

“Devil & Hide”

A Mary Margaret Park Original

Co-Produced by: **Sekrett Scilensce**

"Devil & Hide"

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J

The winds cried; the sound hollow and distant, an echoing omen etched against the concrete and steel of the city's streets -- A skyscraper cut up into the dark like a steel-blade, its penthouse owned by Gabrielle Antonelli, a ruthless yet cunning businessman; he sat at his desk, his view like a vast black and white photograph stretched out behind him - Mr. Antonelli motioned to his butler, Georges, and when he spoke, it arrived like gravel crunching upon pavement, "Georges, we have a visitor, see him in."

A row of security cameras displayed a man in a trench-coat standing at the door, Georges opened it, flashing a toothy grin, "Hey John, come on in."

The apartment was quiet except for the ticking of an old grandfather-clock. John walked into the richly decorated foyer then passed through a sunken living area. Gabrielle looked down from where he was sitting, "Ah, John, I didn't expect to see you until tomorrow."

"I know." John acknowledged, stepping up to Antonelli's desk.

"Well anyway, you're here now, so?"

"I have an answer." John sighed, leveling his gaze at the old man.

"Okay John." Antonelli cocked his head to the side, "What's your answer?"

"No. "

Gabrielle raised his brow then motioned for Georges to leave, "Normally John, I'd shoot you right where you stand; but I'm curious. You have twenty-four hours left, why turn yourself into me early?"

John looked at the old man, his gaze like granite, "Eh...spare me the flattery."

Antonelli stared into his eyes, "John, are you sure you don't want to use these final twenty-four hours to reconsider?"

"Yes."

"Well I'll be dipped in shit." Antonelli reached up, scratching his head; he took a deep breath before continuing, "John, I admire you, somehow, somehow, so have it your way."

"Okay, so that's it?"

Antonelli shook his head once more, "That's it."

Gabe waved a dismissive hand and John turned to exit. After the door closed, he swiveled his chair, leaning over the desk, "Hey Ricky, we'll be picking up John the day after tomorrow. Yeah, well be ready in the morning."

The day began, obscured in familiarity -- Rain coat draped across his broad shoulders, John walked down the narrow sidewalk, clutching his morning newspaper; his tall reflection was a moving picture in the store front windows.

A truck passed over a nearby bridge in a ringing cadence of concrete and steel as the city rose to its full morning volume. He pretended to enjoy the scenery while pondering his long overdue presentation; his jaws ached like he'd been chewing on leather, *Storyboards, I need to finish them for my presentation.*

He passed a used bicycle shop and glanced inside the windows; rows of tires with tired spokes glided by; a coffee shop with green paint peeling along a faded window sill left a faint impression of Formica tables and the whisper of a pink skirt over shapely calves.

The morning sun was interrupted by the steadying flow of traffic. Flashing across his face in a flickering pulse of shadow and light were the silhouettes of Nature's first prized.

John passed a dark blue garbage dumpster sandwiched between two brownstone buildings; the smell of rotting potatoes and rancid meat rose high into the air. He hurried past, reeling his mind back to the task at hand, *Storyboards; I need to finish them for my presentation.*

Up ahead, an old man stood curbside; his grey-white hair dingy, ash like; tangled in dirty strings. His eyes were cirrhosis yellow; splattered with blood tracks. He blinked and focused on an approaching man clutching a newspaper, *Cockroaches, cities full of them*, the old man snickered. With untimely reflexes that belied his age, he lunged out and grabbed John by the wrist.

What the...

The smells of sweat, tobacco, and whiskey hung copiously in the air as he pulled John closer. "Devil's...Devil's Hide John....." the man shouted, coiled in an ethyl-induced seduction.

"Let go of my arm." John snarled.

The exaggerated grip loosened; John snapped his arm downward, twisting away; his right foot already stepping forward into a run. Grey London Fog trailing behind him, John placed as much distance between

himself and the deranged man as he could. It's wasn't until several blocks later that he slowed to a walk, *Well, so much for storyboards.*

A moment of distant city rumblings begot the encounter, *how did he know my name?*

A sign that read 'do not walk' burned orange spots into John's eyes. He shook his head, clearing his mind, figuring he'd better find a place to sit.

Rest his mind amplified.

"Smooth Pall Malls" and "Bubba Buy's Houses, Fast Cash" caught his attention as he ambled over, plopping his body down onto a nearby bench.

In silent demand, he expected for no one else to be present, *strange morning...*

Lurking behind, *Devil's Hide* re-entered his mind.

The swoosh squall of air brakes distracted him as the 5th St. Via came into view; the bus leaned drunkenly towards the curb like a Jack-in-the-Box on faulty springs, *Devil's Hide; storyboards; need to finish them for my presentation.*

Before he realized it, he'd walked halfway up the bus's steps, "Exact change; hurry it up, will'ya?"

John stared at the bus-driver for a moment then reached into his trouser's pocket and pulled out lint plus several coins. His hand shook conspicuously as he deposited the bus's fare.

The bus accelerated as John made his way unsteadily to the nearest seat. With an adjusted sigh, he sat down, throwing his head back; then closed his eyes. The steadier rock swooshes of the bus lulled him into an uneasy sleep.

Jake had driven far to find out if Tommy's cousin Marguerite could shed light on Mr. Riley's present state of being - He glanced down at the address in his hand, *255 Tarkington Ave.* - He swung his car around on the wet pavement, pulling up to a small saltbox house. Droplets of rain shimmered in the air as he cut his way through the fog and up to the door. A pretty blond woman soon answered, "Marguerite, Marguerite Kline?"

"Yes?"

Jake admired the willowy tall beauty, "I'm Jake Lambert. Your cousin Tommy told me how to find you. I need to ask you a few questions about John Riley if that's okay."

"What about...?"

"Well, I understand you've been seeing him?"

"Yes."

"How has he seemed to you? I mean his general demeanor?"

"Jake, why don't you come on in and have a seat, then I'll be happy to help you if I can."

A hint of rose flushed Jake's cheeks; she was beautiful and her voice was like cooled water pouring from a pitcher, "Is John in some sort of trouble?"

Jake nodded and followed her into the cozy living room. "I don't know. I'm sorry, I'm a P.I. and I've been hired by his family to locate him. Forgive my bad manners."

Marguerite furrowed her brow, "It's okay; what do you mean though?"

Jake carefully formulated his following statements, "His family hasn't heard from him in a long while, so I've been hired to find him."

"Oh?"

"I really need to talk to him. Will you be seeing him anytime soon?"

Marguerite hesitated before she answered, "Well, yes. We're planning to go to dinner on Saturday."

"Marguerite, have you thought about my earlier question? I mean, how he's seemed?"

Marguerite's face folded in confusion, "Yes. John has been distracted lately, but he seems fine to me."

Jake studied her closely. He could tell she didn't want to get John in trouble but he needed her help, so he eased up a bit, "Tell you what, how about I give you my card? It's important that I speak with John; do you suppose you could mention it when you see him on Saturday?"

"Sure." her voice trailed off as she glanced down at her lap.

Jake rose from the couch, "Thanks for your time Ms. Kline."

Marguerite walked him to the door. She waited for the rumble of his engine, signaling that he'd driven away - *I sure hope John is okay* -- She picked up the phone and dialed.

Storyboards

"You's missed my stop, now what's I's suppose to do?" a large black woman exclaimed -- John was awakened as she quarreled with the bus driver. Her flower print dress seeded his ponderings; she'd clasped her

purse so tightly that her knuckles had become white like talcum. John dismissed her as more urgent thoughts intruded. He rose up reaching for the pull cord and tugged. The Bus slowed, fumbling over the cracks and crevices of the aged roadway. The door opened and John took his steps groggily. He landed street-side atop a greasy swatch of burned rubber. Cool damp air caressed his face. He stretched while attempting to familiarize himself with the neighborhood. He was overwhelmed with the feeling that he'd been here before. His eyes locked onto a rundown clapboard house; its rotted frame, cut against the bruised sky, poised in a desperate beckoning, lured him inward.

The sun had grown low into the evening sky, casting everything in shadowed-grey. Nudged along by a gust of wind, a beer-can clattered down the sidewalk. Bits of paper and debris performed lazy cartwheels, lodging against a chained link fence. The sodium arc street lights lining the roads ahead hemmed endlessly onward with a low substantial buzz.

Six O'clock P.M.

John looked down at his watch. A child's voice floated through the air. Its sing song quality reminded him of his childhood. He sensed movement in the direction of the clapboard house. Shifting his view upward, he noticed a small child. The blurred image winked out of focus as the silhouette disappeared around to the opposite side of the home.

John shrugged his shoulders and started walking towards the house, still unable to shake the feeling of familiarity.

The exterior needed painting and was surrounded by rusted fencing. Its bare lawn was strewn with trash and faded plastic toys. An old kitchen chair was propped at a drunken angle; its red plastic seat diseased and peeling. John walked up the driveway; gravel crunching under his feet.

To John's right was a wooden porch. Some boards on the risers were cracked and missing. He stopped and surveyed the neighborhood. The street was lined with similar rundown residence, all of them dark and vouching of unpleasant emptiness. Years of dirt buildup had turned the front door grey. Crowning its top were three glass panes. He tried peering inside but the glass was horribly smoked, impossible to view

within. He reached for the doorknob and with a flick of his wrist, the door snapped open.

John became light headed as he stepped into the foyer. The smell of rotting newspaper and urine overwhelmed him. To his left was a hallway that led to the back of the house. Faded bits of ancient paper hung off the wall in ribbons, like the buildings in Chernobyl. To his right was a staircase covered in years of exhausted paint. He made his way up the dusty steps then froze when he heard the front door slam shut.

John's hands trembled; a sharp pain snaked its way into his right eye, making it water. Looking down at his feet, he continued to the landing. Scattered on the wood-tiled floor were pieces of broken glass. An adjacent light illuminated the far wall. He was startled; the words 'Devil's Hide' had been etched in brick red lettering, *Storyboards, Devil's Hide*.

With his monogrammed sleeve, he wiped the sweat from his forehead. His eyes refocused, *Storyboards, I still need to finish them for my presentation*.

John continued to wipe the sweat from his eyes, stepping to the nearest door. He grasped the knob, wiggling it, feeling suddenly claustrophobic. John tried twisting the door knob several more times but gave up and headed to the end of the hallway. He spied an old yet refreshing oil painting. Its presence was disconcerting -- *Anything not nailed down must have been stolen* -- Broad brush strokes depicted a torn image in a large mirror slashed with angry red and black textures. He made an about face and headed back through the hallway towards the last door on his left. The doorknob loomed out at him, beckoning.

At first he hesitated, but his curiosity had grown stronger. The metal knob felt cool in his hand. He tried the door and with a satisfied click, it opened into a small room.

The window on the far wall was broken; glass littered the floor underneath it. The room was bare except for a few wine bottles and a stained mattress dotted with candy wrappers. He closed the door and headed back down the stairs; his feet making soft whisper rubs as he descended.

Back in the dank foyer, he turned into a hall bath-room. The sink hung askew on the wall. Bits of plaster coated the floor beneath it. All that

remained of the toilet was a yawning hole in the floor. He looked down disgusted, hearing the low gurgle of pipes rattling.

Odd, John thought, as he walked over to the faucet and turned the handle, *No water*.

Finding nothing of interest, he turned to exit, followed by a calculative hiss of air angrily escaping from the drain. Startled, he turned to look at the sink. The dirty porcelain leered back at him, insistent and smug. John continued to the back of the house and entered the kitchen. The oil tarred linoleum was splattered with black spots of wear. The oven door hung askew, its black maw empty. Relieved, he turned to head back to the front of the house. Behind him, he heard the hushed squeal of air hissing from the sink drain.

Street light spilled onto the floor at the front of the house. The door was an even more welcome sight. As he reached for the knob he glanced to his right; oblivious upon entry, he noticed a secondary doorway.

Forsaken Entry

I don't remember this door being here -- John opened it and took two steps backwards, suddenly aware that he was trespassing -- Everything in the room was immaculate. His face drained of color; he sat down on a nearby trunk, his knees practically touching his chin.

Polished Steamer Trunk, unbelievable -- John rubbed its fine fabric - There was a cherry bookcase stuffed with vintage-literature and a sitting area flanked by a red velvet couch, but it was the floor mirror that stole his interest.

The silver pane had a luminous quality. He practically glided over to the looking glass, hypnotized by its beauty. The frame flanking the mirror was made of a rich dark wood filigreed with intricate carvings. He raised his hand and lovingly caressed the wood seasoned with the scent of oil soap. The frames edges were smooth, comfortable in his hands; the fine carvings were like Braille under his finger tips. His eyes faded out of focus. A loud bang echoed through the house, snatching him back to reality. He was smiling as the last trace of a thought wisped from his mind, *something, Hide* -- As he turned to leave, the feeling of mysterious beauty was replaced by uncertainty. Something wasn't right. His image was rigid, inanimate in the looking glass.

Caught like a freeze frame; *what's wrong with me*, he glanced back at his reflection. He placed his hands upon his temples and rubbed them with his fingertips, then looked back into the mirror. Sunken blue eyes stared frozenly back at him; then broke into crackling images. With a fierce tinkling crash, the mirror shattered and jagged glass spilled onto the floor. Breaking his feet from the floor, he bolted towards the front porch. His eyes darted back and forth, panicking as he tried to contain himself. He felt trapped between this ill-portent and what profoundly subsisted before him.

The street was desolate, unnaturally quiet; debris skittered along the pavement. A hollow breeze pushed the air in a low whistle. All of the houses had vanished; in their place was an eight foot chain link fence topped with razor wire. Stretching out behind the fence was a vast forest. John leaped off of the porch; a sharp pain bit into his ankle. Tampered and out of breath, he looked up at the street signs, *Lexington and 5th* swam in and out of his vision. He blinked his eyes, managing to calm himself, but the iridescent white letters still read the same. John pretended to be mistaken, deciding to cross the street. The chain link fence slammed back into view.

"Wrong Way" a large sign displayed; below it in smaller letters, the numbers "3:16" were scrawled.

John's eyes kept swimming in and out of focus. It's wasn't until he looked in the other direction that his view set onto something familiar.

Some homes appeared, faded in the distance. The pain in John's ankle had turned into a dull roar. The silence was so thick that it was tangible. He limped along the sidewalk. The smell of freshly mown grass diffused in the air. Up on his right, a neon-red shopping cart protruded from between two houses. His vision blurred; with a faint squeal, the cart moved towards him. A bubble of pressure grew in his chest but he dismissed it, "Hey, what's happened? The houses?" he called out.

There was no response, not even a twitch of recognition as the cart rolled closer. With a lopsided gait, it pushed past him.

John continued walking, deciding to switch from the sidewalk to the street -- *more room* he absently considered -- Arms swinging at his sides, he kept his eyes on the concrete, only glancing up occasionally. He felt like a lost little boy; everything around him seemed ominous, threatening. A familiar rubber pattern on the pavement caught his

attention. The greasy tire track was dotted with dark red slashes and smelt of burnt oil. He paused for a moment then continued down the street. He came to an abrupt halt when a large piece of pavement made a sharp angle upwards.

As he stepped, he leaned forward to compensate for the incline; then finally got down on his hands and knees. The concrete bored into his kneecaps reminding him of an old football injury. He inched towards the edge; the rough pavement painfully stamping his palms. He stopped and inhaled deeply. The smell of splintered wood, dust, and loamy soil rose to meet him.

A shrill siren sounded off in the distance then fell silent.

John's head was pounding; dust motes blared in and out of his vision. He gazed over the edge. The entire street had caved in taking the homes on either side with it. As if to prove this point, he could see a brick chimney poking above the rubble. He found himself wondering if anyone was alive down there. He quickly casted the thought aside and got unsteadily to his feet. Shaking his head in bewilderment, he turned and headed back the way he came.

His legs had a gel like quality to them; he wandered haphazardly along the boulevard, *Headache-medicine* his mind pleaded; "Having a fine day John?" his eyes fetched from a green flyer stapled to a telephone-pole. Leaning forward with his nose nearly touching the flyer, he read it again.

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Ricky Z. arrived at Creu, Vandenberg, Riley and Assoc. He hurried to the end of the hall, already annoyed from having navigated the downtown's afternoon bustle. He knocked on John's door, wondering where John "The Man" Riley was. He raised his hand to knock again when John's partner Marcus stepped out into the hall, "Hello Mr. Zentino." he acknowledged.

Ricky put a smile on his face, the kind you'd wear if you weren't pleased with who you were conversing with, "Uh, hey...Marc, where's your friend?"

Marcus paused for a moment, knowing Ricky's mercurial side a little too well, "Probably lunch mate, can I help you?"

Ricky's grin faltered for a moment, "Nah, just tell him I was around."

Ricky shook his head with an exasperated chuckle and headed out of the office -- Marcus sighed then turned and walked back to his desk, laughing under his breath. He was tickled by Zentino's odd nature, but Ricky was also a dangerous man, not one to be trifled with. Sighing, Marcus went back to reviewing some charts, *I hope John's as well.*

The Severed Centre

There was a tacky red splotch on the right-hand corner, *a thumbprint*, John conceded. He backed away from the pole and looked down at the pavement. Tire tracks slashed with dark-red linings stared back at him. His head thrummed and the words *Devil's Hide* kept slipping into his conscious. He stepped back out onto the street and resumed walking, falling short at the next corner. He glanced up at the street sign, *Lexington and 5th* it read.

He took a deep breath and stepped off of the curb; his feet made hollow clicks on the pavement. Stunned, he noticed the sound of secondary footsteps interspersed between his. He stopped, turning his head to the side, straining to listen; he heard a click then the swish echo of a shoe-sole scraping on the concrete. His headache reignited, ten-fold.

Up ahead was the chain link fence. Feeble bits of paper and aluminum cans littered its edges. Resting against the fence was the neon-red shop-ping cart; its back wheel turned in lazy circles. He felt like his feet were sinking in sand as he stepped forward. Sweat was running off of him in rivulets, soaking his shirt collar. Something was dangling from the carts handle. He took two heavy steps forward when a limb swam into view. Gasping, he back pedaled his forward curiosity. His chest tightened and he'd enveloped with a sinking dread, *am I dying-Oh my God. I'm dying.*

He turned to run, folding over on his injured ankle. He sank to the ground with a grunt. The cool dirt felt good on his warm face. He pulled his hands underneath him. His fingers struck cold metal. Not thinking, he clasped the object in his fist and pushed to his feet. His feet flew dangerously over the concrete when his ankle threatened to buckle under him again. He slowed; his breath coming in ragged gasps. Sodium arc lights threw a sickly glow all around him. He glared up over his right shoulder; his vision blurry with sweat, *Lexington and 5th* the signs read.

He remembered the metal object in his hand. Raising it up, he unfolded his fingers and looked down at his palm.

In it was an old key, *I wonder...*

John lingered there for a few seconds, catching his breath. He shook his head then turned and walked hurriedly past the shopping cart, heading toward the other side of town.

The Other Side of Town

The low buzz of the streetlights was occasionally punctuated with the distant scraping of footsteps. The trees fanned lightly in the breeze, their branches suspended, reaching outward. John looked up at a fluorescent green flier posted on a light pole, "Still here John...?" it queried.

John quickened his pace; his breath coming in jagged hitches. He arrived at a vacant lot that backed up to a long low factory. He searched for steady ground; pitching back and forth over uneven tufts of grass scattered with garbage; he stopped directly in front of a brick building.

The base of the wall was littered with broken glass, like someone decided to make a sport of lobbing bottles against it. The brick was covered with soot, spray painted with gang graffiti. Off to his immediate right was a lone garbage container laying on its side. Beyond that was the rail yard which served the factory.

Long rows of idled boxcars, like sentinels, stared upon him.

John wondered what they manufactured; he walked over to an overturned container. Poking out of the top were the edges of what appeared to be some sort of signage, *Maybe it has the name of the factory printed on it* he thought as he bent over to examine them. He grasped them in his hands and found himself holding a set of storyboards; with a jolt, he recalled his forgotten task, *Storyboards, I need to finish them for the presentation.*

Shards of colored glass outlining the factory wall winked up at him, but there wasn't enough light to make out what was written. He walked back across the field and into a pool of light near the street.

John's eyes glazed and pulled down at their corners.

From his left came a metal screech followed by the hollow boom of boxcars colliding. Sweat dripped off of John's forehead onto the set of

storyboards. John's arms and legs jerked. Drawn upon the first storyboard was a man, and on the man's right sleeve cuff were the initials "J.S.R."

John's vision blurred.

He blinked his eyes back into focus. The initials "J.S.R." remained indelibly stamped in his conscious, *Wait...*

John broke into total flight, arms pumping at his sides. His heart was threatening to explode out of his chest. His legs began to falter and his ankle screamed with pain. He didn't care; all he wanted to do was run away. As he ran, a sharp piercing pain worked its way up his side. He crossed his left hand over his stomach to put pressure on his side but the pain deepened. He felt like his insides were going to rupture, so he slowed to a steady trot. His mind was still urging him to run. Instead, he bent over gingerly and placed both of his hands on his knees. On the pavement next to him were the soaked tire tracks. He let out a low moan and looked up at the street signs, *Lexington and 5th* he was at *Lexington and 5th*.

He caught the promise of movement; hearing child-like laughter in the distance. He straightened up, reigniting the pain in his side. He glimpsed a small blur running towards the clapboard house. It winked out just as quickly as he'd spotted it. He heard the click of a radio followed by 1940ish ballad music. The music was thin and ghostly, coming from the direction of the old clapboard house. He followed the sound with haunted expectation. The music carried him back. He stopped in front of the chain link fence and stared into the front yard. Someone had knocked over the red chair leaving a pile of faded plastic toys next to it. The crunching gravel announced his arrival; he slowed his pace a bit, trying to step more quietly. He walked up the porch's steps. Sitting on the last step was an old radio, its green luminescent dial casting a phantom glow. The nostalgic music pouring from it was quickly interrupted by static mixed with a high frequency whine. John threw his hands up shielding his ears and followed the driveway into the cave between the houses.

He'd come to the back corner of the house. He glanced into the backyard. An old rusted swing set was tilted off-axis; surrounded by virulent weeds. There was a sweet smell all around him; it came from a blooming vine that'd overtaken the fence. Straight ahead was an alleyway heavy with fog. He walked to the edge and stopped.

The stitch in his side hurt; John hesitated; the radio clicked off and he was surrounded by damp fog. He turned left down the alley; the heavy mist coated everything in curtained silhouette.

Invisible Dark

A series of fog draped garages and sheds lined the perimeter. John involuntarily slowed at each gap between them; his heart beating viciously. He heard the loud bang of tin garbage cans being knocked over followed by the sound of feet skittering. He quickened his pace and arrived at the end of the alley. The fog stretched out before him onto the street. Heavy mist coated his hair and shoulders. The streetlights remained wearing misty halos.

Nothing moved.

He started down the sidewalk. Over to his left was a neighborhood park, edges lined with white-powder lights. At the entrance of the park stood a statue, *Why not, might as well check it out.*

John crossed the street and was just about to step up onto the other side when a mournful howl came from his left, *Coyotes in the woods.*

He walked into the park entrance, coming abreast of the statue when he heard the click of a switch, brief static, then music floating around him. To his right, sitting on the crumbled statues ledge was the radio from before, its luminescent green dial at once faint then bright. Beyond the statue, past a line of old pine trees was a ball diamond; there was a chain link dugout behind home plate and a wooden set of bleachers to the side. He walked through the pine scented canopy and came out onto the ball field. His ankle was starting to ache again; his thoughts garbled, *Suffering is bliss here.*

The ground was soft, spongy, broken up by muddy patches. John walked to the bleachers with long strides, climbing two-thirds of the way up, and sat down. The cyclone fence chopped up his view of the tree lined path, and the mist enshrouded statue beyond it. The street lights continued casting lonely pools of light. He wondered if the radio was still playing but was interrupted when he heard a soft growl followed by a shuffling sound. He looked down between his feet catching a dark blur beneath him. The bleachers started to tremor when a mysterious entity below him began scrambling wildly, crashing into the supports. John jumped up. His whole body was vibrating, see-sawing off balance. He heard deep slobbering growls. Swaying drun-

kenly, he took measured steps going down. He had to pinwheel his arms to keep his balance as he descended. He was almost all the way down when two massively shackled arms spurting out from beneath the risers. John flung to the ground, hitting the slick grass in a dead run. He could hear loud slobbery huffing behind him, followed by the dull metal clang of chains. His ankle was growing weary. Knife-like pains built up his calf -- *I've got to find a place to hide* -- There was a concession stand directly ahead of him. He sprinted and hurled himself over the counter. Crouching to his knees, he inched his head counter level to get a glimpse of his pursuer. Lurching across the field in bulky uneven strides was an immense figure, its upper body disproportionately large on its spindle like legs. The creature emitted a high grating scream. John's hands flew to his ears as he cringed in pain. He strained his eyes to get a better look. The monstrosity bore a plastic like shine; its arms were tightly chained to its front. Its eyes bulged; its snout instead a slit. The creature turned to its side, revealing a phallus plunging in and out of its anus, alternating in speed and rhythm. Upon its feet were early century shackles, which caused the monster to move in an exaggerated drunken wobble. Long ribbons of slobber ran down its chin. Spittle squirted out of its mouth as it bellowed.

John's body was trembling; his arms and legs now weakened. Sweat and mist formed rivulets that ran downward, burning deeper into his eyes. The smell of sweat and feces poured off of the creature.

John's mind was in a rapid boil -- *Oh my God it's going to get me...*

The shackled being was halfway between the bleachers and the concession stand; John rose from his crouch. His heart, once again jack hammering; his ears ringing; he placed both of his hands onto the counter top and hoisted himself back over directly into the beast's line of sight. At that moment, the demon figure let out a tortuous shriek. John heard loud wrecking punctuated by snarls as he was pursued. His mind was in a tunnel, everything alongside him a blur. He could smell the creature advancing. The scent of pine needles was overlaid with the smell of rot. Snarled rage chased him but an incredibly small pool of street light suggested escape. He arrived blazing past the statue. When John's feet hit the street, the radio clicked off and all was silent. He took one last glance over his right shoulder. Nothing spanned into view. The park was standing as if deserted, the snarling apparition had vanished. John looked up at the street signs. One read 'Devil's Hide' while the other adhered the numerals "3:16". Both had arrows under-

neath them as if to suggest a choice. John headed toward the avenue marked '3:16'.

admin@devilzhide.com
<http://www.devilzhide.com>

The excerpt you've just experienced is from a larger work titled, "**Devil'z Hide**" – Written by Mary Margaret Park (and co-produced by Sekretts Scilensce), the full-length production consists of a series of instances from the universe as a whole – Follow the links above to learn more (or to make direct contact with the authors).

Thanks *for* reading!

admin@mmp-publishing.com
<http://www.marymargaretpark.com>

leitung@sekrettscilensce.de
<http://www.sekrettscilensce.com>