

Null Trigger  
By S.E. Gordon

Synthetics never cry, it's not what they're designed to do, yet fresh tears streamed down Adeira's cheek. Tears weren't physically possible with a J-series model—her superior design safeguarded against such operational weaknesses—but on and on she weeped, soaking the pillow with her heart. It felt wonderful, even though she couldn't remember what she was crying about. For the moment she was human, and that was all that mattered. Human and infallible.

With great reluctance Adeira snapped open her eyes. Nema, a gaunt caretaker with an uneven tan hovered overhead, an odd brownish-yellow energy drink in hand. “Never seen a J-mod cry before,” she said with a slight Southern drawl.

“Everything okay?”

Adeira smirked, combing aside her golden locks as she slammed down the shake in a single gulp. “How's the president?”

“Just fine,” she grinned. “Just fine...”

Adeira coughed, then again and again. Suddenly, she couldn't stop wheezing. It was as if she'd swallowed razors. Flax foam spewed from her mouth, licking its way to the bone.

“Dammit,” Nema barked, shedding the fake accent. “We'll have to surgically install it.”

“Change of plans,” a dark figure stepped forward, blasting Nema in the back of the head. The stranger held up a black chip and smiled. “Hello, Adeira.”

“Adeira?” came a knock.

Adeira sprung forward, clasping her throat. She was resting in the common room, where Secret Service performed their two-hour recycling.

“Everything okay?” John peeked inside, a hulking K-series from the Hans-Michael era.

Adeira touched her throat, discovering fresh scar tissue. Her bright green eyes dimmed. Quickly she shed her gray socks and stared at the incisions on either side of her archilles. Her Gaia chips had been surgically removed.

“Someone is going to kill the President,” she said finally.

“Oh yeah, who?” he chuckled.

“Me,” she replied and fired several bursts.

“Adeira?” said First Lady Darla Pitz as they crossed in the hallway. “May I have a word with you?”

“I'm afraid I'm a little busy-”

“Sure you are,” she grinned with perfect teeth. “This will only take a moment.” Mrs. Pitz brushed aside her personal bodyguards and stepped towards Adeira.

“I've known about you for quite awhile,” she presented a manila folder.

Adeira glanced inside. A series of photographs read like a poorly-crafted Kama Sutra handbook, Adeira and President Pitz assuming the lead roles.

"I think I'm in love with your husband—that's why I have to kill him."

"Congratulations, that makes two of us," Mrs. Pitz's hair turned a shade whiter. "You've been reassigned—effective immediately."

"I'm afraid I can't do that," Adeira unsheathed her gun. She cut the nearby guards down before they knew they were worm food.

Suddenly a round tore through Adeira's shoulder, then again into her lower calf. She spun inhumanly, diving into a nearby hallway. The pain flashed through her, rousing her faculties and modicum of logic. Someone had replaced her mother chips with a kill switch. Security protocol mandated that she flag her null trigger and shut down. But it wasn't responding; she was still in active employ. The kill switch, however weakened, was still blocking a range of auto-synchronous signals.

In all likelihood, Adeira was diverting attention from from a second party who would execute the kill shot. But who'd want the president dead? He was such a sweet old man...

"I'm not moving from this god-damned chair!" barked President Pitz.

"Mr. President, we really must get to the bunker," the fire-haired agent implored.

"What's so special about this particular threat?"

Chunks of skull and brain blasted out the side of the agent's head.

"Good point."

"Hello, Mr. President," hissed a dark figure, stepping from the shadows.

"Oh hell, not you again!"

"Don't move!" screamed Adeira, crashing through the window.

Adeira's internal kill switch distorted her perception, confusing president and assassin.

"Shoot," said both.

"I don't want to accidentally shoot the President."

"Shoot both of us, I won't hold a grudge," said one.

"Shut up!" said the other.

"Who should I shoot first?" said Adeira.

"Him," each pointed.

"Fine."

Adeira hesitated.

"Change of plans?" one grinned. The words echoed through her mind.

"There you are!" Adeira fired a round into his head. For a moment Adeira's view skewed until the adversary came into view. "First Lady Pitz?"

"Actually she's Ex-Ex-First Lady Pitz."

"They look identical," Adeira gasped.

The president shrugged.

"There's still one card left to play," the First Lady hinted at her vest.

"Am I supposed to be impressed that you can blow yourself up? Fine—blow all of us up."

"Shut up!" said Adeira.

Suddenly the room exploded, propelling the President and his flaming love bunnies into the night.

“That all you got, you crazy bitch?” shouted the president, picking up his metal frame from the smoldering ruin. Several news reporters across the White House lawn gawked, their mouths agape.

“God-damn,” said the president, marveling at the structural integrity of his endo-skeleton. Even though the flesh had been blown off his frame, he was still functional, and therefore, damned fine to serve as president.

“I have another detail for you,” said the president's voice as the room slowly came into focus.

Adeira found herself back in the Wellspring as a team of doctors played Mr. Potato head on each of them, one more hamburger meat than the other.

“Let me know what you think,” he managed a wink.

A nurse brought over a small mirror. Adeira shook her head in disbelief. She was an exact clone of First Lady Pitz, save a thousand face lifts.

“I love you, Mr. President,” she blew him a kiss.

“Doesn't everyone?”

The two giggled and locked hands.

Adeira couldn't prevent the second parade of tears streaming from her eyes. The moment was perfect.

“And I love you too, Monica.”

“It's Adeira,” she frowned.

“Right.” An honest mistake, he surmised. That was so many administrations ago. Ah, sweet infallibility.