

trilogy \Tril"o\*gy\, n. [Gr. trilogi`a; pref. tri- (see Tri-) + lo`gos speech, discourse: cf. F. trilogie.]  
A series of three dramas which, although each of them is in one sense complete, have a close mutual relation, and form one historical and poetical picture.

In the March 1999 issue of My Mac Magazine, Pete Miner claimed that the real cause for the rapid advancement in computers and technology these past 50 years was not due to human ingenuity and perserverance, but rather was a mysterious "gift" from an alien race called the "Zar-ron."

Tim Robertson and Russ Walkowich enjoyed Pete's storyline so much that they didn't want to see it end, so it wasn't long before they decided to pick up where Pete left off.

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## Part Four

She stood just inside the darkened hallway by the door, looking into the smoky interior. While she was far from inconspicuous, her penetrating stares at those who paid her more than a passing glance was usually sufficient to dissuade the curious. She was here for a purpose, one that she was not at all looking forward to.

"Help ya with something, missy?" the bartender asked from behind the mahogany bar. He was a short, skinny fellow with a few tufts of white ungainly hair, which seemed to poke straight up toward the ceiling fan. In his left hand he held a dirty rag which he was using to 'clean' the bar top.

"No, thank you." She replied, once more scanning the room. She was right on time for this meeting, and he should be here. She walked carefully towards the back of the room, her eyes carefully scanning everyone and everything. Her eyes did not miss any details. Here, a woman at least one hundred pounds overweight. There, an older man apparently asleep at the bar, his head inches from his shoulder. The head of a dead animal above the male rest room: an elk, if she was not mistaken. Why was the decapitated and severed head of an animal a prized trophy, when these same humans would bring other animals to their homes and treat them as family members? A strange and curious species, these humans.

"Have a seat" a voice commanded from her left. She counted to three before turning toward the voice. The man sitting there was a non-descript human male. His voice was soft, eyes a plain brown, hair short, and olive drab skin color. Unremarkable in every respect. Not at all threatening in appearance. "Excuse me?" she replied, lifting an eyebrow. Her left hand moved on its own accord, touching the hidden slap-blaster behind her back. Her legs automatically moved to a fighter's stance. Only another experienced warrior or assassin would notice the change in her.

"No need for that, Captain." he said, bringing a glass of liquid (beer?) to his lips and drinking slowly. He did not look directly at her. "Again, please have a seat so that we may converse more comfortably."

She sat opposite him, but still facing the rest of the bar patrons. It was then that she realized that he had not spoken in English, the language native to this part of Earth, but Russian, a country on the other side of the globe. "I was ordered here by you?" she asked, feeling the warmth of the fully charged slap-blaster against the small of her back. It was comforting. Of course, the black sweater was bulky and no one would suspect the weapon was even there, but this man had known. He had also recognized her warrior stance for what it was, meaning that he was as well trained as she was. Who was he?

"Your tracking is going well, no?" he asked as he sat his drink on the table between them. "No problems locating the writer?" His voice was still pleasant, his demeanor relaxed, but his eyes were in constant motion.

"No problems" she lied, wondering how much he already knew or suspected. She had been on the trail of Miner for a week now, and was no closer to locating him now than when she had left Washington. It was very frustrating, and her patience was wearing thin.

His eyes stopped their sweep of the room and focused intently on her. "No problems?" his voice just above a whisper, "Really now, Captain, I would hope we could have an honest and open relationship here. Starting out with falsehoods is not the way to accomplish that objective." Once more, his eyes started to take in the surroundings. She remained silent, also taking in the room. The over weight woman, about forty years of age she would estimate, had gotten up and gone to the bathroom. The bartender was watching a sporting event on the television. Another man, sitting alone by the front door, was not there when she had entered. He was not looking at her, but she sensed he was watching her every move.

"A necessary precaution, I am afraid, for a man in my position," he remarked, following her gaze, "which I am sure you can understand."

"I was ordered to be here to meet with another operative. I assume that is you. Now what is it you want?"

"I know all about the breach, Captain, and I'm understandably worried. You have reported no progress in a week. You have yet to call for help. We simply cannot have our agents running independent operations that may jeopardize our objectives, not even on a backwater planet like this," he said, his eyes once more focused on her.

She had finished her survey of the room, and could find no one else besides the man by the door to worry her. "Who are you and what do you want?"

"Ivan will do for now, Captain" he said, reaching again for his drink. "You have acquired the target, yes or no?" She then noticed that he wore something on his wrist. To humans, it would appear to be a simple bracelet. To her, it signified rank. Another Captain, like herself.

"No" she replied, meeting his eyes. He smiled, sat back in his chair, and crossed one leg over the other. His brown pants were new, the crease perfectly straight. His shoes were a dark brown, supple leather, something a bureaucrat might wear, she thought. "The writer is also an over-the-road transportation specialist, and his whereabouts are unknown at this time. I had a very good track when I was interrupted to meet here. I hope this meeting will prove worthy of the disruption of my mission, comrade." The last she spoke with distaste.

"We are thinking of calling in a termination squad and be done with this problem," he said, his eyes again sweeping the room. He may dress and speak as a

bureaucrat, but his eyes were those of a killer. So were hers.

"That would be foolish at this point," she replied, moving her body slightly so she could see both Ivan and the man by the door. Ivan leveled his gaze on her once more, leaning forward. "Foolishness is not calling for assistance when your own ineptitude is risking our security." He said, switching to earth English when he spoke. The man by the door moved then, but not of his own accord. He pitched forward, his body limp. A fountain of red erupted from his shattered skull. The shot which had killed him had come from outside, she could tell from the bloom of his destroyed skull. She was in motion already, diving left and away from the table. Ivan dove down and to the right. Her right hand had already pulled the slap-blaster from behind her back, and she squeezed off two quick rounds out the open door. No return shots were fired.

"You were followed!" Ivan screamed from his position on the floor across from her. The other bar patrons were confused. Some dropped down to the floor, covering their heads with their arms. Others had half-risen from their seats, confused and uncertain on what to do. The bartender, she saw, was nowhere in sight, though she could hear him talking frantically to (undoubtedly) the police.

"No," she said, scanning the doorway, roof, and all other avenues of possible attack. "I was not. Did you see where the kill shot came from?"

"No. Whoever it was would have had to open the door, but I didn't see either the door open or anyone come in," Ivan said, pulling his pant leg up to removed a slap-blaster similar to her own from an ankle holster. "Options?" he asked.

She did not answer, but rather rolled further away from their now overturned table. She slid to a crouch, leveling the blaster at the door, and slowing moving her hand back and forth across the room. The humans had started making a mass exodus to the front door to get out of the building, and her view of the outside was blocked. The bar had no windows and a drop ceiling. Good, no one would come though either of those ways. That left the back door.

"Stay here and cover the front, I will go around back" she ordered, moving to a door back by the bathroom. She went through the door low, her arms tracking back and forth. Nothing. No one. Foodstuff, empty bottles of beer, stale cigarette smell mixed with stale beer smells, but not much else. The back door had no glass, and was locked from the inside.

Turning back to the front, she heard a high pitched whine, a thousand bumblebees

in intensity, and the small hairs on her arm and neck stood up. "Skimmer!" she yelled out a warning to Ivan, turned back around, put a blaster shot through the rear door, and plunged outside. She was flung twenty or thirty feet in the air as soon as she was outside, the concussion from the bar exploding behind her. She hit something hard, her sight dimmed... blackness.

She tried to open her eyes. Bright light. Sirens in the distance, coming closer. Voices far off. Pain in her neck and left arm. Possible broken ribs. Dizziness. More blackness. Now gray. A male voice, above her. One eye open, a black, cheap shoe before her face on the cracked pavement.

"Well, well, well, what do we have here?" the familiar voice asked. "Nice to see you again, Jade." She tried to rise, get some weight under her, but she was too dizzy, too weak. Where was her slap-blaster? She groaned, blinked back the dizziness. Tried to put the voice above her with a face. Nothing, she was too far out of it. The void of healing, of a deep dark sleep was pulling her down. Gravity around her body was too strong.

"No," the voice called from far off. "Don't try to get up, Jade. You're too banged up. But don't worry, I'll take care of you. I'll get you cleaned up, and then you can tell us everything you know about Mr. Miner."

She could fight the darkness no longer, and oblivion was there. Her last thought before going under was a memory of the voice above her in another time and place. The voice had a gun, and sharp pain in her left side. Yes, the owner of that voice had tried to kill her. But her memory also told her she had killed that man, the man who was not a man.

"Sleep now, Jade." His voice said, and then darkness.

To be continued...

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