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opening extract from

Killer Clone

written by

Steve Barlow & Steve Skidmore

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Killer Clone

by

Steve Barlow and

Steve Skidmore

Barrington Stoke FYI series

Intro

Every living thing is made out of cells. You are made of billions of them. When human beings are born normally, they take cells from their father and from their mother.

But a clone is a copy of one person and is exactly the same as that person. A scientist takes cells from one person – a donor – to make the clone. The same cells could be used to make many copies of a donor, who would all be exactly alike.

So far, scientists have not made a clone from a human. There have only been animal clones.

So far…

Chapter 1

DATELINE 26-5-2036

Doctor Connor’s Office, Clones Inc., Los Angeles, California.

7:47 pm

I stared at Doctor Connor while I sat in his chair and put my feet up on his desk. He didn’t care. He was dead.

He lay on a deep-pile carpet that had been white until he bled all over it. That wasn’t his fault. Someone had put a bullet right through him. When that happened, all he could do was bleed. But if he’d died two metres to the left, he’d have missed the rug and fallen on the wooden floor. That would have made cleaning up much easier. Some guys

don’t care how much trouble they cause.

There were three other people in the room who weren’t dead. But when I looked at Doctor Isadora Grey it was hard to be sure. She was as old, dry and wrinkled as an Egyptian mummy, but less of a looker. She had eyes like a bullfrog and a voice to match. She used it now. “Well?” she croaked.

I shrugged. “Shot though the heart at close range.”

“Poor Doctor Connor,” said the second person in the room. His name was Bristow. He was a skinny guy with a bad wig, who looked as if he was going to faint.

I ignored him. “No sign of a break-in,” I said, “so Doctor Connor must have known his killer. Can I get a coffee here?”

“Brilliant!” This comment came from a big guy in a good suit. He was Head of Security at Clones Inc. His name was Harvey. He had a scar that ran right down his face from his right eye to his chin. He thought he was tough. He wasn’t. The real tough guy was the one who gave him the scar. “Call yourself a Private Investigator?” he said with a sneer.

“Zak Taylor, PI,” I grinned, “That’s what it says on my badge. And the P.I. stands for Private Investigator. ”

“Yeah? Some investigator! Everything you just told us, we’d worked out for ourselves,” Harvey said. He turned to Doctor Grey, “I told you we didn’t need some dumb PI. My men can handle this.”

He’d wish he never said that. I was going to charge

Clones Inc. an extra fifty bucks just for Harvey's "dumb P.I." crack. I stood up. "Well, if you don't need me…"

"Sit down, Mister Taylor," snapped Doctor Grey. She had the sort of voice that expects to be obeyed. The sort of voice that teachers have – or hospital nurses and five star generals.

I sat down.

"You know why you're here," Doctor Grey went on. "Right now, Clones Inc. is in deep trouble. The public don't like clones. Judge Adams doesn't like clones, and he's head of the Supreme Court, so what he says counts. The President doesn't care about clones but he sure as hell likes votes so he's got to stay sweet with what people think. That's why we don't want the police here. We don't need

anyone to know about this murder. If this gets messy, the scandal will close us down."

"I've got news for you." I pointed at Connor's body. "It's already messy."

"Not if we find who the killer is and hand him over to the police with all the evidence they need, tied up in a big pink ribbon," Doctor Grey said. "You tell us who the killer is – problem solved!"

I nodded. "Ok. Let's start with the gun. It worries me. Why leave the gun at the crime scene? I suppose the killer did wipe it clean?"

Harvey gave me a nasty smile. "You suppose wrong. It's crawling with the killer's DNA."

I stared at him. "Then you have a suspect?"

Harvey's smile grew bigger. "You bet. In fact, we have thirty."