

SOUTH STAR

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Z.O. Anderson

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By Z.O. Anderson

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To JACKIE

SOUTH STAR

"A South Star is a Nova. A Nova is a star that suddenly increases greatly in brightness, then within a few years, or a few months, grows dim again. A South Star is also a person who only gets fifteen minutes of fame. Or like a Rock Group or Singer with a single hit, or a One-Hit-Wonder. South Star is also used to describe the short-lived Confederacy of the 1860's."

--Frank Zachary

SOUTH STAR

PROLOGUE

They all met while they were attending college at the University of Colorado in Boulder. They became better acquainted at their favorite watering hole, that tavern across from their favorite gambling casino.

It was in the tavern that they began to discuss their time travel theories and plans. Of course, the drunker they became, the more ingenious, and oft times absurd, their fabulous ideas became.

Eventually, they acquired funding for their experiments and their Time Travel Project. But, when they were finally successful, the government moved in and took control. Even so, they still managed to do things their own way.

SOUTH STAR

"We can record the animals in the valley from that sundial rock at the edge of the plateau." Frank explains to the others.

The Cameraman, Bill Clark, filming with video cameras in both hands, follows Frank. The Monitor, Steve Johnson, carrying recording equipment, checks his chronometer and yells out alarmed:

"Frank! We traveled too far back in time. It should be five million years B.C. This is more like fifty million years B.C."

Team leader Frank Zachary, in his early forties, seeming much huskier in new khaki coveralls than his usual wiry appearance, checks his own chronometer.

"Yeah, yeah. It's that negative accelerator...I can fix that." He shrugs his shoulders then tells them, "Let's take a look anyway."

The three men, all dressed in coveralls and loaded down with scientific equipment, move cautiously toward the sun dial-shaped rock at the edge of the plateau.

That was how they had arrived all geared down in a clearing on this prehistoric plateau exiting from a silky gossamer-like spiraling vertical vortex that suddenly materialized out of nowhere. They had stepped out of this portal and looked around in awe. The animals, birds and other prehistoric life forms were gargantuan. This very calm, clear and peaceful day was disrupted only by the strange and unusual sounds emanating from the valley below which was overgrown with gigantic vegetation and blanketed with an eerie mist.

Cameraman Bill Clark, filming a large bird circling ominously above them, shouts out, "Frank, look out! That giant bird is diving at you!"

Frank drops to the ground, puts a whistle in his mouth and blows hard. The shrill whistle startles the huge bird and makes it veer off.

Then Monitor Steve Johnson alerts Cameraman Bill Clark, "Look out, yourself! There's a small Raptor right behind you."

The Raptor charges Cameraman Clark, who screams and runs away.

Frank cries out to him. "Don't run! It's only a baby raptor. Blow your whistle and scare it off, or use your stun gun."

Bill tries to blow the whistle as he runs, but he trips and falls. Then he starts kicking at the little raptor. The raptor chomps down on Bill's leg and lifts him up in the air.

Frank blows his whistle and throws rocks at the raptor. One rock hits the raptor on the nose and it lets out a roar, opening its mouth and dropping the Cameraman. Then the raptor quickly turns to face Frank. Frank charges, waving his arms and yelling as the little raptor backs away. Frank stops and whistles again. The raptor eyes him cautiously then begins to circle him.

Frank circles with it until he's between the raptor and Cameraman Clark. Steve Johnson moves over to help Bill as Frank keeps the young raptor at bay.

"Oh, oh! Here comes the Momma!" Steve yells as he points past the small raptor.

A much larger raptor comes running and roaring toward them.

"Activate the wormhole! Frank commands. "Hurry!"

Monitor Steve Johnson pulls out a remote device and clicks it. That silky gossamer-like spiraling vertical vortex re-appears behind them.

Frank and Steve pick up the Cameraman Clark and run

for the vortex. The three men disappear into the wormhole just as the large raptor charges at them.

Frank, Steve and Bill come flying out of the wormhole into a laboratory and land on a platform surrounded by huge humming accelerators.

"Shut it down!" Frank commands the Technicians.

"Quick, shut it down!"

Head Technician Stephanie Andrea Valerie immediately throws emergency switches and the wormhole begins to fade just as the big Raptor sticks its head into the laboratory. As the wormhole disappears, the big Raptor disappears with it.

A large wall calendar in the background reads, "**May 2000**".

"Medic!" yells Frank. " We have a medical emergency!"

The squirming Cameraman Clark holds his leg as the Medics come charging over and begin cleaning and dressing his wounds. They bring a stretcher and as they start to carry him out, he grabs Frank by the arm and says, "It looks like you'll need a new Cameraman, Frank."

"He'll need a new Monitor, too.. I quit!" Steve Johnson exclaims as he hands his equipment to a lab assistant and heads for the exit.

Frank chases after him. "Wait! Wait!"

