

Connor Writes
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Chapter 1

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A Primeval/Sapphire Short Story

So I'm going to write this all down. It's not that I'm planning a memoir or anything but I thought writing it down might make it clearer in my head. It's like when I have a theory about the anomalies or something. It gets clearer when I write it down. I usually have to edit it to get it to read properly. Looks like I'm going to have to edit out this first paragraph to start with.

You can tell I'm procrastinating here. Even thinking about it hurts. I'm afraid of putting it down on the paper I think.

I'll start at the beginning since it puts off the moment. I'm not sure where the beginning is, in fact. I could go back to that day I flagged Cutter down to talk about aliens and evolution but if I do that I'll be writing all week before I get to the... Well anyway, even I can see that's taking procrastination a bit far.

I don't know who the reader is supposed to be. I've read books on writing. Always decide on your audience. I'm writing this as therapy, I suppose. Which is a damn fool idea now I come to think of it. I don't know anything about writing as therapy. Maybe I should look it up?

On second thoughts, maybe I shouldn't. Abby is glaring at me. How did she know I wasn't getting down to it? This is sort of her suggestion. I should mention that now. She says I keep going round in circles when I talk about it.

"Damn fool"'s a good expression isn't it? I should try and use it more often. It makes me think of victorian adventurers discovering the Land that Time Forgot, which is more or less what we do, just without the pith helmets.

I guess it starts when we got a call from Jenny. We'd been away for the weekend. Abby took me to this gig which was kind of cool. I'm not sure I was really into the music but the lighting rig was interesting. A lot of work had gone into the

special effects. I was impressed. Anyway, we'd been away but when we got back Jenny rang and sent us straight to an anomaly site. Cutter had gone out there the day before and promptly gone AWOL. Jenny was sending soldiers with us so we also got strict instructions to do as we were told.

"Advisors only," I recall her saying, "no heroics."

Heroics isn't my thing. Abby always contradicts me when I say that but, really, honestly, heroics isn't my thing. In my head a lot of the time I'm Indiana Jones or failing that Ian Malcolm from Jurassic Park. I vacillate between dusty and battered and looking cool in leather. But, realistically speaking, I'm the comedy sidekick. Heroics are only my thing once I'm out of danger. At any rate it all happened by accident. That's what I keep telling myself.

It's an interesting anomaly. I've had a chance to go over the data since. It had been opening and closing quietly for a while but the signal had been masked by the comms at a local airbase. It was only a particularly sharp signal from the anomaly that triggered the ADD at all. I'm going to have to do some tweaking. I've started already and the maths... Well I guess the maths isn't really relevant to this. I didn't know any of this until later though, until I tried to sort out all the pieces that didn't make sense. At the time I didn't know there was anything more unusual about it than any other anomaly. Apart from the fact Cutter had gone missing, of course.

I was a bit excited if truth be told. Abby and I were going to be doing all the scientific stuff between us. I had visions of getting my own team, SG2, or maybe ARC2.

So we get to the anomaly. There were a small group of soldiers there already. A female lieutenant called Buxton was in charge with two privates, called Thorne and Swift. It was a new group. We'd had a rotation of military personnel. I don't like working with new soldiers, you never quite know how they will turn out. In the event Buxton was OK and I'm not just saying that because she was good looking. She was good looking, sort of Princess Leia crossed with Ripley. A little brusque perhaps. I hardly got to speak to Thorne and Swift, which seems strange now. Come to think of it we only spent about an hour in their company before we got split up and it was all business-like efficiency up until that point.

An ARC four-by-four was at the anomaly site so at least we knew Cutter had been there. The anomaly was tucked away behind some warehouses on an industrial estate. No one overlooked it or anything so we weren't too concerned about the general public and it was a Sunday so the place was all shut up and silent. Jenny was there. She was worried and said she'd wait. I think I tried to make a joke about how lone heroes always get away with things in the movies but

Abby stamped on my foot.

Our job was to go through the anomaly, find Cutter and then get out.

It turned out that Swift was some sort of tracking expert. It was why Buxton picked him for that mission. So we go through the anomaly and spend a lot of time waiting around while he scouts forward, proclaims he has mystically discovered some sign of Cutter's passage, and then we move up to follow. In retrospect I don't think Abby and I were as appreciative of his efforts as we might have been. It was a little bit too like what Stephen used to do. In fact, two months ago, it would have been Stephen leading us in after Cutter. We haven't talked about that but I think, now, it did make things worse.

It was late afternoon on the other side. I thought it was probably Jurassic (later confirmed). Lots of conifers and ferns and I thought I saw some flying pteranodon-like shapes. We really needed to see some large wildlife up close though, for me to be sure. Buxton wanted to know why I couldn't classify the insects which made me feel a little foolish but I just don't keep that stuff in my head and trawling the database for the right features would have taken longer than she was prepared to wait. I tried to make some sort of quick come-back quip. I've forgotten what it was, but she didn't look impressed. I remember Abby elbowing me in the ribs though so the quip must have been lame, or possibly too obscure. Maybe I said I wasn't Gil Grissom.

Since it was late afternoon there, even though it was early morning back where we'd come from, Buxton wasn't keen to stay long. We'd been there about half an hour when Swift came back with cigarette stubs. Cutter doesn't smoke. He said he thought he'd got signs of trouble and several people. It was then that Buxton parked me and Abby in a cave and said the SF team were going forward for reconnaissance.

The words "no heroics" got mentioned again.

Dark was falling and Abby and I were just debating what to do. It was a bit of a conundrum. Buxton had said stay put but neither of us were keen on spending the night there, especially with the risk that the anomaly would close so we were considering leaving a note and heading back when we heard gunfire.

I don't recall us talking much about what we did next. I mean, it's obvious you go to see what is happening and see whether you can help, isn't it? When I write that down it looks like the most stupid thing in the world. After all, if three highly-trained Special Forces soldiers can't cope what would Abby and I be able to do? Anyway we set off to see what was happening and whether we could help. It seemed like a good idea at the time.

Then Abby spotted something and dragged me into a bush.

We saw two men go past. They were wearing camouflage gear, you know the sort of thing, and armed with shot guns. We couldn't hear what they were saying. After that we were a bit more careful. There seemed to be a lot of men around. Eight, in all, I now know. They were searching the area, at least that's what we thought. There was a lot of shining of flashlights, tramping through bushes and shouting. Fortunately the natural forest is pretty densely overgrown and Abby and I were a lot more interested in hiding than they were in finding us. Abby also knew a few tricks, like closing your eyes whenever a light was shining your way so the reflection doesn't show up. It was properly dark, though, before they gave up and went away and we were lucky to find our way back to the cave.

A long conversation followed. It was almost an argument in places because, although we both knew there was nothing we could do in the dark, it's really, really hard to agree to do nothing for several hours. Not in a situation like that. We didn't know what had happened to Cutter or the soldiers. We basically agreed, all along, that we needed to get back to the anomaly, inform the authorities and get a really fuck off small army to come back through and deal with these people. If we'd thought we could find our way back to the anomaly in the dark we'd have done so but neither of us was confident we could.

In the event the anomaly had closed. We didn't know that at the time, but Jenny had a bad afternoon wondering if she'd ever see any of us again. It opened about eight in the evening back in the twentieth century, early morning our time. It was then that Jenny summoned a much larger team. We met them on the way out.

Abby thought the men were probably survivalists or hunters. The second guess was correct, as matters turned out, but I couldn't see how they could have got through the anomaly, armed, in such large numbers. It wasn't until I went over the details later and realised that anomaly had been there a while that it all began to make sense. We argued for a long time about what was going because, I suppose, neither of us much liked the fact that there was nothing we could do until it was light.

Then we unpacked our backpacks, ate energy bars and tried to sleep under a survival blanket.

Abby took matters into her own hands at this point. I'd go into detail but if anyone ever gets to read this it'll be Abby so I'm not sure about that. Hi there! Abby, if you're reading this I'm being considerate and sensitive.

I think the technical terms are *guh* and possibly *iz dead* though.

Neither of us slept well. Not that it wasn't *very pleasant*. So we were up as soon as there was any sign of light. Our plan was to head straight back to the

anomaly. Naturally, we headed in the other direction to see if we could locate the men's camp. We argued to ourselves that it was so we could give the "small army" we were going to summon as much information as possible. Looking back, I just think that neither of us could bear the thought of *not knowing* what had happened any longer.

I still can't decide if it was just as well. Abby says it was. Abby is very firm about that.

The camp was in a sort of clearing in the trees. I thought it was natural at the time but actually the men had put a lot of work into making it. I read that in the reports. When we got there Cutter and the soldiers were all kneeling in the clearing while one of the men strutted around them waving a pistol.

Cutter tells me they'd been through a whole interrogation style thing and the man was now working himself up to an execution. I think maybe Cutter was quite scared. He keeps describing the man, a Roger Markham, as "on a hair-trigger". Buxton has been very tight-lipped about the whole thing. We couldn't see the bruises from where we were but I saw them once the whole thing was over. It looked to me like she had born the brunt of the interrogation, even though they'd had Cutter for longer. She did go as far as to say that we arrived just in time. I don't know if Markham really would have killed them. Everyone says he would have.

I didn't have much time to think though because Abby was already out there. It was the moment when Markham placed the gun to the back of Buxton's head. I didn't really see that at the time. Buxton and Abby both agree that that was the moment so it must have been. My brain was still trying to catch up with the whole situation. It was scrabbling around trying to work out what to do. Abby isn't sure what she had in mind just that she knew she had to do something. Markham had his back to us and she crossed the ground rapidly and sort of leaped on him, pulling his gun arm upwards as she did so. He let off a shot into the sky at that moment so Buxton's almost certainly right when she says Abby saved her life. Then things got a bit confused.

They've let me see the reports. They're quite long winded but the gist of it seems to be that Markham was the dangerous one. The other men were mostly a bit bewildered by how rapidly the situation had escalated beyond a bit of odd and possibly illicit big-game hunting to some sort of execution set up. They didn't put up much resistance once the fight started but they did outnumber us. I say us, but of course I was still hiding the bushes. They were also armed.

The next thing I clearly remember is seeing that Markham had somehow thrown Abby off his back. He had lifted her off her feet and she was struggling to

kick him but he had this ugly, ugly expression on his face and his gun was pressed to her forehead. He was shouting something. There was a gun on the ground between me and them. I don't know how it got there. I must have seen it fall because I remember staring at it and then looking up to see Abby and Markham.

I still don't know what I was thinking. I guess some instinct bypassed anything I can consciously articulate. I walked out of the bush. I remember feeling totally calm. I wish I could say I didn't have a plan but I knew exactly what I was going to do even though I don't know how I came to decide upon it. I picked up the gun. I walked right up to them both, placed it against his head and blew his brains away. I even remembered to relax my arm to absorb the kick. I'd read about that somewhere. Then I just stood there.

I remember Abby talking to me, taking the gun away. I don't really remember going back to the anomaly. Cutter took us, I think, while Buxton stood guard on the remaining hunters. Then there were lots of official looking people and more soldiers and some forms I had to fill in.

Everyone keeps telling me I had no choice. But they would say that, wouldn't they?

I know I would do the same again but that doesn't make it right and I keep thinking how Abby went out there to save Buxton, who she hardly knew, and Abby managed to do that without killing anyone. Me, I was only prompted to move when Abby was threatened and I ended up with blood and brains all over my hands.