

Dylan Alexander's

# TRENTON

PART ONE: BIRTH

## 1. I

It's hard to find smart people in a world filled with morons. You have to know exactly what you're looking for, and why you're looking for it. That's why I felt, well, special when they picked me.

My name is Karo Trenton. When I was born, a war was going on. Didn't know why it started (for awhile anyway), how it did, or who did it, only that I didn't like it and wanted it to end. It took my father away from me, that war. I was ten when our house was caught in the crossfire of the two sides: the Kysecks and the Valvas. The Kysecks were formed by my own people. They were, and still are really, an organization bent on keeping all of us from getting out of our small settlements, mine being Mendusta. Funny though, they're so concentrated on keeping the protesters from escaping that spies slip in and out like it's nothing.

Well, back to me. I lived a life that was kind of tough. Since people were going crazy after being "quarantined" from the rest of the world, lots of fights happened within the walls of our little city. And the so called organization that kept us safe never thought to do a thing about the fighting. The only thing that was good about the place was that at least my mother and I were safe from the even worse danger of the Valvas.

As I said before, the war took my father. And when I say *took* I mean *killed*. One of the two factions that blew through our house shooting each other was, as I said before, the Valvas. In the beginning I

didn't know what they wanted. But when I was selected, I was told.

And that brings me back to the beginning, when I was "picked" to do something that would make a huge difference in our war. I'm smart, you see. And you may remember that I mentioned there's a lot more morons than intelligent, "look before you leap" kind of human beings who don't run into the streets shouting at the top of their lungs, only to be blasted to bits by the weapons of either side. Shoot on sight, that's the motto that both factions go by.

Anyhow, the Kysecks picked me out of every soul in Mendusta. I was intelligent. I just seemed to know things. Most people had to learn how to do certain things, but I just knew. My mom thinks I'm "self taught" but I know that's not the case. I didn't teach myself these things, I knew them. I was an expert mathematician at age eighteen, algebra and all. That was what I thought. I thought they picked me because I knew things that other people just didn't. That all changed though when I actually went to see the Kysecks.

## 2. DOC

"Well, Karo, it appears you passed all of the mathematics and physics examinations."

I was seeing Dr. Marcel, the only doctor in our whole settlement. Yeah, that makes you feel safe, right? Anyhow, he was working with me, but not on my mental exams. He had the results for those tests with him, but he was not the examiner. It was Professor Lambrig who had given me those tests and it was he who had sent me to the doctor to get a vaccine. I'd be getting near some chemicals while on my new job.

"And with flying colors," the man continued, setting the results down on a table within the small room. "I've never seen results like those, even from our experts. They're incredible. You seem very bright."

"Thanks, Doc," I told him. I don't like to brag, though if I did I know that I would've said, "Brighter than any other clown in this hellhole."

I kept quiet about that part though. Nobody needs to be like that.

"Now, I'm going to need you to lie down on this cot here," he said, leading me to the small bed like thing. He then came to me with a needle after a few moments of waiting.

"Would you like to be strapped to the cot? You may fall off."

"Why would I fall off?" I asked, thinking of getting off of the cot then and there.

"Well," Dr. Marcel began, "I'm putting the vaccine into your bloodstream."

"How would that make me fall off?"

The doctor sighed and apologized before ramming the needle into my left arm. He didn't even prick the area first, just drove the needle into me. The pain of the shot wasn't what hurt me though. It was when he pulled it out and my body started to react when things got out of hand.

Everything I saw began to have a greenish tint to it. Nothing looked regular. My body broke into spasms and I felt like I'd hurl at any moment. Then I actually did roll off of that cot like Marcel thought, and hit my head against the floor. When that happened, everything went back to normal. Well, almost everything. I still threw up like I'd wanted to, and when I got to my feet I could barely stand. I was trembling.

"What the heck did you do to me?" I snapped. The doctor slowly stepped away and whispered, "I'm so sorry, but it had to be done."

"What had to be done?"

It was too late though. Already I was noticing the effects of the injection. I lifted my arms. My muscles had doubled in size. When the doctor had spoken, I could hear him more clearly than ever. In fact, I could hear his heart beating at an alarming rate. He was scared, scared of me.

"What is this?" I growled, stomping over to him. He backed into the door, and before he could open it I grabbed his arm and pulled him into me.

"Answer me!"

The doctor was now shivering and tears rolled from his eyes.

"I-I can't," he said softly. He looked like he'd have a heart attack at any moment. "They'll k-kill me Karo."

"Well if you don't tell me then *I'll* kill you. Which would you rather, me or the Kysecks?"

"To be honest," he began with a slight smirk, "I'd rather have them kill me. At least they'd make my death quick and painless."

"Giving you all the more reason to tell me what you just did right now, Doc," I said, gritting my teeth.

"All right, fine. That stuff I injected into you was a special fluid. It's a biochemical called Xenos. It's dangerous stuff. I thought it might kill you, but apparently I was wrong about more than one thing."

"What's the other thing you were wrong about?" I asked, releasing him.

"The chemical was supposed to sedate you, you weren't meant to break free from its hold."

"Its hold? What do you mean?"

"Those reactions you were experiencing, they were supposed to put you to sleep. If you didn't die, you would've been unconscious. At the very least I expected that, but you've managed to fight it off."

He was no longer frightened after I'd released him. He was just looking around, as if someone else was in the room.

"We have to get out of here," he said rushing towards the exit once more. I grabbed him before he could go any further and said, "That's a no-no buddy. You're staying right here until you finish telling me what's going on."

"I've told you all I can. If we stay any longer we'll both be killed. They probably know what I've told you. They have people everywhere."

I released him once more and he ran through the exit door. I followed him through and the door slowly closed behind us.

### 3. DEMATERIALIZED

Outside the small shack Dr. Marcel called his "office" was the city, Mendusta. The tallest building was probably only fifteen feet from the ground. The city was small, but never quiet. In fact right when we walked out there were more of those protesters, marching down the streets of our home shouting that they wanted to be let free. I know however that they'd be sorry if they actually did get to leave. The Valvas were out there, and they were worse then our own Authorities.

"Let's head on over to my safe keep. We'll be able to talk there," the doctor said. He then locked his shack up and we went on our way.

Traversing the streets of Mendusta was pretty dangerous too. You had to pay attention to every person so you wouldn't get beat up by any of the gangs.

Unfortunately, we weren't paying the slightest bit of attention at the time. As we kept going in the direction of Marcel's safe keep, the doctor accidentally bumped into a tall heavy looking man with a big chin. He apologized, but the look on the man's face told me he wasn't in the mood for accepting apologies. He clenched his fists and lifted one of them high into the air. As he brought it down I threw my open palm out and grabbed his giant hand. When I squeezed it tightly, the hand slowly began to become mushy and gooey, and slowly but surely it melted into mush, and at the end of his arm was not a hand but dripping melted skin. It was a disgusting sight and the man ran shouting, "Freak! The freak melted my hand! Freak!"



The people around us were silent and everything was dead still. Some of the skin was still in my hand. I tilted it and let the stuff ooze off of me.

"You melted his hand," Dr. Marcel said in awe.

"Thanks, Captain Obvious. I could never have figured that one out all by myself."

He was still staring in wonder, and I had to remind him what we were supposed to be doing to get him to move. I looked back as we rushed on and noticed something that sent chills down my spine: the melted skin was dissolving.

## 4. MELTED FACE

A safe keep was sort of a VIP suite in Mendusta. If ever there was a massive attack made by the Valvas against our home, the safe keep would protect the people inside from certain doom. You'll know why soon.

As we approached Dr. Marcel's home, he pulled a small calculator like object from his pocket. After imputing several numbers, the small house began to move. You see, it's designed like a safe. The small valve began to turn and the giant door swung open slowly, revealing a comfortable looking room with a couch, a large rug, a radio by the couch, a bed across from the couch, and a small compartment which was presumably the bathroom. The walls were made of steel.

When both of us were inside he offered me a seat on his couch while he used the restroom compartment. While he was in there, I looked around at the walls of his safe keep. They were littered with old pictures of many people. In fact there were so many that I thought he might've had one of every person in Mendusta. After all, each picture had a different person on them. They looked like photo IDs.

Dr. Marcel came out after awhile and sat on the bed looking not at me, but at my hands.

"That thing you just did was incredible," he said. It seemed like he'd never get over it. "I thank you for saving me as well but, how on Earth did you do that?"

"I haven't the slightest bit of knowledge as to how I did it," I acknowledged, lying down on the couch facing the ceiling. It was bare compared to the others. The only thing on it was a hanging light bulb which was quite dim already.

"Well, do you want me to explain why I did it now?"

I looked over at him and nodded, and he began.

"I knew you'd become strong and have hyperactive hearing if you lived, but I didn't think of anything else. I knew why you'd be strong, too. The Kysecks want you to lead their entire army against the Valvas. They want to use you as a weapon. You were picked because you were smart, that's also true. They can't have somebody who's dumb and strong. They need somebody who's *intelligent* and strong, somebody who can actually, well, lead the army."

I was still confused. Sure I could melt stuff, but that would mean me getting right up in a soldier's face. They'd shoot me long before then. That's when Marcel told me something else, something about a new ability I hadn't discovered yet.

"The other thing I know," he continued, "is that your epidermis has been reinforced by the injection. Bullets will bounce right off of your skin. That's why they want you to leave them. You're invincible. You're like Superman right now, with all of that power."

"Where is this army?" I asked. I've never seen more than a hundred guards crawling

along the walls. Then I remembered the other settlements of the Kysecks.

"The army is being established in the Fronx settlement," he told me. "It's the Kyseck capital. You'll need to go there."

"One more question. Why would they kill you for telling me?"

The doctor sighed. Then he looked at me and said, "I wouldn't do it, that's why. They're taking eight-year-old kids and putting them into the army. It's horrible. They'll be killed and their families will be left with nothing but corpses. They threatened to kill me and my wife if I didn't do it. Not that she matters much, but if I told you what I just told you now, they'd kill me for that, too."

"Why?"

"Because you're human," said Dr. Marcel standing up now and looking me in the eye, "and humans have emotions. They're afraid you won't do it if you know they're putting little kids in there."

"I would've found out sooner or later," I said, standing now as well.

"That's not the point. The point is that they want you to fight and they want you to lead the army, men and children alike."

I sighed and pondered. So many had died in the past because they could never make it to a Kyseck settlement. There would be more casualties if the war didn't end soon. There were still many who lived outside, with the Valvas.

"I'll do it."

"What? No. You can't!"

I glared at him and took a step forward.  
Then he said something else.

"How come when you grabbed me, you didn't melt *my* arm? You know what I'm talking about, don't you? That stunt back at my office, repeatedly stopping me from leaving?"

"I don't know. Maybe the 'gift' just didn't kick into gear right away or something. How should I know? You gave me the stupid injection."

"I know, and I also know I shouldn't have.  
I'm sorry."

I should my head and asked to be let out of the safe keep. Dr. Marcel shook his head.

"Doc, you had better let me out, or I will-."

He flicked out the device that had opened the door before, and pushed another button.

"You'll what? Kill me? Go ahead, I dare you, you'll never be able to get out of her. Not without the pass-."

It was too late though, I was already grabbing his face. My heart was racing, and his skin was melting. He cried some plea in a language I didn't understand, and fell to the floor, with his melting head oozing apart.

## 5. SAFE KEEPING

Trapped. That's what I was. Trapped like a fly in a spider's web. I was doomed to live in that thin for the rest of my life.

Well, I *was*. At first I tried melting through the safe keep's door, but the moment I touched it a few volts of electricity pumped through me, sending me backwards a foot or two. That must've been what he'd done just before I killed him. I went back to his corpse. His face was gone and what was left of his head was too repulsive to describe. He was mutilated.

I dug through his pockets and found the small device. Apparently it was locked by a password of some sort. I tried his name and the word *doctor*. Neither of them worked. Then I started to freak out. I kept at it for around half an hour before throwing the piece of junk to the floor and cursing a lot, kicking the bed and the couch a bunch, the usual kind of temper tantrum. Then, in act of desperation I began to look at the backs of all the photos on the walls. I had to be careful, since the walls also had electricity pumping through them. Strangely enough it seemed to only have an effect on me. The photos were just fine on the wall. I now realize today that the "shield" was programmed to only to shock organic things like, well, me.

After countless hours of searching through the photos I started to come across a few familiar faces, including those of a few of my friends. And then I came across the doctor's wife. She had long black hair and looked older, wrinkles across her face, a scratch or two (probably from when the war

started and we had no Mendusta). I looked at the back of it. Written on it was the password: *prat*. So, that's what he thought of her as. A prat. Some husband he must be.

I picked the device up from the floor and entered in the password, upon which the commands lit up on it. I deactivated the field and opened the safe keep. When I was outside, I looked back at Dr. Marcel's body. I wondered if his wife would miss him. I learned later that she did, and hated me for it forever. But that wasn't important to me. I needed to go to the Fronx, where my army would be. If I did join the military and lead the army against the Valvas, I'd prevent more suffering. But if I didn't, the army would not be assembled, and the children would be safe from a horrible, horrible war.

## 6. BRIEFING

Johnny Kessler was only twelve when he was loaded onto one of the trucks that would be sent deep into the heart of Valva territory. The inside of the vehicle was lit with a dim red light and the seats on which the soldiers rested were against the sides of the large truck. Pacing along the center of the vehicle giving out orders to the soldiers, a third of which were children, was I, Karo Trenton. The boys were frightened, I could tell. Johnny, however, looked quite determined to get it over with. He didn't look scared, just upset. I think he might've been a bit homesick. He never told me though from the beginning to the end of my war. My war was, as you've probably guessed, the battles in which I had commanded the soldiers Dr. Marcel had talked about before, to defeat the Valvas.

"Your training has been long," I began, "but now you are all ready to go on the frontlines. I don't know how long you'll last, nor how long this war will take to end.

"But I do know this," I added. "You will have good leadership, and I will be of great assistance to you."

"In what such way, sir?" one soldier asked me, leaning back very proudly, as if he thought I were beneath him. At that moment I pulled a small card out of my right pocket. I'd been waiting for somebody to ask me what was so special about me for a month now, and when this man did I melted the card right before him.



"I can also take a couple thousand bullets," I told him. He still didn't seem impressed, but then I learned why.

"If you're so special," he started off in that same, cocky way he had before, "how come you don't just melt those guys yourself? Why do you need our help?"

"Well," I started again, ready for this as well, "my skin is reinforced. However, it does not regenerate. So at one point or another it'll probably wear down."

"Another question," the same soldier asked. He was getting on my nerves. "Why didn't we assemble an army like this before?"

"To be honest," I began to answer, maintaining my composure, "we weren't desperate before. Now that the Valvas' numbers have doubled, and ours have shrunk, we are. And as you all should know by now desperate times call for desperate measures. So, we had to grab people from off the streets."

I felt victorious for a moment, though it was a bitter truth. Then the man spoke again.

"Why children? Why not just men?"

"There is strength in numbers," I told him. Now I knew he was just trying to antagonize me. He was just a cocky jerk. Or was it me? I still can't decide to this day.

"Then why not women who are willing to fight? We've had women in our armies before, when we were America."

Now he was really ticking me off. Who did he think I was, God?

"Look, soldier," I began, drawing closer to the man till I stood directly in front of him. "I need to explain our strategy now. I'm not the one who designed the army, just the one who's going to lead it. Now, if you can't handle the fact that you might just have to do some real work for your people then you might as well get your sorry butt off of this truck and walk back to Mendusta. You like the sound of that?"

He was embarrassed now, and shook his head. I smiled and told him, "That's what I thought. Now, let me tell you what we're going to do."

I pulled from my pocket something new: a small chip. When I dropped it on the ground a holographic map of the enemy base appeared before us all.

"There are two more trucks beside us. They are Squad's A and B. They have their orders. You'll have yours. Squad A will cause a diversion at the front gate of the compound while Squad B flanks them from the side. While they're occupied by those two groups we'll have just around ten minutes to enter the base from the back and capture the Valva captain. That's our estimated time that we believe the squads will be able to hold them off."

"So you're saying you don't have faith in them?" Johnny finally spoke. I looked at him in such a way that he was reminded of how I told off that other soldier, and he kept quiet.

"Once that is done," I went on, "he'll be interrogated and we'll soon learn the location of Valvarus, the leader of the Valvas. Simple enough for you, right?"

Everybody nodded in agreement. It was settled then. Everybody knew what to do. It was only a matter of time before we won the first battle in our small war to end this long one.

## 7. ASSAULT

The truck had now stopped behind the fenced in area. All of the soldiers had gotten out and were armed. Johnny walked over to me as we sat down waiting for Squad B to signal us.

"Sorry for speaking out like that, General," he said quietly, sitting by me. He seemed very calm, not nervous at all. "I tend to do that a lot."

"It's fine," I told him. "You're young. It's not like you meant any harm."

"True, but now I'm worried that the troopers are going to think the same thing."

"Oh, I'm sure they'll be fine, even if they do think what you said may be true."

Then the blasts started going off. A few of the men stood up, but I told them, "Relax, we need Squad B's signal. You can sit back down."

They trembled as they did so, and then I compared them to Johnny. Cowards compared to him they were. Cowards. I don't give a hoot how much they trained, this boy was composed. I liked him for that.

The city that the base was in was very different from what it once was. It used to have tall buildings and lights, but now they were all leveled and the land was oh so very desolate.

After awhile Squad B's chatter came through my radio.

"We've got 'em boxed in. Go!"

Then, we were off. Only seconds later we were at the fence. Barbed wire was at the top of the tall thing, so I melted a large hole in it. Now we had our chance.

We entered and the sounds of gunshots were deafening. They must've been really going at it. In the center of the small compound was a square building. There was a side door which we entered through. I didn't believe that anybody saw us go in through there. If they had, they never attacked us from behind or anything.

We arrived at the door to the control room, where the target was believed to be holding out. The door was locked, so of course I "dealt with it" and we entered fairly quickly, stepping over the mess of liquid that the door had turned into. Our weapons were all aimed at the captain and his bodyguards, all of whom were standing by the large computer screen at the front of the control room.

"There's no hope for you, terrorists!" I cried. "You'll have to surrender yourselves."

The captain kept making sidelong glances at one of his bodyguards' guns. He then ripped it out of the man's hand and aimed it at his own head. Before he could go through with his suicide, however, I raised a hand in protest and two soldiers fired their weapons, thinking he meant to attack them. One of the bodyguards was killed and the captain was wounded. But the most chilling thing of all was this:

the gun in the captain's hand had melted,  
and I was ten feet away from it.

## 8. LAB RATS AND BOMBS

Our mission was a success and we were returned to the capital, Fronx, and when we arrived, well, I mentioned that my powers were evolving and the scientists at Fronx began their tests. We'd just gotten back when the needles of my past were driven into me, and I was reminded of Dr. Marcel, and of the pardon I was given for murdering him. I remembered his wife screaming at me and all of the people at Mendusta claiming me a traitor. Without their doctor, injured people remained injured, and sick people remained sick. The death count was high and wouldn't stop going up. The small sicknesses turned into plagues, and eventually, after the crazed citizens began to wage war against the Kysecks, the city was bombed. Nobody survived the horrible blast, nobody except me. I didn't know it yet because I was so dazed I hadn't noticed it but my skin hadn't just taken the damage that time, I'd healed from it. I learned after many tests that although my skin was reinforced and bullets *could* bounce off of me, if a blast was strong enough it could still tear right through me. My skin was able to reconnect itself, but only because it was still attached to my body. Had it been ripped off of me, I was told, I would not have healed.

If the boy, Johnny, was homesick, he never showed it. He was always talking to me, always asking about my powers. How did they feel? How did I deal with them? Stuff like that. At one point he really got on my nerves. After a moment though I'd always regain my composure and let him continue every time.

We were to go on a mission in eight weeks and he was to be alongside me in my squad. The captain had broken and we now had Valvarus' location.

"Do you think we'll win this?" he asked me once. I looked to the clouds and whispered to him, "You know Johnny, I don't know. I hope Valvarus doesn't escape. So far it seems as if we'll finish this on our second battle. But I don't know for sure. It seems too easy."

I looked to Johnny now. I saw in his eyes a slight bit of worry. It would be the only time I ever saw it in his face.

To be concluded...

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