

# DEVLIN'S DESCENT



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**Chapter Seventeen:  
“Nurse Rosetta”**

"I don't understand," Devlin said. "Why would The Little Man hold the spirits of the dead prisoner?"

Daniel stood and walked to the window. The board Devlin had pried free to enter the motel room was creaking softly from the wind and sounded a great deal like a rocking chair on a hardwood floor. Daniel looked through the slats, then turned and peered into the darkness for a moment before answering.

"You've heard of Nostradamus, haven't you?"

"Sure," Devlin replied. "He could see into the future." Devlin knew there was more to Nostradamus than that, of course, but he wasn't quite certain exactly what more the man had done besides predict Earthly events for hundreds of years into the future. "What does Nostradamus have to do with anything?"

Daniel replied quickly. "Nostradamus had access to the netherworld."

"So?"

"Time isn't linear there.... it's flexible."

"I don't understand."

"Think of time as a piece of paper. If you mark two points on the piece of paper, then draw a line from one point to the other, that's a linear, fixed line. But, if you fold that piece of paper and make the two points touch, you've omitted the line. That's the way things are in the netherworld. People from the distant past and the distant future are there, right now."

"So, anyone who's ever lived or ever will live is there?" Devlin asked. "And they're able to talk to each other?"

"Not exactly," Daniel replied. "It's a little more complicated than that. There are millions — maybe billions — of levels within the netherworld. Two souls with something in com-

mon would probably never find one another.”

“But Nostradamus found them?”

Daniel nodded. “Nostradamus knew that the information he could get from the future was dangerous, so he only gave predictions. A lot of people then and now think of him a lucky guesser, but they’re wrong. Nostradamus was being fed information from the future by the dead.”

“And The Little Man wants to do the same?” Devlin asked.

“No,” Daniel replied. “The Little Man wants to control the future...that’s why he’s keeping the spirits of the dead in that underground bunker. He’s trying to figure out a way of access that information.” Daniel looked at his father then, and Devlin felt a chill run through him. The boy’s stare was icy. “He’s holding them there because he knows the bright light hurts them. They’re confused and hurting, and they need someone to set them free.”

Daniel stared at his father. “That person is you.”

A long silence fell between them. Devlin walked to the window and stood beside his son. Through the cracks, he could see the waning daylight. Night was coming. His head throbbed as he stood there, and not just from the blow he had taken. If anything, the need for Green Pus was becoming more intense by the moment. He felt the nervousness of Pus withdrawal right around the edge, and he didn’t much like the thought of it.

“He’s using Pus, isn’t he?” Devlin asked.

“Yes,” Daniel said. “The clone he made of me was the first successful product of Pus stimulation of the brain. The Little Man knows that Green Pus is the key. With it, he’ll be able to break through the shroud that has kept mankind—except for those select few like Nostradamus — from seeing into its own future.”

Devlin shook his head in disbelief. “It’s funny,” he said. “You try to live your life, love someone, living within your own little niche, and you don’t ever think about the bigger picture. You don’t realize that there are, like Shakespeare

said, "More things on Heaven and Earth than are dreamt of in your philosophies." You think you know it all; when, in fact, you don't know jack shit."

He turned and looked down at his son. Daniel looked back at him, his aura dulled further by Devlin's lack of Pus.

"If we get some Pus," Devlin asked, "will this Carlsrud help us?"

"Yes," Daniel replied.

"Then let's go find some Pus, son. We've got a little bastard to kill."

##

Green Pus wasn't hard to find. It never was, really. Not in the city, at least. All one had to do was find a dealer. Devlin knew that the section of the city he was in had a plethora of dealers, practically one on every corner. Daniel scouted ahead and found one for him, a thin man dressed up in garb that reminded Devlin of a magician. He wore a glittery robe that practically touched the ground, his dark hair graying a bit.

*How the hell can this man not be in jail already? Devlin wondered. He might as well have painted a sign on his chest professing that he was a drug dealer.*

Devlin walked up to him and smiled.

"What can I help you with today?" The dealer asked, his eyes scanning Devlin careful.

Devlin saw the man's arm reach into his pocket, and the barrel of a gun probed outwardly from the fabric a second later.

"Green Pus," Devlin said. "I need some."

"You a cop?" the dealer asked.

"No," Devlin said.

The dealer's eyes darted from side to side. He saw no one else, nor did he see a suspicious vehicle that might be undercover cops laying in wait.

Of course, he had a boy on both ends of the street that

would come to his aid if the cops were actually on him.

"I can get you that," the dealer said. "How much?"

"Six vials," Devlin told him.

The dealer's eyes widen. "Six. Big spender today." He nodded across the street and his gopher (who'd been listening to the conversation via the microphone he wore) came stepped out of the shadows.

The magician looked around, still saw no one, and nodded for his boy to come across.

"You got cash?" the dealer asked.

"Sure," Devlin said. He made as if to reach into his pocket and, at the same time, reached into the dealer's mind and made him see a wad of cash come out. It was as simple as that, really. Devlin's mind control worked beautifully. By the time his gopher arrived with the six vials of Green Pus, the transaction had been made and the gopher was none the wiser.

Later, of course, they would realize that they'd been duped. The magician would probably look upon his gopher as the culprit. *Oh well*, Devlin thought as he walked away from the scene, *they're low-lifes. They deserve each other.*

He found an alley and downed two of the vials. Pus sizzled down his throat and he relished the sensation.

##

Ten minutes later, they were walking down the street. The shadows were hanging thick in the twilight now, and the city took on an ominous feel. Devlin didn't care about that, though. He could feel the Green Pus coursing through him, making him feel invulnerable again.

The city streets were strangely silent, though, and they walked nearly three blocks before they saw another soul. When they did, it was a carload of hoodlums. Four of them, as a matter of fact; *Men that would kill you as soon as look at you*, Devlin thought. *The kind that get killed daily in drive-by shootings over things that are, generally, trivial.*

Devlin stepped out into the street. *Why?* He wasn't certain. He just felt the need to confront someone.

The car skidded to a stop in front of him. "What the fuck!" the driver yelled. He was a big black man. All but one of the occupants were black men. The man riding shotgun was tall and skinny. He wore a do-rag on his head. It had a skull and crossbones on it, but it was shifted to one side and not centered on his head.

The black man in the back seat was a big man, too. The sole white boy seemed totally out-of-place in the vehicle. He had long blonde hair that looked as if it hadn't been washed in a couple of days. His mouth agape, Devlin could see that he was missing his two front teeth.

*Three gang bangers and a redneck hick*, Devlin thought.

It didn't matter, though. He wasn't there to pass judgment on anyone; he just wanted to be left alone.

Devlin stared at the driver, then the other three, one-by-one. He reached out with his thoughts and looked into their minds. What he found within, he didn't like much. These boys were bad people.

That made it easier. He tried to find the vermin of the world, people who deserved what he did to them. A decent person wouldn't walk these streets, he told himself. *They'd be better off somewhere else—maybe in the country, breathing fresh air and living the good life.* It was something he had always wanted for Caroline and himself. The Good Life. Love. Happiness. Peace of mind.

Instead, life had turned ugly for him.

But not as ugly as the foursome sitting in the car in front of him.

Not yet, at least.

Devlin stared down the occupants in the car but, just as he was about to manipulate them, another vehicle rounded the corner. It rolled up behind the gang bangers and the redneck and honked.

Devlin's concentration broke for a moment.

A moment was all the driver needed.

He shook his head in disbelief, then let his foot off the brake and hit the gas pedal.

Devlin tried to jump out of the way as the car clipped his leg. He went down on the pavement—hard—and lay there, stunned.

“Are you all right?” a female voice said. It had been ten seconds at the most since the driver had clipped Devlin’s leg, but it seemed like half an hour.

He looked up into face of a woman. A woman he’d never seen before. And, she wore a nurse’s outfit.

“I’ll call an ambulance,” she said, turning back to her car.

“No!” Devlin shouted.

The woman paused and turned. “But you’re hurt,” she said.

“No ambulance,” he told her. “No hospitals.”

She looked at him a moment. Devlin thought he might have to reach into her mind and find whatever little secret she had hidden away, but it did not come to that. Instead, she walked toward him and offered him her hand. “Here,” she said, “Let me help you.”

Devlin took her hand. Shards of pain ran through his right leg as he tried to stand; but, with the nurse’s help, he managed to get to his feet. Even the Pus high couldn’t alleviate the pain he felt coursing through him.

He looked at the woman. She wasn’t particularly attractive, but there was something about the nurse’s uniform that amplified her appeal.

“You really need a doctor,” she said.

“No doctors,” replied Devlin.

His tone appeared to have scared her. She backed away a step or two. “You’re high on Pus, aren’t you?” she said.

“Yes.” Why he admitted it, he did not know. There was something in her eyes that made him trust her.

She gave him a soft smile. “It’s all right,” she said. She extended her hand and he took it. Her skin was soft. “My brother was a Pus head,” she told him. “I know all about the addiction.”

Devlin saw sympathy in her eyes. It was the first sympathy he had notice in a human being in ages, and he found a certain comfort in it. If anything, he wanted it. He had carried the weight of life alone for so long, and her sympathetic gestures were horribly, horribly uncommon.

"My name's Rosetta," she told him.

"Devlin," he replied.

Rosetta looked around the street. "Well, Devlin," she said, "It looks like you were on foot...can I give you a ride." And, for no other reason than he could, Devlin said: "yes."

##

Rosetta's car was a Plymouth. Devlin didn't know the model because someone had pried the little plastic emblem off the dashboard and the indentation left by it was unreadable to him. If anything, Rosetta's car belied the fact that she was a nurse. He figured that she could afford far more than a beat-up old Plymouth with a missing dashboard emblem, but she apparently could not.

Still, he sank back into the soft cushion of her vehicle and rode the Pus high into dreamland.

##

"Wake up, sleepy head!"

The voice seemed to beckon him from across an abyss of fog. A fog that consumed everything and anything it came in contact with. Yet, even though he could not see him, Devlin knew that The Little Man was hiding there, waiting on him. He would go to the man and fight him in that fog. He knew that much. Perhaps, he reckoned in his semi-conscious state, he, too, was attune with the spirit world. It would explain a lot — Boulton's escape from the swimming pool, seeing Carlrud in his room after his first dose of undiluted Green Pus, the fact that he could reach into a person's mind and touch upon things that no one else could possibly touch. He had a

gift; there was no doubt about that. Whether he wanted to admit it or not, The Little Man had imparted something special to him, even if it had been by accident and terribly unintentional.

"Wake up!" the voice said. He felt a hand on his shoulder, shaking him awake.

His eyes popped open.

He turned and looked at Rosetta, the nurse who had picked him up. For a second, he saw Caroline there. He wanted to reach out and touch her, kiss her.

He extended his hand and touched Rosetta's cheek. She did not flinch at his touch.

Then, reality crept back in, and he realized who he was with.

"I'm sorry," he told her.

He started to pull his hand away, but Rosetta caught it and drew it back to her cheek. "Don't be," she told him. "I know what you're feeling."

She seemed so soft, so vulnerable, so hurt. Devlin leaned toward her and their lips touched.

They kissed.

He kissed her with a passion that he no longer thought he had. Life had zapped away the essence of love in him. For some reason, he knew that Rosetta could help bring it back.

"She's a good woman," Daniel said from the backseat of the car. "She'll help us."

Devlin broke the kiss the second he heard his son's voice and looked back at him. His aura had brightened significantly since Devlin had taken the Green Pus.

"I'm sorry," Devlin said again. "I didn't mean to do that."

Rosetta smiled and patted his leg. "Come on inside," she told him. Then, she opened the door and stepped out. Devlin followed her.

The neighborhood Rosetta had brought him to was one that Devlin was unfamiliar with. It was a suburban area, with well-manicured lawns and yard gnomes everywhere. Devlin hadn't been in an area like that in more than a year, when he came home to find Caroline with another man. It brought that ghost to the forefront again, and Devlin, even in his drugged state, was powerless to fight away those demons.

He felt a shiver run down his spine as Rosetta opened the door to her modest one-story house. In the darkness, the exterior of the house reminded him of the house he had shared with Caroline.

But, as they stepped into the house, any semblance between this home and the one he had lived in previously vanished. They stepped through the side door to the house into a small kitchen area that was immaculately clean. There were assorted pots and pans dangling from an overhead rack, all of them spotless and looking as if they had never been used.

Rosetta, noticing Devlin's observations, said: "I'm a bit of a neatness freak."

He followed her into the living room and she motioned for him to sit on the couch. Devlin did. "Why are you helping me?" he asked.

Rosetta sat down in the chair across from Devlin. "It wasn't my brother who was a Pushead," she told him. "It was me."

Devlin's eyes widened. *How could a woman like Rosetta, who seemed to have it so together, have been a Pushead?* It didn't seem to make sense.

Rosetta read Devlin's expression and answered. "We all fall down, Devlin," she told him. "But, sometimes, if you're very, very lucky, you find the way back up." She turned her head and Devlin realized there were tears in her eyes. "My husband deserted me. I fell in with the wrong crowd, started doing things I shouldn't. Lots of things I shouldn't have done. I just didn't care anymore. One day, someone gave me a little vial of green stuff. I was so naïve; I didn't know what Green Pus was. He told me to take it, and I did. For the next

two years, I was on Pus daily. I would, and did, do anything to get Green Pus.

“Then, one day, when I thought I couldn’t sink any lower, I saw someone. It was a man. I thought I was dreaming, but I wasn’t. He told me where to go to get better, and I went there.

“I saw that same man today,” she said, “and he told me where I could find you.”

“He...told.... you to find me?”

Rosetta nodded. “Yes. He told me that you had a mission. That you would need my help, and that I should help you in any way possible.”

Devlin fully expected to wake up from a dream at that moment and find himself in the run-down, rat-infest motel room again. He reached out and pinched himself and realized he was, indeed, wide-awake.

Devlin said, “I don’t understand. What man? Who is he?”

Rosetta stood and walked to Devlin. “He told me his name.”

Devlin stared into her eyes as she said: “His name is Malcolm Carlsrud.... and he said you need to stop The Little Man to become whole again.”