

CRISPR is already rewriting human DNA. The only question left is who controls the code.

On the night before her wedding to the world's youngest billionaire, Mika Maki is torn from a private Hawaiian beach and vanished into the black. The men who took her are not after money. They are after the secrets she carries—and the classified program she has been running against them for years.

Inside North Korea, gene-editing technology has been perfected into something far more dangerous than rogue medicine. Soldiers of impossible size and strength already walk the earth. Their engineered traits are permanent—heritable. Designed to outcompete and eventually replace the rest of us.

Billionaire Jonathan Matthews refuses to wait for governments or diplomacy. With elite U.S. Army Rangers and technology the public will never be allowed to know exists, he launches a rescue that becomes a race against the birth of a new human species.

This is not speculative fiction. The tools already exist. In 2018, the first gene-edited babies were born, for real. De-extinct animals walk the earth, today, for real. The only thing still missing is the will to use them without restraint.

**If You're Not Afraid,
You're Not Paying Attention.**

PROLOGUE

The People's Republic of China, 2015 –

The Chinese government, after pouring billions into human gene-editing research, announced the first reported use of the technology on a living—but nonviable—human fetus. The edits held. Proof of concept was achieved.

The People's Republic of China, 2016 –

State media proclaimed the world's first successful use of CRISPR-Cas9 in humans. The modifications were precise, repeatable, and—most critically—heritable. Dr. Jie Ning saw the future clearly: nurseries filled with babies whose DNA he had written. New China News explained that the CRISPR-Cas9 system is comprised of a navigational mechanism (CRISPR) that guides a molecular razor blade (the Cas9 enzyme) to a targeted sequence of DNA. The Cas9 enzyme will disable or conversely repair a specific gene by inserting new DNA instructions where the Cas9 razor has sliced an opening. Once edited, the embryo

would be implanted like any other In Vitro Fertilization product. The possibilities were endless, wrote New China News. Chinese military aspirations were never mentioned.

The People's Republic of China, 2018 –

Dr. Jie Ning shocked the world by announcing the birth of twin girls, Biyu and JinJing, whose DNA he had edited with CRISPR-Cas9 before implantation. Speaking at the International Summit on Human Genome Editing in Hong Kong, the professor from Southern University of Science and Technology declared himself “proud.” A second edited pregnancy was already underway. The mother's identity, location, and due date remained state secrets.

The People's Republic of China, 2019 –

On December 30, the same government that had funded the work branded it criminal. Dr. Jie Ning, along with assistants Lang Heng and Huang Lin, was sentenced to three years in prison and a three-million-yuan fine for illegal reproductive gene editing. The scientific community noted the irreversible

consequence: if the edited children survived and reproduced, a new branch of humanity would be born—one carrying the same engineered genome. Though named one of TIME magazine’s 100 most influential people of 2019, Dr. Ning, his associates, and the location of the modified children are no longer known. The scientific world watched in horrified fascination. What had begun as a secret program now lived in the blood of two actual children who would grow up, fall in love, and pass their engineered genome to the next generation. No one knew where twins Biyu and JinJing were hidden. No one knew if the second pregnancy had produced a living child. The silence that followed the trial was more frightening than any announcement.

The United States of America, 2024 –

An unnamed biotech firm announced the successful de-extinction of the Dire Wolf. Using CRISPR on DNA recovered from ancient fossils, they produced four healthy white Dire Wolf pups—two males, two females—now living in a secure preserve. They will mate when mature and hopefully, according to the

biotech firm, produce a whole pack of Dire Wolves. The pups were already larger than expected. Their white coats gleamed under the preserve lights. Scientists monitoring them noted accelerated growth curves and an unusual intensity in their gaze. One researcher quietly wrote in a private log: 'They watch us the way we watch them.'

The United States of America, 2025 –

American doctors used an advanced form of CRISPR called base editing—a “spell-checker” for DNA—to cure an infant of a rare genetic disease. The edits were permanent and heritable. The child’s identity and location remain protected under HIPAA.

Switzerland, 2026 –

A Swiss-funded clinic successfully performed a first-in-human clinical trial demonstrating that a one-time infusion of a gene-editing therapy using CRISPR-Cas9 was effective in permanently reducing LDL [“bad”] cholesterol and triglycerides in people with medication-resistant lipid disorders.