

## *Timelord*

by

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“Excuse me. Is there a war on?”

Jacko jumped, barely repressing a most unmanly shriek at the strangely accented voice. He spun around, pointing his Chinese-made AK-47 at the figure that had materialised behind him.

*Materialised* was the operative word. The last thing he’d expect to find in the hills out west of Charters Towers was a big-headed, hairless nerd in a skin-tight silver suit. A conveyance that vaguely resembled an old-model Citroën, the one that looked a bit like a flying saucer, seemed to shimmer in the air behind him. Jacko could swear it didn’t quite touch the ground.

“Kangaroo shooting,” Jacko squeaked, then swallowed, forcing his voice down to its usual gravelly bass. “What’s it to you anyway, shit-face?”

The stranger smiled. “Delight! Genuine twenty-first century redneck! Just what I’m looking for! Buddy me with you?”

“Wh-wh-wh...”

“Believe you not how *dull* the twenty-fifth century. Longed have I for a time when men were men and free to express themselves in ways most social-anti. You and me, we can fuck about and upfinger—”

“H-h-how—”

“How got I here? Stole this time machine from Ulan Bator University. So easy it is, fool can operate. Push lever forward for uptime, backward for downtime—”

Not even Rambo could accuse Jacko of being a slow thinker. He cut loose with the AK-47 then, pausing for barely a moment to savour his first human kill, hurried to his veteran metal-dash LandRover for ammo, sandwiches, Southern Comfort and a change of camouflage fatigues. He tossed all this into the time machine and closed the door.

Like the man said, it was easy to operate. The only trouble was he couldn’t decipher the meaning of the numbers that came up on the screen when he moved the lever. Were they years, centuries, or what?

No matter. Anything more than two hundred years in the past and he’d be a time-lord, with the advantage of his weapon. How lucky he’d been to find that page on the internet that showed him how to convert the AK-47 back to fully automatic. The past was open to him, with none of those poofter-feminist gun laws of today.

He picked a hundred of whatever it was. There was also a little floating 3D view of the globe with a glowing cursor that was moved by another little lever. Apparently he could choose a place as well as time. On a whim he chose the general location of Paris, France, then pushed the red glowing button.

Jacko felt a wrenching in the gut, and the view through the windscreen disappeared in a flickering blur of light and darkness. He took a swig of Southern Comfort, wishing he had a case of it. But, of course, he could come back anytime he wanted to get some more, and who knew what booze they might have available in the future?

The view outside stabilised. It seemed to be late afternoon. Peering out, Jacko saw no sign of buildings, people, or even cultivation. Snow lay in every shadow. He activated the door button. The cleanest, coldest air he had ever breathed rushed into his lungs.

“I’ll have to go back for a parka,” he muttered to himself.

But first, a look around. Picking up his weapon, he stepped out into the alien landscape.

Off to the west, a thread of smoke rose against the setting sun. Jacko made his way towards it, stumbling over the rough tussocked ground. Presently he came to the top of a rise. In the best commando tradition, he dropped to his belly and crawled up, parting the grass to peer down below.

A group huddled around a fire at the yawning mouth of a cave in the overhang where it curved off to his left. They were too far away for him to see details. Jacko expertly checked out the surroundings, saw a gully where he could approach them in dead ground. He sidled back out of sight, trotted around and, bent double, made his way up the gully, silent as Rambo sneaking up on a Vietcong stronghold.

When Jacko was about thirty metres from them, he got a good look. The hundred must have been thousands, he decided. The women looked about as appetising as partially moulted apes; nothing at all like Raquel Welch in *One Million BC*.

Oh, well. He could always use this era as a hunting reserve. Maybe they were smart enough to act as beaters; if not, they’d be fair game. He could look elsewhere for the other sort of fun. Ancient Rome, maybe.

But, for now, it was time to assert himself, to make these subhumans see him as a god to be feared and obeyed. He slid his weapon forward. *I’ll just take out that big buck.*

It was Jacko’s last thought as the rock crunched down on his skull. He hadn’t heard a sound from the short, stocky figure creeping up behind.

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Ugak looked down curiously at the still form on the ground, then lifted the limp head by the hair and expertly cut its throat with a razor-sharp flint microlith. The out-triber had made as much noise as a herd of mastodons coming up at them, giving him plenty of time to leave the group and circle around behind him. It seemed he was hostile, however, judging from his actions. Obviously his noisy progress was only due to lack of skill.

Why, he didn’t even have a proper weapon. That clumsy stick he carried had too many bits sticking out to make a decent club.

Ugak prodded the body with his hard foot, found it amazingly soft and plump. It would make good eating.