

LETHBRIDGE STEWART

PIECE OF MIND

JAMES MIDDLEDITCH

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Editor: Shaun Russell
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LETHBRIDGE-STEWART

Piece of Mind

Based on the BBC television serials by
Mervyn Haisman & Henry Lincoln

James Middleditch



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(Set between *The Daughters of Earth*
and *The Dreamer's Lament*)

‘Glastonbury, sir?’

‘Yes. I think it will do you good.’ Major General Hamilton stared out of the window as he spoke, and lent his words a certainty that suggested this wasn’t a recommendation, but an order.

Lethbridge-Stewart waited a few seconds, deciding whether to concur obediently or reluctantly. How much to protest? Would it be worth it?

‘Sir, I—’

‘We really think it will help, Brigadier. What with recent... events. Time alone if nothing else. The Sanctuary specialises in mental strength – new techniques, but they take peace and quiet to learn. You’ll get that there. Colonel Douglas will keep the Fifth running just fine in the meantime.’ He had turned to face Lethbridge-Stewart, and tapped the side of his own head. ‘Just as important, up here. You know that.’

One word had caught Lethbridge-Stewart’s attention, and was echoing now in his thoughts. *Alone*.

He paused for a few more moments. He didn’t want to sound too keen too quickly, but that one word had done it. Hamilton was right. He did need some time to himself for a while. *Walking*, he thought, almost

allowing himself a smile. There was quite a landscape down there, he remembered; an expanse of open space dominated by the sudden rise of the famous Tor. *Walking. Maybe a pint or two. Local chat. Sausages and mash...*

Time away from Sally, he caught himself thinking. Probably for the best right now. Give them time to... adjust.

‘Glastonbury it is then, sir.’

‘Glastonbury, sir?’ Lance Corporal Sally Wright was genuinely puzzled.

‘Yes. I think it’ll do you good.’

Sally recognised that tone. She set her face into an impassive mask. *Another man, thinking he knows what’s best for me.*

‘They’re trying some new techniques down there, to combat the new kinds of stresses these threats are throwing our way,’ he continued, almost as if he could hear her noisy, rebellious thoughts and was attempting to overwrite them with cold, logical rationality. ‘We’ll be sending everyone down there in time.’

‘But my name’s gone to the top of the list, sir?’ Sally asked, trying to stay calm. ‘Is this a way of checking whether I’m still trustworthy? I’ve fully explained what happened with the Daughters...’

‘Lance Corporal!’ Hamilton snapped. ‘Your name was on this list prior to that... occasion. I think you know that this is an instruction rather than a request. Please prepare. You leave in the morning.’ He returned to the window. ‘If nothing else, enjoy some time alone. It’s a rare luxury in this line.’

Alone. He was probably right. She couldn’t remember when she wasn’t surrounded by other soldiers, or filling the quiet moments with Alistair, or Anne. Now that Anne had her own new adventures to go on – a first date with Bill Bishop – perhaps she should get out the way for a bit. Especially after what had happened with Alistair.

Time away from Alistair, she thought. Probably for the best right now. Give them time to... adjust.

‘Yes, sir.’

Lethbridge-Stewart and Sally Wright stared at each other, their bags dropping onto the gravel beside the car that would take them on the first part of their long journey south.

‘Glastonbury?’ he asked.

‘Glastonbury,’ she replied.

‘Hamilton,’ they growled.

The Sanctuary was, on the outside, a tumble-down

cottage on the slopes of the Tor. Lethbridge-Stewart scanned the area as he pulled his bag from the car, half taking in the quirky beauty of the place, half assessing potential military advantage points. It was a habit now – even the most ordinary places seemed to buzz with the possibility of something strange.

Maybe that's why I've ended up here, he thought. He just couldn't switch off that readiness, that expectation of action.

Sally emerged beside him and looked around too. Their journey had mostly been silent, which suited them both fine. The quietness had become entrenched, neither of them willing to make the effort needed to start conversation; an effort that grew the longer the silence went on. Now they had arrived, in the late afternoon, the low March sun casting the little town and its iconic Tor in a gentle gold.

'Welcome!' A deep, friendly voice broke the continuing silence, and the new arrivals turned to face the large man standing at the entrance to the Sanctuary. From the open door, backed by a warm orange glow, he walked down the overgrown pathway to the simple wooden fence. 'You've found your Sanctuary,' he said as he reached out a hand, which Lethbridge-Stewart shook efficiently.

'Colonel Waterman,' he greeted. 'Good to see you

again, under better circumstances this time. I remember you mentioning this place. Never honestly thought I'd make it down though.'

Sally coughed, almost politely. 'And Lance Corporal Wright,' Waterman said, reaching out to her. 'Sally. It's good to meet you. Colonel Ralph Waterman. Ralph, please.'

'Sir,' she replied, noticing his pale blue trousers and white shirt, open at the collar. 'I'm confused; is this a military facility? I was led to believe so.'

'Oh yes,' replied Waterman. 'We're military in every way, in service to Her Majesty, and in defence of the realm. We just do things differently here. You'll come to understand. No uniforms, no protocols, no "sirs" or "ma'ams".'

Sally looked again at the Cottage which was to be her home for the next week. It certainly didn't look military, Lethbridge-Stewart observed. Although for a mostly secret organisation, pioneering revolutionary new mental techniques, perhaps that was as it should be. He noticed Sally relax a little, and let herself smile.

'It's good to be here, sir... Ralph.'

'Sir Ralph,' her host interrupted jovially. 'Now that would be nice. No sign of a knighthood just yet though. Although this is the ground walked upon by Britain's most famous knights of course. I'm sure you know the

legends, and just down there in the Abbey grounds is where King Arthur himself, and his good lady wife, are supposed to be buried, and...'

Now it was Lethbridge-Stewart's time to cough, and not as politely as Sally had managed. 'Colonel,' he said, with full brigadier authority. 'We've had a long journey. Perhaps we could get inside this... establishment of yours. I'm not quite ready to start a tour guide's talk on the colourful history of the place from the bottom of a cottage garden.' He paused, taking in Sally's familiar look of disapproval and an edge of disappointment on Waterman's round face. 'As nice as it is,' he added, book ending his outburst with another cough.

'Brigadier,' Waterman said, adopting a more formal tone. 'My apologies. Perhaps General Hamilton didn't fully explain how we operate down here. It may appear a bit lax compared to what you're used to.'

Lethbridge-Stewart said nothing, but made a small *harrumph*.

'Permission to relax military protocols and welcome you to the Sanctuary, sir,' Waterman said, his voice precise and direct.

'Well,' Lethbridge-Stewart replied. 'Granted, I suppose. General Hamilton did make it clear I was to get into the spirit of things and let you take the lead.'

Waterman chuckled. ‘Ah, very good, the *spirit* of things. A good Glastonbury joke.’

Lethbridge-Stewart stared blankly at him. Sally smirked.

‘Anyway,’ Waterman said grandly, reaching out his arm with a flourish to direct them towards the welcome glow of the cottage. ‘Alistair.’ Lethbridge-Stewart flinched slightly at the use of his first name. ‘Sally,’ Waterman continued, ‘come this way. Nothing less than peace of mind awaits. But first, dinner.’

Sally, who was clearly warming to Waterman by the second, smiled and started striding up the pathway behind him.

Lethbridge-Stewart, hanging back a little, felt his heart sink, and his body tense even more. This was not what he’d imagined.

‘Peace of mind my foot,’ he mumbled, stalking towards the cottage and ensuring his shoes made the most military of *clip-clops* against the ground.

‘Ridiculous! I had an awful feeling it was going to be like this. When I mentioned the place to Samson he told me about some Festival they’ve started holding down here, you know the crowd, wastrels and free love enthusiasts. He laughed at the thought of me being here and now I know why. You know this isn’t me at all. I

cope in my own way. I won't be cuddled and cushioned and wafted with smoking sticks, and I will not – *will not* – be chanting my way to sanity!

Sally had just about been managing to keep a straight face while hurrying beside a determinedly marching Alistair, but could do so no longer.

'Oh, Alistair!' she managed as she laughed and puffed behind him. 'If your chanting is anything like your singing, we're all in trouble!'

He stopped as she doubled up in giggles. It was as if months' worth of tension had been keeping the laughter built up, and the dam has now burst. He tried to keep his own mouth fixed into a straight line, despite the twitching in his cheeks.

He had stormed out of the cottage, having endured his first half an hour of guided meditation practice. If anything he needed to breathe fresh air, away from the cloying scent of incense, away from the twinkling bells and sound bowl tone created by that woman. Waterman had introduced her as 'Jana'. No surname, no title – just 'Jana'. And certainly no uniform – nothing even near it, more like a flowery, summer... robe, or *somesuch*. Sally knew that Alistair didn't even have the vocabulary to describe it. She could imagine his thought process now: How such a woman was allowed access to a secret, experimental, high-level

military installation? The whole thing was farcical.

Sally had followed him, not wanting him to get lost in the fast gathering gloom. They were now at the edge of the fields close to the main rise of the Tor, suddenly so steep and imposing. Even Alistair was struggling with the climb, combined as it was with a taut fury at the circumstances he'd found himself in.

'Look, just calm down,' Sally said as she swallowed back down the last of her laughter. 'Maybe we can talk to Waterman and explain. Hamilton hasn't exactly sold this accurately, has he?'

'He has not. I'm not comfortable with this particular military direction. We've seen what dabbling with the mind has done before. Meditation, chanting, all that – it's not just a laughing matter, it can be dangerous.' He shivered, not just from the cold if Sally was any judge. Memory of the Intelligence and its recent incursions into their world and their lives, their families... He pushed the shivering back down, somewhere inside himself. 'And anyway, what's this "silent minute" we'll be missing by being out here?'

Sally shrugged. Waterman had seemed most downcast when Alistair had made it clear that the evening's meditation was coming to an abrupt close. 'But you have to be here for the Minute,' he had been saying as they left, giving the word some kind of

significance beyond the usual. Jana had mentioned it too, asking Waterman in hushed, reverent tones if the meditation was going to include the “silent minute”.

‘We’ll get answers tomorrow, I’m sure,’ Sally said, her breath almost returned. ‘It’s nearly dark. We can’t go wondering around here in the pitch black. Apart from anything, I don’t like that tower. It’s creepy.’

Lethbridge-Stewart gazed up at the tower at the top of the Tor, which was only just visible in the moonlight. Sally was right, although he felt a kind of awe more than fear when he looked at it. It should have been the ordinary tall square tower of a church, but the rest of the building was gone, so it was as if the tower capped some other, invisible structure, or perhaps the Tor itself, a fusion of mankind’s tenacious insistence on building things and a quirk in the ripples that made up the landscape.

Somewhere in the town, a bell started ringing in nine o’clock.

‘This place,’ Lethbridge-Stewart breathed. ‘It’s like it goes out of its way to be dramatic.’

‘Says the man who just stormed out of a meditation, knocking over a gong as he passed,’ Sally said, threatening to laugh again.

‘That was an accident,’ he replied, looking at her

and feeling a wave of the old tenderness. ‘This trip was such a bad idea...’

Sally’s face had changed while he looked at her. Staring up at the tower on the Tor, she was squinting, as if trying to make something out. ‘I don’t want to curse things even further,’ she whispered, ‘but look.’

He followed her gaze. ‘Good grief,’ he said. ‘What is that?’

It was as if the light from the moon was becoming obscured by a cloud that wasn’t there; blackness was spreading from the tower on the top of the Tor, down the slopes, blotting out the dappled silver of moonlight on grass. The darkness was moving quickly, spreading like a viscous tar being poured over the ground from high above. The tower itself was now completely black, a dark monolith against the slightly lighter night sky.

‘It has to be some kind of shadow,’ he said, but even as he said it, he could see the moon shining just as brightly as before, no source of blackout or obscurity.

And then, just as a deep-seated panic was about to channel his body into action, he saw the darkness dissolve and the moonlight return.

‘What just happened?’ asked Sally. ‘Alistair, you did see that, didn’t you?’

‘I saw... something.’

‘And felt it too?’ she added, tentatively. ‘It felt

like...’ She trailed off, evidently not wanting to complete the sentence.

He looked at her, and she saw the old resolve return. ‘Feelings. I’ve heard enough about feelings of late,’ he said firmly. ‘I’m going to retire for the night. Thankfully I packed some whisky.’

‘But that... shadow! Alistair, you can’t just ignore that!’

‘Trick of the light most likely. Some local phenomenon. It can’t have lasted more than a minute.’ He paused, looking back at the tower one more time as it rested impassively at the top of the Tor. ‘I refuse to believe that literally everywhere we go, some kind of disaster must follow. It’s becoming ridiculous.’

With that he marched back down the pathway to the main road, Sally again hurrying to keep up in his wake, then he was inside the cottage, into his room, the door slamming firmly shut behind him.

Breakfast had been a quiet, simple affair. A plan of the day had been provided, which to Lethbridge-Stewart at least indicated some semblance of routine, and went some way towards reducing the awkwardness he felt without his uniform. He wore a plain green, round-necked jumper and dark trousers – this was as casual as he was prepared to go. He had been guaranteed that

tomorrow would be free for him to get out into the countryside, as part of the goal to recuperate and no doubt prepare for whatever next engagement was on its way, from out there somewhere, or already here... There was that tension again. And was that his hand starting to shake? After all this time? *Tension, or obsession?* he thought.

‘Find out as much as you can from Waterman,’ he had told Sally while their hosts were out of sight.

‘You too, from Jana. She knows more than she’s letting on. I don’t trust all that spiritual mother stuff.’ Sally rubbed her head gently where a bump marked the injury she had recently sustained in a car crash. ‘By the way, have you seen any of the other...?’

‘Visitors? Soldiers? Patients?’ Lethbridge-Stewart completed. ‘I passed a couple this morning. They’re down from Imber. Looked like they’d been shaken up a bit. They went through that way.’ He pointed to a heavy wooden door past the kitchen, right at the back of the house. ‘Come to think of it, what is that way? Surely that’s the gardens? Why is that window blacked out there?’ He moved towards the dark window, his senses extending to try to understand the geography of the cramped cottage with its strange mixture of homely and military paraphernalia.

‘Ah good,’ came the voice of Waterman suddenly,

his large frame clad in a bright yellow apron, remnants of breakfast smeared down it. ‘Sally, you’re with me, while Alistair, you’re with Jana. Time to find out what this is really all about.’

Jana had appeared at the entrance to one of the doorways in the hall, once again enrobed in an ornate, rainbow coloured gown, her strong features framed by fading red hair. It was impossible to tell how old she might have been exactly, although somehow she held herself as if she were much older than those around her. She was undoubtedly striking. Lethbridge-Stewart cleared his throat awkwardly. Sally couldn’t help but smile. They managed to catch each other’s eyes briefly as they went their separate ways into the labyrinthine rooms of the Sanctuary.

Waterman eased himself into one of the old, soft armchairs in the small, study-like room that Sally had been led into. She perched on the other, a waft of long-embedded incense puffing from it as she did so.

‘I sense you’re a little more open minded to our work here, Sally,’ he said, his face eager and his eyes shining. He looked like a happy man, Sally thought, with his shaven head giving him the look of some retired monk who after a life of hard work and prayer had washed up here to see out his days in comfort.

‘I’m open minded about most things,’ she replied, trying to adopt the same easy tone. *Certainly more so than Alistair*, she left unspoken.

Lethbridge-Stewart had chosen the wooden chair, while Jana eased herself back into something more like a decorated throne.

‘Do you believe in empathy, Alistair?’ she asked. ‘In having what we might call an open mind?’

He met her gaze. ‘I find that when you leave things open, anyone can walk in.’

She smiled. ‘Very true. The more open-minded you become, the greater your defences must be.’

‘Defence,’ he said. ‘Now that’s more my thing. That’s why I’m here isn’t it? New forms of defence in the light of our new... enemies?’

‘Just so,’ Jana said, her eyes still fixed on Lethbridge-Stewart. He couldn’t read her expression. Confrontational? Amused?

‘How much do you know?’ he asked. ‘How much have they given you access to? What’s the real security rating down here?’

Now she broke his stare. ‘I’m only now starting to learn of the dangers you’ve faced. Clearance is taking time, and is being held back so as not to... overwhelm.’ And now fixing him with her eyes again, staring right

into his. 'But I can help. I can give you what you seek.'

'Defence?'

'Yes, and more. Something else.' She leaned forward, still looking at him, as if searching for something. 'Something you want to hold on to, despite the odds... Contentment,' she said slowly, a word discovered. 'A contented mind.'

Lethbridge-Stewart couldn't think of a suitable reply.

'Soldiers have always suffered from their experiences on the battlefield,' Waterman said. 'The price of our defence is often the mind of the defender. If we can make them better, we have done a great service in return for theirs. If we can go one step further, we can prevent the damage being done in the first place.'

'All sounds very sensible,' Sally agreed, relaxing back into the chair and enjoying the ideas he was proposing.

As if drawing strength from her interest, he continued with greater enthusiasm. 'Further still, by harnessing the power of the mind, we can become an increasingly effective fighting force. Our minds are so fragile at the moment – the physicality of our weaponry, the noise, the visions of horror – they all batter and distort them. Minds can break into pieces. Imagine what we could achieve if we think of our

minds in the same way we think of our bodies, keeping them at the height of strength and ability.’

‘Or, one step further,’ Sally interjected, ‘and they could become more like weapons.’

Waterman tilted his head, as if nodding, but carefully so.

‘Let’s take the Silent Minute as an example,’ Jana was saying. ‘A less well known weapon of the Second World War.’

‘A weapon?’ Lethbridge-Stewart was confused. ‘It’s a codeword?’

‘Not at all. It is exactly as it sounds. It was established by the original owner of this cottage and the surrounding fields and gardens. A true warrior of light, a knight of Glastonbury.’ She spoke with reverence, and sadness. ‘He passed beyond the veil not long ago.’

Lethbridge-Stewart thought of Professor Travers, and felt the pressure rising inside him again, the same pressure that seemed to build and push upwards and outwards when he thought of the Intelligence and its victims, of Owain and Anne and so many others...

‘You may remember it as the moment of prayer at nine o’clock every night. Organised and approved at the highest levels – the King, Churchill, Roosevelt.

Heralded by the chimes of Big Ben, a minute of focus on the concept of peace.'

As she spoke, Lethbridge-Stewart did feel a memory tugging at him, as if he had always known about this moment, but never named it. He felt calmer, and let her continue uninterrupted.

'There is no power on Earth that can withstand the united cooperation on spiritual levels of men and women of goodwill everywhere. It is for this reason that the continued and widespread observance of the Silent Minute is of such vital importance in the interest of human welfare.' That's what *he* taught us. And now, with the threats facing us, facing *you*, surely we need it more than ever.'

'And who was this man of such foresight?' Lethbridge-Stewart asked, regretting almost immediately the tone of distaste he had allowed to creep in.

'Major Wellesley Tudor Pole. And it wasn't just his own foresight. A soldier, dying in the Great War, promised that when we most needed it, he and others like him would be there to lend their assistance from the other side, if we would give them a moment of focus, a Minute of perfect intent.'

'Major? He was a soldier?'

Jana looked up, her eyes shining, though with tears

or something more, Lethbridge-Stewart couldn't tell. 'A warrior,' she said simply. 'Of light.'

'The Silent Minute holds the key to the most important aspect of all this,' Waterman continued. 'Our minds are fragile because we feel we are alone. Our enemies can pick us off one by one. But if we join together, all at the same time, we become stronger. What we call the mind is invisible, intangible. It can blur and blend with others. So many others – more than you know. And their focal point is here, in this place.'

'The Tor?' Sally asked, shivering at the memory of the dark tower at the top of the unnaturally steep rise of the hill.

He nodded. 'Imagine the force behind such a joining.'

A breeze blew through the room, extinguishing a number of the candles that were supplementing the meagre light coming in from the small cottage windows. Her eyes adjusting, Sally thought for a moment that she could see shadows growing from the corners of the room.

'The Nazis recognised its power. One of their surviving officials admitted that at the highest levels of the Party, the Silent Minute was recognised as a force against

which they had no defence.'

Lethbridge-Stewart stood. 'Miss... Jana. Doesn't that rather detract from the efforts and sacrifices in the *real* world? Are you trying to tell me that some mysterious magic was at work instead?'

'Of course not,' she replied, with a new hardness edging her voice. 'The Silent Minute was part of the backdrop against which heroes, so many heroes, played their roles. But it was an important part, in ways we can't measure or define – it provided the power of belief. One Minute, every night, into which all the hopes of the country were focused and directed.'

Lethbridge-Stewart, struck by her certainty, sat back down. 'But the War is over. Surely the need for the Minute has passed.'

'We need the Minute more than ever,' Waterman was saying fervently. 'And it can change, evolve, like any living force. It can become what we need it to be.'

'And what's that?' Sally asked.

'For good, or for ill, the Minute goes on,' Jana said. 'It's growing. Changing. Responding to new thoughts, beyond those we were able to have before...'

Lethbridge-Stewart stared at her, but could not fathom her tone or meaning.

‘I need you to understand,’ she said, sounding almost desperate.

A cloud seemed to have passed over the low morning sun, and shadows were hatching all around them, lengthening and growing.

A shadow passed over Waterman’s face, and he paused, as if composing himself, gathering his enthusiasm back in and holding it down. Sally recognised the gesture, subtle, playing across the muscles of his body and face, from Alistair. *Another man trying to keep himself under control instead of saying what needs to be said.*

‘Tell me more,’ she said, leaning closer towards him. ‘Please. I want to understand why I’m really here, and what this Silent Minute can do.’

The door to the room flung open.

Lethbridge-Stewart was struck by the tableau Sally and Waterman had formed. Both perched on the edge of their chairs, leaning towards each other, as if lit by a spotlight; darkness all around the edges of the rooms, growing from the walls, creeping inwards towards them almost by the moment.

‘Lance Corporal Wright,’ he snapped, ‘with me!’

The moment broken, Sally jumped up, following

him from the darkening room and leaving Waterman staring, as if in rapture, at the empty space she left behind.

Jana sat, illuminated in the dark room, her eyes closed. 'Source of my Being,' she whispered urgently, 'help me to live in Peace, and save my home the Planet Earth. Source of my Being, Help me to live in Peace, and save my home the Planet Earth. Source of my Being...'

As they emerged from the cottage, pushing through the overgrown garden down the pathway and on to the road, Sally was looking upwards in confusion.

'It's night, Alistair,' she said, 'but it's morning. Why does it look like night?'

Lethbridge-Stewart grasped her hand and they jogged away from the cottage into the open space of the road, seeing the sky properly for the first time. 'Good grief,' he said.

The sky towards the Tor was stained, an inky blackness rising from the hill, obscuring the tower and covering the sky above them. In the opposite direction, across the town and out across the flat plains of Somerset, daylight was still visible.

'Literally,' he panted, 'everywhere we go.'

Waterman was still sitting, as if frozen in place, while Jana stood in the doorway, framed by a dim, golden light.

‘Ralph,’ she said. ‘The Minute has burst open. Something has to be done.’

Gradually he turned his head towards her. ‘Those two,’ he said, slowly. ‘They’ve brought something with them... something the Minute can’t contain.’ He stared at the edges of the thick, crawling darkness, which were reaching closer towards him. ‘Find them’ he instructed. ‘I need to go the tower.’

‘Well?’ asked Sally. ‘What do we do? Which direction? Into the light, or...?’

They looked towards the Tor, trying to make out any detail in the black fog obscuring it.

‘Neither,’ Lethbridge-Stewart hissed, dragging her towards the gateway to another cottage on the other side of the road, equally heavy with evergreen growth. ‘Look. It’s her,’ he whispered as they hid themselves. ‘She’s the key to this.’

Sally peered across to the figure of Jana, who had emerged from the cottage and was scanning the road, paying no attention to the spreading stain across the sky, as if she knew it was already there, or was not concerned by it.

‘Is she... glowing?’

‘Don’t be ridiculous!’ Lethbridge-Stewart snapped. ‘Trick of the light.’

‘It’s too late for that word, Alistair. Ridiculous is the new everyday.’

‘Shhh!’ He squeezed her hand and bent further down; Jana seemed to fix her gaze in their direction. *Surely she’s seen us?* he thought.

One advantage of the gathering darkness was the obscurity it had apparently lent them. When he was brave enough to look again, Jana was walking away from the cottage, disappearing into the shadows further up the hill towards the pathway leading to the top of the Tor.

‘I suppose that’s made our decision for us?’ Sally asked with resignation. ‘Into the dark we go?’

‘I’d say keep to the shadows,’ he said, standing, perfectly poised for action, staring into the dark. ‘But I don’t think we have much choice.’ And he moved off in the direction of the Tor.

Inside the darkness, their eyes adjusted, just about. It was as if they had stepped into a monochrome world on the edge of total blackness, with dark greys providing the only distinctive shape or outline. There was only a subtle shift in shade between the grass and

the sky, making orientation hard. But the blackest shape of all, to which they followed Jana, was the tower at the top of the Tor. She herself was paler against the shadows, with just the smallest hints of rainbow colours still showing on her gown.

While far enough behind her not to be heard, the pair had exchanged what they knew of the Silent Minute, agreeing that the apparent obsession of their hosts had to be involved somehow.

‘I don’t trust her,’ Alistair said. ‘I can’t believe Waterman is involved in all this.’

‘You didn’t see him talk about it. He was swept along with some kind of fervour. He might have told me what was going on if you hadn’t burst in.’

Alistair ignored her. They had completed the steepest stage of the climb up the Tor, and could see Jana’s faintly glowing figure approaching the tower.

‘Can you feel that?’ Sally asked.

‘I don’t know what you mean.’

‘For God’s sake, Alistair,’ she hissed, straining to keep her voice down. ‘This is why we were sent down here. I know you can feel it – that dread that accompanies... *it*. The Intelligence.’

She could just about make out his grim expression, and hear his deep, hoarse breathing, laboured. And was that his hand shaking, held by the other?

‘I don’t mean it *is* the Intelligence, just the same feeling that it seems to go with it. Like the echo of the fear it produces. The air is thick with it. Alistair, will you never let yourself go enough to admit that you’re afraid?’

‘Enough!’ he snapped, and he stopped, as if he was about to sag and fall to his knees. ‘I’ve just had *enough*. There has to be more than this constant *fighting*.’

She was about to ask which fighting he meant. The fight against the Intelligence, or whatever other menace had targeted them? Their own fighting as they tried to navigate their changing feelings for each other? His own fight, inside himself, out of sight and beyond his words?

‘See the Minute in all its glory,’ came a voice behind them. It was the familiar, deep voice of Waterman, all layers of false friendliness fallen away. ‘This can be the end of the fight, Alistair – every fight. Nothing can stand against the power of the Minute, especially now you’ve added a new ingredient. We just need to harness it. The Minute has overspilled its bonds, but once contained, it will be unstoppable.’

‘It *was* you,’ Sally accused. ‘I’ve actually done it again. I trusted you.’

‘What have you done, Colonel?’ Lethbridge-Stewart

demanded, attempting to exert military authority despite knowing that things had gone beyond that point.

‘The Minute worked as a bringer of peace against the Nazis, but only after we suffered so much.’ Waterman sounded entirely calm, rational now, approaching them through the gloom. ‘My mission here has been to harness its power and strengthen it, for use against the growing alien threat. Using the volunteers from Imber and elsewhere, I discovered that we could use the threat against itself. The horror of facing an otherworldly terror, as more and more of us are, the sheer *wrongness* and fundamental breakdown of order these threats represent – if these fears can be channeled into the Silent Minute, we can create a psychic force that will destroy anything we direct it at.’

Lethbridge-Stewart understood. He could feel his own fear, his experiences of the Intelligence and more, somehow leaking from him. His hands were shaking fully now, the barriers he had worked so hard to maintain were falling.

‘Even now, your own terror is feeding the Minute. But it is unfocused. I can teach you to control it, to store it, to save it just for that one Minute. One Minute that would end the threat.’

Sally stood, mesmerised by the proposition Waterman

was making, and by the churning darkness all around him. The tower loomed above them all, and at the edge of her perception she thought she could hear some kind of low moan emanating from it, as if it was alive... and in pain.

‘Is there some kind of force here already?’ she asked. ‘Something you’re tapping into? There must be a reason why the Minute stems from this place? Why the Sanctuary is here?’

‘There is something here,’ Waterman replied, turning to the tower, but stopped when he saw a smudge of light emerging from the archway at its base.

Lethbridge-Stewart and Sally followed his gaze, and stared as Jana moved closer to them, striding with confidence, her gown billowing around her and her hair drifting upwards as if she walked underwater.

‘There is,’ she said. ‘There always has been.’

‘I can hear it,’ Sally breathed.

‘What on Earth is it?’ Lethbridge-Stewart asked.

‘Some say it is the Earth itself,’ Jana announced, calm, articulate, as though speaking on behalf of the very landscape upon which they stood. ‘A central node of energy, a crossing point of light. It has many names, and manifests in many traditions.’

‘Does it mean us harm?’ Lethbridge-Stewart asked.

He had seen enough to be able to accept some kind of elemental consciousness, and had encountered such things before. But the darkness, the eerie, keening moan of the thing; it had to be stopped.

‘It’s neither good nor evil; it simply *is*.’

‘It’s not looking too friendly right now,’ Sally pointed out.

‘It feeds,’ Waterman explained. ‘And it becomes what it eats.’

‘In the Minute, when you decide to focus your thoughts, you can choose,’ Jana continued. ‘Good or evil. Hope or despair. Peace or punishment.’

‘What’s your role in all this?’ Lethbridge-Stewart asked.

‘A guardian, like yourself,’ she explained. ‘I’ve been aware of Waterman’s plans for some time, but needed to be sure. Your unique experience of the kind of terror that shapes the Minute in this way, fashions it into a weapon... Even he couldn’t have predicted how quickly and powerfully it would add to the power of the place.’

‘This place is mine,’ Waterman said proudly. ‘My objective is achieved, and the Earth will be safe. With my training, you can hold back your fear, Alistair, and we can deploy the Minute whenever we need to. The horrors you’ve faced – they’ve saturated you, defined

you. This is all you are now. This is just the backdrop. *You're the weapon.'*

His hands still shaking, his mind reeling, Lethbridge-Stewart fell to his knees.

Sally could hardly see him as he blended with the darkness and a low, sad moan began to escape him, melding with the background hum of the Tor itself.

'No,' she said.

Waterman and Jana turned to her.

'No,' she repeated. Not pleading, not a request. A statement. She closed her eyes for a moment; little changed, except that the outline of Jana left an imprint on her retina, visible in the dark of her own closed eyelids. She breathed, deeply.

'He's not a weapon. How dare you reduce him to that?' She didn't sound angry. She was steady, speaking slowly, calmly. 'He's a human being. All this... This is not all of him. It hasn't consumed him. Do you know why?'

She opened her eyes. Jana was smiling gently. She could see Alistair, still kneeling, but looking strangely calm. Waterman was looking with frustration at the sky, which was rippling, like a velvet curtain catching candlelight.

And Sally laughed, quietly and sadly. 'Because he's

ordinary. He's so perfectly, beautifully ordinary.'

Alistair shook his head a little, his eyes opening and the strange noise quietening and stopping.

'He likes real ale,' Sally said, looking down at him with affection. 'The froth gets caught on his moustache. He loves sausages and mash, and looks like a big kid when he knows he's going to get some. He's got one mug for his tea, and a different one for his coffee, and he won't dink one from the other. He combs his hair *before* he goes to bed. Before!'

'What is this nonsense?' Waterman said, his voice so at odds now with the quiet of the brightening hillslope.

'This is him,' Sally said, rounding on Waterman. 'Not a weapon, not just a soldier even, but a person. Do you know what? We've had enough of this *drama*. Grand plans and scary villains, casting us as what, defenders of the Earth? Us! Have you seen us? Have you *heard* us? And that's why we're here. For a *break*, from all *this!*'

Jana reached down, took Alistair's hand, and helped him to his feet. He took some deep breaths, staring with dazed bemusement at Sally.

'Look at him,' Sally said. 'Look at that excuse for a smile. While the world goes mad and the hordes of space rain down, he will still have that ridiculous smile,

seeing how mad it all is. Infuriating, brilliant, ordinary Alistair!

The tower was shining in sunlight now, vestiges of darkness shrinking back from the sky as if being pulled inside it.

‘This is how to fill the silent moments,’ Jana said, beaming. ‘Tell him,’ she added, directly to Alistair.

‘Coffee,’ he said, quietly. Then louder, ‘Tea.’ Louder still, and gently proud, ‘Sausages and mash. A nice real ale. A walk on a hillside. An ordinary day. The silent moments that keep us sane, despite the darkness. Peace of mind. Contentment.’

Only a funnel of shadow still remained, spiralling down into the tower as if being pulled, as if resisting and trying to break free.

“‘In small proportions we just beauties see; and in short measures life may perfect be.’”

They were standing on the Tor, under a surprisingly warm sun. Lethbridge-Stewart, Jana and Sally, with Waterman, sneering, furious beside them.

‘I feel quite strongly about attempts to disrespect the memories of those who fought in our Great Wars, Mr Waterman,’ Lethbridge-Stewart said, his calm command now intact and firm. ‘The Silent Minute, whatever it is, and whatever force it taps into here, will

be left alone. We'll face our treats without a weapon like that, thank you very much.'

Waterman seemed to compose himself, his face relaxing into blankness. Then without warning, he ran. His arms wheeling wildly, he raced away down the steep slope of the Tor.

Sally made to run after him, but Jana held her back. 'Let him go,' she said firmly. 'Let him return to his masters and send them your message.'

'His masters?' Lethbridge-Stewart asked as he caught the last sight of the frantic Waterman disappearing into the trees near the base of the hill. 'What do you mean?'

Jana turned, looking past them, up at the tower. She didn't reply.

There was no sign of Waterman back at the Sanctuary. The two soldiers from Imber had seemingly disappeared too. Lethbridge-Stewart, Sally and Jana stood at the strange wooden door at the back of the cottage.

'I can't tell you much,' Jana said. 'Only that myself and others suspected that Waterman's arrival tied to a corruption of the energies here. He's been channeling the terrors of various soldiers into the Tor itself – this doorway leads into chambers embedded into the

hillside. He would have used your terrors too, but you found the antidote. You embraced the everyday instead of being dominated by the horrors you've experienced.' She smiled at him 'You'll go far,' she said.

'But where's he gone?' Sally asked. 'Surely we need to track him down.'

'Your part is done, for now,' Jana replied. 'Others will take over where we've left off, and for now it will be more useful for Waterman to alert whoever he's working for that Glastonbury is off limits. Like yourselves.'

'I wonder how much Hamilton knew?' Sally pondered. 'Is that why he sent us here do you think?'

Lethbridge-Stewart said nothing, and looked restless.

'Go on then,' she said, indulgently. And to Jana, 'He needs to put his uniform back on. All this informality's taken its toll.'

'Before we go,' he said, facing Jana. 'What about the Minute? And the... creature? In the Tor. Or whatever it is.'

'The Minute will continue, in many forms, but none of them a weapon. There will be many more Silent Minutes in the future. Memorials for the two Great Wars, and for the wars still to come.' She stared, her eyes almost shining, as if she were seeing things they

could not. ‘Memorials for tragedies beyond sadness. So many more silent moments. We will have to choose what we pour into those moments. Hope, or fear. That will shape the power the Minute holds.’

‘And the Tor? Whatever it was Waterman woke up?’

‘I will be here to guard,’ she said with confidence. ‘Well, myself and my... order. And we have ideas...’

‘Care to elaborate?’ Lethbridge-Stewart asked. ‘Or do we designate it a new threat?’

Jana’s mouth twitched, as if she were holding back a grin. ‘The force responds to the energy being poured into it,’ she said. ‘You’ve seen what happens when it’s fed with fear. Imagine, if you can, thousands upon thousands of people, facing the Tor, pouring in their appreciation, their joy, their sheer pleasure at being alive. Say, once a year or so...’

‘Ridiculous,’ said Lethbridge-Stewart. ‘You’d never get that many people doing that. It would be like trying to herd cats.’

‘You might with music,’ Sally interjected. ‘Some kind of concert. Get the big bands down. There must be space in some of these fields... You could line the stage up just right, and...’

Jana was laughing now, and held her hand up. ‘Good idea,’ she said. ‘Let’s see what the future holds,

eh?’

‘Hmm,’ Lethbridge-Stewart sounded doubtful. ‘Well, I really must–’

‘I said let’s see what the future holds,’ Jana repeated, staring at him intently. ‘Yes,’ she said softly. ‘You’ll go far. So far...’ She reached out and tilted his head towards her, to look directly into his eyes. He resisted a little at first, but eventually, he yielded. ‘So, so far,’ she repeated. ‘The things you’ll see... You’ll cross a bridge of light, through darkness itself... You will defend the bridge... No... You *are* the bridge... Connecting *us* to *other*... Time dances around you, folding back and spiralling forwards, and you will stand, calm in the centre, content in the chaos, and one day you will face yourself, as you have before...’

He broke her gaze, looking away. ‘No more,’ he said, ‘thank you. I thought it was all about keeping my feet on the ground from now on. Sausage and mash and a good real ale.’

‘Oh, you’ll do that,’ she replied with certainty. ‘That’s what makes you special.’

Sally coughed at this point, and with a last look at Jana, Lethbridge-Stewart took his chance to take his leave. ‘I’ll get changed,’ he mumbled. ‘Pack. Get someone to swing by from Salisbury to pick us up. Maybe time for a pint before they get here.’ And with

that he was down the hallway, up the stairs, out of sight.

Jana was looking at the space where he had been, and Sally stood awkwardly beside her, trying to meet her gaze, as if she might get her to say such things to her too – that she might see and do just as much, be just as special, be at his side in some form or other, protecting him even if not *with* him...

Jana was now staring at her, sadly. Sally frowned, her eyes asking the questions she didn't want to say aloud. Jana shook her head, slowly. She reached out and touched her shoulder, as if in consolation. Then she opened the door to the chamber inside the Tor, and disappeared inside.

Sally waited for a moment, her heart beating hard in her ears. She walked down the hallway and back out of the cottage. She looked up into the clear, March sky, and towards the Tor, where the tower stood proudly, bridging the land to the sky, stretching from past to future, watching in silence.

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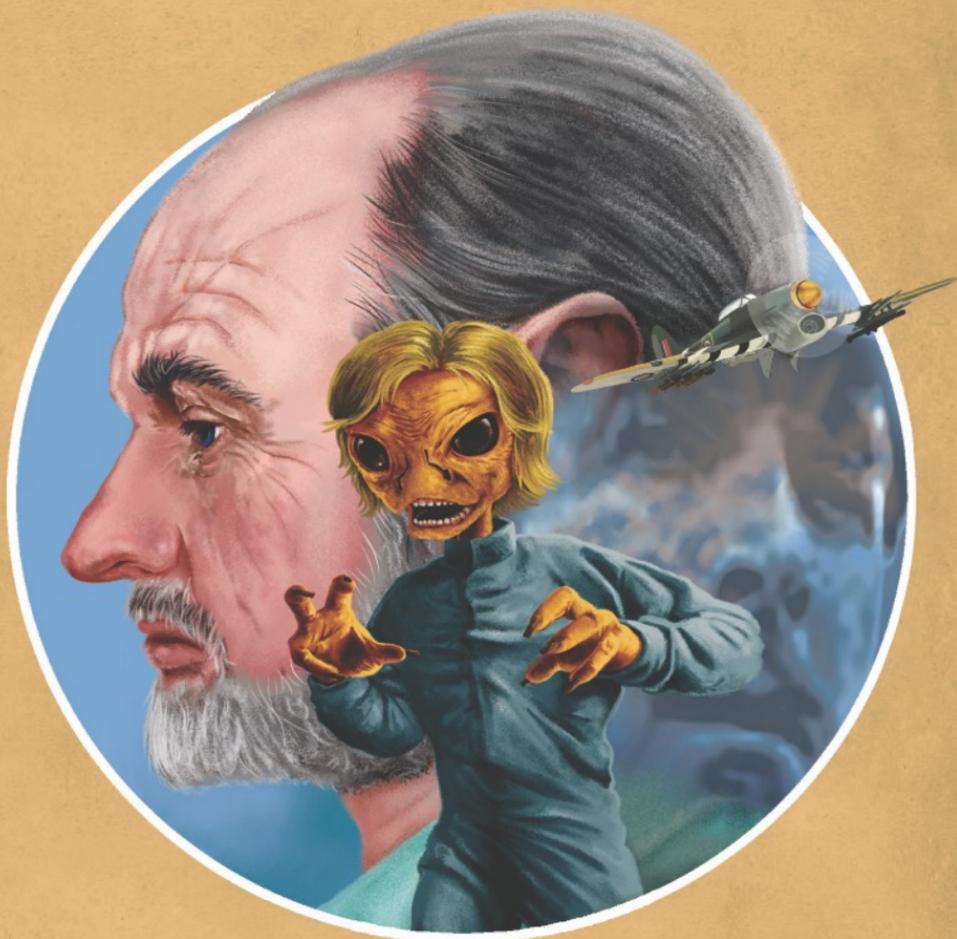
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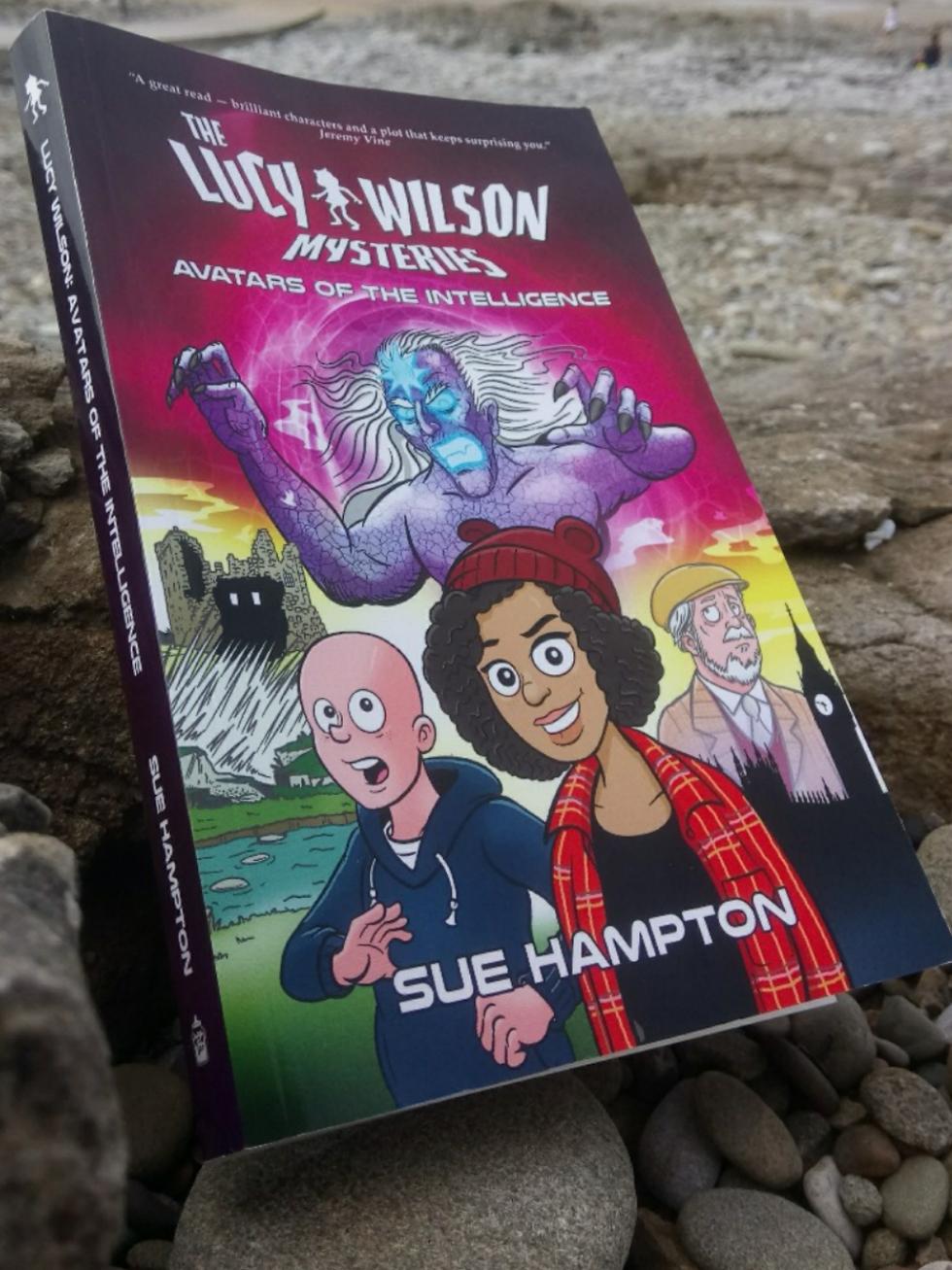
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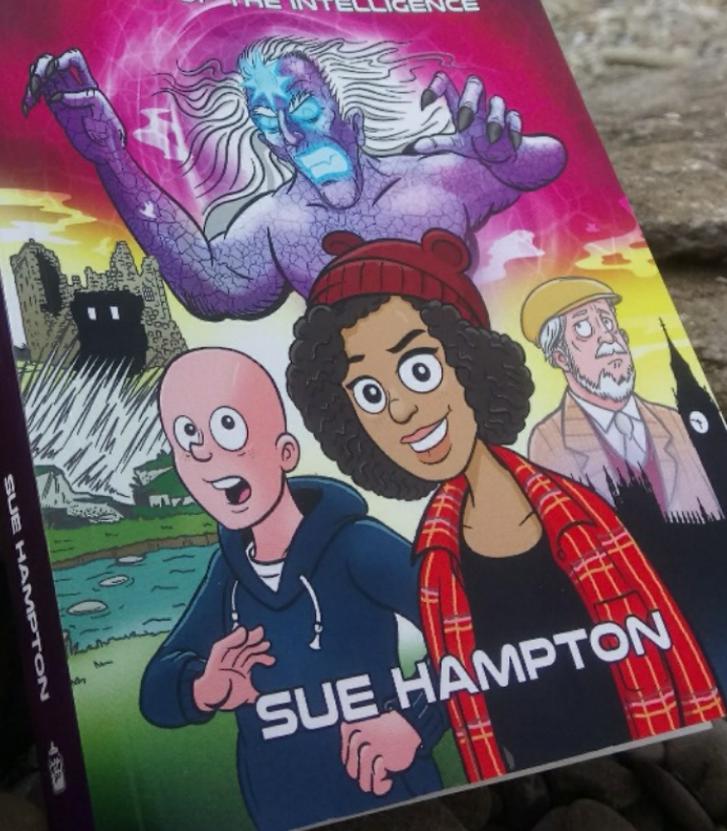
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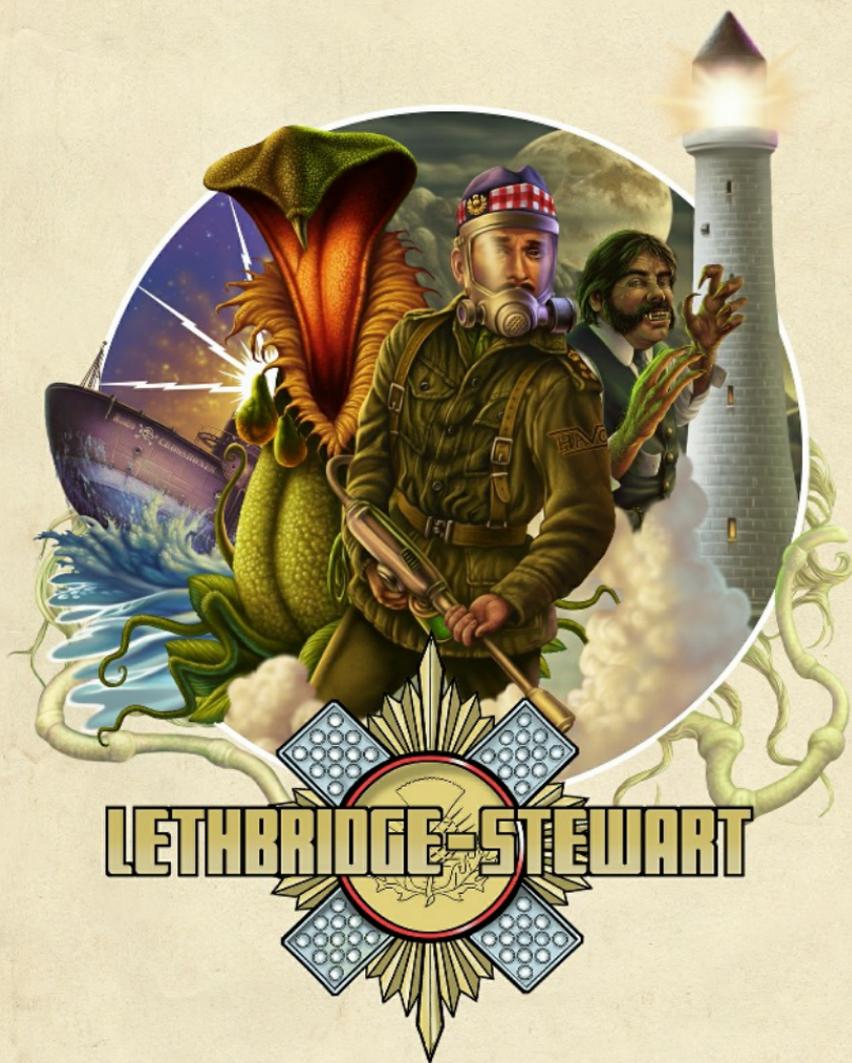


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by Sadie Miller

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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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by Jonathan Cooper

‘Nuzzink in ze world can schtop me now!’

There’s a new TV show about to hit the airwaves, but Colonel Lethbridge-Stewart won’t be tuning in. With the future of the Fifth Operational Corps in doubt he’s got enough to worry about, but a plea from an old friend soon finds Lethbridge-Stewart and Anne Travers embroiled in a plot far more fantastical than anything on the small screen.

Can charismatic star Aubrey Mondegreene really be in two places at the same time? What lengths will ailing entertainment mogul Billy Lovac go to in order to reach his audience? And is luckless journalist Harold Chorley really so desperate that he’ll buy into a story about Nazi conspiracies from a tramp wearing a tin foil hat?

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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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by Rick Cross

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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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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.

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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.

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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.

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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?

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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