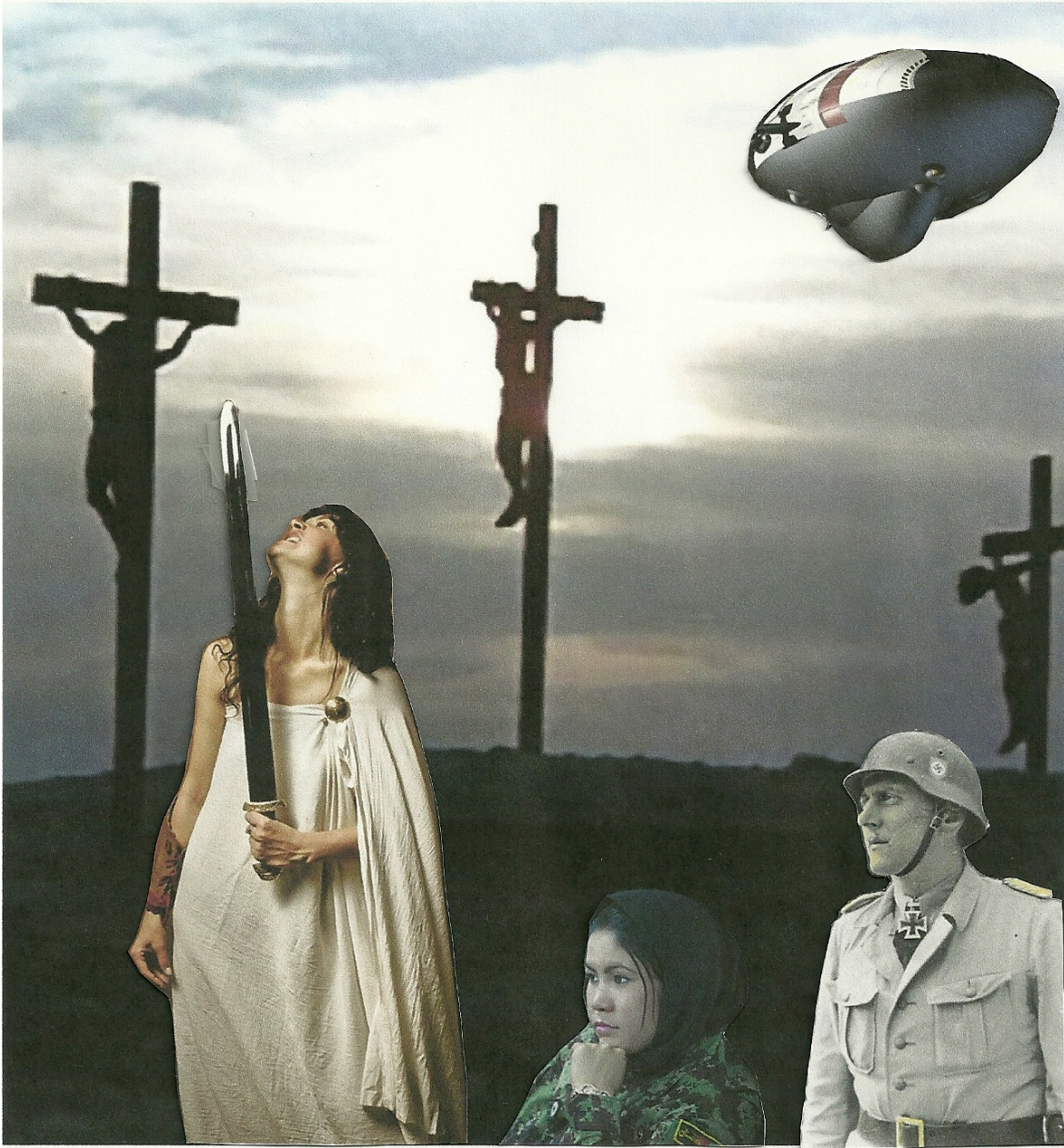


Adventures Through Time



Michel Poulin

ADVENTURES THROUGH TIME

A SCIENCE-FICTION NOVEL

BY MICHEL POULIN

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WARNING TO POTENTIAL READERS

THIS NOVEL CONTAINS GRAPHIC DESCRIPTIONS OF WAR, VIOLENCE AND SEX AS WELL AS COARSE LANGUAGE AND CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECTS UNSUITABLE FOR CHILDREN. WHILE THIS NOVEL DEPICTS MANY HISTORICAL PERSONS AND EVENTS FROM THE PAST, THIS IS A WORK OF FICTION AND WORDS OR DEEDS ATTRIBUTED IN IT TO PERSONS WHO EXISTED DO NOT REFLECT HISTORICAL EVENTS AND ONLY DESCRIBE ALTERNATE HISTORICAL SCENARIOS. RELIGIOUS-RELATED EVENTS DEPICTED IN THIS NOVEL IN NO WAY REFLECT THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF THE AUTHOR.

ABOUT THIS NOVEL

This science-fiction novel is the second installment in a collection of five novels depicting the adventures through time of Nancy Laplante, a female Canadian war correspondent and reserve army officer from the year 2012. Those novels were written prior to the fictionalized events of the 21st Century depicted in them, and thus should be treated as novels about alternate realities. The third installment in this collection, CHILDREN OF TIME, will be published around early 2013. The year in the dates shown in the headings are followed by the letters 'A', 'B' or 'C', denoting in which timeline the action is happening. Timeline 'A' is the original historical line, while Timeline 'B' is a parallel alternate history created accidentally by Nancy Laplante when she was transported against her will from 2012 to the year 1940 and changed history by her actions. Timeline 'C' will be a second parallel alternate history but is yet to be created.

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CHAPTER 1 – 2012

22:06 (Eastern Standard Time)

Thursday, October 11, 2012 'A'

Lake Manitou, Laurentians area

Province of Québec, Canada

The big gray, ovoid-shaped craft silently landed besides the summer cottage, near the shore of Lake Manitou. Its twenty meter-long dark shape was nearly invisible in the night as it now sat between the log house and the treeline. There were anyway only a few other cottages along the shore of the lake, the nearest of them being a good 300 meters away. A large ramp lowered at the rear of the craft, showing the inside of a wide cargo bay illuminated by red lights. A red Mitsubishi Outlander 2010 then rolled down the ramp and, hitting the long grass of the property's ground, drove around the back of the log house before stopping under a covered parking space. The craft that had brought the car cleared the ground and flew off as soon as its ramp was closed again. Rising silently fifty meters above the cottage, it then disappeared in a brief flash of white light.

A tall woman, measuring 183 centimeters in height and with wide shoulders, got out of the driver's seat after shutting down the V-6 engine, closing the driver's door before going to the rear gate. A big, powerful man and a teenage girl got out of the car as well and helped the driver unload the various boxes and suitcases from the rear compartment. The tall woman then unlocked the side door of the cottage and switched on the inside lights so that they could bring in their belongings.

"Let's put everything first in the lounge, Mike. We will put the things in their proper places later."

"Good idea, Nancy." Said the teenage redhead, a girl of mesmerizing beauty with large blue eyes, repressing a shiver. "The night air is really cold."

Nancy Laplante smiled in amusement at her stepdaughter's remark.

"If you think this is cold, Ingrid, wait until winter comes to this place. The Laurentians can be much colder than Germany."

"Hey, Canada is synonymous with ice box in Europe, don't you know?"

"It is too in the States, Ingrid." Cut in Mike Crawford while bringing inside Nancy's TV/DVD unit. "Thank God that Canadian women are quite warm."

"What about German women?" Asked Ingrid Weiss sneakily, attracting a frown on Mike's face.

"Ingrid, you are our adopted daughter. You may be fifteen years old but don't even think about starting a ménage à trois with us."

"And I thought that the people in 2012 were sexually more liberal than in 1941." Replied Ingrid jokingly.

"Incest is still one step too far for me. Massages are the farthest I will go with you. Now, if you want to keep warm, you can help me and Nancy bring in all our stuff."

"Yes, father."

"Just Mike will do, you young perverted girl."

The young German giggled and went to pick up a box from the rear of the car. Between the three of them they emptied the car of its content in less than five minutes, piling their things in the middle of the large lounge of the cottage. Mike and Ingrid then looked around the lounge, eyeing the simple but comfortable furniture and the iron stove.

"Nice place you have here, Nancy." Said Mike. "The property seemed quite large from the air, and well situated."

"It covers nearly twenty acres, or eight hectares if you prefer using the metric system." Replied Nancy. "I inherited it from my parents at the age of sixteen. The lake is quite nice, although the water is too cold now to swim in. I am quite fond of this place, actually. Let me show you around."

Followed by Mike and Ingrid, Nancy gave them a tour of the cottage, showing the large master bedroom, the guest bedroom, the kitchen and dining room, the laundry room and the bathroom. Mike especially liked the fact that the cottage was equipped to be livable even in the event of a long power outage. Apart of the stove in the lounge, there was another wood stove in the kitchen, besides a modern electric stove, and a hand water pump connected to a well sat in the laundry room. There was also an emergency generator in the small basement of the cottage, next to a fresh storage room stocked with dry and canned food. Once back in the lounge, Ingrid went to the bay windows and admired the lake and the surrounding forest of firs and pines.

"This place is so quiet, so relaxing, especially after living through those years of war in 1940-41."

"It will be nice to relax a bit, effectively." Agreed Nancy, sitting with Mike in a sofa. "When I think that, only a few hours ago on this same day, those two scientists from the future kidnapped me with my car right here and dropped me in 1940 England. After ten months of war and two hectic weeks in the 34th century, I am back in my cottage on the same evening, as if nothing had happened."

"Well, you do have a few scars to prove that you lived through some crazy times." Suggested Mike. Nancy looked tenderly into his green eyes and kissed him.

"I also have you and Ingrid to remind me that I was there. If for nothing else, finding you two was worth all the trouble and suffering."

Ingrid sat besides Nancy and hugged her, while Mike did the same. The three of them were silent for a minute, enjoying that moment and caressing each other. Ingrid finally spoke in a soft voice, her head still resting on the shoulder of her much taller stepmother.

"Nancy, my adoption and your marriage to Mike, are they legal in this time period?"

"Not really, Ingrid. Remember your briefing back in 3384: as far as the year 2012 is concerned, you are a German friend of mine visiting Canada. As for Mike, he is my American boyfriend from Montana. You both have valid, albeit well counterfeited passports and other documents and a solid cover story. In both 1941 and 3384, however, you are my legal family. I could always marry officially Mike here, but that would open the possibility that both the Canadian and American government would conduct routine background checks on him. Remember that I am an officer in the Canadian Forces reserves and that, as a captain in Military Intelligence, I hold a high-level security clearance that subjects me to periodic security checks."

"Don't you find it confusing to be so many things at once, Nancy? Captain in the Canadian Military Intelligence and military affairs correspondent for a strategic studies magazine in 2012; Chief of Operations and co-founder of the Time Patrol in 3384 and, finally, a disgraced and officially dead Canadian Army brigadier general in the eyes of the British in 1941. To top all that, you went from deadly opponent to merciful angel for many Germans in 1941."

"Ingrid, I am not an angel." Replied Nancy, a bit annoyed. "I was healed by a supernatural being and given a few powers back in 1941, but I'm still a woman."

“A woman that uses telepathy, telekinesis, levitation and touch healing and has the strength of twelve men? A woman that remembers over 9,000 years of past incarnations, along with her past skills and languages?”

“So? You also can remember your past incarnations, going back 7,000 years. As for me, I still have my monthly periods, can stink if I don’t wash and still am fond of sex. Does that sounds like an angel to you?”

“You are to me, Nancy.” Said Mike, smiling. “The angel of my life. So, what do we have on our agenda for the next few days?”

“Well, a lot of rest and quiet times together, along with a lot of sex. On Saturday, I will have to go to my reserve unit in Montreal to formally sign on another operational tour in Afghanistan. If you want, I can bring you with me and let you two visit Montreal while I am at my unit.”

“Yes! I would love that.” Said Ingrid enthusiastically. “Could I do some shopping then?”

“It’s your money. After that, we will still have a good ten days of vacation. Once my report of my trip to Eastern Afghanistan, which I did just prior to being kidnapped and marooned in the past, is submitted to my editor, we will move to my condominium in Boucherville, then go back uptime, so that I can start seriously training you two and the other apprentice agents. From then on, I will periodically switch between the 21st and 34th centuries in order to keep an appearance of a normal life here.”

“Thank God that you got that anti-aging genetic treatment in New Lake City.” Said Mike. “You were going to burn yourself quickly like this, trying to live two lives simultaneously. Now that you can live to past 200 years, you are not going to age on us before your time.”

“Don’t forget that you will also get that treatment, like all the members of the Time Patrol. You may yourself need it, as some of our training and most of our mission time will involve hidden lifetime.”

“When will we go on our first mission in the past, Nancy?” Asked Ingrid, thoughtful.

“Once you complete your training as a field agent and aircrew, in about sixteen months. Since I am somewhat uniquely qualified for the job, my first extended mission in the past will come much sooner. I will then have to use hidden lifetime, in order not to disrupt your training program.”

Mike didn't like that idea much: hidden lifetime was the period of personal time used in either the past or the future of a given departure date and not evident due to the person concerned returning from its trip seconds or minutes only after its original departure time. One could spend literally years in a past time period or parallel timeline, yet return apparently only seconds after leaving for the past. Mike knew that someone separated from its loved ones for months or years ran a real risk of seeing its emotional bonds weaken or even break. Nancy apparently read his mind and gently kissed him.

"Don't worry, Mike: I will never stop loving you or Ingrid, whatever happens. Now, let's go to bed. We all had a long day."

"But I'm still alright." Objected Ingrid. "Do you mind if I watch something on your television?"

"Why not? We are on vacation, after all. I am going to bed, though."

08:41 (Eastern Standard Time)

Saturday, October 13, 2012 'A'

4th Intelligence Company

Longue-Pointe Garrison

Montreal, Canada

"Please sit down, Nancy. This shouldn't take long."

Nancy took the chair offered by Captain Marc Lemire, the operations officer of her reserve intelligence unit. Lemire, unlike Nancy, was a full time regular officer who also acted as the acting commander of the unit at the present time, since quite a few of the unit's personnel were serving in Afghanistan as part of the NATO force there, or were augmenting the depleted ranks of the staff of the regional army headquarters that was also based in Longue-Pointe. Lemire gave her a confused look as he eyed her hair, which was extremely short and gave her a boyish look, and spoke in French, the working language of the unit.

"What happened to your hair, Nancy? Only two months ago, it fell past your neck."

Nancy made a face at that, as if it made her remember an unpleasant episode of her life.

"Let's say that my latest assignment as a war reporter in Afghanistan was a bit rough, Marc. At one time during a battle between an Afghan Army unit and a group of Taliban extremists, someone threw a white phosphorus grenade near me. Some of the

phosphorus fell on my exposed hair and started burning through. Thankfully, an American sergeant serving as a trainer and mentor with the Afghan Army unit reacted quickly and immediately cut off big chunks of my hair, thus getting rid of the phosphorus before it could touch my skull. I then decided to shave completely what was left, so that it could grow again evenly.”

“Wow! You sure have quite a risky civilian job, Nancy. It makes me feel guilty to be here this morning, asking you to do another tour in Afghanistan.”

“That’s alright, Mark. Tell me what happened to prompt this request for me.”

Lemire eyed Nancy for a moment before answering her. For a reserve officer, Nancy was extremely qualified and experienced, apart from being a superb linguist, a world-class pistol shooter, an advanced black belt in karate and a true athlete. She already had more time on operations overseas than most regular forces officers in the Army. She was also by far the person with the most experience under fire that Lemire knew personally, this mostly being due to her civilian job as a military affairs correspondent, which saw her cover the situation in war-torn countries all over the world. Her last trip in Afghanistan had resulted in some of her reporting being shown on such popular news channels as CNN and BBC, reporting which Lemire had watched. He just couldn’t think of a better candidate than her for the vacancy in Herat. She also happened to be a very pretty woman with a most sexy body, but that was irrelevant to the matter presently at hand.

“To make a long story short, Captain Lebowsky was acting as a NATO trainer and mentor for an Afghan Army battalion, or kandak to use the Afghan term, under training in Herat, in the Southwest of the country. During a training patrol, a roadside bomb exploded near him, wounding him seriously. He has since been repatriated for medical treatment.”

“Will he be alright?” Asked Nancy, genuinely concerned. Lemire nodded in response.

“He will be and should not suffer long-term effects. He is however out of the picture for many months. Unfortunately, he was one of our very few people in Afghanistan who could speak either Pashto or Dari, the two main local languages. You, with your fluent knowledge of both Dari and Pashto and with your extensive combat experience and knowledge of Afghanistan, would be perfect to take Lebowsky’s place in Herat. There is however a slight catch that Ottawa informed us of only yesterday.”

Nancy frowned then: she had a rather low regard for the desk-bound staffers at National Defense Headquarters in Ottawa. The majority of those officers spent too little time in operational units in her opinion and, as a result, too often lost sight of the realities of combat or became politically-sensitive careerists concerned only with promotions for themselves.

"What kind of catch, Marc?"

"Well, Lebowsky had about two months left to do in his tour before returning to Canada. Since very few officers are as qualified as you for his post, Ottawa is asking that you fill in for his two remaining months...then pile on another nine months as his official replacement, which would make you go on tour for eleven months."

Lemire gave her an apologetic look as she digested his words, hoping fervently that she wouldn't turn him down now. To his hidden relief, Nancy finally nodded her head.

"Alright, I am ready to take this eleven month tour, on one condition: that my editor at CONFLICTS MAGAZINE agrees to let me go for that long. Ottawa is asking a lot of me by expecting that I drop my civilian job for this long. Things are very tense all over the Middle East and around Iran right now and my editor is very possibly planning to send me there to cover the situation for the next few months."

"Nancy, I would understand you perfectly well if you refused this tour due to the demands of your civilian job. You already served more time overseas than any of those paper shufflers in Ottawa and they would be poorly placed to criticize you if you decide not to go. When could you know if your editor let's you go or not?"

"In a few minutes, if he answers his phone. May I?"

"Go right ahead, Nancy."

Nancy then took out her cell phone and composed the private number of her editor, as Lemire sat back and waited patiently while she did her call. Nancy got an answer after two rings.

"Hello?"

"Frank? This is Nancy. I came back home this Thursday and got your message. To answer it, I will be able to send you my full trip report and article within two weeks, as you were asking."

"Excellent! I sure could use it soon."

Something in her editor's tone of voice then lit a warning light in Nancy's brain.

"Is there something I should know, Frank?"

This time, there was a distinct moment of hesitation before her editor answered her.

"Uh, no, not really. I'm just having a few problems with some of our other correspondents, who are not pulling their weight in my opinion. Be assured however that I have nothing to say but praise about your work, Nancy."

"Well, you may have something to say about this, Frank: I would need eleven months of unpaid vacation, so that I could go on an operational tour in Afghanistan as part of the NATO forces there."

"AGAIN?! Don't they have other officers in the Canadian Army?"

"Officers that can speak both Pashto and Dari? Maybe two or three others, at the most. I know that this is asking a lot of you, but contributing to the building of a stable Afghanistan would truly mean something to me. Besides, I love nothing more than being able to help pound another nail in the coffin of those Taliban bastards."

There was a rather long silence on the line before her editor spoke in a resigned tone.

"Alright, Nancy. You may go on your eleven month tour in Afghanistan. I will somehow find a way to plug the giant hole this will create at the magazine."

"Thank you from the bottom of my heart, Frank. I will owe you one. I promise to send you my article and trip report quickly."

"That will be appreciated. And Nancy, please be careful over there in Afghanistan."

"Thanks, Frank. You are a nice guy, truly. Have a good day."

Nancy then cut the link and pocketed back her cell phone, smiling at Marc Lemire.

"You are lucky, Marc: my editor proved flexible...again. So, when exactly would I fly out for Afghanistan?"

"I still have to look after that, but you can expect to leave from Trenton in at most three weeks. I hope that your passport is still valid for at least another year."

"It is in fact good for another two years, even though it is starting to be full with entry and exit stamps and visas."

"Good! I have already booked in advance an appointment with the base quartermaster, while hoping for a positive answer from you, to get you new field kit. Your appointment is at one O'clock and the quartermaster was told not to be miserly with you. In the meantime, I have here the paperwork for your tour. Here, first, is your contract for Class 'C' employment in Afghanistan. You will be attached to the Regional Support Command West headquarters in Herat, from which you will be assigned to the kandak that Lebowsky was helping train. The description and number of your position is here. Please read and then sign if you are satisfied with the contract."

Nancy read quickly the employment contract, a standard form for reservists designated to fill full-time positions on overseas operational tours, then signed it. There were a few more forms and messages for her to read or sign before Lemire finally got up and shook her hand.

"Well, you are now in line for your next operational tour, Nancy. Just remind me how many overseas tours you already have."

"Well, let's see! First, there was Kosovo in 2004, then Lebanon and Syria in 2005, Haiti in 2006, then my first tour in Afghanistan in 2007, Darfur in 2008, my second tour in Afghanistan in 2010 and, finally, the Libyan operation in 2011. This will thus be my eight operational tour and my third one in Afghanistan."

"Wow! That's a lot of combat experience, especially for a reserve officer."

Nancy smiled at that, thinking about what Lemire would have said if he ever learned that she also had over ten months of combat experience during the Second World War, with two Victoria Crosses and a few more medals to show for it. Thinking back about that, Nancy scratched the part about the medals, as she had returned them to Prime Minister Churchill in 1941, as a protest after she had been unjustly accused of treason.

08:07 (Eastern Standard Time)

Sunday, October 15, 2012 'A'

Lake Manitou private cottage

Laurentians region

Ingrid Weiss, having just awakened, walked in the lounge of the log house, still wearing only her panties. She found Nancy sitting at the small work desk in a corner of the lounge, typing on her desktop computer and with a steaming cup of coffee by her side. Ingrid went to her and kissed her on the head, attracting a smile from Nancy.

"Had a good night, Ingrid?"

"Very! Is Mike up?"

"Nope! I think that I burned him out last night."

Ingrid giggled at that and looked at what Nancy was typing.

"You are doing your article about that trip as a reporter in Afghanistan?"

"Correct! Thank God that I kept backup copies of my recordings and notes on USB flash drives. If not, I would have lost everything about my trip in Afghanistan when I had to ditch my laptop in the sea just before being captured by the Germans."

That brought back some awful images to Ingrid's mind as she remembered that horrible episode when Nancy had been tortured mercilessly for two days by the German Gestapo, the Nazi secret police, after being captured following a plane accident.

"Well, at least Farah Tolkonen got the authorities of the Global Council to reimburse you for all that you lost in 1941. I suppose that you will buy a new laptop computer soon."

"Damn right you are! For me, it is an essential work tool as a war reporter. That reminds me that I will have to give you courses on how to operate a 2012-era computer. Let's say that the software programs now are quite different from those you learned to use in 3384. For one thing, those 3384 keyboards made for twelve-fingered persons are a bitch to get accustomed to in my mind. By the way, there is still some hot coffee in the pot in the kitchen."

"Aaah! I certainly will get myself a cup then."

Ingrid was back in the lounge with a cup of hot coffee in her hands after two minutes. Her face was now thoughtful as she sat in a sofa near the work desk.

"Nancy, I was thinking about something while getting to sleep last night. Me and Mike are from Timeline 'B', the alternate history you created accidentally out of the original timeline, Timeline 'A', when you were dumped by those two Global Council scientists near London in 1940. You told us as well that me and Mike are basically copies of another Ingrid and another Mike, who lived and died in Timeline 'A' and who never met you. In my case, my timeline twin died officially in 1945 'A' during an allied bombing raid on Berlin, while Mike Crawford 'A' died in 1941 'A' when the plane transporting him from London to Washington crashed in the Atlantic. Up to now, the Time Patrol counts only a grand total of 21 members, including us. Of the lot, you, Farah Tolkonen and her two assistants, Maran Tolvek and Mona Zirel, are the only persons from Timeline 'A'. Me, Mike and the others are all from Timeline 'B' and you said yourself that we will need many more members in order for the Time Patrol to become eventually an effective organization."

Nancy stopped typing for a moment and turned in her chair, looking at Ingrid with interest.

"Go on, Ingrid."

"Well, how about going to save secretly my timeline twin as well as Mike's twin and then enroll them in our Time Patrol? From what I understand, Ingrid Weiss 'A' and

her four comrades were incinerated inside their shelter by an incendiary bomb, while the body of Mike Crawford 'A', or that of any of the other occupants of his plane, was never found. Couldn't we save them in extremis and hide that by substituting anonymous bodies, especially in the case of Ingrid 'A' and of her comrades? If this could work, then there should be quite a few disappeared persons that we could then save secretly and enlist, no?"

"That is actually an excellent idea, Ingrid. Missing and officially dead persons could indeed constitute interesting prospects as potential recruits for the Time Patrol. We would however have to keep to the 20th and 21st Centuries for recruits. Earlier than that and the potential recruits would be too ignorant of modern technology to be really useful to us. Keep your idea in mind until we can talk to Farah about it. If you can think of known disappeared persons that could make good recruits, then note down their names and the general circumstances of their disappearances, so that we could do some research later on about their fate."

"I will certainly do that, Nancy."

Ingrid then fell silent, gazing through the windows of the lounge at Lake Manitou outside, while her mind was on the sad fate of her timeline twin in 1945 'A'. Ingrid 'A' had served like her as a secretly underage female auxiliary of the Luftwaffe, the German air force in World War Two, until killed in 1945 by allied bombs. The story of the present Ingrid had however started to differ drastically from that of Ingrid 'A' in 1941. Ingrid then thought about the first time she had seen Nancy, after having been captured by her British unit, along with the rest of her Luftwaffe fighter division headquarters staff in Wissant, France. Nancy had then brought her to London, to be interned as a prisoner of war with other captured Luftwaffe auxiliaries in the old fortress of the Tower of London. Ingrid, who had been orphaned by the war, had quickly developed a strong bond with Nancy, with the latter ending up secretly adopting her after a few weeks. Both had also started remembering their past incarnations simultaneously at about that time. While Ingrid 'A' had never met Nancy, this Ingrid was sure that she would have also liked the tall Canadian woman instantly. Remembering what Nancy had just asked her, Ingrid then started reviewing mentally what she knew of history, searching for possible recruits for the Time Patrol.

CHAPTER 2 – ARSENAL

12:46 (North America Central Time)

Sunday, August 30, 3384 'A'

Time Patrol headquarters

New Lake City University campus

American Great Lakes area

Nancy waived happily to Farah Tolkonen as she disembarked with Mike and Ingrid from the heavy time shuttle HERMES: the gentle giant was waiting inside the large hangar where the shuttle now lay and was already waving at her. Farah's 220 centimeters of slender frame was the norm with the humans of the 34th century, along with hairless body, bald heads and six-fingered hands. The mixed blood of the Eurasian was also a common trait. It was actually ancestors like Nancy, Mike and Ingrid who stood out with their pure racial features, short statures, body hair and five-fingered hands. That didn't stop Nancy from considering Farah as her best friend, though. The co-founder and chief administrator of the Time Patrol was easily one of the most agreeable person she had ever met, apart of being a kind and caring person. She also happened to be a scientific genius, with degrees in medicine, physics, electronics and computer science. Walking to her, Nancy exchanged a hug and a kiss before looking up into her yellow eyes.

"It is nice to see you, Farah, as always."

"And I am pleased to see the three of you. How was your vacation?"

"Short but nice. Some countryside fresh air was what we needed, along with some quiet time together. How are the others?"

Farah seemed amused by her question. The others Nancy had referred to were fifteen other ancestors brought back from the past by her and who were now members in training of the Time Patrol. They, like Nancy, had been on vacation, adapting to the society of the Global Council and its advanced technology and, for many of them, the shockingly liberal sexual mores of the 34th century.

"Well, you will not be surprised to learn that most of the young women you brought from the past are huge hits with local men here and have been going from party to party. As for the lone man in the group, he is tagging along with the girls."

Both Nancy and Ingrid giggled, while Mike smiled widely, making Farah's heart beat faster. The 190 centimeter-tall American may have been small by contemporary standards, but his powerful built, green eyes and handsome face had warmed up Farah from the first day she had seen him.

"Don't worry too much about them. Besides, everyone starts training tomorrow and they will have little time from then on for pleasure."

"Don't be too hard on them, Nancy, unless you want the medias to paint you as being abusive with your people."

Nancy rolled her eyes in exasperation at that. The most charitable expression a person from the 20th century would have used to describe in general the pacifist giants of the 34th century would be 'wimps'. Raised in a society where all the hard physical work was done by robots and where contact and extreme sports had disappeared two centuries ago, the average citizen of the Global Council found such energetic ancestors as Nancy and her group of apprentice agents nearly scary. The term 'barbarians' was in fact still uttered in low voices from time to time to describe them. Farah spoke before Nancy could make a remark.

"Anyway, they should join us here in fifteen minutes, so that we could all go together visit a model of fast liaison and space exploration ship that could be adequate as a basis for our future patrol ships."

"Hey, that could be really interesting." Said Mike, smiling widely, his engineer side awakening. "And where is that ship we are going to visit?"

"In a hangar of the Zeta Alpha orbital city, which is in a geosynchronous orbit around Earth."

Ingrid's eyes widened at once with joy.

"We are going to go in space?"

"Yes, and you better get used to it: for our citizens, traveling in space is routine, may it be as tourists or as workers. In fact, nearly twenty percent of Humanity now lives off the Earth, and live quite comfortably, thank you."

"Ooh, I can't wait to see Earth from orbit!" Exclaimed Ingrid, jumping with excitement. Her joy warmed Nancy's heart and she pointed Ingrid to Farah.

"Did you tell her that she is going to be trained as a patrol ship pilot?"

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