

DEVLIN'S DESCENT



ROGER
DALE
TREXLER

© 2009 Roger Dale Trexler.
All rights reserved.

Chapter Twenty:
“Do You Want to Know a Secret?”

The Little Man lay in bed, clutching his chest. The heart attack had seized his heart up and made him realize, for the first time, that he was mortal. His conceit had prevented him from such a simple realization and, even now, the thought was strangely alien to him. His chest still ached with phantom pains and he was quite sure that the defibrillator had caused him permanent nerve damage.

That truth was painfully obvious now.

But, the physical pain wasn't what bothered him. He had bore physical pain before, and it was something he knew he could tolerate. No, what bothered him was the fact that Daniel had bested him. He had caught him in a sensitive situation and manipulated it, just as The Little Man himself was prone to do. He had been bested at his own game, and that was what bothered him the most.

His room in the underground bunker was dark. He had come there after the doctors had given him a clean bill of health. They had told him to get some rest, but he couldn't sleep at all. The events of the day weighed heavily on him.

He stood and walked across the plushy-carpeted floor and turned on one of the three computers he had. A video surveillance of the entire facility popped onto the screen, at least three dozen cameras showed him rooms, hallways and even exterior views of the facility.

He reached out and touched one of the thumbnails and the picture grew larger. It was a view of Caroline's room. The lights were still on in her room, but the filters on the camera lenses blocked out most of the brilliance. He saw her sitting on her bed, rubbing her belly. Her belly had grown since he'd

last seen her; she had barely looked pregnant before. Now, there was a definite lump where the child grew.

Growth hormones, The Little Man thought. *We're running out of time*. If his experience with Daniel had taught him anything, it had taught him that Devlin was getting closer by the minute. And, while he would never admit it to anyone, he was afraid of Devlin. Devlin's powers were formidable, and his little spirit child was like an extension of the man himself. Together, he feared they would bring him down.

But, the thing growing in Caroline's stomach could change all that. The doctors gave him daily reports on its progress, and they were amazed. The rod feeding information into the child's brain was feeding major amounts of knowledge and skills into the child. Less than a week after starting the downloads in the child's brain, she had the equivalent of a college education. In another week, the child would be far beyond genius; she would be a demigod.

And, The Little Man would control her. At birth, the doctors would install an explosive chip in her brain. If she didn't do what he wanted, he would kill her. But, she would. The doctors were also instilling commands in the child's mind that would make her submissive to him. The explosive charge was just a safeguard.

He sat and watched Caroline rubbing her belly. Her lips were moving. She was talking to the child.

Telepathy, he thought. *The child has telepathic powers*. It didn't surprise him in the least. Green Pus, which was being fed to its mother on a regular basis, now, opened up the mind's receptacles. The child was as connected to its mother as any other child; her blood was its blood. And, as the doctors had told him with the clones, introducing Green Pus in the formative stages of the human mind was something that they had no real way of controlling. He had seen the results in the first stages of cloning; the aberrations Green Pus had created would have fit nicely in a house of horrors. They had learned to introduce smaller dosages and build up to a standard dosage. Then, after a while, they slipped the undiluted

Pus into the child's mind. The child seemed more capable of withstanding the dosage, kind of like a person's resistance to alcohol with regular consumption.

He watched as Caroline talked to the child and he wondered just what exactly she could say to it.

He flicked a switch and listened.

##

"It'll be all right," Caroline said as she rubbed her stomach. The huge mound that had once been a flat abdomen moved slightly. She saw the metal rod swing to the right, then to the left. It reminded her of a fishing line bobber when a fish was taking the bait.

I took the bait, she thought. And I'm going to die because I did.

She couldn't fool herself; she knew that, when the baby came, it would kill her. The Little Man might have alluded to another outcome, but she had no doubt she would be dead within a matter of a couple of weeks.

"It's all right," she told the thing in her stomach. "I guess I deserve it."

That part, she didn't really believe, though. She knew now that she had done Devlin incredibly wrong, but there was no going back and fixing it. What was done was done. She felt bad for Devlin because, in a strange way, she still loved him. It was a confusing mixture of emotions she had going on at the moment, and most of it was caused by the influx of hormones from her own body feeding the child and herself. She had heard about "the glow" many times. She'd even taken notice of it in her pregnant friends from time to time, but she had never really experienced it herself....until now.

I guess I can be thankful for that, she thought. I'll feel wonderful right up till the moment I die.

The baby moved again. This time, the movement was painful, and the child sent that message to her mother's mind.

"I'm sorry," Caroline told the baby.

The baby stopped moving as she rubbed her stomach again. Caroline felt the child's thoughts. She could get bits and pieces of the information they were feeding it through the little transmitter taped to her stomach. She couldn't see *all* of it but, what she did see, was ugly.

What are they teaching you? She wondered.

Ugliness, the child replied.

"I'm sorry for that, too," she told the thing.

She glanced across the room and saw the tray of food Joseph had brought her an hour or so ago. She had no appetite at the moment, though. The sight of Joseph had upset her. He had impregnated her with the thing and, for that, she could not forgive him.

Eat, the child thought.

No.

Her head began to throb. It started as a low, steady beat and increased in intensity until it felt like someone was beating a bass drum inside her skull.

Eat, the child said again.

"Okay!" she shouted.

She stood and, almost instantly, the pain dissipated.

She walked to the tray and took a banana off of it. She peeled it and began to eat. Her stomach rumbled. She had been hungry after all.

That's better, the child said.

She was about to answer it when the door opened. She turned and saw The Little Man standing there. Behind him, the blue-eyed doctor stood. In his hand, he held a hypodermic needle.

Caroline tensed as they stepped into the room.

"What are you doing?" she asked.

The Little Man did not reply to her query. Instead, he turned to the doctor and said: "Give her the shot."

The blue-eyed doctor nodded affirmation and walked toward Caroline. He looked her in the eyes and said: "You'll need to hold still." With that, he lifted her shirt and exposed her stomach. The child, sensing her mother's apprehension,

began to move. With her feet, she started to kick Caroline's abdomen. Her stomach bounced up and down a good three inches. It looked like a bag full of angry snakes was in her stomach and Caroline groaned in pain.

The doctor held the needle over her stomach and was completely bewildered by the child's reaction.

"Give her the shot, dammit!" The Little Man said.

The doctor paused only a second longer, then plunged the needle into Caroline's stomach.

In her mind, Caroline heard the child scream.

She screamed, too.

The doctor pushed down on the plunger and injected the needle's contents into the child.

The needle had struck the child just below the ribcage. Caroline could feel the substance that had been injected into her child as it coursed through its veins, setting the child's body on fire as it passed.

And, she could feel the child grow.

She looked at the doctor and saw sympathy in his eyes again, but it was a fleeting thing. The Little Man stepped forward and pushed him out of the way.

The child fidgeted in the womb as the growth hormone did its work.

"How long?" The Little Man asked.

The doctor shook his head. "Not sure. Probably only a couple of days now. We've never used the hormone on..." he paused, "... a child before."

He glanced at Caroline. "We have no way of knowing."

"I need the child as quickly as possible," The Little Man told him. He turned and looked at Caroline. "Sacrifice her if you must, but get me that child."

Then, he turned and walked out of the room.

Caroline watched him leave, her mouth agape. In her stomach, she could feel the child's pain. It coursed through her mind as if the pain was her own; which, it was. She looked up at the doctor and asked: "Am I going to die?"

The doctor didn't answer for a moment. Then, he reached

out and took her hand. "Not if I can help it," he said.

Caroline burst into tears. "I've made such a mess of things," she said.

"We all make messes," the doctor replied. "And we all have to pay the price for our mistakes." He patted her hand. "Devlin made plenty of mistakes himself."

"You knew Devlin?"

He nodded. "Yes. I did. And I still do." He bent forward and whispered, "I've been carrying the spirit of your son through the lighted halls," he said. "I don't know why he's the only spirit I can carry through the halls, but he is. He waits for me to leave work, then finds me."

Daniel, she thought. *How can you travel through the light?* She knew that the light had some significance with the spirits of the dead. Now, the blue-eyed doctor was telling her that he brought Daniel to and fro within the brightly lit hallways that housed so many dead spirits. And, if Daniel could travel within the body of a living, breathing person — why couldn't the rest of the dead?

He's special, she heard the voice of her unborn child say. *He's special and he has abilities that none of the other dead do.*

"Why?" Caroline asked aloud. The blue-eyed doctor looked at her quizzically, but she didn't notice. Her thoughts were turned inwardly.

Because he never really lived, her daughter replied. *You killed him before he could. All the other spirits in this place lived lives. Daniel was a fetus when you aborted him. His mind wasn't fully formed — and that's why he can travel inside of people. There's some quality his mind is lacking — or, maybe, his mind has — that allows it.*

"What does Daniel say to you?" she asked.

"He tells me that he doesn't hold a grudge. He knows that you were confused and that you really didn't want to kill him. And, he knows that you loved him."

Caroline burst into tears again at that statement. She and Devlin had always wanted a child, and she had destroyed that child while it was still inside her womb. But, somehow, his

spirit lingered on. The Little Man had taken his stem cells and recreated him, but it had not actually been *her* Daniel. *Her* Daniel traveled in the spirit world and used this man standing in front of her as his host while he was in the hallways of brilliant light.

He had found a way.

"What's your name?" Caroline asked the doctor.

"Jack," he said. "My name is Jack."

Jack, she thought. *Like Jack and Jill. How appropriate.*

"I'm Caroline," she said.

"I know who you are," Jack said. "Your son, remember?"

"Yes," she replied. "So, Jack, how long have you worked here?"

Jack looked around suspiciously, then whispered. "Three years," he told her.

"I bet you've seen a lot of crazy things around here?"

"You have no idea."

"What is it exactly that you do for The Little Man?" she asked.

Once again, he looked around. He knew that they were monitoring her, but he wasn't certain how powerful their cameras and microphones were in this room. And, he had probably already said far too much.

"Anything he asks me to," Jack replied.

Caroline snarled. "Are there any real men in this place? What gives that little bastard such power?"

Jack frowned. "They'll kill my family if I don't comply," he said.

That took the wind out of Caroline's sails. Until that moment, she hadn't considered the fact that people were working in the underground complex against their will. She had assumed that it was all about the paycheck, making money. But, she had seen sympathy in Jack's eyes once too often for that. He worked for The Little Man, but he did not enjoy it.

"I'm sorry," she said.

"It's all right," he told her. "It's a long story."

"I'd like to hear it sometime," she said. And, she would. Jack seemed like a man with a heart. He had been thrust into the situation because his family was in jeopardy. She had no doubt that The Little Man would kill anyone without even so much as a second thought if it would serve his purposes.

A buzzer went off on Jack's wrist and she realized that he had some sort of communication device on. He looked down, touched a button that shut the buzzing off, and looked at her.

"I've got to go," he said. "I'll try to check in on you later."

"Thank you," she said.

He turned and headed for the door. When he reached it, he turned around and looked at her. "Devlin did love you, you know that, right?"

"Yes," was all she could reply. She knew the statement to be true.

He opened the door.

Outside, The Little Man waited. Two burly thugs stood there as well. Jack froze. "I think we need to talk about the secrets you've been keeping from me," The Little Man told him coldly.

Then, the door slid shut.

It would be the last time Caroline would see him alive.