

Electronic Edition

**THE DAY
THE PRIMING
STOPPED**

**A
Dr. Primstein
Adventure™**



The Day the Priming Stopped: A Dr. Primestein Adventure™

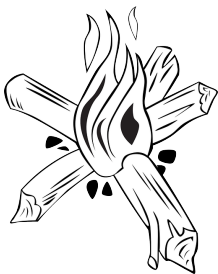
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Life is one big priming experiment...

—Wray Herbert

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Chapter 18

Fire and light

As the sun set over the hills, the one who was called Daniel in the go-before times blew into his small fire. The group had walked far today; Daniel Go-Before — or, as the others called him, Dago — was happy to finally rest his feet. The children played in the quickly-darkening trees around the camp.

“Stay close, children!” he called out. “We do not know who dwells in these woods.”

The other adults wrangled the children back to the fire as Dago chose his spot for the night and settled in. He lay down facing the fire, and the children sat down one by one.

Fire. Warmth. These words meant more in the go-before times, but he could not remember what.

As he did every night, the smallest of the children — who they called *Youngest* — rolled over next to Dago. “Dago, tell us a story!” The other children tittered in support. One of the older children spoke up: “Tell us about the go-before times!”

The go-before times. When things were...different. When he was not a nomadic clan leader, but rather...one who *professed*. Could they even understand? He wasn't sure. The Happening had changed everything.

“Alright, I will try to tell you of the go-before times. What do you know about them?”

Youngest sat up straight. “Bolas told me that you found meat on the ground and did not have to hunt it!”

“This...this is true. We did not hunt for meat. We found it.”

One of the older children objected. “How can you find meat? Meat is from animals.”

Dago explained “Some had meat, and others had small pieces of metal. They traded the meat for metal.”

“But you cannot eat metal. That cannot be right.”

Dago squinted in thought. “Yes. I...it does not make sense, but that is what happened.” The Happening had changed everything. “Let me start again. In the go-before times, we had something called science. Science was the study of metaphor.”

“What is metaphor?” Youngest chirped.

“Metaphor is...metaphor is like...” Dago could not say; he could not remember. Curse the Happening! He looked at the fire as it continued to grow. Fire...heat...

Dago tried to continue. “Metaphor was how we thought; how we lived. Then the metaphors stopped, because of *them*.”

“Who?”

“Them. We showed how the metaphors were thought.” The light from the fire became brighter. “But when they tried the same thing, it didn’t work. They stopped the metaphors.”

“How could they stop the thinking?” Youngest asked.

“Well, at first we thought they were doing it wrong. Or on the wrong day. Or in a different place, or —” Dago stopped and turned toward a rustle in the trees

around the camp. The camp froze as Dago slowly readied his rifle.

From the darkness, a shrill voice cried: “But that doesn’t make sense; you said you were uncovering fundamental properties of human —” A shot, then a loud *thud*. Dago never missed, even in the dark.

“Feral methodologist,” Dago explained. “After they caused the Happening, they had no scientists left to harrass, so they took to the trees.”

Dago lowered his rifle, continuing the story to the still-frozen camp. “It wasn’t the day or the place. It was *them*. They stopped the metaphorical thinking, and it spread from them through the population. We could not think anymore. There was no more science. No one took the metal for the meat. No one...” He stared at the fire: *light*. “No one...saw the light anymore.”

“They were blind?” Youngest asked, on behalf of

the clearly puzzled group.

“No...but yes...*metaphorically*.” The entire camp stared at him with confused faces. He fell silent, basking in the fire’s increasing warmth, and placed his arm around Youngest. “But no more. Tomorrow I will begin to tell you a new story. Now, sleep.”

The next morning, Dago looted the methodologist’s pack for supplies. He was well-equipped: a spare uniform, a jackknife, and...a *t* table? Youngest came up behind Dago as he scanned the critical values. “Youngest, today we begin our journey on the river of knowledge.” The child squinted, not sure how to react.

Dago handed Youngest the table of critical values. “Take this. This is science.”

Dago’s clan began the day’s march, the sun’s new light ahead and the wind at their backs. His clan fell into line behind him; he was Daniel Go-Before.



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