

# 'B' IS FOR BIMBO

*By Dee Dee Perri*



*ILLUSTRATED BY CHAS*

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**A 'NEW WOMAN' NOVEL**

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### **~ Prologue ~**

“What’s going on? Arto? Arto? Three... NO! Make that—,” Zoff was getting impatient. “Oh Nova!” he cursed. His hands pounded his thighs in excitement. “Looks like Time Central just emptied the whole garage!”

The tri-dee holographic images that filled the security capsule showed a cloud of ‘down-time’ tracks all converging on the same temporal slice. He leaned back to get a better look at what had become a complex maze of lines. The brilliant red ribbons that represented ‘Temporal Teams’ spat down and intersected the primary timeline (drawn in blue) in what looked like a random pattern. The earliest crossing was about mid-twentieth century, and the latest lapped near the three quarter mark of the same century. In his ten years with the Temporal Service he’d never seen more than two probes within the same five hour shift. And now... a hundred plus, and some of them large temporal agent teams... and all running concurrently! He spun in his lev-chair when the sound of the Greev Generator came on line with a nasty whine. “Arto?” he said between gulps. Fear made his voice quiver.

There was only one reason the Greev Generator would be activated: the plasti-steel capsule in which he sat was being jerked into quantum non-space, non-time. All communication with the outside universe terminated at that instant. The holographic image was now but a frozen memory of what had been reality. “Arto?” he said again as he continued to look at the silent Noid.

Arto compressed his bloodless lips in what could be easily mistaken for a human reaction, but was surely just a behavioral artifact included as part of his code to make his human counterpart feel more comfortable. The plasti-steel and silicone Noid needed far, far less time to process data than his human counterpart, yet even it paused before answering. It opened its mouth to speak and then closed it, as if focused upon a dense data stream that had erupted unexpectedly— and it had. Finally, ten seconds after his human coworker had queried him, it spoke. “Reentering real time-space... Now.” The whine of the Greev Generator waned slowly and then abruptly re-engaged.

None of the communication screens activated! No signal from any of the thirteen solar systems, 35 human inhabited planets, and hundreds of moons were received. It was as if none of the 4.8 trillion humans in known space existed. “SPACE!” snarled the terrified man. “Say something, Arto! What in the quark happened?”

The iris-less gray eyes widened as humanoid lids blinked and the thin lips pressed even tighter. “Temporal accident, sector one point zero-thirty-seven, segment one-nine-six-three point ten point...”

“Okay, okay ah- October, 1963... Earth prime.”

“Ancient republican nation state, ruler assassinated...”

“Nova!” cursed Zoff Bafa. “Lay your even credits it was one of the Experimental History twits. Okay, Arto, how bad is it?”

“We are now in a temporal paradox, Zoff. Our habitat was created by entities that *never existed* with technology that *never existed*...” As to add the weight of visual evidence, a tri-dee holographic image of the outside world clicked into existence. Youngstown, an old, pre-space village of nearly two-million souls should have appeared. But instead of buildings and a bustling humanity, a forest of ancient hardwood trees loomed darkly over the security capsule. “I have ordered out null-probes, Mr. Bafa.” Suddenly the tri-dee switched to a high altitude view. The mega-city of which Youngstown itself was but a small sector, the city of The Greater-Ohio Valley which ranged from the northern shore of Lake Erie to the Wheeling south shore of the Ohio River, simply did not exist. Indeed there was virtually no sign of human habitation except outside the timeline; the War of the Two Brothers didn’t happen.”

“Space! So how could the ‘*Not War*’ kill our timeline?”

“Time, Mr. Bafa. I need more time to correlate...”

“Speaking of time, Arto. We’re on internal power now. How long do we have before...”

“No problem.”

“Good.” The man looked relieved. “Then we can run a mission?” The Noid remained mute. “We can fix this, can’t we, Arto? That...that’s why we existed. A buffer, security for our timeline.”

“Too many unexamined variables, Mr. Bafa. Perhaps in a few standard e-hours or so...”

“Well...” Zoff pulled at his chin. “I shall just take a stroll outside then, Arto.”

“No, Mr. Bafa.”

“Huh?”

“We don’t *exist!*” The noid’s voice hissed the word *exist*. It didn’t have to explain to the human the consequence of exiting the capsule now.

“But...” The man stuttered to a halt as death, real death, loomed. They were already dead... Ghosts... existences... entities outside the physical universe. In spite of the image outside the capsule, they remained in the space between space. The man’s face grew sober. “How long Arto... until we lose power?”

“A long, long time, Mr. Bafa. We are still well within mission parameters.”

~oOo~

“Mutants,” said the Noid in his emotionless, flat voice. “After the War of the Two Brothers, ten’s of millions of mutations appeared in both the human and other biological gene pools. Most were nonviable and died without reproducing. But some...”

“I remember that!” Zoff said with some pride at his historical aptitude thus exhibited. “There were the... ah- Mutant Wars, early twenty-third century.”

“Late twenty-first,” corrected the Noid. “And they weren’t exactly wars. More like a series of massive witch-hunts conducted by the ‘*Alphas*’. Before the so called ‘wars’ were concluded, millions of altered humanity were... murdered. It was a very one-sided exchange, Mr. Bafa. A real horror.” The noid paused to give his words more weight. “The mutations produced by the War of the Two Brothers, nearly a century earlier, that resulted in the wholesale slaughter of those eventually affected by the Mutant Wars in the next century, created a concern. It was a fear, if you like, of the application of the genetic sciences to the modification of life forms. You follow me thus far, Mr. Bafa?” When the man nodded his head in the affirmative, the Noid continued, “In the new timeline, no such ‘fear’ or caution was experienced. Radical new biological weapons were created. Eventually...” The Noid’s voice died.

“Hmm.” Zoff pulled at his face. “You sure of that, Arto? It’s hard to believe that they simply killed themselves with biological weapons.”

“Sorry, Mr. Bafa. Given that the race was composed of only Alpha males and females in the new timeline... The outcome seems certain.”

“What do you mean *only* Alpha...” The horror bloomed anew. It was inconceivable to imagine a world filled with those unstable creatures. For the last five centuries, only a few Alpha males had been bred, and these for the most dangerous, usually terminal, occupations. And the Alpha females... “You’re saying...” His voice quivered uncontrollably.

The Noid looked surprised, or at least as surprised as its circuits could simulate. The human was obviously not a historian. “All the subspecies from Beta to Omega-3, Mr. Bafa, were an eventual outgrowth of the initial mutations created by the War of the Two Brothers, of course.”

Now Zoff Bafa understood exactly why Temporal Central had required a human in the security team. The Noid was a thousand times smarter and a million times more reliable, but the artificial intelligence was linear in its thinking- not ‘fuzzy.’ The machine had identified the ‘why’ but not really the ‘WHY’ humanity had self-destructed. The Alpha prototype was simply too erratic, too unstable to hold the power created by its own technology. The urge which had led countless humans (Attila the Hun was but a typical Alpha) to sweep a bloody path across Earth Prime was simply incompatible with the raw power available in the twentieth-second century. It was probably one-too-many Hitlers, another prime example of the Alpha type, that had led to the termination of Earth Prime habitation. “No Zetas to provide wisdom, Arto. No Betas to draw off the Alpha’s cathartic energies. They could only focus on their minor *racial* differences. Or was it religion, Arto? Perhaps differences in governmental forms or resources— Alphas didn’t need much of an excuse to begin killing each other! Arto, a world filled

with Alphas and a technology to kill by the billions...” He waved his hand toward the Noid. “It was their nature to hate and kill, Arto. The only things they were really good at.” He dropped his chin and closed his eyes. “I need to think, Arto.”

~oOo~

“We really must begin the mission, Sir.” The Noid’s voice was filled with simulated concern for the human.

“I know,” murmured the man. But his eyes continued to have a far-off look. He was obviously distracted.

“Grief?” queried the Noid.

“Yes... yes, of course. Trillions died...”

“Never were, not died.”

“Whatever!” growled the man. “They *existed!*” He turned and faced the Noid, “What are my chances, Arto? Can I save humanity?”

“It is better that you think so, Sir.”

“That bad, huh Arto? Yeah.” He’d gone down time before in a different body in order to do his job, but he’d never gone with an Alpha host.

“Half life of a sim-consciousness, Mr. Bafa, is about eight thousand hours. And long before your function degrades to that level...”

“Yeah, yeah, I know. Too many glands secreting too many hormones. Blind urges to kill and mate—I’ll become a regular ape-man. What about survivors of the temporal teams that could augment my resources considerably?” Temporal agents were the best of the best. Bright and wonderfully adaptive. Zoff hoped that the Noid would give him some good news for a change.

“Most likely gone, Sir. The backlash effect would have...”

“Enough!” groaned Zoff. It was bad enough he’d be dumped into an Alpha body that in time would dissolve his matrix. It was worse that he’d go down time without artifices to an age in which the tools he’d need would have to be cobbled together from inadequate materials. But it was far, far worse to realize he’d be *alone*. A Delta in a world of Alphas. He shuddered. To save humanity he’d have to replicate at least a few of the very mutations that a nuclear war had inadvertently created. Finally, he squared his shoulders and spoke. “Let’s do it, Arto!”

“Goodbye Sir. And, may I say for the Noids that should have been, good luck.”

## Chapter 1

Zoff, now Reed Brown, a.k.a. ‘Brownie,’ sat in a dark, noisy room filled with Alpha males and a few Alpha females. A quick check of the host’s memories cued Zoff that this was what was known as a ‘bar.’ The tremendous wealth of information stored in the host’s memory, which would help Zoff adapt to the new situation, told him that this was a place in which the primitive Alphas ingested alcohol (which depressed the

oxygen supply going to the brain- go figure!). More importantly, however, was that it was a 'pickup bar.' These thoughts and others were shuttled to the back of 'Brownie's' consciousness at the moment. Less than thirty seconds from making the transference into the Alpha host, poor Zoff was tasting for the first time incipient 'lust.' A blond female wearing heels attached to her feet clicked past his booth. The artificial musk that wafted into the host nostrils sent an electric tingle down the new Alpha male's back finally lodged in its crotch— now Zoff's crotch as well. Zoff's host had grown a 'woody'... a hard-on! Scrambling to his feet, Zoff stumbled toward what his host's memories said was the 'john' or primitive waste deposit site. The first concrete thought that formed in Zoff's new brain was, *Eight thousand hours— I'll never last half that long!*

As he flung open the door to the room marked 'Men', the stench of Alpha male musk, testosterone-rich urine, and a mixed assortment of raw manufactured chemicals slapped Zoff in the face. He turned to retreat when a reflection off the far wall caught his attention. Shuffling forward, ignoring the stink, he glared at the primitive Alpha male image that mocked his every movement. A thick thatch of muddy-brown hair sprouted from the top of his skull. Brown eyes sat on both sides of a nose that was both long and narrow... Thin lips only partly hid the mouthful of teeth. There was no doubt that this was a classic Alpha male, a square chin jutted out above a thick neck and broad shoulders. A lopsided grin formed on the beast's mouth as Zoff squared his shoulders and clenched his fists— a regular tri-dee Alpha-action figure. All muscle and glands and only a modicum of neural tissue. Just then another Alpha male entered the waste site. Zoff turned and looked...*up*.

The monster was a full head taller, with arms that made Zoff's look like twigs. The man grunted as he pushed past Zoff and headed toward the fixture attached to the wall, a urinal, his host's brain told him. He turned to leave, only to be met by three more creatures entering the small room. Each was at least as large as the first. By the time Zoff had made it back to his seat, his visual analysis of the other males in the bar had confirmed his assessment of the situation: Reed Brown was a... shrimp, a wimp... at least relative to the average Alpha male. That was some compensation. Zoff headed back, to what his host would have referred to as his 'pad', alone. The latter was probably normal for the 'little' nerd that worked for Radio Shack. All and all it was a relief or Zoff. He had now less than eight thousand hours to save humanity. Finding companionship, a mate, at the bar would have only made his impossible task even more impossible. Still, he couldn't help noticing his raging hard-on and the Alpha cardinal desire that loomed in his Delta consciousness.

~oOo~

A transmogrifier, in Zoff's timeline, could be as small as a grain of white rice and operated off of ambient light. But the parts available to Zoff in this era were anything but small. Using a model URC-42XXB00 television remote control 'box' and three AAA batteries for power, the necessary components were squeezed in tightly in a space 12 cm long and 4 cm deep. The whole thing weighed almost one and a half pounds- a bit heavy for a TV remote control. The batteries would probably have to be replaced after only a few hundred operations. But that was the good news. There wasn't enough power at maximum in this system to generate the chromosome configuration for a

Zeta or even a Delta. Induction of that many additional chromosome pairs would require a lot more power. But it was a start. The frequencies were set for the simplest manipulation of them all, a simple Beta.

“BROWNIE!” a gruff male voice bellowed from the next room.

“Huh?” Zoff turned just in time to see a harried man entering the work room. It was his boss, the manager of the Radio Shack store in the mall. “Boss?”

“You get that VCR working yet?”

“Um—“ Zoff stammered. He’d forgotten.

The man was on the heavy side, even for an Alpha male of his age. Incipient high blood pressure made his face normally red, but at the moment it was scarlet. “Jesus, Brownie! That’s my mother-in-law’s machine,” He said, as if that information somehow explained the urgency of the need.

“Right, Sir...”

His boss glanced at the TV remote control in Zoff’s hand. He jammed a thumb over his shoulder toward the VCR setting on the work bench. “Get the dang thing fixed before four. Got me?”

Zoff stared at the transmogrifier held loosely in his hand and then back at the man’s face. “Sir?” he said as his finger lingered over the ‘on’ switch. He was of two minds at the moment. As a Delta he knew he would need to eventually test the device. Yet to do such a thing to anyone, even an Alpha was... distasteful. The idea jarred his most basic sense of fair-play, of human concern.

But the Alpha body he wore was of another mind set entirely. It wanted to press the button! Revenge? Hostility? Or just lust for power? The small LED mounted on the upper surface of the remote control winked on as his finger pressed down on the button.

His boss, Harmon Murks, stood there as if turned into wax. The device hummed, and the fine, blue, almost translucent rays that sprang from the device touched and then seemed to pass through Harmon Murks body. In an instant the form blurred, multiple images replaced the one distinct form as the body threatened to shift into null-space. For one horrible moment, Harmon Murks was as naked as the day he was born. It was not a pretty sight!

Zoff screeched and flung the transmogrifier away. The device fell to the floor. It did not hit with the clatter of plastic against bare concrete but with a wet SPLAT! Zoff shoved his burnt fingers into his mouth to make more bearable the pain. The reek of smoldering plastic rose up in a sickening cloud as Harmon Murks returned to normal. The man’s nose twitched as the disgusting odor of charred plastic greeted his abrupt reentry to ‘normal’ space.

“Jesus, what stinks?” he growled before turning on his heels. At the door he called back to Zoff, “Brownie— four sharp!” And then he was gone.

Zoff hadn’t had time to comprehend the utter failure of his first attempt to build a transmogrifier using the elementary components available in this primitive era. He new that this failure was not good. He was not sure what the ray’s effect on Harmon



Marks would be. Little did he know that profound changes were starting to occur in his boss. But Zoff did not have time to consider this.

He hadn't even removed his fingers from his mouth, when a low, conspiratory voice spoke from the rear entryway. "Like wow!" With a start, heart pounding, he turned and... There was a stranger, an Alpha male to be sure... No. It was...

"Davy?"

There, standing in the doorway, was Davy Lopez, the real Reed Brown's pal. They could have been twins, except Davy's skin was several shades darker due, no doubt, to his Hispanic heritage. He wore jeans and a faded blue work shirt with an array of pens sticking out of a pocket protector which bulged in his shirt. Davy adjusted the thick black-rimmed glasses on his nose as if to see better. A sly smile formed on his lips. "Holy shit, Brownie! That was... something else."

All Zoff could do was gasp, "Huh?" What had Davy seen and how much? He didn't know.

Davy pushed past Zoff and removed a pen from his pocket protector. Bending from his waist— he was quite flexible— he brought his nose to within two inches of the still smoking puddle on the floor. With the pen he poked the remains of Zoff's device, before straightening up again. With admiration in his eyes, he grinned, "Totally awesome, Dude. I thought for a second that old fat ass was going to go transparent. Jesus..." He scratched his nose and then looked back at the puddle on the floor.

Now Davy's grin reversed itself, his look hardened into a glare. "You were going to hold out on me ol' buddy. I saw the friggin' rays and that old fat ass on the fade and..." Then the sour look was replaced by a crafty gaze. "You're kidding! You almost got it!" He cocked his head and looked inquiringly at Zoff. "What we always talked about, you know..."

Zoff shrugged. In all honesty he hadn't the faintest idea of what Davy was referring to. And then, from Brownie's memories, the answer came. "You mean..." He stopped to smile. "The X-RAY machine? You know, making girls naked at the push of a button?"

"Yeah!" As ridiculous as the idea of a device to see through clothes was— a classic adolescent fantasy— it was surely safer than THIS reality. There was no way Zoff would tell Davy the truth. He broadened his grin, "Almost had him."

Davy looked concerned. "Why waste it on a dude, Brownie? Jesus, a thing like that was made for, you know chicks."

Zoff shrugged. "Still got some bugs to work out."

"Right!" Davy pushed his way toward the work bench and picked up some papers. "This is the circuit diagram?"

Zoff felt his heart stop beating. "Hey!" He snatched at the papers in Davy's hand but was too late. Brownie's 'friend' stuffed them inside his shirt. "Give 'em back!"

Davy crossed his arms, protecting the precious papers. "After I look at 'em pal. Jesus, you really *were* going to keep this all for yourself." He looked hurt.

"DAMN IT, DAVY!"

Davy ducked his head and shoved past Zoff. “Like I said, we’re partners, and this partner is going to take a long look at...” He was out the door and gone.

It wasn’t the Delta consciousness inside Brownie’s body that yelled, “I’M GOING TO CUT YOUR FRIGGIN’ HEART OUT, ASSHOLE! SON-OF-A-BITCH!” A nearly impossible task- saving humanity- had become substantially more difficult now.

~oOo~

The parts had cost Davy almost thirty dollars, which put a real dent in his wallet, but he was certain it was worth it. Considering what had happened to Brownie’s device, he’d tripled the gage of the wires, added a two-inch thick aluminum heat sink to help dissipate the waste energy, and replaced the triple A batteries with a hefty power supply that could put out a hundred times the current of the triple A’s. The whole thing, when done, covered the kitchen table. It was neither small nor pretty, but it was a damn sight more likely to be ‘smoke free’. To make it portable, he reassembled it in his sister’s hair dryer. Hell, just under five pounds it was still a wonder to be hold. Now to try it, thought Davy. He sat there in deep thought before picking up the phone and punching in the numbers. “Brownie? Meet me at Hooters over on Grand Ave. What?” He laughed. “We’re going to try out your thingy where it counts.” He jerked the phone away from his ear. Ol’ Brownie was having kittens. “Six o’clock or I go it alone-Pal.”

~oOo~

Harmon Murks was at dinner with his wife of five years, Edina. It was only a few minutes past five, precisely the time they normally ate. He held his fork up to his mouth; the pot roast was dripping with gravy, just as he liked it, but he could not put it in his mouth. There was nothing wrong with the meat nor his appetite, but for some reason he couldn’t bring himself to eat. He just held it there, all the while staring into nothingness.

“Honey?” his wife said, voice laced with concern. “Are you... all right?”

“Huh?” His eyes refocused on the fork as he eased it back to the plate from where it had come. “No... I mean, yes, I’m fine.” He thought for an instant. Gads, he *did* feel fine! Energy surged through his body. Sales had been terrible the last month at the store, but that hardly seemed relevant at the moment. There was a *wickedness* in the air, a sweet, wanton *wickedness* like he’d not felt since he and Edina had honeymooned in Hawaii. “I guess I’m just not hungry, sweet-pie.” That was a lie... of sorts. He was hungry, but the food... It was like Edina had asked him to eat rock and twigs. The pot roast and mashed potatoes were about as relevant to his ‘hunger’ as... “I... I need to get back to the store.”

Edina looked contrite. “The inventory?”

“Yeah,” he lied again. “Quarterly report, Hun-bun.” He rose from the table. “I’ll probably be home late sweet ‘em’s, don’t wait up.” He didn’t wait for her reaction. He normally went back to the store in the evening, yet for some undefined reason this afternoon he felt guilt.