

*This is a story of greed, lies, deceit
and heart-break.*

IN THE SHADOW OF EVIL

By Cee McAdams

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IN THE
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CEE McADAMS

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Print ISBN: 978-1-64719-138-2

Epub ISBN: 978-1-64719-139-9

Mobi ISBN: 978-1-64719-140-5

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Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

Printed on acid-free paper.

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BookLocker.com, Inc.
2021

First Edition

Front Cover art concept by: Eli Renteria

Interior images: Alligator ride for Woh & Shattered Heart Art by Ayanna Freeman

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In the Shadow of Evil

It was a cold December day. Just how cold I had no way to tell for sure. The thermostat inside was not a good indication of how cold it was outside but my old bones had a way of announcing weather changes especially if it meant cold or damp weather was on the way. The morning was not too bad but I knew that night was going to be even colder. Winter had roared in with bluster and a bad attitude. He had flexed his muscles and puffed out his cheeks and the temperature had started dropping. By late afternoon, the sky was completely devoid of the sun and the few clouds still hanging around looked dreary and crestfallen.

I had long since left the confines and comfort of my rustic home and was by now living with one my children. Contrary to popular belief, living with one of my children was not the ideal situation that I had imagined it would be. I was alone more often than not and spent a lot of my days just puttering

around the house, trying to find something to occupy my time and my mind, but every now and then, reality would set in and I would find myself on the verge of panic.

My friends, the few that were left, were not in the city so I felt somewhat disconnected here. There was not much for me to do on my own and depended on one of the children to take me grocery shopping or to church or to whatever events that he or she thought I might enjoy. Other times, I was alone, more often than not. At night was probably the worse. I would hear all manner of strange sounds, not like those I was used to hearing around my former home. I knew that those sounds were made by the two-legged creatures who were most likely up to no good, as far as I was concerned, very unlike the furry creatures who had no harmful intent; still I tried to settle in and not worry too much...I knew someone would be coming back sooner or later.

When I was first invited to come and live with this child, I was so elated that it made me slightly dizzy...it took a fair amount of willpower not to jump up and down...I had never lived alone before and just the thought of it was a bit disorienting. I

thought I was going to be as happy as a clam but as the days and nights crept by and I was alone so much of the time, those euphoric moments evaporated like a small puddle on a hot day. I spent too much time remembering my late husband...those feelings and thoughts reverberated in my head, and some days, I would almost hear his voice but could not quite make out the words. Sometimes that rolling undulation of memory felt blissful but at other times, sadness would consume me and I would dissolve in tears. Having no one around to talk to most of the time, the loneliness would simply overwhelm me. I would watch TV for entertainment and there was always plenty of food for me to eat but somehow, I had the notion that being here would be very different...little did I know that my world was about to take a drastically wrong turn.

On this particular morning, I was sitting at the kitchen table trying to decide if I wanted to make breakfast for myself or just have a cup of coffee, finally deciding that a steaming bowl of oatmeal would do the trick. I was feeling a bit chilled and wanted to dial up the heat but realized that I had no knowledge of such things as furnaces and fancy thermostats...I was going to have to call

someone for help so I dialed a number, grabbed a heavier robe and settled down to wait. Looking back, I realize now that that call was the beginning of the end.

He came right over and told me that he would see what he could do, reminding me that it was not his house. He rambled on for a long time about where to find the control box or whether to turn everything up or off or just dial it back a bit. I remember thinking that it was odd behavior for someone who lived in a modern house and should have known how to find the furnace or how to turn up the heat. I almost told him this but decided to keep my thoughts to myself as the temperature, both outside and inside, continued to drop and I continued to shiver.

When he finally decided that he could not find the furnace or turn the heat up or know how to do anything that would make me more comfortable, he offered to take me to his house. I was cold and had not a clue that I was the lamb, voluntarily going to the slaughter. He is what you would get if you could cross a venomous snake with a vulture. He is a creature who hates to work, who profits from the suffering of others, who is greedy, crafty

and devious...he avoids volatile situations because he is mostly a spineless coward...he is opportunistic and therefore he relishes preying on the weak, the dead or the dying...he is a being who is not threatened by criticism...he is usually confident, enigmatic, shrewd, insidious, parasitic, ruthless and cold-bloodied. He is mostly simple but can make complex decisions when it comes to his own survival. He is callous, and unwilling to accept blame. So why would I have gone along with this creature? I should have stopped long enough to think this through but I was ignorant, totally unaware and cold, so I packed a small overnight bag and went along. I really wanted to be warm again.

It would be several days before I would learn that some monsters don't crawl out of the swamp or hide underneath the bed. I know that some monsters come out of the fantasies of parents who want to scare their children so they will go to sleep on demand, but some monsters are of such rare breed and cunning that you have no reason to suspect that they are ready and willing to slice open your throat and leave you to die a slow but horrific death. This particular breed of monster was the disciplined kind that would rather watch

you die in small increments and show no remorse because even if he was not a supremely gifted sociopath, he was at the very least a ruthless one when it came to getting what he wanted. Much to my horror, I learned that he had no more feelings for me as his mother than he would have had for a painted rock or a pine tree. I learned the hard and painful truth but much too late to save myself an enormous amount of disappointment, heartache and financial ruin.



My husband [of more than 50 years] came home one day after being out in the pasture looking after the livestock. His face was scratched and he look a bit disheveled. I asked what had happened and he told me that he had fallen...just tipped right over, no rhyme or reason that he knew about at the time. He said that he felt OK, just a little embarrassed but thankfully no one saw him take a tumble. The episodes of falling continued until one a particular day, a friend was visiting and upon finding him on the ground unable to right himself, helped him up and back to the house...we decided then and there that it was time to get help. I called some of the children and collectively, they wanted to take him to the hospital right away. He strongly objected on the grounds that, in his mind, doctors wanted to rush old people away before it was their time...this was his way of stating that he had a fear of doctors, real or imagined.

Long hours later, the children insisted so off he went to the hospital and we soon learned that he had one those neuro-muscular diseases for which there was no cure. The doctors basically had no recommendations for us, no medication that would help, only that the long-term outlook was not a

positive one, so they dismissed him and we just took him home to begin the long regimen of trying to make him as comfortable as possible, at least most of us did. Each of us had a particular chore of bathing, or feeding or shaving or being the companion. One of us should have been the sentry.

One day not too long after my husband came home from the hospital, we found this person with his hand around my husband's throat, slowly squeezing the life out of him. My husband was by now, growing weaker and could not fight him off but thankfully one of the other children walked in just in time. He over-heard some very strange angry words such as 'you're not going to need it where you're going.' He was trying to force my husband to tell him where he had money hidden in the house and where the ownership papers could be found. Mostly he was demanding to have everything signed over to him. Needless to say, this was not accomplished but from that day forward, until the angels came to take my husband away, he was never left alone even for a minute, while this creature was around.

This assault and act of cowardice left us all bewildered...we were constantly picking our chins up from the floor, almost in total disbelief...no one really understood. How could he do such a thing to his father who was by that time, unable to talk or defend himself? A few days later, my husband handed me a piece of paper on which he had written a message...he had figured things out. The note stated that this individual had been sent by 'the devil' and warned me to watch out for him. At that time, I was surrounded by other children and didn't take this as a warning...I have now lived to regret it.



My husband left me with land, enough money to survive and a house already paid off and well furnished. It was not the lap of luxury, not many amenities, but it was home. The problem with this was that I would have had to live alone, far away from anyone that I knew and far from medical care facilities. I never learned to drive and depended on my husband for almost everything including the day to day management of the place and paying of all the bills. We had a simple but comfortable life. I could travel to see my children and other family members whenever I had the hankering and my husband would provide me with funds. Now that he is gone, I am like the proverbial fish out of water and literally drowning in air, trying to learn to deal with this new and strange existence. Of course, I had no plans to lose my husband...I just assumed that he would always be there to take care of things...the angels came and took him away before I was prepared for him to leave. Now I have found myself in the lair of this parasite and I didn't know if it would have done me any good to be afraid...thinking back, it was probably fear that kept me so cold and uncomfortable. Truthfully, I totally lacked the wherewithal to understand that bizarre creature...he was the blood of my blood but I could hardly believe it.



One day, approximately 1 week after I moved in with him, I was lying in bed looking up at the ceiling, and wondered why the paint was cracked and why he had not painted this room...I had noticed that other parts of the house needed painting as well when my wool- gathering was interrupted by a knock on the door. I cleared my throat and said give me a minute, stretched and then headed for the door. He stood there, looking as forlorn as a snail but said nothing at first, as if choosing just the right, or the wrong words to use. Finally, he asked to be included on my checking account so that he could help me manage my finances...he even offered to go and pay the taxes on my home so that I would not have to worry about going back and forth to the tax office or even the post office. Something stirred inside my stomach, not too much of a jangle but a definite mild disturbance. I pushed it aside. At the time, his request didn't seem like such an outrageous one since I knew that the money was available and all that needed to be done was to send a check. Unfortunately for me, what appeared to be a lagniappe was wrapped in slimy loincloth and I was about to be stripped naked. At that moment, I was as naïve as a newborn, having forgotten the previous warning. My lack of education and

sophistication was about to cost me everything I had.

But I digress. I couldn't possibly spend the rest of my life trying to remember if there were any indication of this person evolving and becoming the inhuman thing that he was or whether or not my husband had ever seen any obvious signs and simply failed to point them out to me. He had tried at least once but that acorn was not heavy enough to fully get my attention. It certainly should have given me a hint of how I should have side-stepped a collision with this monster, but I was already his prey and he was about to inflict a debilitating wound...but he was going to make me suffer first.

Although it's a little too late, I can clearly remember that he never liked work of any sort and would spend hours hiding out in order to avoid doing even the simplest chores. I recall also that he had a penchant for catching and torturing small animals, especially cats, holding them under water to see how long it would take for them to stop breathing. He tried this form of torture with other small animals like toads but cats seemed to have been his favorite, I think because they made loud

noises and fought to stay alive. This must have really fueled his already developing proclivity to inflict misery, maiming and eventually killing to satisfy his thirst for maximum destruction.

I can't imagine how I missed it or did I simply choose to ignore the horrifying picture that was developing right before my eyes? I definitely remember seeing the body of a small white kitten floating on the surface of the stock pond and hearing him say that 'that one didn't take long enough.' It gave me a chill like ice water running down my spine even then. His earlier exploits seemed to have prepared him for this new and malicious mission...he has now morphed into this perfectly soulless, fang-bearing monster.



I had been in his lair for about 5 months. The weather was warmer and the breezes were cooler by then and I was no longer cold from the low temperatures, but I was uncomfortable all the time from the environment in his house...his treatment of me left me feeling cold, empty and feeling useless. He seemed carved from stone as he showed me no sign of familiarity, let alone affection. I didn't get as much consideration as a dirty dinner plate.

I inquired almost daily about the taxes and how much was left in my account, but he continued to tell me that the money was gone and that the government had taken it. He failed to explain to me whether or not the taxes had been paid or why the government would have taken my money. I attempted to ask other people and my other children who told me that the bank would not do such a thing without explanation, but they were otherwise of no help since he had custody of my check book and refused to return it to me.

I was fortunate or unlucky as it were, to be there alone when the mail came one day and I was able to get a look at my account statement. Much to my horror and dismay, I discovered that I had a total

\$18.00 and change left in an account which had a previous balance of over \$6000 when he has asked to pay my taxes for me. As usual, he was smarter and a more gifted liar than most, more cunningly vicious than anyone else and did not provide me with satisfactory answers. There was no one I could go to for help.

I was not the most social person but once in a while, company would have been a good thing. Just to have someone to chat with about church matters, since he would not allow me to attend services, would have been welcomed relief from the solitude, but he did not allow others to come to visit me at his lair. I was cut off from everyone, totally at his mercy of which there was none.

One day he informed me that we would have to leave because the house was being foreclosed. This was a new word and a new concept for me so of course I had no clue what he meant. He then told me that he was several months behind on his payments and that there was no more money for electric, water and other bills and that we would have to get out. He then casually announced that he would be moving into my house but there would be no need for me to go.

Something very cold, like a large sliver of ice, began running around inside my chest and my heart constricted. I felt as if I had been kicked in the belly by a really ticked-off Missouri mule. I had no money, very little food, and no place to go. I felt sick. He had obviously stolen all of my money, used it for his own needs including preparing my own house for his convenience and was throwing me out on the street with nothing but the few clothes I had brought with me to his lair. I couldn't call a taxi or anyone else because the phone was off and besides that, I could not pay the taxi driver anyway. I was alone, helpless, humiliated and destitute. I was in the grips of a screaming depression with my insides rolling and twisting around on itself. I didn't know what else to do so in the depths of my despair, I sat down and cried; for what seemed like hours, huge throbbing sobs escaped without my ability to control them.

I was hungry. I couldn't remember when I had eaten last but I knew there wasn't much food left in the house. My eyes were puffy and my face felt mis-shapened. I knew I had to find someplace to go...I could not stay here and didn't want to be here one minute longer. I certainly could not be out on the street, not in this city where

unimaginable things could happen to me. I knew very few people and no one but him knew where I was. Finally, I decided to walk across the street and ask the lady I had seen earlier if she could call someone for me or possibly take me to the house of one of my other children. At first, she only stared at me as if I were a bright blue alien, then she smiled at me and nodded. I nearly fainted with relief when she agreed to drive me across town. I didn't know the address where I wanted to go but thankfully, I knew how to get there.



I was back at the home of a child whom honestly, I never felt much affection for...it should have been a horrible way for a mother to think about one of her children but frankly, this child never had much affection for me either. She was a difficult child who always lived on the brink of being defiant. If one could cross an elephant with an owl, you would get this child. She was always wise beyond her years...she was independent and loyal to those she felt deserving of her loyalty, mostly her Dad. She was also perceptive, tuned in to things beyond the eyes and ears of the rest of us. She always insisted on solving her own problems and was what I would call 'always in her own head.' She was a solitary child and I thought this to be a bit disconcerting. As a grownup, she gave me both raised eyebrows and elevated blood pressure, plus fits of confusion and a few sleepless nights. This was her house and the same house I had left only months before. I realized what a horrible mistake I had made by leaving because upon my return, I discovered that she had other family members living with her and there was no longer any room for me. There was no place for me to sleep for even one night, so I had to gather the rest of my belongings and go and find another place to stay.

I arrived at the abode, the dwelling, of another son...I hesitate to describe it as a house. This was hardly where I had intended to end up but I was left with no other available options...it was either here or sleep in the street...I didn't even own a car. I suppose there was the possibility of a shelter but I knew nothing about shelters and would not have had the wherewithal to even inquire about them. So, I moved in with this son who had given up his home a few months earlier just so that he could be away from me. I was in fear that he would not accept me but he was kind and showed me in. Over the next several days, he tried his best to make me feel welcomed and to make me as comfortable as possible...this was so much more than I had expected or deserved.

The first two or three days of being there, I had nothing but headaches, bellyaches and bad dreams. I was homeless and as poor as a church mouse. Just the thought of it gave me heart palpitations. My heart would race as if it was trying to get away from me. I would take aspirin to try to ease the throbbing headaches but that fixed nothing. It was such a small place that I couldn't even pace more than a few feet before I would bump into a wall or a piece of furniture. I wanted

to talk about what had happened but I was too ashamed; besides, who would I tell and would anyone even begin to believe the rantings of an old woman...the whole business was draining and exhausting. It was hard to keep from crying...that would only have upset everyone else. I would lay on the bed and close my eyes. My mind would drift one way and then another and somehow it drifted to the memory of my older son.

I remembered that the older son, who reminded me of an otter, always preening, had to fix that one stubborn curl that was out of place. He was quite narcissistic and would tend to be controlling. When that didn't work for him, he could become verbally abusive...he had no use for logic. Despite all of that, he was mine, the love of my life and he had been taken away too soon, leaving a crater in my heart. He had also been a victim of this soulless creature. He had been sick for a long while and near the end, had become too weak to do much for himself. He had either appointed or simply asked this person to be his representative or just be kind enough to look after things for him should his health deteriorate to the point that he could not take care of things himself. I later learned that he had stolen all of the money in my

son's account and had pilfered almost everything that was worth selling from his house. Inquiries were made as to what had happened to one item or another, that gun or that suit and he would always deny having any knowledge of anything. Of course, no one saw him take anything...he hardly wanted a captive audience while he was helping himself to things that did not belong to him, so he made his 'visits' in the early morning hours when there were no witnesses to point fingers at him.

Just remembering all of this made me woozy and I would be assaulted by stronger and more intense headaches. As soon as they would ease a bit, I would again be overwhelmed with the hopelessness that had become my life. I would close my eyes and my world would slide into this incomprehensible nightmare of being thrown into a ditch.

I am not far from the highway or some type of major thoroughfare. I can hear cars and trucks going by at a high rate of speed...I can even smell the exhaust fumes, but apparently, I'm in a

ditch too deep or too far away for anyone to see me. I'm not sure why but I have the feeling that it is someplace out in a rural area. I can hear animal sounds like horses whinnying and cows mooing. I will sometimes get the comfortable sensation of being on the back of a hay wagon being pulled by a tractor like in the days of my youth. I am never here long enough for the sun to rise or for night to fall...I am always in a nether world that is neither day or night.

I sometimes feel cold and then feel things climbing over me, sometimes very slowly, sometimes squirming and other times things will scuttle as if in a great hurry' to get wherever they are going. I look around but I can never see anything; there is always shadow but I cannot see the sun. I feel as if I'm

drifting in and out of consciousness but it's hard to tell...in this nether world, time seems to stand still.

Just to amuse myself, I sometimes have conversations with whatever happens to be passing by, usually a tarantula, but he complains that he has things to do and places to go and has no time for idle chatter or he will miss out on the wonderful meal that just wobbled by...perhaps he will have time to chat on his way back.

I must have gotten distracted by my deep and tantalizing conversation with the spider because suddenly I hear a car coming...it must be just beneath the hill. I can feel the ground vibrating beneath me and know that it's close. Then there are lights in my face and hands lifting me up. I open

my eyes and find that I am back at the house of my son. It seems that I was always in the ditch 3 days or perhaps three days and nights each time, the best I can calculate, then someone finds me and return me to this house.

This son is what one would think of if you could cross a doctor with a sloth. He is slow of movement, slow to anger, slow to act...he is kind, patient, gentle and not known for his sharp sense of anything...he tends to see things in black and white and takes life one moment at a time...he is not very good at planning ahead...he tends to veer off the beaten path usually to the detriment of himself...he is usually [a good friend to have] but always a good son.

From my bedroom, I could look out of the window and see nothing but raggedy weeds, dying grass, the rear of a few houses and the remnants of what used to be a farm. The place is rundown, poorly ventilated and in very poor condition. The floor is unlevel but my son has put carpet on the floor in the room where I was sleeping. The room that

used to be the living room had become his tack room, full of old leather parts, bits and pieces of bridles, broken tools, several sizes of nails and screws, old buckets and mostly rotten rope, torn and tattered beyond use. There was even a wood stove, long since broken and beyond use. At one place near the rear of the house, you could see right through the walls into the backyard. The fence was mostly falling down and the roof long since needed replacing. Home sweet home! I was going to have to get used to the idea, and soon.

The truth is, this place was dilapidated and should have been demolished several years before, but I was thankful that I had a son with enough human kindness to offer me a bed to sleep in and a roof over my head, so I tried to settle in but spent most of my days just sitting, staring out of the window, twittling my thumbs and feeling sorry for myself. Some days, I wanted to cook for him but his kitchen left much to be desired, no cooktop or even useful cooking utensils...I didn't trust what he had for an oven but I learned to 'make do' and tried not to complain. Thankfully he had a lady friend with a car and would drive to the store or restaurant for most of what we ate without having to do much cooking. I discovered pizza, fish

sandwiches and fried chicken that came in a box! I even learned that the chicken was better than I could make myself.



When my husband and I first started out, we had nothing but two pair of hands and two young strong bodies...not a dollar between us. We lived in a place with four corners...if one had a lot of imagination, you could have called it a house with four rooms, or space for four small rooms. We had curtains made from flour sacks and linoleum on the floor, but it was cracked in more places than not. We lived in fear that things that squirmed or slithered would pay us a visit while we slept, things that would crawl in from underneath. I would awake every morning and check each possible hiding place for unwanted visitors. Other than a bug or a millipede, I never got any nasty surprises.

I suppose you could say that we lived close to the soil, but we also lived close to the sun for very long hours and was up close and personal with hunger a lot. We cleared bushes and pulled up stumps to make room for planting. We got to know several mosquitos by their first names and knew some of them by the songs they played incessantly in our ears. We destroyed mounds, roused raccoons and scared off snakes. We mostly worked from early just as the sun was making its arrival to late in the evening when the

shadows grew long and the last rays of orange sherbet was melting into the horizon. We would stumble into the house, barely alive, and eat whatever was available to us, then fall into bed half dead. We worked long and hard and finally got 20 acres of our own paid for and later we were able to add a few more. We plowed...we sweated...we planted...quitting or giving up were not options available to us.

We grew most of what we ate but it never seemed to be enough. There were always more people to feed than there was food...most of those people didn't belong in our house but who just could not seem to have homes of their own or get jobs or do anything except beg and bum from those of us who worked like trojans. They would show up just when they thought we had picked or pulled or gathered or dressed, depending on what was in season. They knew that they would have a nice free meal without having to work for it.

My husband was a Christian and a charitable man, always trying to help, willing to share what he could with others although we barely had enough for ourselves. I screamed and cussed about it but in the end, I lost the argument more

often than not. I only wanted those bums to see the outside of my door, preferably with the help of a large muddy boot.

My husband had a real knack for growing things but he had an amazing head for business. He would often say that if only he could get his hands on a few head of cattle, he could do some bigger and better things. One day he announced to me that he would speak to a friend of his about advancing him enough money to buy a few head and he would pay him back when he sold the calves in the spring. This sounded like a pipe dream to me but then I knew nothing about business and could do nothing but pray that it worked out.

Many years and seven kids later, we had a better place we called home and even had a little money put aside for emergencies. And I do mean a little. There were always open hands ready and willing to clean us out if we had let it be known that we had even one cent that we didn't have to use for ourselves. Raising seven kids during those times was especially hard but mostly nobody cared about our struggles or what we needed as long as we were willing to pass something over to them.

Now all of these years later, after all of the work, sweat and sacrifice to have this home and this land, there is this one last creature (I hesitate to refer to him as a person) who did not feel that it was his duty to do any of the work, actually felt obliged to do anything and everything he could to avoid working, has robbed me blind and taken away what was mine.



When a mother has [seven] children, she tells herself that she knows right away which child will be special, which one will give her the most problems and which ones will give her more proud moments. I had heard from older generations that when there is a family of more than one child, the mother has a favorite and the father may have a favorite of his own. On rare occasions, the parents will have the same favorite, but that was not the case in this family. As each child came along, I tried to figure out which one would do what or be what kind of child but all I was able to figure out was that they were all as different from each other as golden retrievers are from elephants or as different as ants are from otters.

Looking back, I suppose I felt some little twinge, or thought that I knew that one was different from the others and not for any of the usual reasons. He didn't have three heads, or an extra eye or even three sixes tattooed on his body. He didn't do banshee-like keening or bay at the moon, but I suspected that something was not quite right. There were times when I would feel ripples on my skin like miniature tidal waves whenever he would be near me...the hair on the back of my neck would stand on end. I could see nothing

strange...he looked totally normal. I had no explanation for why I had to sometimes muffle a scream or wanted to flee from the room to put distance between him and me, even for a moment. Now realization has reared its ugly head...it took Satan a few years but he has finally come to take possession and complete control of his own.

Even when a mother knows something is abnormal, her instincts are to prepare to take on any threat to her or her children; she surely should feel immune to fear when it comes to one of her own children. A mother has this bravado, which is often false but she is reluctant to give those feelings a voice for fear that they may come true...now I realize that I should have spoken out loudly, clearly and often...maybe then we could have considered sending him to Tibet to live with the monks...maybe then we could have saved ourselves and possibly could have given him a chance to be more normal...and just maybe none of this would have happened to me...I could have been spared this unbelievable nightmare.

Even though I say this now, I never really believed that even the monks could have made any real

difference in the mind of this child...he was born without a soul. He had no conscience. The monks would have been hard-pressed to know where to begin to help, guide or change him. I shudder to think what would have happened once he arrived in Tibet...I suspect that he would have taken to drowning or suffocating the baby yaks or one of the monks would have been found hanging limp in his own robe.

There were definitely signs that I chose to ignore. Something very dark and evil was taking shape inside of him. For instance, he never liked other kids nor did he like any of the animals on the place. He hated the chickens...he said they looked at him funny. Wild turkeys would wander onto our place and we had a few of our own but they mostly stayed out of his way...because he couldn't catch them, he would just throw rocks at them. He complained that the livestock 'smelled bad' plus they were too large for him to bully and required too much of something known as 'work' just having to drive them toward the corral, but he would throw rocks at the small ones whenever he could get away with it. He would rather kill the dog than feed him, and did once, and buried it in a dry creek bed. We kept wondering why the dog never

came back and finally assumed that he had run away chasing a rabbit or some other kind of critter or perhaps took up residence someplace else. Then one day my husband found the shallow grave...it didn't take long to discover what was buried in it. We questioned the boy about it but he denied having seen the dog or having anything to do with a grave. We had no proof...there was no smoking gun and no blood spilled...just a very dead family dog. No one had seen him do it, but we had very strong suspicions.

My husband never caught him conducting any of his animal experiments or he would probably not have lived to grow into this full-sized monster...my husband would have had him drawn and quartered. I didn't want to see that happen to him...after all, he was my child...but I was ignorant...he was the damned and I was already doomed...I had an inkling but didn't have a clue what it meant. By the time I got a handle on it, it was too late.

My husband was a good man but not a very patient one. He had no tolerance for 'foolishness' and could not abide laziness. He, like me, had not much formal education so we did not understand

words like 'sociopath' and monster. Of course, my husband had no fear other than of things associated with divine power such as lightening, so the strangeness of this boy did not worry him much...the laziness drove him to distraction. Every now and then, he would yell at him to try to get him to do some semblance of work, but after a while, he grew weary of that and basically gave up. He would breathe deeply and let the cool and silent wind cool his temper. In hindsight, I should have allowed him to be drawn and quartered...after all of these years, all I really know for sure is that he is a pseudo human, devoid of all real human feelings and emotions, twisted beyond my ability to understand. I wonder what my husband would say now that the creature has grown into his truly disturbing soulless self.



Sometime during that summer, I decided to travel to visit one of the other children, a daughter. She was the child who reminded me mostly of a parrot. She was pretty, vocal, a fence-sitter, intelligent, liked attention, liked to talk, loved to be pampered and avoided conflict at all costs. However, she could be manipulative and deceitful. She would usually empty my purse upon my arrival but this time, my purse had already been cleaned out along with my account. This time, I had nothing to give her. It was an odd feeling.

I was pretty much on the verge of totally unravelling and was down on my luck by this time so she had to advance me enough money for an airplane ticket while I waited for my money to start again and then accumulate enough to pay her back...I had learned that I needed to close the previous account post haste and I had done just that.

I spent most of my time just sitting around her house, half of it staring at the TV, half of the time staring at nothing, too depressed to be much of a guest. This daughter liked to shop, loved to spend money as if she could mint it herself. She had a way of spending more than she earned and could

never seem to hang on to a dollar for very long. She tried to take me shopping but I could not feel up to it no matter how much she cajoled or performed delicate arm-twisting. She would take me out to eat but food didn't please me either...I had no pressing need to feel human again. She and her family wanted me to talk about my ordeal and hopefully, if I could just get it out of my system, they felt that maybe I could feel better. I tried once but unfortunately, all that did was knock the scab off and the wound would open again and all of that misery, degradation and shame would pour out. Little did I know at the time, that my little fence-sitter knew all about what had happened and had actually aided and abetted the very monster who had caused all of this pain and misery.

I learned about this betrayal way too late and it was of too little comfort to me near the end...actually, no comfort at all. How does a mother deal with betrayal by not just one but two of her children? I waited in the heavy silence but no answers came to me. I tried not to think about it but I could not switch off my mind. I closed my eyes and found only darkness.

I awoke in a strange place, alone, a hospital room. I couldn't remember when I had arrived nor why I was here or who had brought me. I had no clue where it was...I didn't see the name of the hospital written on anything. I looked around for someone or something familiar but found nothing. I looked out of the window at the fat clouds and the gray sky, but neither the clouds or the sky offered any answers. I felt a little light-headed and a little disoriented at first, but I felt no pain or discomfort and I wondered again why I was here in a hospital. Just for an instance, I felt a strange sensation, the faint smell of peppermint and the feeling that I should have been pale pink instead of teal-blue...the aura was a bit off but mildly exciting. After a long moment, I heard the silence, so with a deep breath and a nod, I left it all behind and went to where I hoped would be a kinder and gentler place.



Russha Fethersteen died alone in a hospital far from her home. Neither one of her children was by her bedside. Her death certificate stated 'OF NATURAL CAUSES' ...manner of death: cardiac arrest. It should have stated 'this mother died of a 'desolate spirit and a broken heart.'

When her remains were returned to her home state, she was unloaded from the aircraft and was allowed to sit in a waiting area, in 90 degree plus heat for several hours. The 'thing' who used to be her son just left her there...he had no further use of her.

...and

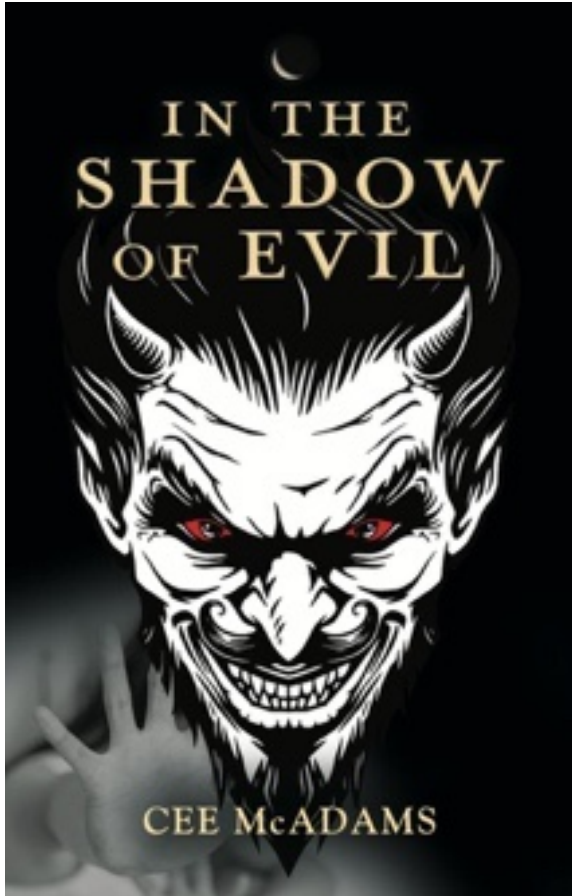
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Woh...





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and heart-break.*

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