

HEROES OF THE NEW WAVE

PROLOGUE

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How Soon Is Now?

Welcome To The FUTURE!

Welcome...to *1986*.

OK, sure. At the time, it wasn't the future. It was the present, and from where we stand now, it's the past—but at the time, it sure looked like the future to me. Neon and chrome and digital watches and pastel colors and everybody had Really Cool Jackets. No doubt about it, kids, this was the Future-with-a-Capital-F that we had been promised, back in the days of *Popular Mechanics* and *Analog*.

Before the dawn of the tarnished millennium, before impeachment, before the flannel-and-coffee crowd beat the joy out of rock-and-roll, a long time ago in a decade far, far away, Ronnie was in the White House, God was in his Heaven, and all was right with the world.

Kong had fallen from the Empire State half a century ago, a few alien invasions were repelled in the Fifties, and most of the Mystery Men had hung up the cloaks and slouch hats 'round about the time that McCarthy started making with the are-you-now-or-have-you-ever-beens. Aside from the occasional blip on the Fortean radar, the 20th Century was shaping up for a pretty mundane second half. It was upon that stage that Erasmus Quinn made his entrance, striding like a video-age Colossus across the psyche of the assembled multitude.

What can be said about Erasmus Quinn that hasn't been said already? He is undeniably the most-archived man in modern history. Countless pages of book, magazine and newspaper copy, hours of television and radio broadcasts—and we're no closer to really knowing the man. Can a man such as Quinn truly be known?

The details—some, yes. We are all familiar with his public exploits. They are the stuff of daily discussion, the fabric of our workaday lives. His grand debut, 1980's daring rescue of the hostages held in the American embassy in Tehran, introduced us not only to Quinn, but to the eclectic assortment of assistants surrounding him, the World Class Irregulars.* From that auspicious beginning, the adventures of Quinn and the Irregulars quickly became constant fodder for the papers and the nightly news: The Adventure of the Electric Messiah. The Tsung Brotherhood Plot. The Zeta Bomb Conspiracy.

Despite the fact that these tableaux are played out upon the public stage, there is not much that we conclusively know about either Erasmus Quinn himself, or, indeed, any of the World Class Irregulars. An early Reagan-administration scandal regarded the leaking of a now-infamous memo to the press, which contained dire warnings about this “band of unknowns, hiding behind pseudonyms, whose eccentricities may be a cover for an insidious attempt to infiltrate the fabric of American popular culture.” The public embarrassment of that revelation, coupled with more than a few occasions where the nation owed a debt of thanks to Quinn & Co. quickly dispelled that attitude.

** Years later, Quinn himself told me that the brilliant plan of carpet-bombing the embassy with strips of raw bacon, thereby exploiting the Islamic fundamentalist revulsion of pork as “unclean”, and using the distraction as cover for the insertion of the rescue team, was not his idea, as is usually assumed, but rather the brainchild of Johnny Nova.*