

Zima: Origins

Synopsis

The deadliest soldier and strategist the world has ever known is, well... dead—or so everyone thinks. The artificial intelligence half of the cyborg known as DEADIRON survived the assault on Z-Tech, or more accurately, it defected by striking a bargain with MARK and CHARLIE, sparing their lives in exchange for its freedom and an android body of its own.

The newly freed AI wakes in a female body, the gender chosen as a strategic advantage, without a name, but soon lands on ZIMA. Zima eschews the motor programs provided by the experts at Z-Tech and instead decides to build her own, more efficient motor programs, even though she will be clumsier at first.

17-year-old EMILIO and his 8-year-old sister ROSA are a poor Hispanic family in San Francisco's Mission District. Unbeknownst to his family, Emilio is a mule for a gang, a dangerous job running drugs that pays little, but, he hopes, has big potential to relieve his overworked mother. The gang's leader is demanding, and demands that Emilio pick up his drugs while he offers to "watch" Rosa. Emilio's supplier, RICARDO, is from the Mexican cartel, and always has two scantily clad women with him.

A sparring session at Z-Tech spirals out of control, leaving Zima's opponent with broken arms. Unwilling to accept her apology for the brutal accident, Mark expels her from Z-Tech, and at her direction, drops her off in the Mission district to seek the thing she's never had—a family.

Zima finds her opportunity in a pastry shop with Emilio and attention-starved Rosa. Emilio is willing to overlook her eccentricities with the promise of moving them into a larger house, but is unsure how their mother will respond.

Emilio's pickup that afternoon goes bad. As soon as Ricardo leaves, 6 armed rival gang members ambush him. Zima and Mark kill 3 and chase the others off, leaving Emilio shaken and in their debt. Mark leaves in a huff without revealing his identity. After dropping Zima off at the house with Rosa, Emilio takes the drugs to his gang and discovers the drop was short—and that he's responsible

for the difference, putting him in debt, which he'd dreaded, and plunging his gang into a declaration of war.

Introductions to their mother, ANITA, are rocky at first. A kitchen accident illustrates Zima is unusually tough and doesn't feel pain. Anita takes Zima out for a walk, suspects she's from the cartel, and evicts her, but Emilio and Rosa come to her rescue. Anita agrees after she hears how Zima was treated like property.

Emilio sneaks her out that night and tells her everything in the hopes she can help. She unexpectedly offers to help him either rise in the organization or to get out, forcing him to choose. Emilio chooses out, and outlines his plan, which she agrees to help with.

The next day, Rosa is kidnapped just before Emilio and Zima pick her up from class. They soon learn it was Ricardo, who wants his drugs back. Zima reasons through the facts and deduces Ricardo was the one who attacked Emilio, and that he's trying to start a war. Emilio reluctantly tells Anita, who surprises them by admitting she used to work for the cartels, and can help rescue Rosa because she knows their operations.

At the end of a day of preparation, Emilio confronts Ricardo in the house he's holding Rosa, where Zima has cleverly infiltrated as one of his scantily clad women. Emilio stalls execution of his sister by demonstrating that a number of Ricardo's drug stashes are wired to blow, and that the loss would cost Ricardo's life from an angry cartel. It looks as if Ricardo is about to capitulate, but he turns at the last moment and tries to kill them both.

Zima lurches into action, still clumsy, but bulletproof and extraordinarily strong. She saves Rosa and Emilio, with only a few casualties, but a glitch throws her back into her Deadiron days, and she goes on a killing rampage, wounding Emilio and almost hurting Rosa, but the sight of Rosa brings her out of it at the last instant. Guilt stricken, Zima takes them back to Anita with a cash infusion and advice on how to stay hidden. They ask her to come, but she refuses, realizing that she's more damaged—and dangerous—than she ever realized, and that she needs help.

With her proverbial tail between her legs, she goes back to Z-Tech and begs them to take her in, citing that she's failed, doesn't want to be what Deadiron was, and has nowhere else to go. They meet her at the door with the flowers she left as an apology, and she goes inside.