

K.A. Applegate

the andalite chronicles

Before the **ANIMORPHS** . . . there was Elfangor.

Elfangor's
Journey #1



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His name is

Elfangor-Sirinial-Shamtul.

An Andalite war-prince. The one who gave five young humans the ability to morph into any animal they touch. They are still out there, fighting an evil so powerful there isn't a moment that goes by when they can actually feel safe. Their story continues.

But *this* is how it all began.

The story that came before

ANIMORPHS . . .

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Elfangor's Journey

the
andalite
chronicles

For Jean Feiwel

And, as always, for Michael

Prologue

My name is Elfangor.

I am an Andalite prince. And I am about to die.

My fighter is damaged. I have crash-landed on the surface of the planet called Earth. I believe that my great Dome ship has been destroyed. I fear that my little brother Aximili is already dead.

We did not expect the Yeerks to be here in such force. We made a mistake. We underestimated the Yeerks. Not for the first time. We would have defeated their Pool ship and its fighters. But there was a Blade ship in orbit as well.

The Blade ship of Visser Three.

Two Yeerk Bug fighters are landing on either side of me now. The abomination Visser Three is here as well. I can feel him. I can sense his evil.

I cannot defeat the visser in one-on-one combat. I am weak from my injuries. Too weak to morph. Too weak to fight.

This is my *hirac delest* — my final statement. I have formed the mental link to the thought-speak transponder in my fighter's computer. I will record

my memories before the Yeerks annihilate all trace of me..

If this message someday reaches the Andalite world, I want the truth to be known. I am called a great warrior. A hero. But there is a great deal that no Andalite knows about me. I have not lied, but I have kept the truth a secret.

This is not my first visit to Earth. I spent many years on Earth . . . and yet, no time at all.

I landed here now in this construction site because I was looking for a great weapon: the Time Matrix. The existence of this weapon is also a secret.

So many secrets in my life . . . mistakes. Things I should have done. All the strands of my strange life seem to be coming together. It all seems inevitable now. Of course my death would come on Earth. Of course the child would be here. Of course it would be Visser Three who would take my life.

I am too weak to locate the Time ship now. I will die here. But I have left a legacy. Visser Three thinks he has won our long, private war. But I've left a little surprise behind.

I have given the morphing power to five human youths.

I know that in doing this I have broken Andalite law. I know that this action will be condemned by all my people. But the Yeerks are here on Earth. Visser Three is here. The humans must be given a chance

to resist. The human race cannot fall to the Yeerks the way the Hork-Bajir race did.

I have given the morphing power to five young humans. Children, really. But sometimes children can accomplish amazing things.

I have no choice but to hope. Because it was I who created Visser Three. I who caused the abomination. I cannot go peacefully to my death, knowing that I created the creature who will enslave the human race.

I came to this place, this empty construction site, looking for the weapon I know is hidden here. But there is no time now. No time . . .

The visser is here. He is laughing at my weakness. He is savoring his victory over me.

This is the *hirac delest* of Elfangor-Sirinial-Shamtul, Andalite prince. I open my mind in the ritual of death. I open my mind and let all my memories — all my secrets — go to be recorded by the computer.

This is not just a message to my own people. I hope that someday humans will read it as well. Because humans are also my people. Loren . . . and the boy I have just met, but not for the first time...

chapter 1

Twenty-one years before

The Yeerks were loose. Like some terrifying disease, they spread their evil from planet to planet. They took species after species. They crushed all resistance.

Their spiderlike Pool ships roamed throughout the galaxy. Their armies of Taxxons and Hork-Bajir, all under the control of Yeerk slugs, rampaged — killing, butchering, enslaving.

They were annihilating entire planets.

Only we Andalites stood against them. But we had been caught off-guard. Our mighty Dome ships, each more than a match for anything the Yeerks had, were spread too thin. Our spies, even though they used top-secret Andalite morphing technology, were unable to penetrate Yeerk secrets. For five years our princes had fought the vissers of the Yeerk Empire. They said the war could go on for another fifty years . . . another hundred years.

We were outnumbered. We had fought many battles and lost too many of them. But arrogant as I

was, I was confident that if only I could get into the fight, I could make a difference.

I, Elfangor, was going to become a great warrior, a prince, a hero.

I was posted as an *aristh*, a cadet, to the Dome ship *StarSword*. But so far, after six months in space looking for an elusive Yeerk task force, I had not exactly proven myself to be a great hero.

In fact, I had proven myself to be a clumsy, slow-witted, and quite possibly hopeless fool. At least, according to my instructors.

<*Aristh* Elfangor! How many times do I have to tell you: The killing blow should be as graceful as it is fast!> Sofor yelled his thought-speak loudly enough that half the ship probably heard him.

I stood facing him, trying to stand light and easy on my four hooves, just like I was supposed to. At the same time I had to think about where my weight was centered, and whether the tilt of my upper body signaled when I was going to strike, and whether the grass floor under my hooves was uneven, and whether my hands were out of the way, and about a million other things a warrior should know for tail-fighting.

Sofor was bigger than me. He was a full warrior, while I was just a lowly *aristh* — a warrior-cadet. If this had been an actual battle, Sofor would have

sliced me up twenty different ways in less than a second.

Maybe. Sometimes I thought I'd be faster and better if it was a real battle, not just a lesson. I was sure if my life depended on it, I could win.

In any case, Sofor was not my enemy. He was my teacher.

<Watch my eyes, not my tail,> Sofor said. <My main eyes, you nitwit, not my stalk eyes! Keep your main eyes on mine, your stalk eyes on my tail.>

I watched his main eyes, but it wasn't easy. His left eye had a huge scar running right beneath it. I tried to focus all my thoughts down to nothingness, just like Sofor had taught me.

<Your mind will never know when it is time to strike. Only your *instinct* can guide you,> he reminded me.

Suddenly . . . FWAPPP!

I fired the muscles in my tail! The bladed tip cracked the air, it moved so fast. I could barely see my own tail as it struck.

The blade arched over my head toward Sofor's face, and I thought, *Hey, maybe old Sofar will end up with a new scar*. If I landed a blow on Sofor, I'd be a hero with every poor *aristh* who had ever suffered under him.

Then . . . SWOOP! FWAPP! FWAPP! FWAPP!

Sofor blocked my tail blade with his tail, turned it aside, and in about a tenth of a second delivered three lightning blows. One to each side of my head, and a third that left his razor-sharp tail blade pressed right up against my throat. The blows stopped just a hair from cutting my skin.

If Sofor so much as twitched, he could remove my head from my shoulders.

<Not bad, *Aristh* Elfangor,> Sofor said with a laugh. <Not bad at all. That strike of yours could almost have hit me . . . if I were asleep!>

He laughed again and pulled his tail away. <Remember, don't think about it, do it. You're too Intellectual. You think too much. You should be a scientist, not a warrior. There's no time for thought in a fight. There is only time for your training to join with your instinct.>

<I guess even you must have forgotten that once,> I muttered.

I regretted the words the instant they were out of my head.

Sofor turned his stalk eyes toward me. He had a dangerous expression. <What did you say, *Aristh*?>

<Nothing . . . just . . . urn, nothing,> I stammered. But I was staring at the scar below his eye the whole time.

<Ah, I see. You've noticed my little scar. Yes, quite a nasty cut. Know how I got it?>

I shook my head. What was I doing, getting smart with Sofor? What was the matter with me? Was I insane?

<I got this scar from my own teacher. He wasn't as sweet and understanding as I am. He didn't like uppity *arisths*.>

The old warrior laughed at his own wit, turned away, and went galloping off across the grass, holding his tail as high as an Andalite half his age would.

I breathed a huge sigh of relief. I looked around the dome to see whether anyone else was watching me be humiliated. The dome of a Dome ship is a circular area about a third of a mile across. It is filled with grass, trees, ground rushes, and flowers. There is a lake in the middle and a stream that runs around the circumference.

It's as much like home as it can be. You'd almost think you were running across any well-kept area on the home world. But when you look up, you see that you are in space, protected only by a clear plastic bubble, a dome.

I saw other warriors off running across the grass, feeding and playing and practicing their skills. But none seemed to be watching me.

I replayed the fight with Sofor. How had he known the exact second when I would strike? What had given me away?

What was the matter with me? Was I actually mad because Sofor was faster than me? Of *course* he was a better fighter than me. He'd been in more battles than I could imagine.

But it still made me angry. I didn't like people laughing at me. And I didn't like losing.

Through my stalk eyes I saw someone coming up behind me. He'd been hidden by a stand of trees. I recognized him immediately, of course: Arbron. We were the only two *arisths*.

Great. More bad news. I didn't really like Arbron much. He was very competitive with me. And still he never seemed to take anything seriously.

<Well, hello, Elfangor,> he said. <Having fun with the old Yeerk-killer?>

<Hello, *Aristh* Arbron,> I said, so stiffly I sounded like my own father. <I don't think it's very respectful to refer to Sofor as the old Yeerk-killer. He is a full warrior, after all, and our personal combat instructor.>

Now Arbron laughed at me. <Yeah, right, Elfangor. Like you're so respectful. Teach me to be as respectful as you, *pleeeeeease*.>

He laughed again, and I was starting to get even angrier. It was bad enough having Sofor laugh at me. At least he outranked me. But Arbron was just a lowly *aristh* like me. Lowlier, because I had four days seniority over him.

<This is a Dome ship, not a play field,> I said.

Arbron kicked lightly at the grass with one hoof in a gesture of contempt. Then he said the insult that went with the gesture. <Elfangor, when are you going to get your hooves back on the grass and out of the air?>

<Some of us actually care about being better fighters. The people need us. These are evil times.>

Arbron laughed. <You don't fool me. You're not some mighty prince or hero. You're just another scared, confused *aristh* on his first big deep-space mission. And by the way, you shift weight to your left hind leg when you get ready to strike. That's how old Sofor knew.>

I was getting ready to say something really crushing to Arbron, but just then there came an announcement. It was a direct-beamed thought-speak summons.

<*Arisths* Elfangor and Arbron to the battle bridge.>

I stared at Arbron. He stared at me. We were both frozen in place. Our argument was totally forgotten because we were both busy being shocked and horrified.

See, it was *impossible*. Neither of us had ever been to the battle bridge. The battle bridge was where the captain was. And the captain of a Dome

ship is like one of the ancient gods. I mean, captains don't even look at *arisths*.

<What did we do?> Arbron asked anxiously.

<I don't know,> I moaned, <but it must have been really out of line.>

<We're in trouble. We are in definite trouble,> Arbron said.

chapter 2

A Dome ship is built with the dome at one end and then, far away, far back, there are the three huge engines. Zero-space engines, and you probably know how powerful those are. Connecting the dome to the engines is a long, long shaft. Inside this shaft is the place where everyone has their quarters — their private areas.

For *arisths*, the quarters are tiny. I mean, extremely tiny. If you want to turn around you have to back out into the hallway. In my quarters I have holograms of my father and mother, of course. Plus a wish-flower representing the little brother I'll be getting in a few years. The Electorate has voted to allow more children to be born since we're in a war now. They say if the war goes on for long and there are lots of battle deaths, some families may even have three and four children.

Personally, I don't think it will come to that. And even having one sibling is bad enough. Now, in addition to the morning ritual and the evening ritual, I have to do the wish-flower ritual. And you have to