

APEX

WORLD OF DINOSAURS ANTHOLOGY



FEATURING STORIES FROM

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EDITED BY JONATHAN THOMPSON
& ALANA JOLI ABBOTT



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WORLD OF DINOSAURS ANTHOLOGY

Edited by
Jonathan M. Thompson
Alana Joli Abbott

APEX: WORLD OF DINOSAURS

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Dedicated to Victor Milan.

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— FOREWORD —

My kids don't always get excited about my work. There's not a lot that's exciting about sitting in front of a computer and typing, especially for my five year old, who'd rather have me watching *Dino Dana* with him than working on story development or copyediting (though I think that's fun!).

When Outland Entertainment started working with Herschel Hoffmeyer on the *APEX Therapod Deck-Building Game*, however, I got to be a Cool Mom. "Come see the new pictures for the game we're doing!" I'd call out, and my younger kiddo, who knows more dinosaur names than any five year old has a right to know, would come running to look at the *giganotosaurus* or *spinosaurus* on my computer screen.

I will admit that I had lost my passion for dinosaurs as an adult until I became a parent. My older daughter could not get enough *Dinosaur Train* when she was little, which is how I learned that *troodonts* are the smartest dinosaur, and that *therapods* are the ancestors of modern birds. (Even *Sesame Street* is sharing that information these days; when I was a kid, I'm pretty sure we were still being taught they were reptiles!) I've started clicking through on dinosaur-related news any time it comes up in my feed. I had wrongly assumed, for a long time, that we pretty much knew everything there was to know about these extinct creatures. Dinosaur books when I was a kid had maybe thirty or forty types of dinosaurs. We now regularly read from dinosaur books that feature over a hundred different species.

Did you know that the *triceratops* actually lived closer in time to humans than to the *stegosaurus*? Dinosaurs were on earth for so

long that the end of their era was closer to the start of our history than it was to the beginning of theirs. It boggles the mind.

Over the course of the last decade or so, I've become a huge dinosaur fan again, which is why it was such a joy to work with Jonathan to bring together the authors for this anthology. We didn't give them many boundaries: we wanted stories about dinosaurs, and we wanted to see what they'd come up with. In these pages there are funny dinosaurs and terrifying ones, dinosaur partners and dinosaur threats. Some talk. Some are no smarter than animals. Some are only smarter than animals because humans interfered—and some were smarter than us in the first place.

I hope that wherever you are in your own journey with dinosaurs that you enjoy these tales. I hope some of them give you a good jump-scare in the style of *Jurassic Park*. I hope others give you warm fuzzies as people (and creatures) come together, or make difficult choices about their futures or their loved ones.

Most of all, I hope you share in our joy in bringing you these stories. Dinosaurs may be extinct, but their legacy lives on.

Alana Joli Abbott, co-editor and author
September, 2020

— INTRODUCTION —

Ever since William Buckland discovered the first fossil in 1818, humankind has been fascinated by Dinosauria. It is a subject that has permeated our hearts, minds, and souls for generations. Every kid knows they have a favorite dinosaur, and so do a lot of adults. It is a subject that transcends age, gender, race, and creed. These creatures appear as movies, television shows, and books. They have spawned a science dedicated to the study of dinosaurs—and of course, there are those that make a living from fictional dinosaurs doing things, like you'll find in this anthology.

When I was a child, I fell in love with the triceratops. To me it is the most beautiful animal to have ever walked the Earth. This started a lifelong fascination with these creatures, most of them as deadly as they were beautiful. As I got older we learned more and more about these creatures. Even now there seems to be a popular theory that some dinosaurs had feathers (while I am sure is true, but after forty years, this still looks a little silly—but we are all capable of adjusting our perspective on things.)

Being invited to be a part of this anthology made me happy, and the thought of getting to work with my co-editor and the other authors of this book always brought a smile to my face, even in the midst of tragedy. While I was working on this book, I was struck by a fire in my home that displaced me for almost a year. The fire killed some of my beloved pets and destroyed my ability to work (since it started in my home office) and about a quarter of my collectibles. The people that are Outland Entertainment are the best people. They and the other authors were able to look past the issues I was having and continued to have me as a part of this project. I am very grateful.

My story, “A Boy and his Dog” is set in the fictional universe of “The Dinosaur Protocol,” a setting for the Savage Worlds game engine, written by Christopher Halliday and me. The world is not unique as a post-apocalyptic setting, but it is one where Earth itself has survived anything that could have been done to it. It is a world where dinosaurs exist, much like Apex itself.

Dinosaurs literally fill my world. I have several on my desk currently as I type this introduction. They are my wallpaper on my computer, and they are seen everywhere in my office and home. Dinosaurs bring out the kid in all of us, and it is said that the *Jurassic Park* movie from 1993 created a resurgence in the field of paleontology. It made people excited about dinosaurs again and sparked their limitless imaginations.

I know I have rambled on, but remember this. The kid in all of us needs to be with the adults that we generally are. To do otherwise and fail to enjoy life makes it cease to be worth living. Dinosaurs are one of the many things that let us be free.

So, in my conclusion, I want to thank a couple of people. Robert J. Sawyer, who has stories in this book, agreed to allowing us to reprint his work. Robert is a lover of dinosaurs, and he has several novels about them. Secondly, I want to spend some time thanking my friend, Victor Milan. Victor was a dinosaur nerd, and one of the best people I have ever had the privilege of knowing. Victor has been gone for a few years now, but his dinosaur legacy lives on my mind, in my heart and with his books. If you need something additional to read, be sure to look these two gentlemen up. I promise you won't be sorry you did.

Thanks to everyone for letting me be part of this work. I look forward to a second one of these anthologies—maybe we can convince the bosses at Outland that it is worth it!

Jonathan M. Thompson, co-editor and author
September, 2020

— SMILE —
by LaShawn M. Wanak

Let us start first with the news article.



Lab Technician Turned Arsonist Sentenced to Fifty Years in Prison

A judge today sentenced 46-years-old Alma Patterson in her alleged role in the 2056 explosion of a laboratory at the University of Oregon that destroyed research vital to the Velociraptor Revivification Project, where Patterson had served as Lead Technician.

“Justice was served in the sentencing,” Michael Rooks, Director and Distinguished Professor, said at a press conference after the ruling. “But our department has been struck a blow that we may never recover from. Years of research have been destroyed, the eggs, the genetic material, the methods we used. It’s all gone. It is the extinction of the dinosaurs all over again. Our only hope is that—”



Unfortunately, this was all I was able to recover from the data files, but I do have a video clip to go with it.

Alas, there is no audio, but here we get to see Alma Patterson in the flesh. There she is, dressed in all gray—gray shirt, gray pants, gray nubs of short coiled hair. We can't see her face right now because she must face the judge during her sentencing. But let us admire how straight and stiff her back is, how her head is tilted back to look the judge full in the face. She knows what she's done, and she has no regrets. I dare say her very posture is that of a queen, not a destroyer of arguably the most important find of the twenty-first century.

And now, look, there—the guards are in the act of pulling her away. She sags in their grip, her defiant fire dwindling down at last. But as they turn her around to lead her out the courtroom, we can finally see her face.

Why, yes, what a great observation. That is indeed a smile on her face.



This is just the beginning. I happen to have the most extensive collection of memorabilia from that crucial time period when the raptors were discovered and brought back to life. Patterson figures prominently in most of my collection. Unfortunately, we don't know much about Patterson herself, but I do own the earliest clip we have of her. Shall we have a little watch?



The camera flashes on to show a small box sitting on a clean steel table. The box is opened to show it holding several trays of what appear to be oblong eggs, about a foot in length. A heat lamp shines at the top of the box, showing that it is an incubator. A figure enters the view, covered from head to toe in white, wearing white gloves and a white mask around the nose and mouth. As the eyes crinkle, we see that it is Alma Patterson. She beckons the camera closer.

“You need to get this,” she says. Her voice is a light tenor bordering on baritone, and it is breathless with excitement. She reaches into the incubator and takes out one of the eggs, cupping it carefully in her hands. “Come here. Closer. We’re viewing history here—oh look! Here it comes!”

The camera zooms in on the egg, which is cracking at the top as whatever is inside pokes and chips at it to free itself. As pieces of shell fall, a bright fuzzy head wiggles its way out of the hole. Despite its orange and green feathery fuzz, it is not a bird—more lizard-like, with tiny black eyes and a long beak of a mouth. It yawns, showing rows of miniature teeth.

“Hello, my friend,” Alma speaks softly, almost reverentially. “Welcome. You’re a long way from your original time. Welcome to our age.”



Why yes, that is indeed our very first view of a raptor chick. Note how Alma’s brown eyes widen with surprise, then fills with—what is it called? Warmth.

Hardly the killer of the entire velociraptor race, is she?



The eggs? Ah yes, how did they get the eggs. Unfortunately, I don’t have any video or audio from that auspicious discovery, but I do have this. Back then, they called it a “plushie.” This was supposed to represent the raptors, but made of the softest materials, even the teeth, so people could give these fearsome predators to their children to play with.

Reach inside its mouth. Go on. It won’t bite. Hah, yes, a little joke. You feel something? Go ahead and pull it out. That oblong lump is indeed supposed to represent an egg.

Ironic, isn’t it?

It had been a momentous discovery. Excavators had been draining a marsh in what used to be known as Mongolia when they came across a momentous find—a clutch of large salamanders

that had died in the marsh, fully preserved. These salamanders were known to have a curious method of survival. During periods of extreme drought, they would burrow down into the earth and secrete a mucus that hardened into a protective shell. They would then go into a hyper-hibernation state until the rains would come to revive them. Unfortunately, those rains never did come for those salamanders.

Radiometric dating on the tissue determined that they came from the Cretaceous Period. Furthermore, scientists were able to examine the contents of their stomachs. Each salamander contained an egg, perfectly preserved and intact. To the scientists' amazement, the eggs were indeed raptor eggs, to be specific, *Velociraptor mongoliensis*, with enough DNA intact to cultivate a full genome.

This was an even more momentous find. Up until that moment, dinosaur DNA only came in fragments too fragile to do anything with. But the DNA in these eggs were stable enough that the scientists felt they could use it to revive the raptors. So they injected the raptor DNA into chicken eggs stripped of their own chromosomes. And what emerged was...well...let's watch another video.



Alma Patterson stands in a room similar to the first room, though there is no furniture here. She is still dressed in a white lab coat and white sneakers, but her face is bare. She is walking around the room in a zigzag pattern. Every few steps, she pauses to bend over and laugh, hands on her knees. The camera jerks, as the wielder also laughs. A male's voice calls out off-screen, "Just like a mama duck!"

The camera blurs out of focus, zooms to focus by Alma's feet. A train of seven raptors amble behind Alma, their bodies covered in feathery orange and brown fuzz. They are the size of large apples. Their forelimbs are clasped almost as if in prayer. Their eyes are large and round as they gaze about, steadying themselves on their legs. As Alma steps forward, they

chuff—their vocalizations reminiscent of tiny alligators, but with a longer squawk—and scurry to keep behind her.

Alma leads them in zigzags and circles, laughing until tears stream down her face.



Watch the raptors follow Alma around. Watch the smile spread across her face. Her bare, brown face. Fixate that in your mind. Good. Now here. Take this.

Yes, that is exactly what you think it is. What you're holding is one of the raptor chicks. Don't worry. It's not contaminated. It's been encased in what they called an acrylic block—they used this method to preserve specimens. Pick it up and examine it. Look at how tiny it is. Judging from the size, this chick would have been three days old when it was encased like this. Don't worry, it was already dead when they preserved it.

We also have a video from Patterson at that time. Here:



Alma Patterson sits in what appears to be a desk in an office. Files and books are stacked behind her. She's not in her lab coat, but wearing a green t-shirt. She dabs at her reddened eyes with a tissue. "Five minutes ago, the last raptor chick died. We tried everything, but it just...weakened and died. Just like the others. We didn't even have the chance to give them names."

She takes a deep breath, rolling her head on her neck. She sounds tired. "The best we could determine is that their immune systems were probably in shock, despite everything we have done to prepare them up. But the fact that they were able to live for three days tell me that the DNA is indeed viable. We just need to boost the immune systems. We'll be dissecting the raptors to determine the cause of death; I've already received permission to cultivate a new batch of eggs—"