



Filmmaker Kurt Kuenne and 1-year-old Zachary Turner.

Doc rips apart viewers' hearts

Dear Zachary



Documentary by
Kurt Kuenne

BY MINA HOCHBERG
amNewYork movie critic

Kurt Kuenne's intensely personal documentary "Dear Zachary" is one of the most emotionally draining, devastating films in recent years.

On Nov. 5, 2001, a doctor named Andrew Bagby was shot to death in western Pennsylvania. In the following days, evidence pointed resoundingly to an ex-girlfriend named Shirley Turner, but she fled the country for her home in Newfoundland before U.S. authorities could intervene. Soon after, she announced she was pregnant with Bagby's child, a boy named Zachary.

David and Kate Bagby, Andrew's parents, moved from California to Newfoundland to be close to their grandson and to expedite the extradition process that would put Turner on trial. But the

law was cruel. To spend time with their grandson, the Bagbys had to jump through legal hoops and cooperate with a woman they were certain killed their son. It's a battle that no grieving parent should have to face, and yet these parents endured it with remarkable dignity.

Kuenne, a childhood friend of Bagby's, made "Dear Zachary" to show Zachary what kind of man his father was. Kuenne drives around the country and crosses the Atlantic to film friends and family as they remember Bagby.

The story evolves in ways I won't disclose, but I'll say that the twists and turns are so enraging and gut-socking, you will need some hankies. The film juxtaposes the best of humanity with the worst, and the result is searingly stark.

As traumatizing as it is, though, "Dear Zachary" makes you feel that much more human for being touched by such pure effusions of love and hate. This film is a tribute not only to Bagby, but to the power of family, community and human connection.