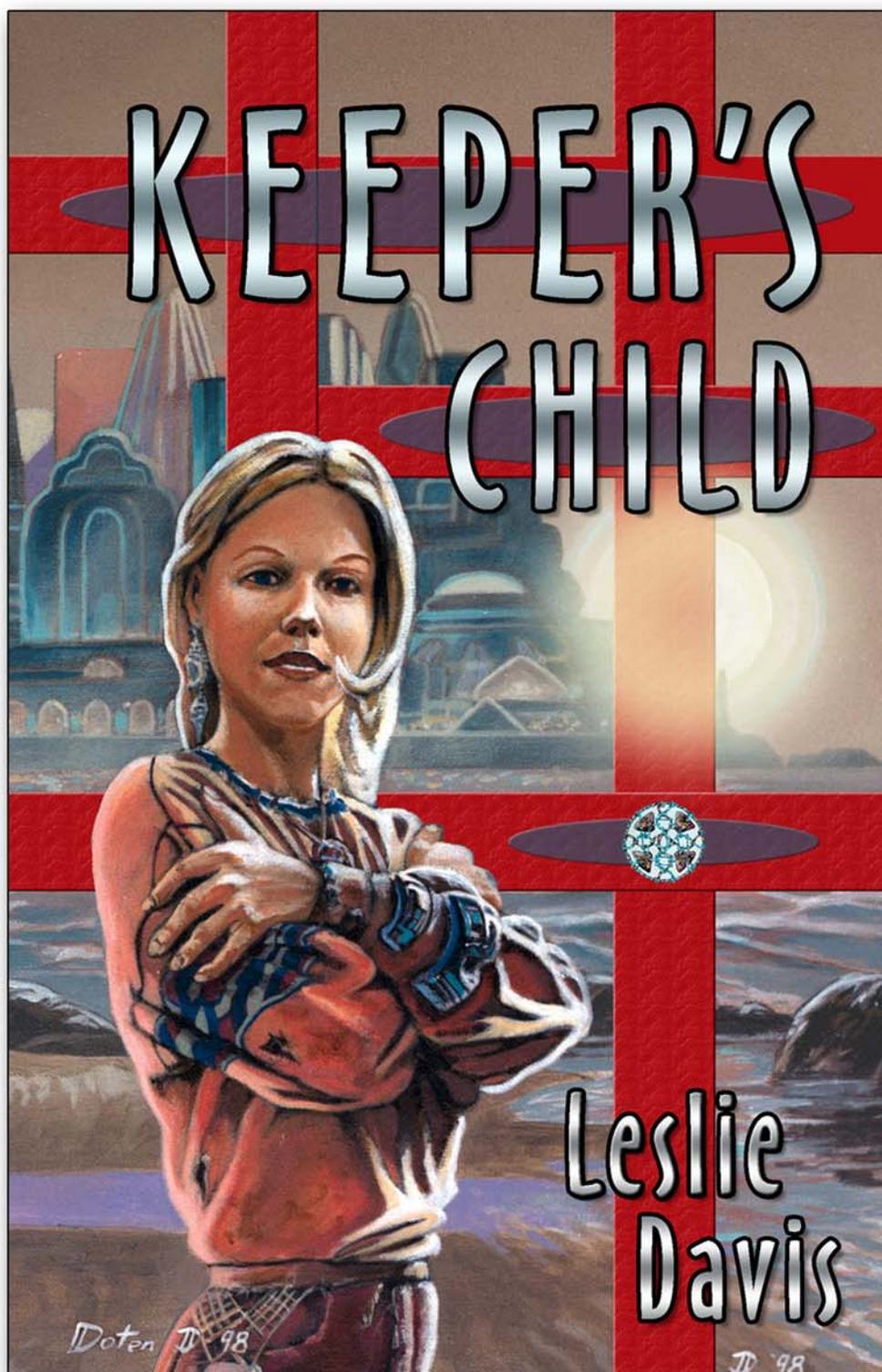


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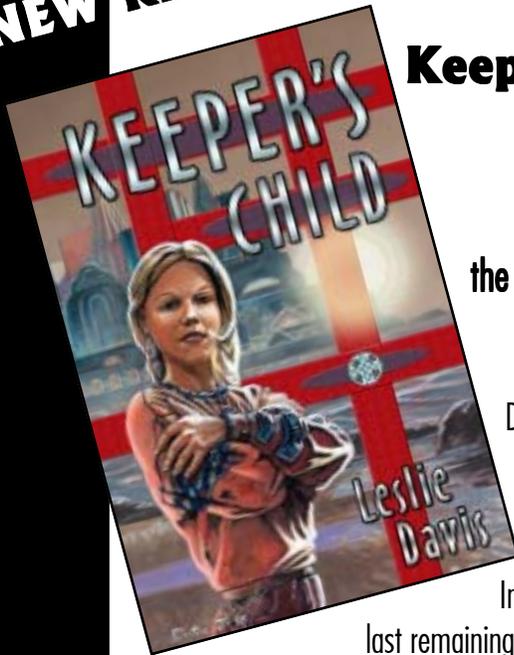


Keepers Child by Leslie Davis  
ISBN-13: 978-1-894063-01-2 / ISBN-10: 1-894063-01-5  
5.5" X 8.5" - 352 Pages - Trade Paperback  
USA Release: October 15, 2007  
\$ 19.95 US BISAC: FIC028000

Science Fiction

Keeper's Child  
**ABOUT THE  
BOOK**

**NEW RELEASE**



## **Keepers Child by Leslie Davis**

**In a time not so distant from our own, the land is scarred;  
the air tainted; and the desperate poor are sick and dying.**

Dr. Jesse Grange has spent the last thirty years trying to rebuild his protected city and its technology. Now he glimpses the future and sees what may be the end of the world.

In his walled city, Jesse lives as a hero and celebrity, guardian of one of the last remaining safe havens on the continent. But the mistakes of the past are catching up to his best efforts, and with news of the failure of the latest experiment his hopes of a real future for his people are dashed.

Beckoned by his brother, a banished Keeper of the sick, to travel to the edge of the sea, Jessie Grange experiences first hand the ash grey air, the bitterly cold sand, and the tainted and unduly warm ocean.

Then, as Jesse enters his brother's house, he catches a glimpse of the girl who may be the savior and salvation of humanity; Robin Sayers.

Robin is Desgastas, born into exile because of the genetic trap in her blood. She has lived all her short life under her Keeper's care, absorbing both his faith and his bitterness. Now her world will change as she is uprooted from the only home she has ever known and forced to shelter in Jesse's sterile sanctum as a "marked" child.

There Robin will begin the battle for her life, her faith, and for the future...

**Keeper's Child**

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EDGE Science Fiction and Fantasy Publishing / Release: October 15, 2007

Trade paperback / ISBN-10: 1-894063-01-5 / ISBN-13: 978-1-894063-01-2 / 352 Pages / \$19.95 US / \$21.95 CD

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"Most of my stories have their roots in my dreams. I dream crazy, wild dreams almost every night, and often wake up thinking: "I've got to write this down." Usually it's a character sketch, or a flash of imagery, rather than a real line. I have notebooks full of pieces of dreams. I've been writing since I was a think I started writing because I couldn't find enough stories to read in my genres: science fiction and fantasy. No matter what else I'm doing with my ways writing in some form or another." – Leslie Davis.

Leslie resides in Spokane, Washington with her husband, hundreds of paperbacks, two children and three cats. When she is not doing renovations around the house, she spends her time practicing Yoga.

She finds free minutes to write whenever she can.

Leslie Davis

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# chapter one

Jesse searched his brother's face as he stepped from the sea, hoping for any sign of welcome. From boyhood Harold had loved the sea, had delighted in the gifts it disgorged onto the sand. Jesse remembered running together on a warmer beach in a softer time, two boys collecting the treasures waves had given up overnight. Now Harold's mouth was set and hard, his eyes bitter. This delinquent brother the ocean had dared to spit back onto his shore was apparently one gift he did not want to take back to his House.

Harold stood still on the shadowed porch of the old House, waiting. Unruffled, Jesse took measured steps across the sand. The wind off the beach scraped across his wet skin and plucked at his scalp. It blew icy cold, and by the time he stood under the eaves of the House goose bumps puckered his skin.

"Why did you come?" Harold asked. As if in reaction Jesse's teeth began to chatter. He resisted the impulse to rub at his freezing arms.

"Andy called-" Jesse began, but Harold wouldn't let him finish.

"Are you alone?" He glanced at the boat anchored out beyond the waves. Jesse nodded. Scowling at his brother's nakedness, Harold shook his head and waved a hand.

"Then come inside and put some clothes on." Harold turned his back on the sea and pulled open the screen door. Damp corroded the latticed metal, Jesse noticed as he padded up the porch steps. Thin flakes of rust loosened beneath Harold's hand. More flakes shivered and fell when Jesse brushed the screen with his shoulder.

A girl hovered in the shadows just beyond the door. Jesse was a slight man, smaller than most cityborn half his age, but the child who watched him from the darkness was tiny. The crown of her head barely reached Jesse's waist.

"The disease breeds them smaller and smaller," a technician Jesse worked with had once remarked. At the time Jesse had agreed. He had seen many sickened, stunted children. This girl was different. She lingered just inside the screen door, regarding him with a lively curiosity. Jesse saw that she was like many of the healthy cityborn children, slow to grow and quick to learn.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Keeper's Child by Leslie Davis

Keeper's Child  
SAMPLE  
CHAPTER

"Hello," he tried, and the girl watched him with bright blue eyes. She didn't seem startled by his lack of clothes. She would have seen nakedness before, Jesse knew. She probably wondered instead who he was and why he ruffled the usually placid Keeper.

When he smiled at her she didn't smile back, and when he offered his hand she didn't take it, so he shrugged and walked past her into the depths of the House. The old building was much quieter than he remembered, and much darker. Despite the daylight, candles burned in sconces on the faded walls. Jesse remembered their smell. As a boy he had helped his brother make the tapers, he remembered dipping the wicks, and the soft beeswax that burnt his fingers. Before the candles there had been electricity, no doubt the House was still wired. Then electric lamps had burned, keeping back the long nights, and there had been hope. Now the walls stank of mold.

Harold had vanished into the gloom of the House, so Jesse found his way on his own through the dim hallways and into the kitchen. The room hadn't changed. The plank tables and wooden benches that had seated so many friends and lovers were still painted blue, and still worn smooth with use. He opened one of the whitewashed cupboard doors, and then another. Each shelf stood empty, and when Jesse tried the kitchen faucet the pipes squealed, dry and unforgiving.

"What did Andy want?" Harold switched subjects abruptly. "Why did you come?"

"She said Kris was dead and that she was dying. And she said you would be next."

The finger on the glass stilled. "She knew."

Briefly, Jesse felt anger. He squelched it. "Of course she knew. She knew you better than you thought, brother. She loved you more than you wanted." He took a breath, afraid despite his resolve. "How long? How much more time do you have?"

"A few months. A week." Harold shrugged. "I've lived longer than most. Freer than most."

Jesse hunched forward. He looked down at the sand on his toes, and tried to swallow back the grief that clogged his throat.

"Andy didn't want you to take me to your city."

"I don't know." Jesse admitted. "Maybe. Yes, I think maybe she did."

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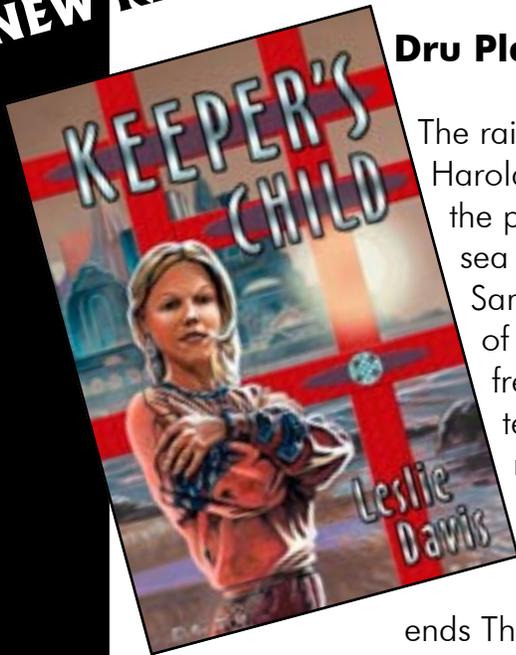
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## **Dru Plagiassotti - The Harrow**

The rain fell in a steady torrent for five days. When it stopped Harold abandoned his chair on the porch and retreated to the privacy of his bedroom. Robin spent more time in the sea than on land. Jesse stopped caring for the House. Sand gathered on the hardwood floors, and all but three of the household candles burned down to nothing. The fresh apples Isabella had carried from the village rotted on the kitchen table. Robin and Harold ate almost nothing, and Jesse's taste for the tangy fruit had vanished. (— Keeper's Child, pp. 55-56)

T.S. Eliot's most famous stanza may be the one that ends The Hollow Men:

This is the way the world ends  
This is the way the world ends  
This is the way the world ends  
Not with a bang but a whimper.

The world in Keeper's Child is ending on Eliot's whimper: humanity is tired, melancholy, and defeated. When the cruiser Sacramento went down in 2008 bearing a load of genetic material, the spillage poisoned the 631 migrants hired to clean up the mess. The results weren't immediately obvious, but two generations later, the grandchildren of those migrants began to die as adults of a degenerative disease, and the ocean and land began to sicken. Bioengineer George Bruster tried to develop a counterbacteria that would stop the spread of the disease in the ocean, but it didn't work fast enough, and it began to warm the ocean as it worked.

Now, eighty years later, civilization has retreated to a few enclaves where those who've inherited the disease — the Desgastas — are given an identifying Mark and allowed to live in the city or are left outside city walls, unMarked, to huddle in crude camps or hospice-like Houses. Plants and animals are mutating and be-

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Keeper's Child  
Reviews and  
Testimonials

# Keeper's Child

coming toxic, and Jesse, the man who developed the Mark, has returned home to the House where his brother Harold, the keeper, is dying. When he finally leaves, he takes quiet, infected Robin with him.

Keeper's Child is less about Robin than about Jesse and the decline of a poisoned world. Jesse has discovered that the disease is mutating in humans, turning some of them into mad, feral creatures, afflicting the Desgastas at increasingly younger ages, and, finally, infecting the "clean" cityborn. Both he and Robin are trapped by the situation, Robin knowing that she carries the disease and reluctantly accepted into the Desgastas society, Jesse as of yet uninfected and considered a pariah by cityborn and Desgastas both.

The tone of the novel is unrelentingly melancholy; an understated description of the fear and despair that overtakes the city as it becomes clear that nobody is safe anymore. Neither Robin nor Jesse have any optimism about the future; they are simply doing what they can to survive. The narrative style is one of quiet observation, with the story's moments of action and tension subordinated to its longer passages about struggle and death. Even when one small, bittersweet hope of survival presents itself, it comes veiled in pain and death.

Keeper's Child is a lyrical novel, a dirge for a society that didn't consider how its science might react with the world's ecosystem. But it doesn't preach or present its readers with an action-packed plot that pits intrepid survivors against post-apocalyptic monsters; it simply unfolds description after description of humanity's gradual decline in a mutating world. Readers who find Michael Crichton's impassioned warnings about science's missteps to be too much will appreciate the more subdued and human-centered approach that Leslie Davis takes in Keeper's Child.

<http://www.theharrow.com:80/journal/index.php/journal/article/viewArticle/2498/710>

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Keeper's Child  
Reviews and  
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**Keeper's Child**

## **Midwest Book Review**

It's the near future: the land is dying, the poor are sick, and a doctor has spent thirty years of his life trying to protect and rebuild a protected city and its technology. Jesse's been a hero for his efforts - but he journeys away from his beloved city to experience firsthand the dying world, and possibly its only salvation in a girl who was born with a genetic trap in her blood, struggling for her life. An engrossing story of the future will satisfy any avid science fiction reader.

### **Don D'Ammassa**

Novels of ecological collapse were quite popular a few years back, but seem to have declined in recent years, perhaps because the real problems with the environment have made us unwilling to think about it explicitly. This is, I believe, a first novel set in a not too distant future, although at times it feels more remote than the author may have intended. Various problems of pollution and ecological deterioration have devastated the world and the outlook is grimmer yet. The survivors live primarily in domed cities, where the protagonist has spent his entire life, until a summons from his brother causes him to set out on an enlightening, and depressing, journey across a blighted landscape. During that journey he will make a discovery that could change the human race's destiny. The prose in this one is excellent and I enjoyed reading it despite the downbeat setting. I was less impressed with the plot, maybe because I'm also tired of depressing scenarios, but also because it seemed a bit too pat. There weren't any big surprises. It also seemed a bit emotionally flat. It struck me as the work of a good writer who wasn't quite ready to try a more ambitious project. Hopefully, that will be her next book.

### **Charles S. Teegarden, Amazon.com**

The author weaves a tale that pulls you in and out of believing there is hope for humankind. There is no reliance on sex or violence to keep the reader moving forward. The plot is extraordinary and the dialogue thoughtful. This book is almost impossible to put down once you start reading it. I cannot wait for the next one.

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Keeper's Child  
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**Dr. H. E. Lorimer "Reader and Geneticist", Amazon.com**

Keeper's Child was originally written and published a number of years ago yet it paints an all-too-real picture of a society struggling after a biotechnology related ecological disaster. The biological methods we have developed since the initial publication of this book make it a very timely and cautionary tale. Hopefully we will have the wisdom to use these new tools that we have developed to help our world and not unleash ecological disaster like that in Keeper's Child. The protagonist of the book, Jesse, is a Geneticist who has won fame and fortune through helping people in the aftermath of the disaster. He has secrets of his own though and close connections with people less fortunate than the wealthy survivors he serves, cloistered in their gated city. His reluctant ward, the keeper's child, holds a key, but what does that key open? Nothing is simple in this world.

The scenes and characters are often very vividly drawn, I felt like I could smell the tang of the tainted ocean and feel the grit of the sand under my feet. It is often very immediate, at least one scene made me gasp out loud. It is a complex world and there are many underlying themes; issues of class, short-sightedness, our tendency to hide and hide from what we don't want to acknowledge, as well as uncontrollable biological change and adaptation. The narrative flows unevenly but it never stagnates, rather it jumps forward disorientingly, perhaps in keeping with its themes. Overall, this book is of that rare and precious variety that is likely to leave you thinking long after you have finished it. I recommend it!

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