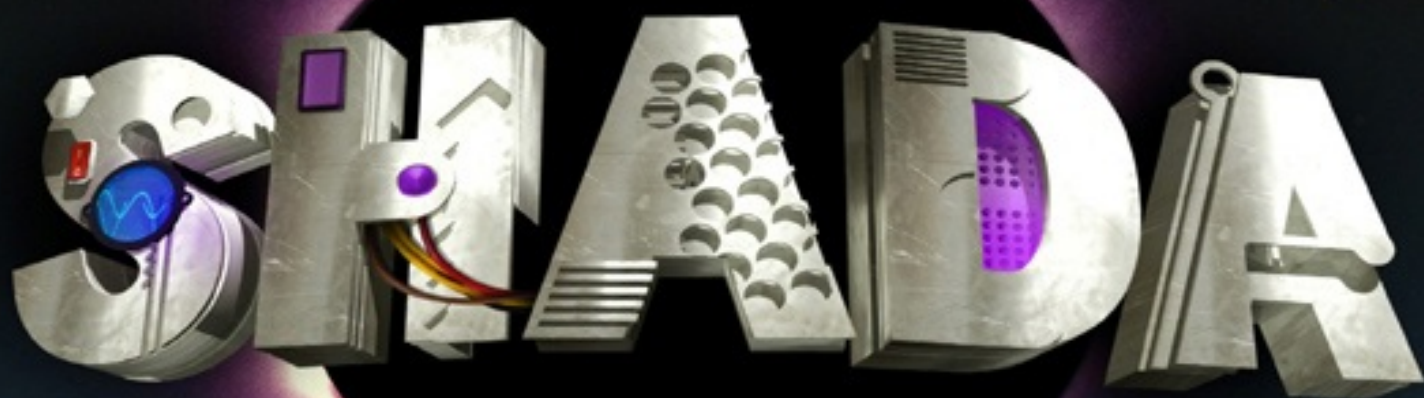


BBC
BOOKS

DOCTOR WHO

THE LOST ADVENTURE BY
DOUGLAS ADAMS



GARETH ROBERTS

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About the Book

The Doctor's old friend and fellow Time Lord Professor Chronotis has retired to Cambridge University – where nobody will notice if he lives for centuries. But now he needs help from the Doctor, Romana and K-9. When he left Gallifrey he took with him a few little souvenirs – most of them are harmless. But one of them is extremely dangerous.

The Worshipful and Ancient Law of Gallifrey isn't a book for Time Tots. It is one of the Artefacts dating from the dark days of Rassilon. It must not be allowed to fall into the wrong hands. And the sinister Skagra most definitely has the wrong hands. He wants the book. He wants to discover the truth behind Shada. And he wants the Doctor's mind...

Based on the scripts for the original television series by the legendary Douglas Adams, Shada retells an adventure that never made it to the screen.

About the Author

Gareth Roberts was born in Chesham, Buckinghamshire in 1968. His scripts for *Doctor Who* on television include 'The Shakespeare Code' (2007), 'The Unicorn And The Wasp' (2008), 'The Lodge' (2010) and 'Closing Time' (2011), and he has also written many scripts for the spin-off series *The Sarah Jane Adventures*, as well as scripts for programmes as diverse as *Emmerdale* and *Randall and Hopkirk (Deceased)*. He has written nine previous original *Doctor Who* novels, and lives in West London.

Douglas Adams was born in Cambridge in 1952, and was educated at Brentwood School, Essex and King's College, Cambridge, where he read English. As well as writing all the different and conflicting versions of *The Hitch Hiker's Guide To The Galaxy* he has been responsible for *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*, *The Long Dark Tea-Time of the Soul*, and, with John Lloyd, *The Meaning of Liff* and *The Deeper Meaning of Liff*. In 1978-9, he worked as Script Editor on *Doctor Who*. He wrote three scripts for the programme - 'The Pirate Planet', 'City of Death' (under the name David Agnew), and 'Shada'. Douglas Adams died in May 2001.

DOCTOR WHO

The Lost Adventure by
DOUGLAS ADAMS

SHADA

Gareth Roberts

Based on the BBC television serial by Douglas Adams
by arrangement with the British Broadcasting Corporation



*For Clayton Hickman, whose role in the creation
of this book was larger than Queen Xanxia's
transmat engine, and whose role in my life is
more precious than oolion.*

And in memory of Douglas Adams.

'The radical evil: that everybody wants to be what they might and could be, and all the rest of mankind to be nothing, indeed, not to exist at all.'

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Maxims and Reflections*

'... flat eyes that only turned toward the stars to estimate their chemical tonnage.'

Truman Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*

'Other people are a mistake.'

Quentin Crisp, *Resident Alien*

*'Does the body rule the mind or does the mind rule the body?
I dunno...'*

The Smiths, 'Still Ill'

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Fig. 1. These words are carved into the machonite plinth upon which rests The Worshipful and Ancient Law of Gallifrey, one of the Great Artefacts of the Rassilon Era. They are here reproduced by kind permission of the Curator of the Panopticon Archives, the Capitol, Gallifrey. Translated from the Old High Gallifreyan they read, roughly: 'If this book should care to roam, box its ears and send it home.'

Off the Shelf

Chapter 1

AT THE AGE of five, Skagra decided emphatically that God did not exist. This revelation tends to make most people in the universe who have it react in one of two ways – with relief or with despair. One Skagra responded to it by thinking, *Wait a second. That means there's a situation vacant.*

Now, many years later, Skagra rested his head, the most important head in the universe, against the padded interior of his alcove and listened to the symphony of agonised screams coming from all around him. He permitted himself two smiles per day, and considered using one of them now. After all, the sounds of wrenching mental anguish and physical distress were a sure sign that his plan was working and that this was going to be a good day, possibly even a 9 out of 10. So he might have even more cause to smile later on and he didn't want to waste a smile. He decided to save it, just in case.

Instead, as the screams faded slowly into bewildered animal whimpers and the occasional howl of uncomprehending fear, Skagra climbed from his alcove and turned to survey his handiwork. His own alcove was one of six (an even number, of course) set into the sides of a tall grey hexagonal cone at the centre of the main laboratory. At the top of the cone was a grey sphere.

Minutes before, he had watched as the other five members of the Think Tank climbed into their alcoves, laughing and joking in their irritatingly trivial way. They hadn't even noticed that there were connecting terminals built into the headrests of all of their alcoves but no such terminals built into his own. Why were other people so stupid, Skagra wondered? Even these people, who were so clever, were basically stupid. He had wondered this every few seconds for as long as he could remember. Still, thanks to him – thanks to the plan of which this moment was a significant part – soon other people would no longer be a problem.

The five Thinktankers stood gibbering in their alcoves, their eyes blank, limbs making the occasional spasmodic movement. It was interesting that the bodies of all five had survived the process.

Now to check on their minds.

Skagra entered a command code into one of the many panels of instruments that lined the walls of the laboratory. It was a cursory, automatic gesture. If a lesser, sillier person had conceived this plan, not that anybody else could have this conceived this plan – they would have rigged up a big melodramatic silly red lever to activate the sphere. Skagra congratulated himself on not doing this.

The command code chirruped and the sphere started to vibrate. A confused babble of thin, inhuman voices issued from its interior. It was the sound of thought. Messy, disorganised, arbitrary, no words distinguishable.

Skagra raised a hand. The sphere's command program reacted instantly. It detached itself from the top of the cone and zoomed towards him, coming to rest in his palm. Its touch was metallic and icy cold.

Skagra's fingertips curved round the surface of the sphere. He looked across the laboratory at the slumped figure of Daphne Caldera, her eyes staring moronically into nothing, her lips issuing bubbly baby noises.

Caldera – whose specialty was six-dimensional wave equations. Skagra had never found the time to explore this particular avenue of research beyond the rudiments. Obviously, $zz = [c^2] \times 4$, everyone knew that. But Caldera had taken the study of six-dimensional wave equations into an entirely innovative area. 'A whole *new* dimension, you might say!' she had joked yesterday, and Skagra had

been forced to sacrifice one of his smiles just to look like one of the herd.

Now, his fingers on the sphere, Skagra applied his own mind to a complex six-dimensional wave equation problem:

Σ is less than $\dagger\Delta$ if ∂ is a constant, so $\beta\dagger\Delta\Delta + \approx\zeta$ if expressed as $Zag BB Gog = ?$

The answer popped into his mind: ((>>>x12!

Of course! It seemed so obvious now. It was obvious.

The process had worked. But Skagra decided on one more check, a deeper probe of the sphere's potentialities.

In the alcove next to Caldera, C.J. Akrotiri was slumped, his fingers making tiny circling movements, his mouth hanging open, discharging a string of drool. Akrotiri, the legendary neuro-geneticist, whose research into dendritic pathway alteration had led to the cure for Musham's disease

Skagra thought of Akrotiri, deciding on a suitable test question.

And suddenly, overwhelmingly, a memory tumbled into his mind –

I'm stood on the beach, a skimboard under my arm, I'm trying to look muscly and confident but you can't fake confidence or muscliness and I feel like a fool and I'm wondering why I ever thought this was a good idea and suddenly SHE is there and she looks so good and I look so bad and she's asking me do I want to skim over to the island and does she mean with her and of course she means with her and so we get on the board and I'm dying inside and she puts her arms around my back and I kick off and suddenly we're skimming over the water under a purple night sky and she rests her head on my shoulder and I think did she mean to do that and she doesn't take her head away and I can't believe it and I skim clean on to the island like a pro which I've never done before and she falls onto the sand and I go to help her up and she laughs and pulls me down and suddenly she's kissing me and my head's spinning and this can't be happening to me – and then in a flash I can see it, I can see how dendritic decay can be reversed by the early introduction of a fluon particle into Genome A/5667 –

Skagra shook himself. It was to be expected that some traces of personality and experience might, on occasion, corrupt the data during retrieval. He would increase the sphere's filter capacity to ensure such irrelevant sentimental trash would never again get in the way of the important things in life.

Then he released the sphere, which bobbed in the air, following its master as he crossed to the main communications panel. With another casual cursory movement he activated the message he had prepared earlier. Then he swept out of the laboratory, the sphere accompanying him.

His own voice echoed around the laboratory. *'This is a recorded message. The Foundation for Advanced Scientific Studies is under strict quarantine. Do not approach, I repeat do not approach. Everything is under our control.'*

The message began to repeat itself, transmitting on all frequencies out into space. But not very far out into space. Skagra wanted the message to keep any passing spacecraft away from the Think Tank and the word quarantine had a very definite effect on most beings, Skagra had found. It changed statements such as *'I wonder if we could help those poor people, Captain?'* into statements such as *'It's the plague! Scream! Scream! Let's get out of here with incredible reluctance and at incredible speed!'*

The message rang out loudly in the central laboratory of the Think Tank.

And the people who were supposedly the greatest minds in the universe, flopping and babbling in their alcoves, couldn't understand a word of it.

Skagra walked calmly – he always walked calmly – down the corridors from the laboratory to the shuttle bay. There were four docking positions built into the hull of the space station. Illuminated signs showed that docks 1, 2 and 3 were occupied by standard shuttlecraft, three-seaters with enough

fuel to reach the outskirts of galactic civilisation.

~~Skagra walked calmly past docks 1, 2 and 3, the sphere following, and pressed his palm onto the locking panel for the unoccupied dock 4.~~

The airlock swung open into empty space.

Skagra walked calmly and confidently through into what appeared to be absolute nothingness.

He was on his way.

Chapter 2

CHRIS PARSONS FELT that time was passing him by, and also that time was running out on him. How time could be doing both of these things to him at the same time he didn't have time to wonder.

For a start, he was twenty-seven. *Twenty-seven!*

Over the years he had noticed a disreputable tendency in himself to age at the rate approximately one day per day, and now, as he cycled the short distance from his flat to St Cedd College on this unusually sunny Saturday afternoon in October, he could already feel another day heaving itself up onto the pile.

The old streets and the even older university buildings, tall and stony with their grey-mullioned windows and effortless beauty, seemed to mock him as he cycled by. How many hundreds of young men had passed through these institutions, studying, graduating, researching, publishing? Now all of them were dust.

He'd come up to Cambridge as a fresh-faced grammar-school boy nine years ago, and flowed through his physics degree without much conscious thought at all. Physics was the one thing he could do well. Now he was engaged in a long and very occasionally exciting postgraduate struggle with sigma particles. He could predict the exact rate of decay of any sigma particle you cared to mention. But today even Cambridge, which he loved but had come to take as much for granted as the sun rising in the morning, seemed to add to his own inner feeling of decay. He often wondered if there was anything much left to be discovered in his field of research. Or, for that matter, any other. The modern world seemed unrecognisably futuristic to him sometimes. Videotape, digital watches, computers with inbuilt memory, and movie special effects that had made Chris, at least, believe a man could fly. How could things get any more advanced than that?

He passed a gaggle of freshers, who were to a man and woman kitted out in short hair and drainpipe trousers. How had this happened? Chris's own undergraduate days had been spent in the flared denims and flowing hair that he still favoured. He had been a member of *the* young generation, the generation that was going to change everything, for ever and completely. There couldn't be another one, not yet, not before anything much had changed for ever and completely, wasn't fair. For heaven's sake, in a few months it was going to be the 1980s. The 1980s were clearly far in the future and they had no business turning up until he was ready.

Yes, time was passing him by in general. But it was running out on him in a much more specific way.

Clare Keightley was leaving Cambridge on Monday.

She'd got a job at some research institute in the States and worked out her notice at the university. Three short days added to the pile and then he would never see her again, never get the chance to start another conversation. They talked rather a lot, saw each other rather a lot, and Chris despaired at the end of each encounter. Whenever they met, and much more of late, Chris felt that Clare had the air of waiting for him to say something obvious and important, but for the life of him he couldn't work out what it was. Why did she have to be so intimidating? And why did he have to be so in love with her?

Still, he had concocted one last shot, one final chance to impress her, one final excuse to talk to her, where she'd be so overwhelmed by his thoughtfulness that she might, finally, at long last, just tell him what she wanted to hear him say. That was why he was now turning through the ancient stone archway and into the impressive forecourt of St Cedd's college.

Chris parked up his bike among the rows of similar vehicles that acted as the students' free and endlessly swappable transport system. He took a scrap of paper from his satchel. *Prof Chronotis Room P-14*. He looked around for the porter, but he must have been off on his rounds, so Chris collared two of the less outlandish undergraduates in the quad – one of them was wearing a Jethro Tull T-shirt, thank God – and they directed him to a door set in an ivy-covered corner.

Chris was very much wrapped up in his own thoughts and concerns about Clare, the passage of time etc., as he headed down the narrow wood-panelled corridor towards Room P-14, but a small corner of his inquiring mind couldn't help but wonder at the oddness of the architecture around here. It looked very much as if the corridor should have ended at Room P-13, but there was a buttress, a corner and a small extension down to P-14. That was all very well, because many of the university buildings were a patchwork of renovations and extensions, but the really curious thing about this particular one was that there was no obvious discontinuity. It was as if the extension had been built exactly the same time as the building it was the extension to. This puzzled Chris on a deep subconscious level that his conscious mind didn't even really notice. He did, however, notice a persistent very low electrical hum that seemed to grow louder as he approached the door marked P-14. PROF CHRONOTIS. The wiring in these old buildings was a disaster, probably installed by Edison himself. Chris half braced himself for an electric shock as he reached for the knocker and rapped smartly on the door.

'Come in!' called a distant, scratchy voice. He recognised it immediately as Chronotis, even though they had met only once before, and very briefly.

So Chris came in, navigated a cluttered little vestibule bulging with hats and coats and boots, and pushed open an oddly sturdy wooden inner door. He found himself in a large, oak-panelled room dotted about with ancient furniture, though for a moment it was hard to make out the panels or the furniture as every available surface, and several that weren't available at all, was covered with books. Every wall was lined with bookshelves, books jammed in two-deep and other books thrust on top filling each shelf to bursting. Books covered the sofa, the chairs, the tables. They tottered in ungainly piles on the carpet, some at waist height. Hardbacks, paperbacks, folios, pop-up books, all creased and dog-eared and teacup-stained, some of them with spines folded back at a particular place, many annotated with torn pieces of paper, and none of them seeming to relate to its neighbour in subject, size, age or author. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* lay next to a dusty Georgian treatise on phrenology.

Chris boggled. How the heck could anyone get through this amount of books? It would surely take you several lifetimes.

But extreme as this case might be, Chris was used to the eccentricities of the older Cambridge dons. He even tried not to react to the other, really much more peculiar thing that stood on the other side of the room.

It was a police box.

Chris hadn't seen one in years, and had certainly never expected to see one here. They had been a familiar sight on the street corners of London during his childhood trips to the capital. Like all of its kind this one was tall, blue, battered and wooden, with a light on top and a sign on the door, behind which there was a phone. The really peculiar thing about this one, on top of it just being there at all, was that around its base were the edges of several flattened books, as if it had somehow been dropped into the room from a great height. Chris even looked up at the low rafters of the ceiling to check that this hadn't in fact happened. And there was no way it could have been squeezed through the frosted door.

The voice of Professor Chronotis carried through from a door that presumably led to a kitchen.

‘Excuse the muddle. Creative disarray, you know!’

‘Er, right, yes,’ said Chris. ~~He carefully ventured further into the room, skirting the piles of books that looked the most dangerous. How was he going to find what he wanted in this lot?~~

He waited for the Professor to emerge from his kitchen. He didn’t.

‘Er, Professor Chronotis?’ he called.

‘Tea?’ came the reply.

‘Oh, yes, thanks,’ said Chris automatically, though in fact he wanted to get away from all this strangeness and back to thinking about his own more important issues as soon as possible.

‘Good, because I’ve just put the kettle on,’ said Chronotis as he emerged from the kitchen and into the room, navigating the dangers unthinkingly.

After their one brief meeting a couple of weeks ago, Chris had mentally filed the Professor away as just another Cambridge eccentric, indulged and isolated by decades of academia. He had forgotten how memorable a person Chronotis was. And that was another irritating strangeness, Chris thought, because you can’t forget memorable people. Chris decided he must have been really, incredibly wrapped up in himself to forget Chronotis.

He was a little man, somewhere in his eighties, in a dishevelled tweed suit and tie, with a heavily lined face, a shock of white hair, scruffy beard and half-moon spectacles over which peered kindly penetrating black eyes.

Kindly and penetrating, thought Chris. You can’t have eyes that are kindly *and* penetrating.

‘Er, Professor Chronotis,’ he said, determined to get things back to normal, ‘I don’t know if you remember, we met at a faculty party a couple of weeks ago.’ He extended his hand. ‘Chris Parsons.’

‘Oh yes, yes!’ said the Professor, pumping his hand enthusiastically, though it was abundantly clear that he didn’t remember at all. He squinted up at Chris a little suspiciously. ‘Enjoy these faculty shindigs, do you?’

Chris shrugged. ‘Well, you know. I don’t think you’re actually supposed to *enjoy* them—’

‘A lot of boring old dons, talking away at each other,’ huffed the Professor.

‘Yes, I suppose you could—’

‘Never listen to a word anybody else says!’

‘Yes, well, that night you said that—’

‘Talk talk talk, never listen!’

‘No, indeed,’ said Chris. ‘Well...’

‘Well what?’ said the Professor, staring at him with a look that was more penetrating than kindly.

Chris decided to humour him. ‘I do hope I’m not taking up any of your valuable time.’

‘Time?’ the Professor laughed. ‘Time! Don’t talk to me about time. No no no. When you get to my age, you’ll find that time doesn’t really matter very much at all.’ He looked Chris up and down and added, a little sadly, ‘Not that I expect you will get to my age.’

Chris wasn’t at all sure how to take that remark. ‘Oh really?’

‘Yes,’ said the Professor, looking into the distance. ‘I remember saying to the last Master of College but one, young Professor Frencham—’ He stopped himself. ‘Though hang on a minute, was the last Master of College but two? It may even have been three...’

Chris frowned. The term of a Master of College seemed to last on average about fifty years. ‘Three?’

‘Yes, nice young chap,’ said the Professor. ‘Died rather tragically at the age of ninety. What a waste.’

‘Ninety?’ queried Chris.

Chronotis nodded. 'Run over by a coach and pair.'

'What was it you said to him?' asked Chris.

Chronotis blinked. 'How am I supposed to know? It was a very long time ago!'

Chris decided to put this aside. He wanted to get out of this strange humming room, far away from all its peculiarities and the peculiarities of its owner. 'Right, yeah. Professor, when we met you were kind enough to say that if I dropped round you would lend me some of your books on carbon dating.'

'Oh yes, happy to,' nodded the Professor.

Suddenly a high-pitched whistle emanated from the kitchen. The Professor jumped and clutched his heart, then clutched at the other side of his chest. 'Ah,' he said, relaxing, 'that'll be the kettle.' He bustled round the piles of books towards the kitchen, calling back to Chris, 'You'll find the books you want at the far right of the big bookcase. Third shelf down.'

Chris sidled past the police box, trying not to think about it too much, and scanned the shelf the Professor had indicated. He pulled out a book, a slim leather-bound volume with an ornate scrollwork design, sort of Celtic but not really, picked out in gold on the front. He flicked it open and saw row after row of symbols, hieroglyphs or mathematical formulae.

And suddenly, for no reason that he could fathom, Chris was overwhelmed by a sensory rush of memory. He was seven years old, sat on his grandfather's lap in the back garden at Congresbury listening to cricket on the radio, the voice of Trevor Bailey, bees buzzing in the garden, the tock of a willow on leather, jam sandwiches and orange squash. So long ago...

The Professor's voice, echoing from the kitchen, called him abruptly back to the present. 'Or is it the second shelf down? Yes, second, I think. Anyhow, take whatever you like.'

Chris examined the second shelf and saw the titles *Carbon Dating at the Molecular Level* by S. Lefee and *Disintegrations of Carbon 14* by Libby. Yes, these were the ones. This was the stuff that would impress Clare, give him that excuse for one more conversation.

'Milk?' called Chronotis from the kitchen.

'Er – yes please,' Chris called back, distractedly hunting the shelf for more Clare-impressing material.

'One lump or two?'

'Two please,' said Chris absently, grabbing another couple of books from the shelf and stuffing them into his satchel.

'Sugar?' called Chronotis.

Chris blinked. 'What?'

The Professor emerged from the kitchen, carrying two cups of tea. 'Here you are.'

Chris, his mission accomplished, realised he didn't have to tolerate any of this strangeness any longer. 'Oh, actually, Professor, I've just realised I'm going to be late for a seminar,' he lied, checking his watch. 'I'm terribly sorry.' He indicated his satchel, now bulging with books. 'I'll bring these back next week, if that's all right?'

'Oh yes, yes, whenever, take as long as you like,' said the Professor. He took a noisy slurp of tea from each cup. 'Goodbye, then.'

Chris nodded. 'Goodbye.' He made for the door – but found that he couldn't go without asking one question, to try and clear up the strangeness in at least one of its respects. 'Er, actually, Professor, can I just ask you, where did you get that?'

He nodded towards the battered old police box.

The Professor peered over his half-moon spectacles at it. 'I don't know,' he said. 'I rather think that someone must have left it there when I popped out this morning.'

Chris didn't know what to say to that. He muttered 'Right' and let himself out, glad to be away from the strangeness of that room.

Nothing in his twenty-seven years had prepared him for the last five minutes. If anything, there had been too much time in that room. It was oozing with time, covered in big dollops of time. And police boxes, and humming, and kindly and penetrating eyes and last Masters of College but three, and the was altogether too much of it all.

He was glad to be back in the real world. Back to the real, important business of Clare and impressing her. He selected a sturdy-looking bike from the available selection, climbed onto it and slung his satchel over his shoulder.

Chris had no idea that inside his satchel was the strangest, most important and most dangerous book in the entire universe.

Chapter 3

IT MAY – THOUGH it almost certainly will not – come as a surprise to discover that the police box that Chris Parsons saw in Professor Chronotis’s rooms was not a police box at all. It was in fact a TARDIS, a time machine that could travel anywhere in space and time, and its humble battered wooden blue shell housed a vast, futuristic interior. Chris was also very wrong to think back to his childhood trips to London because this TARDIS was not a product of Metropolitan Police technology. It may – though almost certainly will not – come as a terrible shock that this TARDIS was not from Earth at all but in fact originated on the distant planet Gallifrey, home of the awesomely powerful society of the Time Lords. And it could – though this would really be pushing it – elicit gasps of awe to learn that the TARDIS was the current occupancy, if not exactly the property, of that mysterious traveller in time and space the Doctor, a renegade Time Lord who had shunned the static and futile life on Gallifrey and set off many hundreds of years ago to explore the infinite universe.

The Doctor’s ‘mission’, if it could be called that, and it was something he would never have called it, had been simply to explore, to live a long life packed with wonder and excitement. Along the way, however, he had found himself dragged into the righting of wrongs, not for any grand and crusading reason but simply because he happened to be there and because it seemed the decent thing to do. Generally these adventures had taken place in the company of people from Earth, but relatively recently the Doctor had been joined by – or more accurately had foisted upon him – a member of his own people, the very same race he had spent so many centuries running from.

Her name was Romanadvoratrelundar – Romana for short, thankfully – and she was, at 125 years old, a recent graduate of the Academy of Time Lords. She had been selected by the White Guardian, a mysterious being even more awesomely powerful than the Time Lords, to assist the Doctor in his mission – and this really was a mission, much to the Doctor’s irritation – to recover the six segments of the Key to Time, an extraordinarily awesomely powerful object needed to restore the harmony of the cosmos. Mission more-or-less accomplished, the Doctor had intended to return Romana to Gallifrey and continue his travels alone but for the company of K-9, a mobile computer in the shape of a dog whose powers, if not exactly awesome, were pretty handy, battery life permitting. K-9 also had the advantage over Romana, from the Doctor’s point of view, in that he obeyed orders, came when whistled for, and was equipped with an off switch.

However, the Doctor’s success in the quest for the Key to Time had incurred the wrath of the vengeful Black Guardian, who was as equally awesomely powerful as the White Guardian, although his desire was to plunge the cosmos into eternal chaos. He had sworn in a very dramatic way to hunt the Doctor down and destroy him. To avoid detection, the Doctor had attached a device called the Randomiser to his TARDIS, his plan being to outfox the Black Guardian by popping up randomly all over the place. Neither Romana nor K-9 had the heart to tell the Doctor that that was pretty much what he did anyway.

Whatever the case, the addition of the Randomiser meant the Doctor certainly could not return Romana to Gallifrey. And this suited them both, because the Doctor liked good company on his travels and Romana had learnt to appreciate the full variety of what life had to offer beyond the narrow confines of Gallifrey. Neither of them had ever discussed these feelings with the other, of course. That was not because they were members of an awesomely powerful race with a completely different set of emotional responses – although they were – but because they were not (currently at least) the kind

people who did that sort of thing.

One of Romana's particularly important discoveries during this period had been the extent of the Doctor's fascination for a planet in the Mutter's Spiral galaxy – Sol 3, known to its inhabitants as Earth. He had a great affinity for the people of this apparently distant and insignificant planet, and seemed to regard saving it from destruction as his special hobby. The Doctor had spent so much time there, and so much time in the company of its people, that it was hard to interact with him on any meaningful level without at the very least a working knowledge of the planet's history, social structure and idioms.

And so one afternoon she plucked a computer tablet from the TARDIS library and read up on its local history and culture, from the birth of the planet from drifting clouds of cosmic dust, through the Stone Age, the Trojan War, Homer, Shakespeare, the Great Break-Out into Space, right up to its eventual immolation in the 57th segment of time. ('Been there, seen it, done it, wrote most of that, caused that' – the Doctor kept saying over her shoulder, irritatingly.) It had been a very interesting 45 minutes, and now Romana was able to keep pace with the Doctor and his favourite planet.

And now they were back on Earth again, taking part in what the Doctor had assured her was an idyllically bucolic and very relaxing activity. As usual, Romana had her doubts.

They'd arrived in the Professor's rooms a couple of hours earlier, but found them empty. Romana was concerned his absence might have something to do with the urgent message he had sent them. But the Doctor seemed almost glad of the chance to rush off through the back of the college to the river edge, where he threw a handful of large-denomination notes at a surprised young student, threw off his hat, coat and scarf and virtually bundled Romana into a tiny, wobbly wooden boat.

She couldn't see the point in this at all at first. There was a perfectly serviceable path right next to the river, which they could have walked along and enjoyed exactly the same view without the possibility of capsizing. But the Doctor had seemed so delighted, marvelling at the wooden punt before thrusting it into the dirty water and using the full heft of his tall powerful frame to push it down the river like it was the Amazon, that Romana decided literally to go with the flow.

Now she reclined in the punt, the Doctor's ancient Baedeker guide in one hand, the other trailing over the edge through the clear water, enlivened by the sunshine and the pleasing architecture of the college buildings along the banks. Unlike the Academy on Gallifrey, this was a fresh, vibrant place of learning, the most ancient of the colleges a mere eight hundred years old.

The Doctor stood at the other end of the punt, punctuating each stroke of the pole with the name of one of the great Cambridge alumni.

'Wordsworth! Rutherford! Christopher Smart! Andrew Marvell! Judge Jeffreys! Owen Chadwick!' Romana frowned. That name hadn't been on her tablet. 'Who?'

'Owen Chadwick!' the Doctor repeated emphatically. 'Some of the greatest thinkers in Earth's history have laboured here.' He went on. 'Newton!'

Romana nodded. She knew Newton. "'For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction,'" she quoted.

The Doctor gave the pole a particularly hard shove through a muddy patch and the punt shot forward, as if to illustrate the truth of those words.

'So Newton invented punting?' asked Romana.

'Do you know, I wouldn't be at all surprised if he had?' said the Doctor airily. 'Like all great thinkers, he encapsulated the simplest things. There was no limit to old Isaac's genius.'

Romana smiled as the little boat passed under a bridge, the shadows of the willows on the banks casting criss-crossed patterns on the stone. 'Isn't it wonderful,' she mused, 'that something so

primitive can be so...’ She searched for the right word.

‘Restful?’ the Doctor suggested, ~~shoving down again and causing the punt to wobble alarmingly.~~

Romana found the word. ‘Simple. You just push in one direction and the boat moves in the other.’

They emerged from under the bridge and Romana gazed at another grand college building beyond the trees that lined the riverbank. ‘I love the spring,’ she said. ‘All the leaves, the colours...’

‘It’s October,’ said the Doctor, a little shamefaced.

Romana blinked in surprise. ‘I thought you said we’d be arriving in May Week?’

‘I did,’ said the Doctor. ‘May Week is in June.’

‘I’m confused,’ said Romana.

‘So was the TARDIS,’ admitted the Doctor.

Romana decided to make the best of it. ‘Oh, I do love the autumn,’ she said, trying not to sound too critical. ‘All the leaves, the colours...’

The Doctor harrumphed. ‘Yes. Well, at least with something as simple as a punt nothing can possibly go wrong. No coordinates. No relative dimensional stabilisers. Nothing!’ He lunged down again. ‘Just the water, the punt, a strong pair of hands and the pole!’

The words were barely out of his mouth when the pole jammed solidly into another muddy patch with a loud squelch. The Doctor tried manfully to retrieve it as the punt shot forward but was finally forced to abandon it or join it in the River Cam.

Romana looked sadly at the retreating pole as they sailed on.

The Doctor slumped down into the punt. ‘Er... I think it’s about time for us to go and see if the Professor is back in his rooms. Ask me how.’

‘How?’

‘For every reaction,’ said the Doctor with one of his sudden toothy grins, ‘there is an opposite and equally difficult – action!’

He rattled in the bottom of the punt and snatched up a long-handled wooden paddle, deployed for just such an emergency, swung it into the water and started to paddle furiously towards the bank.

The punt passed under another bridge. Romana was glad there was only one paddle. She’d had quite enough paddling during their adventure on the third moon of Delta Magna, when—

Suddenly her thoughts were interrupted. This interruption was not just in the normal sense, something distracting her. It felt as if something had literally barged into her mind and cut off her train of thought.

It was a thin, distorted babble of inhuman voices. Lost souls in torment, crying out in terror and confusion. The words were indistinguishable but the anguish was unmistakable, and tugged at her hearts.

The punt swept out from under the bridge. Romana blinked, and the voices were gone. It had all happened in a second.

The Doctor’s expression was similarly disturbed, and he had stopped mid-paddle, looking around in surprise. Romana caught at his arm. ‘Did you just hear voices?’

The Doctor nodded solemnly, just as the sun passed under a cloud, sending a chill autumn wind along the river. ‘Yes – a sort of thin, distorted babble of inhuman voices.’

‘Then what was it?’ asked Romana.

The Doctor shrugged. ‘Probably nothing,’ he said very unconvincingly.

‘Doctor, please, let’s go in,’ urged Romana.

The Doctor nodded and resumed paddling ferociously towards the shore.

If the Doctor or Romana had looked up rather than just around at this point, much of what followed

may have turned out quite differently. But as it happened, they did not. And so they did not see the man on the bridge.

Skagra looked down, making his first detailed survey of this planet of primitives. He enjoyed looking down on people.

He still wore the functional white coveralls of the Think Tank, but had added a long, shining silver cape and a wide-brimmed shining silver hat, the better to go unnoticed and unremarked upon on this remote and uncivilised world. He had been pleased to see, on his journey on foot into this small conurbation known as Cambridge, that he had been correct in this decision. Several of the primitives had even shouted words of social greeting to him as he passed through the streets, using untranslatable colloquialisms such as 'Oi, Disco Tex, where are the Sex-o-lettes?' and 'Get her!' and 'Hello, honky tonk!' Yes, he was obviously passing for a native amongst these cattle.

This planet really was almost distressingly backward. The few pathetic satellites winking in its orbit stood as a measure of that. Its people travelled in ground cars with exhaust pipes that belched smoke, or on laughably basic self-propelled contraptions consisting of two wheels and very little else. Skagra had passed a trading post that trumpeted low-resolution magnetic videotape recording equipment as the height of invention and sophistication, suggesting that the primitives would never have to miss *Coronation Street*, whatever that was, ever again. Their economy seemed to consist of shoving dirty pieces of paper with the head of a great matriarch printed crudely on one side at each other. The Matriarch wore a crown, suggesting a type-B monarchy, which was presumably something to do with this important street where coronations were so regularly performed.

There was also this strange, slow and wasteful mode of transport along the waterway in small wooden craft. He had just seen a primitive male make an incredible hash of this simple, if pointless task.

All things considered, Skagra decided Earth rated as a 2 out of 10 planet, bad but not quite the worst he'd ever seen, and it gained half a point for its breathable atmosphere and another half a point for its tolerably close sun.

In fact it was the perfect place to hide away in, just as his target had done. Somewhere in this quadrant of the city, the so-called 'university quarter', was what he had come for. He was approaching it circumspectly, still not quite convinced that anybody could be so stupid as to possess what he desired, yet put up no security systems to protect either it, or himself.

The leather handles of a large carpet bag were clutched tightly in one of his hands. Inside the bag was the sphere, the babble of its voices undetectable by the non-telepathic primitives of this planet. The sphere buzzed and hummed angrily, rubbing against Skagra's leg like a pet demanding to be fed.

'Soon,' he told it curtly. 'Very soon.'

Chapter 4

CHRIS WAS VERY glad to be back in his lab. He threw his satchel down on a bench and just stood breathing calmly for a moment, reassured by his spectrograph, his carbon-dating machine, his X-ray machine and even his Bunsen burner. He looked the longest at his neat, almost bare bookshelf. These were a things he could understand.

He looked out of the window into the little garden which the laboratories surrounded. The sunshine was fading now and it was starting to feel a lot more like October. A solitary magpie hopped about on the lawn. Chris gulped and then reminded himself that he was a rational, scientific person surrounded by rational scientific things.

Whenever he felt irrational and unscientific like this, Chris reminded himself of the pure, simple and almost inexpressible beauty of Euler's Identity: $e^{i\pi} + 1 = 0$. You just couldn't argue with Euler however many mad professors and police boxes you'd bumped into.

He checked his watch. It was just after two, so Clare had probably had lunch and was back in her rooms. Operation Keightley, aka The Chris Parsons Project, could now swing into phase two.

He flipped open his satchel and took out the books. He was irritated to discover that among the relevant ones was that other one, the strange one, the one he'd picked off the wrong shelf, the one with the odd not-quite-Celtic scrolly symbol on the front. He was about to put it down when –

He was back at home again, the cricket and buzzing bees and mum's voice coming from the kitchen

Chris blinked – and put down the book. Odd.

He picked it up again –

He was back at home again, the cricket and buzzing bees and mum's voice coming from the kitchen

– and then he blinked, and was back in the lab. That had been very strange. This book seemed to have the irritating habit of making you imagine things very vividly, things that weren't actually happening.

He shook himself. Of course it didn't. Books didn't do that sort of thing. Well they could, but not that vividly and you tended to have to be reading them. You didn't expect to feel the terror of Jane Eyre locked in the red room just by touching the spine of the Penguin paperback.

No, it was quite ridiculous. Books sat on shelves and waited to be read, that was all they did, the same way that solitary magpies signified nothing but an almost total lack of magpies.

He looked down at the book again, and again he saw the rows and rows of arcane symbols scrawled across its pages. But this time there was something else, and that something else was the most ridiculous something of all.

He could swear that as he looked at the book, the book was somehow looking back at him.

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