

THE
UNWANTED
TRILOGY
BOOK ONE

The Unwanted

DANIEL L. CARTER

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One

Nightclub

Chicago, Illinois

Nick slipped two one-hundred-dollar bills into the doorman's hand as he cautiously entered. The nightclub crowd was in full party mode. Men and women engaging each other rhythmically on the dance floor, along with the thumping bass of the live band, made it difficult for Nick to concentrate. Purposefully he adjusted his three-thousand-dollar suit and took a deep breath to calm himself. His jacket felt tight around his shoulders; he wished he'd taken more time with the tailor. But he pushed those thoughts aside. He had to stay focused on the meeting he was having tonight. It was too important to screw up.

He made his way toward the bar, ignoring the women smiling in his direction. He thought it would have been nice if this was a social meeting, but it wasn't. Fun and socializing were not options tonight.

With a wave of his arm Nick got the bartender's attention and asked, "I'm looking for a Damon Hannah."

"Who's asking?"

With one fluid motion Nick slid a one-hundred-dollar bill toward the bartender. Nick locked glances with the man and didn't say anything. Pointing to the back of the club, the bartender took the money and walked away. Nick could see the booths in the back. Again he adjusted his suit, only to be met with the sensation of someone running their hand through his hair.

"Where you goin', you dark hunk of meat?"

He turned around and looked into the face of a beautiful young woman who was very drunk.

“Nice watch, handsome. Vacheron Constantin, right?”

Any other time this would have been a welcome diversion, but not tonight.

“Yes, thanks for noticing. I’m sorry, miss, but I can’t stay and talk.” He politely pulled the woman’s hand out of his hair and walked away.

“Jerk.”

Ignoring the woman’s comment, Nick weaved through the crowd and headed to the back of the club. He could see Damon sitting in a private booth with two large bodyguards standing nearby. Taking another deep breath, Nick approached. Just as he expected, the larger of the two muscle-bound guards stepped in front of him. Nick knew he was no slouch at 6’ 2”, but he felt small as he looked up into the man’s face.

“I think you’re lost, pal.”

Nick smiled politely at the bodyguard. “Tell your boss Mr. Prospero is here.”

“It’s all right. Let him through,” Damon ordered. “Please sit down, Mr. Prospero. I have to ask, are you a Poe fan?”

Nick cautiously sat across from Damon. “Not really, but I hear you are. I thought you would appreciate it.”

“Nice. Do you know the story of Prince Prospero?” Damon’s crooked smile made Nick feel like he was some sort of prey.

“Not really.”

“The story tells of a prince who thought he could escape death and ignore his own sickness. He believed the Red Death couldn’t touch him. In the end he died.” Damon took a sip from his wine glass. Nick wasn’t sure if he should say something in response, but Damon continued. “The moral being that pride comes before a fall. I hope you’re not such a person.”

Nick was glad to let Damon do all the talking. It gave him a chance to size up who he was dealing with. Damon wore a nice suit adorned with expensive chains and several diamond-studded rings that he clearly liked to flaunt. His pale complexion and wrinkles were most likely due to working at night and taking too many drugs. Even though Damon spoke like an educated man, his mannerisms told Nick he was a low-level soldier and not the one in charge.

“That’s a lesson we can all learn from, Mr. Hannah.”

Damon chuckled at his response and said to his bodyguards, “Mr. Hannah. I like this guy already. He knows how to show respect. So how can I help you, Mr. Prospero?”

Nick wasn’t sure if there was a hint of sarcasm in Damon’s question.

“I believe you are in the market for some high-end medical equipment, or so I was led to believe.”

“Go on. I’m listening.”

Nick reached slowly for the list inside his jacket so as not to alarm the bodyguards. He slowly slid the list across the table to Damon. This was going to be a complicated transaction, and he didn’t want to start trouble. Yet.

“I also have in my possession an ABI PRISM 310 Genetic Analyzer. Interested?” Nick waited to see what kind of reaction he would get.

Damon tapped his PDA with his pointer and leaned back in the booth. It was hard to see Damon’s face in the shadows. *Who is Damon selling to? Why does he want DNA equipment?* For now Nick could speculate, and Damon was his only connection to those answers.

After several seconds Damon leaned forward. “I believe we can do business, Mr. Prospero. I’d need to see that all of the equipment is working before we can talk price.”

Something was wrong. Everything was going entirely too easy. Nick expected questions about where he acquired the equipment, and the lack of mistrust was setting off internal alarms. Any street thug would have patted him down for weapons before he was allowed to sit down and talk. Also, the lack of female companionship was a sure sign that Damon was all about business tonight. Nick knew there was no genuine intention of purchasing any of the equipment, but that left one question unanswered: *What does Damon have planned?*

“Perfect, Mr. Hannah,” Nick said. “If you’d like, I can take you to my warehouse, where you can examine the merchandise.”

“Let’s go.”

The deadness in Damon’s eyes as he rose from the booth answered Nick’s question. It was a look he had seen before—*murder*. He hurried to follow behind Damon as the two bodyguards took up the rear.

“My car is just around the corner out the front. We…” Nick tried

to stop and redirect Damon, but he was met with a stiff shove in his back followed by one of the bodyguard's hands latching onto his right shoulder. He knew this was not a good sign. Damon led the way through the crowds and headed toward the back exit hallway. Nick's life was on the line. If he were going to survive the night, he would need to do something—and quickly. Sweat poured down Nick's face as his heart rate accelerated in his chest. He tried to wipe his brow, but another large hand clamped onto his left forearm.

Nick's breathing was becoming more rapid. Immediately he forced himself to take deeper breaths. He couldn't afford to panic or be distracted. What he needed was an advantage, and finally it came.

As Damon led the way down the back hallway past the restrooms, the second bodyguard stepped in front of him. It was now or never. Nick watched as the bodyguard in front of him turned his attention toward Damon. He attacked. With all his weight on one leg Nick kicked backwards with his other foot and hit its target. His escort's right kneecap bent unnaturally. Nick could feel the give of the bone from his kick as the bodyguard yelled out in pain and released him.

Immediately he spun around and landed a right fist across the now-kneeling bodyguard's jaw and sent him to the floor, unconscious. The other bodyguard grabbed for his pistol. Again Nick attacked. Without forethought he jabbed his right hand into his attacker's throat. The man dropped his gun and gasped for air. Nick had to finish him off before Damon turned around. He kicked the bodyguard in the groin and double-fisted the man's back, forcing him motionless to the floor.

Trying to focus on what to do next, Nick looked up to see Damon finally turn and face him. There was a brief shocked expression, but it was gone in a blink of an eye. Damon reached for his gun underneath his black blazer just as a young brunette came out of the ladies' room. Nick leaped forward and tackled the woman back through the ladies' room entrance. Bullets buzzed past his head. The woman screamed. It seemed to happen all in slow motion, but Nick forced himself to his feet. He could hear the screams of the nightclub members replacing the now-silent band.

Nick stood just inside the ladies' room, cursing himself for not grabbing one of the bodyguards' pistols. After a few seconds he

cautiously peered into the hallway. The exit door was latched. Beyond it a motorcycle sputtered, stalled, then sputtered again. Correcting his earlier mistake, Nick grabbed the gun from the nearest bodyguard and ran toward the back exit. He slammed open the door with the gun pointed in the direction of the motorcycle engine, but he was too late. Damon raced down the alleyway on a blood-red motorcycle.

Tires screeched as a black van halted behind him. He jumped into the passenger side. "Where were you?"

The driver, Allen, glanced over. "We couldn't hear you over the noise. You knew that was going to happen, Nick. Or should I call you 'Prospero'?"

Nick pulled off his Armani jacket. "I was nearly shot! Do you have a bead on him?"

"Sorry. Yes. He's heading eastbound on West Kinzie Street just past North Clark."

Nick sometimes wondered about his team member, Allen Young. They were good friends, and Allen seemed steady, but Nick often found his humor inappropriate; this was one of those times. Nick used the van radio and called all local units to pursue the subject as he put his gun holster on. The motorcycle wove in and out of traffic as Damon ran a red light and nearly caused an accident. They couldn't lose him. They had spent months setting up this sting, and Damon was their only lead. Yet Damon moved further away.

Nick spoke again into the radio. "Suspect is heading northbound on North Rush Street," he said and turned on their pursuit light in the front windshield, hoping for something to go their way. They made the turn to follow the motorcycle. The police had blocked off East Grand Street as their lights flashed two blocks away. Oddly, Damon stopped in the middle of traffic and was looking back at them. Allen floored the gas once again as Damon spun his tire and headed east on East Illinois Avenue away from the roadblock. Was Damon taunting them? Whatever he was doing, it gave them a chance to catch up.

Nick grinned as two Chicago police cars joined the chase behind them. After four blocks of pursuit, Damon began to slow down. Damon didn't have much further to run as they approached Lake Michigan. Nick called all units to block off the exits of the pier immediately. They

had him trapped. The road ended at a circle that led to East Navy Pier Street, which was a dead end overlooking the lake.

“Hurry, Allen, before he finds a way out.”

Allen shot him an agitated look. Nick didn’t care. They couldn’t let Damon escape. Allen turned, following Damon into a parking garage. With great agility Damon slid the motorcycle on its side underneath the entrance railing, then propped himself back up without stopping his momentum. Allen broke through the entrance railing and followed Damon. He was trapped. Nick watched as Damon sped upward to the roof. There was no way out now. Nick’s mouth dropped at what he saw. On the far end of the roof the motorcycle lay on its side. Damon strapped into a glider and leapt from the building.

Jumping out of the van, Nick watched from the roof edge. Damon glided out over Lake Michigan, along with any hope of capturing him. Clearly he had planned this from the beginning. Nick shouted out in frustration, “You’ve got to be kidding me!”

“Sorry, Nick.” Allen put his hand on his shoulder. “He’s probably going to land somewhere out in the middle of the lake, where a boat is waiting for him. I should call in the Coast Guard and have them begin searching.”

Nick replied, “Yeah, do that,” but he knew by the time they got in touch with the Coast Guard, Damon would be long gone.

An explosion shattered the night sky behind them. Smoke and flames shot in every direction. Allen and Nick ducked down instinctively. Nick’s stomach ached as he watched the smoke from the explosion begin to blow over Chicago.

“Not again,” he whispered.

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Nick replayed the evening in his head as they drove to the explosion site. Something had tipped Damon off that he was an FBI agent. He didn’t want to consider just yet that it may be a “someone,” but tonight made him feel even more uncomfortable. Damon wanted them on that roof to witness the explosion. That much was certain. The more Nick thought about it, the more upset he became. Whoever was behind this

was playing games with him and the Bureau.

Nick watched from a distance for a couple of hours as fireman fought back the flames coming from the building. The scene was chaos. Crowds of onlookers and every news crew in the city stood at the barricades fighting to get a better look.

“We’ve discovered several bodies so far in the fire,” the police chief reported.

Just like the other two times. Nick asked, “How many of them were babies?”

Shooting a stunned look at Nick, the police chief replied, “At least three so far. How did—”

“Keep searching. There’ll be five, Chief, and at least ten or more adults. Always.”

Nick let out a sigh and walked away before anything more could be said. He was disgusted with himself. He felt like a failure. This was the third mass murder in just over twenty months, and they were still in the dark as to who was behind it. Their only lead was somewhere over the middle of Lake Michigan.

He ordered Allen to get forensics on the scene as soon as possible. He wasn’t looking forward to reporting the day’s events. On his way back to the hotel Nick played the night over and over in his head. Crimes like this gave him nightmares.

Two

Escape

July 17, 2007

Poughkeepsie, NY

Fourteen months after the Chicago murders

Once again Janet Renard found herself hitting the hard pavement and, for a moment, breathing eluded her. Several deafening explosions rocked the ground underneath her as section by section the building behind her spewed out debris in every direction. Finally Janet inhaled sharply, then coughed from the thick smoke in the air. The almost-paralyzing pain in her ribs made it even more difficult for her to take another breath, but survival outweighed her physical state. *The Jeep™*. The Jeep™ was only a few feet away. *But the pain. No, forget the pain. Get to the Jeep™!*

Ignoring her pain, Janet jumped into the driver's seat and slammed the door shut. Another explosion from the building caused her to instinctively scream as debris crashed against the window. Screeching the tires, she pulled away as fast as she could. She watched in her rearview mirrors as several more explosions rocked the facility. Like a dam bursting, she wept. She tried to stop, but the torrent of emotions was beyond control.

The crying of the five infants lying helpless in the backseat only added to the hysteria. Before she even knew where they were or how they had gotten there she parked the car in the back of a nearby McDonald's. She needed to check on the children, but the pain in her side made her examine herself first. Now that the adrenaline had worn off, she became aware of her injuries.

There were several cuts on her hands and arms and a couple of

gashes that probably should have stitches. Sharp knife pains on the left side of her chest told her she had at least one broken rib, probably more. Using the mirror on the back of the sun visor, she examined her face. One very deep cut over her left eye had been bleeding but was now clotted. She'd have a scar for life, but at least she was alive. Her long strawberry hair hung limply, and she was covered in gray soot from the building. She tried to wipe the tear streaks from her filthy cheeks. Another wave of emotions involuntarily consumed her. She pushed up the visor and sobbed once again.

Why me? Why is this happening? It had been two years since her husband had died, and all she'd wanted to do was run away from the pain. Now she was running again, but this time it included five innocent children, and their lives were at stake.

A hand grabbed her shoulder. Janet screamed. The babies cried louder as she looked at the backseat. Her friend Michele had regained consciousness. Holding her head in both hands, Michele asked, "How did we get here? Oh, my head."

"We need to check them for injuries," Janet said as she gently got out of the Jeep™.

Michele helped her hold the babies and examine each of them. Both she and Michele were surprised that the only injuries the infants had were minor cuts and bruises. Michele, on the other hand, had two broken fingers on her left hand and most likely cracked ribs and a concussion. Janet knew she had better keep an eye on Michele just in case things got more serious.

With a shaky voice Janet said, "We need to go to the police right away."

Michele pointed at the bottom of the dashboard. "I don't think that's such a good idea."

Janet followed Michele's finger. A police badge lay in the ashtray. The realization that they were sitting in a stolen police vehicle dashed all hope Janet had left. They couldn't go to the police or the FBI, given what they had overheard earlier, and they didn't have either of their purses with them. To add to the dread, Janet didn't know if anyone would be coming after them or not, so going back to either of their apartments didn't seem like a smart idea.

Michele interrupted her thoughts. “We need to ditch this Jeep™ right away.”

Janet’s mind took a moment to catch up to her friend. Reluctantly she said, “I know where we can hide.”

“I have a cousin in Newburgh who can take care of the car and get us some cash. Where did you have in mind?”

Janet hesitated again. “My uncle has a place where we can stay, but we’re going to need supplies for a couple of days for these babies.” She didn’t want to tell Michele that, besides the memory of her dead husband, her Uncle Leigh was the reason she had moved away from Oklahoma. Now her past was catching up.

“Won’t they check your uncle’s place?” Michele asked.

“We won’t be staying at his house. Don’t worry. No one will find us where we’ll be.” But Janet was unable to let Michele’s comment go without an inquiry. “What does your cousin do?”

“He runs a chop shop on South Street.” Michele grinned, despite the pain. “And don’t look at me like that. It’s not like we’ve got a lot of options. Besides, we can easily get a few hundred for this fine piece of machinery—and a replacement.”

Janet shook her head, but Michele’s idea was their only option. She suggested they take turns going to the restroom with the babies and cleaning up their wounds before heading over to Newburgh. The day ahead of them was going to be rough; traveling with five infants and not knowing if someone was after them made it even more stressful. In the back of Janet’s mind she knew if they could get to her uncle, they would be safe. Or, at least, she hoped they would.

Three

Mistake

July 18, 2007

Poughkeepsie, NY

2:34 a.m.

The sight was getting old to Nick. He stood with Allen several yards from the burned-down building as the fireman finished putting away their equipment. Nick was disgusted. If his team had gotten on the scene just a few hours earlier, they may have been able to prevent this from happening again. It felt personal. A part of him always felt responsible for each of the victims' deaths. And the children—why children? He knew he needed to stay objective; that was the job, and he did it better than most. But pride was on the line with this case—along with something more he couldn't express.

Having grown up a single child of an Irish mother and an Algerian father, Nick had been forced to overcome prejudices and fears that most of his coworkers had never faced. Being a light-skinned black man meant facing prejudices on both social fronts, black and white. He had no crowd to belong to. He took a deep breath. That was part of what made him a stronger person and propelled him to overcome obstacles. Because of this motivation, he had landed the team leader position with the FBI before he reached thirty. Nothing was going to stand in his way of solving this case.

A picture of his ex-wife Rebecca's face flashed through his thoughts. His heart raced slightly. There was a downside to his motivation. Having to always succeed had cost him dearly. Why he put her through the torture of being married to him was still a puzzle. It only lasted a little over two years, and quitting was not something that

came easily to him. In the end she left him—no, he gave her no choice. The job always came first, and after Rebecca miscarried, their relationship became nonexistent.

The feelings of losing their child once again rose to the surface of his emotional barriers. It was his fault. The stress of their marriage falling apart had been too much for Rebecca. Although she had never verbalized it, he knew she blamed him. Why not? He did, too.

A revelation struck him. That's what was bothering him about these murders—the children. It wouldn't take away the guilt, but maybe he could atone for it.

Allen leaned close to Nick and said quietly, "If I didn't know any better, I'd say they knew we were coming...again."

Nick snapped out of his thoughts and replayed Allen's words in his head. It was the first time either of them had verbalized what was becoming obvious. There was a leak within the Bureau. Nick knew they must have been very close this time, because the crime scene looked much different than the other two. First, the parking lot was full of vehicles.

There weren't any cars or trucks at the other crime scenes—nothing to tell them who was involved or might be a potential witness, making it more difficult to identify the victims. Whoever was responsible for these killings was in a big hurry to leave, which boded well for catching this psychopath. Also, both previous buildings had a concentrated, controlled fire centered on the victims. This one was different. Not all of the bodies were burned as severely as the others. Something prevented them from being consumed by the flames, leaving more evidence.

Nick watched as Sam made her way from the wreckage. Agent Samantha Coles was part of Nick's team and one of the smartest women he had ever known. She was only twenty-eight, but her demeanor gave the impression of someone much older. Nick couldn't understand how she could be married with two children and still do the job she was doing. The job had already cost him his wife and kid.

"What'd you find out?"

Samantha asked, "Do you want the good news or the bad news first?"

Optimistically he answered, “There’s good news this time? Great, give me the good.”

“We found twenty-four bodies so far, but none were children.”

Nick gave a sigh of relief. “What else?”

She smiled. “We also found several pieces of medical equipment intact, multiple fingerprints throughout the wreckage, and those—” Samantha gestured toward the parked vehicles covered in ash and debris.

Nick pushed the issue. “That’s it?”

“So far.”

“All right. What’s the bad news?”

“Like I said, there are twenty-four bodies so far. We’ve identified one already.”

By her expression, he could tell he wouldn’t like what she had to say next.

“That doesn’t sound like bad news to me, Sam. Who is it?”

Samantha took a deep breath. “The body was a male in his early thirties, and we found his wallet still in his pants.”

“Just tell me.”

“His name’s Frank Scarnado.”

He sighed. “That means what to me, Sam?”

“*Officer* Frank Scarnado.”

A police officer may be involved in these killings. Great.

Nick shot Allen and Samantha a look. “Don’t say anything to anyone about this. I don’t want this leaking to the press before we know exactly what’s going on, or I’ll have someone’s head. Is that understood?”

Both nodded.

Nick ordered, “Allen, you and Jason search those vehicles and have them all dusted for prints. I want to know everything about who worked here, what they were doing, and if their body isn’t in this wreckage, I want to know where they are. Sam, work with forensics to help identify the bodies. We’ve got a lot to do.”

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Nick's team set up in Albany's headquarters so they could process the crime scene. They had almost nothing to go on with the previous murders, but now there was an overwhelming amount of evidence to sift through. The fingerprints were being processed and already there were two hits in IAFIS. The team met in one of the conference rooms.

Allen started off by reading his findings. "Our first hit was a woman by the name of Elizabeth Anne Mitchel, originally from Morristown, New Jersey." Allen handed out her mug shot for everyone to see. He continued, saying, "At the age of twelve she was in the foster care system and soon had a rap sheet ranging from petty theft to drugs and prostitution. When she was seventeen she graduated to murder—manslaughter, to be precise—and was sent to a high-security woman's facility. At the age of twenty-one in 2000 she was released and moved to Sussex. She fell off the radar two years later, according to her parole officer."

Samantha interjected, "Sounds like an upstanding citizen."

Nick could tell Jason had something to say so he nodded in his direction. Jason was the fourth member of their team, and Nick liked his laidback demeanor. However, having spent several years with the Bronx police, Jason was no pushover.

"I checked to see who owned the place," Jason said. "It's an extension of Saint Frances Hospital, but they closed it down a year ago. They claim to know nothing about what was happening in the place. I suggest we check the employee records for anyone named Elizabeth or Liz in the past year. I'm sure she didn't use her real name, but maybe a variation."

Nick nodded in agreement.

Allen tossed another photo onto the table. This one was of a pre-teen adolescent boy wearing a graduation uniform. "This is Tibon Agha, son of a United States ambassador to Jordan. Luckily for us, the entire family's prints are on file. Son of Jaleel and Durrdana, he was a child prodigy. IQ was off the charts. In 1987, at the age of twelve, Tibon graduated from a private high school. This is where it gets interesting. His family went on vacation after his graduation in Amman, Jordan, to visit relatives, only to be blown up in a freak car accident outside of the American Embassy. Guess who the only survivor was?"

Samantha answered, "Tibon."

Allen waved his hand in her direction. "Give that woman a prize. He was, however, paralyzed in his legs from a piece of metal that had nicked his spine. When he finally returned to the States, Tibon went to college at MIT and graduated at the top of his class. His major: biology and bioengineering. He was only seventeen when he got his doctorate. Unfortunately, that is all we have on him. Right after he graduated, he sold all of his family's estate and dropped out of sight. No one has seen him since. He should be about thirty-four now."

Allen finished and Nick closed the file in front of him. Turning toward Samantha, he said, "I want you to look up Tibon's old college friends and classmates. See what you can dig up on him. Someone has to know where he is. Follow up with the State Department and find out what hospital he was treated at. I want to know why his prints are at our crime scene."

"Jason, you need to follow up on the hospital and get me a list of all the employees who left in the last year. According to the registrations on the vehicles, several of the cars were registered to nurses. They're probably recruiting from within, like the last two murders."

Nick stood. "Allen, keep following up on the backgrounds of all the car owners. You know the drill." Nick hesitated, then walked over to the door and closed it. He turned to face all three members of his team and took a deliberate breath before speaking.

"What I'm about to ask of you is not to leave this room or to be discussed with anyone outside this room. If you're not comfortable with that, please leave now." Nick waited a couple of seconds. Just as he figured, his team was with him as they sat quietly waiting for what he was about to say. "Good. It has become painfully clear that whoever is responsible for these murders has inside information that can only be leaked from within the Bureau. This sicko has been one step in front of us from the beginning, and finding out an officer was involved tells me we can't trust anyone other than each other.

"Sam, I want you to make a list of all agents who had anything to do with this case. Start looking for any connections with past assignments they may have had with any of our known suspects. Do as much of a background check as you can, but keep it under the radar.

Jason, while you're at the hospital, check for anything or anyone from Poughkeepsie or the Hudson Valley area who would be linked to the Bureau. Family, friends...anyone who knew them. Does anyone have a problem with what I'm asking you to do?"

Nick looked each of them directly in the eyes. They were with him. "Good. I'm going to go meet with our professor from Columbia University, then the coroner. We have four IDs left unaccounted for and two unidentified cadavers. That means there are two possible witnesses out there. Let's go."

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Nick walked into the evidence room where all of the computer parts that had been found at the crime scene were being kept. At the far end of the room sat a short dark-haired man with his back to Nick. The noise of typing on the computer told Nick his presence had been undetected. He cleared his throat in hopes of not startling the man, but still the typing continued.

Nick walked across the room to see what was so intriguing that it outweighed recognition of his existence. On the computer screen were several mathematical symbols and pictures of what he thought were DNA strands, but none of it made any sense to him.

The man continued to ignore Nick as he intermittently let out a "Hmm," and an "Oh, my."

Nick cleared his throat once again, only this time with a more aggressive sound. Finally the man stopped typing and jumped slightly as he turned to realize someone was standing right behind him.

"Thank you for coming, Dr. Yamugi. I'm Agent Nick Catlin."

The middle-aged Japanese man let out a nervous laugh as he replied, "So sorry. I...I...got caught up with what you have found...most fascinating, really. I was particularly interested in the—"

Nick cut Dr. Yamugi short. "Great, I see you've had some time to look at the computers we found."

"Why yes." The doctor seemed confused by the declaration of the obvious.

"Let's sit for a moment, shall we?" Nick pulled up a rolling seat.

“On behalf of the FBI, I’d like to thank you for coming on such short notice. When our technicians realized the type of technology we were dealing with in these computers, your name was on the top of our list.”

Dr. Yamugi had a hard time keeping eye contact with Nick. He seemed uncomfortable with formalities and probably would have rather been looking at the computer than Nick.

“So, Doctor, what have you found out so far?”

Concern flickered in the doctor’s eyes. “Well,” he said, while at the same time looking at the ceiling, “to be completely frank with you, Agent Catlin, I’m dumbfounded.”

“What do you mean? You couldn’t find anything?”

“No, it’s not that. Quite the opposite, actually.”

Nick took a deep breath. “Please, whatever you did find, tell me.”

“Well, it’s clear that whatever this equipment was being used for has something to do with genetic manipulation or research.”

“I know this already, Doctor,” Nick said, holding his sarcasm to a minimum. “What I need to know is if you can give me more specifics.”

“Yes, well, what I was going to add is that the modifications to the equipment are beyond anything I have ever seen before. I doubt anyone’s ever seen the type of technology that you have recovered. Not anyone in the known world of science.”

Now Nick was becoming interested. “How so?”

The doctor sat upright and stared at the ceiling as he formulated the thoughts in his head. “Where do I begin? The program on this computer has been modified to separate out sequences of a human’s genetic code in ways that have never been thought of, let alone attempted. In fact—”

Nick hurried the doctor along. “I’ve heard many stories in the news and television of genetic manipulation before. Why is this different?”

The doctor became more animated, moving his hands in front of him. “You see, the genetic code is a set of rules by which information encoded in genetic material are translated into—”

“Stop.” Nick didn’t want to offend the doctor, but he needed answers now. “Give me the bottom line and in laymen’s terms, please.”

“Right. Sorry. The program on the computer that was recovered, if

you have the knowledge, can be used to specify lines of DNA in a human and rewrite them. Imagine, if you will, changing your eye color or reversing your baldness. Let's go one step further. What if you wanted a better singing voice or to be taller? Even better, what if I wanted to be stronger, faster, more intelligent? The kind of genetic sequencing that this program does is so advanced that almost anything can be changed about a human being."

Nick didn't know what to say at first. "So what you're saying is that you could use this program to change, or say, *create*, a human being in whatever image you want? Like a 'God program'?"

The doctor tilted his head in a gesture of hesitation. "Yes and no. Like I said—*if* you have the knowledge. The program will create any genetic sequence you want and will target any part of the genetic code you want, but you must tell it where to look and what to change. The scientific community is not even close to understanding human DNA in the way this program is meant to work. The person using the program would have to have intimate, specific knowledge of which codes to change. In other words, the program is only as useful as the knowledge of the one using it. Whoever was using this program is beyond any genius you or I could imagine."

Nick replied, "I see. Let's say I am such a person and am able to create humans in any way I deem fit."

The doctor excitedly jumped in before Nick could finish his thought. "The problems that would arise from making any major changes to the genetic code would cause all sorts of physical and mental problems with the subjects in question. It would take literally thousands—possibly hundreds of thousands—of experiments before you got one viable subject who didn't have some sort of defect or mental disability. Not even with the intelligence level we are talking about can someone alter another human being's DNA and get it right the first time. There are just too many variables to consider and even then I doubt anyone could be successful."

The more Nick listened, the more disgusted he was becoming. "Is there anything more, Doctor?"

"I won't know until I've had more time to study the data on the computers."

Nick thanked the doctor and left. Finding the person responsible for these deaths had just become even more important to him. The case was no longer just about a murderer. The thought of creating children to experiment on them was on the same level as the Nazis, and Nick was even more determined to find whoever was responsible. He wished his father were still alive. He would know just what to say or do to cope with something so evil....

For more of the story, read on...

THE
UNWANTED
TRILOGY
BOOK ONE

The Unwanted

DANIEL L. CARTER

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About the Author



DANIEL L. CARTER, born and raised in New York State, has always enjoyed Sci-Fi and Fantasy stories. Some of his favorite authors include Robert Asprin and Stephen R. Donaldson.

Having acted in plays, such as *Diary of Anne Frank* and *Damn Yankees*, Daniel soon turned to writing skits and short plays, as well as directing. After studying at Elim Bible Institute and Hudson Valley Bible School, the desire to blend fantasy and faith drove him to begin a journey on finding a story that would do just that.

The Unwanted, Book One in *The Unwanted Trilogy*, opens up a new world of Science Fiction and Fantasy that will appeal to many ages. Daniel is currently working on Book Two, *Children of Anak*. He and his wife, Margo, reside in Western New York.

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