



Spiral: A Novel

By Paul McEuen

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In this riveting debut thriller—a finalist for Best First Novel at the 2012 Thriller Awards and a nominee for a Nero Award—the race is on to stop the devastating proliferation of the ultimate bioweapon. *Spiral* is perfect for fans of Michael Crichton, Douglas Preston & Lincoln Child, and Richard Preston.

When Nobel laureate Liam Connor is found dead at the bottom of one of Ithaca, New York's famous gorges, his research collaborator, Cornell professor of nanoscience Jake Sterling, refuses to believe it was suicide. Why would one of the world's most eminent biologists, a eighty-six-year old man in good health who survived some of the darkest days of the Second World War, have chosen to throw himself off a bridge? And who was the mysterious woman caught on camera at the scene? Soon it becomes clear that a cache of supersophisticated nanorobots—each the size of a spider—has disappeared from the dead man's laboratory.

Stunned by grief, Jake, Liam's granddaughter, Maggie, and Maggie's nine-year-old son, Dylan, try to put the pieces together. They uncover ingeniously coded messages Liam left behind pointing toward a devastating secret he gleaned off the shores of war-ravaged Japan and carried for more than sixty years.

What begins as a quest for answers soon leads to a horrifying series of revelations at the crossroads of biological warfare and nanoscience. At this dangerous intersection, a skilled and sadistic assassin, an infamous Japanese war criminal, and a ruthless U.S. government official are all players in a harrowing game of power, treachery, and intrigue—a game whose winner will hold the world's fate literally in the palm of his hand.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Set in and around the city of Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell physics professor McEuen's fiction debut successfully mixes science and suspense. When Liam Connor—an 86-year-old Cornell emeritus professor of biology, a Nobel Prize winner, and pioneer in the field of nanoscience—inexplicably jumps to his death off a bridge into one of Ithaca's gorges, the entire community is stunned, especially Connor's granddaughter, Maggie, and his academic confidant, professor Jake Sterling. But when micro-robots—silicon and metal constructs that Connor helped create—are found in his stomach, Maggie and Jake realize that he didn't commit suicide: he was tortured before being murdered. As they race to unravel cryptic messages Connor left behind, his ruthless killer plots to unleash an ingenious biological "doomsday weapon" with origins all the way back to WWII Japan. While the cutting-edge science and apocalyptic backdrop power the narrative, it's the cast of endearing characters and their interpersonal relationships and struggles that make this emotionally intense and thought-provoking novel so readable. (Mar.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review It's hard to reckon with the realization that a prominent scientist in a cutting-edge field, writing his first novel in his "spare time," has created what may be the most gripping and engrossing thriller this reviewer has ever read in almost 50 years of thriller reading. But facts are facts, and the opinion is considered. McEuen has created an indelible hero in 85-year-old Liam Connor, a diminutive scientific giant. But Liam dies at the hands of a brilliant, merciless female assassin within the first 50 pages. He is entrancing, and McEuen's decision to kill him off so quickly shows authorial panache. Left to unravel a complex scheme to launch the "most devastating terrorist attack in human history" are Liam's granddaughter, her nine-year-old son, and one of Liam's colleagues, Jake Sterling, a Cornell physicist. McEuen, also a Cornell physicist, wisely writes about what he knows—science, nanoscience, and Cornell—but also shows a true gift for plotting, pace, characterization, and writerly clarity. He mines relatively little-known history about Japan's horrific experiments with biological weapons in WWII. He offers brief, lucid disquisitions on science; notes that a large university is the ideal place to begin a global plague; posits that "synthetic biology" will surpass silicon microelectronics as the next big technological wave; and remarkably, he makes these ideas accessible to typical thriller aficionados. A stunning achievement. --Thomas Gaughan

Review

Advance praise for *Spiral*

"*Spiral* by Paul McEuen carries the reader on a fascinating ride through a world of bioweaponry, nanoscience, murder, and international intrigue. This gripping story, partially based on Unit 731, the biological warfare group of the Imperial Japanese Army in World War II, is one of the best debut thrillers I've read in a long time."—Douglas Preston, author of *Impact* and *The Monster of Florence*

"*Spiral* is an all-too-frighteningly-real tale. This is an exciting debut."—Steve Berry, author of *The Emperor's Tomb*

"A riveting story that combines international intrigue with fascinating inventions such as the MicroCrawler, a spiderlike robot with knife-sharp legs. In more ways than one, *Spiral* will get under your skin." —Mark Alpert, author of *Final Theory*

“Fast-paced and suspenseful . . . McEuen, a leader in nanoscience research at Cornell, makes unsettling use of recent developments in the field. . . . After you’ve finished the book, try not hearing [the MicroCrawlers] go *tink tink tink* in the night. . . . exciting and unsettling.”—*Kirkus Reviews*

“It’s hard to reckon with the realization that a prominent scientist in a cutting-edge field, writing his first novel in his “spare time,” has created what may be the most gripping and engrossing thriller this reviewer has ever read in almost 50 years of thriller reading...[Paul McEuen] wisely writes about what he knows...but also shows a true gift for plotting, pace, characterization, and writerly clarity...and remarkably, he makes [his] ideas accessible to typical thriller aficionados. A stunning achievement.”

– Booklist, starred review

Users Review

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Johnnie Nystrom:

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Paula Daniels:

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