

Dr. Peppermint in



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...The Colour of Time

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Horror, fantasy, science fiction. Super-villain, espionage, spy, apocalypse, religion, cults.

Adult readers: violence; brief, mildly-graphic sexual situations; frequent cursing; death.

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*Now...*

## **Buried**

Marcus pulled the last of the IV bags from his "emergency" kit, hanging it from the low ceiling of the tiny crawlway on one of the hooks mounted there for just this occurrence. The small light of the battery lamp was growing dimmer as the last needle pierced his flesh and he unblocked the drip feed. Seventeen various bags hung around him, feeding chems through their needles into his flesh, with settings ranging from steady streams to single drops per week.

It had been hours since the last sounds came from above, since the last rubble had settled. But Marcus had seen all this before it had happened; he had been ready for it. He removed his clothing and sat in lotus on the bare stone floor, cold to the touch, but that was necessary as well, and there would be no discomfort in a while. He began deep breaths, cycling his chakra in the desired pattern, an alignment taught only to the most advanced students of Yoga. As he began to breathe deeper, he watched the sands of the small hourglass positioned so he could see it. As he watched the sand flowed as a stream... then a broken trickle... then as individual grains...

Then the sand stopped...

Rewind...

## Birth

Donald Jamison paced back and forth, tethered to the desk by the short, black phone cord. “Look... I don’t give a damn what the president said. The appropriation numbers *are* correct, and he’ll make sure congress forks it over, or he can deal with the damn Russkies without my help... there’s no reason why I can’t sell to them instead!”

A short knock at the door caught his attention and the white-clad nurse came into the room. “Mister Jamison... you should come now, your wife is asking for you. There have been... complications.”

“Well you tell him I’ll call him back when I’m damn good and ready!” the head of Jamison Dynamics shouted as he slammed the phone back into the cradle. “Complications,” he muttered as the nurse led him toward the master wing of the house. “That woman’s been a complication since Dad pushed her into my bed.” The nurse sighed but said nothing else as they walked down the carpeted halls of the mansion. After all, she needed the job.

The Jamison family doctor met them at the door. “Mister Jamison, we should talk before you step in.”

Donald Jamison locked the doctor with a withering stare. “Don’t you presume to tell me what to do in MY house, you quack,” and with that said, he opened the door and stalked into the room. “What the hell is it, Miriam? You know I was on the phone with the Pres-” his voice paused as one of the nurses carefully draped the sheet over Miriam Jamison’s face. The bedclothes were soaked a deep red about her hips and legs. The Doctor stepped into Jamison’s view.

“We did everything we could, but the birth was difficult. Perhaps if we had been allowed to move her to the hospital-”

“Seven generations of Jamisons have been born in *this* house, in *that* bed... I’m not about to break that tradition.”

The doctor looked as though he had been slapped, and one of the nurses left the room at a run. “Good God, Donald, your wife is has just died giving birth, and you’re talking about family tradition?”

“Doctor, if I want moralist viewpoints, I’ll buy a priest’s opinion. If the woman had been strong enough, she’d still be here. Now, show me my sons.”

The Doctor shook his head. “Son, actually. The other was delivered with the umbilical around his neck, which was broken. These things... err... can happen without the *proper* medical facilities.”

Donald stepped past him. “And a good deal more money as well, I suppose.” One of the nurses stepped forward with a baby swaddled in blankets and offered the child to Donald, who made no move to take his son into his arms. “Why is the boy not crying? All babies cry when born, don’t they?” He looked at the child, catching a glimpse of blue eyes from under the child’s eyelids for a moment.

“It’s common, sir, but not always the case. The child cleared his lungs and then quieted immediately. That’s the sign of a strong child.”

“As he damn well should be... he’s a Jamison, after all. Thank God he took after me and not that... weakling.” Jamison turned to one of the servants. “Take the child to his nursery and have the nanny begin attending to him immediately.” He began to leave, when the doctor grabbed his arm.

“Sir, about your wife and other son?”

Donald snorted. “Leave them; the staff will make arrangements to have them buried in the family plots. I suppose it’s the least I should do since she managed to give me *one* good child in exchange for all the money she spent.”

Donald Jamison returned to his office, sat down and took several peppermint swirl candies from the goblet on his desk, popping them into his mouth.

The door opened, and Robert Smythton entered quietly. The family lawyer opened his briefcase and withdrew several papers. “Donald, a few small matters before you get back to work.”

Donald Jamison sighed, letting the taste of the mint sooth his nerves. "What now?"

The lawyer set a form down. "First, this authorizes the payment of the nursing and delivery staff."

Donald looked over it and signed it. "Call the medical board as well. If that quack is still practicing in Massachusetts by the end of the week, I'll have all of them dismissed." Smythton nodded, accustomed to the extreme demands of his richest client after years of ministering to his legal needs.

"And lastly, the birth certificate. Miriam, bless her soul, did not have time to name the child."

"Marcus. He'll be named after my great-grandfather." He gestured toward the painting of the stern looking military officer dominating one wall. "It's a good family name, traces back to Rome. He fought as a mercenary in India with the British, during the quelling of the Revolt, you know." He gazed at the peppermint swirl in his palm and then popped it into his mouth, picking up the phone.

## Beach

Peppermint made a last adjustment to the silenced THP .22 semi-auto in his ankle holster and smoothed down the velvet crimson trouser leg, taking one last glance at the pant leg's lay. Its twin already lay sheathed on his other leg. A quick adjustment of the Italian cuffs on his black silk shirt and a brush of the lapels of his trademark jacket and he stepped out on to the deserted strip of beach along the edge of Devil's Cape and toward the waiting figure of Hans Drumhellsen, impeccably dressed, if slightly ominous, in his black suit and high-tech face plate.

*The white tie's a nice touch.*

Peppermint nodded in agreement as he approached.

The strip was deserted in the twilight, and plenty of open beach stretched in either direction. More than enough to give someone a sense of security... right before the killing blow struck. But he liked Hans for some reason, and he knew She was there was well. The practiced smile crept onto his face.

*Careful, my love... do not underestimate him... his words can kill. I would suggest a single shot through each eye lens, that should disable him and the device he uses for fine control of his ability, then a third through his voice box to take it away permanently,* the voice of his mistress sang to him. He smiled a silent thanks for Her advice, reminding her he had been doing this for a while now, but that he was grateful for it all the same.

"So, Hans... I was just wondering if one of us is going swimming?"

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## About the Author

Kenn Gentile is an unwilling resident of Asheville, North Carolina and enjoys zeppelins, clockwork minions, warbot A.I.s, and secret volcano bases.

Other works include:

*The Tale-Seller's Night* (Prologue to The Scorched Earth) (Short Story/Science Fiction) Nobody knows how it began, what caused the events that led to the Scorching: one of the fusion spirits got out of its cold tower and ran amok across the world, one of the old empires striking at another with their fire-lances, or Mother Nature just got tired of her children digging and cutting and slashing her open and decided to teach us a lesson. But everyone has their story. (published in the August 2010 issue of *Phase 5 Monthly Review*)

*Lil Red & The Baron* (A tale of The Scorched Earth) (Short Story/Science Fiction) Life on the Scorched Earth can be treacherous. Food and clean water can be scarce, and keeping what you have can be tough. Finding what you need can be tougher. Fortunately, Lil Red is an expert at getting into tough places. And The Baron is an expert at getting her out. (published in the September 2010 issue of *Phase 5 Monthly Review*)

*Drucy's Tale* (A tale of The Scorched Earth) (Short Story/Science Fiction) There are many enterprising folk on the Scorched Earth, and Eddings considers himself one of them - one of the cleverer ones, maybe. Drucy is just his type, accustomed to accepting what the blasted world gives her and doing the best she can with it. But this is Drucy's lucky day. (published in the November 2010 issue of *Phase 5 Monthly Review*)