

## Miracles and Monsters by Rob John

This was supposed to be the happiest day of her life yet Dr Jenny Sullivan looked worried as she sat alone in her laboratory. She had locked the door and turned off her phone. She was thinking. Thinking about her terrible dream.

This was supposed to be the proudest day of her life. The day when Jenny Sullivan told the world all about her amazing new discovery. Hundreds of journalists and TV crews had come to The International Institute and were downstairs now waiting to hear about Jenny's miracle breakthrough. But Jenny sat alone in her locked laboratory thinking about her dream.

'Are you ready, Jenny?'  
It was Professor Whiting, Jenny's boss.

'They're all waiting for you. It's time to go down.'

Jenny didn't reply. She looked up at a framed black and white photograph of an elderly lady which hung on the wall. Marie Curie..... Jenny's hero. One of the world's greatest scientists; the woman who discovered radium. How Jenny wished Marie Curie was alive today. How she wished the photograph would come to life so that she could talk to Marie.....tell her about her terrible dream....ask her advice.  
'What shall I do?' said Jenny to the photo.

Marie Curie stared back at Jenny from the photograph but said nothing. People had said making this pill was just a dream. People said it couldn't be done. Even some of the older members of the research team here at Institute thought it could never happen. If you'd told them ten years ago that a young scientist called Jenny Sullivan would be the one to make the breakthrough they'd have laughed in your face.

'She's not much more than a girl,' they'd have said. 'How's she going to find the answer we've been looking for all these years?'

But it was Jenny who found the answer. She deserved her success because it was Jenny who worked late at night when the others had gone home .....Jenny who came into the laboratory at weekends when the others were gardening or playing golf.... Jenny Sullivan who never took a holiday.....Jenny Sullivan who one day discovered this pill, the miracle food.





Her pill was special because it contained proteins, carbohydrates, fats, minerals, vitamins .....everything that a human being needed to stay healthy. It was tasty, simple to make, cheap to produce, easy to transport and best of all it came in tablet form. A single delicious tablet could fill you up and give you all the food you needed for a whole day. Just imagine holding a whole day's food supply on the tip of an out-stretched finger! Imagine being able to put all the food you needed for a week in an egg cup. With her discovery there would be no more hunger, no more famines. Every child in the world would be able to grow up strong and healthy simply by swallowing a little tablet each day. It truly was a miracle and it was all Jenny Sullivan's work.

But today as the world waited to clap and cheer Jenny Sullivan sat alone in her laboratory sadly staring at a photograph of her hero Marie Curie and reliving her terrible dream.

In her dream Jenny is an old lady. She is sitting in a black car and she is being driven through the countryside on a summer's day. But something is wrong. The fields where once they grew wheat and barley are full of weeds. The meadows where cows once grazed are empty. There are no sheep on the hillsides and the farmhouses are falling to pieces with broken tractors rusting in their yards. The driver stops the car outside a small cottage. He points to the cottage garden.

'This is it, Ma'am, The last apple tree in England.'

In her dream Jenny walks up the garden path. She sees an old man standing by a tree. The man reaches up and picks a red juicy apple and gives it to her. Jenny looks at the apple.

'It's beautiful,' she says.

'Yes,' says the old man. 'But no-one wants apples any more. No point.'

In her dream Jenny bites into the apple.

'Nowadays you can get all the goodness of an apple from a tiny little pill.' says the man.

'No,' says Jenny feeling the sweet juice run into the back of her mouth. 'No you can't' Professor Whiting knocked on the door again.

'Jenny are you alright? We have to go down now.'

Jenny didn't answer. She was still looking at her photograph of Marie Curie.

'Did you work in the evenings and weekends?' said Jenny to the photograph. 'Did you ever take a holiday? How did you feel when you discovered radium? Did you have any idea what would happen to your discovery?'

Jenny knew that without radium we'd never have developed the treatment for some



serious diseases. Without radium thousands of people would have died. But Jenny also knew that much later other scientists used Marie Curie's work to build the first atomic bomb and thousands of people died when those terrible bombs were used for the first time.

'Science can make miracles,' thought Jenny, 'but it can also make monsters. What if her pill turns out to be a monster? Do we really want a world where we don't grow our own food? Do we really want a world without apples?'

And that's when the real miracle happened. Jenny looked up at Marie Curie and suddenly she remembered something that she had read. It was something that Marie Curie had written a long time ago. As Jenny looked at the picture the words came into head almost as if the great scientist was talking to her now.

'Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.'

'Yes,' thought Jenny. 'The more we understand, the less we have to fear. We can't hide from science. We have to understand it and then use it the best way we can.' Jenny stared at the picture.

'People will always want apples, won't they?'

Although Jenny knew it was scientifically impossible she was sure she saw Marie Curie smile and slowly nod her head.

'Thank you,' said Jenny.

'Jenny, we have to go now. Please open the door.' Now Professor Whiting was sounding a bit scared.

Dr Jenny Sullivan unlocked the door and smiled.

'I'm ready professor,' she said. 'Let's go and tell the world.'