

# Do Not Accept

**Book Two of the DNA Trilogy**

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## Prologue

No one knows precisely what happened to all of Hitler's "experiments" at the end of WWII. In the chaos of war, with the different factions who were liberating specific regions of Germany, it is highly possible that test subjects disappeared behind the Iron Curtain or simply were moved to more remote and undocumented facilities. Cryogenics was the least of the experiments being done with human cells, eggs, and sperm. Stealing the discoveries made under Hitler's rule, scientists could have continued creating from the eggs and sperm harvested before the Allies destroyed Hitler's laboratories. Those created from the manipulated cells could have been kept in secret so that the inhuman research could

be continued, paid for by unscrupulous companies and individuals wanting to get rich using the data harvested by Hitler's minions.

Nicoleta has discovered that her DNA can be traced, at least half of it, back to those experiments of Hitler's scientists. Her grandmother willingly took part in the Lebensborn program, and later in a private program hidden in Romania. Nicoleta's mother, Bianca, born with unique extrasensory gifts at a research facility, managed to escape the scientists at the age of eighteen. Her Romany guard and lover hid her before she fled to America. Her Romany lover didn't know she carried Nicoleta in her womb.

After giving birth to Nicoleta in a Las Vegas hotel, Bianca lost her life to a religious fanatic disguised as a mugger. Nicoleta became one of the hundreds of children handled by the foster-care system. For the next eleven years, Nicoleta moved from home to home, never entirely fitting into any family because of her extrasensory abilities until the day that Wayne and Mike adopted her.

The scientists knew Bianca could control her body's healing, but they didn't realize Bianca could control the emotions of those around her. Nicoleta inherited all her mother's talents, strengthened by the sensitivity of her Romany father.

Now, Nicoleta and her future husband, understand the truth. They destroyed the secret lab in Romania, where Bianca's cryogenically frozen eggs were stored and used. Nicoleta, along with the MackWood Security team, liberated other test subjects from the scientists. Using her abilities has revealed two things. First, it has strengthened them, especially when she draws on the innate mystic power of her Navajo fiancé. Secondly, the price paid for using her talents is steep, minor brain bleeds. Fortunately, she has been able to heal herself so far.

However, the path ahead is fraught with peril for her, James, and the others when they flee the country.



# Chapter 1

**Ten hours earlier, sixty miles away:**

"Nicoleta, you *won't* believe what I've found in the room across from your cell," Mack whispered, his voice cracking with emotion.

"Another prisoner? Did you find more hostages? I saw one man with dead eyes, watching as they took me away," Nicoleta remembered, shuddering.

"No adults. This group is still in diapers. It's a nursery. There are cribs set up along the walls—two groups of two cribs and one group of three. Seven cribs in all and two sets have charts hanging on them. I need to get closer without waking them." His voice dropped lower. "Okay, the first two cribs are empty, no charts. The second pair of beds has a chart at the end of the left crib." A short pause, he began to read, "Semi-identical, polar-twinning girls, with a birthdate three months ago, and notes about food, as well as experiments performed on them. These charts show the evilness of these scientists, the *bastards*. Poor babies."

In the short silence that followed, Nicoleta held her breath, listening to him moving to the final set of cribs.

"Ahhh, blue blankets. Must be boys. Hey, buddy, shhh, don't cry. No need to wake your brothers." The clipboard clicked against the crib as he lifted it. "The chart is on the center crib. "Dizygotic-triplet boys. Two eggs, one split after being fertilized by altered sperm resulting in a set of identical babies; the second egg fertilized with a single altered sperm from a third donor. The non-identical child has only a fifty

percent match to his brothers' DNA." Mack's breath caught in a gasp while he silently read the birthdates and the tests already performed on the boys. "By the date, they are six months old. *Shit*, I wouldn't do to a lab rat what those assholes have done to these children! No wonder this boy is so silent, he's likely afraid to cry. I've never seen such wise eyes on a baby. He's watching me, not making a sound—just watching—kind of spooky." His voice broke. Nicoleta understood that finding the babies had shaken him. "How can any woman carry and deliver babies, then just turn them over to scientists? I don't understand," Mack whispered, disgust dripping from the words.

Removing the children from the lab had been easy; getting them onto the private jet at the Constanta, Romania airport proved a little more problematic. Jimmy drove them to Constanta. He enlisted the assistance of Chef Maryann, who was waiting on the jet. Together, they shopped for supplies to feed the group, asking all the items to be boxed rather than bagged. At the limo, they emptied five of the boxes, putting a baby in the bottom of each. With soft goods covering the children, Jimmy and Maryann slipped through the customs inspection with a healthy tip to the inspector. He hardly glanced at the multitude of grocery boxes.

Two hours after leaving the Foxborough Medical Industries private research lab, the babies were sleeping in their cartons on the thickly carpeted jet floor.

## Now:

Sitting in the cabin with his crew, James Woodruff felt an overwhelming sense of liberation when he heard the jet engines come to life. *Home!* They were going home. But, his relief was short-lived. He began to worry about how they could smuggle five infants into the United States. It wasn't

going to be easy, but James felt sure his hacker, Richard, would come up with something. Maybe. If they were lucky. The more difficult thing was going to be disappearing from the records and minds of the scientists and owners of Foxborough Medical Industries. He and Nicoleta would need to live off-the-grid to keep the babies safe. Finding a place was going to be difficult, and cutting ties with family would break her heart. His grandfather would understand, he hoped.

All James needed to do right now was come up with a romantic proposal to Nicoleta, and his happiness would be secured. The jet began rolling, causing one of the babies to start crying. James stood and walked over to check on the infants. The vibration from the jet engines had likely set off the baby's crying.

"Hey, little boy, it's okay. Nothing's going to hurt you now." James spoke over the growl of the jet, bending to pick up the squalling child. "Here, your Uncle Mack can hold you while we take off."

Not giving "Uncle Mack" a chance to object, James passed the mewling baby to the surprised bachelor. "Here you go, Mack. Hold him until we're airborne, or until he falls back asleep. Don't laugh, fellas—there are enough babies to go around." Collecting each infant with its blanket, one at a time, he began handing them out.

He passed one of the girls to Maria. Maryann motioned for the other girl, and Nicoleta took a baby boy as she entered the cabin. As James settled the last of the boys in his lap, his phone began to chirp. "Crap. Jimmy, take this baby. I've got a call coming in."

"Does it have a name?" Jimmy asked, taking the boy with trembling hands.

"Not yet. This is one of the boys. Why don't you come up with a name for him?" James challenged Jimmy before answering the call.

"This is James; who's this?" he demanded. "Oh, hi, George. I was just thinking of you. How's Rome?"

"Rome is *still* boring as hell. I hear jet engines. Are you coming this way to rescue me from terminal boredom? If not, when do I get my chef back? I'm getting tired of takeout." George's voice whined louder than the jet engines.

After rescuing James and Nicoleta from Serbia, George had not been happy when the MackWood crew sent him back to Rome. He had even threatened to contact his friends, Mike and Wayne, Nicoleta's fathers. George had threatened to tell them she was traipsing around Europe, escorted by a man who seemed to have designs on her. Nicoleta had spent an hour soothing his hurt feelings and explaining why he needed to be out of Romania before the MackWood Security team took down the genetics lab.

"Uh, well, we were going to route through Paris, but let me see if we can change the plan without waiting any longer on the ground here. I won't draw an easy breath until we're airborne. Hang on a second."

James walked to the cockpit to ask if they could change routes once they were airborne. The girl in Maryann's arms began noisily wailing as he passed.

"Can't you quiet her?" James snapped. "Between the baby and the jet noise, I can't hear a thing. Besides, we don't want to start all of them crying."

"Did I just hear a *baby*?" George demanded. "What do you mean *all* of them? What's going on? Okay, now you simply *must* come to Rome to collect me. To hell with the movie; whatever you're up to is much more interesting—"

James cringed inwardly; George had gone from interested to demanding and excited in five sentences.

"Shhh... Don't mention the babies. Not on an open line where someone might hear you. We'll come to Rome, even if we have to go to Paris first. Just be ready to leave when

we get there. I'll call once we have an arrival time. Not a word to anyone, and we'll let you be part of the wedding."

"*WEDDING? Did...y*" George's shriek was cut off when James broke the connection.

Sticking his head into the cockpit and raising his voice, James put his hand on the pilot's shoulder. "Can you change our flight plan once we're airborne, from Paris to Rome? If not, file another to Rome from Paris. It seems we have to collect a member of our party from Rome instead of Paris."

"Yes, sir. I'll take care of it. I'll give you the arrival time once I get the computations done on the new destination." The pilot's eyes never left the ground crew. Rolling into line with the commercial flights, he waved James back to the passenger cabin. "Better sit down. Prepare for takeoff."

Taking his seat, but not the baby, James smiled. The group in the passenger cabin was too busy tending babies to notice. "Looks like we're going to Rome, not Paris. Going to collect George. Seems he misses your cooking, Maryann."

"I'll bet he does. That man has got the pickiest diet of anyone I've ever cooked for." Looking at the wide-eyed infant in her arms, she cooed, "I'll bet you'll eat just about anything, won't you, sweetie?" Her smile widened when the baby chuckled up at her, waving her arms in seeming excitement. "Good thing you mentioned these passengers *before* we went to the market, Jimmy. I picked up some baby food and diapers, along with the adult fare we bought. Once we get airborne, we can feed them, change them, and let them sleep until we land in Rome."

"I've got it!" Jimmy almost jumped out of his seat. "This is Anthony—Tony to his friends. His brothers can be Charles—Charlie and Daniel—Danny. How's that for the three boys—Tony, Charlie, and Danny? Good strong names they can grow into." Smugly he looked around the cabin, beaming at his friends.

"Not bad, not bad at all. Easy to spell, and the boys won't need to spend their lives correcting others who mispronounce their names. What do you think, Nicoleta?" James asked the woman engrossed in staring into the eyes of the infant she held.

"I think David instead of Daniel for this boy. He seems more like a Davy than a Danny." She planted a kiss on Davy's baby-fine blond hair.

"I guess I'm holding Charlie. Look, he's smiling. Charlie, do you like your name?" Mack asked the red-haired baby bouncing on his knee. The boy squealed and giggled. "I think he approves."

"What about the girls? They need names, too." Chef Maryann cooed as she rocked the baby in her arms.

James thought a few moments, examining the baby in Maryann's arms. Blue eyes gravely regarded him from the baby's face. "I think the girls need to have Navajo names. I hope they will be growing up with Navajo parents, and their lives will be more natural with Navajo names. Fewer questions, especially since at least one has vibrant blue eyes. Maryann, you're holding Dolee. It means Bluebird." The baby in Maryann's arms gave a small smile, yawned, and then fell asleep. "I think she approves." James nodded to Maryann.

"What about this little girl? She's so tiny compared to her sister, and her hair is almost blue-black." Maria rocked and cooed at the girl in her arms. "I can't tell her eye color; she's been sleeping since you handed her to me."

"Then she should be Sialia. It means Good Dreamer or Little Bluebird, and she seems to be both, don't you think?" James glanced around the cabin to see if anyone would disagree. Everyone was smiling, so he nodded at Maria. "Sialia, it is."

"Hey, boss—can I work with Nicoleta while we're airborne? Maybe I can locate other subjects. You know, if I

got into the FMI computer as quickly as I did—there's no telling if anyone else has. Those fanatics of the *Church of the Pure* could have hackers too. We might want to warn any other half-siblings Nicoleta might have out there. There probably are more than just these infants." Richard waved a hand at the children.

"Okay, if Nicoleta doesn't mind you digging into that thumb drive you gave her, it's fine with me. Besides, it will keep you both busy during the flight." Smiling to himself, James buckled his seat belt, leaned back in the comfortable recliner, and waited for takeoff. He pushed his long hair behind his shoulders to keep it out of the way. If he had a rubber band, he would braid it.

Now, all he needed to do was come up with a romantic proposal for Nicoleta. He already had her answer; at least he thought he did. She'd scoffed at his assumption that they would marry, but she never said they wouldn't. Now that they were going to take on raising at least the triplets, she better be ready to marry him. Hmm, could he use the babies as part of the proposal? With his brain whirling and dancing around different ideas, he never felt the takeoff and was sleeping soundly before they hit cruising altitude.

"Boss, hey, boss! Wake up. You've been sawing major logs for the last hour. We're almost to Rome. The pilot chose Rome Ciampino because it has less traffic. Mack called George for you, and he's meeting the plane. By the way, he's pretty excited about some storm in the Atlantic. Mack kept telling him to settle down and that we'd help him." Jimmy's mouth ran off at James while James came awake and tried to make sense out of the monolog.

"What? Crap, get me a coffee, and start over. Better yet, you get me a cup of coffee, and I'll talk to Mack." James rubbed his gritty eyes and looked around the cabin until he spied his partner sitting next to Nicoleta. She laughed at

something he said, and James' gut twisted. Mack had better *not* be putting the moves on his woman. Standing, he walked across the cabin, motioning Maria to move out of the aisle seat across from Nicoleta and Mack.

"James. About time, you woke up. Here comes Jimmy with a cup of coffee for you. Would you quit looking daggers at me, I was just talking to Nicoleta about the half-siblings Richard has kind of located from the thumb drive. It seems one of the twins is a shark in the casinos." Mack laughed as his partner's scowl cleared.

"How'd Richard find that out?" James reached for Nicoleta's hand as he sat down, needing that physical contact.

"He managed to open a file labeled 'twins' on the drive. He found this pair who were born to a surrogate mother when Nicoleta's mom was barely past puberty. The surrogate and a scientist raised them. It's disgusting what they did to those babies, well, adults now, but I'm surprised they managed to survive." Mack's face was grim, his voice reflecting his disgust.

Nicoleta's golden hazel eyes caught his as she took up revealing the information. "According to the file, the girl had her eyes sealed shortly after birth until she was fifteen. Her brother had plugs inserted and kept in his ears for the same length of time. These kids grew up deprived of one of their senses just so the scientists could tell if they were able to develop a replacement sense or ability. How can a person do that to a baby and still look in the mirror? I just don't understand. Now I'm sorry we let those scientists off so lightly at FMI. I want to go back and hurt them—I really do," Nicoleta's voice broke; her light eyes watered before she turned her head to the window.

"Do you know where they are? How old are they?" James turned to Mack, all the while holding Nicoleta's hand in comfort.

"The files state the twins are Jelica and Mikal Sonnen, but I understand there are several aliases for each since they've been on the run. The girl was tested as telekinetic and seemed able to see through the eyes of people close to her. The scientists let her go to University in Prague, and she disappeared after one semester. Her brother stole a car at about the same time and disappeared too. The vehicle was found about fifty miles south of Prague. That's where the file officially ends, but there were notes from one of the scientists mentioning a couple of news stories about a big winner at a casino. The casino wasn't pleased when their mega slot jackpot was won. The winner was a twenty-five-year-old college student. She avoided cameras and melted away into the night after receiving half the money. We think it was Nicoleta's half-sister. Sounds like a way a telekinetic would rustle up cash." Mack looked up from the paper in his hand.

"I think I'll get off in Rome and go to Monte Carlo—see if I can't trace her. They likely don't know about all their enemies and may need help, especially if the scientists should decide to continue the project despite our work last night. The twins, and any other siblings, will be prime targets. I hope Jelica has her brother with her. I'll get them both to the States if I can." Mack looked sternly at his partner, seeming to wait for James to object. "Oh, and Richard has found some fascinating information on that thumb drive. Possibly valuable data about anti-rejection drugs, and new in-vitro methods for artificial insemination. Some of this material might be marketable to a pharmaceutical company. Could help pay for raising the babies. Ask him about it."

"I'll speak to him later. About this woman, do you even have a description? Did Richard manage to 'download' the security footage from the casino where she won big?" Taking a long pull on his cooling coffee, James felt more awake and aware by the minute. "You're going to need traveling cash."

Looking around the cabin, he raised his voice; "Okay, we need to finance Mack. If you're carrying any company funds, cough 'em up."

All of the MackWood employees pulled money out, either from their pockets or wallets. The funds were passed to the table next to Mack.

"We're going to need at least a grand. For the babies' papers. Hopefully, by that time, we'll have access to an ATM, but in case we don't—having some cash never hurt." James pulled ten crisp one-hundred-dollar bills back from the stack next to Mack.

"Thanks. I've got my credit cards, and I'll use them where I can, but who knows what I'm going to encounter if I find them." Mack folded the money, slid his clip over it, and stuck the funds into his front pocket. "About the footage, Richard managed to get the video, but it's not great. The sneaky girl knew exactly where the cameras were. She wore a niqab and hijab most of the time, leaving only her eyes visible. She'll have deep mahogany brown eyes unless she's wearing contacts. I'm taking a copy of what we were able to salvage from the casino footage with me. She's got a Czech passport. Courtesy of the scientists when they sent her to college."

"Anyone appear to be with her?" James asked.

"Not in the footage around the slots. Jelica tried to keep her head down when they handed over the money, so there's no good shot of her. She managed to blend in with the crowd so quickly that even facial recognition software didn't work. A niqab and hijab were turned in as found items by housekeeping later. Richard spent most of the flight trying to pinpoint when she ditched them," Admiration colored Mack's voice at the ploys used by the woman. "Richard has been scanning slot winners at other locations, and we think we might have a decent photo of her winning a small jackpot in a casino on the edge of town two days before the big win."

"Boss, I hate to change the subject, but that George fella; he was almost ranting when we called to give him our arrival time. You might want to call him. Something about hurricanes and friends trapped on an island." Jimmy spoke when there was a pause in the conversation about Nicoleta's half-siblings.

"George is excitable. We're landing soon. I'll wait until I see him and find out what's happening." James assured Jimmy.

"But, boss—he was screeching so loud I could hear him from across the cabin. Something about getting a flight plan and him taking over our jet because it had more room," Jimmy argued.

James looked at Mack. "You spoke to him, what exactly did he say?"

"We called him to tell him when and where to meet our arrival at Ciampino airport. He said, 'Great. I need to commandeer your jet; you can use mine. I've got a crew shooting on St. Thomas, and the last hurricane almost killed them. They've no shelter and need to get off the island because another storm could be there within days'." Mack's perfect recall reproduced the statement accurately.

"James, I've got an idea. We can use the destruction of the last storm to smuggle the babies into the USA. If you take them to St. Thomas, you can sneak them off the plane and then 'rescue' them. St. Thomas is a possession of the USA, so bringing in refugees from there shouldn't be difficult." Looking at James, he grinned when James began to smile.

"Might just work. We can fly to St. Thomas. Once there, we can let the jet take George's crew to Miami and return for us. While we're on the way there, Richard can work his magic to create records of the infants on the island." He waved Richard over. "I've got a job for you."

Mack moved out of his chair to allow Richard to sit close.

James continued his planning aloud. "With faked documents, we can load them and a few other refugees onto the plane, and then fly to the States as a humanitarian mission." Turning to the man taking Mack's seat, he asked, "Okay, Richard, how well can you hack into hospital and government records?" James motioned at Richard's laptop.

Mack took a seat by the window, positioning himself for landing. The plane was almost touching down in Rome.

