

## Hazardous to Your Health

My name is Kate. I was born to Mary and Bob Ebert in Bumblefuck, Pennsylvania twenty-eight years ago. I was raised on a small farm and worked seven days a week feeding cattle and other four-legged things you'd expect to find on farms. I went to school with the same group of kids for all the mandatory years, got my diploma, and got the hell out of there before I wound up inbreeding like the rest of them. I wound up in New York City with no money, no job, and no interest in prostitution.

Luckily for me, I had a plan. A stupid plan, mind you, but it worked. I put on my on my prettiest dress and walked into expensive men's boutiques along fifth until I found what I was looking for. Along came John, my prince in suit and tie. He took a liking to me, and six months later wedding bells were ringing. After a year, I was getting goo rubbed on my stomach looking at a little white shape on a black screen. And then, John and I both got sick- and I became patient zero and started the Zombie Apocalypse.

Nah, I'm just fucking with you. But John did get sick. I spent my pregnancy waiting for chemo treatments to come through and watching John's hair slowly fall out. By the time he had three eyebrow hairs left, I was on my back with my feet in stirrups being told to push.

Now, here's where everything gets started. This story isn't about me-it's not about John, it's not about my parents, and it's not about the goat fuckers back in Pennsylvania. It's about our daughter, Emma. Emma was seven pounds three ounces at birth, and between you and I, almost ripped me a new asshole on the way out. We took her home and spent as much time, just the three of us, as we could. John had been given a number of months left, and Emma spent her first year in the cancer ward.

John lasted longer than the doctors initially told him. Then their time estimation doubled, then tripled- until John's cancer had begun to recede from his entire body. At first, they thought it was a miracle- how could someone who was infested with cancer suddenly experience total remission in less than four months? But then all of the other patients' cancers started to recede, too. Then, the cancer disappeared.

It wasn't just the cancer that went away, though- the hospital was empty after a year. Nobody who was sick came to the hospital, because nobody was sick. It was the media's wet dream, but nothing from their wildest imaginations could explain what was happening. Everywhere else in the world people continued getting sick, but not on that eight-block radius, and not in that hospital. It probably would have stayed that way, too- if it weren't for Cancun.

Well, not Cancun exclusively- but that's where we decided to take Emma for her first holiday, and it was in the two and a half weeks that we were gone that the cancer returned to all the previous patients, the flu returned to elementary schools, and chlamydia returned to the college students.

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The initial reaction was uproar. From the cancer patients' families, particularly. John was the only survivor whose cancer hadn't relapsed, and clueless in his good fortune, went to see some of his friends in the ward.

People, whether sick or not, felt good in Emma's presence- they felt amazing. Arthritics never had a single ache, depression went away, and John and I hadn't aged in three years. It's a wonder she wasn't discovered sooner- but when she was, all hell broke loose.

First it, was the media. Camped outside our house and calling her by her first name- then our address was released, and we had people knocking three times a day to fix their colds, their bad backs, their heart disease. Then more and more of them started coming- until finally, eight black SUVs pulled up and black suits came crawling across the lawn.

When she saw the men, Emma screamed. Living with Emma- particularly being pregnant with her- gave John and I abilities nobody else had. John grabbed her, and I tore the back door off its hinges, ushered them out, and ran. We didn't make it far before they'd caught up to us.

They took us to a private facility that spanned the entire city of Chicago two levels beneath the subway system. We were told it was their R&D laboratories and testing centres for dangerous diseases and biological warfare, but all I gathered from that was a lot of people in white coats and a lot of really bright lights. We were kept separate from Emma, John and I didn't like that. In the middle of the night, we broke through the wall, grabbed Emma, unplugged her from a huge machine, and hightailed out of there.

From there, we decided Europe would be our best bet for safety, but we were wrong. The Italian government was alerted pretty quickly of our arrival, and wanted to do similar things with Emma that the US did. So we packed up our few belongings and left again. We bounced from place to place for almost a year after that, unable to stay in one place for too long. In Romania, we lived with a nice woman who herded goats on the top of a mountain and who made a different kind of stew each night.

It was there that we were visited for the first time. A woman, coming from a remote corner of Belgium, came to stay with us and persuade us to come stay with her people. She lived on a large estate and housed many people just like Emma, with special gifts of their own. So we packed our things and when she left, we went with her.

For now, we are safe at the estate. We live and sleep alongside people just like us. They've provided us with the resources to use Emma's power to better the world.

With their help, she's going to save the world. When she grows old enough, she'll work alongside a private team to eradicate disease. But until then, we want her to have normalcy. We want her to be a child. So she will play with children under our watchful eyes.

Emma is young, but she understands. She knows that she won't ever have a fully normal life because what she does is special. She's young, but she knows. And she knows that her father and I will do absolutely anything to protect her from the people who want her. So if you're reading this, and you want her power, here is your warning. Stay away or die before you realize

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why you needed to. Stay away. If you come for her, I will kill you. Stay away, because it's bad for your health if you don't.