

Synopsis of
DARK SEED
No One Knows What Really Grows
Book 1 of the Dark Seed Trilogy
By Lawrence Verigin

Fall, 2000

Thirty-year-old, disillusioned *Seattle News* reporter Nick Barnes agrees to meet Dr. Carl Elles about a ghost-writing project. Elles, who has just retired from being a pioneering genetic-food-engineering scientist at corporate giant Naintosa Agrochemicals, wants to organize decades worth of work into a memoir. He wants to come clean about how his scientific achievements have been perverted into something dangerous to mankind.

Though Nick is wary of the project, his feisty best friend, Sue Clark, keeps pushing him to remember his core values and get back to investigative journalism. He's not entirely sure, but since he first met with Dr. Elles, Nick feels he's being followed. When he arrives for their third meeting, he finds Dr. Elles dead from what looks like a heart attack, but the circumstances are suspect.

At the funeral, Nick meets Dr. Elles's beautiful, twenty-eight-year-old daughter, Morgan. She wants to salvage her father's legacy and convinces Nick to help her write the memoir. Just as Nick and Morgan begin to read her father's notes, the two men Nick suspected of following him commit a brazen raid of Morgan's home. Morgan escapes, but Nick is interrogated and warned not to continue the project.

He and Morgan now have to decide whether their project should go forward. Morgan is even more determined and points out that if her father's notes weren't so damaging, why would Nick have been interrogated and threatened? Nick sees the value of what Morgan is saying, but he also wants to protect her.

When Sue protests that Morgan's zeal could be too dangerous, Nick has a realization: *"When I picture myself going back to my old life, it feels depressing. When I think about going to Canada with Morgan and writing the memoir, it feels exciting. This story could really help people. I don't think I could live with myself if I didn't continue."* Nick and Morgan elude the men following them and make it across the border to Christina Lake, a tranquil place in the southern interior of British Columbia.

Dr. Hendrick Schmidt is the owner of the conglomerates Naintosa Agrochemicals and Pharmalin Pharmaceuticals. Fifty-three years ago, his father and others formed a long-term plan to control the food seed market. Dr. Schmidt's security people, headed by Peter Bail, are following Nick and Morgan. Dr. Schmidt instructs Peter to seize all the memoir work.

Feeling safe in their hide-away lake cabin, Nick and Morgan write the manuscript. In close quarters during a Canadian winter, Nick finds himself admiring Morgan's beauty, watching the little things she does, and considering the possibility for more than just a working friendship.

Delving into the notes, they discover that many of the genetically engineered crops becoming available for mass consumption have safety issues and side effects, some deadly. On the environmental side the impact would be devastating: once let loose, the modified seed could not be recalled. What began as a memoir project now becomes an exposé.

Naintosa's security force closes in. Nick and Morgan have to escape, *to Vancouver in the dark, snow falling to cover our tracks.*

Finishing the manuscript, Nick and Morgan figure out Dr. Schmidt's master goal: *Naintosa plans to corner the world's agricultural seed market. Food grown from the seed weakens human immune systems and creates a form of colon cancer. Naintosa's parent company, Pharmalin, is in the process of developing a drug that cures the cancer, thus giving them control of a large segment of the global pharmaceutical market.*

Naintosa's security men find Nick and Morgan in Vancouver and abduct them. They beat up Nick and hold them, bound and blindfolded. Morgan feels the rope around her wrists loosen enough

that she unties herself, frees Nick, and they escape. On the wet, cold, and dangerous streets of East Vancouver, having no money and with Nick bleeding, they need to figure out a way to get back to Seattle. They contact Sue, and with her help get away, but there was someone else out there assisting them. Who?

They find an envelope with documents about a secret compound in Bolivia that houses a Pharmalin lab and Naintosa farm. The conglomerates are experimenting on indigenous people, and those studies provide proof that eating food grown from genetically engineered seed for a prolonged period of time gives people colon cancer. But Pharmalin's drug to help manage the cancer, not cure it, isn't close to being perfected yet.

Seattle isn't safe, and Nick and Morgan need a place to lie low while their fake identification is being made. Nick and Morgan fly to Maui and wait for Sue to bring the new passports. There they meet Jack Carter, who owns an unoccupied bible camp on the island. Renting a cabin there provides them with a private place to wait.

Stalled in the sun and sand of paradise, the attraction between Nick and Morgan grows, but neither makes a move.

Peter Bail is now directly involved in tracking them down. He and his men follow Sue to Maui and capture Nick, Morgan, and Sue at the bible camp.

Nick has a confrontational phone discussion with Dr. Schmidt that ended with: *"You underestimate my power. Our conversation and your meddling have come to an end. Goodbye, Mr. Barnes."*

"Then may I add, fuck you, Schmidt!"

Jack Carter turns out to be more than his guests think he is and comes to their rescue. He knows Dr. Schmidt and about what Schmidt's companies have been up to. Jack has the means, and his men have been watching Nick and Morgan since Christina Lake, helping in the background when needed.

In a gun battle, Jack and his men eliminate the two Naintosa security thugs that have been after Nick and Morgan for the last four months; one of them being the man who had killed Dr. Elles. However, Peter gets away.

While Nick, Morgan, and Sue are being patched up at Jack's residence, Peter makes another attempt to kill them. At the last second, Nick sees Peter and lunges at him. Peter escapes once more but won't be back because Nick now has his gun.

Nick has been transformed from a self-doubting, heavy-drinking procrastinator into a confident man willing to put his life on the line for what is right. That gives him enough courage to show Morgan how he feels about her. *"It's not quite over, but we'll face the remaining challenges and danger, and uncover the truth, together."*

Dr. Schmidt is in trouble and knows it. Staring out the window at his villa on Lake Como, he realizes: *Steering the direction of mankind and profiting in turn has become unbearably difficult.*

Set into motion all those years ago, the plan to control the world's food and health resources goes even deeper than Dr. Elles and the people who have helped him after his death have ever imagined.

Book two of the trilogy, *Seed of Control*, continues the story.

Fiction, Environmental, Ecological, Lab Lit, Thriller, Espionage

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