

I.

Kevin Lattimore could only blame himself for his abduction. The government agents who kept him restrained upon a glistening metal table would not have noticed him if he had not been such a show off.

Clad only in underwear and imprisoned in some secret location, Kevin thought about the events that led to his captivity.

No one thought much of the fact that Kevin had never been hurt or gotten so much as the sniffles during his early years. His parents (who came down with their own fair share of colds and nagging discomforts) only thought themselves blessed to have a remarkably healthy child.

That all changed one afternoon when seven year old Kevin and his cousin Junebug played catch in front of Kevin's house.

II.

Kevin chased an errant throw into the street at the same time that a young man sped down the narrow block in a Cadillac Seville. The screech of late breaking tires joined a resounding thud in singing a disastrous duet. Little Kevin was thrown ten feet to the asphalt.

Kevin's eyes fluttered as he lay in the street. The young man who struck him stood over him, shrieking, "Omigod, lil' man! Got damn!

He just came outta nowhere! Somebody get some help. He just came outta nowhere.”

A distraught chorus soon joined the young man. Among those voices was Kevin’s distraught mother. She wailed, “Please Lord, let my baby be okay! Oh, God. Lord –please!” Kevin heard infantile bawling and thought that it was Junebug.

None of the voices Kevin heard sounded quite real to him. For a short time, he thought he might have died and gone to heaven. The voices were the cries of those he had just left behind.

An interminable amount of time passed before a siren heralded an approaching ambulance. When the paramedics lifted Kevin onto their gurney, it dawned on him that he didn’t feel any pain. He opened his eyes and popped up like a Jack- in- the -Box as soon as that realization struck him. His mother and three other neighborhood women swooned into safeguarding arms when he did so.

The story of that incident traveled through the community on the mouths of onlookers and people who witnessed none of it. In church, the pastor spoke of Kevin as if he were a modern miracle. Teachers and

other second graders treated him differently. His miraculous survival was featured in the local newspaper and newscasts.

Kevin thought that what happened was pretty cool, but his parents seemed uncomfortable about it. His father came into his room one night and sat at the edge of his bed. He patted the space next to him, signaling Kevin to climb free of his sheets and sit there.

Worry creased the middle aged man's forehead as he spoke to his young son. "Son," he said, "I want to talk to you about your accident." He cleared his throat. "Son, I'm glad you weren't hurt by that car. Most people that get hit by a big ole' car like that end up in the hospital or even dead, especially a kid as small as you. But you came out of it without so much as a bruise."

Kevin nodded. "I know. The pastor says it's a miracle."

Mr. Lattimore sighed, then nodded. He took Kevin by the shoulders and turned him so that they faced each other. "I know he does. And I suppose he's right. There sure isn't any other explanation for it." He sighed again. "There's something I got to tell you about miracles though, son. The thing about miracles- they only happen every once in a great while. What I'm saying is that everyone is glad that miracle

saved you- but none of us can expect it to happen again. You understand what I'm saying to you, son?"

"I- I think I do, Daddy."

Mr. Lattimore chuckled then, laughing while seeming sad at the same time. "I'm saying you have to be careful, son. No more running into the street or doing anything else dangerous because miracles just don't happen all the time. The next time something happens that's supposed to hurt you, it probably will."

III.

Kevin promised his father that he would be careful and he was, right up until he became fed up with Keon Adler bullying him in fourth grade. Kevin and Keon had been in the same classes together since kindergarten. They'd been pretty much the same size until the summer after third grade when Keon shot up about six inches and gained more than thirty pounds. From that point on, Keon made himself the class bully. Shaking other kids down for lunch money and snacks seemed to be the high point of his day.

Keon confronted Kevin and some friends as they walked to school one October morning. He demanded a quarter each from the smaller

boys, calling it a walking tax. Kevin had submitted to Keon for the first month of so or school, but on this particular morning he wondered why he always did so. Why give money to some bully when he had survived a hit from a Cadillac without even a scratch?

“You can’t hurt me,” his mouth said to the big boy, not bothering to check with his brain first.

Astonishment spread across Keon’s chubby face. “What did you say?”

“I said you can’t hurt me.”

Kevin’s walking buddies sought high ground as the bully leveled a meaty fist at his face. The blow caught Kevin flush on the upper lip. Though his head snapped back, he felt no pain. He grinned at Keon. “Told you, you can’t hurt me.”

Keon went wild then, unleashing a flurry of punches and shoving Kevin to the ground. All the neighborhood kids walked the same route to school, so a crowd of them gathered to watch the assault. Kevin bounced back like a punching bag each time Keon hit or shoved him, grinning and repeating that Keon couldn’t hurt him. The cycle repeated itself until adults appeared to drag Keon away.

Keon was suspended for the attack, even though he hadn't hurt Kevin. Kevin was feared and awed in the aftermath. From then on, he became a de facto enforcer. Kids stopped paying Keon's extortion fees, giving treats and money to Kevin instead. Kevin looked into Keon's eyes on a number of occasions, silently communicating that if the erstwhile bully bothered those who paid tribute, they would go at it again. This time, Kevin would fight back.

The taste of power that Kevin enjoyed from humbling Keon went to his head. He started performing all sorts of dares for money, leaping from tall tree branches and off hillsides to emerge unscathed. His feats only grew more daring as he reached adolescence. His father's long ago warning affected no restraint in him. His father's belt could cause no lasting pain.

He played youth football, developing a punishing style at running back. He relished contact despite his small stature, purposely colliding with defenders at the ends of runs. He started riding a dirt bike when he was twelve, using money that he collected from his daredevil stunts to split the cost with his parents.

“You have to promise me that if we get you this bike, you’ll stop doing all those crazy stunts,” his rapidly graying father said.

“I promise.” Kevin lied.

IV.

Kevin became a good enough rider to qualify for the Junior Motorcross Circuit by the time he reached ninth grade. Because of his total lack of concern about injuring himself, he was as likely to wipe out on a course as he was to leave more cautious riders in his wake.

That same year, he began charging others for the privilege of punching and kicking him. For \$2, he’d stand with his eyes closed and absorb the hardest blow a paying customer could give. He made at least twenty bucks a day that way. His JV football teammates were his most faithful customers.

Kevin spent his entire adolescence pushing the envelope because he thought he couldn’t be hurt. He only used a condom during sex because he didn’t want to become a teenage parent. Fear of disease was not a concern for him.

Kevin liked violence mixed with his sex. He needed his partners to kick, punch, bite, scratch, paddle, ball gag, and whip him to really get

off. The girls he dated just couldn't get into all he wanted done, so he often paid for such privileges.

He received a sexual godsend in the form of Amanda Hutchinson during his senior year. She was more than happy to heap any abuse he desired upon him, including the pouring of hot wax and making small cuts with knives. Amanda's frizzy hair, proliferation of freckles, and slight overbite didn't blow Kevin away, but her aptitude for depraved sex more than made up for her not being his ideal physical type.

Kevin gave up football to concentrate exclusively on Motorcross during his junior year. He won many races during the summer and on weekends. He always wrecked when he didn't win, but he never needed significant medical attention.

The money Kevin earned from Motorcross events combined with the money from his dares to keep his pockets heavy. He'd attempt any reckless deed for money, always managing to up the ante when it seemed it couldn't be upped any further.

It occurred to Kevin that of all the showing off he'd done, shooting the videos had been his ultimate undoing. This was as apparent as the unyielding straps against his body. The whole business began after one

of his ex-football teammates offered him fifty bucks to ram himself into a brick wall. He did so with no qualms, taking a running start before colliding with the unyielding structure. Five other jocks pooled their money after he came away unscathed. They paid him another fifty dollars to do it again.

“Dude,” his former quarterback said, “you gotta do that one more time and we gotta put it on Youtube. I bet we could get like a million hits on this.”

They got 1.2 million hits in a week’s time. The cell phone recording of Kevin smashing into the wall and turning unfazed to face his buddies even made television news shows. Much of the national discussion centered on how he was able to make his stunts seem so real. His parents expressed their disgust with him, but their words entered one ear and departed from the other.

V.

Within a week, Kevin and his football buddies rigged up a pay website titled *The Awesome Feats of Indestructible Boy*. For \$9.99 a month, members were treated to daily videos of Kevin engaging in a gamut of reckless activities, from standing on burning coals to jumping

off rooftops to stabbing himself with rusty nails. So much money poured forth that he was able to rent an upscale apartment Downtown after the first month of the site's existence. He was still only seventeen, but his father did not hesitate to co-sign the lease. Kevin had no doubt that the poor, worried guy was glad that he was taking his craziness elsewhere.

He and his buddies were about to shoot a 3 AM video of him leaping off the Hanover Street bridge and swimming back to shore when an immense black car materialized upon the deserted stretch they occupied. The phantom vehicle's tires screeched as it swerved to a stop. Its body was horizontal to the bridge's driving lanes and its sinister headlights were trained upon the photo shoot. Dark suited men leapt out, discharging strange firearms at Kevin and his friends.

VI.

Kevin woke up in a Spartan room in the secret location where he now lay restrained. A clam shell shaped chair was the room's only accoutrement.

The white door at the far end of the room slid open. A man in a white lab coat and two dark suited others walked in.

“Hello, Kevin,” the man in the lab coat said, speaking in a calm, youthful voice that belied his grey hair. “My name is Dr. Lassiter. I and my cohorts work for an agency known- or should I say unknown- as The Outfit.” He paused before continuing, as if giving Kevin time to process his initial statements.

“The Outfit has been around for many years and during that time, we have only had one purpose. That is to gather extraordinary individuals like you and put them to use for the betterment of their country.”

He looked Kevin over and smiled. “You’re not yet fully recovered from the sedation, I see. Perhaps the agents whom apprehended you were a bit too liberal with their ammunition. Not to worry, though. You’ll recover. You always do. We ran a number of tests on you while you were unconscious.”

“Those tests confirm that you carry a genome that we have never seen before. That genome gives your body the ability to recover from great punishment and to do so at a miraculous rate. We shall test the limits of that ability in the coming weeks.”

Kevin was exposed to electroshock, outright electrocution, drowning, shootings, and stabbings daily. His body recovered from it

all. He wished he had some other ability, one that would allow him to fight his way free or would have kept him from being interesting enough to abduct at all. The men in dark suits subdued him and strapped him to this very table every time he tried to escape. They only released him when Dr. Lassiter was satisfied that he was done resisting for the time being.

He remained in his prison, day after uncountable day, certain that he would be trapped there for the rest of his life. After he ate breakfast this very morning, the doctor informed him that The Outfit had decided how he could best serve his country.

VII.

“We will put you to stud,” the Doctor said. “We will put you to stud to find out if we can reproduce a brood of others just like you. Of course, they will be The Outfit’s children, not yours. We will train them to be the indestructible soldiers that our great nation needs in these terrible times.”

Kevin went into a black rage at that moment, trying his best to strangle the doctor. Dark suits quickly grabbed him, jabbing him with a syringe fit to tranquilize an elephant.

He regained consciousness in his present undignified position. A feeling of utter helplessness discouraged him from even lifting his head when the white door at the end of the chamber slid open.

He expected his captors to return for more of their torturous tests. Instead, a busty blond woman dressed in a dominatrix outfit approached him. The seductive and self-satisfied smile on her face made it obvious that The Outfit had promised her a large sum of money to bear his child.

“They’ll kill you,” he warned her, his eyes widening. “They’ll never let you live after you have the baby.”

“Hush now,” the woman said, laughing as she knelt before him. She pulled his underwear down and placed a cold hand on his erection.

“You may not want to do this, but I know someone who does.”

She scratched, punched, and bit him as she took what she wanted. Kevin couldn’t help enjoying himself.

The Outfit had chosen his seductress well. The Outfit knew just what he liked.