

Sleepers Prequel: Beck's Story

Jacqueline Druga

It had been the first time Gavin Beck had been out of uniform in three weeks. It was the first weekend he had off in a long time. Being Executive Office at Ohio's Army largest training base took its toll on his home life.

But he had off. Finally. A weekend where the weather was supposed to be perfect.

Beck had plans.

One of them being to sleep in, but he couldn't. His wife, Robyn, was always with the children and when his two month old son, Levi, cried his first 'hunger' whine of the morning, Beck was glad to handle it.

It was his son. His pride and joy.

Beck was a big man, six foot five, intimidating in bulk, and in comparison, his son looked like a baby doll in his huge grip.

He changed the baby's diaper, kissed his sleeping wife, pulled the covers over her and carried the baby into the kitchen. One arm, one forearm was all Beck needed to carry his son. Head cradled in his hand, Beck kept him close to his chest, like a football player, as he prepared the bottle.

"You hungry?" he asked softly. His voice cracked as he did. Whispering wasn't vocally possible for Beck. His voice was deep and trying to soften it only caused it to squeak and miss. "Yeah, you are."

He turned on the kitchen television to watch while he fed the baby, and as the formula heated, Beck brewed his coffee.

His phone sat on the counter and he lifted it.

Six missed calls? All from base.

"Are you kidding me?" He grumbled and thought, '*bottle for the baby, a sip of coffee, it can wait.*'

The coffee was faster than the bottle, that new machine Robyn got brewed it in an instant.

Beck took the cup, took a sip, and grabbed his wits.

“Hey Daddy.” His daughter, only three, darted in the kitchen. Still in her pajamas, her ponytails tossed from sleeping.

“Hey Sweetie,” Beck accepted a kiss. “You’re up early.” The baby squirmed in his arms, fussed vocally and Beck started to feed him.

“No, silly. I always get up early.” She giggled. “Can I watch cartoons?”

“Yeah, let Daddy have some coffee, make his call and I’ll get you food, too.” Holding the baby and bottle in a single wraparound grip, a task he was quite good at, he reached for the remote and that was when he saw it.

Across the screen were pictures of devastation. The headline read, ‘earthquake in Seattle’.

“Oh my God,” Beck said.

“Are they hurt, Daddy?” Dakota asked.

“I don’t know—” his phone rang. “Damn it.”

“You swore.”

“I’m sorry.” Beck answered the phone. “Major Beck.” He sighed out. “No, Benson, I haven’t checked my voice mail, what’s up?” he paused. “National emergency, how is this affecting us it’s in Seattle ...” Beck’s eyes widened. “How many?”

“Daddy?”

“Twenty-seven? Are you serious?”

“Daddy?” his daughter tugged on his leg.

Multi tasking. Beck was good at it. He noticed the baby consumed a few ounces and placed him against his chest to burp him. “We’re mobilizing?” he spoke on the phone.

“Daddy.”

Burp.

Beck placed down the bottle and sipped his coffee as he listened. “Where are they putting the center? You don’t know.” He exhaled. “Get the Intel, have it ready, I’ll get dressed and be at base in an hour. Thanks.” He hung up. “What the hell is going on?”

“Daddy.”

Thump.

“What happened, baby, did you fall?” Beck asked

There was an eerie silence that radiated a shock through Beck, almost fearful, he looked down. His eyes widened as his tiny three year old daughter began to convulse. Her arms flailed and head went back and forth.

“Robyn!” Beck screamed for his wife. “Robyn!”

What to do. He had an infant in his arms and his other child convulsed on the floor. Still holding the baby, he crouched down to Dakota. She made a grunting noise as her head twitched.

“Robyn! Call 911!” Beck tried to hold the child still. A white liquid seeped from her mouth. One minute earlier she was fine. “Oh, God, Oh God. Hold on.” Beck reached for the phone and immediately dialed for help.

It was busy.

What was going on? It was all happening so fast. On his knees Beck reached for his daughter. He would lift her, try the landline, and if that were futile, he’d drive to the hospital.

Where was his wife?

“It’s ok, baby, Daddy has you.” He slipped his hand under his daughter and that was when he noticed it.

His son.

No movement.

Blood rushed to his ears, his heart sank to his stomach and a burning sensation filled his lungs as Beck pulled his child away from his chest and his infant son’s arms just flopped lifelessly over his arm. His tiny body was limp.

“No!” Beck growled out loud and deep. “No!”

Left to right. Right to Left, Beck looked. Where to turn, what to do.

It had to be a gas attack, a chemical attack of sorts. That was it. He was strong and big enough to do it and Beck, lifted his daughter into his other arm and raced to the bedroom to get his wife.

“Robyn.”

Robyn didn’t move.

Thinking, ‘no’, Beck moved to the bed. “Robyn. Robyn wake up.”

She breathed deeply and differently. There was a pale grey color to her face. He laid the baby down next her and to do so was painful. Watching the still infant made Beck whimper as he grabbed the land line.

He dialed.

Busy.

With a growl of frustration and hurt he sailed the phone across the room, and reached to Robyn. Her body was on fire. Fevered beyond belief.

Something was released, some sort of attack, and there was no time to waste. Beck scooped up his son, and with his daughter in his arms, he flew out of the bedroom.

He had just stepped in the living room when he heard the screech of tires and the sounds of cars slamming into each other.

“I have to get my kid to a hospital!” a voice yelled from outside.

“You’re not the only one.”

Beck holding both kids, managed to open the door. He saw cars strewn across the road, people panicking, running with lifeless children in their arms to get them help.

“No!” A woman cried out. “He’s dead. Someone help me. My baby is dead!”

Eyes wide, Beck took in the scene before him. The hysteria matched what he was feeling. Then he realized whatever happened, was huge.

The woman in the street screamed for help.

Beck needed help.

But there really was none.

And with that revelation, his children in his arms, heartbroken, Beck stepped back into his home and closed the door.

The news called it the Rapture. It happened everywhere, to every child at the exact same time.

Babies were born without life.

The Rapture, to Beck, took the innocents’ body and soul. He believed his son didn’t suffer, but what his daughter experienced was torture. She cried and whimpered in pain as her body slowly drained of life. He wrapped his son in a blanket, kissed him and placed him in the crib, then he did what he could for his daughter.

Held her, touched her, wiped her down and repeated how much he loved her.

Robyn didn’t wake. At least not during the last few hours of Dakota’s life.

The only thing that made it minutely tolerable was the fact that Beck was not alone in his suffering. The cries of anguish from parents carried in from the streets. Screams of pain that Beck himself felt.

During his last few hours with his child, he had come to terms with it.

Beck was losing.

He was able to make contact with base only once.

Someone answered the phone and told him everything collapsed. No one held post.

Surely, if what was happening to his children and his wife was the orchestration of God, then God Himself chimed the last chord with the most vicious of storms that evening.

The storm rolled in and Dakota was gone.

She hadn't just died, like Levi, the life drained from her, taking every physical compound and leaving nothing but dust.

She was gone.

Levi was gone.

Then Robyn woke.

It was in the midst of his agony, the midst of his grief, his daughter's grains of remains flowing over his fingertips, that Beck heard the shuffle in the hall of their one floor home.

Robyn.

Slowly, from the other side of the couch, Beck rose.

Robyn staggered. Her hair draped across her face, her pajamas were soiled and Beck could smell the odor of bodily fluids carry to him.

"Robyn," Immediately upon seeing her, Beck rushed to the hall, but stopped a few feet from her.

She paused. Her head tilted, face a death white, dark circles formed under her eyes and her pupils had widened making her eyes look black. Her lips were dry and cracked; they even looked as if they bled.

"Baby, you're sick, let's get you cleaned up and back to bed," Beck said softly and reached for her.

The moment his hand touched upon her forearm, Robyn released this groan of damnation and lunged forward, mouth first, aiming for his hand.

He felt her teeth against his hand, and quickly he pulled back.

Robyn then raged at him. He towered over her, yet, she was strong and in Beck's shock, he had a hard time fending her off. He just wanted to control her, subdue her, he called her name, trying to reason, but she continued at him. Lashing and biting as if he were her only means of nutrition. What happened to her? What had become of his wife?

Beck shoved him from her and she flew back down the hall, but quickly stood again.

This time she ran for him.

Not wanting to hurt her, Beck side stepped and swung, catching her with the back of his hand. She spun hard and landed on the floor. Before she could jump up, Beck grabbed on to Robyn and placed a restraining hold on her.

She fought and squirmed, kicked and screamed and then Beck saw his option.

The hall closet. The latch was up top, high enough that the children couldn't get in there, because that was where Beck kept his pistol.

He reached up, unlatched the door, nearly losing his grip on Robyn, he opened the closet and shoved her in. She bellowed a screamed and then tripped backward smacking her head off the back wall.

Was she dead?

She didn't move.

Slowly Beck reached out his fingers.

Her eyes popped open.

In surprise, he retracted his hand, grabbed for the pistol case and slammed closed the closet door. He had just latched it when the door rattled with her violent attempts to break free.

Continuous banging.

Beck caught his breath, and back against the door, feeling emotionally and physically defeated, he slid to the floor.

He sat there for the longest time, knees bent up, case across his lap, hand to his face.

Robyn kept smacking against the door. She was relentless and didn't tire. But Beck did and he couldn't stay there any longer.

He couldn't stay in the house. Where to go?

Last he heard no one was holding post, Beck didn't believe that. That wasn't possible. Not in his mind, and that was when he made his decision.

He couldn't help his family, there was no more he could do for them, but he could do something else. Help others. He was no longer a father or a husband, but he was still a United States Soldier.

With that to keep him going, he got dressed in uniform, left the house and headed to base.