**Survivor**

Junior stepped out of the event horizon and took a moment to adjust to his surroundings, reciting the Department of History’s First Protocol — *You are only here to observe*. The air carried humidity and the smell of organic matter — the smell of the earth after rainfall — so different from the industrial atmosphere of his own time. Nothing could prepare him for the way his senses were heightened by his ‘shell’, the almost indestructible cyborg body housing his consciousness. His human body would be pulled apart by the forces of the wormhole.

He began to walk through the long grass, reciting the Second Protocol — *Do not change the past*.

Approaching his destination, Junior ensured his audiovisual input was being recorded. The grass, still wet from recent rain, parted to reveal a curved bitumen road, slick with moisture. The driver of a yellow sedan, on its side a hundred metres along the road, had lost control as he came around the curve, well above the posted speed limit. Fresh skid marks on the road testified to it.

Junior used his shell’s advanced sensors to collect data. Leaking fuel had spread across the road. In a few short decades, the accident’s lone survivor would use her absolute authority to outlaw internal combustion engines.

Historical texts were unclear on what happened next. That was why Junior was there. The girl never spoke of the accident and, after she seized power, brutally punished those who investigated her past. Junior would return home with evidence of the event some said was the seed of the girl’s madness.

Over the ambient sounds of nature, Junior discerned two distinct voices. A girl’s steady voice offered reassuring words, while a male infant screamed in terror. Fascinated, Junior approached the sedan. The police report indicated a single survivor, the girl sitting behind the driver. Her younger brother was supposed to have died. Walking around the car so he could see through the windows, Junior saw the boy, with his curly black hair, struggling against the child restraint. His side of the car was closest to the ground. His flame-haired sister, also restrained by a seatbelt, offered a calmer demeanour.

Noticing Junior, she called out for help. Why was he just standing there? she screamed. Disbelief and anger poisoned her voice.

The sound of sparks from the engine told Junior the car would soon explode, correlating with the police report. But there was only supposed to be one survivor. Do not change the past, he reminded himself, but he could not see how the girl could escape the coming inferno. She was determined to save her brother.

Assessing his options, Junior realised he would have to break one Protocol to follow another. He reached through the broken rear window, using his great strength to snap the girl’s belt. Her initial smile at her rescuer became a scream as he carried her across the road to safety. What about my brother? she cried.

Don’t change the past, he reminded himself. The car exploded behind them. There was only one survivor, and thanks to Junior she would grow up to become history’s bloodiest villain.