

**Marty Drexell: Witness To The Endtimes
in
"Genetic Material"**

"Thanks for your time, Dr. Hutchins." Marty shuffled through the papers in his bag.

The doctor glanced up from the notebook that he was looking through, sliding his glasses down to look at Marty. "It's no problem at all, son. There's not enough time in the day for me to talk about myself and my work." He chuckled to himself, pressing the glasses back onto the bridge of his nose, and went back to skimming his notes.

Marty finally ended his shuffling, withdrawing a pad and small tape recorder from the depths of his bag.

Marty had been one of the star reporters at the Oberwalz University Of Fineness for nearly three years and was a state and national prize-winner for some of his stories, ranging from his article on marmoset-trading in the local Oberwalz underground to stories detailing school corruption, when the dean sold four of the dormitory buildings to pay off his gambling debts.

But, after being caught in the computer lab after-hours with his co-reporter, Lydia, in a particularly sticky situation by her father, the school's Literature professor, Marty was unceremoniously demoted from his usual stories down to second-rung filler, mainly consisting of girl's softball training reports and layouts of the next week's cafeteria menu.

And, now, here he was, late in the evening, doing an interview with the college's most notoriously flaky professor. It was his dubious task to learn about and document some of the exciting new research that Dr. Hutchins was doing in his time outside of teaching.

"So, Doctor," Marty began, clicking his tape recorder on and checking the list of questions that he had written on his notepad, "how long have you been at the school now?"

Dr. Hutchins tilted his head to one side and focused on Marty. "Martin. You came all the way to ask me a question like that?"

The abruptness of the Doctor's reply took Marty by surprise. "I'm sorry, Doctor?"

"You heard me, Marty... You could have stayed at the school newspaper's office and dug up records on how long I've been at the school."

Marty was nearly speechless. He pressed the 'stop' button of the tape recorder and wiped his brow with the back of his hand. "Well... That is true, Doctor. But I was given an assignment and I will follow through with it."

"That's noble of you, Martin, but you can do better than that. If you want to know that I've been here for 16 years, that's fine... But I know that you are a little more inquisitive than that."

"Well, Doctor... To tell you the truth, I'm a bit angry that I was stuck with this assignment. I've helped to uncover political corruption. Now, I'm helping to uncover what you're going to be teaching in class next week."

"Well, then, why don't you go on your way?"

Marty sighed and rubbed his eyes. He looked up at Dr. Hutchins and back to his lap. Finally, after several seconds he reached back over to his tape recorder, switching it on again.

"So, exactly what is it that you do to earn your grant money, Doctor?"

The shelves on the back wall of the laboratory slid to the side and Dr. Hutchins and Marty stepped into the dark abyss that was exposed.

There was a click and a low flicker as fluorescent lights started up slowly, gradually exposing the scene to Marty's eyes.

At first, it was hard for him to understand what he was seeing. Then, it was hard for him to believe what he saw. The room, at first glance, was much like many other laboratories that one would see around the science department of a college campus. But, then, subtle differences started to sink it. The strange vials and jars filled with what seemed to be the fetuses of various species.

"Um... Doc, exactly what kind of research are you doing here?"

"Well, Marty... I'm experimenting with human cloning and hybridization."

Marty sighed. "Doc, do you realize how insane that sounds? Human cloning? Hybridization? How is it possible to clone a human being, much less start splicing genes with some other..."

"Warthogs. For one."

There wasn't anything that Marty could do except stare blankly for several seconds.

Dr. Hutchins seemed mildly annoyed by Marty's silence.

"Walter!"

A shuffling noise started in the back of the room and drew closer, until Marty could see a squat, pig-nosed man wander into the light. His face was long and he had a distinct snout and ears that sat high on his head.

"Yo," the thing snorted. His very human eyes caught the light and shone with a strange intelligence.

"Walter, I figured that it would be best for you to meet our young reporter friend here. He is welcome and is here to learn what our research is."

"Is he an experiment?"

Walter grinned, showing glistening tusk, and Dr. Hutchins chuckled before answering. "No, Marty, he is my assistant."

"So... what is it that you're doing?"

"This," Hutchins said, pointing at Walter, "is just one of my many glorious works." Walter emitted a snort. "He is, admittedly, one of my finer works."

Marty looked over the cloven hooves, the gut, and the mishmash of a face and was mildly disconcerted by the news. "And what wasn't quite up to par?"

"Well," started Dr. Hutchins, "I am mildly reluctant to show you my faulty work, but I think you are a lad of understanding and intelligence much higher than your fellows." He moved past several drop-sheet-covered containers, pulling back the coverings so that Marty could see what was underneath. And what was underneath was truly shocking.

"You see, at first I thought it was a good idea to try cross-breeding a man and a ham sandwich. In the end, it seems like a foolish idea. But you must understand, at the time, it was done with the best of intentions."

"Which were?" Marty raised the recorder level to the Doctor's mouth.

"Well, to create a man who would be able to subsist off of a self-produced food supply..." Marty only stared. "You see, he would always have food..." Marty's

eyes scanned over the rancid meat and bread coupled with flesh floating in the tube and was horrified. "Yes, I know. It wasn't very good."

The Doctor walked to the next small container. "Here I created a human being with a second head, facing backwards so as to make sure that one has no objects, such as toilet paper, sticking to their shoe. It seemed like a much stronger decision at the time."

"I'm sure."

"You'll, of course, notice the miniscule size of the second head. It had a very limited capacity for speech, only having an ability to speak in two-syllable phrases such as 'hey now'. I tried to correct the error, but in the end it wasn't worth the trouble to not have toilet paper stuck on your shoe."

Dr. Hutchins walked to the next container and lifted up the drop sheet's edge, revealing the brown, churning goo inside. "This isn't so much an experiment," he said. "It's just the vat where I make my Boston baked beans. Though I found that the last three batches were sentient. But I'm hoping that the next batch will turn out. I've got a contest coming up at the Oberwalz County Fair. I won for baked beans last year..."

Hutchins wandered off to next container, leaving Walter and Marty to catch up.

"Over here you'll see where I've been trying to combine man with cat, so that they will be able to move faster and be stronger and more agile, but I've found that the only real differences created have been a predilection for licking themselves, hair growth, and a fondness for climbing into automobile engines to sleep. I've lost 4 specimens and a lovely Volkswagen Rabbit that way."

"Doctor, this is all fascinating," Marty interrupted, "but what exactly do you tell the school that you do?"

"Mollusk research. No one gives a shit about those little bastards. So, no one ever stops by to check up on my work... Not that I'm not prepared with the hidden laboratory and all."

"So what do you have to show for your work, then?"

"Well, I have my personal satisfaction and a warthog assistant."

"Isn't there anything more to gain from all this research... as strange as it is? I mean, you're doing things that no one else has ever done... Not that they've tried. Or would want to."

"Well, I'm hoping to one day create a legion of minions to control the world. Or, at least, do some light housework for me or wash my clothes. You can never give good housekeepers enough credit, as far as I'm concerned."

"So what do you feel that I should write about you in my interview, then?"

"Well," the Doctor pondered, "I've got nice shoes."

The Doctor was quiet for a while, before adding a request. "But, Marty, just try to keep all this genetic manipulation quiet... I've got to pay for a new Rabbit."

Two days later, Marty had the Doctor arrested. After hearing Marty's tape, the police took all of the genetic materials as evidence and social services put Walter into a foster home. Dr. Hutchins was charged with something strange involving the words "national security" and "playing God".

As amazing as the Doctor's work had seemed, Marty felt a necessity to do what was right and keep Dr. Hutchins from corrupting the human gene pool. Because, he felt, no man should be able to screw around with nature with no one watching over him. Some things in this world must be kept pure. And, plus, no more softball practice.

Marty was back on top.