

CLONING  
GALINDA  
A NOVEL

JAN SMOLDERS

Cloning  
*Galinda*

**A Novel**

**JAN SMOLDERS**



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**A NOVEL**

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# Chapter 1

7:30 p.m.

Friday, February 17, 2012

The City of Noredge, Ohio

“I don’t buy it,” Mary Jenkins muttered quietly to Joe, her hand covering her right cheek. She had been standing with him at a community meeting for the last twenty minutes, nervously shifting her weight back and forth. Arms firmly crossed, lips pursed, she listened and frowned. “Those suits are too smooth—feel too superior—the mayor and the ministers already in their pockets.”

“*Shh!*” Joe whispered, hands behind back, chest protruding, a hint of a kind smile.

“Not on my land! Jenkins land. Over my dead body.”

He sighed audibly. “Quiet.” He threw quick glances left and right.

Mary nodded.

The “suits” were three officials of the Doornaert Oil and Gas Company headquartered in nearby Canton, Ohio. One had said he was a lawyer, and his two companions spoke polished marketing and vague public relations lingo. It had rubbed Mary the wrong way from the moment they’d uttered their first words.

This was serious business, a community matter, the issue of bringing fracking, hydraulic fracturing, to the fourteen thousand citizens of Noredge. The elderly, bald Mayor Sanders, all of his two hundred pounds on his short-ish frame, had opened the meeting. “Community Outreach,” the announcement had said.

Mary knew a thing or two about fracking. Amidst kids' soccer games and homework, the kitchen, house cleaning and her fifth-grade teaching job at the Deep Creek Public School on Main Street she had read up for more than a year on the good and bad of the oil and gas industry's recent technology. She knew the history of a good number of fracking wells in Ohio—and that more than one hundred of them were being drilled every day in the USA.

In her mid-thirties, divorced for five years, Mary lived with her boys Andy and Jimmy, ages nine and six, and her “refrigerator” boyfriend, Joe. She and Joe had been together for eighteen months. He worked for Doornaert, employed there since 2009. When she first met Joe Bertolo she had fallen head over heels in love with the uncomplicated, former high school linebacker. His straightforward talk, his voice, his rugged looks, his folksy humor—she adored all of it. But she had raised her eyebrows when he explained that he hauled “dirty water” from Doornaert wells in the region to special injection wells near Youngstown. Every day, with his huge tanker trailer. He was specialized in this work, which was, he said, much more complicated and important than he described it. He argued with conviction that he was involved in a business—fracking—that did a lot of good, but also had some problems. “Me, I don’t do any harm. I clean up. I help Doornaert be a good citizen. The company has a good reputation.” His face had radiated pride and Mary was shocked when he went on to reveal his weekly pay was fifteen hundred dollars.

The Doornaert marketing man stood at the end of the oval table, its fifteen seats filled by elderly folks and persons of authority; he looked too refined and sounded too cocky for Mary’s taste. But his story apparently impressed the standing crowd of about sixty that had filled to capacity the Noredge Chamber of Commerce’s conference room.

The place was spartanly decorated, with just a black and white historic picture of downtown, a framed photo of the then youthful mayor and one wide, aging bookcase sporting, besides books, a flat TV screen and piles of magazines. The heating was overdoing it. The coffee- and teapots on the table had their screw stoppers removed, signaling to the empty cups spread out over the table that they were all done for the day.

The company's pitch, complete with a flashy, six-minute video and patriotic music, had seemed overwhelming for many of the folks in the room. Noredge would take "the Great Leap Forward." The Doornaert folks hadn't credited Mao Tse-tung. *Shock and awe*, Mary thought, a little disdain slipping in.

"Utica!" the Doornaert man shouted, hands up high. "Let that Utica shale under your land work for you! Make Noredge rich!"

"That shale, the 'source rock,' sits a few thousand feet under your city," the lawyer added, his tone overly friendly. "Its oil and gas have been waiting there for us for more than four hundred million years. Haven't we tested their patience long enough?" He welcomed nods and shouts with open hands. "A good leasing fee can mean three thousand per acre or more, depending, of course, on your location and topography. That's money in the bank. And if we can get a well or wells drilled and working on your property, you're also looking at a minimum, *mi-ni-mum*, of twenty thousand dollars in royalties, per well, *per well*, over a period of a few years."

"Wow! Guaranteed?" a woman asked, sounding skeptical over the soft murmur that floated through the room.

The lawyer nodded. "These are ballpark figures, of course, ma'am. I can't guarantee you that the sun will come up tomorrow, but it would be a pretty good bet, right? Nothing's guaranteed in life, but we're not kidding. This is real. And once the well's done producing we'll lock it all up with cement

and you'll have your acres back unscathed." He paused. His big smile mixed confidence and condescension.

The woman turned to the man standing next to her, wide-eyed with both disbelief and enthusiasm.

The murmur got louder.

The PR man added suggestively, "And how would you like to pay two bucks at the pump? For Premium?"

"Yeah! We won't have to import dirty oil from dictators! We're paying the tyrants and ayatollahs through the nose!" a young adult hollered. "USA! USA!"

Some chimed in. "USA! USA!"

"Quiet!" It was Phil Jones, the stocky nonagenarian in the room.

Joe smiled at Mary.

"How about all those accidents? That gas in the water in Pennsylvania?" The gray-haired lady's question was barely audible.

"The gas? The gas! Yes. Of course! The gas and all these accidents on TV! How about them?" the lawyer repeated loudly, sounding pleased with the question.

"That faked tone," Mary whispered.

"Just listen." Joe sounded a bit irritated.

The PR man coughed and took a few seconds to formulate his answer. "Well, ma'am, like everything else in life fracking isn't perfect all the time. But it's damn...it's pretty close. And we're getting better every day. We all love clean water and air, and we'll do our damndest, uh...our very best to keep it all clean. We Doornaert people breathe and drink too, you know."

For the past three or four years Mary had paid her seventy-dollar dues to the Sierra Club and devoured their literature. The Doornaert people were