

DEVLIN'S DESCENT



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Chapter Fifteen:
“The First Cut is the Deepest”

The Little Man reached out and patted Caroline on the hand. "There, there," he said in his best condescending tone. "This will all be over shortly." With that, he nodded toward the doctor who'd placed the monitors on her belly.

The doctor nodded a reply, then threw the first of three straps across Caroline's chest. The blue-eyed doctor secured them without looking at Caroline.

"What are you doing to me?" Caroline shouted. She fought in the restraints, but there was no breaking free from them. The doctors had secured her firmly.

The Little Man answered her question calmly. "The creature growing inside your stomach is very, very important to many people," he said. "We're going to cut a small incision in your stomach and place a wire in the child's brain. We'll be able to send and receive the child's brainwaves, and we'll be able to manipulate the child's thoughts and teach it while it's in the womb. It's a process we've perfected with the clones in the nursery room."

The doctor opened a tray and produced a scalpel.

Caroline's eyes grew wide as she watched the man walk up to her. She tried to fight again, but there was no use.

"Now, hold still," The Little Man said. "We wouldn't want to hurt the child, would we?"

The doctor took a cotton swab and placed it on Caroline's stomach. There was a cold liquid on it that Caroline figured was some sort of disinfectant. He washed a small section of her stomach, keeping a close eye on the ultrasound monitor the other doctor still held to her stomach.

"This is going to hurt," the doctor said.

Then, he placed the blade on Caroline's stomach and cut.

Caroline screamed. The lack of anesthesia as they cut into her abdomen sent pain dancing through her. She didn't think she had ever felt such intense pain in her life. The Green Pus the doctor had given her had, in hindsight, been administered to lessen the pain of the incision. But, it hadn't helped. She thought that this pain must be like childbirth; not that she would know what it felt like, but she could imagine. She screamed out "Daniel!" to the room as the doctor cut the slit wider. And, still, she tried not to move as she screamed. She knew that moving would only make the blade cut more, and that was the last thing on Earth she wanted.

When he withdrew the blade, Caroline cried out with joy. It seemed like the doctor had cut into her flesh for an eternity, but it had actually only been a matter of seconds.

Then, the doctor produced the electrode they would stick in the child's brain. It looked like a long, thin nail attached to some wires. Caroline thought it resembled one of those probes you stick in a turkey at Thanksgiving to measure the interior temperature.

The doctor walked to Caroline.

He placed one hand on her stomach, spreading the incision he had made with his fingers like a lover might part a woman's privates to perform fellatio, then looked at the ultrasound picture. "Move it to the right a little," he told the blue-eyed doctor. The doctor complied and gave him a clearer view of where he was inserting his needle.

He slid the needle in, through the muscle, and it appeared on the ultrasound.

Caroline felt only a nominal amount of pain from the insertion. Her mind had suffered enough pain, and the Green Pus had moved in to dull her senses.

Still, she watched as the needle slid through her insides.

And, the child moved.

She looked at the ultrasound and couldn't believe what she was seeing. The thing in her stomach had placed its hands in front of its skull, trying to protect itself from the needle.

The doctor, seeing this, wiggled the needle to one side

quickly, then pushed it back, essentially pushing the child's hand out of the way.

Quickly, he jabbed the needle into the child's brain.

Caroline screamed.... but the scream was not her own. Inside her womb, the child cried out *through* her. She knew then that the child and she were linked by far more than just an umbilical cord...the boy was in her mind.

She looked at the ultrasound. The child spasmed in pain; it wiggling in a way that reminded her of an alligator bringing down its prey. But, through it all, the doctor held firm to the rod it had placed in the child's head. The body contorted and fought, but the head remained in place.

Caroline could feel the movement within her, but the Green Pus had numbed her enough that it seemed like no more than a muscle spasm.

In a moment, the child lay silent, the rod firmly ensconced in its brain.

"Is it dead?" she asked. *Oh, please, let it be dead*, she thought. *I don't want to carry a monster inside of me.*

But, in answer to her question, she looked over at the monitor. There was a steady beeping.

The child was still alive.

The doctor with the electrode took a thin strip of adhesive tape and adhered the rod to Caroline's stomach. Then, he produced a small device no bigger than a pack of cigarettes and taped it, too, to her stomach. He hooked up the wires coming out of the electrodes into the device, flipped a switch, and stood back.

Caroline felt something strange. She couldn't quite put words to the feeling, but she knew without question that the device taped to her abdomen was feeding information into the brain of her unborn child. She knew it because she, too, was receiving the information.

The doctor went back to the monitors and said: "it's transmitting."

The Little Man nodded. "Good," he said. He looked at Caroline and added: "that notion you have about pulling out

the wires won't work. We'll just reconnect them...and we'll bury the device under your skin without anesthesia. And, if you continue to try to hurt the child, we'll cut your arms off.... you understand?"

Caroline nodded.

She understood.

The Little Man turned to the viewing room audience. "We have successfully inserted the probe into the subject's brain. Over the next month, as it grows, we will instill the knowledge and abilities needed for specific tasks. Those tasks can be user-defined. And, the child can continue to learn and grow just as a normal child does."

Caroline lay there as The Little Man continued to explain the importance of the child to the future of the military. He told them that soldiers could be created who would be able to hear and see better. That they were still exploring the portion of the brain that, until now, lay dormant, and that those areas, with the augmentation made possible by Green Pus, would bring a new era of success and world conquest.

All the time, The Little Man waved his hand in the air, embellishing his statements. The jar full of Green Pus derivative still looked like an over-sized emerald on The Little Man's hand.

Slowly, Caroline shut The Little Man out. Instead, she focused on the thing growing in her stomach. The Little Man had threatened to cut her arms off if she attempted to pull the probe out of the child's mind, but what would stop the child from doing it himself? He had, after all, tried to keep the probe from being inserted in the first place. As the child grew, his knowledge and abilities would grow.

I won't do that, a voice in her head said.

Caroline gasped. The doctor with the blue eyes looked at her quizzically. He was still running the ultrasound device across her stomach. Caroline watched the monitor as it moved. The ultrasound was far more advanced than anything out there in the real world, and the child's body twisted slightly as he reached the waist. As he moved down slightly,

Caroline saw the legs and hips. Between the legs, she saw a small slit.

She glared at the doctor.

“Congratulations,” he said softly, so as not to be heard by The Little Man. “It’s a girl.”

Caroline stared back at him, her jaw slightly agape.

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The rest of the exhibition took about ten minutes, but Caroline didn’t listen to much of it. *The Little Man might be a good used car salesman, she thought, but he is as full of shit as a Christmas goose.* Perhaps, that was why he was in the position he was in. People liked having smoke blown up their asses, even if they didn’t fully understand that the person blowing that smoke was a murderous, power mad devil of a man. Of course, she reckoned, he was probably in good company. The men sitting behind the glass of the observation port were birds of a feather with The Little Man. They care nothing for anyone’s well being. They were as deadly and obsessed with power as The Little Man himself.

A pot and a lid, Caroline thought, remembering what her mother had said about people who had a similar nature. Birds of a feather, in other words. How she wished her mother were there now. She would have had some worthwhile insights.

I’m here for you, Mommy, the voice in her head told her.

Go away, Caroline thought back. *I don’t want you.*

We’re stuck with each other, the voice replied. *Better make the best of it.*

Caroline wanted to reach down and touch her stomach, but the incision and the punctured muscles ached. Even on a Pus high, it hurt.

The doctors attached some sort of bandage that closed around the rod stuck in the child. It wasn’t quite plastic, though. I had a fleshy aspect to it and, as she watched, the bandage seemed to soak into her stomach and become a part of it. The cut the doctors had made to drive the bandage

down on the rod sealed itself around the rod also. About half an inch of the rod remained outside her flesh, and the wires attached to it were covered with something that looked like one of those rubber thimbles seamstresses use to keep from jabbing the needle into their fingers.

The exhibit ended with The Little Man asking questions of the audience above. The room remained dark as questions came over the loud speaker.

“So, from impregnation to deliver is less than thirty days.”

“Yes,” The Little Man said. “It will vary with the subject, of course, but delivery is expected within twenty-five to thirty days.”

“What harm is there to the mother?”

The Little Man turned and smiled at Caroline with that question. “We’re not absolutely certain,” he told the inquiring voice. “Undoubtedly, the nature of the infant will render the mother incapable of bearing more children. The nano-boots have been programmed to destroy the subject’s ability to produce eggs after fertilization has occurred.”

He looked away from Caroline. “There is no way of telling what difficulties delivery might present. Therefore, we had decided that a cesarean section is the optimal method of delivery.”

“But, impregnation in the field?” another voice asked.

The Little Man grinned. “Well, that would produce an unfortunate casualty of war. Collateral damage, gentlemen. The mother would die without medical attention.” He chuckled a bit, then added: “Considering the factions we will be warring with, does it really matter?”

No one replied to that comment.

“Well,” The Little Man said after a moment of pondering. “Today has been a historic day. We’ve successfully bonded our nano-sperm with a human egg and gestation has begun. The child is growing and is healthy, and we have inserted a probe into its brain to provide it with the vital information it needs. We will reconvene in two weeks time to check on the

progress of our child. At that time, I will be taking bids for the final information that is instilled in the fetus before birth." He nodded at the darkened window above him. "Have a good day, gentlemen, and, rest assured, we are keeping our country safe from foreign and domestic terrorists alike by our research and diligence. Thank you, and have a good day."

The Little Man curtsied to the men overhead. Caroline would have laughed at that, had she heard it. But, more and more, she was hearing the child within her womb talking to her. It was like the rod sticking out of her stomach was an antennae and it was transmitting information to her as well as the child. Not just the information that The Little Man and his minions had designated for the child's education, but the child's thoughts as well.

A hand touched Caroline's shoulder, and she jumped. She looked up into the blue-eyed doctor's eyes and saw genuine concern. "Are you all right?" the man asked.

"Yeah...yeah," Caroline replied in a groggy sort of tone. If she tried, she could separate out the child's thoughts from her own. But, it wasn't easy. And, she found herself wondering if, as the child grew stronger, she would be in control of her own mind.

I'll take care of you, the child answered. There's no need to worry now.

But, Caroline could sense some of the things that The Little Man was trying to force-feed her child's mind, and she didn't much like it.

"Help me!" Caroline pleaded with the doctor. "Please, help me!"

The Little Man strolled up to her. "I'm afraid there's no one who can help you now, my dear," he said. "Not even Devlin."

Caroline wanted to jump off the gurney and attack The Little Man. She wanted to hurt him for what he had done to her, for what he had done to Devlin. For, she knew that Devlin had suffered far more than she would ever dream of suffering. He had been driven to the precipice and looked down

into Hell.

And, The Little Man had been there waiting for him.

Caroline knew that.... now. She didn't quite know how she knew it; but, she supposed, it had something to do with the message Daniel had sent her at the moment of his death. Somehow, his thoughts had passed through the brilliant lights of The Little Man's underground lair and found her.

It had told her many things.

She just hadn't been able to interpret them. Now, now that she had some bastardized scientific monster growing within her womb, she understood. She knew that Devlin had paid a heavy price for loving her.

He had paid with his heart.

"Devlin will come for you," Caroline told The Little Man. "He'll come and he'll kill you."

The Little Man grinned. "He'll try," he said. "But imagine what he'll think when he sees the love of his life pregnant? I'm a psychiatrist, first and foremost, my dear," The Little Man told her. "I know human nature. That's what makes me so good at my job. I know that Devlin will hate you for what you have done. He'll hate you and he'll love you all at the same time. He won't know how to react.

"And, in that moment when he doesn't know what to do, that's when I'll kill him."

The Little Man's smile widened. He looked like an insane clown. "I can promise you something though," The Little Man said.

When he didn't continue, Caroline asked: "And what is that?"

"He won't die quickly.... and he'll know that it was the man you betrayed him with that gave you the child. He'll know, and the knowledge will drive him insane."

The Little Man pursed his lip in his hand, then said: "I wonder if you know just how many times that man cried over you? It was the most pathetic thing I've ever seen. A grown man crying like a baby, telling me how much he loved you. I've never seen a man who loved a woman more. It

was so easy to manipulate him — all I had to do was promise him was that I would make everything all right again. That I would make him forget you.”

He ran his hand along the contours of her stomach, touching the device they had attached to the rod in her child’s brain. “I didn’t tell the military types, but child birth, even a c-section, is likely to kill you.”

Caroline winced at the information.

“With luck, Devlin will live long enough to see you die. I owe him that much, I think.” He paused. “Maybe the man will find some small bit of solace in that?”

He let the question hang in midair.

“Take care of her,” he told the doctors. “See to it she has what she needs to survive.”

Then, without another word, The Little Man turned and walked away, leaving Caroline in the hands of medical professionals.