

TIMELESS

A NOVEL TRILOGY

BOOK II



M.R.M. PARROTT

rimric press

A NOVEL TRILOGY

Timeless: Book II

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(PREVIEW)

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"I guess we should hear what Director Franklin has to say," Olen said, looking back to his datapad.

"We can go down to the lab..."

"...No need," Olen interrupted, tapping the device to return the previous call from the Director.

"But not from up here," Michelle worried, self-conscious of how things might look for them to be there alone on the deck.

"We only came out for some fresh air," Olen reasoned, unconcerned about any appearance their location might offer. "This is serious business, it doesn't matter where we are," he added with a smirk.

"I suppose you're..."

"Hello, Doctor Nadimov," Director Franklin readily answered, "and thank you for getting back."

Olen looked at Michelle, indicating she had probably worried about nothing.

"I do apologize," Franklin continued, only her dark and greying long hair, dark eyes, serious countenance and

red collar visible on the small screen, "and, especially, I know you both have had some long days, but due to the...forward wave...a few hours ago, VC Jasthi and DG Lorentz have asked that we speed things up considerably on the Tempo Programme. We're authorizing Mission Stopwatch."

Michelle and Olen returned looks again, and each felt strange about their work now being called a *mission*, when their discovery was made and proven only the afternoon before. They awaited for almost anything to issue from the datapad.

"I ask you both," Franklin continued, "to go prep the mission in person. Help the pilots deploy the nodes."

They were taken by surprise, and stared at the datapad as if frozen in place.

"We will probably need strong operational support with this..." Olen reflexively suggested.

"...I expect you will have it," Franklin asserted, thinking of Lorentz. "The mission's priority has been upgraded, too. We want you to go to the main UN Defense Centre and Engineering Complex, in Yemen. The nodes are already being moved there from Gibraltar, as the island is far too small for what we've realized needs to happen. We'll brief you both further from there, as soon as you arrive."

"Yes, ma'am," Olen and Michelle said together.

Their flat, semi-transparent, holographic heads and shoulders were rendered atop Franklin's desk. As the call was ended, they faded away.

"I'm glad to see that it looks like the power won't go

to their heads," UN Intelligence Director-General, Nikolai Lorentz, smirked, sitting on the other side of the projection and in front of Franklin's desk.

"Yes, they seem more stunned than anything," Director Franklin laughed.

"Do you think they want to do it?" Nikolai Lorentz asked her, reflecting on the young scientists as he sat across from the major general. Thin and greying, polite and very experienced Lorentz wore his decorated, red dress uniform coat and trousers as a second skin, many thought, and along with the uniform, Lorentz often wore a curious, focused expression on his face. Despite managing critical teams at once with running the entire Intelligence Directorate, Lorentz betrayed the least amount of stress of anyone in UN Command. Still, Franklin felt the focus of his eyes as she reacted.

"Yes," she offered, standing from the black glass and tan panel interactive desk of her upper floor Science Centre office. She walked elegantly across the wide beige room, her red dress uniform's coat and skirt flowing with her, her scientist's badge and rank squares catching the light, over to the large windows. She looked out at the bright early morning sky over Berlin's Reichstag, imagining that her scientists might need more than just a few minutes of fresh air on the deck above.

"I mean, do they *wish* to do it, or do they feel *ordered* to do so?" Lorentz pushed against Franklin's vague response. "What about Nadimov?"

"From what I can tell, I think they want to be involved with Stopwatch as much as possible," she said, turning back to Lorentz and trying to read his face, "but we haven't known Nadimov for as long a time as Lambert.

Still, I think he's more excited than anyone to be asked to work these kinds of missions. It's no wonder they selected him for their TAP in his time. He's ambitious, but prudent. He's done everything we've asked and more. Plus, we need him. He helped discover the distortion field, and he and Lambert know more about it than anyone. Tempo is an incomplete project without the wizards, right?"

"Jil, I have complete confidence in your management of Nadimov and Lambert, in all of your scientists and programmes. That's not the problem..."

"...Director-General..."

"...I was as disappointed as you must have been," he asserted, trying to soften his concern, "when their shield solution wasn't finished during our meeting with the Chancellor yesterday. But now that it seems to be finished, and we have our leave to deploy, I just want to be sure we're not pushing too hard on our visitor."

"We've known each other for a long time, Nikolai," Franklin said, her confidence returning. She relied on her years spent on experiments and administration, rising in the ranks to become the top leader in all of UN Science. Her career and legacy, as others, now depended on Tempo, but she kept a long view. "I'm telling you," she continued, "they are solid, and the science is solid. Nadimov and Lambert just happen to be the kind of people we would train for such critical missions if we had the time. I'd say they're at least as solid as Laurent's young Major Devon and the tricky operational side of Tempo."

Lorentz nodded in general agreement, and he thought to question Franklin's meaning regarding the major, when a beep filled the room. Franklin's desk system indicated it was a secure transmission directly from the

Planalto.

"The Chancellor," Lorentz mumbled, his head dropping slightly. How fast this is all moving, he worried. He gave Franklin a look to say he did not expect the call.

"Viewscreen," Franklin said, and the large wall panel lit up, first with the UN Chancellor insignia, based on the traditional UN globe and leaf design, then the Chancellor appeared. "Madam Chancellor, this is the Science Director, Major General Franklin," she responded, nodding to Lorentz to indicated she was not worried.

"Yes, Doctor," UN Chancellor Nishiko Kitamori said, emphasizing Franklin's expertise rather than her rank. The Chancellor's face, black hair and black collar were all they could see of her onscreen. "It's around 6am UTC, or 3am here in Brazil, so I know it's early, and I hope you aren't too alarmed at my direct call. I'd like to ask if you have things in place for this mission. How are things going with your team?"

"Well, I don't suppose we have a choice," Olen said as he and Michelle came down the stairs from the rotating Observation Deck.

"How do you mean?" Michelle quizzed, watching as Olen looked around the empty restaurant while they passed.

"I mean just that," he said, "do we really need to show Defense engineers how to load their ship?"

"Well, we have to!" Michelle urged, giving him a short look as they headed down the hallway toward the lift. "We should jump on this," Michelle continued, "after all, you are the one responsible for our success, and this is not

something that comes around every day. It will be a lot more than loading a ship."

"I'm no more responsible than you are, but I guess you're right, of course," he offered, still moody from his awkward nap. "Just blowing off a little steam."

They walked into the lift and fidgeted as they rode downward to lower level two. Olen nodded at Michelle's vague smile, but looked back at the lift indicators, thinking about how it was likely to be another very long day. He wished he could share everything he had been thinking about with Michelle, share it with anyone. He wished he could simply live his life without carrying such a burden around, or if he must carry one, that it could be something other than such a secret.

Also, I wish I could tell Michelle more about my home, but mostly, I wish I could have told my family more about this future. It's not easy holding back such details, and even though Michelle and Director Franklin know I'm a visitor from another time, the details are hard to avoid with people who wouldn't even know that much. The two stepped off the lift and walked down the hallway and into the lab, their heels filling the corridor with their hurried steps. On entering, Michelle knew she had to call their assistant scientists to come back in, but did not relish it.

"Call assistants," the managing scientist said, slowing in the direction of a very large wall viewscreen in the main room.

The screen filled with three inner windows as the two available assistants were called, the third displaying a small UN Science logo, the fourth area left blank. With small sound cues and a short pause, the two indicated answers, one was audio only, the other with a visual of an

awakened young assistant missing her sleep.

"I apologize for the early call," Michelle offered, "I do. But, we have to bring you in and make a flight to Arabia as soon as possible to prepare the nodes for a priority launch. We'll all meet back here in...forty-five minutes." She and Olen nodded, and they each thought they might need to go home to gather things.

As the assistants tried to conceal their groans, Olen thought about that third inner window, why Technical Officer Perkins had not answered the call. He presumed the young man might be in a ball of confusion. Olen wondered why their brightest young scientist and lead assistant had not returned from the past sooner, but he had little practical way of communicating with young man. I hope he didn't interfere with Major Devon's mission, Olen thought, but I've got a funny feeling about it all. Milona could be a big problem, or maybe the whole thing would just blow over.

Just then, Director Franklin surprised them as she appeared through the doorway, and walked with a certain pause as she took in the large laboratory workspace. How strange, she thought, that I should feel almost out of place in a lab I ran myself at one time. She continued toward the center of the main floor, as Olen and Michelle take curious note of the director.

"I wanted to see the place," Franklin said.

Michelle and Olen looked at each other, and Michelle tried to explain.

"Sorry if we shouldn't have been up on the Obs..."

"...What? Look, you've got to get some fresh air, sometime," Franklin laughed at Michelle, as she led them to the modeling lab. She understood what seemed to concern Doctor Lambert, but thought nothing of it.

She tapped on a workstation's display surface, which started the simulation they all knew so well, and they each watched as the program ran. Jil thought about how her scientists, surprised as they were at hearing about the mission status, hadn't seemed surprised quite enough at her request. Both Olen and Michelle could sense something else was bothering the director, and it was Olen who ventured to break the ice.

"Why don't you tell us what's on your mind, ma'am?"

"See, I'm not sure if I made things clear enough."

"Of course you did," Michelle said, "we've called in our assistants, and we getting ready to head out..."

"Not that, Doctor," Franklin said, turning to face them, "I mean, we don't just want you both to go and prep the mission from Yemen."

"So, what do you mean?" Olen quizzed.

"We want you to lead it, to actually go on the flight with the pilots, to deploy the nodes yourselves. It's the only way you can stay on top of every contingency. You'd have command and control."

Both Olen and Michelle were again shocked. Olen's immediate thoughts had nothing to do with the technical or military details, but that he had no idea the people of the future would dare trust him that deeply, a complete outsider in his mind. Michelle, who had rarely even been away from Europe, she reflected, reeled at the thought of a space flight beyond the Solar System.

"But, Madam Director," Olen mumbled, still stunned, "I'm just...still new here..."

"Yes, Doctor, we know that," Franklin smirked, "but you are crucial to this whole plan. We brought you in and up to speed quickly, and unexpectedly, you've helped us find

and address this anomaly. You've been instrumental in building the shield. Both of you have equally, and it might not have come together without either one or both of you. I don't know what you're accustomed to, Doctor, but here, we don't waste people's time with the outmoded shell games of human resources. We trust the people who want to make a difference, we go with what's working, and this is a most important project. You're at the top of a very short list. In fact, you're the only ones on the list!" she laughed.

Michelle was confused as to why Franklin was talking about what Olen would be used to. Where had the lieutenant colonel been, she mused, that wouldn't work the way we work here?

"I...I don't know what to say..." Olen mumbled.

"Just say yes," Franklin urged. "I've already cleared top priority status for you both for every step of the way. That means everyone from the Intel and Defense teams here, to Defense Command at Yemen, have to clear a path. Just remember that with top priority comes top responsibility. Yet, it isn't really even a question of the flight and the operation itself, but the shortness of time, and the continuing questions from the political leaders."

Olen waved as Michelle's tram sped her away so that she could get home and back in time. He needed a moment to process it all, and instead of stepping across to the opposite channel to wait, he turned and wandered back toward the building, taking in the early morning stirrings of the city across the plaza. Neglecting to catch the next tram, which would take him back toward Alexanderplatz, to his

own apartment, he found he could only focus on the larger questions.

I can't believe this is happening to me, he thought, as he looked up to the Observation Deck, to the circle of national flags around it, all as it quietly turned. Behind him, the next approaching tram quickly arrived across the channel and slowed with a rush of braking thrusters. The doors opened and many people rushed out on the other side. The tram sped away just as quickly, and Olen glanced as workers walked with suited executives, uniformed military personnel with regular citizens.

The Science Centre and all the other buildings around Tiergarten would gradually come to life, Olen thought, with people and machines buzzing, the business of another day in Berlin set to begin. He felt a curious attachment to them, he mused, strangers all. He and Michelle had to save them, and billions others, yet they didn't even know it would be happening. Wow, he thought, it might even be fun, and he wandered around the plaza's cubic fountain, in front of the distinctive white and glass-paneled building. Of course it will, he assured himself in his thoughts, of course it will.

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M.R.M. Parrott's books include the novella, *To Lie Within the Moment*, travelogue *Driving Home*, Philosophy and Science series *Dynamism*, monographs in Philosophy and chapbooks of poems and short stories.

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