

# WEAPONIZED HUMAN

Robot Geneticists, Book 3

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J. S. MORIN

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## Chapter One

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Eve Fourteen walked the pristine white corridors of Cindy14's brand new laboratory. Walls, ceilings, and floors all shone with a glossy, unblemished finish. Soft, diffuse light from overhead panels chased away any shadows that might have come to visit the underground facility, nestled in the Norwegian fjords.

All these sights came filtered through a pair of data goggles that were as essential a part of Eve's attire as shoes. She never went anywhere without the aid of the computerized display overlaying her vision, giving her an edge that human biology couldn't manage on its own. Thin fiber cables ran over her ears and down along her spine, held in place by a harness that had become just another undergarment. The fibers plugged into a computer strapped snugly against her lower back and contoured for lumbar support when she sat. Similar fibers ran along both arms, terminating in a pair of open-tipped gloves that translated hand motions into inputs.

Cindy14 gave the tour, showing Eve the power station, cryogenic facilities, security measures, and all the entrances and

exits. It was a thorough accounting of every space within the laboratory, in accordance with the Human Welfare Committee's requirements. But what Eve really wanted to see, what her job *demand*ed that she inspect, was yet to come.

"And here we come to the highlight of the tour," Cindy14 said with a proud smile and the sweep of a hand toward a door that opened at her silent command. "The production facility."

Clenching her jaw and forcing down the rising knot in her stomach, Eve strode through.

Inside was the largest single room in the whole facility. Its high ceilings left room for crisscrossing catwalks and overhead cranes, but this was no robotics factory. This facility would manufacture humans.

Glass vats filled with pale green growth medium stood in a row down one end of the lab. As Eve walked the row, hands clasped at her back, she peered inside. Tiny floating specks, barely visible to the naked eye, drifted on invisible currents within the medium.

Eve knew what they were, but if she had any doubts, the visual readout on the built-in console made it perfectly clear.

These near-microscopic clusters of cells were Liam Karlsson. In 2065 he had been a retired Olympic swimmer and pediatrician, father of six and grandfather of two. Now he existed as twelve identical blastocysts, awaiting committee approval to grow into baby humans.

"You didn't waste any time from your conditional approval," Eve stated. She let the subtle accusation hang there unspoken. Had Cindy14 been a little *too* ready to proceed?

If Cindy14 took offense, she hid any sign of it. "I knew the facility would present best if shown in operation. There's only so much the Human Welfare Committee can infer from proposals. I know it's early to see how I intend to handle more developed specimens, but I hoped to show how human life would be safeguarded even from conception."

Eve rankled at the term specimens. She had been a specimen once.

But Cindy14's answer was proper. The equipment was slightly modified or repurposed from primate cloning. While the simplicity of the changeover made humans seem just a tad less special, it was also the only way Cindy14 could have justified having the first human production facility up and running so quickly without admitting to being a human cloner already.

"Care to see the rest of the next generation?" Cindy14 asked as Eve lingered, staring into the growth medium.

These would be people. Eve would meet them, witness their births, attend their school graduations, serve with them on committees, argue with them, possibly even love them.

"What's the plan for something going wrong?" Eve asked softly.

Cindy14 pulled up short. The brisk, efficient tour ground to a halt. When the aspiring human cloner turned to regard her, Eve forced her features blank. She wanted no hint that the turmoil in her mind was clouding her judgment. But Eve couldn't shake the memories of Plato's genetic siblings and the residents at the Sanctuary for Scientific Sins.

"Wrong?" Cindy14 echoed as if the very concept seemed alien to her.

"The price for a scientist's hubris could be a life of pain and misery for the... specimens."

Cindy14's brow knit. The robot's face was more emotive than most, with a burnished bronze that gave hints of a plausible human skin tone. The facial actuators on the Version 55.12 chassis made for near-perfect human mimicry. "I'm hoping this becomes less necessary with refinement of the process, but I can show you."

Eve followed the geneticist past more tanks filled with other clone specimens and an entire row, four high and fifty long, of

empty gestational tubes. Their umbilicals dangled loose inside, awaiting embryos to nurture.

On her way past the gestation tubes, Eve allowed her hand to brush along the glass. Fingers wet with sweat squeaked along the smooth surface. On the tube's status panel, a red light blinked on. A robotic arm attached to an overhead crane swung down, a spritz of solvent covered the contaminated area, and a cloth wiped it clean.

"Sorry," Eve muttered, addressing the arm and not her guide.

But it was Cindy14 who answered. "No trouble at all. I appreciate seeing the contaminant countermeasures in action under real-world scenarios. I understand the necessity of committee oversight, but that doesn't mean biological contamination needs to run rampant."

"I thought there weren't germs?" Eve said.

Cindy14's face twitched a smile. "Pure hubris. Charlie's War might have ended with the Earth being wiped clean, but I for one find it impossible given the number of biological samples preserved that *some* infectious vectors didn't manage to sneak a ride. Better to take precautions."

*Precautions...*

Eve's gaze roamed the laboratory. It wasn't an experimental facility like Evelyn11's had been. This was scaled for volume production. Cindy14 would never spit out humans the way the Kanto factory built drones, but she might exceed them in the number of sapient life forms birthed each year.

"You were showing me the disposal equipment," Eve reminded the geneticist.

"Yes. Of course."

There was an adjoining room off to one side of the lab. The LED overheads snapped on as Cindy14 entered. Despite the wash of bright, sterile light, the chamber had a cozy feel. With

the two of them inside, Eve didn't feel cramped for space, but a third occupant might have been enough for them to be in one another's way.

Cindy14 picked up a glass cylinder with stainless steel devices capping both ends. She unscrewed the top and poured in the contents of a waiting beaker of green liquid.

Squinting, Eve couldn't tell whether there were any clusters of human cells floating inside. "You don't have to kill any embryos on my account."

Cindy14 paused. Viscous fluid sloshed lazily in the beaker. The last drips of the liquid growth medium clinging to the glass edge. "Don't be silly," she said. "This is a demonstration. I wouldn't dream of sacrificing a healthy specimen for a simple inspection."

Closing the cap and screwing it on, a simplified readout showed that the container was sealed. Cindy14 fed the cylinder into a waiting receptacle, plugging it in like a power cell and giving a twist to lock it into place.

Eve put her hands behind her back to hide the fact that they were clenching of their own accord. She forced herself not to look away as Cindy14 tapped a short series of commands into the machine.

There was a hum, a quiet rumble, and a sucking sound like a straw at the bottom of an empty soda. Reversing the process, Cindy14 unlocked the cylinder and slid it free. There was nothing left inside.

"All gone," Cindy14 announced proudly.

Gone. Nothing left.

"Where did it go?" Eve asked. The question sounded stupid in her own ears, childish even. She was well aware of object permanence. This wasn't an infant's game of peekaboo. She was less concerned with how it was gone than she was with the green slime's ultimate fate.

Fortunately, Cindy14 took her question as it was intended. “The process is irrigation, followed by chemical decomposition. Then the tube is flushed and cleaned. The resulting solution is sucked into a waste recycling subsystem that runs below the lab. Would you like to see that next?”

*No!*

Eve could imagine all too vividly how close her fate might have come to that dummy sample. Evelyn11 had tried for decades to produce what Eve had become. There had been twelve Eves before her, but every attempt up until that point, and however many other genomes Evelyn11 had experimented upon, had all been flushed, irradiated, or incinerated.

She swallowed back her fears. “Yes. But first, a question. What happens if the specimen is larger? Say, several weeks into development rather than several days.”

Cindy14 held up the cylinder. “Anything too large for this will get a proper burial. If it fits... well, a larger specimen will just take a little longer in the machine.”

Echoes of Evelyn11’s words rang in Eve’s ears, clear as if she’d just heard them again. *First, I’ll exsanguinate your body, then carefully decapitate you. I’ll peel away the skin and muscle, vacuum out the brain with the aid of a light sodium hydroxide solution. ... The extraneous bits of you will be incinerated.*

Evelyn11 had played up the gruesome details while Cindy14 sanitized the process. Which of them was being more honest about what was really happening?

Eve reminded herself that this was Cindy14, upstanding primate geneticist and darling of the Genetic Ethics Committee. It was no accident that she was the first of Eve’s inspection tours. This was the light cardio before the strength training, the vaccine before the plague.

Sooner or later, Eve was going to run across robots trying to hide their deepest secrets from her while still receiving Human



Welfare Committee sanction for their actions. This was the easy day.

“Carry on, then,” Eve said graciously and followed Cindy<sup>14</sup> on the rest of the tour.



Grab a copy of *Weaponized Human*, book 3 of *Robot Geneticists*, and continue your adventure now.

