ferns and thistles.

KAT
(singing)
"Feelin' 7-up, I'm feelin' 7-up!"

Kat is carrying her Raggedy Ann doll while she pokes around the bank, playing in the sand. She perches Raggedy Ann on a rock overlooking the pool.

KAT (CONT'D)
Here, Ann, you sit here and watch
the bugs! You gotta get your head
really low to see right.

Kat and Raggedy Ann watch the bugs skate across the still water.

KAT (CONT'D)
(to Raggedy Ann)
Cool, huh?

Raggedy Ann does not respond.

Kat walks along the creek bed. She picks forget-me-nots and winds them together. She tucks them behind her ear.

Kat collects stones and stacks them up. She stacks several onto each other to make a teetering tower. She adds one more rock.

KAT (CONT'D)
Rufus! Look at this! Look, watch!

Rufus looks up briefly and returns to scratching his ear.

KAT (CONT'D)
"The crowd's on its feet. Can she
do it? Can she do it? Here she
goes."

Kat adds another stone. It looks like it's gonna hold then wavers. Kat holds her breath. It holds!

KAT (CONT'D)
Yes! "And she's done it! She's done
it!" The crowd roars!

Kat jumps up and looks around. No one to share her victory with. Bummer. The rocks fall.

The dogs snuffle around chasing other bugs. Kat sits on a wide rock and rolls on her back, chewing on a twig. She watches the wind in the verdant canopy.

KAT (CONT'D)
(singing)
"It's a crisp, refreshing feelin',
crystal-clear and light! America's
feelin' 7-up--"

Suddenly, the underbrush explodes and Bingo takes off after something, Rufus and Dottie on her heels.

KAT (CONT'D)
Hey! Bingo! Bingo!

Kat jumps up, grabs Raggedy Ann, and they all give chase!

KAT (CONT'D)
Rufus! Bad dog!

EXT. REDWOOD FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Kat chases Bingo, Rufus, and Dottie farther and farther into the redwoods.

EXT. REDWOOD FOREST - UNFAMILIAR GROVE - SAME

Bingo has finally given up the chase and stopped to drink water out of a puddle. Rufus and Jake investigate the new grove.

Seriously out of breath, Kat brings up the rear and looks around.

KAT
Bingo! Where did you bring us!?

Kat heads back the way she came, climbing over enormous fallen redwood trees.

One of them splinters under her foot.

KAT (CONT'D)
Ow! I'm stuck. Rufus!

Kat yanks hard and frees her foot.

KAT (CONT'D)
Ooowwww. Goddammit.

Kat climbs back down, rubbing her leg. She looks around. She listens closely. Nothing.

KAT (CONT'D)
Rufus, I don't know this place.

Rufus and his friends pay her no mind. They figure she's got in all in hand. She's trying.

KAT (CONT'D)
(to herself)
Ok. Ok. I'm ok. We're ok, Rufus. No need to get worried. We'll just go...
(looks around)
...that way. We have to retrace our steps. This way. Let's go guys.

The dogs get up and trot along beside her.

EXT. REDWOOD FOREST - SPOOKY GROVE - LATER

Kat is sniffing a little bit, scared. She's holding Raggedy Ann more tightly now.

KAT
(to Raggedy Ann)
I'm sure it's up there a little bit. Right at the tree. Right at the tree.
(sniffle)
That's where we go.

They enter another unfamiliar clearing. The light is getting soft, it's getting late.

KAT (CONT'D)
(miserable)
This isn't it either. I can't--

Kat runs around the clearing to one edge and another. Nothing.

KAT (CONT'D)
I can't--

Kat's getting increasingly panicky.

KAT (CONT'D)
Rufus! I don't know where we are!

She finally plops down and cries. The dogs lick her face and lie down next to her.

Kat huddles with the dogs.

A small wind picks up and swirls around Kat. The dogs whine a little bit and sniff the air. There's a very subtle HUM.

KAT (CONT'D)
(to no one)
H-hi.

Kat listens for a second. HUM. She wipes her tears away, trying to look brave.

KAT (CONT'D)
(to no one)
I'm Kat.

She listens some more. HUM.

KAT (CONT'D)
(to no one)
Yeah, I think I'm lost. I don't
recognize anything.
(scared)
No, I'm not scared.
(wipes more tears away)
Yeah? Do you know? I'd totally like
to know how to get home. Ok, then.

Kat picks herself up, dusts off some dirt and heads down one leg of the creek. The dogs follow along with her.

KAT (CONT'D)
No, I've never been up here. It's
pretty. Yeah, I like the quiet too.
That one's my dog, Rufus. That's
Dottie the Doggie, and that's
Bingo. She's a bad dog.

Kat snuffles but laughs. A wind rustles along the bushes and branches she passes.