

## Personality and Partnership: Speculations on the nature of Sapphire and Steel



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### **Eva Albertsdotter Enblom:**

I get the impression that their partnership is their own idea. Of course, the Authority booms at the beginning of each ep that "Sapphire and Steel have been assigned", but somehow I have the feeling that it wasn't his idea in the first place, but it worked out well, so now he assigns them together - at least some of the time. But I think it's unusual, and that most of them work alone. And quite a few seem jealous of this particular partnership; in Adv 6 it's hinted that there have been attempts to break it up. (Attempts which, interestingly enough, Sapphire and Steel apparently have \*not\* discussed between them before.)

### **Philip S. Cotterell:**

Hmm. I'd always assumed that all the investigators worked in pairs, with a similar division of abilities to S&S, and that is was only the specialists who were usually called in alone (but always to support a pair of investigators).

It does seem that there's something a bit unusual about the S&S pairing, though, what with those hints in A6, and all the other suggestions about their relationship. But I'd always assumed they were assigned together by "The Authority" - of course, that's one of the things we Just Don't Know, how much autonomy they have, and how much they're controlled. Or, indeed, who exactly it is who might be jealous of the partnership - other agents? "The Authority"? Someone undisclosed party?

### **Eva Albertsdotter Enblom:**

Small correction - they're operators, not investigators. My guess is that investigators are sent in first, but for some reason they are never around when the operators show up... OTOH, Sapphire says in Adv 4 "We are all operators" - but I seem to remember three categories from somewhere.

### **Philip S. Cotterell:**

Correction accepted - yes, I remember those three

categories as well; I think investigators turn up to assess potential "situations", and operators are then called in / assigned / dispatched if there's actually a problem. So one could assume that the job of the investigator(s) is completed when the situation is assessed as warranting the attention of operators, hence they're not still around when the operators arrive (though they might perhaps brief the assigned operators before they arrive?)

### **Eva Albertsdotter Enblom:**

Sounds reasonable. Though the operators don't always seem to get very well briefed, either not all investigators bother, or the operators take off too soon. :) They know where to go, everything else they find out later.

Of course, Sapphire can find out most things for herself.

I have the overall impression Sapphire and Steel arrive at the site together, but in fact we don't really know even that. Sometimes they come from different directions - could have gone off into separate rooms, or could have arrived separately. And after Adv 2 it looks as if they are going off in different directions.

### **Froi D En:**

I got the impression from Adv 6 I think it was that S&S weren't actually briefed together or about the same aspects of the Time Break, as though their briefings were conducted separately so that each could concentrate on areas of the TB where their talents lay. I always felt that Sapphire was told about the emotional / metaphysical side of the investigation while Steel was told about the location, the type of Time Break and generally what was available to work with "on site".

Or maybe the separate briefings were an attempt to destroy the S&S partnership by an unknown entity. I don't think that entity would be "The Authority", probably more like other, jealous, operators with access to the Transuranics,

or could be the Transuranics themselves if S&S had anything to do with trapping them in the past.

#### Clare O'Farrell:

In Adventure 6 all 3 elementals stress the fact that the briefing was unusual - that they had received more of a feeling (or 'knowledge') than an explicit briefing. My impression was that it was the Higher Authority who had set up the trap and that this 'higher authority' was using the transuranics to do its dirty work. The 'higher authority' seems to come across as a morally ambiguous body whom both Sapphire and Steel reject. The briefings seem vague at the best of times - and also seem to indicate that the human bodies of the elementals are just convenient manifestations - their real form is something else and they communicate via weird telepathic nonverbal means. Perhaps all the investigators do is just locate time breaks - it is up to the operators to work out what to do about it.

#### Philip S. Cotterell:

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*- and also seem to indicate that the the human bodies of the elementals are just convenient manifestations -*

I was never sure about this. In a way it seems reasonable, but... in A1 Sapphire takes the threat of decapitation by the ghost soldiers very seriously; in A6 Silver says he wouldn't survive if transported back to a time before the Earth could support human life; in A3 it's fairly clear that falling off the edge of the building would be very unhealthy for Steel. This all suggests to me that they do have physically real bodies which are not totally different from human ones.

The exact appearance, of course, is at least partly a convenience, as is clear from Sapphire's "wardrobe" scene in A1, the beginning of A5 and the sudden change of appearance of the Transient Beings / Transuranics / whatever-they-are in A6. But we don't really know how far this can go.

#### Jamas Enright:

I think that it's more that when they're in human bodies, they're limited by their bodies, so can come to harm. Although they can withstand far more than normal humans. (Such as reducing body temperature to zero.)

#### Eva Albertsdotter Enblom:

I agree that their real form is something else - but I think they have some kind of affinity to human conditions, including this shape. Perhaps those who operate 'where there is life' are like that, and those controlling things in the other dimensions are something else - can take on some other form, better suited to their environment.

But I also have the impression they are not on the best of terms with the Authority. Which should make things more interesting. :)

#### Jamas Enright:

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*In Adventure 6 all 3 elementals stress the fact that the briefing was unusual - that they had received more of a feeling (or 'knowledge') than an explicit briefing. My impression was that it was the Higher Authority who had set up the trap and that this 'higher authority' was using the transuranics to do its dirty work.*

I got the impression that it was a trap the transuranics laid, and they somehow faked being the 'higher authority' to get SnS to show up.

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*The 'higher authority' seems to come across as a morally ambiguous body whom both Sapphire and Steel reject. The briefings seem vague at the best of times - and also seem to indicate that the human bodies of the elementals are just convenient manifestations - their real form is something else and they communicate via weird telepathic non verbal means. Perhaps all the investigators do is just locate time breaks - it is up to the operators to work out what to do about it.*

Adv 3 is a interesting point. SnS aren't told much about the capsule, except its vague purpose. It's up to Silver to start filling in the blanks, and he seems to know an awful lot even though he was just stopping by.

#### Eva Albertsdotter Enblom:

And in 6, nobody seems to know why he's already there when they arrive, and towards the end, the Transients say he doesn't have to be captured along with SnS. Yet I don't think he's really involved in the schemes against SnS, but maybe that the Transients are trying to frame him, making him seem unreliable for some reason. Possibly, to make him seem unreliable both to SnS and to the Authority. I don't know why, it's just an impression.

#### Clare O'Farrell:

*Jamas Enright:*

*I got the impression that it was a trap the transuranics laid, and they somehow faked being the 'higher authority' to get SnS to show up.*

The problem with this explanation is that the transient beings on their own didn't have the power to time travel - someone else gave them the time box (the portable chess set!) and from the brief discussion between Sapphire and Steel about 'the higher authority' - it doesn't seem as though the latter are a particularly nice bunch - rather dangerous in fact. Sapphire and Steel only think of the 'higher authority' when they realise a trap has been set for them - there is no mention of this authority before then.

*Jamas Enright:*

*Adv 3 is an interesting point. SnS aren't told much about the capsule, except its vague purpose. It's up to Silver to start filling in the blanks, and he seems to know an awful lot even though he was just stopping by.*

It is interesting to note that if Sapphire and Steel trust each

other - they don't really trust anyone else and are very wary of Silver. In Adventure 6 Silver is clearly tempted by the transient beings' offer and my general impression is that Silver is generally happy to go along with what is most expedient - he doesn't have the sense of duty that Sapphire and Steel so strongly feel.

*Philip S. Cotterell:*

*I was never sure about this. In a way it seems reasonable, but... in A1 Sapphire takes the threat of decapitation by the ghost soldiers very seriously; in A6 Silver says he wouldn't survive if transported back to a time before the Earth could support human life; in A3 it's fairly clear that falling off the edge of the building would be very unhealthy for Steel. This all suggests to me that they do have physically real bodies which are not totally different from human ones.*

I agree but the nature of their relationship to their bodies is uncertain. The opening animation, which shows glittering spheres representing a number of different 'elements', might suggest that their human shapes are something they adopt for the sake of convenience. Yet in Adventure 4, Sapphire, addressing a creature which changes its face at will, states that she and Steel have only 'one face'. Their bodies can also be damaged as various incidents with absolute zero temperatures, barbed wire, knives, imaginary swans and attempts at strangulation(!) indicate, but at the same time they appear to have remarkable powers of regeneration. In Adventure 3, the technician Silver refers in passing to a faculty of 'instant reduplication' which might explain these recuperative powers, but even this, it appears, is fallible. It is the failure of this faculty which results in his disappearance into his own past at the hands of the changeling, and as you say he also mentions when threatened by the transient beings, that he would not survive in the Triassic period. All this would seem to indicate that the relation Sapphire and Steel and similar beings have to their bodies is quite different to our own.

**Jamas Enright:**

Sapphire seems ready to trust Silver in Adv 3. In fact they both trust him to do his job.

In Adv 6, they just don't know enough to be able to trust anyone, and Silver's strange appearance before them just didn't help.

**Clare O'Farrell:**

Steel is very wary of him when he first arrives on the scene - going so far as to threaten him when he suspects he might know more than Steel does. On the other hand, Sapphire plays along with Silver's flirtations just for her own amusement and also as a way of teasing Steel. In my opinion it's pretty clear - particularly from Adventure 6 that Sapphire doesn't really take Silver too seriously. In adventure 3 there are also indications that Silver doesn't respect Sapphire's capacity to do the job in the way that Steel does.

*Jamas Enright:*

*I think his 'instant reduplication' ability is more to do with duplicating objects, such as the box in Adv 6.*

I disagree - he says this just after Sapphire and Steel have managed to make him reappear after he is sent into oblivion by the changeling. He says that he can't make a mistake and they point out that he just has. At this point he talks about 'instant reduplication' which I took to his own capacity to regenerate. In answer to Eva Albertsdotter Enblom's comment - this is how I think Sapphire manages to recover from Steel strangling her - a kind of 'instant reduplication' of her own body. In Adventure 5 when Steel is struggling to stop Sapphire stabbing herself, the point of the knife goes into his hand and he seems to manage this situation quite well.

**Eva Albertsdotter Enblom:**

She has these odd little outbursts of flirting with Silver - whether to keep Steel on his toes or just to have fun, is anyone's guess.

Speaking of... One of the things I like about the series is that things don't always have to make sense, and now and then there are a few lines thrown in that seem to be only so many red herrings. Though most conversations make a sort of sense on the second or third viewing, there are things like this scene in Adv 5 where they have been assigned a room where they can change for the party. Sapphire asks which side of the bed Steel wants, and he says, "Is there no other way?" To which she replies, "Not \*now\*."

Does anybody have any theories as to what they are talking about?

**Jamas Enright:**

There are other ways of entering the party and being able to mingle, but they chose to become Miles and Veronica (or whoever) Cavendish. And once there, there were stuck to play humans, including sleeping in the bed together.

Although the entity started acting up freeing them from that eventuality. :)

And it wasn't without its benefits.

"Of course, it has to deal with us one two levels. One as otherselves, the other as Miles and Veronica Cavendish."

**Jill Sylvan:**

Actually, in the time-bubble adventure (with the animal ghost monster) it seemed fairly clear to me that Sapphire is involved with Silver outside of her partnership with Steel. And Steel is (house adventure) involved with Jet.

**Eva Albertsdotter Enblom:**

I have a feeling she and Steel have something special (why did I \*ever\* promise those stories to a zine - I wish I could have tossed them into the discussion here), but she might be sort of '70's style about it and it doesn't keep her from leading Silver on from time to time. OTOH, it \*could\* be just a joke between them, to annoy Steel.

*Jill Sylvan:*

*outside of her partnership with Steel. And Steel is (house adventure) involved with Jet.*

Not sure about that. It seemed more as if Jet was very interested in him, or liked to pretend so, but that he possibly considered it irrelevant nonsense.

#### **Clare O'Farrell:**

I think Sapphire was just having fun with Steel. They seem to do this on occasions e.g. when Sapphire is explaining to Steel how to open the door to the darkroom in Adventure 4 or in Adventure 1 when they are having a telepathic conversation about sinking houses and ships or again in Adventure 1 when they are talking about Sapphire being the 'diplomat'. Or again in Adventure 5 when Steel decides to play the hide and seek game. There are a number of other examples.

#### **Philip S. Cotterell:**

Seems to me that Steel would consider almost anything of a "romantic" or "relationship" nature to be irrelevant nonsense. After all, it wouldn't help get the job done, would it...

And there's a conversation in (I think) A5 which makes him appear very cynical about the whole "love" idea; I forget the exact wording but it's something like:

Steel: She's using him.  
Sapphire: Or in love with him.  
Steel: Is there a difference?

Of course, this just makes the suggestions about his relationship with Sapphire perhaps even more interesting. OK, he does talk about "the Sapphire I've grown to know and love" in A2, but then he's only trying to catch out the Darkness at that point, and he knows he's not talking to the real Sapphire. I'm sure this can all be made to seem consistent somehow...

#### **Eva Albertsdotter Enblom:**

*Philip S. Cotterell:*

*Seems to me that Steel would consider almost anything of a "romantic" or "relationship" nature to be irrelevant nonsense. After all, it wouldn't help get the job done, would it...*

Hehe, no, that would probably be his rational explanation for not taking an interest - whereas Sapphire seems interested in most human quirks.

*Philip S. Cotterell:*

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Steel: She's using him.  
Sapphire: Or in love with him.  
Steel: Is there a difference?

Sapphire: On this planet, yes.

As far as I remember. It sounds as if, to them, love and using always go together, as if they can't have one without

the other. So theoretically, they can't use anyone without loving them. :) (I know the other way around is more obvious, but why not this also? They \*are\* rather special.)

#### **Clare O'Farrell:**

*Philip:*

*Seems to me that Steel would consider almost anything of a "romantic" or "relationship" nature to be irrelevant nonsense. After all, it wouldn't help get the job done, would it...*

*Of course, this just makes the suggestions about his relationship with Sapphire perhaps even more interesting. OK, he does talk about "the Sapphire I've grown to know and love" in A2, but then he's only trying to catch out the Darkness at that point, and he knows he's not talking to the real Sapphire. I'm sure this can all be made to seem consistent somehow...*

It seems to me that the relationship between Sapphire and Steel is definitely 'romantic', but because the way the 'romance' is played out is very subtle and not coded in the usual hollywood terms it may appear ambiguous. - I think the scene you mention here is very interesting and quite a masterpiece on a number of counts. Steel's remarks to the double of Sapphire serve a dual purpose - they explain to the viewer why Sapphire and Steel don't discuss their relationship - they don't need to as they are both constantly aware in a general manner of each others' thoughts and feelings. (This mutual awareness, I think, emerges quite often throughout the series.) And by the very fact that he makes these remarks, Steel is indicating that he knows that he is talking to a double. The statement about love he uses as a weapon against the darkness, a kind of refusal to be compromised by or have anything to do with the darkness. I find the interplay between Sapphire and Steel interesting - Steel often modifies his behaviour in function of suggestions made by Sapphire that he should tone it down a bit.

*Eva Albertsdotter Enblom:*

*Hehe, no, that would probably be his rational explanation for not taking an interest - whereas Sapphire seems interested in most human quirks.*

Actually Steel seems to be very interested as well. For example in Adventure 4 he is manifestly interested in why the girl seems so detached from her surroundings and her friends. He also finds Tully pretty interesting. I also think his scathing comments about people being in love in Adventures 5 and 6 are more comments about accepted conventions around this issue. In general his behaviour (risking himself to save humans) often belies his words. I have to say I like that dichotomy, that lack of sentimentality!

#### **Eva Albertsdotter Enblom:**

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*It seems to me that the relationship between Sapphire and Steel is definitely 'romantic', but because the way the 'romance' is played out is very subtle and not coded in the usual hollywood terms it may appear ambiguous.*

Also because they *\*are\** different - because of what they are, and also because of that mutual awareness you mention below. I seem to remember from one of the interviews with P J Hammond that he said their feelings were definitely real, but that they might have forgotten how to express them in a human fashion.

What irks me a little is that nearly all signs of endearment between them are fully explained by practical circumstances - as when she kisses him in Adv 5 - you know right away that somebody is going to come in at the door, and she wants to give them a reason why she and Steel have withdrawn for perhaps longer than warranted by the Sardines game. (Which doubtlessly included quite a few romantic encounters - it seemed to be part of the intention with it.)

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*they don't need to as they are both constantly aware in a general manner of each others' thoughts and feelings. (This mutual awareness, I think, emerges quite often throughout the series.)*

Yes, it does. Without really being referenced. That's yet another beautiful thing about the series - there's so much to be just understood about it, things that are never hammered home as in so many other series where they are afraid you'll miss the point if they don't preach. And after a while, you do understand, down to very subtle nuances.

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*I find the interplay between Sapphire and Steel interesting - Steel often modifies his behaviour in function of suggestions made by Sapphire that he should tone it down a bit.*

And she hers - she does as he says even when she doesn't really agree. Not blind obedience, I don't mean that, but an unwavering loyalty, I'd say. (Which isn't always part of my stories, but one needs some room for experimentation too..) Another thing in this context - Steel often starts out berating her for something, and then cuts off in mid-shout more or less, abruptly thinking better of it.

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*I also think his scathing comments about people being in love in Adventures 5 and 6 are more comments about accepted conventions around this issue.*

He certainly has no patience with conventions, no. :)

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*In general his behaviour (risking himself to save humans) often belies his words. I have to say I like that dichotomy, that lack of sentimentality!*

Same here - I must say that British series are usually refreshingly free of sentimentality compared to American ones. I'm not quite sure Steel risks himself to save *\*humans\** though, that seems more like a bonus, a side-effect of thwarting the time breaks.

**Clare O'Farrell:**

*Eva Albertsdotter Enblom:*

*Also because they *\*are\** different - because of what they are, and also because of that mutual awareness*

*you mention below. I seem to remember from one of the interviews with P J Hammond that he said their feelings were definitely real, but that they might have forgotten how to express them in a human fashion.*

I don't think it was Hammond who said they might have forgotten... it was somebody else I think. I actually disagree with this... I think that the way they do things is just different, and as they are not human there is no reason why they should conduct themselves in conventional human fashion in any case. The other thing is they have been together for a long time and know each other very well and seem to communicate telepathically at non verbal levels as well. For example in Adventure 1 we don't hear Sapphire ask Steel if Rob has spoken to him - but Steel responds. There are a few other examples of this.

*Eva Albertsdotter Enblom:*

*What irks me a little is that nearly all signs of endearment between them are fully explained by practical circumstances - as when she kisses him in Adv 5 - you know right away that somebody is going to come in at the door, and she wants to give them a reason why she and Steel have withdrawn for perhaps longer than warranted by the Sardines game. (Which doubtlessly included quite a few romantic encounters - it seemed to be part of the intention with it.)*

I actually read this bit in Adventure 5 somewhat differently. Sapphire has just tried to kill herself and then Steel and said when she was aiming the gun that she is not sorry about it and it seems to me that that scene afterwards has more to do with that. I don't think they were expecting anybody to come in as they both seemed embarrassed to be caught out. I don't think either of them really could have cared less about giving reasons for their absence to the other guests.

What I found really interesting was the complete lack of hollywood conventional coding here and this occurs in a number of other scenes. It also fits in with what I said earlier about Sapphire and Steel not needing to discuss their feelings for each other. The conversation they are conducting is completely at odds with the romantic visual which is why I think some viewers think that they are just pretending.

My interpretation is a pretty off the wall one but what the hell!!! - For me this scene emphasises that the orders of words and things are different, i.e. we are used to particular words going with particular objects or behaviours. So for me that scene completely breaks down that relation. It made me think in a completely new way when I first saw it about how easily we think that particular orders of words should go naturally with particular behaviours. This happens a few times in the series - for example in Adventure 3 when Steel strangles Sapphire - the scene looks pretty dramatic on the outside - but telepathically they are conducting a fairly rational discussion. The usual coding is tumultuous emotions on the inside covered up by an icy exterior sort of thing. I find this completely fascinating.

They often just seem to enjoy the mere fact that they are talking eg their conversation in the scene before they and

Silver go through the screen to get into the time capsule - and when they are having an argument in the library in Adventure 5 about where the fire occurred.

*Eva Albertsdotter Enblom:*

*Yes, it does. Without really being referenced. That's yet another beautiful thing about the series - there's so much to be just understood about it, things that are never hammered home as in so many other series where they are afraid you'll miss the point if they don't preach. And after a while, you do understand, down to very subtle nuances.*

Yes, for example when that girl in Adventure 3 has the slightest of difficulty walking in the high heel shoes - indicating they wear nothing like that in the future.

*Eva Albertsdotter Enblom:*

*Same here - I must say that British series are usually refreshingly free of sentimentality compared to American ones. I'm not quite sure Steel risks himself to save \*humans\* though, that seems more like a bonus, a side-effect of thwarting the time breaks.*

The less sentimental the better in my view and this is really where a series like Babylon 5 falls down in my view. In Adventure 6 Steel makes some comments about his duty to help humans, he resists with difficulty a plea for help from the young men in the submarine - and he is certainly pretty upset about the two people burnt alive in Adventure 4 - but he definitely doesn't want to give the impression too easily that he has any interest in saving humans!

**Eva Albertsdotter Enblom:**

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*I don't think it was Hammond who said they might have forgotten...it was somebody else I think. I actually disagree with this...*

Yes, I don't think it sounds right either - I mean, why should they have forgotten? But it's a good description, in the sense that they don't act as if they had no feelings or were just faking them (especially with Steel, you sense a hot core :) but that their way of expressing them is different from the human way. (Or at least the American way, if we think about visual codes and such.)

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*The other thing is they have been together for a long time and know each other very well and seem to communicate telepathically at non verbal levels as well. For example in Adventure 1 we don't hear Sapphire ask Steel if Rob has spoken to him - but Steel responds.*

Yes, I noticed that one. I love all those things that are never stressed or even pointed to at all, yet you see them and you know precisely what they signify. (Well, at least you think you do... many incidents are ambiguous, at least when we get around to discussing them :)

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*I actually read this bit in Adventure 5 somewhat differently. Sapphire has just tried to kill herself and then Steel and said when she was aiming the gun that she is not sorry about it and it seems to me that that*

*scene afterwards has more to do with that.*

That's lovely, I much prefer that interpretation. :)

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*I don't think they were expecting anybody to come in as they both seemed embarrassed to be caught out.*

Well, Sapphire \*must\* have known someone was coming. If she was listening on that wavelength anyway - perhaps she wasn't?

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*I don't think either of them really could have cared less about giving reasons for their absence to the other guests.*

Not for their own sakes, no. I was thinking that they wanted to behave as expected so people wouldn't start wondering about them. Then again, some of the guests were already suspicious of them at that point, or have I got my timing crossed again? :)

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*What I found really interesting was the complete lack of hollywood conventional coding here and this occurs in a number of other scenes.*

Yes, that's a true relief. This bordering on the absurd is done beautifully, as it never breaks up the plot, it adds something to it.

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*It also fits in with what I said earlier about Sapphire and Steel not needing to discuss their feelings for each other. The conversation they are conducting is completely at odds with the romantic visual which is why I think some viewers think that they are just pretending.*

Exactly. That's how I concluded it was for the benefit of Emma walking in. But I see that it doesn't have to be. They are quite accustomed to carrying on one conversation vocally and another one telepathically at the same time. Perhaps that is as much habit as called for by circumstances? So on one level, they are discussing their current mission, on another, she is kissing him to make up for the revolver incident, and these two levels don't interfere with each other? Maybe elemental brains work like parallel processors..

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*This happens a few times in the series - for example in Adventure 3 when Steel strangles Sapphire - the scene looks pretty dramatic on the outside - but telepathically they are conducting a fairly rational discussion. The usual coding is tumultuous emotions on the inside covered up by an icy exterior sort of thing. I find this completely fascinating.*

Me too. That little touch of apparent absurdity is really all it takes to convey a rather profound alienness. The whole series is ingenious in how it uses very small things and changes to create a great and captivating impression.

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*They often just seem to enjoy the mere fact that they are talking eg their conversation in the scene before they and Silver go through the screen to get into the*

*time capsule - and when they are having an argument in the library in Adventure 5 about where the fire occurred.*

Relishing having voices for a while? In whatever other state they exist, they probably have to rely on telepathy alone.

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*Yes, for example when that girl in Adventure 3 has the slightest of difficulty walking in the high heel shoes - indicating they wear nothing like that in the future.*

Ooohh, yes, I understand her completely! I'm fascinated with Sapphire's easy walking around on those stilts she wears most of the time. (And the fact that she's allowed to, since she's already tall! :)

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*In Adventure 6 Steel makes some comments about his duty to help humans, he resists with difficulty a plea for help from the young men in the submarine - and he is certainly pretty upset about the two people burnt alive in Adventure 4 - but he definitely doesn't want to give the impression too easily that he has any interest in saving humans!*

True, I had forgotten about that.. the victims in A4 might be because it went against time or something, so it could have been plain duty, but the submarine, yes, that seemed very genuine. (I loved his eyes in that whole scene, from when he first sees Sapphire and Tully on the floor, but especially where the 'ghosts' are pleading for his help.)

**Clare O'Farrell:**

*Eva Albertsdotter Enblom:*

*Well, Sapphire \*must\* have known someone was coming. If she was listening on that wavelength anyway - perhaps she wasn't?*

I don't think she was - I think at that point they were concentrating exclusively on each other. One of the feelings I get from Adventure 5 is that it is a bit of a holiday for Sapphire and Steel - it is not as difficult a job as some of the others.

*Eva Albertsdotter Enblom:*

*Then again, some of the guests were already suspicious of them at that point, or have I got my timing crossed again? :)*

Definitely suspicious and if Sapphire and Steel before all this occurred could teleport into a room full of the guests - who just by chance were not looking in their direction (very convenient!) -then they are definitely not going to worry about being away from the other guests for a while!

*Eva Albertsdotter Enblom:*

*Exactly. That's how I concluded it was for the benefit of Emma walking in. But I see that it doesn't have to be. They are quite accustomed to carrying on one conversation vocally and another one telepathically at the same time. Perhaps that is as much habit as called for by circumstances? So on one level, they are discussing their current mission, on another, she is kissing him to make up for the revolver incident, and these two levels don't interfere with each other? Maybe*

*elemental brains work like parallel processors..]*

They are still only having one conversation at the verbal level - it is not exactly vocal either! as they are speaking telepathically - but my theory is they probably also communicate at a non verbal feeling level as well and this is what is happening here. Conventionally, we are used to seeing certain words going with certain feelings - but do they have to? - do particular words have to go with particular feelings? these are the kind of assumptions this scene breaks down I think.

*Eva Albertsdotter Enblom:*

*Relishing having voices for a while? In whatever other state they exist, they probably have to rely on telepathy alone.*

I hesitated when I wrote this before whether to say communicating or talking - I actually meant communicating at any level - one of my wild theories (what the hell - this is a list for wild theories!) is that in some ways the jobs they have to do are just an excuse for Sapphire and Steel to have one long conversation with each other across space and time- whether verbal, or non verbal and the jobs they do certainly provide fodder for discussion!!

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**Clare O'Farrell:**

Re all these discussions about the sexual orientations of the various characters - is this really of any interest? Does every relationship have to be a sexual one?? There are lots of other human and elemental (!! )kinds of relationships besides sexual ones.

Who do you reckon the darkness was after then? Maybe the darkness lusted secretly for the body of the young soldier. Perhaps the swan in Adventure 3 was really Zeus and Steel was really Lyda (sp?) Perhaps the capsule was a metaphor for an impenetrable and sterile womb. What the hell!!!

**Sarah MacIntosh:**

You're quite right, Clare, there's nothing particularly meaningful in these discussions! As far as the actual agents are concerned, we are attempting to humanise them by applying human characteristics; this could only be useful if we decide that they make an effort to mirror human behaviour when they 'wear' human form, as suggested by Eva Albertsdotter Enblom.

But actually, their entire concept of love and connections to other beings could be completely beyond our comprehension. I'm reminded of the line in the McDee story I think, where Steel states "We know Tony Purnell was in love with Ann Shaw" and Sapphire replies something like "No, he was using her" and Steel says "Isn't that the same thing?", suggesting that the agents' perception of a loving relationship is pretty much one of transaction.

**Clare O'Farrell:**

I don't think this is the case - I think it's pretty clear that

Sapphire and Steel don't regard their own relationship as one of transaction or their relations with humans. After all they virtually sacrifice themselves to help the woman in Adventure 6 and often endanger themselves to help humans. The above exchange might have contained a fair degree of irony I think.

I think there is a definite and ongoing romantic relationship between Sapphire and Steel. Sapphire flirts with Silver because - well she likes flirting and perhaps they did have a relationship in the past - and also she wants to get a rise out of Steel. But I think from some of her remarks in Adventure 6 she clearly prefers Steel. She indicates that she doesn't really trust Silver. The way Sapphire and Steel interact indicates to me at least that they have something going. It is rather subtle and understated but it is there. For example when they are discussing how the photographic trick was performed in Adventure 4. And as someone says Steel does in fact say in Adventure 2 that he loves Sapphire. The question might then be does she reciprocate this? I think that she does. Somebody else mentioned that romantic love and elementals might not mix. Why not I say?? :-)

**Sarah MacIntosh:**

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*I don't think this is the case - I think it's pretty clear that Sapphire and Steel don't regard their own relationship as one of transaction or their relations with humans. After all they virtually sacrifice themselves to help the woman in Adventure 6 and often endanger themselves to help humans. The above exchange might have contained a fair degree of irony I think.*

Are you saying that when Steel does the "isn't that the same thing?" line he's only mucking around? Actually, I can see that. The rare flashes of humour we see from Steel are very, very dry.

I find it an interesting contrast that despite betraying and sacrificing Tully at the Railway Station, Steel places so much importance on his 'duty' to save the woman at the service station. I'd like to think that the betrayal of Tully left such a scar that Steel vowed to himself that he'd never have to make that decision again.

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*Somebody else mentioned that romantic love and elementals might not mix. Why not I say?? :-)*

Why not indeed. Like you say, the frisson between the two is understated, but for me it's very clearly there. I'm interested that you pick out Adventure 4 as one with a defining moment of interaction. For me, Steel's in such a blummin' awful mood, all through the story, that these moments are fewer and further between than the other stories.

**Clare O'Farrell:**

*Sarah MacIntosh:*

*Are you saying that when Steel does the "isn't that the same thing?" line he's only mucking around?*

*Actually, I can see that. The rare flashes of humour we see from Steel are very, very dry.*

Yes, I think it is a kind of irony - a kind of game that he is playing with Sapphire.

*Sarah MacIntosh:*

*I find it an interesting contrast that despite betraying and sacrificing Tully at the Railway Station, Steel places so much importance on his 'duty' to save the woman at the service station. I'd like to think that the betrayal of Tully left such a scar that Steel vowed to himself that he'd never have to make that decision again.*

It was a question of sacrificing one life for the many and in my view Tully agrees to the sacrifice. It is subtle but all the indications of his agreement are there. He feels that his life has been worthless and this is the one worthwhile thing that he can do. Tully in exchange for hundreds of human ghosts. This was the choice that both Tully and the elementals made - a choice none of them wanted to make but knew they had to.

*Sarah MacIntosh:*

*Why not indeed. Like you say, the frisson between the two is understated, but for me it's very clearly there.*

*I'm interested that you pick out Adventure 4 as one with a defining moment of interaction. For me, Steel's in such a blummin' awful mood, all through the story, that these moments are fewer and further between than the other stories.*

This is why I picked that example in Adventure 4. I don't think by any means that it is the strongest indication that they are involved in a relationship, but it shows that in spite of the frosty exteriors they are both very aware of each other and how the other is feeling. Steel reacts rather strongly (for him) when Sapphire says that at least the photographer made an effort to charm the ladies.

**Jill Sylvan [1]:**

We are trained to react negatively to the idea of someone using the person who loves them. However, I think that Steel's statement is not a negative one, but more one of a healthy view of love. When you love someone, you want to do everything in your power to help that person. But ALL of us know how hurt we are if the person we love says "Oh, no thank you, I don't need your help (with this)."

Innocent though it may be, we associate not needing us with not loving us. Steel is not talking about callously using someone's feelings to manipulate them, he's talking about showing someone how deeply they are valued and trusted by both welcoming and asking for their assistance!

**Sarah MacIntosh:**

*Clare O'Farrell:*

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I'd not considered that possibility before. I'm not sure I entirely agree, to be honest. I think Tully knows that something is up bigtime, when he comes to the stairs of the footbridge and asks Steel "Winning, are we?" very guardedly. He might well foresee his own death, at this moment. I don't think he has \*willingly\* acknowledged his sacrifice because he feels his life has been worthless, however.

I agree, Tully knows that he isn't a stereotypically successful man, and that he hasn't looked like he might become one since his childhood days spent brass-rubbing. He places a great deal of importance on his work investigating 'psychical phenomena', though, and I think that gives him a feeling of self-worth.

Also, throughout the story, the ridicule he has likely been confronted with for years regarding his investigations is shown to be misplaced. He sees proof that 'ghosts' exist. And it was his seance which allowed communication of a sort. All this is yet more reason to feel his life's investment in this area was worthwhile and important.

*Clare O'Farrell:*

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That's a brilliant moment, isn't it! And then, shortly afterwards, Steel actually DOES try to make an effort, coaxing Sapphire to "come and sit on the sofa". It almost makes up for his earlier strops ...

**Paul Curtis:**

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*It was a question of sacrificing one life for the many and in my view Tully agrees to the sacrifice. It is subtle but all the indications of his agreement are there. He feels that his life has been worthless and this is the one worthwhile thing that he can do. Tully in exchange for hundreds of human ghosts. This was the choice*

*that both Tully and the elementals made - a choice none of them wanted to make but knew they had to.*

Agreed. It's not explicitly stated in the dialogue, but I think it's pretty clear from Tully's body language, during that final scene on the stairsteps, that he knows about, and is resigned to, his impending sacrifice.

*Clare O'Farrell:*

*This is why I picked that example in Adventure 4. I don't think by any means that it is the strongest indication that they are involved in a relationship, but it shows that in spite of the frosty exteriors they are both very aware of each other and how the other is feeling. Steel reacts rather strongly (for him) when Sapphire says that at least the photographer made an effort to charm the ladies.*

Y'know, I interpret this as an example of Sapphire teasing Steel for not responding to Liz's flirtations. Even though Liz obviously thinks he's a weirdo, she does seem rather attracted to him—perhaps because, unlike most of the other men she meets, Steel \*doesn't\* treat her as a sex object. Remember the bit when she attempts to banter with him, asking whether Sapphire had paid for his suit? It almost seems that she's a bit jealous of Sapphire, and that she's trying to provoke some sort of... er, \*response\* from Steel (who, of course, remains as expressionless as ever).

Regardless of whether their relationship is truly romantic/sexual/whatever, I do think that Sapphire feels quite secure about her place in Steel's affections, and is, if anything, flattered when other women pay attention to him—hence, her mirth when Lead reports that "Jet sends her love" in Adventure One.

**Jill Sylvan:**

Ah, Sapphire. I did find her interactions with female humans interesting. Or even her non-interactions. For example, when she was letting Tony Purnell flirt with her and touch her, Steel never noticed or cared. However, young Veronica burst into tears! I thought Sapphire would have to know the pain this was causing that girl, but it made no difference to her. I rather doubt she ever noticed.

Then there was Liz. Sapphire seemed to like her, and had no interest whatsoever in her interactions with Steel. Again, they had a job to do.

But the woman in the cafe! The way Sapphire bristled when that woman burst into the garage where they were hiding out! We could tap that out to an instinctive suspicion in an uncertain place, where our heroes were under threat! But you remember how she looked, and even acting somewhat threateningly towards the other woman, BEFORE we found out there was a real reason to!

**Sarah MacIntosh:**

The body language taking place during the earlier moments of the party was quite fascinating! I do think Sapphire noticed the pain poor Veronica suffered at Tony's flirting - after all, she was the one who delighted in informing Steel of various undercurrents (They're rather more than

friends!). Like you say, I don't think she was particularly interested. What I noticed, and which interested me very much, was that Steel picked up on it during their introduction, and was more attentive than he actually had to be towards the young girl, almost as though he was trying to distract her from her deeply dislikable boyfriend's behaviour!

*Jill Sylvan:*

*Then there was Liz. Sapphire seemed to like her, and had no interest whatsoever in her interactions with Steel. Again, they had a job to do.*

Yep, I'll agree that both agents seemed to take a liking to Liz. Again there was a lot of body language - remember the bit where Steel sits on the arm of the sofa beside Liz and Sapphire leans on the back. It's all very cosy and Liz does lots of little 'beneath the lashes' glances at him, but Sapphire doesn't act at all possessively or with any annoyance.

*Jill Sylvan:*

*But the woman in the cafe! The way Sapphire bristled when that woman burst into the garage where they were hiding out! We could tap that out to an instinctive suspicion in an uncertain place, where our heroes were under threat! But you remember how she looked, and even acting somewhat threateningly towards the other woman, BEFORE we found out there was a real reason to!*

I agree that there seems a lot more antagonism. It's also interesting that, having established that the woman and man are supposedly eloping lovers, she deliberately teases him flirtatiously in the foyer - you know, the bit where Silver gets all cross - to me, it's almost as though she's testing her own ability to seduce the man's attentions away from his lover ...

However, Sapphire notes her disquiet about the whole situation with Steel quite early on, I think, and her manner right from the start is one of confused concern. This may go some way to explaining her behaviour.

#### **Clare O'Farrell:**

*Paul Curtis*

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I think actually this is why Sapphire prefers Steel to Silver. In Adventure 3 for example Silver is constantly trying to tell Sapphire what to do, whereas Steel just relies on her judgement. When she is dealing with the grown up baby, Steel tells Silver to let Sapphire do her job.

*Paul Curtis:*

*Regardless of whether their relationship is truly romantic/sexual/whatever, I do think that Sapphire feels quite secure about her place in Steel's affections, and is, if anything, flattered when other women pay attention to him—hence, her mirth when Lead reports that "Jet sends her love" in Adventure One.*

I think she is actually displaying a touch of jealousy in relation to Jet, although it could be that she's pleased other women are paying attention to Steel. And I would say that this is about the only place she shows anything like this. I agree she is certainly pretty confident of Steel's affections, but not in a taken for granted kind of way in my opinion. In spite of some jealous moments I think Steel is also pretty confident of Sapphire's affections. It is interesting to watch how he continuously modifies his behaviour in subtle ways in response to Sapphire's prompting like the scene I mentioned earlier in Adventure 4.

Somebody mentioned that scene in Adventure 5 where Steel is talking to the young girl and Sapphire is talking to her worthless boyfriend. It is as though Sapphire and Steel have tacitly agreed to embark on a seduction routine of the parties in question. One sees Laura and Steele doing this in Remington Steele. In short, 'you work on the girl and I'll work on the man'.

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#### **Notes:**

This article contains excerpts from discussions which took place on the now-defunct mailing list [sapphire-and-steel@herald.co.uk](mailto:sapphire-and-steel@herald.co.uk).

The first thread started in March 1998.

The second thread started on 08 Oct 1999.

The mail archive is several years old. An attempt has been made to contact the original posters but this has not been possible in some cases.

[1] Jill Sylvan's original post expressing similar sentiments was unfortunately lost. This comment was added in Jan 2003.

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