



## The Gene of Life

**Ted Takashima**

**Guisepppe di Martino, Translator**

Museyon

(366pp)

978-1-940842-51-6

*In the science-minded thriller *The Gene of Life*, three unlikely heroes track and fight an old evil.*

In Ted Takashima's political thriller *The Gene of Life*, adventurers unite under chaotic circumstances to uncover an international mystery with World War II roots.

Max is a renowned researcher who specializes in studying DNA and the human genome. While working in Berlin, he is abducted by Joe, a professional Nazi hunter who needs Max and his lab partner, Katya, to examine a severed hand. The hand is tied to a recent bombing at a Neo-Nazi rally that rocked a city.

The hand belonged to Carius, who served as a colonel in the Waffen SS. Joe wants to know how an 111-year-old man could still be alive; he's also curious about how Carius fits into a larger pattern of terror attacks in Germany, all of which are connected to a secretive Neo-Nazi organization. The questions, and another bombing, lead Max and Katya deep into the jungles of Brazil, where they uncover a monster from history.

This addictive narrative begins with the explosion that killed Carius, and is fast to reveal the political motivations of the terrorists, too. All that occurs relates to the mystery around Carius's longevity. Who Max, Katya, and Joe are as individuals somewhat recedes in service of the narrative's brisk movement: they are reduced to their respective roles, with Max and Katya as scientists first, and Joe explored in terms of his dedication to bringing war criminals to justice.

Elements of real science wend into the narrative, while a love affair between Max and Katya, though it comes to feel superfluous, also gives the story extra steam. The scientific conversations are needed because of the story's reliance on DNA sequencing and genetic discoveries; still, the dialogue around them is often stilted. And the book's villains are ciphers—almost inhuman monstrosities whose motivations are too obvious.

Much of the story is predictable. It includes Nazis, occult science, Vatican involvement, and tropical lairs. Though intended as hints, the nods to who lurks in the Brazilian rain forest are blunt, and that figure's ultimate reveal is no surprise. The book's fun rests in its action, and in the interactions between the main characters. Still, the book's conclusion is never in doubt, particularly once the broad outlines of the plot are revealed.

In the science-minded thriller *The Gene of Life*, three unlikely heroes track and fight an old evil.

BENJAMIN WELTON (June 4, 2021)

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