

# **Mount Dragon: A Novel Study Guide**

## **Mount Dragon: A Novel by Douglas Preston**

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# Plot Summary

Written by Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child, this is a fast paced, multifaceted story that blends science and technology with a good grasp of the possible and probable directions of both. Woven with great detail, the story begins with the quest for a scientific breakthrough that will change humankind forever. Working for GeneDyne, scientists discover a gene in a species of chimpanzee called the bonobos that makes them immune to all sixty known varieties of the flu. Named X-FLU, this gene, if introduced into humans, would transfer that immunity to them. This whole branch of science opens up a large debate over whether or not scientists should alter the DNA structure of human beings, as any change to the human genome is a permanent one, forever altering who we are as human beings.

Guy Carson is chosen to work on this project by GeneDyne's CEO Brent Scopes, and confident though he is that he has the answer to the problems regarding the way X-FLU is prepared for transfer, he, like the scientist before him, is unable to render the virus harmless. It takes great preparation to ready a sample for testing, and the disappointment when the first host chimpanzee dies is intense. An accidental release of an infected chimpanzee causes the death of scientist Rosalind Brandon-Smith, her death occurring even faster than the previously infected chimpanzees. An investigation into the matter brings Gil Teece to the facility. His investigation uncovers facts that leads him to believe he should recommend the suspension of work on this project. He leaves to file his report and is caught in a sandstorm. His empty vehicle is found shortly after, but Carson has suspicions that it took more than a storm to stop Teece from filing his report. A note left by Teece for Carson asks him to search for a journal he believes Carson's predecessor left behind, and its subsequent discovery exposes a flaw surrounding the project he pioneered before it called PurBlood and answers the issues they are having with X-FLU.

The discovery leads Carson and his assistant Susana de Vaca to a file that reveals the staff at Mount Dragon all had been used as test subjects for PurBlood. Since the product involved falsified test results, PurBlood's release is not only premature, but dangerous. The side effects include hallucinations, leaking blood vessels and a slow degeneration of mental functions leading to violence and self destructive behaviors. Scientists who were given PurBlood begin showing signs, and Carson and de Vaca know they must stop its release and destroy X-FLU. They try to send the information to Brent's former partner, Charles Levine, who is also a former professor of Guy's and is at odds with Brent over the direction his research has taken. Brent intercepts the transmission and triggers the alarm, sending the security staff to detain Carson and de Vaca. With no alternatives left, they trigger a self destruct code in the lab that destroys everything before escaping into the desert, pursued by the head of security, Nye, who is already hallucinating. The chase through the desert is life altering for all three.

Levine has done everything he can to stop Brent from continuing the dangerous research he is doing before he permanently alters human DNA, but his zeal to that end costs him his chair at the Foundation for Genetic Policy and his position at the



university. With nothing left to lose and to help him get close enough to Brent to talk to him, he enlists the aid of Mime, who is a hacker of extraordinary talent, confined to a wheelchair because of Thalidomide. The only way to accomplish that goal in the current lock down mode is to enter his cyber space directly from inside his office building. Mime will talk him in and give him the tools he needs to get to Brent, but the resulting contact will cost both men their lives and alter the future for both GeneDyne and all who were directly involved.

Mount Dragon is a well written story, worth the read, that has the reader totally engrossed and on the edge of their seat, with a surprising ending that ties all of it together neatly.



# Part One: Pages 13 - 50

## Part One: Pages 13 - 50 Summary

Mount Dragon by Douglas Preston and co-authored by Lincoln Child is a gripping and fast paced, multifaceted story that blends science and technology with a good grasp of the possible and probable directions of both. Woven with great detail, the story begins with the quest for a scientific breakthrough that will change humankind forever. Working for GeneDyne, scientists discover a gene in a species of chimpanzee called the bonobos that makes them immune to all sixty known varieties of the flu. Named X-FLU, this gene, if introduced into humans, would transfer that immunity to them. This whole branch of science opens up a large debate over whether or not scientists should alter the DNA structure of human beings as any change to the human genome is a permanent one, forever altering who we are as human beings.

Guy Carson works for GeneDyne Edison when founder and boy genius Brentwood Scopes singles him out for a lucrative and highly secretive position at the GeneDyne Remote Desert Testing Facility in the Mount Dragon facility. Excited to be returning to the area he grew up in, Guy jumps at the opportunity to do something meaningful. He leaves immediately and is met the next morning by the facility's director, Dr. John Singer, who drives him to Mount Dragon.

Dr. Charles Levine is a professor and lecturer at Harvard University. After delivering his regular lecture, he tells his audience that he has more to talk to them about, and proceeds to divulge information about a disastrous breach of genetic testing that could have easily wiped out the human race that had recently taken place in the town of Novo-Druzhina in western Siberia. Satellite photos back up his extended lecture showing the many dead still lying on the streets as the result of experimentation with the simple herpes virus. The resulting and fatal virus becomes known simply as Strain 232, he explains. At the end of his lecture, a young man approaches Levine and informs him of the fact that Guy Carson has been given a post at Mount Dragon. Levine takes the news gravely.

Carson is taken around the Mount Dragon facility by Dr. Singer, but Singer stops short of taking him through the Biosafety Level 5 laboratory, telling one of the other scientists to complete this task for him. Rosalind Brandon-Smith is not happy to be taken from her current task, but quickly and brusquely shows him through. When they reach the section referred to as the Zoo, Carson witnesses the death of the last chimpanzee that was a part of the experiment conducted by scientist Franklin Burt, whom Carson discovers he is replacing. The chimpanzee suffers and the sight is disturbing. Caretaker Bob Fillson asks them to leave so that he can deal with the poor creature, and Rosalind takes Carson back to Dr. Singer after pointing to Carson's lab and workstation deep in the BSL5 facility.



## Part One: Pages 13 - 50 Analysis

Scientist Guy Carson is thrilled to be back on familiar turf when he is given the temporary posting at Mount Dragon, and equally grateful that he might be involved in something meaningful and challenging. A descendant of Kid Carson, he feels a connection to the area that will always be home to him. He is surprised to have been chosen out of all the talented scientists available for the position at Mount Dragon, but doesn't hesitate to accept. He is told to leave immediately, and is met the following morning by the director of Mount Dragon, Dr. John Singer.

Dr. Charles Levine finishes a lecture at Harvard, and then describes an event to his audience that he could get in trouble for disclosing, but Levine is no stranger to controversy, and it is not the first time that he has chosen to bend the rules. This time, he shows the group satellite photos from the disastrous genetic accident in Novo-Druzhina, Siberia. His intention is to ensure the group is made aware of the dangers of these kind of experiments which are for the most part unregulated and could mean the end of mankind. Strain 232, as it is known, was almost such an accident, and the only thing that saved the rest of mankind was the fact that the facility was enclosed and the Soviet military was quick to lock down the entire town. To date, no one has gone in and the bodies remain in varying stages of decomposition and mummification on the streets where they died.

Carson is taken around the Mount Dragon facility, but still knows nothing of the project he has been hired to participate on. When Dr. Singer gets to the entrance to the Biosafety Level 5 laboratory, he stops short and calls another scientist forward to continue Guy's tour. He won't enter the lab himself, fearing the collection of deadly viruses and bacteria contained within. The biohazard suit is not enough to make him feel safe. Rosalind Brandon-Smith takes him through the lab and shows him where his area is. On the way, they stop in the zoo, where Rosalind and Guy observe the last chimpanzee from Carson's predecessor's experiment die. It is a sobering sight for Carson, and when he questions the cause, Rosalind is surprised to discover that Carson still doesn't know what he is doing there. She takes him back to Singer.

# Part One: Pages 51 - 81

## Part One: Pages 51 - 81 Summary

Dr. Levine asks his assistant to ensure he isn't interrupted and then logs on to a secure communications program to ask his contact "Mime" to get him into GeneDyne's computer system. Mime is reluctant, but Levine questions his ability to accomplish the difficult security breach, which only makes Mime rise to the challenge.

Singer takes Carson back to his office and explains the project he has been brought in to work on. Called the X-FLU gene, it is a gene that only the bonobo chimpanzee carries, and it makes the bonobo immune to all known strains of influenza. The gene has already been isolated, and if it could be inserted into a human being, that person would also then be immune. The trouble is that the gene, once inserted into a flu virus for delivery into the host, turns the ordinary virus virulent. Carson's job is to redesign the viral coat of the X-FLU messenger virus to render it harmless so that it can be used as a transport. Singer goes on to tell Carson that Levine is out to destroy genetic engineering, and has a twenty year vendetta against his former college friend, Brent Scopes.

Carson is up early the following morning, eager to begin. He finds his way to his lab and introduces himself to his assistant, Susana Cabeza de Vaca. They immediately get off on the wrong foot with each other, and when Carson, exasperated, tells her that he has no intention of taking abuse from her or Rosalind, he accidentally keys the global broadcast instead of their private communication channel, and makes an enemy out of Rosalind as well, much to Susana's amusement. He goes over the notes Dr. Burt left and puts together a plan of action. By the end of the first day, he feels as though he has accomplished something.

Brent sits in his office playing piano when the call from Rodney Falfa comes in. Brent isn't happy that it has taken three days to hear from Rodney, and now that he has, he sees the fifty-six baby chimpanzees in cages in the rain. He chastises him to get them under cover and fed, and makes it clear that if he has a fifty percent mortality rate like the last time, there will be consequences. He breaks the connections, disgusted with the kind of man Falfa is, and throws his keyboard at the opposite wall in frustration. When his assistant Spencer Fairley comes in to see if everything is okay, Brent calmly tells him he's broken his keyboard. He also asks Spencer to anonymously give a family he saw on the news enough money to look after the child they have with leukemia and pull the ticket from the cabby who almost hit him the day before.

By the third day, Carson is settling into a routine of sorts. As he uploads his files for the day, he notices a message from Singer, and agrees to meet with him after dinner.





## Part One: Pages 51 - 81 Analysis

Dr Levine is willing to do anything it takes to get privileged information from GeneDyne, even if that means enlisting the aid of a hacker to get into their computer systems so that he can confirm his suspicions. Mime is his logical choice, and although reluctant at first, Levine appeals to Mime's ego to get his help, even resorting to insinuating that it might be beyond him to accomplish such a task to get him to do it. Mime's ego won't let him turn it down after that as he prides himself on being able to get into anywhere electronically speaking.

Singer explains the ramifications of X-FLU to Guy from the safety of his office. He extols its virtues, and assures Guy that he is the one who will be able to solve the problem associated with delivering the gene to a new host without it becoming lethal. He also gives Carson a small background on Levine, explaining briefly the prior friendship between Brent Scopes who heads GeneDyne and Levine, claiming Levine's behavior now is based on his misguided desire to have genetic testing banned and claiming it amounts to little more than a twenty year vendetta.

Carson is excited to get started, and the following morning introduces himself to the woman he finds in his lab area inside Level 5. Susana is testy and combative where her heritage and background is concerned and just about everything else. Guy quickly realizes that nothing he says will be acceptable to her. He finally responds in frustration to one of her comments, but accidentally keys the lab-wide intercom and manages to alienate another scientist in the process, to the amusement of everyone else. She corrects his mistake, and embarrassed, he concentrates on work instead. By the end of the day, he has a game plan that has him feeling as though he is making some kind of headway. By day three, he is getting used to the routine, although he still finds movement around the lab and actual work exhausting and limiting in the suits that are necessary.

Brent Scopes sits in his office, immersed in the music he is playing on his piano, when a video call interrupts him. He talks to Rodney Falfa, who is in the field collecting more chimpanzees for the Mount Dragon facility, and is disgusted by what he sees and who Rodney is. While Falfa is a necessary evil to accomplish the end goal, Brent hates what he represents, and has a hard time even communicating with him. Despite that, his desire to have a hands-on approach to all aspects of his company makes him deal with the man in person, however distasteful, instead of relegating it to another person under him. He assures Rodney that there will be hell to pay if the mortality rate of this batch is as bad as the previous batch, and is sickened by the fact that the baby chimpanzees are in cages in the rain, unfed and cold.

Despite his gain financially from the research being done, Brent is a bit of an anonymous philanthropist. He tries to help when he sees need, but does so most often without taking credit or publicity for his actions. At the same time, he has little patience for the stupidity or carelessness of others. He uses his status and financial standing to

help a child struggling with leukemia, while at the same time pulling the taxi license from a driver who almost hits him.



# Part One: Pages 81 - 111

## Part One: Pages 81 - 111 Summary

Singer meets Guy and tells him that Rosalind filed a formal complaint against him for his comment over the intercom. They discuss Guy's progress and Carson tells Singer that he is well on his way to a solution. He explains it, and Singer is so excited that he wants to email Brent right away with the good news, but Carson asks him to wait.

Dr. Levine arrives at the Ritz Carlton to be met by a crowd of reporters. Media consultant Toni Wheeler keeps trying to talk to him, but reporters give her no openings. Levine handles them, surprised by their questions surrounding a new lawsuit filed against him by GeneDyne, and not about the Holocaust Memorial Award he is about to receive. He defends his position against GeneDyne, revealing that the current lawsuit is nothing more than an effort to force him into renewing the patent with Scopes - something he has no intention of doing. Levine believes the patent should be given to the world for the benefit of people in countries who need it the most, but Brent uses it as his financial windfall to create GeneDyne and finance his many activities since. Levine resents it, and as co-patent holder, refuses to renew when the current patent expires.

Carson manages to put together a variant of the X-FLU and readies it for the zoo. He and de Vaca take it to lab scientist, Fillson, who sedates one chimp at a time, pulling first a female and then a male out for injection of the new compound. Carson and de Vaca continue their verbal jousting and Brandon-Smith interrupts to tell them that the chimps are back in their cages and conscious again. So far, so good. Brent convinces them to inoculate four more chimps to ensure there are no ambiguities, and Brandon-Smith cautions Carson to continue working so that not so much time is lost when he discovers he has failed. The annual Bomb Picnic arrives, and almost all staff attend, spending the day at the old Trinity Site where in 1945 the first atomic bomb had been exploded.

## Part One: Pages 81 - 111 Analysis

Rosalind files a formal complaint against Carson for his

"global" comments the day before. Singer talks to Guy about it, but does it tongue-in-cheek, more for formality than anything else, and on a personal note agreeing with Guy. Still, he asks him to apologize to her to keep the peace, reminding him that everything gets to Brent, who extols the virtue of harmony in the workplace. Guy fills him in on the progress he's making, which is so exciting to Singer that he wants to immediately tell Brent about it, but Carson tells him to hold off as notification of success is premature.

Reporters surround Levine as soon as he gets to the Ritz Carlton, but are not interested in the award he is about to get. He fends them off despite being caught unaware of the suit asking two hundred million and the revocation of his foundation's charter. The



question of his motives finally provokes him into telling the truth about the past and how, as close friends, they had isolated the gene from the corn kernels Scopes had found at the Anasazi ruin that were responsible for making it immune to corn rust, and spliced it into a hybrid. The resulting patent was filed together, but Scopes had no desire to give it to the world as Levine wanted. Brent used it to make money - lots of money - and then founded GeneDyne with those profits. Levine now feared the possibility of an accident at Mount Dragon that would be life ending in its proportions. He has no intention of renewing the patent that is due to expire soon, and along with it the source of income Brent has grown accustomed to. It is one area where Brent's philanthropy seems to fall short of the mark.

Carson is finally ready to begin testing the delivery system for the X-FLU that he has put together, confident that it is the only correct solution to the problem this virus has presented. Two chimps are inoculated, but Scopes makes the decision to inoculate four more to be positive of the results. Brandon-Smith is condescending as always in her attitude, telling Guy that he should begin another approach immediately so that when this one fails, he won't have lost so much time. It is difficult for Guy to do so, despite the logic of her comments, simply because he is so sure that he has the solution already. Most of the staff attend an annual "bomb" picnic, enjoying a rare day off.

## Part One: Pages 111 - 137

### Part One: Pages 111 - 137 Summary

Levine hears back from Mime, who tells him the security of Brent's software at GeneDyne is comparable to Fort Knox and that if he gains access he will be backtracked and caught. Still, Levine is determined, and asks him to create a back channel to Guy Carson for him. Mime agrees, mostly out of curiosity as to whether or not he'll succeed.

Less than one week after inoculations, the first chimpanzee becomes ill and dies in a horrible manner. The strain of X-FLU that has presented itself is many times more virulent and deadly. Brandon-Smith takes him to the zoo. While he is on his way down the ladder after looking in the cage, he becomes aware that one of the cages isn't latched. He calls out a warning to Rosalind, but she doesn't get out of the way in time. The chimpanzee manages to tear her suit, leaving scratches on her skin that draw blood. She tries to leave the facility, but protocol is followed and they are locked down. In the confusion that follows, she struggles with the guards, tearing the suit of Roger Czerny and causing his quarantine as well. Once control is assumed by Nye, justified by the protocols as they are outlined, the remaining staff are let out in alphabetical order, but only after their suits are pressure tested for leaks. Once all are out and decontaminated, Scopes appears to them via video conference. He criticizes the way some of the scientists seemed willing to break protocol to help Brandon-Smith but praises Carson for his restraint. Some are put on probation after he reminds them of the mandatory lab closure for ninety-six hours.

Roger resents being held in the same quarantine room with Rosalind. It takes very little time for the confines of the room begin to get on their nerves. Placed in clean suits, they submit to regular blood tests and exams, and though they are both in the same boat, Rosalind never stops whining and complaining. She is given regular shots of Tylenol, but they aren't enough to keep her out of pain. She gets more and more anxious. Her right arm loses its feeling and shortly after, while standing in front of Roger, he hears a wet sound and sees brain matter on the inside of her visor. She stands dead in her tracks for what seems like an eternity before toppling over.

### Part One: Pages 111 - 137 Analysis

Mime tells Levine how dangerous his request is, but Levine manages to convince him that he absolutely must be able to talk to Guy. Stroking his ego and alternatively suggesting perhaps it was too much for Mime to accomplish is enough to get the job done. Mime agrees to breach GeneDyne's firewall after Levine tells him that he knows one of the new scientists at the facility, piquing his curiosity.



Carson learns of the death of the first inoculated chimp one week into the study. Somehow, his method manages to intensify and speed up the effects of X-FLU. It is not a happy discovery. The news comes from Rosalind, who seems to relish his failure with her "I told you that you'd fail" attitude. While up on a ladder taking a closer look at the cage the dead chimpanzee is in, he notices an anomaly in the cage below and realizes it hasn't been latched correctly. He calls out a warning to Brandon-Smith, but her brain doesn't register what he is saying fast enough to get her feet moving. The chimp pushes out and lunges at her, opening her suit. Panic follows soon after as the ramifications of the scratch go through her mind. She begs her fellow scientists to help her - to free her so that she can seek proper medical attention, actually getting to a couple of them before Nye shows up. He issues commands for her to be restrained and taken to quarantine, and when Dr. Singer arrives and waffles as to what should be done, Nye assumes control temporarily, issuing orders to the remaining staff. In the struggle Rosalind puts up, guard Roger Czerny's suit is breached and he is taken to quarantine along with Rosalind. He is not amused. The rest are let out alphabetically and the only one who follows protocol to the letter is Carson - a fact that is verbally rewarded by Scopes afterward. The rest are chastised for failing to follow the regimented procedures.

Roger resents being confined with the woman who caused his very confinement. Her complaining never stops, alternating with her frightened whimpering and moaning. Combined with the total lack of any privacy, he fights to control his own panic and tries to stay calm. That only lasts until he wakes to find her standing over his bed, complaining that she is losing the feeling in her extremities. Things go from bad to worse very quickly, and though he tries to summon help with the emergency call button, by the time anyone arrives, Rosalind's brain has exploded inside her faceplate and she has toppled over dead on his bed.



## Part Two: Pages 141 - 170

### Part Two: Pages 141 - 170 Summary

Since the laboratory is closed, Carson decides to go for a ride. He chooses a horse, and while riding gets caught in a desert storm, taking shelter in a cave to wait it out. When he emerges, he sees Nye and observes him removing his compass to check his direction. Curious, Guy follows him, but doesn't see the turn that brings Nye back behind him for a confrontation. Nye threatens Carson with a rifle, but Carson disarms him, shoves a piece of gum in the chamber, and throws the magazine on the ground.

Susana takes a broken CD player to Pavel Vladimirovic, who, despite having never seen one before, manages to repair it for her using parts he scavenges from bins of circuitry on the shelf. She is impressed, and they talk for a while about the rows of control panels and circuitry he oversees. From him, she learns about the stage-zero alert which used to exist for use in extreme cases. Stage-zero seals the system and injects one thousand degree air into Level 5, sterilizing everything. He assures her that it cannot accidentally be triggered.

Levine gets a surprise morning visit from the president of the university and the dean of faculty. They warn him his behavior may have consequences that include the loss of the foundation's charter. The monitor on Levine's computer comes to life and he gets rid of his guests as quickly as he can, knowing Mime has limited patience.

Carson attends the meeting held at GeneDyne, where they are introduced to the senior investigator from Occupation Safety and Health Administration, Gil Teece. He has many questions and tells them he will speak to them one at a time and that the Level 5 lab will be reopened. The following morning, Carson and de Vaca don their suits and go in. Carson goes to his computer and the screen goes blank. His name comes up on the screen and he is asked to verify his identity by entering his mother's birth date. He does, and Mime tells him that he has a message for him and explains that the message is secure. Carson doesn't want it, but Mime has control of his system. The message from Levine asks Carson about the accident with Rosalind. He begs Carson to be an independent thinker. Before Guy can fully process this, a page from Brent arrives and he is given the results of Rosalind's autopsy. The virus is even more virulent and contagious than the original strain for some reason, and they have dubbed it X-FLU II. Brent calls the discovery fortuitous, citing that if Guy can make it stronger, perhaps he can isolate the reason and reverse the process. He adds that he is having samples of Brandon-Smith's brain sent to him. Just as he signs off, the technician arrives with the samples.



## Part Two: Pages 141 - 170 Analysis

Carson uses the time off by going for a ride in the desert. Caught in a storm, he takes shelter in a cave and his mind goes over and over the death of Rosalind, and the weight of responsibility settles on him heavily. He second guesses his science, his methods and even the confidence he felt in the testing of his results. Her death seems to fall squarely on his shoulders. He finds an arrowhead in the cave that reminds him of his childhood and makes him feel better. When he comes out and sees the fresh tracks crossing his, he follows them, curious, and sees Nye. He tracks him but Nye doubles back and threatens Guy with his rifle. Taking offense, Guy disarms him and uses his chewed gum to temporarily disable the firearm to ensure his safe retreat. He hasn't made a friend out of Nye and feels his glare on his back as he heads back to the compound. He leaves feeling safe but unnerved by the contact.

De Vaca takes a CD player to Pavel for repair and inadvertently discovers a level of security she didn't know about. Deactivated now, stage-zero, when engaged, would fry the contents of Level 5 with one thousand degree air, killing all viruses and everything else in the enclosed area. She is only mildly reassured by Pavel's claims that the system was deactivated when civilians took over the facility.

Levine is told to back off his crusade to shut down GeneDyne or lose his position and chair. He isn't happy about it, and has no intention of stopping. While he is getting a lecture from them, Mime is paging him on the monitor in front of him to inform him of the status of his request to hack into GeneDyne's system. Levine can hardly get rid of them fast enough, anxious to continue his efforts to undermine Brent Scopes any way he can. He is convinced that what Brent is doing at GeneDyne is the beginning of a global disaster, and the contact from Mime is exactly the behavior that the two men are referring to that could cost him everything.

Teece arrives to determine the outcome of Rosalind's accidental exposure and her resulting death. He emphasizes his misgivings surrounding Rosalind's in-house autopsy and subsequent cremation for a start, and the lack of a personal appearance by Brent Scopes as the circumstances would certainly warrant. He add that the lab is being reopened against his better judgment, and tells them he will interview them one at a time. Though the lab is reopened, no one is in a hurry to go back in. When Carson gets to his work station and opens his computer file, he finds a communication from Mime in real time. At first he thinks it is an internal prank, but Mime soon assure him it isn't. He tells Carson he has a message for him after confirming his identity. Carson is scared. Mime's contact is a breach of security that could cause him the kind of trouble he really doesn't need, but Mime assures him that their conversation is untraceable and private. He also promises that the message will be secure and has attached elaborate security measures to it that include a single keystroke that transforms the text to chemical formula that will pass cursory inspection by anyone near by. To anyone else, the message will be unreadable in the format that Carson will see it, he assures him. Still Carson tells him he doesn't want it and tries to hit escape to get out of the bizarre conversation, but Mime has total control and is enjoying it. Mime sends the message





from Levine in which Levine asks for information and begs Carson to think for himself and understand the depth of the danger of their experimentation on this level. Before he can fully absorb the contact, Brent pages him and gives him another curve ball. The autopsy has shown changes that when investigated might lead to reversal of the contagious virus. He adds that samples of Rosalind's brain are on their way to his lab. Again, before Carson can digest the horror of that thought, a technician arrives with the samples.



## Part Two: Pages 170 - 210

### Part Two: Pages 170 - 210 Summary

Teece meets with Singer and Nye, during which Teece questions the depth of Nye's loyalty to Scopes. He asks for an accounting of the day of the accident, including the conduct of both men, and corrects them where necessary.

Mime quietly circumvents the password routines on GeneDyne's corporate network in a subtle and graceful way of hacking into a system that leaves little trace. Once inside the system, he dials Levine and then connects him to Carson. Levine won't leave him alone until he answers some questions, and Guy angrily complies to a degree before telling Levine not to contact him again. Mime breaks contact to Levine's dismay, but Mime already has the information Levine wants, having gleaned it while Levine talks to Guy. Later, the chef at Mount Dragon serves sweetbreads. Harper is thrilled but Carson and Vanderwagon question its origins. Andrew begins to cite a religious passage, and then talks about invisible irritants shortly before picking up his fork and plucking out his own eye. Carson goes to his aid, but Andrew fights back, screaming incoherently. Teece tries to find out why he did it, but Andrew is beyond comprehension.

Levine takes the information he gets from Mime onto a televised production, although media adviser Toni Wheeler tries to convince him he shouldn't. Since Levine was warned not to interfere with GeneDyne again, he puts the information into envelopes and goads the other guests to disclose them instead.

Teece talks with Carson and Guy is open with him, answering his questions with as much detail as he can. When Teece completes his interview, he invites Guy for a sauna, and reluctant because of the heat, Guy accepts. Once inside the sauna room, Teece confesses the reason for meeting there is the absence of recording equipment in such a damp environment. He tells Carson he has learned a great deal, and part of what he discovered includes the fact that several people are exhibiting signs of secondary symptoms that can only be linked to their lab which include leaky blood vessels and an over abundance of serotonin and dopamine. Teece intends to leave the following morning to make his report.

### Part Two: Pages 170 - 210 Analysis

Teece probes Singer and Nye for answers, asking Nye where his loyalties lie since Brent hired him despite the fact that he had been unable to secure work in his chosen field for almost ten years. First he pits them against each other, and when he has gleaned all he can that way, he quietly questions the similarities he has found between Rosalind's autopsy and the current condition of Dr. Burt - similarities that Singer and Nye were unaware of.



When Mime connects Levine to Carson, Guy threatens to reboot his system, but Mime tells him in no uncertain terms that he no longer has that kind of control. He tells Carson that he has created a secure communications method for him to contact Levine if he wants to, and tells him how. Then he yields again to Levine, who probes for information regarding the accident. Levine tries to convince Guy that he has no right to alter the human genome, but Guy isn't easily swayed, and gives him the company line regarding advancement. The next victim of Mount Dragon is Andrew Vanderwagon, who during dinner begins speaking to invisible guests and then plucks his own eye out with a fork. He is taken away by Mike Marr and his security staff. Later, it is determined that he suffers the same physical ailments, as do Dr. Burt and as did Rosalind. Teece tells Guy all of this as well and confesses that he is planning to leave as soon as possible to make his report that the facility be shut down until the concerns regarding the physical abnormalities are addressed. The idea that this could be related to X-FLU terrifies Carson. He asks Guy to look for a notebook he believes that Dr. Burt had been keeping, based on the amount of information Dr Burt had been committing to his computer towards the end of his time there. Carson had come to the same conclusion, but he sees a dust storm coming and advises Teece not to leave until afterward, but Teece is determined.

Levine finds a way to expose the work being done by Mount Dragon and the accident as well. He goes on a controversial talk show, and goads the other participants into making the disclosure for him by placing envelopes with the information inside in front of them and telling them that he cannot reveal the contents himself. Curiosity is enough to have the answers brought to light, and soon the details of the accident are public knowledge.



## Part Two: Pages 211 - 243

### Part Two: Pages 211 - 243 Summary

Teece leaves almost an hour before the storm begins. Afterward, Carson makes his way to the barn to see how the horses fared and hears Nye approaching. He ducks down to avoid unpleasant contact and watches while Nye, covered in dust, along with his horse, takes out two squares of stiff plastic and using a wax pencil, writes something down, and then hides it. After he leaves, Carson goes back to the canteen and joins Singer on the balcony. Singer tells him of the splash Levine made in the media, exposing the accident at Mount Dragon, and Guy tries not to appear panicked, but it doesn't appear as though Singer links him to the leak. On Sunday, Carson climbs the cylinder cone that gave Mount Dragon its name while the usual decontamination is happening in the lab. At the top, he finds de Vaca, who claims she always spends Sundays there. She tells Guy that Teece's Hummer was found in the desert and Teece was nowhere to be seen. It is presumed he wandered off in the dust storm and died. Carson remembers seeing Nye returning covered in dust and tells de Vaca. They talk about the possibility of Dr. Burt having a notebook hidden somewhere and de Vaca wants his help to find it. Carson decide to play his banjo and discovers a note from Teece tucked under it. In it, he asks Carson to help him by looking for the hidden notebook. He realizes that his residence must have been the last place Teece was before leaving. He calls de Vaca and together they go through his notes, searching for a clue as to the location of Dr. Burt's notes.

Scopes sees the news regarding Levine's revealing interview, and decides his best course of action is to get even. He calls upon a German acquaintance, asking him to access the Nazi files at Leipzig. Herr Saltzmann agrees to the price offered. Then Scopes asks Fairley to make a very public million dollar donation to the Holocaust Memorial Fund, adding that Levine won't hold the chair for much longer. In the desert, a short distance from Mount Dragon, a helicopter homes in on a beacon sent by a transmitter on a small piece of Mylar weighted down with stones. It lands briefly beside a Hummer, and a man runs towards the hatch with a metal case that has the GeneDyne logo on it, giving it to a man inside. As soon as he does, and the hatch is secure, the helicopter leaves again. The Hummer drives away.

Levine finds a man in front of his door first thing in the morning. He introduces himself as Jacob Perlstein - a historian with the Holocaust Research Foundation. He tells Levine that the records are all kept in Leipzig, and the truth is much different. He explains that his mother had been sent there for processing and had become the mistress of his father, an SS officer. Levine is livid and throws the man out. The folder he had held containing the damning proof left on the floor in his haste is empty. Levine knows then Scopes is behind this. The Boston Globe carries the story with regret the following day.



Muriel Page sees a thin young man while working for the Salvation Army on Pearl Street. She notes that he looks clean and alert, but undernourished and suggests that he take advantage of the free meal across the street at the Mission. He asks about religious undertones, or obligations, and she promises him there are no strings attached. Something about the young man touches her. She is stunned when the next morning an anonymous donation for a quarter of a million dollars is made to the Salvation Army in her name, citing it is in honor of her work.

## Part Two: Pages 211 - 243 Analysis

Carson is amazed by the changed landscape after the storm. The storm hits as Guy expected. There was no rain. There is only wind, sticks, sand and debris creating a four foot high deluge of wind able to sandblast vehicles as it passes. He had gone to work before it began. He checks on the horses and catches Nye returning with an exhausted horse, after obviously being out in the storm for some time. Not wanting to be seen and put up with another accusatory session from Nye, he hides and watches curiously while Nye writes something on a square of stiff plastic and hides it. As soon as Nye is gone, Carson sneaks out and returns to the canteen. He finds Singer there, melancholy, and together they play for a while, enjoying each other's company and for a short time able to put the horror of Vanderwagon aside. When Singer tells Carson about Levine's newest attack on GeneDyne in the media, Guy is momentarily panicked, wondering if somehow they have found out about the contact he had with Levine, but nothing is said and he realizes he is in the clear for now.

Someone meets a helicopter in the desert and gives a man inside a metal case with GeneDyne's logo on it. The helicopter leaves right away, and the Hummer soon after. Not a word is spoken in the exchange. Later, after climbing Mount Dragon while the lab is undergoing its weekly decontamination, Carson runs into de Vaca, who tells him that Teece's Hummer was found in the desert and no trace of Teece or his report was found. They speculate as to whether or not Nye could have been responsible for Teece's death or just out looking for him. Trusting him a bit more, she confesses her doubts as to the entire program, citing the same concerns that Levine has regarding who will regulate where the gene interference will begin and end. She reminds him that the difference between man's DNA and chimps is less than two percent and it will take very little to make man unrecognizable. Carson is beginning to see the wisdom of that argument. When he goes back to his residence to play his banjo and discovers a note from Teece underneath, it feels like divine intervention, and he wonders if he is getting paranoid. He calls de Vaca and takes her up on her suggestion that they search through Dr. Burt's notes for a clue as to the location of the missing written notebook.

Jacob Perlstein, a historian with the Holocaust Research Foundation, wastes no time confronting Levine about his story, often told, about his father and mother and their history of helping Jews escape the Nazis. He continues, informing Levine that his father was actually an SS Obersturmfuhrer stationed at the concentration camp at Ravensbrueck, and shows Levine photos. He goes on to tell Levine that his mother survived by informing on the resistance movements inside the camp after becoming the



German officer's mistress. When Levine throws the man out, he sees the folder of "information" is actually empty, and knows that Scopes is behind it. There is nothing he can do about the article that comes out in the Globe the next day.

A young man goes into a Salvation Army store, and when he buys a jacket from the rack, the clerk, Muriel Page gives him a deal, recognizing that five dollars likely means a meal to him, and suggests that he get himself a free meal across the street. The young man takes her up on her suggestion and she is happy to see it through the window of the store. The next day, the same young man makes a donation of a quarter of a million dollars to the Salvation Army in honor of Muriel's good work. She is stunned.



## Part Two: Pages 243 - 279

### Part Two: Pages 243 - 279 Summary

Carson and de Vaca take horses out to the nearby ruins of Kin Klizhini, where they hope to find the location of a subterranean kiva. Carson finds it and they uncover the plastic specimen jar that contains Dr. Burt's missing notebook. He writes to his partner Amiko, and tells her about his initial project dubbed PurBlood - how in a moment of weakness he falsifies the results to allow his work to be accepted by the rigorous standards of the FDA. He uses himself as a human guinea pig to test the product he created, and then waters down the solution to comply with the FDA parts per million standards. On the way back to Mount Dragon, Guy convinces Susana that the only thing they haven't done is check the purity of one of the steps involving Dr. Burt's research. She agrees and they get back with a game plan in mind.

A reporter for the Boston Globe, Edwin Bannister is given a rare interview with Brent Scopes. Brent is waiting for him and talks to him about the predicament he feels his company is in. He talks about Dr. Levine and the recent press surrounding his accusations and tells Edwin that Levine has lost his credibility. Then he "confesses" as to the true nature of the deadly virus they are working on, telling Edwin that it is nothing more than the flu and a one time cure for it hangs in the balance.

They test Dr. Burt's purification process and discover that it is the source of all their troubles. Something in the process alters the virus, allowing it to return to its lethal state. Excited and tired, Carson is ready to stop for the day, but de Vaca can't stop thinking about PurBlood and wondering about its actual output. She wants to test it, but Carson leaves her to it and goes to tell Silver the good news. When he gets to Silver's office, he finds him in a meeting with Nye and not looking well. Distracted, he is lining things up on his desk and he looks up at Carson with bloodshot eyes. Then it dawns on Carson with frightening clarity what is going on. He backs out, telling Silver he'll come back later and leaves.

### Part Two: Pages 243 - 279 Analysis

Carson decides to help de Vaca find Dr. Burt's notebook after discovering a note left for him by Teece before he disappeared in the sandstorm. They find it after some searching, and the first heading is dated May 18th. They begin reading, knowing they can't bring it back to the facility with them. Written to Amiko, the journal is a confession that contains an outpouring of emotion. Every few days there is another entry. He explains what prompted him to leave her to come and work in Mount Dragon, and by the entry dated June 12th, the journal has become Dr. Burt's story and by way of his writing, his confession. On June 30th, his last entry is cryptic and fearful. He says he can't risk coming back to write again. Carson and de Vaca decide to test the purity process and head back to Mount Dragon.



Edwin Bannister heads to his meeting with Brent Scopes, still unsure that the mystery man will even show up. Brent is at the arranged place ahead of him though, and he congratulates Edwin on his reporting of the incidents surrounding Levine and his accusations. Edwin doesn't want Scopes to get the impression that his reporting can be skewed either way, and tells him so. Brent calms him down, and turning off the tape, he explains that his company is in trouble because competition is close to edging him out in his research. He won't go on the record, but "confesses" to Edwin that the doomsday virus Levine accuses him of creating is actually the influenza virus. He tells Edwin that his team is on the edge of finding a cure for the flu, and it's worth billions to him and his company if they succeed first. Edwin can't get over that number, and is thinking about investing in GeneDyne. Brent sends him on his way, but not before telling him confidentially that Levine has crossed a line so far that he is about to lose his chair at the Foundation.

Carson and de Vaca begin with X-FLU again. They strip it down and put it through the purification process again, checking it against the original sample. The results are exciting because they have finally found the reason for their recurring failures. It is all due to the purification process that they took for granted. He wants to share his news with Silver, but de Vaca is more concerned with the fact that the same purification system was used on PurBlood. She wants to test it again right away. Carson leaves her to it, and goes to Silver's office to find Nye there. At first, he wants to interrupt their meeting with his news, but then he notices some abnormalities in Silver's behavior. His eyes are bloodshot, he's distracted and lining things up on his desk with careful concentration. These are all patterns he has seen before. First in Dr. Burt, then Rosalind, then in Vanderwagon and now in Silver. He backs out saying he'll return later, and leaves with new insight.





## Part Two: Pages 279 - 304

### Part Two: Pages 279 - 304 Summary

Scopes realizes that the timing of Levine's release of information can only mean that he has an inside source. He gets onto his computer, finds the thread and slowly tracks it. Carson returns to the lab after eight hours. De Vaca is still there. He stands in front of the camera and drawing instead on the desk with disinfectant powder, asks her to meet him in the library. She agrees. The library is quiet. Carson shows de Vaca the files relating to PurBlood. They watch a video file, horrified to see all of the staff including Scopes use themselves as the alpha test group for PurBlood. The only ones unaffected are the newest arrivals - himself and de Vaca. He tells her about Silver's behavior and asks her when PurBlood is scheduled for distribution. They realize the only options open to them to get out are the horses or on foot - neither very appealing. They run into George Harper, still bandaged from his encounter with Vanderwagon. His conversation is paranoid and suspicious, but de Vaca manages to distract him before it gets out of hand.

Levine gets notification of his dismissal and wonders how he could have underestimated Scopes so badly. In the back of his mind, he still remembers their original friendship and can't believe he's lost everything from his tenure to his foundation chair. It reduces his options to only one, and he begins to plan.

Carson and de Vaca meet in the radiology lab that night. She can confirm the PurBlood testing by accessing the data from their mandatory weekly physicals. The tests confirm that in every case but his and hers, the dopamine and serotonin levels are many times normal. Carson copies the data to the local drive and logs into his own password, about to copy the files to a disk along with the files he already copied from the library when a message appears on the screen. Brent is asking what he has been doing, citing the CPU time and on line log. He also asks why the sudden interest in PurBlood. Knowing time is short, Carson initiates a chat with himself like Mime told him to if he wants to talk to Levine. Carson gives him a brief outline of the situation, and begins transmitting the information. When Levine tells him that he and de Vaca should remain calm, Carson knows he isn't talking to Levine because he hadn't told him who he was with. When he asks who he's talking to, the screen dissolves and laughter can be heard before the alarm sounds.

### Part Two: Pages 279 - 304 Analysis

Scopes is increasingly paranoid about the security of GeneDyne and the activities of his staff. It is no surprise considering the data that Carson and de Vaca have stumbled on. After their discovery that the purification process is faulty, Carson is excited. It means that he can fix the problems with X-FLU's delivery system and make it work. De Vaca has concerns about PurBlood. She doesn't want to stop, although they've been working



for hours. She wants to ensure that the same process hasn't adversely affected PurBlood as well. Carson leaves de Vaca in the lab to share the good news with Singer, but when he gets to his office, he notices that Singer is exhibiting the same symptoms as Brandon-Smith, Vanderwagon and even Dr. Burt had before leaving the facility. Suddenly it's all clear to Carson, and he goes to the library without telling Singer his news. He looks up information about PurBlood himself and finds videos that show the entire staff at GeneDyne, with the only exceptions being Guy and Susana, have had the PurBlood introduced to their bodies. As a result, there is widespread paranoia and delusional behavior. One by one, the scientists and support staff are having increasing problems leading to self destructive behavior.

Carson goes back to the lab, and Susana is excited to have discovered the same thing. He signs for her to be quiet, with his back to the camera, and manages to convey that she should meet him in the library. When they both get there and share what they know with each other, Guy and Susana realize they have to leave as soon as they can. Outside help has to be attained for the staff at the facility, and somehow, the distribution has to be stopped. In his increasingly paranoid outlook, Scopes has secreted a vial of the X-FLU in his safe. Carson tries to contact Levine for help, but the intrusion by Mime has been discovered by Scopes. He intercepts their communication and prevents Guy from transmitting the pertinent data to Levine. The alarms sound and Carson and de Vaca realize their time is up.

Levine has been dismissed and has lost his chair at the Foundation. He has little left to risk, so he begins to plan his next move.



## Part Three: Pages 307 - 342

### Part Three: Pages 307 - 342 Summary

Carson and Susana only have a few minutes to get out of the compound before the guards get organized, but de Vaca refuses to leave until X-FLU is destroyed. They don their suits and go down to the lowest level where the fail-safe is located. As de Vaca is programming it, they hear Nye's voice over the headsets. He tells them their employment is terminated and if they surrender, he will guarantee their safety. A computer voice confirms the fail-safe instructions with ten minutes to evacuate. They go up to the second level, avoiding Mike Marr as he heads for the lower level. A voice announces they have five minutes. Going through sterilization, they hear shotgun blasts from inside as Marr encounters the chimpanzees Carson freed. A circle of guards protects the Hummers so they head for the horses. The explosion happens as they ride quickly out into the desert.

Scopes knows he cut the data transfer off soon enough that Levine will have nothing to go to the press with. He still can't understand Carson's sudden interest in PurBlood, and goes on the computer to check the aborted download for information. He goes into his private cyberspace, comforted by the knowledge of his foresight to remove a sampling of X-FLU from the lab. He offers it to the military for four billion dollars. Levine's credibility is so badly damaged that no one will listen to him. The phone rings, connecting him to Mime. Levine believes his only hope is to talk to Scopes and reason with him, but Mime has managed to recover the data Carson was sending, and passes it along. Levine is stunned to learn PurBlood is contaminated, and Mime tells Levine that Carson and de Vaca managed to shut down the facility at Mount Dragon, referring to it as a patty melt, but that redundant back-ups exist. Levine has to talk to Scopes, but Mime tells him the only way he can do that is if he goes into Scope's personal server. Levine begs Mime to come with him to help him hack into Brent's personal server, but Mime declines, finally transmitting the genetic code for Thalidomide and then Levine understands that Mime is not afraid - just unable.

Carson and de Vaca head south and double back on themselves when they hit the lava fields to escape the Hummers that are following them. Nye knows he has failed and his only course of action now is revenge. Carson tells de Vaca they have to save all of their water for the horses, and it won't be enough. He gives her as many tips as he can to improve their chances of survival, but knows that they will have to find water somewhere. Nye finishes preparing slowly and deliberately and sets out after them, confident of his success.

### Part Three: Pages 307 - 342 Analysis

Susana won't leave the compound without destroying X-FLU first. She reasons that the last place anyone will look for them is in the Level 5 facility, and doesn't think that



anyone will be manning the cameras. She is brave despite the likely consequences, knowing that if they leave the virus in the hands of people who are mad or going mad, the human race is doomed anyway. Carson sees the logic and follows, listening as she explains the fail-safe device Pavel had told her about when he fixed her CD player. Carson is leery that they will be trapped below, but she assures him there will be time. Nye's voice comes over the headset telling them to surrender, but de Vaca is determined. She finishes the programming and kicks the console for good measure. They have ten minutes, and she broadcasts what they have done over the global channel, giving everyone else a chance to get out as well as informing Nye of what they have done. Seeing Marr on the monitor, and in short supply of air because it has been cut, they hurry to the exit, but Carson stops long enough to release the latches of the agitated and infected chimpanzees on the way out. Their escape plan is foiled by the guards posted in the motor pool, but now Carson is calm and takes over. He heads for the stables and gets together the barest essentials they will need for an escape through the desert. The explosion occurs while they are getting ready. Carson's biggest concern is not the Hummers that will be chasing them soon, it is their lack of water.

Scopes is anxious - a feeling he is unused to and doesn't know why. He feels betrayed by Carson's behavior, seeing it as espionage. The explosion doesn't worry him as he had the foresight to secrete a vial of X-FLU in his safe before it happened, and is offering it to the military for a sum of four billion dollars, giving them twelve hours to come up with the money and by doing so, committing an act of espionage himself. Meanwhile, Levine is trying to get past his damaged reputation so that someone will heed his alarm, but to no avail. Mime surprises him by finding him, and then transmitting the data to him that Scopes tried to abort.

Nye is following Carson and de Vaca on horseback with only revenge on his mind. He packs slowly and deliberately, knowing that with an endurance horse like Muerto and his ability to track and survive the environment, he has the advantage. He hears a voice in his head quietly murmuring his name.

After reading the file from Carson, Levine is more determined than ever to get to Brent and talk to him. He begs Mime for help, but Mime assures him that Scopes has gone into a lockdown mode and the only way to get to him would be to enter his building and hack into his system from within. Levine begs Mime to accompany him, offering him plane tickets from anywhere, and when that doesn't work, he calls him a coward, but Levine is wrong. He realizes it as soon as Mime transmits the genetic symbol for Thalidomide. Then Levine understands, and begins to follow Mime's careful preparations and instructions.



## Part Three: Pages 343 - 379

### Part Three: Pages 343 - 379 Summary

Nye has no trouble tracking Carson and de Vaca, and is so confident he can find and kill them that his mind goes back to the other problem of how to get his gold out of the desert after they are dead. Carson uses every trick he can remember from his ancestors to avoid being found or followed. De Vaca has little experience in this area, and submits entirely to Guy's suggestions and directions. Nye takes suggestions also, though he travels alone, listening to the voice of the shadow that follows him.

With Mime's help, Levine finds his way to and into Boston's GeneDyne headquarters to confront Scopes. With his laptop, posing as a representative from the phone company, he bluffs his way inside and follows the instructions that Mime gave him earlier. He uses the lockdown mode Brent initiated to gain access to the high speed internet terminal and initiates Mime's program to give him access to Brent's inner internet sanctum. To the guards, it appears as though he is merely doing his job. As soon as the program loads, he leaves, but instead of going to the main entrance, he doubles back to the elevator. Going in, he opens his laptop and connects to Mime for further instructions. Mime helps him to disable the elevator between floors and tells him how to get into Brent's personal cyber world. From there, Levine is on his own. When Levine enters Cyber Space, it is as though he has stepped into another world, and the effect is disorienting. He spends time looking for Scopes, typing his name in, but only finds a Phido - an artificially intelligent programmed dog written by Brent as a tool but never fully implemented. When queried, Phido admits that he was more company for Brent than anything else. Frustrated, Levine keeps looking. He finally realizes that the dog is an interface program, and by asking it to mimic the keystrokes Brent used at certain barriers, Levine is able to gain access. He finally navigates to the only place Phido admits he can't go. He leaves the cyber dog behind as he enters Brent's personal Cypherspace.

Carson and de Vaca stop to rest, hobbling the horses in the dark to graze, talking quietly, when de Vaca smells Nye's horse on the wind. She quietly tells Carson, who immediately realizes they haven't managed to elude him. He whispers to her and together they sneak away, walking the horses until they are far enough away to mount.

### Part Three: Pages 343 - 379 Analysis

Nye is confident that he can find Carson and de Vaca no matter where they go. He thinks he is so much better prepared mentally and physically to survive in the desert that he'll likely find them as a result of the circling vultures, but the birds won't be necessary. The PurBlood in his system is already making him delusional. He hears a disembodied voice and in his peripheral vision there is always a shadow near. He thinks he knows the voice, but can't quite put a finger on who it is. Nye underestimates Guy



though. He is more resourceful than Nye imagined, and having grown up in the area, he has a good grasp of what to expect. This, combined with a wealth of information that stems from stories he listened to from his Ute ancestors as a child are what will help him to make his way through the unforgiving landscape and keep him one short step ahead of Nye.

Levine is single minded. Having lost everything, the only course of action open to him now is to track Brent down and find a way to reason with him. Since Brent has gone into "lock down" mode both physically and electronically, the only way that Levine can access him is by going directly into his office tower and accessing his private network. Mime prepares him as best he can from a distance. He calls in favors from everywhere, outfitting Levine with a van from the telephone company and a uniform to match, a tool belt that has all the tools necessary for him to actually pull off his role, and then spends hours preparing him for the task ahead. Levine has to get into the tower, convince them that Brent has broken his contract by restricting internet access and then he has to access a T1 port and make a convincing show of putting an "authorized" stop on the line. He is nervous, but has no choice. The guard at the door accepts his cover story and lets him in, he manages to recognize and access the T1 port, and then downloads the program that will help Mime to help him. He leaves the two guards talking and tells them he'll show himself out, and his plan is dependent on them letting him go off alone. They do, and he manages to get into the elevator and, using his laptop, connects to Mime for the next stage. He has no confidence in his ability to accomplish the next task, but there is no going back - especially not after so many people contributed to his getting to this point. Mime accesses the building's computer. When the elevator is between floors it is shut down, and a maintenance loop is played to keep others away. To lower suspicion, Mime updates the maintenance logs now and then, showing repairs being made. Levine underestimates himself. Though it takes time to accomplish, sitting in the elevator he manages to access cyberspace in the building, and maneuver himself to the entrance of Brent's personal cypherspace. It is an area that no one has access to before him other than Brent. The entire experience is one of wonder and discover. Levine had no idea that Brent had advanced so far in his cyber world development.



## Part Three: Pages 379 - 414

### Part Three: Pages 379 - 414 Summary

Carson and de Vaca manage to elude Nye by removing the shoes from the horses, making them harder to track. Lack of water is beginning to take its toll when Carson sees vultures circling. Since they are not landing, he surmises that coyotes must be there as well, and since they never stray far from water, he heads in their direction. Leaving an obvious trail for Nye, he cuts the rattles from a rattler and lays him in Nye's path to slow him down. Nye encounters the rattler and manages to avoid being bitten but falls heavily when Muerto rears in fear. When he comes to, he sees the source of the voice accompanying him for the first time, recognizing it immediately. The boy gives him advice, and Nye remembers the last time he saw him, and asks him what happened in Littlehampton, adding that Mum wouldn't tell him. The boy confirms a wave took him under. Nye still doesn't understand, but his older brother, not having aged a day since then, is now giving him solid advice that he follows.

Carson gives the horses a drink and finds Nye's map in the bottom of the saddle bag, realizing that Nye had been searching for the Mount Dragon treasure all along. Knowing Carson has the saddle bags, he hunts them without mercy. By following the vultures, they find a dead pronghorn antelope and coyotes on the hill waiting for them to leave. Carson tells de Vaca if they can track them, they'll find water, as coyotes are never more than ten miles from a water source, but ten miles seems like an insurmountable distance to Susana. Nye still thinks he can outsmart them. He sees the vultures too, but figures it's too soon for them to be circling Carson and de Vaca. The only thing that shakes his confidence now is when the boy is out of sight for any length of time. It is thirty miles to the ambush site.

Levine enters cyberspace at GeneDyne's headquarters, and is disoriented at first by the scope of detail and realism. He finds an AI program in the form of a dog named Phido who helps him navigate the system, remembering keystrokes Brent used to gain access to various areas inside the cyber world. One door the dog is unable to enter, and Charles finds himself looking at Monhegan Island, Maine, where the Scopes family had their summer house. He had been there with Brent years previously, and now finds his way around, marveling at the detail of the re-creation. At the top of the hill is the summer home he remembers.

Levine makes his way into Brent's summer house in cyberspace, and it is just as he remembers it. He climbs to the widows walk and looks inside to find Brent in front of a huge cyber screen telling General Harrington that the price for the virus has just increased to five billion dollars. The situation is even more frightening than Levine thought. He bangs on the door but nothing happens, so he types SCOPES! on the screen. After a second, the garret door opens.



## Part Three: Pages 379 - 414 Analysis

Nye can tell that Carson and de Vaca walked their horses separately for a while and then mounted again. He can tell they are headed for the cinder cone, and as he approaches, he can see smoke from a fire and can just make out their camp. He can't see them but surmises they have moved into the shade and he settles in to wait, content to pick them off when they come out. After forty minutes, his companion voice tells him he's a fool. Soon afterward, he recognizes the voice as that of his brother and asks him to confirm the events of the last time they were together. His brother had died, taken by the undertow of a strong wave when he was just a child, and Nye was the younger of the two. His mother had never admitted the truth to him. Now, it seems normal to Nye that he should be able to ask him how he swam out, and to hear him admit that he hadn't. Still, his brother gives him the idea to head Carson and de Vaca off at the pass. It's a sound idea and Nye follows it. It never occurs to him that he is following his own hallucinations, or that something might be terribly wrong with him. All he can think about is getting Carson and de Vaca. Once he has revenge, he can get back to searching for the Mount Dragon treasure.

Levine can hardly believe the scope and complexity of Brent's creation. Cyberspace has such depth that he can forget he is really in an elevator, and the hours pass. He loses all track of the passing of time, and no longer recognizes the difference between day and night. He hopes that Mime is able to keep repair people away from him for a while longer. The artificial intelligence named Phido is frustrating at first, especially when he admits that he was never properly installed as a help function (Brent didn't need help) and acted more as company for Brent in this place. Finally, Levine gets the idea to ask the dog if he can recall the keystrokes used at various locked doors, and that Phido can do. He finds his way into the cyber version of the Boston office, identical in all ways to the real thing. From there, he goes up to the floor Brent's office is on, but the dog is not allowed in this building and stays behind. Now Levine is on his own. Getting into the office, he is surprised to find himself looking not at a replica of the office space, but at Brent's family vacation spot at Monhegan Island in Maine. Again, the detail is astounding. It is peopled with residents that he remembers, right down to men fishing. He manages to find his way back to the summer house, and finally to Brent himself.





## Part Three: Pages 414 - 450

### Part Three: Pages 414 - 450 Summary

Susana is too weak to even stand and falls off her horse, and Carson is not in much better shape. Even the horses are near panic from lack of water and losing the will to live. He tries to help Susana but falls himself, and the next thing he knows there are stars in the sky. He heads alone for the sound of the coyotes, Susana too weak to join him. Now and then, he can smell water, but isn't sure if he is hallucinating. After finding the water, he drinks and lets the horse drink before going back to Susana, who sobs with relief. They spend another day recuperating and regaining their strength. They explore the cave and find the remains of Montdragon himself and his mule, along with the saddle bags of "Montdragon gold", which turns out to be no more than Meerschaum. The following night, they head for Lava Gate, and Lava Camp beyond.

Brent asks Levine to identify himself and explain his presence in his private sanctum. Charles tries to reason with him, but Brent picks a gun up off the shelf. Charles reminds him that they are in cyberspace and he can't shoot him, but Brent's intention is to stall him there until his security staff can get to him in the elevator. He apologizes, but explains his justification for killing Charles before signing off. When the guards find Levine in the elevator, he tells Brent he will sign the patent renewal, and Scopes has the guards bring Levine to his office. Levine has conditions attached, telling Brent he wants a rematch of the game he lost the patent to him with so many years ago. If he wins, he takes the virus and leaves, but if Brent wins, he surrenders the virus, his patent signature and his life. Brent agrees, adding one more condition. If he wins, Levine must come and work for him, thereby neutralizing his incessant attempts to shut Brent down. Charles agrees, but wants the patent signature signed on the table in front of them. Levine counters by asking that the virus be placed there as well.

Nye is ready when he sees them coming from a distance.

### Part Three: Pages 414 - 450 Analysis

Carson decides to wait until nightfall to listen for the call of the coyotes and follow them that way. He hears the coyotes calling, but Susana is too weak to go with him. He barely manages to mount his horse, and shambles towards their sound. The horse turns to the smell of water, and he lets him, concentrating on hanging on. The horse stops, and he falls off and into a shallow pool about four inches deep. The water is warm, but he drinks, laughing and rolling in it. He wills himself not to over do it, and the horse requires a whack on the muzzle to pull him away for his own good as well. He fills a canteen and heads back to Susana, helping her to drink, and giving her salt to replace the electrolytes they've lost. They go back to the pool and the cave beside it, and Susana is asleep before he can finish hobbling the horses. Nye reaches Lava Gate, where he is planning to ambush Carson and de Vaca, and sets himself up to wait. Carson catches a



rabbit he is cooking it when Susana wakes. Surprised, she makes yet another comment about his ancestry and tempers flair. Before the emotions die down, they are in each others arms. As the day warmed, they slept again. Later they wake and explore the cave, finding Mondragon's gold at the bottom of a deep and narrow cavern. The gold is not the kind of value now, however. Instead the saddlebags they find are filled with Meerschaum that at one time had been every bit as valuable as gold, but now had little or no value.

Levine finally manages to confront Brent, but it doesn't go as well as he'd hoped. Brent is determined to see the X-FLU virus and recover some of his losses. He is also determined to put an end to the constant interference from Levine, assuring him that since he is an intruder, Brent is within his rights to have him shot on sight. He tells Levine that while he's stalled him here in cyberspace, a team is approaching his hideout in the elevator with orders to shoot to kill. As a last hope at survival, Levine types in that he could sign the corn patent renewal. Brent has Levine brought to his actual office space where they finally strike a deal they can both live with. They will play one more "game" like they did in college. The winner takes all. If Brent wins, he gets the patent renewal, the virus, and Charles as his partner, and if Levine wins, he leaves with the virus and his life.

Nye sees Carson and de Vaca coming and readies himself after ensuring that his brother is out of harm's way.



## Part Three: Pages 450 - 478

### Part Three: Pages 450 - 478 Summary

Susana and Guy are almost at Lava Gate. Before they even hear the first shot, Guy has a bullet hit his upper arm and blood pours out. Susana hears the report of the gun and helps Guy get to the relative shelter of the mountains. Susana helps Guy get off and the horses panic, running back out into the desert where Nye shoots them. Susana takes off her t-shirt to use as a tourniquet. Nye comes after them, but Susana saves them by showing Nye the coins she found when they discovered Montdragon's final resting place. It is Nye's Achilles heel and if he kills them, he'll never find it. Susana bargains with him. She wants the unloaded rifle, some water, and his horse. For that, she will give him the location he has spent months looking for. He agrees and walks away with Jonathan into the desert. It is dawn when Susana walks into Lava Camp leading Muerto, Carson strapped to his back, her shirt used as the tourniquet that will save his life. Bare breasted, she is a sight to behold.

Brent and Charles sit down to play the game again for the first time since college. The virus and the signed patent are in front of them on the table as they take turns quoting lines that relate to the subject the computer has chosen. The game is played until one player wins two out of three times. Challenges can be issued and are resolved by computer. This time, to Brent's surprise, Charles wins. When he reaches for the virus, Brent does also, unable to face the loss. Their hands close over it at the same time, and the vial breaks, cutting them both and infecting them both in the process. Stunned, they look at each other, realizing the ramifications and magnitude of the event, knowing they are both dead. Charles asks him if there is any hope, and Brent assures him there isn't. Levine knows they have to act fast. Brent issues commands that are recorded so that no dispute can come of them later. Chemicals are assembled to put a quicker and more humane end to their lives, and the office is sealed from the outside. The patent is torn up, and the technology is given to the world, and Brent's impressive cyberspace program is donated as well. Once the details are looked after, Brent has one last request. He asks that Levine enter his cyber world with him, and Levine agrees, going through the psychological profiling that enables his character to be created and knowing that they will continue to exist on some level in Brent's creation together.

### Part Three: Pages 450 - 478 Analysis

Nye's ambush works. His first bullet hits Carson in the upper arm, and Susana helps him get to the mountain, but there is no where that they can hide, and they have no weapons. Taking his time, Nye shoots their horses, making certain that they have no escape, and then goes down to finish them off. Susana uses the only bargaining chip she has, which is the location of Montdragon's gold. He tries to beat it out of her, and then resorts to threatening to kill Carson, but Susana keeps her head, despite being knocked unconscious twice. She warns him that if he hits her like that again, he'll never



find it, and finally he gives in. He empties the rifle and gives it to her, along with water and Muerto. Then she tells him how to find the cave. Nye isn't thinking clearly anymore and hasn't for some time. As he walks away, he tells his brother Jonathan that they will share the gold because that's the way Mum would have wanted it, leaving Susana shaking her head.

The game is played by the selection of random subjects by the computer, after which each player takes turns quoting a line and its author related to the subject. It is the game they played in college when Levine lost and was forced to sign his half of the patent over to Brent. Now, Brent hardly hesitates to accept the challenge Charles lays down, sure of his ultimate victory. Having had time to play the game often, he feels he has a distinct advantage over Levine, but this time, he is mistaken. Neither man is overly trusting of the other, so the stakes are placed between them before they begin. The signed patent and the virus sit as reminders of what their friendship has become while they play, and no one is more surprised than Brent when Charles actually wins.

Sadly, Brent is not the man he used to be, and grabs for the virus. He is unwilling to give it up as honorably as Charles once did, and in the process, the vial is broken between them. Both are cut by the broken vial, and after asking two short questions about the lethality of the virus, Charles accepts that they are both dead men. He keeps his head and helps Brent to do the same. In the next few moments, several changes occur in Brent that bring him back to the man he once was, and bring out the best in who he could have been. With encouragement and suggestions from Charles, he arranges to seal the room, have lethal gas flown in to assure their end will not be as bad as it would be if they waited for the virus to do its job, and then Brent arranges to have the room incinerated afterward - before any entry is attempted. He also tears up the patent renewal as a last request from Charles, freeing it for the betterment of all. Sadly, facing the end of his life, he finds his way back to the friend that Charles lost so many years before. His last request to Charles is that he allow himself to be placed in his cypherspace with him. Brent also finally donates the genius of this science to those who will benefit the most from it, and are most likely to ensure it will be kept up and improved upon. Their last moments of life are spent watching as their lifelike character representations begin to play the game together in cypherspace - both aware that they have an eternity to spend there.



# Epilogue

## Epilogue Summary

Carson and de Vaca return to Mount Dragon, observing the blackened remains that are all that is left. Rumors are rampant that the site will be used as a bombing target. In the distance, they can see the blackened ruin of Kin Klizhini (The Black House), and both are amazed that though a thousand years separate the two ruins, they have come to the same end. Carson's arm has healed almost entirely. They speculate on the future of altering our genetic makeup, both frighteningly aware that they will likely live to see some terrible things.

They turn away finally, heading for Sleeping Ute Mountain, where Caron's ancestors wait to meet Susana and where they will have an opportunity to properly thank and honor the memory of his great Uncle Charley for saving them in the desert with his many conversations of desert life and survival.

## Epilogue Analysis

It is a strange sight for Carson and de Vaca to behold as they stand looking at the ruined remains of what was once the Mount Dragon facility. They stand for a while, both lost in their memories of the place. It is odd to see the two ruins, separated by so little visible distance, but a thousand years between them. Susana knows that one day, they will still have to bear witness to the science they began here, and she fears the terrible things that will come of gene altering explorations in their lifetime.

Still, there is no time now to worry about such things. Now, all that matters is going on to Sleeping Ute Mountain where Carson's relatives wait to meet her, and where they can finally honor the memory of the man who saved them - Great Uncle Charley. She teases him about chickening out, but this time it doesn't grate on him as it once would have.



# Characters

## Guy Carson

Guy begins as a Lab Technician Three at GeneDyne Edison, despite impressive credentials that include a PhD from M.I.T. A smart man, he wrote his dissertation on the tertiary and quaternary protein structure transformation of a viral shell. For Carson, accepting a position at Mount Dragon is much like a homecoming, as his family dates back to Kid Carson, who worked as a drover on the Spanish Trail as a teenager. His great grandfather had a land grant in Hidalgo County where his father eventually managed to go bankrupt after a number of unsuccessful attempts to diversify from cattle ranching. Carson's interest in genetics came out of a failed attempt at crossbreeding cattle that his father attempted.

Carson has black eyes and an aquiline nose that women often find exotic. His maternal ancestor is a Southern Ute, but it is a fact he is generally keeps secret. Still, he suffered many schoolyard taunts of half-breed and now as an adult would rather not acknowledge the connection at all. On occasion, when confronted with this part of his personal history, he is defensive, and combative, seemingly almost ashamed of this part of who he is. Despite this, it is likely the single reason that he and Susana survive their ordeal in the desert without water or food. Carson recalls the stories and tips his ancestors shared while he was a child, and all of it comes in handy.

Carson is resourceful and confident and knowledgeable in areas of survival where a desert environment is concerned. Having worked on his family's farm for many years, he learned a great deal about staying alive in harsh and unforgiving circumstances. This information serves him well when he and Susana are faced with crossing the desert to get to Lava Camp while evading security expert, Nye. A gentleman at heart, Guy is the type of man who takes charge and is unselfish in his efforts to accomplish a goal. While at first he is angered by Susana and her references to his ancestry, taking the reference as a slight, he soon sees a different and more vulnerable side of her and realizes he has much deeper feelings for her than he could have imagined at the beginning. Carson also has a strong moral compass. When he discovers the truth about the science he is a part of, he does all that he can to repair or minimize the damage possible by risking his own life to destroy the lab before leaving and again by ensuring the public finds out the truth about X-FLU and PurBlood. It takes some tough realities from Susana to help him come to grips with his ancestry and even appreciate the rich history that helped to shape who he is, but in the end, he finds a certain pride in himself he didn't know before.

## Brentwood Scopes

Founder of GeneDyne, Brent is a CEO who rules his company from cyberspace. A young CEO at just thirty-nine years old, he approaches his employees with the attitude



that they are his colleagues and not merely his employees. He prefers to be called by his first name, and the new hires all get stock in his company as one of their perks. He built the four billion dollar company from the ground up, and has a reputation on Wall Street that has him idolized by his employees and terrifies his rivals.

Brent's office is octagonal, with each wall rising to a ceiling fifty feet in the air. Seven of the eight walls are covered with huge flat panel computer screens. Equipped with the most modern security features, it also contains an old and battered sofa, incongruous beside the mahogany desk. Brent plays the six octave pianoforte that is also part of the furnishings. He has a hands-on approach to his business, wanting to be aware of all aspects at all times. He insists that his employees all download their work each day to a work station he can access, and he spends most of his time keeping up with their developments and offering his opinions or motivations.

He can be impatient, especially when his employees are slow to understand his wishes, and his temper is exhibited in occasional items thrown against the wall, or he sees someone or something being mistreated. At the same time, he anonymously gives money to those in need, insisting that no one be aware of his generosity, determined to make his money a conduit for something good. Brent is a man of conflict.

This is a man of brilliant imagination, who creates an entire world by merging different technologies, and his production is so complex and so rich in nature that once it has been properly launched, it continues to grow and evolve on its own in ways that Brent could hardly have imagined when he started the project. His private world, dubbed cypherspace, is a collection of completely autonomous memories and people. He uses people and places he knows well to create a place peopled with real identities able to interact with each other independent of him. At first selfish with a creation that is so much a part of him and content to explore the evolution of the area himself, he undergoes a certain transformation himself when he and his long time friend and nemesis Charles Levine both contract X-FLU and they realize that their lives are over. With the short time remaining, instead of embracing the part of him that is hard and self serving, Brent donates his scientific creation in the hopes that all who wish to learn have access. He also ensures that the truth behind the science of PurBlood and X-FLU are brought to light to minimize the possible risks.

## **Dr. Charles Levine**

Lecturer at Percival Lecture Hall at Harvard University, Dr. Levine is outspoken and candid. He paces in front of his audience, with intensity that radiates from his movements and expression. He is a small and wiry man, with only a fringe of hair left surrounding a bald dome. As he talks, he gestures with chalk in his hand. A professor of genetics, he is the head of the Foundation for Genetic Policy and is known for his controversial behavior. He is the spokesperson for the Foundation for Genetic Policy and often works outside the rules and regulations to support his cause.



Charles and Brent attend university together, and are co-founders of the X-RUST gene that makes Brent rich. Charles and Brent go their separate ways at this time because they have different ideas about what should be done with their groundbreaking discovery. Charles wants to donate the science to mankind for the betterment of all - especially the starving masses in third world countries. Brent wants to use the discovery to finance his future. They gamble for the patent, playing a game they created together, and Charles loses, forced into co-signing a patent with Brent, but the idea of making money on this kind of science so galls him that he refuses to have anything to do with the money or the position Brent offers as partner in his firm. Charles launches a campaign to end irresponsible gene science, targeting Brent's company GeneDyne on a regular basis. He is so intent on stopping this kind of science for fear of the possible outcomes that he costs himself his position with the university as well as his chair on the foundation he created because of his zeal and single-minded attack.

When Charles is told the truth about PurBlood and X-FLU, he breaks into GeneDyne's headquarters in a last-ditch attempt to reason with Brent. Caught inside, Brent is ready to eliminate him once and for all, but Charles buys time by telling Brent that he will finally give in and renew the patent for X-RUST instead of allowing it to go public, as was his intention up until that point. He challenges Brent to one more game, winner take all. This time he wins, but Brent isn't ready to give up. He grabs the vial of X-FLU, trying to take it from Charles, and between them it breaks open, cutting and infecting them both. Now, resigned to certain death in a short time, he convinces Brent to be altruistic and responsible with the short time they have left. In the end, they leave this world as friends, and their last act together is to insert themselves into Brent's cypherspace, immortalizing themselves as friends forever.

## **Susana Cabeza de Vaca**

Susana was Dr. Burt's assistant and now will be Guy Carson's. Her family came to America in 1598 with Don Juan de Onate, and she has deep resentment towards being lumped into a "Mexican" category despite her heritage. She is slim built with long black hair. Her eyes are a deep shade of purple, set against her brown skin, and the overall effect is one of extreme beauty, but her attitude is frosty and untouchable.

Susana has a sharp tongue and a quick mind and wit. She is sarcastic and can be abrasive, but has a way of seeing through the bull to the truth of most situations. When she and Guy discover the truth about the purification system used on X-FLU, she refuses to let it go at that. She is determined to ensure that the project completed previous to X-FLU using the same purification system is safe. Her dogged determination to get to the bottom of the problem reveals the flaw in PurBlood and the resulting psychological and emotional problems affecting the staff who formed the alpha testing group for PurBlood. Knowing the dangers involved, she is the one who insists that the lab be destroyed rather than leave it in the hands of scientists who are slowly losing their grasp on reality. She risks her life to go into the lower end of the Level 5 facility to initiate the fail safe program. Her actions ensure that X-FLU is contained, and the single





remaining sample in the hands of Brent Scopes is contained because of their efforts to ensure that Charles Levine gets the information as well.

Susanna is able to bring out the best and worst in Guy Carson, eventually becoming much more than just his friend, and saving his life when Nye catches them in the desert.

## Nye

Formerly the security director at the Windermere Nuclear Complex in the U.K., he became the company scapegoat after rumors of employee sabotage followed an accident, and worked in the Middle East for some time. Brent hired him to work in GeneDyne UK, and he turned out to be so efficient in his job that when Mount Dragon opened, he was brought in. He seldom leaves the facility, but for occasional nights that he spends in the outback beyond the enclosure.

Nye has a history that cost him his job as head of security once before, and when Carson and de Vaca succeed in destroying the lab at Mount Dragon, he knows he is finished. By then, PurBlood has so contaminated his mind that he no longer cares, and there are only three things that matter. The first is revenge on Guy and Susana, the second is locating the lost Montdragon gold of legend, and the third is the hallucinated presence of his older brother in child form. In the end he walks away from revenge to share the Montdragon gold with his brother, unaware that all he would find is two saddlebags of Meerschaum. His quest to the lost cave is his last.

## Rosalind Brandon-Smith

Described as a bit eccentric, Rosalind is one of the scientists who works in the BSL5 at Mount Dragon. She is a large and unfriendly woman who borders on rude when communicating with others. She worked with Franklin Burt before his breakdown, and was also instrumental in the development of Mount Dragon's artificial blood project. She has the unconscious habit of rubbing her hands up and down her thighs, which is one of the first symptoms of a reaction to a bad purification process.

Distracted, careless and taking pleasure from the failure Guy Carson experiences in his first run of tests on X-FLU, Rosalind becomes directly infected with X-FLU because of contact with a chimp. She spends her few remaining hours alternately begging for her life and feeling sorry for herself.

## Mime

Mime lives in River Pointe, Cleveland in a clapboard house at the corner of Church Street and Sycamore Terrace. The house is filled with racks and rows of electronic gear that would make any government agency jealous, with circuit boards that stretch from floor to ceiling. There is so much power being used in the room that a smell of ozone lingers. Mime is wheelchair-bound, with limbs withered from disuse. He spends his time



entertaining himself by passively intruding electronically where he shouldn't. He is the one that Charles Levine calls to help him access the internal workings of GeneDyne and to put him in touch privately with Guy Carson. Mime also provides Levine with the information that Guy refuses to give him concerning the X-FLU project. His efforts leave him laughing at his successful intrusion, his shrunken body wheezing with the effort.

A victim of Thalidomide, Mime has little to live for, save his computers. He prides himself on his ability to sneak in through any system or firewall without leaving a large enough footprint behind for anyone other than a hacker of equal or better skill to find him by.

## **Dr. John Singer**

Black-haired and slightly balding, John Singer is the director of the Mount Dragon facility located in the New Mexico desert outside of Engle. On the plump side, John has a mild face that is well tanned and cheerful. His legs are stubby and are equally tanned, visible and offset by the white shorts he wears. His heavy boots reflect the civilian version of the Humvee he drives, along with all other employees of Mount Dragon. The former Morton Professor of Biology at Cal Tech, Dr. Singer is one of the few long term employees of Mount Dragon.

## **Mike Marr**

Security man for the Mount Dragon facility, Mike is well muscled and deeply tanned. He has green eyes and a direct, no nonsense manner. He walks with an uneven gait as a result of a stiff leg, hitching his right leg along beside him. He habitually chews a large rubber band and is the first person all those who enter the facility at Mount Dragon see.

Mike was an intelligence officer in Vietnam. His job was tunnel rat in the Iron Triangle, searching for weapons and killing anyone he found inside. His limp is a result of a booby trap he triggered after following a sniper into one of those holes.

## **Gilbert Teece**

OSHA inspector, Gilbert makes no friends as he talks to the group at Mount Dragon one at a time. He gets most of his information by pitting one employee against another. His English accent and stuffy appearance is highlighted by his pale complexion and almost immediate burn that follows. He has a stooped posture and his over-sized briefcase tends to bang against his leg when he walks. He has pale skin, emphasized by the sandy hair that is already graying at the temples and black rimmed glasses. The overall effect radiates a look of ill health.

Teece is from an area near Cambria called Hamsterley Forest where his father was the Baronet of Teecewood Hall in the Pennines.



## Spencer Fairley

Referred to as a "Beacon Hill fossil" by Brent, Spencer is Brent's assistant, and the only one who gets away with calling him sir. He is a tall man, nearing sixty years of age, who dresses immaculately in suit and starched shirt, wing tip shoes, and silk ties. He has hair that is graying at the temples and a finely chiseled nose. His eyes are gray and he stays away from television and computers. He is the one who takes Brent's final requests, putting them in motion while painfully aware that the man he served and respected is already a dead man.

## Rodney P. Falfa

Rodney works in the Cameroon jungle for Brent, collecting infant chimpanzees for the zoo at Mount Dragon. He has an ingratiating manner and a lack of general common sense that makes Brent crazy, but he is a necessary part of the continuing research being done at Mount Dragon.

## Bob Fillson

Caretaker of the animals in the zoo at Mount Dragon.

## Frederick Peck

Peck, a graduate from Syracuse University, runs the GeneDyne Edison biotechnology company in Edison, New Jersey.

## Jonathan Nye

The hallucination that Nye sees when PurBlood begins to do its work on him, Jonathan was Nye's older brother. He was killed while swimming with Nye as a rogue wave pulled him under and refused to release him. Now, deep in Nye's hallucination, he reveals himself to Nye and becomes his ever more visible companion as they track Carson and de Vaca, and then afterward as they head out together to retrieve Mondragon's gold.

## Edwin Bannister

Associate managing editor of the Boston Globe, Edwin meets Brent at his family summer home in Dark Harbor, Maine to discuss the death of Rosalind Brandon-Smith. He is a man of ethics and honesty with journalistic integrity.



## Objects/Places

### GeneDyne Edison

Located in Edison, New Jersey, off Route 1, GeneDyne Edison is a premier biotechnology company.

### Mount Dragon

GeneDyne's Remote Desert Testing Facility that looks out over the Jornada del Muerto desert and located within the boundaries of the White Sands Missile Range and is the site where the only Level 5 facility in the world exists.

### Engle

New Mexico desert town bought out by GeneDyne and now used strictly as the jumping off place for Mount Dragon.

### White Sands Missile Range

Department of Defense site within which the land for Mount Dragon is leased.

### Novo-Druzhina

Town in western Siberia where everyone died as a direct result of genetic experimentation with the Herpes Simplex Ia+ virus that began on May 23rd, 1985.

### Strain 232

Viral name for the disastrous experimentation of Herpes Simplex Ia+ that was done in western Siberia.

### Biosafety Level 5 Laboratory

The only laboratory in existence with this classification, Mount Dragon's Level 5 lab is designed to handle the most dangerous viruses and bacteria that exist, christened the Fever Tank by some of the staff.



## **Bomb Picnic**

Name given to the Trinity Site, opened once a year by the government to public access. It is held at ground zero where the first nuclear bomb was detonated.

## **OSHA**

Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

## **Muerto**

Nye's horse, Muerto is registered with both the American Paint Horse Association, and the American Quarter Horse Association.

## **Kin Klizhini**

Apache for Black House and name for the ruins south of the Mount Dragon facility.

## **Great Kiva**

Underground religious chamber of the Anasazi Indians.

## **GEF**

Purification process designed by Dr. Burt and used to purify PurBlood and later X-FLU.

## **Jornada del Muerto**

The desert Carson and de Vaca have to cross, translated as the Journey of Death.

## **Cypherspace**

Brent's newest technology. A three dimensional environment through which he can surf his network from home or office.

## **Monhegan Island, Dark Harbor**

Dark Harbor, Maine location where the Scopes' family summer home exists, and the model used to act as Brent's personal Cypherspace.



## **Lava Camp**

Destination for Carson and de Vaca as they escape through the desert with Nye hot on their trail.

## **El Ojo del Auila (The Spring of the Eagle)**

The spring that saved Carson and de Vaca from dying in the desert, named because the morning sun caused the shape of an eagle to appear at the back of the cave.

## **Sleeping Ute Mountain**

Carson's ancestral place.



# Themes

## Gene Science: Alterations to Somatic Cells versus Germ Cells

There are two types of cells in the human body. The somatic cells are gene cells that are only carried for the single generation in which they are affected. For instance, if a change were introduced into a person's somatic gene cells, that change would occur only throughout that person's lifetime. It would not alter the gene construction of the children this person would have and would therefore have no lasting effects on future generations.

Germ cells are more permanent. A change made to a person's germ cells would affect the person the change was made to along with each subsequent generation that came from that person from that time forward. This is a permanent change, and can be seen as altering the human gene pool and in fact changing it forever.

Those who work with germ cells argue that a change to human gene cells for the better is acceptable. They would state that if a cure for influenza, as is the example set out in Mount Dragon, is a change for the better for the human race, then it should be a part of our evolutionary make up if at all possible. On the other side of that argument lies the obvious detriment to making changes to germ cells and for allowing that kind of science to continue. Comparing this with the Nazi mindset of purifying the human race, this side is emphatically against the altering of gene cells for any reason. The bottom line is that there are no safety measures in place to protect people. There is nothing to stop the train once it has left the station. If an influenza cure were indeed created, that would be a definite plus for mankind, but once Pandora's box is open, there would be no closing it. Who would have the ultimate say as to which of the germ cells were acceptable to change? Would we all soon only want cells that would produce "beautiful" people? Would we want our children to have the best of intelligence, the advantages of certain physical traits, or other enhancements? Before long, we would be creating an entirely new human race, and all of this begins with the first germ cell alteration. If someone is sick with an incurable disease and it can be fixed in their lifetime, it should be, but not by the alteration of germ cells. Evolution occurs naturally, and should be left to occur naturally. The risks outweigh the benefits of any other course of action.

## Computer Science: Cyberspace versus Cypherspace

In Mount Dragon, Brent Scopes (CEO and founder of GeneDyne) creates a new programming language that allows for the next level of computer programming to exist. It begins in Cyberspace, which currently exists in many RPG's (Role Playing Games). This is where the user becomes a character or avatar in a cyber world and navigates a number of levels and challenges to gain points or continue. Some are simple, and some can be quite complex. Brent takes this technology to a new level when he uses it to



electronically keep track of the many branches of his company and their varied interests. For example, once Brent's cyberspace is entered, a user finds themselves on a catwalk of sorts that navigates through the system. From this catwalk, Brent is able to access any of the GeneDyne locations, and each location is an exact replica of the actual building inside and out. While a complicated endeavor, it is not impossible. Once the building or facility is entered, the office spaces within are also accessible. While the staff is not re-created, each area of sensitivity is password protected by quotations that Brent has committed to memory by playing the game he and his former partner and friend Dr. Levine created. Any data transfer from the individual facilities is represented by streams of light coming from the area where the transfer is actually occurring in real time.

Cyberspace is an offshoot from Cyberspace that takes that technology one step further down the rabbit hole. Cypherspace is Brent's name for his personal creation accessible only from his office or the cyberspace representation of his office. In either case, the user enters and finds themselves transported to Dark Harbor, Maine. The seaside town is located on the Atlantic shore where Brent's family had their summer house. It is recreated in painstakingly real detail, including everything from the buildings in town to their occupants. In this cyber world, a person inserts their actual personality via a lengthy profile completed beforehand which establishes everything from level of education to attitudes and personality quirks. Once the profile is complete, and a physical representation is chosen (your own or a fantasy recreation), your avatar is inserted into the program. From there, it becomes independent in every way. It is able to interact with other beings in the system, behaving much as you would in real life, and is able to learn and progress without further influence from the programmer or actual user. When Brent realizes he is dying, he asks his friend Charles to have himself profiled for insertion into this cypherspace where they would be able to continue to interact as friends in perpetuity.

While actual programming isn't too far from creating such a reality, we have to ask ourselves whether or not this is a leap forward or a giant step back. By giving himself his own private world, peopled with the beings he remembered from the town itself, Brent created a personal utopia for himself. Since the characters interacted independently from him, and continued to progress without his interference, he never knew what state he would find the town or its inhabitant in. The only sense not recreated was the sense of smell, and while fantastic - without doubt - the user slowly loses touch with reality as a result. Brent lost himself to his cypherspace, spending more and more time there and becoming more and more of a recluse as a result. The technology is a marvel, and at the same time a societal downfall.

## **Altruism versus Exploitation**

In Mount Dragon, two friends begin a journey of discovery both of themselves and of a scientific nature. Brent Scopes discovers a handful of Anasazi corn kernels, and with the help of his best friend, Charles Levine, they co-found the process that allowed for the isolation of the X-RUST gene. From there, they create a disease/rust resistant strain





that increased corn productivity by fifteen percent world wide. Many lives were saved from starvation because of this discovery. Charles Levine wanted to turn the discovery into a vehicle of altruism by releasing it into the public domain. He believed that anything created for the benefit of mankind should be free for all to benefit from and that would have been a miraculous step forward for many third world countries. Unfortunately, his partner didn't share his altruistic nature.

Brent Scopes saw a different perspective. He wanted the discovery to fund further interests. They solved their dispute by playing a game they invented while in school. Whoever won would win the right to the patent and its disposition. Charles lost that game and spent many years afterward thinking about it. Brent took the patent signed by both himself and Charles and used the proceeds to fund GeneDyne and further gene exploitation. Amassing a small fortune from the patent, he created a small empire, but his friendship with Levine altered from that day forward. Levine devoted himself to trying to expose and shut down the kind of gene research being done by companies like GeneDyne. Single minded in his efforts to that end, he eventually loses his position at the University as well as his seat on the Holocaust Foundation that he created.

Brent tries to redeem himself, but does so for the most part in anonymity. He donates money to various charitable organizations that he comes across, gives money to causes that he feels are deserving such as families with children who are terminally ill, and in general tries to use his wealth for the betterment of his corner of the world. When Charles finally confronts Brent, they have reached an impasse. The patent for X-RUST, which is the financial backbone of GeneDyne, is about to expire, and Charles steadfastly refuses to re-sign until he is caught in Brent's inner sanctum and threatened with death. Then he offers his signature as a way to save himself, but he has conditions attached. Charles wants a rematch of the game that they played originally - winner take all - and Brent agrees, believing he can beat Charles again. This time he is wrong, and Charles wins.

For Brent, it is an unacceptable situation, and he is not prepared to lose as gracefully as his best friend once did. Instead, he tries to reclaim the vial of X-FLU from Charles, and in the process breaks the vial open, cutting them both. In that instant, he is given a second chance to become the man and the friend that he could have been. Knowing his life is over anyway, he finds himself and tears up the renewal patent he'd already signed, and donates his programming extravaganza to the University in perpetuity. Altruism being the true nature of the man, in the end when faced with his mortality, he finds his way back.



# Style

## Point of View

In the novel, *Mount Dragon*, co-authored by Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child, the point of view is the third person, alternating between the main characters. The narration is reliable and easy to follow, despite switching back and forth from Guy Carson, Susana de Vaca and Nye, to Charles Levine and Brent Scopes. Each character is well rounded and brings important perspective to the story that would not likely have translated as well in other formats or styles. While the dialogue is confined to small sections, the changing perspective is used to keep the reader focused on the two main story points as they are slowly drawn together to a natural and spectacular conclusion.

Carson and de Vaca cross an unforgiving desert just one step ahead of Nye, knowing that someone has to ensure that the truth behind the science of their experiments is brought into the light. The project Guy and Susana worked on could easily have meant the end of mankind as we know it. Their dialogue and interaction is vital to the understanding of how what at first appeared to be for the benefit of mankind could easily backfire and become the first in a series of changes that make us unrecognizable.

The alternating dialogue between Charles Levine and Brent Scopes is equally important, as it draws the reader into the moral and ethical dilemmas surrounding the science and its impact on mankind as a whole. Technology, as it becomes ever more complex, can be used for the benefit of our kind. On the other hand, driven by greed, it can be pushed through before the ramifications of the long term effects are fully understood or appreciated. It serves to exemplify how the greatest minds can also be the smallest when wealth and the potential for it enters the picture.

## Setting

*Mount Dragon* is set in several locations. It begins in New Jersey where Guy Carson is first approached to transfer from Edison GeneDyne to the location at Mount Dragon to aid in their specific research. Mount Dragon is located within the White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico. It is bordered by the Jornada Del Muerto desert and Fra Cristobal Mountains; the Oscuro Mountains; the San Andres Mountains and El Malpais (Old Lava Flow). The facility is located in an area leased from the White Sands Missile Range and Kin Ktzhini (Old Anasazi Ruin) can be seen from it. Carson is at home in this environment, having grown up on his family's farm in that area.

Dr. Charles Levine lectures at Percival Lecture Hall at Harvard University, and a portion of the story covers his tenure and lectures there. He is the former partner and friend of GeneDyne's founder Brent Scopes. Their falling out surrounds a patent that Levine



wanted to donate to humanity, and Brent wanted to use to establish a financial foothold for GeneDyne with. The used a game to break the stalemate and Levine lost.

Brent Scopes works primarily out of his Boston, Maine GeneDyne location. His office is on the sixtieth floor of a building that is highly secure both electronically and by way of a security staff. His complex cypherspace allows him to access his many GeneDyne facilities electronically, and his office doubles as his family's summer home in Dark Harbor, Maine. While many locations are accessed by computer from inside the Boston GeneDyne location, they are as realistic and complicated as the actual places themselves.

## Language and Meaning

Mount Dragon combines two complex subject matters with grace and dexterity. On one hand, the story deals with genetic science, and the reader is given a crash course on gene splicing and altering and the differences between somatic cells (which only alter the genes of the person they are changed in) and germ cells (which when altered will also carry on to similarly alter the successive generations from that point forward. The science includes viral strains of influenza that have one hundred percent lethality, and a brief overview of a variety of chimpanzee that they discover has a natural immunity to all influenza strains.

On the other hand, the reader gets a fantastic crash course in computer science. Brent Scopes takes the computer to whole new levels of interaction with a brand new interactive programming language that allows him to recreate his electronic needs in cyberspace with his varying locations physically and separately represented. Some are reproduced to be the exact same as they are in person, and others, like Brent's office in cypherspace, is so technologically advanced that he allows no access to it except by very rare circumstance. His office is wired to such a degree that he can enter his own personal brand of cyberspace that allows him easier access to the interconnected network of GeneDyne computers. Having entered the system, the user would find themselves in a virtual reality world so realistic that it was as difficult to navigate as a dangerous foreign country. Walkways wander through areas where surfaces and shapes represent hardware and software. A vast screen gives the user the impression of movement, and the walkway snakes between buildings of varying sizes. Streams of light coming from them represent data transfer operations. Once a user entered the Boston GeneDyne location and navigated successfully to Brent's personal office, entry to that area takes the user to Brent's family summer home in Dark Harbor, Maine. Recreated in stunning detail, it is peopled with AI representations of the actual residents of the area, and they are created with such detail and complexity that once turned loose in the town, they act and interact independently of any outside interference.

Though technical on both sides now and then, none of the story is so complex that it is difficult to follow, or so extreme that the reader gets lost, and the book remains an educating read on so many levels.



## Structure

Mount Dragon is written in three parts without chapter structure that goes beyond breaks where they would be. The first part deals with the introduction of Guy Carson and his transfer to the facility known as Mount Dragon, where he is to work on a Level 5 project involving a possible cure to the flu. While Brent Scopes spares no expense for his scientists, especially at Mount Dragon, his former colleague and friend Dr. Charles Levine is convinced that Brent may one day be responsible for destroying mankind. Having originally co-patented the gene altered corn that is resistant to the problem of rust, Levine believed that the patent should be given to the world while Brent insisted on using it to finance further gene testing. Brent's Level 5 laboratory at Mount Dragon is a source of Levine's concern. Levine has good reason to be concerned, as becomes evident when an accident exposes one scientist to a deadly virus and kills her.

Part two gives the reader a deeper insight into the Levine/Scopes rivalry. The investigation into the accidental death of Rosalind Brandon-Smith is completed and the Level 5 facility reopened to the scientists. The investigator leaves to make his report, but half an hour after his departure, a sand storm of major proportions hits the area. His empty Hummer is found the next day and he is presumed dead, but some scientists suspect foul play. This section deals largely with the isolation of the cause of X-FLU lethality, and the two scientists involved discover they have much in common. They share a fundamental lack of trust in Brent Scopes, and while searching for answers to the issue of X-FLU, they find a secret journal that leads them to fraud and a scientific processing error that contaminates both X-FLU and the facility's former project, PurBlood. The latter had been tested on all GeneDyne staff with the exception of the most recent arrivals, and the effects lead to psychosis and eventual death when left untreated. Dr. Levine is desperate to stop the work being done by GeneDyne, and in his zeal to that end he loses his tenure, his chair at the Foundation, and his credibility.

In part three, underestimating Brent Scopes and the depths to which he will go to save his company is Dr. Levine's biggest mistake. When scientists Guy Carson and Susana de Vaca initiate the fail-safe that blows up the Mount Dragon facility, they escape on horseback, but Nye is hot on their trail and determined to get even with them for what he sees as their betrayal. Neither are aware that Scopes anticipated even this, and has secreted a vial of X-FLU in his safe. This vial becomes the vehicle that brings Brent back to the man he once was, filled with potential and a desire to make the world a better place. His last gifts to the world will live on in perpetuity.



## Quotes

"The Novo-Druzhina incident nearly hanged the human race And yet, as I speak, other companies across the globe are tinkering with viruses, exchanging genetic material between viruses, bacteria, plants, and animals indiscriminately, without any thought to the ultimate consequences." Part One, p. 34

"Instead of being an innocuous messenger, the protein coat of the virus seems to mimic a hormone that stimulates the overproduction of cerebrospinal fluid." Part One, p. 59

"With genetic engineering, if you alter the DNA of a person's somatic cells, the change dies with the body. But if you alter the DNA of someone's germ cells - in other words, the egg or sperm cells - the change will be inherited by that person's children." Part One, p. 89

"Don't force me to remind you of the two planks our deep and meaningful phriendship is built on." Part One, p. 116

"GeneDyne is altering the germ cells of human beings, committing a sacrilege against human life itself." Part Two, p. 156

"The autopsy was conducted within the Level-5 facility, in security suits, and was followed by incineration of the corpse and decontamination of all laboratories within the secure perimeter." Part Two, p. 175

"It won't take big changes in the genome to remake the human race into something that we'd never even recognize." Part Two, p. 229

"It's like sifting through the wreckage of a plane crash to determine the cause of an accident, when in reality the problem was faulty directions from the control tower." Part Two, p. 275

"You are now trespassers on GeneDyne property, and your presence in the Level-5 facility must be assumed a hostile act." Part Three, p. 312

"You see, if they find me, they'll take away my computers. If that happens, I might as well be dead." Part Three, p. 361

"I think that we need to divide the remaining water with the horses." Part Three, p. 407

"General Harrington: Your impertinence just cost you an additional billion, and the price is now five billion." Part Three, p. 413

"I wanted a way to traverse it (the network) easily and privately." Part Three, p. 426

"I may have found the Anasazi corn kernels, but it was your brilliant science that helped me to isolate the X-RUST gene, to develop the disease-resistant strain." Section 13, p. 441

"You risked everything you believed in for that final game, and you lost." Part Three, p. 447

"You're going to have to do what's necessary to make sure this virus stops with us." Part Three, p. 469

"The greatest favor you can do for me now is not to let me die by X-FLU II." Part Three, p. 471



## Topics for Discussion

What event takes place in Novo-Druzhina in Western Siberia and what are the direct consequences? Why does Dr. Charles Levine expose the truth about it?

What project is Guy Carson hired to work on in Mount Dragon, and what skills does he have that secured him that position? What do they hope to gain if Carson is successful and how will it benefit mankind? What is the permanent change that will occur as a result?

What is the Fever Tank? Why is it dangerous? How can it be used as an asset to mankind?

What makes Carson so reluctant to talk to Levine? What or who changes his mind?

What object is critical to unraveling the curious physical changes occurring with some of the employees at Mount Dragon? Where is it found, by whom, and what discovery does it lead to?

What is Nye looking for in the desert? Who finds it and what bargain is struck to give Nye the information?

Who is Nye talking to as he searches for Carson and de Vaca? What is significant about this person's presence, and when was the last time Nye actually saw him and what were the circumstances of the time?

Scopes and Levine have a long standing rivalry. What started it? How is it significant throughout the story in relation to how they solved the original issue versus how they resolve their final conflict?

What discovery do Carson and de Vaca make in the desert? How does it serve them in this time frame that is also relevant in Susana's past? Name the reasons it is important to the story and why.

What is Brent's final self serving act and how does it affect both Scopes and Levine? What changes occur in Brent almost immediately as a result and what does he do about them?

How many people die as a direct result of exposure to X-FLU I and X-FLU II? How do these exposures change the outcome of GeneDyne's future separately and as a whole?

What valuable information does Brent withhold from the world of science until the very last minute? Why? When this is finally donated, under what conditions and circumstances does that happen?



What is the language Brent creates and how does it impact the story, and his day to day life? How does this "language" affect his office and why is it significant to both Brent and Charles in the past and in their future?

What steps does Brent take to ensure the final X-FLU exposure is contained? What fundamental changes occur in him at the end when he realizes he will die?

Susana and Guy have profound affect on each other, and on the outcome of the story in several ways. Explain them and their relation to the final outcome.