

THE TIME PATRIOT

Episode 2 - Stranger

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Dedication

This book series is dedicated to my sweet daughter, Megan Elizabeth Megahee, who left us far too soon in October of 2022. Her singing, writing, comedy, and inner and exterior beauty are missed by all who were fortunate enough to know her.

Relevant Quotes

“Liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people, who have a right...and a desire to know; but besides this, they have a right, an indisputable, unalienable, indefeasible, divine right to that most dreaded and envied kind of knowledge, I mean of the characters and conduct of their rulers” —John Adams—1765

“Truth will ultimately prevail where pains is [sic] taken to bring it to light.” – George Washington — 1794

CHAPTER ONE

Wednesday, February 11th, 2037 – 4:22 AM EST – HERO Team Lab,
Telegraph Road, Alexandria, VA

Tyler stood at the time engine console, ready to override and execute the time jumps. McKnight and Smalls stood on the left and right of the travel platform, ready to aid the arriving travelers. The med kit lay at Smalls's feet.

General Drake came into the lab from the double doors leading to the office space. McKnight beckoned him to the platform.

"What can I do?" Drake said. "How can I help?"

McKnight pointed to the space between himself and Smalls, across the platform from Tyler and the console. "The team is returning. They should be here any time now."

Drake trotted over to the position and stood.

"What do we know so far?" he said.

"We know they're jumping back from 1787 while under attack, and General Washington and Will Lee are with them."

"That's encouraging. Do I understand correctly that World War II German soldiers pursue them?"

"Pre-World War II Germans, sir. From 1937."

Drake grunted. "When we get done here, I want to know where and how those people got a time engine."

McKnight nodded. "Yes, sir." The hair stood straight up on his arm.

"Here they come," Smalls said.

The first aura appeared on the platform. They could make out two figures, a male and a female. The aura resolved into Hatcher and a man, covered with dirt and huddled together.

That's two out of six returned.

When the aura faded, Lee tried to stand but fell backward. The three rushed in and lifted him to his feet.

“Will!” Hatcher said. “We have to move. Remember the man who died testing the engine?”

Will’s eyes were wide and staring. He made eye contact with Hatcher, recognized her, and pushed his way off the platform. Drake and Smalls stayed on the perimeter, while McKnight and Hatcher showed him to a chair and sat him in it.

“What’s the status?” McKnight said.

“Hold on a minute, sir,” Hatcher said. “Let’s get them all back. The General and Daze should be next.” She dashed back to the platform.

Another aura appeared, surrounding a tall man and a woman.

Washington and Daze. That’s four.

“There we go,” Hatcher said.

The aura disappeared, leaving Daze and Washington on their hands and knees. Drake rushed forward to help them. Convinced that Will Lee was okay, McKnight ran to join them.

“Pardon me, Lieutenant,” Washington said. “But I believe I’m going to be ill.”

“We can’t stay here, sir,” Daze said. “Remember, Cutty and Wheeler will be right behind us. We don’t want them to land on us.”

“What?”

“We need to move,” McKnight said.

Daze pulled the General’s face toward hers and caught his eyes.

“Remember the boy who was killed by the engine? We’ll be killed if we don’t move out of the way.”

“Oh, yes,” he said. “By all means, let’s move.”

McKnight, Drake, and Lagunas helped Washington to his feet and half-carried him off the platform.

Washington groaned and sagged. Will Lee jumped up from his chair and came to help. They half-walked, half-carried him to sit at the picnic table in the lab’s break area.

“Smalls,” McKnight called out. “Toss me the med kit.”

Smalls ran it over, handed it to McKnight, and returned to the platform.

McKnight pulled out an anti-nausea packet and tore it open.

“Take this, sir. Put the powder under your tongue for three seconds, then swallow it.”

Washington did as instructed. McKnight helped him dust the dirt off his clothes.

“Ugh,” he said. “The taste is very unpleasant.”

“Yes, it is, sir. But it works fast.”

Washington kept swallowing, trying to get the taste out of his mouth. He stopped and said, “You are correct, sir. I feel better.”

Daze and McKnight hovered over Washington.

“I’m not hurt,” he said. “Thank you for your concern.”

Hatcher came over to report to McKnight. “We were in an untenable position, sir. It was defensible against a smaller enemy force, but we realized we couldn’t sustain it or outrun them for long. General Washington suggested this course of action, so we jumped back. He was right, of course.” She paused, then continued. “We were outgunned and outnumbered. It was the best option and the right thing to do.”

“Understood, Major. Well done. Where are Cutty and Wheeler?”

Hatcher turned to the platform. “I don’t know, sir. They should be here by now.”

As they walked back to the time platform, another aura appeared.

That should be the last two.

After a moment, it disappeared, and the two men collapsed on the platform.

“Oh, no,” Washington said.

Hatcher knelt by Wheeler and pulled his shirt away from his shoulder. When she touched the wound, Wheeler cringed. “A ball is still in his shoulder, I think. Looks like a ricochet wound.”

“Get off me. It’s just a scratch,” Wheeler said.

“Shut up, Wheeler, while I’m fussing over you.”

“Calm down, I’ll live, Hatch. Cutty is okay, I think. A bullet went clean through his calf. But he needs medical attention.”

“So do you, you ass.”

“Let’s get them up and to the hospital,” McKnight said. “They don’t appear to be in mortal danger, but let’s not take any chances.”

Tyler approached to stand by McKnight. “Smalls and I will get them to the hospital, sir. My truck is just outside.”

“Roger,” Smalls said. “We’re on it.”

“Good. Carry on,” McKnight said.

Smalls and Tyler helped the men limp through the loading dock door.

“Is anyone else wounded?” Drake said.

“No, sir,” Daze said. “Shook up or nauseated, but not hurt.”

“Very good.” Drake turned to McKnight. “What’s next on the plan?”

Before McKnight could answer, Washington called his name and beckoned him to come closer.

Washington pointed at Drake. “Who is this other gentleman?”

McKnight beckoned Drake to join them. “General Washington, may I present my commanding officer? This is General Michael Drake.”

“Retired general,” Drake said. “But most of the team act like I still outrank them.”

“You do, sir,” McKnight said.

Drake dismissed the comment with a wave.

“I’m proud to meet you, General Washington,” he said.

Washington looked embarrassed. “I perceive we have a lot in common, General Drake. I too am supposed to be retired, despite the events of the last few hours.”

“Sometimes the service of our country overrides our personal desires, a situation you no doubt are familiar with.”

“Yes, sir, I’m learning this even now. What about your wounded officers? I fear for their lives, or at least their limbs.”

Hatcher blinked and looked at McKnight.

“Ah, I think I see what he’s concerned about,” McKnight said. “General Washington? What caused the most deaths in the Continental Army?”

“The British. And the Hessians. And some from my stupidity.”

McKnight shook his head. “Yes, sir, but that’s not what I wanted to ask. Did they die more from disease, infection, or wounds?”

“I see now your intent. I would attribute their deaths mostly to disease and infection. Those who suffered the most grievous wounds died. But infection killed many before they healed. Some survived at the cost of a limb. And we couldn’t stop disease once it appeared in our camps.”

“Yes, sir. I agree. Let me assure you that medicine has made incredible discoveries and progress since then. There are medicines available today that prevent diseases and keep infections away. Cutty and Wheeler sustained minor wounds. With proper medical attention, they will recover from their wounds with no issues.”

Washington looked confused.

“Please trust me on this and don’t worry about them,” McKnight said. “Today, soldiers seldom die from minor wounds.”

Washington sighed. “I hope someday soon, Colonel, you will explain to me how that can be. I’m sure there are a great many things I shall learn here.” He paused. “I also hope I can return soon to my wife and my home.”

“Don’t be concerned, sir,” Drake said. “We know where you will spend your time in May of this year—1787, I mean. You’ll be back in time to see your wife and do what you are resolved to do.”

Why did he travel? Will he help us?

“General Washington,” McKnight said. “May I ask you why you came here with us? When we last talked, I believed you were more inclined to stay in 1787. Did you reconsider?”

Washington beckoned Will Lee to his side.

“I think Will and I agree here. First, we didn’t want to die, and we didn’t want any of you to die.” Washington looked at McKnight. “Your people, Colonel, risked death to protect me, even when it wasn’t clear

what I planned to do. They could have brought me against my will... but they didn't. They protected me against heavy odds. I owe it to them to at least hear your case, and to help if it is the right thing to do."

"Yes, sir," McKnight said.

"One more thing," he said, then shifted his weight in his chair. "You were right... The Hessians who attacked us... Will and I couldn't have fended them off without the help of your team. I have a better understanding of the forces facing me now, and I see the folly of hiding in 1787 and hoping to escape them..."

"I understand, sir."

"Not fully, Colonel, though I appreciate your position. I'm still undecided whether to cooperate with you. But I will participate in your plans until I see a reason not to. I reserve the right to stop at any time if I disagree with the circumstances. Is that acceptable to you?"

"Understood, sir," Drake interjected. "We'll take your position as a tentative 'yes' and we'll assist you in making a quality decision, whichever way it goes. And we'll provide supporting information for you as you request it."

"Thank you, General. I am willing to take the next step. What do we do now?"

"Sir, we must acclimate you to our era first. We'll do that by showing you our history and political environment."

"And how will you do that?" Washington said.

"Sir," McKnight said, "I believe we have the perfect place and the perfect teacher."

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Telegraph Road, Alexandria, VA

"Yes, we do," Drake said. "But before we go down that path, let me get the ball rolling on something. I'll be right back."

We need to stop those other time travelers from interfering.

He turned on his heel and walked to the engine console.

“Kathy? Trevor? Got a minute?” he said.

“Yes, sir,” Trevor said, and Kathy nodded. “But before we talk, can we talk about the investigation into how those guys from 1937 got the time engine technology?”

Drake chuckled. “That’s exactly what I want to talk about. Tell me, what are your thoughts?”

Trevor glanced at Kathy. She returned his glance with a huge smile.

“Yes, sir. We’ve been decoding the return beacon the team found on the dead man. We have the location and time of his jump to 1787.”

“Indeed? What did you find?”

“They came from Berlin, Germany, in 1937. That’s not good. Time travel technology shouldn’t be in 1937 and it’s an older version of our technology and we don’t know how they got it. But we’ll find out.”

“Okay. And?”

Trevor glanced at Kathy and continued. “General, we want to run the investigation to figure out how they got the technology. We have a starting place.”

“The Germany location in 1937?”

“Yes, sir, and since it’s our old technology, we know approximately when it was taken.”

Drake leaned forward. “You’ve said that twice now—old technology—what does that mean, actually?”

“Sir, it’s the same technology we used in 2035 when the Colonel made his first time mission back to 1985. That was a year and a half ago. We... by that I mean Doctor Astalos... have made a lot of changes to the technology since then. They got the plans for the engine somewhere, but from what we’ve seen... the dead guy, for example... they have no in-depth knowledge on what it can do or how to use it safely.”

“Okay. What does that tell you?”

“It’s a starting place, sir. We know when we had the technology during that period. Assuming it came from us, who else knew about it or

had access to it? We just need to run the rabbits—check out all the possibilities.”

“I see. That’s great information. I’ll use that as a starting place for the investigation.”

“There’s more, sir,” Kathy said. “Tell him, Trevor.”

“I got this,” Trevor said to her, and turned back to Drake.

“Sir, let me and Kathy run the investigation. This is what I did for nearly twenty years at Atlanta PD. It’s what I’m good at and I can contribute to the team in a big way. Let me help you guys figure this out.”

Drake paused, smiled, then spoke.

“You’ve been so creative and resourceful in the role you’ve had, I almost forgot the reason we brought you on the team. Of course you can run the investigation. You’ll need some resources... Arms and legs on the ground. Tyler is going back to 1762 to work for Francis Marion for a few months. I’m going to reassign Hatcher and Wheeler to Colonel McKnight for reporting, and to you for the investigation. Will that help?”

Kathy clapped her hands together, and Trevor grinned at Drake. “That’s more than we could have asked for, sir. That would be great!”

“Remember this, though,” Drake said. “Our first and most important task is to take the time travel technology away from those people in 1937. I’m sure Colonel McKnight will have some ideas about that.”

“Yes, sir.”

“And if you guys have time to clean out their place and gather intelligence about what they have, where they have it, and how they got it... well, it’s okay with me. The mission will only be successful if they lose the technology and can’t get it back or rebuild it.”

“Yes, sir,” Trevor said. “We won’t let you down.”

“I know you won’t,” Drake smiled. “I knew I made the right decision when I picked you two for the team. Make me proud.”

“Yes, sir,” Trevor and Kathy said in unison.

Drake turned and walked back to where McKnight, General Washington, and Will Lee stood.

Trevor and Kathy high-fived each other.

(End of Sample Chapter)