

Chapter 9.

Welcome To The Jungle



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Dax stared at the endless page: a harsh, barren landscape of epileptic flickering light. It emphasised little more to him now than infinite blankness and eternal emptiness. But did the Sistine Chapel once have the same effect on Michelangelo? He plunged deep into himself, into his soul, wrenching it out from within, to smear it defiantly onto the page. His personal masterpiece, his magnum opus, his Sistine Chapel...The only way he could put any more of himself on the sheet would be to carve an artery and scribe it from blood.

The Little Bear by D.T. Davison

Once upon a time there was a Little Bear that grew up in the meadow by the woods. His father wasn't around. He had, like many big bears, moved on to greener pastures to make more little bears with different mummy bears. As many mummy bears as he possibly could.

The Little Bear had always dreamed of growing up into a big strong bear like the father he had little known. Though he wasn't around, the daddy bear was big and strong and was able to provide enough apples every year to send the little bear to a very good bear-school. The best that apples could buy.

The little bear found it hard at first, but it wasn't long before he discovered that out of all the other little bears at school he was one of the biggest little bears. He was also one of the cleverest. He excelled in the classroom. He excelled at the bear games. He also realised very soon that his father had more apples than any of his other little bear friends. He enjoyed bear-school very much and before long missing the meadow mattered less and less to the little bear.

As he progressed at the bear-school he also made another discovery. Bearlets. Not only was he very, very clever, and very, very good at the bear games, it appeared he was also very handsome, and the bearlets liked him very much. Much more than all of the other little bears. There was one bearlet in particular, who would be more significant over the years than any of the other bearlets, but he was still able to enjoy the company of many other bearlets regardless. He even enjoyed the company of many of her friends. He often enjoyed the company of his own friends' special bearlets, but he always returned to his very special bearlet.

His very special bearlet did have a little "friend" of her own, that he knew was very keen on his special bearlet, but it didn't worry him as this "friend" was puny and small and his father didn't have nearly as many apples as the little bear. The little bear took great pleasure in his bearlet's company when her puny friend was around. One time, when they were away on a bear expedition in a foreign land, he even took great pleasure in the special bearlet when her puny friend was in the

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room. He knew that the puny friend could hear them and it troubled him. ~~Stupid fucker. Served him right.~~

The little bear graduated from bear-school with top grades. He had his pick of the very best bear-universities. He picked the very best of the very best bear-universities. He studied Philosophy, Politics and Economics. He was even more popular at the bear-university than he was at the bear-school. He joined many bear-clubs. He developed a taste for honey. He and his bear friends would drink a lot of honey and many good things came from it and there wasn't a lot of work to do and the work he did he found very easy. And of course there were more bearlets. They were not like the bearlets at school. They were much easier company than the bearlets at bear-school. His special bearlet was at another university and she would sometimes visit and he would often have to hide the evidence of the easier bearlets. One time, hiding the evidence was very difficult as she left some permanent evidence. Chlamydia. That took some explaining to his special bearlet... He was in a good deal of trouble for some time with his special bearlet, but in the end he talked her back round. He felt a little bad that he gave his special bearlet chlamydia too... Had to spend a fuck of a lot of apples on her to make that one up. Trip to Rome. Flowers. Jewellery. Those platinum earrings. That white gold necklace. Christ, she took some placating, but in the end the little bear was so handsome, clever and charming, with such bright prospects, that he won her back over. By now the little bear was being scouted by very special companies based in the heart of the jungle, and the little bear was pretty damn confident that this helped to swing it. He promised her never to see another bearlet ever, ever again. He promised himself never to get caught again.

Life in the jungle proved tough, but once again the clever little bear excelled. Where lesser bears fell by the wayside, the little bear did well. He worked for one of the finest companies in the jungle, a company that dealt exclusively with making as many apples as possible. They made more apples than anybody else, and though the hours were long his remuneration was significant. The work was so clever that other creatures couldn't possibly understand it. Credit Default Swaps. Collateralised Debt Obligations. Apples. Apples. Apples. He lived in a very exclusive part of the jungle in a big cave and he didn't need to use public transport like many of the shmucks in the jungle. His bearlet longed for nothing, and he was able to finance her career whims with his plentiful supply of apples. Often his colleagues and he did apple deals over honey. Honey was a large part of the work. After some time, tiredness began to consume the little bear, and in order to boost his energy levels the little bear began to take sugar. This stimulated him immediately and meant that he could work even longer hours and drink even more honey and do even more deals on even less sleep and he was able to move into a bigger cave in an even more exclusive part of the jungle. He purchased a number of caves and let them out, for apples, to other creatures in the jungle.

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Then one day his special bearlet, after all he had done for her, demanded something more. She said she wanted some “security”. That pissed him off. He had enough on his plate with work, the hours, he’d bought her a Porsche already. Lived in Knightsbridge while she indulged in her loss-making Cashmere wool clothing company, her art dealership whim, the charity venture stuff, for fuck’s sake, and now she demanded security... He’d kept his liaisons discreet hadn’t he? Been careful with the high-class hookers, the private dancers at Peppermint Hippo, who for fifteen hundred extra would let you do what you liked... and now this? Still, no point swimming against the tide, he decided, and in the end it was inevitable and so he chucked out three months salary on a rock... then the ceremony, no expense spared, even let that puny fucker from school come. Working as a hack or something on minor duckets. “Evening invite” only though... he still came... I mean, where’s your self-respect, man? Added me on facebook afterwards too... Never accepted. Ha! Ten months later, along came Davey Jr. She was happy. All business pretences of Cashmere and Art and everything else went out the window.

Then there was the crash. Fucking sub-primes. That fucked up everything. Held onto the job by the skin of the teeth while everyone else tanked... Rome fucking burned...

The Little Bear had to work even harder than normal. Competition was tough. Most of the creatures in the jungle were out of work, but there was apples to be made in clearing up the mess... but chances of survival were slim... Many of the little bear’s colleagues were let go... simply turned up in the mornings and their key-cards didn’t work. Ruthless shit, but hey, this is the jungle man. Survival of the fittest. The little bear’s key-card still worked where others’ didn’t, but it made him anxious and he drank more honey and took more sugar. Much more sugar. Far less sleep. And the bearlet wasn’t sympathetic. Stopped putting out for a start. Fuck’s sake...

And then the quality sugar in the Jungle took a nosedive. The little bear used to shell out for the high-grade stuff, which was about good enough. Not exactly grade-A Colombian marching powder but the best you could get in the city. More baking soda than rat poison, if you know what I mean... But then even the high-grade became the same old shit that you used to find in Brixton at 3am... The little bear had to take more and more just to break even. And he usually needed a bit of honey in his first coffee of the day. But he kept it together at work. The special bearlet became even more of a bitch as her puny friend ended up in front of a firing squad in Bali and she rattled on and on and on about it. Niagara Falls. Get over it, for fuck’s sake. The guy was a loser. Real life sucks losers dry. The little bear spent more time at Peppermint Hippo. Still, could claim that back on expenses...

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'I'm worried about your drinking' the special bearlet said one day. Told her it's not a problem and to mind her own fucking business. Worry about Davey Jr. or a set up another charity or whatever.

'I'm worried about that stuff you're doing' she said another day. Fuck's sake. The pressure I'm under and she gives me this shit. What does she do all day? Lunches. Shopping. Davey Jr.? Don't make me laugh. When he's not at playschool she outsources him to the Polish au pair...

In truth the little bear did worry that the sugar may be getting the better of him. Quite often he'd started to smoke it, freebasing, 5 minutes of oblivion, but he still did good, trading the apples. It's only a problem when you start fucking up at work, right? Still getting the big commissions.

'I'm going to Courchevel for a while' said the fucking bearlet, 'and I'm taking little Davey with me'.

'No you're fucking not' said the little bear.

'Yes I am' she said.

And she did.

Bitch.

'We've got a problem' said the little bear's boss. 'You took your eye off the ball'.

There'd been some apple problems. Big trade gone wrong. But the little bear fought back. Stated his previously untarnished track record for the company. The apples he'd made them. Everyone makes a mistake once in a while don't they?

'Don't expect much of a bonus' said his boss.

'Cunt' muttered the little bear, under his breath...

And then the little bear had another fight on his hands: the bearlet's lawyer. Best lawyer his apples could buy. This fight was bad. Got ugly. It was like the little bear was going ten rounds with a giant fucking arctic POLAR BEAR... Ripped the little bear to shreds.

And she took him to the fucking cleaners: the house, the cars, half the property portfolio, gargantuan lump sum and a percentage of his fucking FUTURE earnings. The little bear was well and truly fucked.

So he did what he always did at times like these: did a load of sugar, sank a load of honey, and went down to Peppermint Hippo with pockets full of apples.

He did it every night. Shelled out extra for the bonuses and fucked just about every dancer there. Did everything, man. Freebased sugar. Sucking, fucking, golden showers, anal, skat, the works...

Then one day he went to work and his keycard didn't work. Those fuckers.

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The little bear challenged the decision in a costly legal battle with his former employers. They won. He lost a LOT more apples in the process.

The little bear went to see his big bear father.

‘Jesus Christ, son, you look like shit’ said his father. ‘You need to pull yourself together’.

The big daddy bear suggested that the little bear check into a clinic for substance abuse treatment, but the little bear was dismissive of the suggestion.

‘How’s Daisy?’

‘She’s shackled up with that film guy who did the thing about North Korea’ said the little bear. ‘They’re both living in my house with Davey Jr. and I’m pretty certain I’m financing his films...’

Not much more was said.

The little bear decided that rather than going to the clinic he would take a holiday to India to find himself. He got a motorbike. The sugar in India wasn’t up to much but he drank an awful lot of honey, which was much cheaper than the honey back in the jungle, and his apples went a lot further. He took a trip up into a magic mountain with an Australian guy, who looked like a lifeguard, and a Scottish guy, who looked like a roadie for a rock band. There were lots of hippies everywhere. He discovered something called Dimethyltryptamine. DMT. Hippy Crack.

The little bear took a pull of the hippy crack from the pipe at the highest point of the magic mountain. The little bear felt himself lift from his body as an explosion of colours hit him. He closed his eyes and it was like life and death and being reborn. He swirled around the sky and up into the atmosphere through the clouds and into space. He saw stars explode and universes created. He saw evolution from single-celled organisms in oceans crawl from the sea in to monkeys climbing the trees, which became giant towers and the monkeys were wearing suits. He saw himself from another perspective and did not like what he saw. He saw himself as his special bearlet’s puny friend in front of a firing squad, but letting go of the hatred he had once felt for himself, and then he came back to his body.

The little bear felt different.

The little bear checked himself in to a clinic like the one the big daddy bear suggested.

The clinic had rules. No drink. No drugs. No “intimate relations”.

The little bear was asked to leave the clinic.

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But before they'd kicked him out, they had suggested as part of the therapy that he write down some of his experiences to exercise his demons.

Dax thought he could do one better and write a children's book and fuck returning to structured finance...

He filled an oversized glass balloon with '78 Bordeaux, pouring it all the way to the rim. Dark red drops splashed onto the white tablecloth as he stared at the content of the screen: his heart, liver, lungs and spleen, spilled like a Jackson Pollock, all over the page.

It was a terrible children's story.