

Chapter 1

Apples. Everywhere. Harvest was coming. And soon winter. Roland looked around. Ithaca was bustling with the university's expansion. What more to wish for. His research grants were piling in. The laboratory had enough staff. A whole new set of docile Hindus and sycophantic Chinese had rolled in as future doctoral candidates. And his research was going well.

Unbeknownst to Cornell University, Dr. Svengali, PhD was expanding his personal laboratory underneath his modest house. He had bought military grade centrifuges, the kind used to separate radioactive isotopes and also to homogenize typhus biotoxins for germ warfare. A duct system with a two-story flu was installed in the back of his gourmet 16-burner stove kitchen. A separate vent was added from the basement to the duct.

He had found an electron microscope. Old equipment from the 1960's. But it worked. And it was being thrown out by another laboratory. A hydrogen fuel cell system was installed. This would avert the National Security Agency (NSA) from the massive electrical load his small abode was utilizing. He had a customized PC with a massive AMD stack motherboard. He had arrayed 250 processors and had sequenced them so that he replicated a Hitachi mainframe. At a cost that was less than \$60,000 for the entire unit.

And there right in his living room, was a Cray computer. From the 1970's. Garbage from a military lab that had closed during the Peace Dividend cutbacks. "Peace dividend", he thought to himself.

The Cray was primarily furniture. Although declassified, its processing unit was removed and its memory completely wiped. The ROM drive was removed by the CIA decades earlier. He liked to show students his Cray. Like the aristocrats that showed off their antique cars.

He set up a Delaware corporation to acquire the materials. No one knew it was him. The laboratory had gene sequencers, robotic arms, heaters,

ovens, sterilizers and a fire system. There were hazmat suits in case something disastrous happened.

A PhD in molecular biology with a Masters degree in biophysics. That was how he fired his intelligence. The sequences for humility were lacking in his gene pool. His father was a defrocked Mormon minister. “Lost his faith”, said his mother on his death bed. The funniest thing about his childhood was that he always remembered waking up to howling screams in the early morning praising God.

His mother was a devout needlepoint addict. “Worse things to be addicted to”, he thought to himself. Drop out from Miss Porter’s School. Expelled actually. She never made it to college. Met his father in New York as he was travelling to Nairobi on missionary work. His Dad never made it to Nairobi.

Roland Svengali came into the world nine months later. The boy made it through Andover and Cornell and MIT. Then he came back to Cornell. Had been here now twenty years. Not bad for a minister’s boy.

He was proud of himself. Over the last three years he had finally sequenced and gestated human embryos to the first trimester. That was easy. But his efforts to create an artificial womb had resulted in endless failure. This was all being done secretly in his basement lab.

But soon he would be successful. He sat there looking at the university’s fruit orchard. He took a bite out of his apple and swallowed. Then another bite. Then another bite. After he finished the apple, he wiped his mouth clean with the paper bag the fruit was in. Then he placed the rubbish in the garbage can. He walked back to his lecture hall for his afternoon classes with a smile on his face.

Soon he would create the perfect child.