

PRINCIPIA

*A Series of Tales Describing
th' Adventures of Messrs. Lennon et. Delapore
of Cambridge, et. their Various Acquaintances,
in th' Time of the Glorious Revolution.*

Part 0: An Unexpected Assault on La Route de Meyrin



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URBS ANGELORUM, CALIFORNIA, Anno MMXIII.

Three hundred and thirty years from now.

It would be so simple if there were no rules. Walk into the laboratory. Kill anyone who got in the way. Set an explosive on the device. Destroy it. Save the world.

But there were rules.

The bakery van turned left, pulling off the Route de Meyrin and into Entrée D, Goods Reception. There was no gate or guardhouse, and the battered white van, which read "Boulangerie-Pâtisserie" on the side in faded paint, pulled into the middle of the receiving area and slowed to a stop.

Matthias sat behind the wheel patiently for a few minutes. Tinny Europop music bled from the one remaining speaker attached to the van's primitive radio. There was no one in the receiving area, no one on the loading dock.

After a few minutes a security officer appeared, squinting in the early morning sunlight. Matthias looked closely — it was Fonzi, as usual. That would simplify things.

Fonzi, a mildly obese Swiss in his mid-30s, approached the van casually and waved. He recognized Matthias, who had been delivering bread for Cafeteria One for about three weeks. After the first few visits, Fonzi had stopped inspecting the back of the van.

"*Bonjour*, Matthias," Fonzi called out, hugging himself in his thin windbreaker as he approached the van's driver side window, which Matthias rolled down, yanking its ancient, fragile handle in circles. "You're early."

"*Oui*," Matthias replied. "Do you mind if I wait?"

"There won't be anyone here until nine."

"I don't have anywhere to be."

Fonzi shrugged. He watched as Matthias pulled the van around, and backed it up to the loading dock, parking in the cold shade of the building.

Matthias sat in the driver's seat for a bit, waiting silently, listening to the radio. Suddenly there was a loud banging on the side of the van. Matthias almost leapt from his seat.

But it was just Fonzi. "Do you want me to bring you coffee?" the security officer asked, peering through the open window.

Matthias regained control over his hammering heart. He leaned into the window as casually as he could, to prevent Fonzi from seeing into the van. He forced a smile. "*Non, merci*."

"Cappuccino?"

"*Non*."

Fonzi shrugged again, and headed back off towards the receiving building.

Matthias watched the man laboriously climb the steps and disappear into the receiving office. Finally, he relaxed a bit.

He looked over his shoulder into the back of the van. Armed soldiers, six men and two women, sat on wooden benches, their faces hidden behind HUD helmets. They wore shiny body suits with active camouflage surfaces. Each gripped an LSAT rifle with caseless rounds — the company that manufactured the rifles that would not be founded for another 12 years. They sat in the dark, staring at Matthias, or at each other, or at their shoes. Waiting.

He looked at their leader. She sat farthest in the back, gripping her rifle, her expression obscured by her faceplate. She nodded slightly, but said nothing.

Matthias looked back out through the windshield, gazing west, across the main campus of CERN, home of the European Organization for Nuclear Research.

§

Dr. Leighton struggled to control his anger. He had years of experience dealing with the non-scientists — the administrators, bureaucrats, politicians, and investors — who held the purse strings of any scientific enterprise.

But dealing with the military introduced an entirely different level of frustration.

“General, I made my position on this very clear in my letter, and in person when we met in Paris,” Leighton said. Thankfully, the General spoke fluent English. Leighton had trouble maintaining his train of thought when he had to say anything substantive in French.

“Your opinion has been noted,” the General replied; any Dutch speaker would have known from his accent he was an *Antwerpenaar*. “The decision has been made. You will move forward with the experiment as instructed.”

Vigorously shaking his head, Leighton led the General past the guard desk, flashing his badge as he passed, and down the hallway towards the Main Lab. “This isn't an *opinion*,” Leighton exclaimed. “What you want is too dangerous, *far* too dangerous.”

“It is not a request. NATO is now funding this project, Dr. Leighton. We call the shots.”

Leighton laughed. “You mean the Americans call the shots!”

The General shrugged. “As you wish. Washington wants to see progress, so we will give them progress.”

“*It's... too... dangerous.*” Leighton tried to emphasize this even more than the last time he said it, and came off sounding ridiculous.

“Leopold have weighed the risks, and the decision has been made to go forward,” the General explained calmly. “Leopold” was Boulevard Leopold III, 1110 Brussels, Belgium — the headquarters of NATO.

Leighton stopped abruptly and spun to face the General, his unkempt gray ponytail whipping about and his hands in the air. “Weighed the risks? I can't even *state* the risks, I can't even *guess*; and no one knows more about this experiment than I do!

“We place a sample — an inert sample — in a field with positive curvature, it disappears and *bang!* it reappears, let's say, 30 seconds later. Causality is intact.”

Leighton mimicked the placement of the sample with his empty hands. On “bang,” his hands flew out and he wiggled his fingers — jazz hands. When the imaginary sample “reappeared,” he snatched it up again.

“Now we place a sample in a field with negative curvature. What will happen? No one knows! Will the sample reappear 30 seconds *before* we even place it in the field?”

He pantomimed placing the sample, and made another “bang” with his fingers. Now with each hand, he picked up two samples.

“Are there then two identical samples, an original and a duplicate, before the experiment has even taken place? What if a duplicate appears, and then we decide *not* to later place the original in the field? Then what?”

Leighton leaned in towards the General, and lowered his voice. “What if placing matter in a negatively-curved field creates an entirely new universe? Who's going to accept responsibility for that?”

The General patiently watched Leighton's performance, and waited calmly for the physicist to pause. “All of this was covered in your letter,” he said, “and it has all been considered. Leopold want the experiment to move forward. Negative curvatures, and living samples.”

Leighton threw up his hands. “No. I won't do it. Not until we've accurately modeled how negative curvatures will interact with matter. It's not happening.”

“Then we will replace you.”

Leighton laughed. “With whom? There is no one on the planet who understands the math like I do.”

The General regarded the scientist evenly. “We'll make do.”

Leighton had expected this, but was nonetheless profoundly appalled by the hubris of this poorly-educated, ignorant, pencil-pushing, ribbon-festooned... *Belgian*.

“This machine,” he said, “is the single most dangerous device ever built. The potential for destruction is far greater than — than for every nuclear weapon in existence! Combined!”

“And that,” the General said, “is why the military is in charge.”

§

Weiss sat at his desk along the far left wall of the Main Lab, hunched over his laptop, working up the enthusiasm to actually start inputting for the day. He was alone, and did not expect anyone else to show up

for at least a half an hour.

So he was mildly surprised when Dr. Leighton and his guest burst in through the glass doors from the public area. Weiss peered over his monitor, and could see at once that Leighton was not happy.

Leighton stopped by the old control console they had liberated from Building 1012, a clunky beige slab of 1960s-era folded metal that once contained hundreds of kilos of ancient computer equipment, but now served as a desk for a line of slim Toshiba laptops. He was arguing fiercely with his guest, a portly gentleman in one of those slightly absurd European military uniforms, a bright blue outfit with a large red sash and too many oversized spiky medals.

Leighton noticed that he and his antagonist were not alone; he turned to stand blocking Weiss' view of military fellow, and lowered his voice, still arguing. The man in the sash seemed sanguine, almost cheerfully unbothered by Leighton's tirade. Clearly whatever the sash man had said to so upset Leighton, he knew the British scientist could do nothing at all about it.

Weiss was glad it was Leighton and the other higher-ups who dealt with the military brass. All that was required of Weiss was sit at his desk and juggle his numbers. "Juggling his numbers" was what Weiss called it, although there was no mathematics involved to speak of. In his position with the Project, Weiss was the world's best-educated (though definitely not best paid) data entry clerk.

Still, it was an honor to be a member of the team performing the single most important scientific experiment since Newton bounced an apple off his head. Right? Sure, history would remember Leighton, and Barineau, and Huáng; and maybe one or two of the project leads at Tokaimura. Maybe Mbanefo, if she wasn't left off the eventual paper for being young, female, and African.

But "JL Weiss?" That name would be on the paper alright, near the end of a list of 112 other interchangeable names, amongst the researchers and technicians at CERN, Tokaimura, Berkeley, and elsewhere who had contributed, in one way or another, to the experiment since Dr. Mbanefo first noticed an anomaly in the PORTIS data 18 months earlier.

Taking his eyes off Leighton and the red sash man, Weiss spent a moment considering the colossal metal ball sitting in a depression in the center of the laboratory, surrounded by cables, computers, and cameras. It was far more than a "metal ball" of course. It was one of the most sophisticated pieces of equipment ever constructed, and had taken a team of 20 physicists and engineers over a year to manufacture.

Almost everyone in the lab had wanted to christen it the "chroniton shield" — there were a lot of *Star Trek* fans at CERN. But Leighton insisted on "Leighton Field Subtraction Effect Delimiter." He was really pushing for the (still largely hypothetical) field effect to be named the "Leighton Field." So, the side of the sphere displayed the acronym LFSED; but everyone called it the "field shield" when Leighton wasn't listening.

Lost in thought, Weiss was startled when the glass doors to the lab fell shut. Through the observation windows, he could see Leighton following the sash man back down the public corridor, still arguing. Weiss was alone again.

It wasn't even 8:00am yet, and the lab techs wouldn't arrive for the day until at least 8:30. They had put in long hours the previous evening, preparing the field shield for another positive field test. This time, Leighton was going to send an *entire* centigram of room-temperature titanium forward an *entire* half an hour. The boss

was growing adventurous.

Weiss did not want to be in the lab so early, but he had nothing better to do. He had wandered every inch of the village of Meyrin during his scant time off, and had never had time to properly explore Geneva, not since the discovery. There was little on this Earth more painful than Swiss television; and even the Internet held little interest for him anymore. How could he feign interest in news program gaffe videos and LOLcats, when he was spending his days deciphering the fundamental nature of spacetime?

Well. His co-investigators were deciphering the fundamental nature of spacetime. Weiss was doing data entry. But at least he got to watch from close up.

Lost in thought again, Weiss completely failed to notice when someone sneaked up behind him and thwacked him hard on the back of the head with a heavy blunt object.

The next thing Weiss knew he was on the floor. He had no memory of falling. He wasn't in pain, although his head felt tight like it was crushed between plates, and his vision and hearing were dimmed. The world felt removed, dull. He wanted to move, but couldn't for some reason — he was paralyzed. Balled involuntarily into a fetal position, he felt the tiled floor hard and cold against his side. Weiss had the impression he was in control of his thoughts, but later would realize he was not at that time fully conscious. Still, he had some awareness of the room around him.

He could tell there were two people in the room, whispering back and forth as if arguing. Weiss thought they both sounded male; later he would guess an American and a Briton, from their accents. But he could not make out anything they were saying.

They stood for some time over by the control console, bickering. Weiss could not see them; his gaze was aimed at the darkness under his desk, and he could not move his head. But he could hear the intruders, moving about, exchanging hissed whispers. Finally, Weiss heard typing on the keyboard of one of the Toshibas. There was more hissed arguing.

Then, for a long moment, Weiss heard nothing. He began to think they were gone. He tried to move again, and a powerful wave of nausea surged up his chest and into his throat. Coughing and hacking, he pulled uncontrollably into a tighter ball.

Suddenly, one of the men loomed over him. Weiss could see nothing of the man, but could hear him, the rustle of his clothes and his shoes against the tile floor, and see his shadow against the desk. He could *feel* the man standing there. Was the man going to kill him?

Weiss listened to the man's breathing as the intruder rifled through the bookshelf behind Weiss' desk. Then Weiss heard the man place something on his desk. Footsteps receded, and there was silence.

Weiss lay on the floor, and waited. It was a long time before he tried to move again.

He lifted his head, and the nausea returned, but it was not as bad. Hacking again, Weiss rolled over, and tried to get into a sitting position. This took another minute or two.

Now, finally, pain began to well from the back of Weiss' head, stabbing forward into his eye sockets. But his mind was clearing. He reached up onto his desk and felt around for the landline, knocking aside whatever small object the stranger had placed on the desktop. Grabbing the ancient Bakelite phone, he pulled it over

the edge of the desk, and fumbled with the receiver.

Pressing the “zero” button, he waited an eternity for the operator to answer “*Bonjour CERN.*”

“*Aidez-moi, s’il vous plaît,*” Weiss croaked with phrase-book politeness.

He peered up through tearing eyes at the security camera near the ceiling, its unblinking red light staring back at him. *Where the fuck are you people?*

§

When Matthias first heard the sirens, he thought little of it. As they grew louder, he became anxious.

When the police cars roared past Entrée D, and turned up Route Pauli and onto the CERN campus, Matthias panicked.

He turned to look at the armed men and women in the back of the van. They were all facing the sirens, their weapons raised in front of them, tense and ready to move.

“What do we do?” Matthias asked.

“Nothing,” the leader said, her face hidden behind her HUD mask. “We follow the plan.”

“And if there are police?”

“*We follow the plan.*”

§

The medic finished the last of the stitches while a detective looked over Weiss' paperwork. Building 2210 was on the Swiss side of the border, so the Police Cantonale de Genève investigated any crimes that took place there. This was the first violent crime on the CERN campus in years, so there were a great number of gendarmes sniffing about, dusting for prints, collecting evidence, and interviewing the staff. Their blue-and-black uniforms reminded Weiss of *Star Trek* jumpsuits.

With the NATO general and his people also on the scene, there were quite a few strangers milling about the lab, touching things that shouldn't be touched and disturbing the equipment.

Leighton was apoplectic. He darted around the lab, trying to keep the police from messing with computers or with documents. Several of the lab techs were present, hovering over their own workstations, guarding their domains against the interlopers.

Weiss sat in a wooden chair, bent forward while the medic inspected her work. A member of the Sûreté, the criminal police, stood over him. He wore a black business suit with brown shoes.

“Your full name is Monsieur John Lennon Weiss?” the detective asked in French.

“*Oui,*” Weiss said. “*Docteur Weiss,*” he added, immediately regretting it. Well, he didn't spent six years earning his PhD to be called “Monsieur.”

6

“Just 'John?’ Not 'Jonathan?’”

“*Oui.*”

The detective looked down at the document again. “Ah. You were born the day he died.”

Weiss nodded, which hurt.

“You are American?”

“*Oui,*” Weiss answered again. He was in much less pain now that the medic had administered a local. But he probably couldn't have stood up if he wanted to.

“From California?” the gendarme asked.

“*Oui.*” Why was this idiot asking Weiss things that were clearly spelled out on his resident visa?

The detective lifted up the little blue jewelry box, its lid open to reveal the ring inside.

“And you are certain that you left this ring in California? You did not bring it to Switzerland?”

Weiss reached up to take the ring from the box; the gendarme allowed him to do so. Weiss peered carefully at the ring, moving his face in close to it — his vision was not yet fully recovered.

“It's my father's old Masonic ring,” Weiss replied in broken French — he wasn't sure how to say “Masonic ring,” and his best guess was “*anneau Masonique,*” which was almost completely wrong.

“I left it at home,” Weiss continued. “I had no reason to bring it along.”

“But you say your attacker left it on your desk.”

“*Oui.*”

“Then your attacker must know you.”

“I... I suppose,” Weiss admitted. “But I don't understand how that can be.”

“So this person,” the detective said, “sneaked into the lab, came up behind you, and hit you on the head. Then he left this ring, your father's ring, in this box on your desk. He took three books from your bookshelf, and then left.”

“Two persons,” Weiss corrected. “Yes. Plus they —” he wasn't about to translate “made specific alterations to the subtraction field topology for the upcoming experiment, indicating a familiarity with both the experiment itself and the software used to control it,” so instead he said “fooled with the laptop.”

“*Ah bon,*” the gendarme said. Weiss understood enough colloquial French to know that the detective wasn't really saying “oh good.” It was more like “I see.”

Over at the old control console, Leighton and a handful of techs now stood over the Toshiba laptop, examining the doctored data. The program was supposed to ask for a password whenever changes were made to the input grid; but everyone in the lab knew if you pressed the tab key, the password window went away. It was a bug Leighton never bothered to spend the resources to fix.

Leighton peered at the graphical representation of the new topology. “It’s a deeply negative curvature. This would represent what? Years? Decades into the past?”

“Centuries,” one of the techs suggested.

“No way to know without doing the math,” another tech replied.

“Do it,” Leighton ordered. All of the people on Earth who *could* do the math were right now in this room. Yet someone had altered the field topology, and not in any random or haphazard way. Was whoever hit Weiss on the head a member of the research team? But why? What was the point? The input grid would be reset before the next experiment. What was so special about this particular topology?

Leighton turned away to find the General staring at him. The Belgian was on his smartphone, barking orders in French — but his eyes never left Leighton.

Meanwhile, the detective was asking Weiss about the books.

“I don't know which books they took,” Weiss said. “I don't remember everything I had on there. I just know three books are gone. See? There’s three empty spaces.”

“Perhaps you can look again?” the gendarme asked.

Weiss nodded, which was still painful, so he stopped. The medic was packing up. “Give me a moment,” he said, “and I will look.” He struggled to his feet, and the medic and the detective each took an arm to help him stand.

Slowly, with the detective’s help, Weiss made his way over to the bookshelf.

§

Morrigan watched the seconds count down on the HUD in her helmet. Showtime.

She pounded twice on the doors at the back of the van. Matthias knew the cue; he peered out the front windows for a moment, and then opened the driver side door and exited the van. He took a moment to walk around the van, and make there were no witnesses on the loading dock or in the parking area. The coast was clear.

Matthias opened the back doors, and Morrigan and the others spilled out, rifles at the ready. They had rehearsed the operation a dozen times in a field outside Morez, and simulated the approach to the laboratory on computer. They would be in and out in less than eight minutes — minimal footprint, minimal casualties.

The seven soldiers and their leader took off at a full run towards Building 2210, home of the experiment formerly known as PORTIS. Matthias meanwhile got back into the van, started the engine, and pulled out. The team would be extracted by another vehicle, waiting on campus on Route Einstein. They would be back

in the French countryside before anyone knew what had happened.

Of course, now there were cantonal police on campus. That was unexpected. But the timetable could not change. The machine must be destroyed, on this day, at this precise time. Failure was not possible.

While that was happening, Matthias had other business to attend to.

Morrigan led her team around the corner of the receiving building and onto the campus proper. They were now in plain view of a number of curious CERN staff members.

In and out. Eight minutes and counting.

§

Weiss examined the bookshelves, confused. Three white pieces of particleboard were anchored to the brushed concrete wall behind his desk. Two of the shelves were weighted down with spectacularly heavy plastic binders full of printouts. Because if there was anything research scientists enjoyed, it was printing out data, putting it in a binder, and then never looking at it again.

The third shelf had contained the eight books Weiss brought from California, and three more he purchased in Meyrin. Eleven books — and now, three were missing. Which ones?

The detective stood over his shoulder, saying nothing, but somehow radiating impatience. Eleven books, so it should be very easy to remember which eleven books, and then figure out the three that were gone. Right?

But Weiss' head still felt tight. He lifted his right hand to his forehead, and discovered the ring was still in it. He would have to get that back to the detective. It was evidence.

“Do you recognize which books were taken?” the detective asked again.

Okay. The bright orange paperback of *Fodor's Switzerland* was still there. Check. Hestenes' *Clifford Algebra to Geometric Calculus* was still there. Check. *The Feynman Lectures* — couldn't leave home without *The Feynman Lectures*. Check.

Why did he even lug physical books all the way to Europe? He had most of this on his iPad back at the apartment. But Weiss always took a small collection of real books with him wherever he went, he had since college. It was a tradition.

“Monsieur Weiss?” the detective prodded.

“*Docteur*,” Weiss corrected again. He tried harder to concentrate. Next to the Feynman, the first of three empty spots. What was supposed to be there? *The Silmarillion*? Had they taken his *Silmarillion*? It was his favorite damned book. He scanned the rest of the shelf, but his vision was still blurry, and *god damn it* he was still having trouble concentrating.

There were a number of loud popping noises. Maybe because of the head trauma, or because of the surreal nature of the day so far, it took Weiss a long moment to understand what was going on. Things were exploding. People were running and diving and hiding behind desks. The detective was on one knee, his gun out, firing towards the bay windows to the public area, which had exploded inward into a million glass

shards that covered the desks and floor.

Oh. People were firing with automatic rifles into the lab.

Weiss got down onto the floor, putting his desk between himself and the gunfire. He wasn't frightened as much as confused. *What the fuck?*

Some group of people was firing into the lab from the public area; the gendarmes, and the General and his staff, were firing back. Weiss could see Leighton crawling across the floor to get under a desk.

While strangely fearless and detached, Weiss was not suicidal. He kept crouched as low as he could, hoping the sturdy metal desk would shield him from the gunfire.

The General was yelling something in French. Weiss couldn't follow it. The gunfire wasn't letting up.

Despite his altered state of consciousness, it was Weiss who first noticed that the gunmen, whom he had not risked peering around the desk to look at, were not firing at the gendarmes, or the General, or his men.

They were firing at the field shield.

Now Weiss panicked — *Christ, not the shield!* That thing represented a year's work! The gunfire was battering apart the outer casing, and threatening the miles of precise and delicate wiring underneath.

Weiss looked around. No one was in his direct view except the detective, who had exhausted his rounds and was crawling around the other end of the desk; and Leighton, who was balled up under a table. Weiss would have to do something himself to protect the shield.

He began to crawl on his belly towards the device. If he could get inside, he could rotate the shield 180 degrees, so that the side with the heat shielding was facing the gunmen. The heat shielding was expensive, but could be quickly repaired or replaced. Not so much the other side, which contained most of the delicate sensors.

Weiss knew he was crawling into the line of fire, but all he cared about was saving the shield.

The smoke from the gunfire set off the fire suppression system, and sheets of white foam sprayed from the ceiling. The fire alarm wailed, and the emergency lights came on. The gunfire from the public area became sporadic, and Weiss guessed the gunmen were reloading.

He took the opportunity to get to his feet and sprint around to the far side of the shield. He slipped in the fire retardant, but managed to make it without falling. His father's ring was still in his hand — he stuck it in his sweater pocket.

Weiss struggled clumsily through the narrow access panel and into the spherical interior of the field shield. The gunfire started up again, and the bullets striking the outside of the shield filled the interior with a cacophony that hurt Weiss' ears. He grabbed a work light, turned it on, and looked around for the control box — it should be somewhere on the floor of the shield, where the hell was it?

Meanwhile, one of the lab techs wiped foam from his face, and peered from his hiding place behind a concrete pillar into the public area. It was hard to make out the attackers; they were wearing some kind of

high-tech active camouflage that sent shimmering waves of white and gray pixelated shapes cascading across their bodies, breaking up their silhouettes and making them hard to focus on. The tech hadn't even known that technology existed outside of movies.

He had also figured out that the gunmen were targeting the shield. And he knew how to protect it. If the shield weren't in the lab, it couldn't be harmed, could it?

Keeping his head low, the tech made his way to the control console. Moving quickly from behind, he grabbed one of the laptops off the top, and crouched down behind its heavy metal bulk.

The tech had no idea where powering the field would send the shield, since the field topology had been changed. But wherever it was, it would be safer than here and now. Then, when this was over, they could just reverse the field and retrieve the shield. Probably. Maybe. *If* the field worked that way.

It was a brilliant plan.

Weiss found the control box, and twisted the right-hand yellow knob as hard as he could. The shield began to slowly rotate. Only then did Weiss realize that once the shield was rotated with the heat shielding facing the gunmen, the access panel would also face that way. He wouldn't be able to climb out of the shield, not until the firing stopped.

Still, he sat within the spinning sphere, concentrating on guessing when the giant ball would be facing the right way.

The lab tech punched at the laptop screen, activating the experimental systems. Deep underground, 1600 superconducting magnets began to power up. Most of what he was doing required formal permission from the CERN authorities and from the other labs, but there was no time for that.

Twenty-seven different systems came online, one after the other. The team at the French substation would know this was unauthorized activity, and would shut down the power grid. He had to work fast.

Over the sound of gunfire, a deep hum built up quickly, low but powerful enough to rattle the bones. Everyone felt it.

Leighton heard the equipment powering up. "What the hell?" he shouted.

Weiss heard the equipment powering up. "What the hell?" he shouted.

Weiss dropped the control panel and moved toward the access panel. But it was too late – if he climbed out now he would be in the direct line of fire, and the gunfire was not letting up. Jesus, how many rounds of ammo did these people have?

The interior of the shield filled with a red luminescence as the coils heated up. Somebody was running the field sequence. *Somebody was running the fucking field sequence.*

Weiss didn't know what to do. He couldn't climb out, but he couldn't stay in the shield. He knew he had 120 seconds while the field stabilization routines ran. Then... then any matter within the shield would interact with the field. And no one had any idea what that would do to a living organism. Not a clue.

Shit!

Leighton had no idea who was fucking with the experiment. He knew it had to be controlled from one of the laptops on the control console. But he was pinned down by the gunfire, and was frankly terrified of leaving his spot beneath the desk. All he could do was shout “NO!” over and over.

The lab tech waited until the field stabilization timer came up on the screen, and then he canceled it. He couldn't afford to wait two minutes. With a pinching motion on the screen, he resized the field to encompass the entire shield — it would probably take part of the floor and ceiling too. He hoped that wouldn't do too much structural damage to the building. Still, it was better than losing the field shield.

He punched the big green button on the screen.

The equipment came to full power.

Morrigan crouched on the floor beyond the shattered observation windows, pouring gunfire at the field shield. The device was far sturdier than she had been lead to believe — why? Such devices were usually quite fragile. Then again, this was the first ever built, and little was known about it. But it was now obvious that gunfire would not be enough. Time was running out.

A grenade would undoubtedly injure or kill people in the lab. But it couldn't be helped. What had to happen, had to happen.

She was saving the world.

Morrigan dropped her LSAT and knelt on one knee, pulling an explosive device from her belt. She activated it, stood, and threw the device with all her might straight at the field shield.

She dropped to the floor, and the others followed her lead. One of the gendarmes saw her and shouted “*grenade!*” He dove to one side.

For a moment there was an eerie silence. Then a white flash. Then a deafening pop as the grenade detonated.

But the shield, and Weiss, were already gone.

Principia 0: An Unexpected Assault on La Route de Meyrin is a prequel to *Principia*, a serial by Erik David Even. This prequel story is offered for \$0.99 on the Amazon Kindle store, but it is downloadable for FREE from the *Principia* website at <http://kunoChan.com/principia/>. This is also the place to learn about and purchase stories in the serial.

Principia

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About the Author

Erik David Even is a writer of science fiction and fantasy. He is a graduate of the University of California Los Angeles with a degree in Anthropology, where he evinced a special interest in the society of medieval Iceland. In 2011, he attended the Clarion West Writers Workshop.

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Erik enjoys reading, cycling, kayaking, cinema, wine & cheese, *Doctor Who*, the Oxford Comma, and writing about himself in the third person.

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