

A Day in the life

Louise Sellers

Rated Mature

Thanks to my beta-reader “lil_shepherd” (from livejournal) for spelling, grammar, and civil service picks.

Chapter 1

A Day in the Life

A Primeval Short Story

8am

On the 23rd December 2008 an anomaly opened near the village of Crathie in Aberdeenshire. Two Triceratops came through. We sent them back. Nicholas Cutter (Professor)

This is not so much a report, Cutter, as a text message. Can I assume that its brevity indicates a mission accomplished smoothly and without incident?

9am

“Good morning Lorraine. Can you hold any calls this morning. I’ve a mound of paperwork to get through and I’d like to get home early. Christmas Eve and all that.”

;b;10am;/b;

“What’s that? Number Ten? Yes, you had better put him through.”

“No sir, I’ve only received a brief report so far. I’m waiting for a longer one.”

“No sir, the castle wasn’t mentioned in the report I received.”

“Triceratops I believe, sir.”

“They are *large* animals, sir, and armoured I understand. I’m sure my men did their best.”

“No sir. I do understand how serious the situation was. I’ll speak to Lieutenant Lyle.”

“And the Professor.”

“Yes sir. I’ll have an apology ready by midday.”

“Thank you, sir. Your forbearance is appreciated.”

“Goodbye sir.”

“Lorraine, if you see either Lieutenant Lyle or Professor Cutter can you ask them to come and see me in my office. Yes, immediately.”

11am

“What’s that Lorraine? The Palace. Yes, you had better put them through as well.”

“Good morning.”

“Yes, I have spoken to the Prime Minister. I was just writing an apology now. It should be with Her Majesty in under an hour.”

“Yes, I am aware she is in residence at Balmoral during the Christmas period.”

“Yes, the PM did give me to understand there was some damage to the walls. We will of course provide the funds necessary to cover the repairs.”

“Yes, and the cost of the extra security needed in the interim.”

“No, I was not aware that the Professor had encountered Her Majesty.”

“I quite agree that was an unforgivable remark.”

“Do not worry. Her Majesty will receive a personal apology from the Professor. I will see to it myself.”

12pm

Report on Animal Welfare Issues at the ARC

The ARC was built with approximately two dozen cages ranging in size from a few square feet to several square yards. We are having considerable success with a number of smaller creatures that have come through anomalies. All the indicators are that they are content in their new surroundings. They appear healthy, are eating well and we have even had the birth of several young.

However we are doing considerably less well with the large animals, in particular the Megatherium and the Mammoth. We are witnessing a number of signs of distress such as loss of weight, lethargy and repetitive behaviour. Of course our understanding of the specifics of caring for these animals is minimal but there are a few general guidelines with which the ARC, as it currently stands, is simply unable to comply. Even the largest of the cages are insufficient in size for the truly

big animals. An outdoor area for these creatures is an absolute necessity which our city location prohibits.

We also need the advice of an expert in enrichment (that is the design of cages to provide an interesting and stimulating environment for the animals) and nutrition so that we may better understand how to care for the specific animals we have.

I am afraid to report that there are widespread concerns among the keepers and not all of them believe that a report such as this will generate any real action on your part. These people care greatly about their charges and are deeply distressed by the state of the Megatherium, in particular. Urgent action of some kind is required.

Abigail Maitland.

1pm

“Lorraine. The packaging may say Cheese on the outside but it tastes like plastic between slices of cardboard. Send someone down for something else?”

“The sandwich shop closed at midday? Bloody Christmas Eve.”

“No, no, I don’t want anyone going into town. It’s Christmas Eve; we’ll never get them back. I’ll make do with the plastic.”

1.30pm

“Lorraine, I know my wife has told you to watch my diet but if you report that I’m helping myself from the vending machine, so help me, I’ll see you fired.”

1.35pm

“Ah Jenny! Hello. You met my wife at the summer barbeque didn’t you? Here, have a chocolate bar.”

“No, no, I insist, I got it in the Secret Santa and was just wondering what to do with it. Merry Christmas!”

2pm

Dear Sir

As I am sure you are aware the efficacy of the National Grid depends upon precise calculations using statistical data which estimate the anticipated usage of the system at any one time. On the 21st November there was a sudden and unanticipated surge in demand, causing what is known as a cascading failure. This is a failure in which, as one element fails, it's excess load is transferred to surrounding elements causing them to overload in turn. We use complicated computational models to avoid and limit the effects of such failures. These models represent the state of the art and account for all reasonable usage of the system. On the 21st November we suffered just such a cascading failure when a power line over-loaded resulting, as I am sure you will recall, in a power failure across a wide area of the West Midlands. Extensive investigation by ourselves has indicated that the sudden excess demand can be traced to your facility. We therefore request that our engineers be permitted to enter your premises and examine your equipment with a view to limiting such failures in future. If in the process of this inspection we conclude that your company was acting without due regard to safety or outwith the terms of your supply contract we will be bringing a prosecution to recoup the losses.

“Lorraine, can you send the Electricity company a brief note informing them that they have no right of entry and reminding them of our status as a government research facility conducting work of relevance to national security. Then get the lawyers onto our contract with them and make sure we're bullet proof when it comes to power cuts. Oh, and while you're about it ask the lawyers if it's possible to sue for egregiously long-winded letter writing and incorrect use of apostrophes.”

3pm

To: Connor Temple <connor.temple@arc.gsi.gov.uk>
From: James Lester <james.lester@arc.gsi.gov.uk>
Subject: Recent power cut.

Connor

What exactly were you doing with the ADD on the 21st November when that blackout occurred?

James

4pm

“We must change the sound that thing makes. It is absolutely impossible to concentrate when it is going off.”

“Cutter, I thought I said I wanted to see you in my office!”

“Yes, yes, go chase this anomaly but I want to see you as soon as you return. The Palace wants an apology.”

“Lorraine, you’d better allow through calls from anyone at the anomaly site.”

5pm

Dear Sir

I have received a complaint which states that your facility houses a number of vertebrate animals in poor conditions. I can find no evidence that your department has ever been granted a Licence to use Animals in Scientific Procedures, nor any information detailing the scientific work being undertaken at your establishment. I am hoping that there has been some mistake here and that the whole situation can be resolved without difficulty. I would be grateful if you could get back to me without delay so the situation may be resolved. I feel bound to inform you that we take such complaints very seriously and are almost bound to consider a welfare inspection a priority.

Alan Richards
Inspector
RSPCA

“Lorraine, you should go home. No point you being late as well on Christmas Eve. Make a note though. When you get back find out if there is anyone in the RSPCA with security clearance and set up a meeting. If not arrange for someone to get clearance. Liaise with this Alan Richards chap in the interim.”

6pm

“Aah! Lyle! I trust everything is going smoothly. At least on Salisbury Plain we can pretend it’s all a military exercise.”

“Why exactly do you need the services of the Air Force?”

“I’m sorry Lyle, but no. You can not bomb Stonehenge. It’s a World Heritage Site for crying out loud. I can’t believe Cutter would agree to it.”

“Ah! I thought not.”

“He did what?”

“I’m sorry about your man but the answer is still, ‘No’. Get Cutter out of there and ship him back to me, by force if necessary. Then get rid of the creature and make your way home.”

7pm

Dear Mrs Werth

It is with deepest regret that I write to inform you of the death of your husband, Private Mark Werth. You and your family have our deepest sympathies and understanding during this period of bereavement.

Your husband was a valued member of the forces and the work he was undertaking, while low key, was of great importance to national security. You may be proud of the fact that he died in the course of his duties while successfully saving the life of a civilian. He will be greatly missed by his fellows, in particular the football team will be sorry to have lost their best goalkeeper.

Please know that we have shared in your pain and sorrow and pay our final respects to one of our best soldiers.

Sir James Lester

ARC: A Cabinet Office, Agency.

8pm

“Cutter. Here is a pen and a piece of paper. You are going to sit there and write a letter of apology to the Queen while I watch. Then you are going to explain what the bloody hell you thought you were doing this afternoon. And before you ask, ”acting as live bait“ will not suffice as an explanation.”

9pm

I have once again made a tour of the building and discovered a number of Health and Safety contraventions. In no less than three labs I found chairs pulled up in front of whiteboards and obstructing the pathways to the fire exits. There is also considerable evidence that food and drink is being consumed in close proximity to computer workstations. In one lab I found a microwave that had not been PAT tested. Please can you reiterate to all staff the need to follow the guidelines.

Dr. Butterworth

To: All Staff <all@arc.gsi.gov.uk>

From: James Lester <james.lester@arc.gsi.gov.uk>

Dear All

May I once again draw your attention to the Health and Safety check-sheet drawn up by Dr. Butterworth which I circulated last month. Random inspections are taking place and action may have to be taken if certain people continue

to be found in breach of them. I know they are tiresome but they are intended to prevent accidents.

Thank you for your assistance in this.

James

10pm

“Lyle! When I said, 12 hours ago, that I wanted to see you in my office straight away I was expecting you to be wearing clothes at the time.”

“Well stop standing there looking decorative. Come over here and show me quite how sorry you are.”

“God Lyle! No! Don’t stop!”

“A Happy Christmas to you too.”