

LETHBRIDGE
STEWART

'48 CRASH

MARK CARTON

*Introduction by The Equalizer
creator Michael Sloan*

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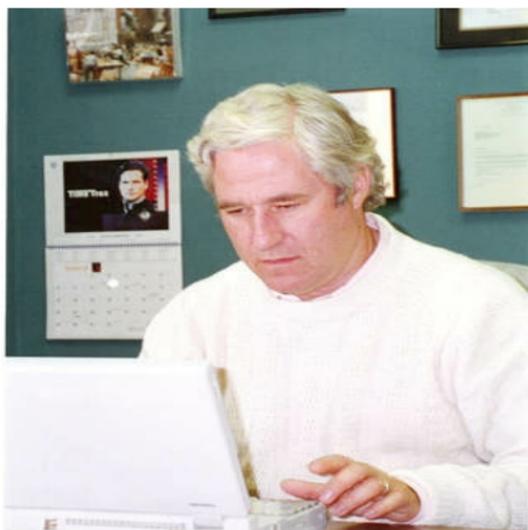
LETHBRIDGE STEWART

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*Introduction by Michael Sloan
(Creator and writer of The Equalizer)*



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Michael Sloan

– INTRODUCTION –

*My Time With Cilla Black
and Jon Pertwee*

In 1965, I signed on at the Wimbledon Theatre on the pantomime *Little Red Riding Hood* that starred Cilla Black in the leading role and Jon Pertwee as J Worthington Wolf. It was the first pantomime that Cilla Black had starred in, and it seemed to me that she had a great time. Not that I had much to do with her... I was a lowly assistant stage manager and she was a huge singer, but she was always wonderful to the backstage crew. Jon Pertwee was a consummate professional and very well liked by the backstage staff, not to mention the audiences who loved him and his comedy timing. This was before he became a household name for his portrayal of the third Doctor in *Doctor Who*.

Jon Pertwee seemed to like Cilla Black immensely, even though she had no real stage experience, and I recall he was like a mentor to her. I remember the first song that Cilla Black sang in the pantomime was ‘On a Wonderful Day like Today’, written by Anthony Newley and Leslie Bricusse, with all of the company joining her. She was ebullient and vivacious and got

the show off to a rousing start.

Jon Pertwee had many songs in the musical with his young co-star, accompanying her with his deep, baritone voice. Jon was playing the villain in the panto that was plotting to follow Little Red Riding Hood through the forest to her grandmother's house, where he would pretend to be her ailing grandmother before he devoured her! J Worthington Wolf's plans were thwarted by the courageous Jack the Woodcutter, played by the very handsome Eric Flynn. Jon Pertwee's portrayal of the wolf was played with conniving flair and dastardly innuendo. Also in the show were Freddie Desmond and Jack Marks, aka Desmond and Marks, seasoned performers and acrobats who had been in many pantomimes over the years. There was also a wonderful actor named Tony Hughes, who was playing the role of Simple Simon, who delighted the audiences.

I remember that Jon Pertwee had a "trick knee", which would suddenly give out on him. It never happened during any of the performances, but in rehearsal we would suddenly hear him shouting: "My knee! My knee's gone!" I would dash onstage with other members of the backstage crew and help Jon hobble to a chair, where we would manipulate his knee back into place. It was a continuing problem for him, and I am sure he had to have surgery on that knee when the pantomime finished.

The role of the pantomime dame, Dame Wormold, was played by an old-time character actor named Jack Haig, who had been in the TV series *Dad's Army* and *Allo Allo*. He was a cantankerous, nasty little man, as far as I was concerned. I remember a time when I had been asked to take a message to Jack. I saw him backstage, ran over to him and said, "Hey, Jack," but before I could say anything more, he turned to me and said, "That's Mr Haig to you." I was taken aback, but I delivered the message and walked away.

Sometime after that, when the pantomime was up and running, I remember standing backstage in the Stage Left wings, while the company was performing another song with Cilla Black. I hadn't noticed that Jon Pertwee was also in the wings. Obviously, he had overheard the exchange between myself and Jack Haig, or else he had heard about it earlier. Not that it mattered at the time at all. As I said, I was a lowly assistant stage manager, and I was accustomed to dealing with difficult performers. But that rebuke from Jack Haig had really upset me. Suddenly, I felt a strong hand on my shoulder. I turned around and saw that Jon Pertwee was standing beside me. He said, quietly: "It will be all right, Michael," and smiled at me, and then he moved away as the rousing number on stage finished, and it was time for his next entrance as the villainous J Worthington Wolf. I never forgot that small kindness from Jon Pertwee to me.

The *Little Red Riding Hood* pantomime finished its Christmas run at the Wimbledon Theatre in 1965. The pantomime had been a huge success. I don't remember now whether I had the opportunity to say goodbye to Cilla Black – very unlikely! – and I don't recall if I ever had the chance to say goodbye to Jon Pertwee. Probably not. But at the age of nineteen, being with these terrific stars had been a great experience for me.

I have wonderful memories of that 1965 Christmas season. It had been a thrill for me to watch Cilla Black performing onstage every night, the Britney Spears of her day. But my lasting memory of that pantomime was watching the charming and rascally Jon Pertwee transforming himself nightly into the dastardly J Worthington Wolf.

Michael Sloan was born into an illustrious show business family. His grandfather, Fred Stone, was a famed vaudeville performer who created the role of the Scarecrow in the *Wizard of Oz* on Broadway in 1902. Michael's mother and father, Paula Stone and Michael Sloan, were stage producers who mounted such shows as *The Red Mill*, *Top Banana* and *Rumple on Broadway* in the 1940s and 1950s.

Michael wrote and produced three features while living in England: *Hunted*, *Assassin* and *Moments*, all distributed by Columba/Warner Bros. While still in England, Michael wrote an episode of the Universal TV show *Columbo*. It was the only episode ever shot of the TV series that had been handed out to a freelance writer.

He worked for Glen Larson and wrote and produced the TV shows *McCloud* starring Dennis Weaver, *Quincy* starring Jack Klugman, *The Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew Mysteries* starring Shaun Cassidy, Parker Stevenson and Pamela Sue Martin, *Evening in Byzantium* starring Glenn Ford, *Sword of Justice* starring Dack Rambo, the original *Battlestar Galactica* starring Lorne Greene, Richard Hatch and Dirk Benedict and *BJ and the Bear* starring Greg Evigan. Michael was nominated for an Emmy for his work on the TV series *Quincy*.

Michael left Universal to go to MTM Studios where he wrote and produced *Riveria* starring Ben Masters,

Patrick Bauchau and Elyssa Davalos, directed by the legendary John Frankenheimer. On loan back to Universal Studios, Michael wrote and produced *The Equalizer* pilot starring Edward Woodward for CBS.

Back at MTM Studios, Michael wrote and produced a TV series called *The Master* starring Lee Van Cleef and Timothy Van Patten.

Michael returned to Universal Studios where he wrote and produced *The Man From U.N.C.L.E* TV Movie starring Robert Vaughn, David McCallum and Patrick Macnee (of *The Avengers* fame).

Michael also wrote and produced three TV Movies based on *The Six Million Dollar Man* and *The Bionic Woman* TV series starring Lee Majors, Lindsay Wagner and Richard Anderson.

Before leaving Universal Studios, Michael produced forty-one new episodes of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, most of which he also wrote, which starred such TV names as Lindsay Wagner, Robert Carradine, David Cassidy, Van Johnson, Rory Calhoun, Melissa Sue Anderson, Anthony Newley, Robert Lansing, Edward Woodward, Jean Simmons, Doug McClure, Eli Wallach and Mike Connors.

Michael wrote and produced eighty-eight episodes of the TV series *Kung Fu: The Legend Continues* for Warner Bros TV starring David Carradine and Chris Potter.

The Equalizer feature film from Sony Pictures was

released in 2014 starring Denzel Washington and directed by Antoine Fuqua. Michael was one of the producers of the movie, based on the characters he had co-created from the classic CBS TV Series. *The Equalizer* feature film has made over \$220,000,000 at the worldwide box office. The sequel was released in August 2018.

Michael's Christmas novel *Lost in Christmas* is free on Kindle for one more day. Click on the image below to download your copy. Please email us with your comments. shaun@candyjarbooks.co.uk

The book will be released in autumn 2019.





'48 Crash
Mark Carton

– CHAPTER ONE –

'48 Crash

Terrance Runeckles short tenure at GCHQ had been eventful, and he was already making a name for himself. His lack of respect for superiors and unorthodox working practices were raising more than a few eyebrows. His results, however, were extremely impressive. That was until the last two weeks. He had become erratic and his daily reports were limited.

His team leader was Grace Burnside, an old school analyst, a stickler for protocol and fastidious about discipline and procedures. She had recruited Terrance straight from Christchurch College and instantly recognised his ability. No one she had ever met could establish a sequence or a pattern as quickly as Runeckles. He'd already intercepted a number of communications which had been totally dismissed by much more experienced and qualified senior staff.

She was aware that he had been sleeping at his desk. There had also been an incident with another analyst, with an abrupt exchange of expletives and threats in the communal dining room. She could no longer turn a blind eye.

She rarely called in without arranging a 'meeting',

as analysts always preferred the opportunity to prepare for a supervisor visit. However, he was becoming a problem and so an unscheduled visit was in order.

As she entered his station, she was shocked by all her senses.

He'd not left his desk for weeks, and so the stale smell hit her like a wave. Then there was the mess. Every available inch of wall space was covered in pinned notes and, on closer inspection, what looked like song lyrics. In the corner of this cubicle was a single spotlight lamp highlighting the crouching hunched figure of Runeckles.

He was humming and chanting.

'It's all in the charts. It's all in the charts...'

Grace turned and phoned for assistance. A classic burn-out. These occurrences were becoming less frequent, as recruitment policies were more rigorous, but Runeckles was showing all the signs of 'dysfunctional paranoia', which was the blight of all young analysts.

One hour later, Runeckles had been removed to a secure hospital wing, his station had been cleared, and Grace Burnside was filing a report on his final work. He had become obsessed with popular music and was attempting to string together a completely random series of relationships. She could put this one to bed before the end of the day.

*

One of the problems with Dolerite Base was the requirement for dress uniforms being worn at all times, whether on parade, in training, working in the office or even just relaxing in the officers' mess. It was fine in the winter months, when temperatures were often in single digits and the extra layers offered great insulation from the Edinburgh chill.

However, summer was much more challenging. Three weeks consisting of fourteen hours of daily sunshine, leading to evening humidity and a record number of thunder storms, had made life very difficult for the military personnel at every level.

As Lethbridge-Stewart sat buried deep in the weekly 'sightings' report, his boredom with the task in hand, was made all the more unbearable with this incessant heat.

Despite being deep underground, the heat was draining him of the limited energy he had. The problem with this 'needle in a haystack' account was that almost anything constituted a 'sighting'.

The civilian reports, especially, made his blood boil. Pampered commercial passenger airline pilots working primarily using autopilot, and cruising with panoramic views and no significant visual challenge. These reports were often full of random detail and flowered with speculation. It was beneath his rank that he was stuck here considering the viability of these fantasy stories concocted by bored overpaid airborne taxi drivers.

After two hours of studying a report from a twenty-nine-year-old commercial co-pilot on a Heathrow to Amsterdam night flight that had passed over what they were calling 'a fireball in the Norfolk skyline', Lethbridge-Stewart had had enough!

He took an early tea and decided the mess, and a long glass of 20-year single malt, would offer some solace.

In Broadcasting House, music director for Radio One, Gerry Breeling, was meeting with Flip Collins, darling of the airwaves, and reviewing the new format for Radio One Roadshows. Gerry was energetic and enthusiastic as always, and had already said three times that he was 'totally pumped' about the ratings from the live shows, whatever this meant.

Flip had not signed up for live shows in front of a viewing public. He was a DJ from the pirate years (which meant moored out in the Solent), and liked his broadcasting to be on air and on his own, with the insulation of a sound booth. The roadshows were only meant as a trial and now it looked like they were going to be an annual activity.

Gerry was desperate for Flip to sign up for a full forty-five shows next year, and was softening him with a new contract for the Radio One Roadshow.

Sales from the 'goodie van' were incredible as everyone wanted memorabilia, and Gerry knew that

his biggest on-air star was a major draw.

Flip had agreed to the three-week trial of the roadshow, but was reluctant to do more. As the smoke from Gerry's cigar filled the room, the two men came to a compromise.

'Just three more shows this year, and then a complete break until next Easter,' Gerry urged.

'Where were you thinking?' Flip asked, although it really didn't matter that much to him. Fans were fans, and it was just the accent which changed with these morons.

'Scarborough on Monday, Skegness on Tuesday and the finale with *The Big Wash* on the promenade at Hunstanton', Gerry said, as if he was sharing the date of The Beatles first gig in Shay Stadium.

'Done', said Flip, and he was away without another word.

Flip had been expecting this to last until after the Bank Holiday, so three dates was a bit of a let off.

The month of August had broken nearly every record at the Met Office and the final week was going to be as extreme as the rest of the month. August temperatures had shown the highest variation since records began, with a range of 0.5 to 30.5 degrees. Record sunshine levels alongside record rainfall, and twenty-one nights of thunder storms. It had been a weather fanatics dream.

The short range forecasts were predicting even more storms, centralising across the North Sea and then spreading inland, with huge pressure across Anglia, and the definite likelihood of electrical storms.

August was going out with a bang, and weather was definitely making the news.

Another week started, and for Lethbridge-Stewart another series of briefings, meetings and reports looking for the signs of alien life which had become his new domain. The GCHQ reports were usually light relief, and they had assigned one of the team leaders to make sure that any queries arising could be dealt with immediately.

Grace Burnside had reported to Lethbridge-Stewart a couple of times and he liked her. She was formal. She did not waste time. Her reasoning was relevant. She offered the details, but had no time for speculation.

Mrs Burnside led Lethbridge-Stewart through some intercepted indirect communications coming out of China about a possible series of spy planes. Moscow was quiet and although the East Germans had been making noises earlier in the year about new defence systems, the whole world seemed to have slipped into a summer solstice.

As the meeting ended, Mrs Burnside made reference to her young analyst who was now under medical supervision. Lethbridge-Stewart recognised the strain

and pressure associated with the work and was sympathetic to the health issues of his colleagues in intelligence.

‘What had he been working on?’ Lethbridge-Stewart enquired as he started to pack away his folder.

‘He was unfortunately obsessed with a pattern he had seen in popular music, and was drawing together some quite tenuous links between hit records and coded messages about a planned invasion by some unknown force. His work had centred on a song by Suzi Quattro.’

‘Good grief!’

‘Quite’, Mrs Burnside agreed, and provided a resigned smile.

‘What was the song?’ Lethbridge-Stewart was certain he would have no idea of the tune, as popular music left him absolutely cold, and he had never heard of this Quattro woman.

‘‘48 Crash, I believe,’ Mrs Burnside said, equally limited in her knowledge of the music charts.

‘‘48 Crash?’ Lethbridge-Stewart repeated. ‘Leave me a copy of that report will you,’ he said.

Lethbridge-Stewart picked up the report and began to read it...

Crash of ‘48

On the 27th August 1948 an electrical storm was witnessed in Hunstanton. The ferocity of this drew a small crowd to the

promenade.

Eye witnesses suggest that the Wash changed colour. This was followed by a series of terrifying waves that ripped up the promenade, dragging many people out into the sea.

Others believe an alien incursion took place. The Wash was thoroughly searched, but nothing alien was discovered.

After a week of haystack hunting, Lethbridge-Stewart decided this was a coincidence worthy of at least a second look.

– CHAPTER TWO –

Life on Mars

The forward planning team at BBC Radio One Roadshows was a ramshackle group of logistics, technical and promotional staff. They rarely worked together as a team and spent most of their time quietly ignoring each other's existence as they moved around the vast corridors of Broadcasting House.

The roadshow had suddenly thrust them together to work as one team. It had not been easy as this was not a natural team.

Extroverts and introverts; technical expertise alongside base presenters who hated the triviality of details. However, the last couple of weeks had been an epiphany for all involved.

It may have been the locations, travelling from seaside resort to resort – a mix of candyfloss, chips and gravy and sea air. Perhaps it was the team spirit. Live broadcasts from small sites, with limited resources, meant everyone was working at their limits, amid the excitement of a daily live outside broadcast.

But no, it was none of this. Not really. It was the fans.

This was a group who never normally saw the fans.

Never heard the cheering and never sensed the adrenalin of the stage. The last couple of weeks had made everyone in the forward planning team a superstar. Everywhere they went and stayed, the fans followed. They were outside the hotels, and camped on the beach hours before a broadcast. The advance planning team were the superstars who made the live show happen, and they were adored.

The team sat and looked at the detailed notes which had been circulated. The pre-promotions team had already been active for a week, and with billboards and bridge signs on every available location within a twelve-mile radius and five days of live on-air shout outs, the anticipated crowd was fifteen thousand plus.

The only negative they were anticipating was inclement weather, but everybody was positive they could pull off the biggest and best roadshow ever. The powers that be had decided to call the event *One Big Wash* slightly sarcastically as one of the producers had commented on the body odour emanating off the crowd at a particularly damp event in Rhyl.

Lethbridge-Stewart stood over the restrained torso of Runeckles. The man was manacled to a steel bedframe for his own 'safety'. Heavy sedation was wearing off, and he had been stirring for the last couple of hours.

As Runeckles focused on Lethbridge-Stewart, the relaxation in his facial muscles brought on by the mix

of sedatives, was replaced by a look of confusion and fear. His expectation on awakening was to see the face of a caring nurse or other medical professional. He was not expecting the stern unsmiling face of Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart.

‘Don’t worry, officer, I’m not here to add to your distress,’ Lethbridge-Stewart began, in a calming tone. ‘I just wanted to discuss the report you were working on.’

Runeckles tensed and involuntarily stated, ‘It’s all in the charts,’ as he realised where he was. The cuffs holding his arms in place tightened.

Lethbridge-Stewart realised immediately that this young man was still agitated despite the sedation. He knew that he would not have long to talk before Runeckles would become incoherent again, so he cut to the chase.

‘What’s in the charts?’ He snapped the question to elicit an immediate response.

‘Welcome Home... Crash ’48... Life on Mars... Going Home...’

‘What does this mean?’

‘Alien invasion. Already here for the last twenty-two years. Deep cover, waiting for the right moment. Need to create a reaction. Rebel army. Call to action. It’s all in the charts.’ Runeckles spat the phrases, his eyes rolling.

‘I’m not quite sure I follow,’ Lethbridge-Stewart

said, rather puzzled.

‘Check the files. Crash ’48. It happened. It’s happening again. They have learned and developed a new strategy. This time they will succeed. It’s all in the charts.’ And with that Runeckles started to thrash wildly, the restraints pulling taut.

A medical team arrived as Lethbridge-Stewart left. Was this the rantings of a crazed man, or a real and present threat? Lethbridge needed more information, and needed it quickly.

Most of the files were so heavily redacted that, what was not obscured by black marker, made little sense. From what Lethbridge-Stewart could tell, the summer of ’48 had been intensely hot with extreme weather patterns.

Meteorologists had noticed early that the weather over the North Sea was irregular and not being caused by the jet stream. It seemed that the night time storms were being caused by some unknown source, and what had started as a spectacular light show had ended in terror. A wave had swept the northern seaboard of Norfolk in minutes, with the Wash creating a spinning circle of bright light deep below the surface of the cold, usually still waters. The light at the centre of this vortex was illuminating the sky. The force and speed of the waves took those on the seafront by surprise. The unfortunate few who were too slow to outrun the water

were swept up and dragged back to sea in under a minute.

A small deployment of troops had been sent directly to the water's edge. As the waves receded the scene changed, with eight bodies stood upright on the beach. They looked different, their eyes glowing with the bright intensity of a strobe light.

The eight attacked in unison and, with only makeshift weapons of driftwood and rocks, they attempted to overpower the troops; their mania to attack seemingly driven to clear the area. They were outnumbered and eventually overpowered, thanks to the quick action of the troops deployed.

The events of the night were covered up and the scene was locked down, with a full battalion despatched to enclose the site and search the area.

Nothing was found.

The commonly accepted theory was that the attack was part of a preparation for a full alien invasion. The sea swell and abduction of individuals from the beach was to create a co-opted rebel force, to clear the local area of prying eyes and distractions.

The invasion failed, and the summary of the night's events concluded that given a larger scale abduction of local people, the rebel force would have been able to take full control of the beach and surrounding areas, and help the invading force land successfully.

Lethbridge-Stewart noted that among the officers in

charge of events and the classification of the files was Oliver Hamilton. He decided he better make a call, and do it now.

The Octavium Club, hidden in the depths of Soho, had for almost two hundred years been a place of relaxation for the great and the good of higher society. From Lords and bishops to dukes and ambassadors, the club offered a place where they could drop the exterior persona and enjoy the finer things in life without the risk of challenge.

Major General Oliver Hamilton was a regular at the club, not least because of its close proximity to his office at Army Strategic Command. He'd spent many happy evenings here over the years, so the club was normally off limits to work related meetings.

Not tonight, however.

Hamilton sat transfixed by the glass of single malt which lay in the heavy crystal tumbler in his hand. He looked troubled and seemed to be reliving an experience from his passed, as Lethbridge-Stewart arrived.

Hamilton signalled for Lethbridge-Stewart to pour himself a drink. It had been an hour since the two had exchanged a brief telephone call about the analyst's report and the suggestion of a repeat of the circumstances surrounding the Crash of '48. That was enough for Hamilton to hastily cancel his remaining

day's meetings and head over to the Octavius Club.

He needed Lethbridge-Stewart to investigate, but he also needed as few people as possible involved.

'The Crash of '48, and the details of events around that time, have been classified for almost twenty-five years,' Hamilton began. 'I thought we may be able to bury this file forever. For those involved we needed to run deep cover stories to ensure the real details did not emerge. To this day we have no understanding of what happened to these poor victims when they were dragged out to sea, or what the real purpose of the attack was.'

'However, we must ensure that whatever happened then, never happens again. Brigadier, you can have whatever resources you need, but this action has to be top secret, only the highest level of the Corps is to be involved. There is a major event planned for the seafront in almost the exact location of the original invasion this week. They expect thousands will attend.'

'Whoever, or whatever, is behind this must be stopped, and if we have several thousand young people in imminent danger, then I trust that you will do what is necessary.'

'Why not cancel the event?' Lethbridge-Stewart asked. 'Surely cancellation would be the safest and surest way of guaranteeing public safety.'

'The problems of cancellation of such a high profile and national event like this would be significant. The

reasons for cancellation at such short notice would draw more attention than we would like. The BBC are notorious for sticking their large noses in where they are not welcome. No. I'm afraid this has to be handled without publicity and without the help of traditional authorities. This has to be managed, discretely as possible, by the Fifth.'

Hamilton could tell Lethbridge-Stewart wasn't impressed with the order, as if Hamilton was using the Fifth as his personal service. It didn't matter, this was the first time Hamilton had made such a direct request since Lethbridge-Stewart's promotion. A year ago now. Hamilton felt fully justified in his request.

'Is there anything else I need to know, that isn't in any of the files?'

Hamilton considered, then nodded. 'Just before the huge waves swept inland, there was a light in the sea so bright that it shot a beam into the sky. Whilst nobody can be certain, it seemed to light up the sky. They said it looked like a beacon highlighting a landing point for a full invasion.'

– CHAPTER THREE –

Welcome Home

The team was hastily assembled. Just twelve men; each had been singled out by Samson and Bishop for their ability on the target ranges. Marksmen were essential for a mission like this. None had seen significant active service, but psychological testing had suggested that all these soldiers would cope well in urban warfare situations. At such short notice and with limited real intelligence to work with, these were the only criteria Lethbridge-Stewart could specify.

The briefing had been straightforward. Lethbridge-Stewart showed the group a map of the promenade at Hunstanton and the location of the roadshow. Numbers attending were vague, but the BBC had been promoting the event for a week, and so tens of thousands were being mentioned on air. The team were to work on the fringes of the crowd when they arrived, with two of the group taking up advance positions on the beach looking to the sea.

They had been advised to look for signs of unusual behaviour in the crowd. It was paramount to isolate any individuals who they suspected may have been placed in the crowd to cause trouble, whatever that

meant.

The two advance positions would operate with two-way radios and were instructed to start an evacuation in the event of a swell in the sea water. They would need to act quickly to drive the crowd from the beach front location, inland to safety.

The team was plain clothed, with concealed weapons, but Lethbridge-Stewart decided to remain in uniform. In the event that someone needed to gain control of the stage and address the audience, the uniform would at least carry some authority.

The group mounted the Westland Wessex helicopters for rapid deployment to Norfolk. The lack of a thorough description of the supposed target was clearly worrying some of the team.

Lethbridge-Stewart tried to allay their fears. 'Men, this is a unique mission, and I know that many of you won't have had experience of black-ops like this before, but you all knew this was coming when you were assigned to the Corps. You were specifically selected because we needed a team who could blend into a crowd, but would not be scared to use a weapon if needed. We don't know who our enemy is, or if they will even show themselves, but this is the reality of service in the Corps.'

Bishop, beside him, nodded and added, 'We just need to be ready, and I am confident that your gut instinct will pay dividends, so just follow my lead. This

is unknown territory for all of us, but we will be fine if we work as a team.'

Lethbridge-Stewart smiled inwardly, pleased to see how far Bishop had come in the last year.

The group boarded and checked their operational notes on the thirty-minute low level journey north from London.

The crowds were much larger than anyone had expected. Hundreds had been arriving since Tuesday lunchtime to get the best locations in front of the cordoned area where the BBC would eventually position their two Wessex Portafold Continentals. As the day broke on Wednesday, morning the roads approaching the sea front from all directions were already crammed with vehicles. A large field near South Parade had been converted into a makeshift car park, and by 9:30am it was already full.

Those arriving for the roadshow were greeted by gangs of sales teams offering flags, scarves, posters, badges, illuminated Deely Boppers and a host of other impulse memorabilia. As the crowds grew, the focus of everybody's attention turned to the two large caravans immediately in front of the promenade, and like a pilgrimage everyone was piling forward like a huge congregation attempting to reach an altar.

It was a very humid, dark day, and the entertainment and excitement was all focused on the

two metal caravans. The sea waters remained still, but somewhere below the surface a light began to illuminate. It was the sort of light a concealed torch would make under the bed covers. It was moving around and hard to spot initially, but was obviously bright enough to drill through the gloom of the Wash.

The Westland landed about a mile from the site, and the team yomped the rest of the way in under six minutes. They were taken aback by the sheer size of the audience. The estimated fifteen thousand people was completely wrong.

Suspicious about the audience size were immediately reinforced when an announcement from the stage called for people arriving to allow space at the front, as there were now thirty-five thousand people here. The crowd let out a cheer to celebrate the sheer achievement of gathering in such vast numbers. They seemed happy to cheer anything.

Lethbridge-Stewart evaluated his options.

This size crowd would never move quickly and safely based on his original plan. He had to think fast and work out what would be the trigger to this attack. In '48, the light had emanated from the sea, and a swell of water had washed inland and taken its victims in under a minute. If that were repeated, thousands could be caught up in the water, and the consequences would be unimaginable.

He needed to create a diversion; something to distract the audience and get them moving, but in an organised fashion. This would be tricky. He was here based on hearsay. What if nothing happened? How could he justify this?

The music was playing loudly and it was Slade, so the crowd was now bobbing around. Flip Collins looked out from his booth at the sea of faces, and wondered what had he done to deserve the heady combination of *Skweeze Me, Pleeze Me* and seventy thousand prying eyes.

The live broadcast was going to start in less than five minutes, and from what he could see from the people still arriving in large numbers at the edge of the playing field, the crowd was going to get bigger throughout the live show.

Flip hated this attention, and just wanted the show to end. He felt like a lab rat trapped in a small cage. Hands were poking through the windows of the continental with paper pads and pencils, awaiting a signature. Flip played the hits. He was not a rock 'n' roll star. Why did they want his signature?

The back door to the cabin opened and Kevin Tilson, OB Manager, stuck his head around the corner, holding up three fingers, indicating that the countdown to the live show was beginning.

*

A hundred yards in front of the unit on the deserted beach stood Corporal Wallace and Private Deacon. They had made base and unloaded the limited surveillance equipment they were able to carry. It took them only a minute to notice the moving strobe light and the discoloration of the sea.

They radioed back the bad news to Lethbridge-Stewart. His worst fears were being realised. This was a repeat of Crash of '48. Lethbridge-Stewart remembered the weekly sightings report. The sightings over the North Sea now seemed to make sense. The flurry of electrical storms had proved perfect cover for strange lights in the sky, and so a craft may have landed in the sea, and was now the signalling mechanism for a full scale invasion.

Lethbridge-Stewart looked to the sky, and the dark clouds, were being backlit by flashes. Was this the sign of an electrical storm approaching from the sea? Or perhaps the alignment of hundreds of concealed alien craft, awaiting the clearance of a landing site for a full scale invasion.

He looked around him, but the audience were mesmerized by the two caravans fifty yards in front of him. Some youngsters pointed at the colours in the sea, and a few old people edged towards the promenade, but most were engrossed in the silliness of the Radio One DJs.

Lethbridge-Stewart took a deep breath and radioed

for the rest of the team to go directly to the beach and hunker down. They needed to secure themselves for a large wave, and make sure they were ready for whatever followed.

Lethbridge-Stewart stood alone, in a crowd of thirty-five thousand. He had to move these people and do it now. In an instant Lethbridge-Stewart started running forward, heading straight towards the epicentre of this pilgrimage. He pushed his way through the crowd and headed straight at Flip Collins, as the crowd roared, and Flip announced, 'Live from Hunstanton, it's the One Big Wash.'

– CHAPTER FOUR –
Bits and Pieces

The opening seconds of the roadshow coincided with the opening of the heavens, as the heavy clouds above the Norfolk coastline decided a rapid deposit of precipitation was needed. The double height speakers from the roadshow booth blasted out *No More Mr Nice Guy*, and the sky rumbled with a sinister growl.

Lethbridge-Stewart reached the front of the crowd and leaped the security fence. The Radio One security team were absolutely no match for Lethbridge-Stewart. As he pulled his revolver, they instantly recoiled and instead of challenging him, they fled either side of the caravan.

Most of the crowd did not even notice what was happening in front of them. The heavy rainfall had caused a flurry of quick changes as people put up umbrellas and donned waterproofs. So far, barely a show had passed without at least one shower, but being British, nobody minded the weather.

Lethbridge-Stewart spotted the DJ to the side of the stage. He was wearing a t-shirt saying ‘I’d like to Flip Collins’. He seemed to be unaware of the fracas. He always did the shows with his head down, buried in

his script and close to the turntables, which were his real and only love. He tried to ignore his audience and block out the world which was invading his egg box clad cell.

Lethbridge-Stewart ran to the side of the Wessex Continental. The door burst open and Lethbridge-Stewart joined Flip Collins live on air as he was starting the countdown to Bits and Pieces, the flagship competition of the roadshow.

Flip Collins covered the mic and instantly lifted the needle onto a T. Rex classic.

‘You’re not allowed in here,’ he snapped, ignoring the uniform and the pistol in Lethbridge-Stewart’s hand.

‘I’m not here for an autograph,’ said Lethbridge-Stewart.

‘This audience are in immediate and grave danger. This broadcast is over!’

‘Danger!’ exclaimed Flip Collins. ‘Trust me, mate. If you cancel this roadshow, we’ll be the ones in danger! This crowd will start a riot if we go off air.’

Flip looked at the audience, who were now embracing the tropical storm outside and the flashes of lightening hidden behind the heavy cloud cover. They were bouncing up and down and providing a huge choral backing group for the infectious beat of *Get it On*.

Lethbridge-Stewart radioed to the rest of the team on the seafront.

‘What’s the status on the beach?’ he barked.

‘The sea is getting choppy and the light is much stronger now. The whole sea is lit up. I’d say five minutes’ maximum until we have a swell. The light will be breaking the surface anytime now.’ The report from his Corporal left no further doubt.

Lethbridge-Stewart turned back to Flip Collins.

Suddenly a bolt of lightning cut across Flip’s head. He dived as box full of badges exploded into dust.

‘You aren’t joking, are you?’

‘Can we move this thing?’ Lethbridge-Stewart said, looking around the caravan, which had been turned into a full recording studio.

‘Of course we can. This is state of the art,’ replied Flip.

‘Fine. I need your help. I want you to cut the transmission but keep playing music, and if possible get the audience to follow you. We have five minutes to get you and this crowd away from the sea front, or everyone here will be dead.’

Flip Collins considered his options and smiled. ‘You get the engine started and leave the rest to me.’

On the beach the waters were now moving against the natural tide. They appeared to be moving in and out, almost forming a spiral effect. The light had broken the surface; creating a spotlight on the torrential dark clouds and forcing warm rain down with increasing

ferocity.

Lethbridge-Stewart jumped from the broadcast booth and headed towards the Range Rover, which was hooked onto the Continental. He revved the engine and listened for his cue.

As the record ended the crowds cheering slowly subsided, replaced with the chanting of 'Flip, Flip, Flip'.

Collins picked up his mike and stood in the booth so that he could be seen by the crowd. They erupted in turn and he waved to his adoring fans. 'Hey there pop pickers. It's nearly time for Bits and Pieces,'

'But today is no ordinary show. During the next song the first five contestants to reach the side door will take part in our live competition, with the chance to win the prize of a lifetime.'

The crowd yelped with pleasure.

'And just to make it fair for everyone – even those of you right at the back of the crowd – we are going to be a moving target. OK, Brigadier. Hit the pedal.'

With that Lethbridge-Stewart threw a wheel spin and the 4x4 and the Continental tore away from its anchored spot. Lethbridge-Stewart used his significant skills to manoeuvre the vehicle past the crowd and pulled away at speed, taking a 45 degree turn and heading straight for the embankment to the side of the field which led directly onto South Parade.

For a split second the crowd looked on in disbelief. The roadshow was now on the move and the metal

cabin with speakers atop blared out the latest chart topper by Elton John.

As the vehicle spun and turned passed groups of fans, the ironic lyrics about the Rocket Man echoed across the field.

The crowd started moving. Those at the front chose to chase the vehicle. Those at the back of the crowd moved sideways and decided to try and head for the end of the embankment.

Lethbridge-Stewart knew the risks of driving at an embankment with no clear idea of what lay beyond it, but towing a double-sized caravan loaded with electrical equipment and holding extra speakers was equally suicidal, but this was a mission requiring decisive action.

The sky was starting to clear, and the strobe light was now fixed on a position pointing directly north. Lethbridge-Stewart's men had anchored themselves to points on the beach and prepared their weapons. Under the instruction of Bishop they had donned water proofs and were sporting goggles and nose clips. They waited as the waters started to rise, staring up at a site that none of them could quite comprehend.

Lethbridge-Stewart threw the gearstick into third and pushed the accelerator as hard as possible. The Range Rover and caravan cleared the top of the embankment

with ease, and for a split second both vehicles left the ground. The Radio One Roadshow was actually on the move! And it was flying!

Lethbridge-Stewart corrected the steering and steadied both vehicles as he headed inland along the South Parade. The crowds were following, mainly on foot, but some dashed to their cars to keep up with the action. Such was the spectacle of an unidentified flying roadshow!

The waters rose and the swell reached out. In seconds the beach and the troops were engulfed in fast running water. The water crossed the main promenade and entered the field that had minutes earlier been occupied by thousands of cheering young people.

The rush of water swept back to sea violently as the twelve soldiers held their breath. Diligently the soldiers watched as a space craft rose from the sea, its strobe light searching the shore like World War II searchlight. It stopped and the door to the craft opened. It was obvious that whatever was inside the craft was expecting to see thousands of new recruits to its rebel army, but all they could see was the elite troop assembled by Lethbridge-Stewart, and they were battle ready.

‘Take Fire’ was the command from behind the team.

Lethbridge-Stewart swerved the Land Rover through

the town.

‘Out of the way,’ he shouted, attempting to avoid some rather shocked pedestrians. After he had driven inland for less than half a mile he jettisoned the caravan. As the caravan rolled to a stop, Lethbridge-Stewart wheel spun a full one hundred and eighty degrees and gave a single wave of gratitude to Flip Collins as he passed. Collins saluted in return. In twenty years of broadcasting this was the greatest buzz of his broadcasting life.

The Range Rover screamed to a halt at the beach head as the wave receded. Lethbridge-Stewart jumped from the vehicle to join his team. His command to shoot was met with a volley of gunfire directly at the craft. Bullets struck the surface and the doors, which had only opened seconds earlier, rapidly closed. The sea waters returned and the craft was submerged from view.

Above them they caught a glimpse of hundreds of smaller craft, but this scene was quickly replaced with cloud cover again.

The retreat was immediate.

In the classified files, which came from the events at Hunstanton, the few sightings of an alien craft had been dismissed as a Radio One prank.

The elite team could not testify that they had seen any actual aliens, and so the full nature of the invasion

remained unexplained.

As for Flip Collins, he agreed to do another season on the roadshow, and the feature of guessing the distance between roadshows became a popular part of the programme and was used as a means of selecting the participants in 'Bits and Pieces'.

Lethbridge-Stewart's journey back to Edinburgh brought a mixture of relief and a sense that his role had new and even greater purpose.

As he drove along the A1 he flicked on the radio. The insane tones of Kenny Everett filled the airwaves.

Not at the moment, thought Lethbridge-Stewart. *Time for some Radio Four.*

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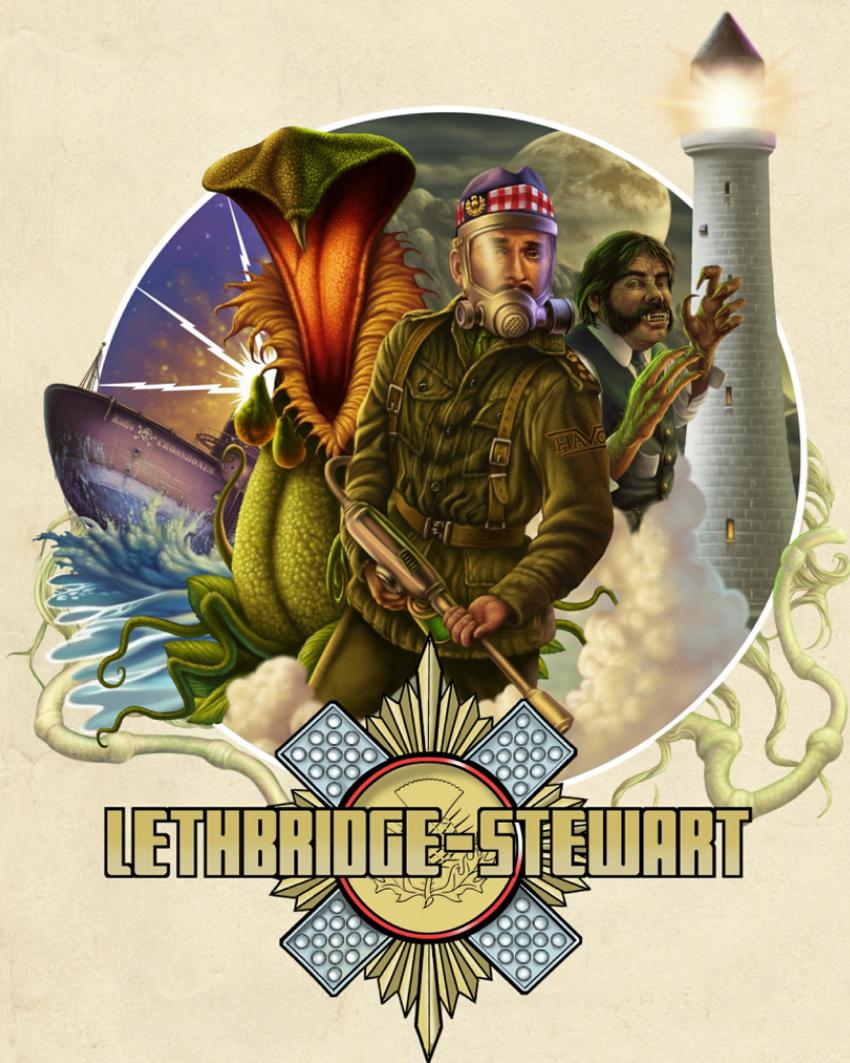
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For Colonel Alistair Lethbridge-Stewart his life in the Scots Guards was straightforward enough; rising in the ranks through nineteen years of military service. But then his regiment was assigned to help combat the Yeti incursion in London, the robotic soldiers of an alien entity known as the Great Intelligence. For Lethbridge-Stewart, life would never be the same again.

Meanwhile in the small Cornish village of Bledoe a man is haunted by the memory of an accident thirty years old. The Hollow Man of Remington Manor seems to have woken once more. And in Coleshill, Buckinghamshire, Mary Gore is plagued by the voice of a small boy, calling her home.

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by Nick Walters

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It's the summer of '69. Flower power is at its height, and nuclear power is in its infancy. Journalist Harold Chorley is out of work, and Colonel Alistair Lethbridge-Stewart is out of sorts. Dominex Industries are on the up, promising cheap energy for all. But people have started going missing near their plant on Dartmoor. Coincidence, or are sinister forces at work?

Join Lethbridge-Stewart and uneasy ally Harold Chorley as they delve into the secrets behind Dominex, and uncover a plan that could bring about the end of the world.

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LETHBRIDGE-STEWART: MOON BLINK

by Sadie Miller

July 1969, and mankind is on the Moon. Both the United States and Soviet Russia have lunar bases, and both are in trouble.

Back on Earth, Anne Travers has learned she is about to be visited by an old friend from America, Doctor Patricia Richards. Lance Corporal Bill Bishop is aware of the visit, and is on hand to meet Richards.

She brings with her a surprise, one which the Americans and Russians wish to get their hands on. But the only man who can truly help Anne, Colonel Lethbridge-Stewart, is away in Scotland.

It's a game of cat and mouse, as Anne and Bishop seek to protect the life of an innocent baby – one that holds the secrets to life on the Moon.

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**LETHBRIDGE-STEWART: THE GRANDFATHER
INFESTATION**

by John Peel

The late 1960s and pirate radio is at its height.

Something stirs in the depths of the North Sea, and for Radio Crossbones that means bad news.

Lethbridge-Stewart and his newly assembled Fifth Operational Corps are called in to investigate after the pirate radio station is mysteriously taken off the air, and a nuclear submarine is lost with all hands.

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LETHBRIDGE-STEWART: TIMES SQUARED

by Rick Cross

When Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart, his fiancée Sally Wright and nephew Owain Vine embark on a much-needed holiday in New York City, the last thing they expect to find is a puzzling mystery involving coma patients, a stranger from a distant land and a dark menace lurking in the bowels of the city's labyrinthine subway system.

Before long, they're battling an ancient evil pursuing a deadly campaign of terror that could bring Manhattan under its control... and the world to its knees.

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LETHBRIDGE-STEWART: BLOOD OF ATLANTIS

by Simon A Forward

Could Atlantis really have arisen in the Aegean Sea?

Lethbridge-Stewart's nephew, Owain Vine, and a group of eco-protestor friends, are attempting to oppose an operation undertaken by Rolph Vorster, a ruthless South African mining magnate with his own private army, who is out to harvest as much Atlantean riches as he can.

Lethbridge-Stewart, along with Anne Travers, is called in to investigate a missing Russian submarine that appears to be connected to Atlantis, recruiting the colourful eccentric archaeologist, Sonia Montilla, along the way. All the while, Captain Bugayev and an undercover Spetsnaz team are investigating the fate of their government's missing submarine. A complication that could light a major fuse on the Cold War.

Meanwhile, Atlantis grows, and its reach is utterly inimical to human life.

ISBN: 978-0-9954821-0-4

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LETHBRIDGE-STEWART: MIND OF STONE

by Iain McLaughlin

Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart has been remanded to Woodworms Scrubs Prison, and his team have no idea why. Secrecy surrounds his case, but his team barely have a chance to process anything before they are sent on a mission to Egypt.

Why does it seem like Lethbridge-Stewart is going out of his way to court trouble from the prison's most notorious inmates? And what does it have to do with well-known gangster Hugh Godfrey?

In the Ptolemaic Museum of Cairo, Anne Travers and her team are trying to uncover the mystery surrounding some very unusual stone statues.

One thing connects these events; the cargo transported by Colonel Pemberton and Captain Knight in August 1968.

ISBN: 978-0-9954821-5-9

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LETHBRIDGE-STEWART: NIGHT OF THE INTELLIGENCE

by Andy Frankham-Allen

Three men feel the pull of the Great Intelligence.

One; Professor Edward Travers, who was once possessed by it, plans to return to the Det-Sen Monastery to clear his mind of the Intelligence once and for all. But he never makes it. The Vault want him, but an old friend is waiting in the wings to help.

Two; Owain Vine, who carries the seed of the Intelligence within, is in Japan on a pilgrimage to cleanse himself of the taint he feels in his soul. Soon a happy reunion takes place, and Owain learns that past friendships are not what they seemed.

Three; Brigadier Alistair Lethbridge-Stewart, who finds himself haunted by the spectre of his brother, James, who refuses to stay dead.

The stage is set for the long, dark night of the Intelligence.

ISBN: 978-0-9957436-3-2

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LETHBRIDGE-STEWART: THE DAUGHTERS OF EARTH

by Sarah Groenewegen

To celebrate Lethbridge-Stewart's birthday, a romantic weekend is planned for him and Sally in a remote cottage in the Scottish Highlands. Unfortunately for Sally, freak weather causes her to crash her car.

Lethbridge-Stewart, meanwhile, is in Cairngorm investigating UFO sightings.

Elsewhere, the Daughters of Earth, a women-only peace movement, are making waves in the political world, but just who is their enigmatic leader? And what links the Daughters with the events of Cairngom and Sally's accident?

ISBN: 978-0-9957436-4-9

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**LETHBRIDGE-STEWART: THE DREAMER'S
LAMENT**

by Benjamin-Burford Jones

While visiting his mother, Lethbridge-Stewart is a little perturbed when Harold Chorley calls to ask for his help. A train from Bristol has gone missing, and Chorley is convinced it has something to do with the Keynsham Triangle, where over fifty people have vanished without trace since the early 1800s.

Elsewhere, Anne Travers is coming to terms with a loss in her family, and sets about preparing for a funeral. However, news reaches her that both Lethbridge-Stewart and Chorley have gone missing, and her help is required to find them. And, hopefully, solve the mystery of the Keynsham Triangle.

What connects the missing train to the Triangle, what has it got to do with a Wren from the 1940s, and just why does it appear that Lethbridge-Stewart and Chorley are in the village of Keynsham in 1815?

ISBN: 978-0-9957436-5-6