

DEVLIN'S DESCENT



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Chapter Fourteen: “The Kid Inside”

Caroline awoke with bile at the back of her throat. She barely had time to make it to the toilet before she expelled the contents of her stomach, some tasteless gruel that Joseph had brought to her the evening before. She clutched the lid of the toilet as she purged herself of the food, the acidic taste of bile burned down her esophagus as she watched the liquid escape her.

She threw up three times; each time a little less liquid filled the bowl.

After the third time, she laid her head on the toilet seat, catching her breath.

I'm pregnant, she thought as she lay there. The Little Man got me pregnant. That, or Joseph.

She felt like a cheap whore, a public-aid mom who slept with so many men that she didn't know who the father was.

And, oddly enough, as she lay there, her head resting on the cool comfort of the toilet seat, she thought of Devlin. Devlin, the man who had loved her with all of his heart. The man whose love she had betrayed. *Why? Because she could.* There had been no real purpose to it, nor any rhyme or reason.... she had just done it. She had become bored with her life, and Joseph had offered her a moment or two of excitement, was all.

It seemed foolish now.

It always had been.

She moved against the wall adjacent to the toilet and touched her stomach. It had only been a few days, but the thing inside her was alive. She could feel it. It shouldn't have been moving yet, but it was. It was in there. She had no doubt about that.

But how could she be suffering from morning sickness so quick-

ly? She wondered. She thought back to when she had been pregnant with Daniel. It had taken weeks for her to know she was pregnant. She had skipped a period and that had been the thing that had confirmed it for her. The morning sickness had come later, and the abortion had followed shortly thereafter.

She had debated the abortion for weeks, but had finally chosen that path for the convenience of things. She was, after all, a single woman, and the notion of raising a child on her own had scared the living daylights out of her. So, she had gone to the abortion clinic and taken care of her little problem.

Or so she thought.

Little did she know, her problems would return to her.

She felt movement in her stomach and ran her hand along the raised contour as what grew within her moved. It was bigger than a baby of only a few days should be, and she felt afraid. *What did The Little Man put in me? She thought. Was it one of his science experiments?*

The answer to that seemed to be a resounding yes. She had seen enough around the complex to know that The Little Man had his finger in many, many pies. She had no doubt that government funding was involved in his operation somehow. And that he was doing what he was doing with complete autonomy. He could get away with murder if he wished.... and he wished it.

The thing in her belly kicked.

She felt queasy again, and leaned over the toilet. She dry heaved over the opening. There was nothing left in her stomach.

A moment later, the door opened and Joseph stepped in. She didn't know why, but The Little Man had assigned Joseph as her personal servant. Perhaps it was to prove his power over them both; she wasn't really sure. But, she was certain of one thing — any love she had for Joseph had left her the moment he had beaten her at The Little Man's behest. She had thought on more than one occasion that Joseph was a weak

man, but beating her had been the icing on the cake, so to speak. His weakness was self-evident then.

She looked at him and saw a shallow husk of a man.

“What have you done to me?” she asked, her voice weak.

Joseph turned away.

“Talk to me, *God dammit!*” she shouted. The door had slid shut behind him, but she knew people down the hallway had heard.

“I brought you some breakfast,” he told her, still not making eye contact with her. “Real eggs and bacon. An English muffin, too.” He sat the tray down on the dresser and turned.

“You’re not going to tell me?” she asked. “After all we shared together.”

He stopped. He did not turn. “I...I’m not certain,” he told her.

“What do you mean you’re not certain?”

“He gave me an injection,” Joseph told her. “Tied me to a surgical table and stuck a catheter in me. I saw something go inside me. When I’d healed up, he told me to have sex with you or he’d hurt me again.”

“So, you hurt me to keep yourself from getting hurt?”

“Yes,” he said.

Caroline had no sympathy for him. “You’re a coward,” she told him.

“I know,” he said.

Then, without another word, he slid out the door.

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Caroline tried not to eat the food, but vacating her stomach had left her hungry. That, and she felt some sort of abnormal compulsion for her to eat. Like the thing in her stomach was demanding sustenance. She tried not to think about that as she wolfed down the eggs and bacon. A small cup of orange juice washed it down, and she found herself feeling better.

She lay on the bed and napped.

The sound of the door opening returned her to wakefulness. She fully expected to see Joseph there, a tray of lunch in his hands. But, instead, The Little Man stood at the door. He entered the room.

There was something highly reflective near his waist, and Caroline held her hand in front of her face to ward off the reflection. He moved into a spot where a shadow fell on his hand, and Caroline saw something that looked like a Mason jar encompassing his hand and half of his forearm. There was a green liquid inside the jar.

Pus? She wondered.

She salivated at the thought.

"I'm told there are signs you might be pregnant?" The Little Man said. He walked about the room, the Mason jar shimmering as the light caught it from different angles.

"What'd you do to me?" Caroline asked.

The Little Man cracked a smile as he said: "You spread your legs, you get what's coming to you."

Caroline wanted to kill the man for saying such a thing. While there might be a certain bit of truth to it, he had drugged her to have his way with her. She had become his plaything by his choice, not hers. He had manipulated and used her to get her there because he knew that Devlin still loved her.

"What happened to your hand?" she asked in a sarcastic tone.

The Little Man's smile faded. "Your son failed me," he said, "that's what happened to my hand." He gritted his teeth as he held the Mason jar of green liquid up. In the brilliant light, it looked like he was holding a huge emerald in his hand.

"Fortunately," he said, "We are on the cutting edge of medical technology." He motioned toward the jar. "The green liquid in here—which you have, of course, figured out is a derivative of Green Pus — will mend my severed fingers in a

matter of days. Isn't modern technology wonderful?"

Caroline snickered. "Doesn't do much for your damaged ego though, does it?"

The Little Man's face contorted with anger. It was one of the few times Caroline had ever seen the man angry, and she thought the little bastard was even uglier with a frown than a smile.

"You're a mouthy bitch today, aren't you?" he asked.

Caroline said nothing.

The smile returned to The Little Man's face quickly. "Not to worry. I always get the last laugh. Come with me."

At first, Caroline did not move. Then, she noticed the man standing in the doorway. He was one of the burly thugs who'd carried her back to her room after she'd met Daniel for the first time. She thought the man was as ugly as The Little Man.

"Where are we going?" she asked as she stood.

The Little Man didn't seem to mind offering up that little bit of information. "You have something miraculous growing within you," he said. "We're going to have an ultrasound.... you remember those, don't you? I'm sure you must have had one before they sucked Daniel out of your womb."

Caroline had no response to that. The Little Man seemed to have an uncanny ability to turn things around. She supposed it was his experience in the field of psychiatry that made that possible. She wasn't sure.

She followed The Little Man out the door, and the burly thug fell in behind them. He stayed back a few steps, but was well within arm's reach if need be.

He would have no need, however. Caroline also knew that she was trapped within The Little Man's underground lair, and that there was no escape unless The Little Man allowed it.

As she rubbed her stomach, she knew that escape would be impossible. The thing in her belly would be born underground.

She winced at the thought.

"I'm sorry to inform you," The Little Man said as he walked, "but Daniel met with an unfortunate accident.... well, not exactly an accident, I suppose. Devlin blew the boy's fucking head off."

Caroline stopped dead in her tracks. Part of her wanted to believe what The Little Man had just said. But, she knew better. Devlin was a lot of things, but she knew that he loved children. That was another reason she had aborted Daniel's fetus; Devlin would have been shattered to find out that the child was not his. It made her sad to know that the child had, indeed, been Devlin's. Over the course of the past few days, she had thought often about Daniel and Devlin. They would have been like sidekicks, if only she hadn't turned all their worlds upside down.

The Little man stopped and turned. "You coming, my dear?"

"I don't believe you," she told him. "You're a liar."

The Little Man shrugged. "Whatever," he said. "Believe what you wish...but Devlin used his physic abilities to kill the boy. He's a murderer."

"So are you," Caroline replied coldly.

The Little Man nodded. "Fair enough," he said. "But remember the old adage: "it takes one to know one." I know one. His name is Devlin." He turned and started walking again. "Come on, we haven't got all day."

Caroline paused. She could feel the burly thug behind her, his eyes burning a hole in the back of her head. It would be only a matter of seconds before he made her move. She turned her head slightly, not enough to see him, but enough to let him know that she knew he was watching her. "Move it, lady," he said. His voice sounded rough and dry, like a desert.

She started walking again.

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They came to a door and The Little Man keyed a code into

the electronic lock. The door hissed open.

The Little Man ushered her in.

Inside, the light was normal, and there were two people dressed in white, sterile surgical scrubs. Caroline looked up and realized she was in some sort of surgical amphitheater. Little did she know that Devlin had spent time in that very room.

“Disrobe and get on the gurney,” The Little Man told her.

Caroline looked at him, then up at the blackened glass of the viewing area. Is anyone sitting up there? She wondered. She thought that, most likely, someone was. Who? She didn’t know the answer to that particular question.

In the past, she would have been uncomfortable with someone watching her disrobe; but that had been in the past. She removed the thin fabric pajamas and dropped them on the floor. Her nipples became erect instantly, from the cold and not arousal.

She glanced down at herself and chuckled inwardly. It’d been a while since she’d shaved. *No bikini for you*, she thought.

She hoisted herself up onto the gurney and lay down. The doctors laid a thin sheet over her to cover her nakedness, then turned to the equipment they had nearby. As they worked on the equipment, The Little Man began to speak:

“Through trial and error,” he began, looking up at the viewing room, “we discovered that our nano-sperm required the same considerations normal sperm do. They have to live at a certain temperature. Our attempts at artificial insemination proved futile, so we retooled our thoughts and realized that we needed a male host to deposit the nano-sperm into a female test subject.”

He turned and smiled at Caroline. “One lucky test subject got to do just that.”

It was only then, as The Little Man brought her into the spotlight, that she felt naked and vulnerable. She ran her hand across her stomach and felt the thing inside her moving — but all she could think about was Green Pus. She wanted some desperately, and wondered if the pregnancy would keep

them from giving her the precious concoction.

She turned to one of the doctors. "Can I have some Pus?" she asked the man. She could see that he had bright blue eyes, but the surgical cap and the facemask covered the rest of his features. Still, the man's eyes told her far more than what his face would have. She could see compassion in those eyes and, as she watched, he turned and produced a small vial of Pus. He looked over at The Little Man, whose back was turned to them, then opened the cap and dropped the liquid in her mouth. The liquid sizzled on her tongue a moment, then she swallowed it down. It burned as it flowed into her.

"Thank you," she whispered.

The man nodded.

The Little Man continued his discussion with the people above him. Caroline listened but did not really understand the science of it. Apparently, they had somehow created a nanoboot that adhered itself to semen. That nanoboot was able to rewrite the genetic code in the semen, essentially creating a new life form. The Little Man told them that this was the first "successful" implantation that they had achieved. He eluded to "unfortunate circumstances" that had befallen the other test subjects, a statement that Caroline took to mean they had died.

Then, The Little Man turned back to Caroline. "But, we have cured all our problems related to nano-sperm, and our test subject here is carrying the first of what we hope will be a legion of creatures designed for specialized infiltration and assassination." He smiled at Caroline, then nodded at the doctors.

The doctors went about the tasks assigned them. One of them rolled an ultrasound machine up to Caroline's bed while the other brought electrodes connected to another machine along side Caroline on the other side of the bed. The man pushed back the cover, exposing Caroline's nude body from the hips up, and attached the electrodes to her stomach in various positions. That done, he hooked the electrodes into the machine and turned it on. The machine started to beep.

“As you can see,” The Little Man said, returning his gaze toward the viewing room above him. “There is a heartbeat and brain activity. The subject,” he said, nodding toward Caroline again, “was impregnated less than seventy-two hours ago.” He turned his gaze back to Caroline. “We expect full gestation and delivery within a month.”

Caroline, now well into a Pus high, watched the monitors as they beeped. The wave of brain activity went up and down, up and down, and she followed it with an intensity that only Pus could give her. The Little Man’s words seemed to be coming from far, far away as she watched the monitors. “Daniel,” she whispered as the heartbeat pulsed. *You’re not dead. You’re coming back to me.*

Then, she felt something cold on her stomach, and she looked down. The other doctor was rubbing a gel on her stomach, preparing her for the ultrasound. She felt a chill run down her spine from the coldness — *or was it?* She couldn’t be certain of much.

The doctor held up the little ultrasound roller as The Little Man said: “Ladies and Gentlemen...you’re about to see a miracle.”

He motioned for the doctor to proceed.

The blue-eyed doctor looked at Caroline. She could see compassion in his eyes as he said: “You might want to look away.”

Then, he placed the ultrasound roller on her stomach. On the monitor across from him, an image appeared.

Caroline watched as he rolled the ball around, revealing something odd. It looked almost like a snake, she thought. Then, he got a clear view of the child’s body. The screen gave them a glimpse of appendages. At first, Caroline saw nothing wrong with what she saw on the screen. Then, she realized that the child’s arms were shaped strangely. They looked like they had three sets of joints, and the hands appeared to be webbed.

As the he rolled the ultrasound further, they saw the child’s head. It turned and looked at them.

Caroline screamed. She looked at The Little Man and screamed: "Cut it out of me! Cut it the hell out of me!"

"I'm sorry, my dear," The Little Man told her. "But you're too important to us now." He tapped her stomach lightly, and the thing inside her moved. "So very important."

Caroline looked at the ultrasound screen and cried.

The thing inside her stared back at her.... and it had three eyes.