

Seaton Carew

in

“Over the Hills and Far Away”

Preview of Kindle Edition 2

By Pat Cresswell

Copyright

Preview of Seaton Carew in 'Over the Hills and Far Away'
Edition 2

The first novel in the Seaton Carew Series by Pat Cresswell

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Chapter 1 – Afternoon Delight

1.1

Wednesday, 22nd March. Dorking, UK

“Rose!”

“Rose dear, I’m back!”

Hallie Westmorton struggled through the front door, her arms laden with Sainsbury’s bags as she brought in the weekly shopping, but her call to her daughter went unanswered. She pushed her way into the kitchen and rested the bags down onto the pine table that occupied the centre of the room.

“Rose?” she called again to no avail. She decided to leave putting away the shopping and look for her daughter. The lounge was empty, so was the dining room and she was about to go upstairs when she noticed her husband’s home office door was ajar. Hallie opened the door further and walked in to find Rose sitting in one of the two wing-back, leather chairs that framed the glazed, single door looking onto the garden.

“There you are! Didn’t you hear me calling Rose?”

Rose didn’t move.

“Oh no, not again,” Hallie said in a tone that mixed sympathy with an air of resignation. She crossed the room and knelt by the arm of chair.

“Rose dear,” she said softly taking her daughter’s hand in both of her own, “you have to get through this, exorcise it, talk it out and move on.”

Her words went unheard. Rose continued in a fixed stare out of the door. But she didn't see the small fish pond set into the patio or the mossy winter lawn beyond, or even the drizzly mist that hung low over Dorking and Box Hill on that late March day. Rose was in the mountains of Borovia, in the northern Balkans.

Her mind was over the hills and far away...

1.2

Wednesday, 22nd March

Hallie had left Rose to her thoughts. The consultant who was treating her daughter had warned that it could be a long, slow recovery with a strong possibility of relapses into catatonic silences like the one that Rose appeared to be suffering now. Each time the advice was the same.

'Rose needs to confront what happened to her, and what happened around her. Sexual assault, seeing people killed and betrayal compounded into a few days of a young life is a terrible psychological injury, much more difficult to treat than a physical one. Get her to talk about it, better still get someone that knows about what happened to talk her through it.'

He had said time and time again. That meant only one person, a person that had been with Rose throughout her ordeal in Borovia, someone that had once been her lover and now was a good friend, like a brother even.

Seaton Carew.

Hallie reached for the phone, hoping upon hope that Seaton would help.

1.3

Wednesday, 22nd March

“Ah, afternoon delight!” whispered Seaton as he turned on his left side and supported his head with his hand.

“Perfect,” he added looking at Jacqui’s slender, lightly tanned and completely nude body that lay next him, her chest still panting from the exertion of riding him to their mutual climax. He was in the bedroom of her Fulham flat. The room was very warm and, though still winter, the roof light above the bed showered them in pale sunlight. With the tip of his index finger he lightly traced a line down her stomach through the small triangle of short clipped black hair and on to her pussy. Before he started he knew how she would react as they frequently enjoyed each other in a ‘no strings’ arrangement. Jacqui needed to be naughty and Seaton liked good sex so they got along very well. She shuddered and quickly pulled his hand away.

“Please! Give my pussy time to recover from you!” she chided, dissolving into giggles and then embraced him, pulling his face to her right nipple. It was erect, perched with a slight upturn on her small, but shapely breast, so Seaton obliged with a gentle lick. She held his head in place, stroking his slightly long, light brown hair with her other hand.

“Seaton?” Her voice was inquisitive and tentative.

“Umm,” was the best he could manage while continuing the tongue massage of her appreciative nipple.

“At lunch you didn’t finish telling me about your parents.”

“Umm.” She was right. They had left a very nice fresh fish course to rush back to her flat and delight in each others’ bodies for an hour or two.

“You were finally getting round to telling me how your parents met? Will you finish telling me now?”

“Sure,” he said, ending the adoration of her nipple and rolling onto his back. She responded by curling up, head on his chest and hand low on his stomach teasing into his pubic hair. He thought for a moment. He was often asked about his parents by people he met as his mother, Francesca, an exceptionally attractive glamour model, publicly known as ‘Fiamma!’, and father, Don, the now deceased lead guitarist of the Jurassic’s rock group, were never an ‘item’ publicly. He had heard the story from both of them and today elected to tell his mother’s version of the story.

1.4

Mid February, 1984

It was mid February 1984 and Seaton’s mother, Francesca, known to her mostly male fan base as ‘Fiamma!’ was in Sunderland at a major publicity event. She was widely acclaimed as the “Sexiest Woman Alive” by the tabloids and certainly not shy about her sleek and womanly body. She frequently did topless and nude modelling and even socially her style of dress was highly revealing. Often the public were as aware of her pubic hair style as that of her head. She was a definite crowd puller and the event was a sell out. Other celebrities made up the rest of the bill, including Dune, the lead guitarist of “Jurassic Era” a defining rock group at the time. He had a well deserved reputation as a hell-raiser and womaniser so security had been doubled to keep out the train load of wannabe groupies desperate to be his next conquest.

‘Fiamma!’ had heard of him but they had never met before and she wondered what the Rock God would be like in the flesh. Despite the reputation she found him fascinating and charming, a little traditional even. Don, his real name, had been calm, good company and polite to the letter. Only on stage did the public image surface. He played free form guitar riffs, a medley of the great Jurassic’s anthems. The crowd went wild as he made the

guitar wail and sing. And the highly sexual 'Fiamma!' was stirred. The event ended late and the organisers had promised to get her back to London that night for a major nude shoot the next day. There was now no chance of making the flight and 'Fiamma!' was furious. Don arrived in the middle of her giving the transport manager a tongue lashing. As she paused for breath he intervened.

"I'm stuck too so don't feel picked on! But they've arranged a car to drive me down overnight. Why don't you join me?"

'Fiamma!' was about to restart but hesitated.

"You are going to London?"

"Yes, should be there by five am. Hope to get some kip in the car."

"I suppose I have no choice," she said glaring at the transport manager. He shrugged and walked away.

"OK, thank you Don, I'd be delighted."

"Great. I'll just go and choose a few groupies from the queue to keep me happy and we'll get going." He started to turn away, his long hair and brown leather waistcoat swirling out as he did so.

"You what!" shrieked 'Fiamma!', her red mane of hair shaking as she stamped towards him.

"Joke," he said quietly. "What do I need them for when I'm spending the night with the sexiest woman alive?"

"You're impossible!"

Ten minutes later they made it out of the stage door. Security was keeping the stragglers of the groupie army at bay. The car was a top end Mercedes, the driver holding the rear door for them. In the brief time from building to car they both noticed how cold it was and once inside brushed a few snowflakes from their coats. The driver got in and greeted them. His name was Mike.

"I'm sorry to say the weather does not look good. There's a major snow storm coming in off the Atlantic and heading East," said Mike. "I've been advised to stay with the coast road as far as Middlesbrough before cutting inland to the A1. The snow inland is bad this far north. But hopefully we'll be OK after that."

“Whatever,” replied Don, settling into the large, individually shaped back seats.

On the A19, south of Easington the snow was falling heavily and progress was slow, but in the warmth of the back Dune and ‘Fiamma!’ chatted about their lives, the demands of adoring fans and ignored the conditions outside. At Sheraton a police car, lights glaring and blues flashing was across the road. The police told Mike that an accident had blocked the A19 and he should divert along A179 to Hartlepool and then on to Stockton. Mike thanked them and headed off into the thickening snow.

“Hartlepool, Stockton,” ‘Fiamma!’ said, “I used hear them on the football results when my dad checked his coupon on a Saturday evening. Now I’m there! That’s what I call success!”

Don laughed in reply.

With the road signs rapidly becoming coated in snow, Mike missed a turn on the A179 and ended up on the A178. Then the blizzard really hit and it was a white out. With great skill he guided the car towards some lights. Every metre was treacherous, the car sliding from side to side. Just past the sign welcoming them to the town of Seaton Carew he slid to a halt outside a large house that had a few lights on.

“I’ll go see if they can help us,” he said as he got out, pulling a heavy coat on immediately.

“Doesn’t look good for getting to London,” said Dune.

“Doesn’t does it and I need to be there for tomorrow, it’s a big shoot, Pet of the Month no less,” replied ‘Fiamma!’, curling onto her seat although the car was perfectly warm. Mike returned and dived into the car.

“This is how it is,” he said frankly. “There may be a hotel still open about 2 miles further on. As it’s winter most are closed up, including this one, The Coronation Guest House.” He tapped the car window to indicate the house he had just come from. “I seriously don’t think we can make it much further and getting stuck

in the car will not be pleasant. They're refurbishing here but have one room spare and a sofa. That's it. I really do advise we take it."

"No chance of going on," asked 'Fiamma!', thinking of her lucrative modelling engagement in London. Mike started to answer, but Don cut in. "He's the expert, and I always listen to the expert. I don't always do what they say, but on this occasion I think we should."

They struggled into their coats while still in the car, got out and slipped and stumbled up to the guest house. It was a faded four storey, square looking building, with steps leading up to a columned porch. The owner was John and he greeted them warmly. He could not stop staring at 'Fiamma!', even now, tired and late at night she looked stunning, her deep red hair tumbling to her slender waist in a mass of loose curls. She lacked the pale skin colour of many redheads and she positively glowed with a light tan. John showed them the one and only bedroom that was inhabitable. It was a small double, with a dressing table and a wardrobe in dark wooden veneer and a fan heater that whirred in the corner trying to chase the cold away.

"Problem," said Dune.

"What do you mean?"

"I have to have a bed."

"Gallant," mocked 'Fiamma!'.

"No sorry, I have a bad back. If I sleep on that sofa downstairs it will be weeks until I can move again."

He did look apologetic 'Fiamma!' thought.

"A Rock God with a bad back! How do you manage all those groupies?" 'Fiamma!' was referring to the endless newspaper reports of his sexual adventures in oversized beds, pools and Jacuzzis.

"Girls on top," he ventured in reply with a sheepish grin.

"Oh. Thanks John, this is very kind of you. I think we'll sort out our sleeping arrangements and not keep you up any longer. Thank you so much."

“No problem. People need to pull together in weather like this,” said John and started his way down stairs. ‘Fiamma!’ pushed the door shut and started to take off her coat.

“Left side or right?” she asked Dune.

“I was hoping for the underneath!”

Seaton’s mother had told him she was secretly delighted with having to sleep with Dune, she liked her men often and varied and this one had all the charisma she desired. Not that in her fuller accounts there was much sleep. The ‘Sexiest Woman’ tag was certainly not all hype, she had a strong sexual drive and her bedpost was well notched. Seaton chose not to recount the litany of positions his mother had retold on several occasions, but cut to the end.

“And there you have it,” he said, stroking Jacqui’s long, jet black hair as he had done throughout the story. “One night, one Rock God, the sexiest woman in the world, and bingo, me – Seaton Carew!”

“Must have been a strange childhood. They both looked after you though, didn’t they?”

“Oh yes. My father accepted I was his, in fact he was delighted for the world to know he fathered the “ Sexiest Woman Alive”’s only child. And he did, in his own way look after me until he was killed. My mother never wanted to marry so never pursued that path, she was happy to let Don carry on rocking. She brought me up mainly, though Don did visit when he could, and a lot more frequently as I grew into my teens. My mother earned well and as she was a shrewd investor. I have to say we wanted for nothing.”

Seaton looked over to the bedside cabinet. He saw two things. A picture of Jacqui and her husband standing arm in arm in front of some building, and the clock. It was coming close to four p.m.

“What time is your husband back?”

“Usually just after four,” Jacqui answered without much interest.

“Seen the time?”

“God! You’ve got to go!”

1.5

Wednesday, 22nd March

Seaton went down the stairs and out into the street. He took a deep breath and looked around, glad not to see Jacqui’s husband anywhere near. After the close warmth of Jacqui’s bedroom it felt chilly and he pulled his jacket closer around him. The road was like a lot of Fulham; Victorian red brick, terraced houses, many converted into flats so both sides of the road were full with parked cars. He walked down to the Kings Road, turned and headed towards the Edith Grove junction. As he was just inside the Congestion Charging zone the road was relatively quiet for London. He was just considering finding a cab and going to a wine bar when his phone chirped. Taking it from his jacket pocket he did not recognise the landline number but decided to answer in any case.

“Seaton?”

“Yes,” he replied thinking the voice sounded familiar.

“It’s Hallie Westmorton, Rose’s mother.”

“Ah yes, I thought I recognised the voice. How are you?”

“I’m fine Seaton, it’s Rose I’m calling about.”

Aware that Rose had suffered badly since their return from Borovia the previous Autumn, Seaton was cautious.

“Is she OK?”

“No not really. I think she’s having a relapse. She just sits there, staring at nothing.”

“Oh dear.”

“Seaton I’m going to ask you a big favour. A huge favour really. Her consultant says she needs someone to walk her through what

happened, every detail. To exorcise the memory he calls it. It's really urgent. She needs your help desperately."

"Umm."

"Well I was wondering if you could help us do that. I know you are busy and have a life of your own to lead, and you and Rose are not, er, together, but I really can't think of anybody else. It really ..."

"Of course I'll help Hallie!" He held the phone with his chin and shoulder while he looked at his watch.

"I need to go pick up my car, but I guess I can make Dorking by six, perhaps a little earlier. Will that be OK?"

"Seaton you are a saint, thank you so much! I'll have tea waiting for you. Thank you again."

Seaton was not sure he qualified as a saint, even with Rose. They had some torrid nights when they went out together at University. But that was all in the past and even before the events in Borovia, Seaton and Rose were more like brother and sister, even so he was more than happy to help all he could.

It was just gone five thirty when Hallie showed Seaton into the study where Rose was still sitting silently. It was nearly dark outside and the pedestal light next to the chair Rose was sitting in was on. She seemed not to even notice they had come in.

"Seaton's come to visit you Rose," announced Hallie in a slightly raised voice, as if trying to break through to Rose.

"That's nice of him isn't it," she added when there was not even a glimmer of a response.

"Oh," said Seaton and whispered to Hallie, "Let's just try the two of us, alone for a while." Hallie agreed and quietly left the room, closing the door behind her.

Seaton sat at the end of the two seater sofa next to the chair that Rose was curled into. She was barefoot, with her legs tucked under her. Her signature blonde hair was growing back and now hung just below her shoulder. As always it looked shiny and well kept. She was wearing jeans with a cardigan over a T shirt top. But Seaton could see the pain in her eyes. She finally looked towards

him as he sat down. Her eyes were moist as if she was about to cry. He reached out and rested his hand on her forearm.

“Rose, remember that morning in Tilany, when I was staying with you and Drew in that little garret flat? When the tanks first appeared?” She looked up and turned her head towards him and for the first time in his visit he felt they were communicating.

Chapter 2 – Out of Tilany

2.1

Sunday, 24th September, the Year Before. Tilany, Borovia.

Something had stirred Seaton from a deep sleep and he slowly came awake. It was Sunday morning and it was bright and sunny. He was wrapped in a duvet on the sofa in the lounge. The room was light, too bright for his eyes, and although it was late September it was still unusually warm for Tilany, the capital of Borovia. Last night the three of them, Rose, Drew and he, had eaten outside a small bistro with a large group of their friends from the University. It had been a great evening with far too much wine and beer. Or it felt that way now to Seaton. He lay still and listened for what had woken him, but there was only the cooing chirp of a cock pigeon on the window ledge pursuing a hen that seemed uninterested. He propped himself up on one arm and looked around.

He was in Rose and Drew's top floor, garret style flat in the centre of Tilany. Over a year ago Rose had decided to go and study in the small state that had emerged from the collapse of Yugoslavia. Her father had served in the UK diplomatic team in Yugoslavia many years before and always spoke of this area as being especially good, with old town centres, varied countryside and friendly people. She was about to start her second year and based on their near brother and sister relationship from University days in the UK, he had been delighted to accept her invite to come stay for a week or so before her studies began again. Borovia had been set up as a separate state fairly early in the breakup of Yugoslavia, and like neighbouring Slovenia had a painless 'birth' compared with its siblings to the south. It had an 'old European' look with a vibrant and young culture, where arts came to the fore, bistros, restaurants and bars thrived, and new business bloomed. A small, land locked state,

with Slovenia to the west, Austria to the north, Hungary to the east and Croatia to the south, it was on the verge of joining the EU.

Seaton slipped out of the duvet, pulled on his jeans and did up the belt. Feeling decently dressed he walked towards the large garret style window looking out of the front of the building. To his left the tall, faded blue double doors to the bedroom were slightly ajar and a quick glance told him Rose was still fast asleep next to her lover, Drew Farrell. She had met Drew during her first year of study in Tilany. He was an American, son of the CEO of Westerland Industries, a massive Dallas based group. Money was certainly not a problem to Drew and he did like to make that point. When Seaton had first met the tall American something worried him and he was still not sure if it was a little hint of jealousy over Rose. Seaton and Rose's short, but torrid, time together had finished some four years before. It ended in a great argument when Seaton had strayed at a rather full on party. But after that they had built a close friendship in which sex had played no role and they had grown to be close friends. He took another glance and saw her mane of blonde hair was sprayed across the pillow. She looked peaceful in her slumbers and Seaton had to admit she seemed happy with Drew. As Drew was with her, his 'English Rose' as he often called her. Then he heard it.

A distant metallic chirp, chirp, chirp ...

Before he could concentrate on it, it was gone and a sleepy, early Sunday silence returned to the room. He pulled the net curtain open and looked out. All seemed quiet and deserted. He could easily have been looking across Paris roof tops. The buildings all around the University quarter were mid 1800s and Parisian architecture had obviously been the style to copy. On both sides of every street in view were buildings four or five storeys high, with cream coloured rendering and blue-grey slate, garretted roofs. Stretching, he walked to the bathroom for a pee. That done he checked his face in the mirror. He did look as he felt, rough. He

tried dragging his fingers through his tussled light brown hair, worn slightly long over his ears, but it had little real effect. His mind drifted to the evening before. Talking, arguing, shouting, singing, it had reminded him of some of the nights he had spent with his hell-raising father, Don, or Dune as his was known on stage, during his late teens. Wild.

“Hi,” a faint and slightly hoarse voice greeted him as came out of the bathroom. Rose was standing, well more leaning, against the door from the bedroom. Her hair was bedraggled and her eyes looked moist with dark rims. She almost had Drew’s shirt on, but it was unbuttoned and a lot of her feminine charms were visible.

“Pussy alert!” said Seaton with a little laugh.

“You’ve seen it all before,” was the rather growled answer and Rose pulled the shirt closed.

“How are you feeling?” he asked.

“Felt better. That red wine is always brain damage.”

“Drew awake?”

“Doubt we’ll see him till gone midday.”

And there it was again, chirp, chirp, chirp.

“Shush!” Seaton said. “Did you hear that?”

“What?”

“That sound like a ...” Seaton’s voice faded as he had still not identified the sound yet. But he knew it. He’d heard it before.

“Did you enjoy last night? We always have a great sess there, it’s really my favourite place for an evening in Tilany,” asked Rose.

“Absolutely great. That Yanik was so funny talking about the smuggled copies of Dire Straits!”

Rose was starting to look more awake and continued the conversation. “I just can’t believe what it must have been like here under the Communists. Not able to listen to music like that. Just getting one boot leg cassette and then copying it over and over again.”

“How old is Yanik? He seems a bit past it to be student.”

“We don’t know for sure. Fifty, probably more. He says he wasn’t able to go to college when he was young, but he’s determined to make up for it now. You know a lot of the girls fancy him? I mean really, really fancy him!”

“Charms of the mature man!” replied Seaton, “My dad was a master at that!”

Chirp, chirp, chirp, louder, closer

Rose continued to review last night, but Seaton drifted to the window. He looked down the street at the front of the building, The Avenue of Heroes, to see nothing but a dog running quickly across the street.

“I need a pee,” Rose’s voice cut into his empty thoughts and she padded off towards the bathroom. Seaton could not help but look at her arse and its sexy swing as she went. Lucky guy that Drew he thought to himself and then turned to look out of the other window towards the University.

Chirp, chirp, chirp

He got it this time, at the same time as he saw it. Tracked vehicles. Military vehicles. He had heard it when his Dad organised a mad day’s tank driving. They had ploughed through mud, walls, buildings and finally his dad had driven the tank over his agent’s new 7 series BMW! He was furious, but Don had said he’d paid for it ten times over so he was entitled to crush it. But that’s where he’d heard that noise. And there was one. A tank, going down the Avenue of Learning where it crossed “Heroes”. Clear as day.

“Rose! Quick! Look at this!”

Rose emerged from the bathroom and joined him, holding his arm, pressing herself against him.

“There are tanks out there,” Seaton said.

“Tanks?”

“Yes tanks. Driving across the Avenue. Is there a parade or something today?”

“Not that I know of.”

As they looked the sound returned and another tank appeared. There were about six soldiers sitting on the front of it and on the turret. Instead of crossing Heroes like the other one, it stopped, slewed round on its tracks and moved into the Avenue, a large plume of black smoke bursting from the exhaust as it moved away from the turn. There it stopped and the soldiers reluctantly dismounted.

“Maybe there’s some sort of independence celebration, it’s about the right time of year if I remember from reading the guide book you got me,” said Seaton.

“Joe didn’t say anything last night. He’s really up with this stuff”

“Put the radio on,” suggested Seaton and Rose reached across the sofa and switched the radio on. The sight of Rose stretching across the sofa almost made Seaton forget about tanks and he really started to question the platonic relationship he had with her. But it was the music on the radio that stopped him. For all of his short stay the radio was always tuned to an English speaking pop and rock station. Sombre classical music filled the room.

Rose looked over her shoulder and frowned. “What’s this crap?”

Seaton returned to the window. The soldiers now had built a barricade of wooden crosses and barb wire across the Avenue either side of the tank.

“Rose. I think there’s trouble,” he said in a slow, serious tone.

They stared at each other in silence for a few seconds. The visual connection was broken by the crackle of small arms fire nearby.

2.2

Sunday, 24th September

“Jesus!” exclaimed Seaton and rushed to the window. Rose was alongside him in a moment. They looked out the windows, down both avenues, peering to see through the plane trees. There was more gunfire. Rose fetched her mobile from her handbag in the bedroom. A speed dial button rang the phone of George and Maria, their closest Borovian friends. Maria answered.

“Maria? It’s Rose. What’s going on?” She spoke in fluent Borovian.

There was silence while Maria replied.

“What! Maria says it’s a coup!” She shouted to Seaton who was still peering out of the window. Another silence.

“Maria, don’t worry. The Government is strong and backed by the EU. The coup will fail.” But Rose’s voice did not sound confident at all.

“OK”

“We’ll call later.”

Rose closed the call.

“They’re going down to The Square,” Rose relayed to Seaton. She tossed the mobile onto the sofa. From outside came the sound of firing again, this time escalating into the thump of heavier arms fire.

“I’m waking Drew,” stated Rose and she went into the bedroom.

Rose and Drew emerged through the double doors many minutes later. Rose had dressed in jeans and a cotton top. Drew had managed a t-shirt but still only had his boxers on below the waist.

“What the fuck is all this?” asked Drew, rubbing his eyes and then trying to flatten his hair. He was tall, a tad over six feet, with a large frame that needed to fill out.

“Come and look,” Seaton said and stepped back from the window, holding the net curtain away so Drew could look at the tank.

“Fuck! That does not look good.”

“Guess this isn’t normal for Tilany then?” asked Seaton.

“We haven’t seen even a glimpse of the military for all the time we’ve been here, except the guard around the President’s Palace and the Congress building,” replied Drew.

Then the radio ceased playing the same classical music over and over again and a voice instructed them in Borovian to wait for an announcement. Rose and Drew sat stock still on the sofa, holding hands and waiting while Seaton kept a watch on the street below. When the announcement came it was in Borovian and Rose quickly translated for the other two.

“This is Leonid Bratishic, Commander in Chief of the Borovian Armed Forces.”

Seaton could tell the speaker had a heavy and authoritative tone on the radio.

“As of eight o’ clock today, I have assumed control of Borovia at the special request of Prime Minister Flanic. The Prime Minister fears that Borovia is out of control of its government and being infiltrated by American and European factions. He blames the liberal approach of President Illanovich for the situation and has called on the armed forces to remove Illanovich from power with whatever means necessary before Borovia joins the EU and all is lost. The armed forces have now secured the government and university quarters and have surrounded the Presidential palace. I am calling on President Illanovich to surrender to my forces or face the consequences.”

The voice paused and Rose and Drew stared at each other in disbelief. Rose bit her bottom lip.

“To ensure the safety of the civilian population at this time I am ordering a strict curfew within Tilany. From eleven a.m. this morning all civilians must stay indoors until further notice. Violators will be considered as enemies of Borovia and will be shot on sight. Listen to the radio for further instructions. Please

support the armed forces in saving Borovia!" The Borovian national anthem closed the broadcast and the classical music returned.

2.3

Sunday, 24th September

Two hours later Rose called George and Maria again. George answered, sounding shocked and frightened. Seaton pictured him in his maroon velvet cap, like a peaked bun on his head, apparently his trademark and worn whatever the weather or occasion.

"Have you heard of the curfew?" Rose asked.

"Yes, and they are enforcing it!" George's voice wavered.

"What?"

"We were in The Square when the tanks and troop carriers arrived. They announced the curfew with loud hailers. Everybody jeered and stood their ground. Then at 11 o' clock they started shooting in the air. We left, but the people across the hall say troops shot some people who carried on shouting in protest."

"Shot them?"

"Machine gunned them from the tanks they said!"

Rose brought her hand to her mouth in concern.

"Rose we're going back to old days!"

"It won't work. The people have freedom. They won't let it go now!" Rose was shaking her head, almost crying. Drew took the phone from her and listened to George.

"Don't worry George, we're staying in."

"course I'll look after Rose. Call you later."

By early evening the curfew was still in place. Seaton was restless, stalking around, checking the window, while Drew may as well have been on the beach at Miami. He was lounging on the sofa, iPod in his ears and just about managing to stare at the ceiling. Rose was

fiddling with things, tidying stacks of books, moving ornaments around. She picked her mobile up, disconnected the charger and tried to call George again. As earlier there was no dial tone, the mobile system was dead. Later that evening the radio broadcast told them that President Illanovich had committed suicide, leaving a note apologising to the people of Borovia for his wrong doings. Bratishic was named as President and pledged to ensure the safety and prosperity of Borovians, and to drastically cut foreign influences in the country.

2.4

Tuesday, 26th September

The curfew lasted until Tuesday. The radio gave little news. On several occasions they had heard firing and on Monday night a column of tanks had stopped in the Avenue of Heroes below their flat, the rumbling engines keeping them awake until around two am when suddenly they moved off towards the Commercial district. The radio announced just a two hour relaxation of the curfew for people to get essential supplies and ordered shop keepers to open by 1400 hrs.

Rose, Drew and Seaton were ready by the front door of their block before two. Most of the other residents were there as well and talk was of shootings and a return to the old days. More than a few welcomed that, talking of crime, drugs and a wasting generation. The three of them kept quiet, just exchanging glances as the comments flew. Rose gave some whispered translations. A few minutes before two the conversation moved to the 'foreigners', the European and American companies taking over Borovian industry. While Drew could just pass for a Borovian maybe with an American style of dress, Rose's blonde mane and Seaton's light brown hair marked them as foreigners. There were no blonde Borovians, only

black haired ones. As the tones became angrier Rose moved close to Drew. He was much taller and she pressed her head against his chest, looking towards Seaton and biting her bottom lip out of fear. The end of curfew siren sounded cutting the conversation short as the group flooded onto the street.

They queued for some basic supplies like bread, cereals, local sausages, cheese and even some meat pies of unknown content. That took about forty-five minutes and they decided to try and contact their friends. The mobile phones were still not working, so they tried a public phone in a café and called George, but there was no answer. Rose suggested they were probably getting their supplies as well. The whole city had an edgy, nervous feeling about it. People were rushing, pushing their way through, and unlike normal times, not a word of apology was offered.

“We’ve got time to get to the Manhattan,” she said, referring to a bar near The Square where the group often met up. Drew looked at his watch.

“Yea takes about fifteen minutes, so we can be there and back easy.”

“I’m game,” added Seaton and they set off at a brisk pace.

The good weekend weather had broken and low cloud covered Tilany with a hint of rain every now and again. The Café Manhattan occupied the right angle corner of a triangular courtyard just off the main Square. Drew liked this place from the start as it sold American Budweiser beer, his favourite. As they entered the courtyard they were relieved to see it was open, better still George, complete with maroon cap, and Maria were there, drinking a beer. They greeted each other with hugs and kisses as though they had been apart for months. It felt like that. Tilany now looked like a strange and unwelcoming place, a massive change in just a few days.

Drew stood up to attract the waiter. It was the owner’s son and he knew him well by sight.

“Two crowns and a Bud, please,” he called in English. The waiter looked upset and turned quickly away. The five continued to swap stories of what they had seen and heard, the tanks and troops, the direction of gunfire. The waiter returned with the beers. The bottle placed in front of Drew had had the label hurriedly scratched off. Although this café had been good in the past, other places often tried to pass off cheap local beer as imported by saying the label had fallen off. Drew was about to complain, but before he could call the waiter back, Rose firmly took hold of his arm.

“Look” she said pointing up to the front of café.

The others turned to see. The café name was gone.

The time flew by and soon there were only ten minutes to go until the return of the curfew.

“You better go,” said George to them. “Remember they are strict on this curfew”

“Yeah, OK. But next break we’ll meet you here?” suggested Drew.

“Sure,” said Maria and they left quickly. Within seconds the waiter cleared the bottles off the table.

They set a brisk pace back to the flat. Rose locked arms with Drew and Seaton kept station to the other side of her. Army trucks were cruising the streets with loud hailers ordering people back into their houses. Each truck had a squad of obviously armed soldiers in the back. They were about a kilometre, two blocks away from their flat when the final siren sounded. They rounded a corner onto the Avenue of Heroes. People were running in all direction, rushing to get off the streets. The loud hailers were now giving threats of shooting. A man running wildly crashed into Drew and Rose sending Rose sprawling and the shopping spilled on the pavement. He regained his feet and dashed off with no more than a wild look in his eyes. Drew helped Rose up and Seaton tried to gather their shopping together. Still people ran past. Then another truck came roaring up the Avenue. As it came level with them, one soldier started firing short bursts into the air. People dashed for cover and

Drew pulled Rose away from the shopping and into the shelter of a doorway. Seaton took what he could and joined them. The truck carried on up the Avenue, the ejected bullet cases rolling across the road into the gutter.

“Let’s go! Run!”

Drew led, Rose fell in behind him and Seaton followed as they sprinted towards their block, items of shopping falling unheeded as they went. The road had never seemed so long and soon all were open mouthed gasping for the air they needed.

As they passed the last side street there was loud shouting from ahead. Beyond the Learning and Heroes’ intersection a group of people were still standing in the road. Two trucks were stopped near the front entrance to their block and were confronting the group. As they ran, the troops deployed from the trucks, all but two rounded to the front and formed a crouched line, rifles pointed ahead of them. The other two took a similar stance behind the trucks, facing down Heroes. There was no warning. They heard the clatter of gunfire, saw the mist like smoke burst around soldiers, bullet cases flying out. The screams could be heard above the fire. The two soldiers behind the trucks aimed their rifles as Drew slid to a halt, Rose and Seaton pushing into him.

“Back! Back!” he screamed. They needed no more encouragement, turned and ran upright as fast as their legs could carry them. The remaining shopping was discarded. A line of flashes sparked off the building to their left, shards of stone and dust bursting off. They were metres away from the side street when Drew launched himself at Rose taking her down in a rugby tackle and rolling the two of them into the shelter of the side street. Seaton just made the swerve and dived to safety as bullets slammed into the brick work at chest height. Another burst of fire raked the corner of the building opposite to them.

Rose was winded, her elbow and forehead grazed, but otherwise all three were amazingly unharmed. They looked at each other and

the bullet marks only metres from them. Seaton choked back the fear, and he could see fear in the eyes of the other two.

"Where now?" he snapped.

"Fuck knows," Drew replied and he started creeping back towards the corner, but Rose pulled him back.

"The mews," she hissed, "we can get in the back way."

Drew nodded and he headed off into a narrow cobbled street that ran into the middle of the block, where they parked their untrustworthy Trabant, affectionately known as Gurtrude. Rose and Seaton followed.

Minutes later they were in the apartment. Outside the firing and screaming had stopped, replaced by barked orders. Standing to the side of the window they peered carefully up Heroes. The crowd had gone and soldiers were working their way around a number of bodies lying on the road. They treated them roughly, turning them with their feet, rifles pointed at the heads.

"I can't look," said Rose, breaking into a sob.

Neither Drew nor Seaton could look either and they turned into the room, backs sliding down the wall into a squat position. Without looking at Rose, Drew said quietly, "You know my English Rose, we're in the shit."

2.5

Friday, 29th September

Over the next few days the two until four lifting of the curfew became regular. The radio continued to carry announcements that the rules were necessary to keep the civilian population safe without saying what from. They met with Jeorge and Maria every day and soon some of the others in their group turned up as well. By Friday the constraints were beginning to take on a normality. Radio, TV and papers carried only external news and obviously

made up articles on how President Bratishic was saving Borovia. None of the media mentioned the shootings outside Drew and Rose's apartment. Others in the group had seen or heard of similar situations and now everybody made certain they were in doors by the end of curfew. Friday was no different and the group split up around 3.35 so everybody could get back.

The time in the apartment dragged. The radio was dire and for the first time since coming to Borovia Rose and Drew missed not having a TV. Several times they talked through the problem of having no contact with their families.

"If you only have a mobile and the mobile network is switched off what can you do?" stated Rose. "The landlines only let you call within Borovia."

"We should get to the embassy," said Drew.

"Would we have time?" asked Seaton.

"It's in the commercial quarter now," replied Drew. "That's a good thirty to forty-five minutes walk, so we can get there but we won't have much time there to do anything."

"What about the British embassy? Do you know where it is Rose?"

"It used to be just by the Uni, but it moved as well. I haven't been to the new one. We could look it up."

She searched through some books and papers and found a tourist guide she had got for Seaton.

"There it is," she said pointing at the map in the centre pages.

"That's just the other side of The Square from the bar we go to," said Seaton, who had always had a good sense of direction. Drew joined them.

"Yea it is. But no use to me." It was a statement of fact.

"But if we can get a message to my parents they can pass it on to yours," suggested Rose.

"Guess so. Mind you I wouldn't be surprised to see my old man driving his own tanks down that road if we don't get in contact soon. He must be well pissed by now!"

Before they could finalise any plans there was an urgent knock at the door.

“Who the fuck is that?” asked Drew as he walked to the hall. It was well into the curfew hours.

“Be careful Drew.”

“Don’t worry, it’s probably a neighbour, run short of something.”

It wasn’t. George pushed past him into the apartment.

“George!” exclaimed Rose as he came into the sitting room. “Are you mad?”

“I might be, but I had to come.” He took off his cap and seemed to be trying to wring it dry with both hands.

“You’re not going back tonight. You’ll stay here,” commanded Drew.

“How did you get here?” asked Rose.

“It wasn’t bad. Remember this is my city. I grew up here, I know all the back paths and alleys,” George said dismissively of the great risk he had just taken. “It’s the news. It’s bad for you. As we can’t phone I had to come.”

All three stared at him.

George continued. “A friend of ours has a good radio and picked up BBC World. They’re trying to jam it, but signal was stronger today. The European Union is preparing to take action against Borovia unless they restore the elected government. America is backing them. The broadcast talked about not repeating the mistakes of Kosovo and acting immediately.”

George paused for breath. Rose jumped in.

“That’s great! That should bring an end to this. They can’t stand against that sort of pressure.”

George regained his breath.

“It’s not so good. That’s why I came. They are rounding up all foreign nationals, well Americans and Europeans at least, to be used as hostages. A human shield against bombing.”

“What!” Drew half shouted.

"It's already started. They're pulling in all the managers of companies like BP, Vodafone, and Xerox. I saw a raid on the way here."

"Oh no!" said Rose quietly.

"You have got to get out. We'll do all we can."

"How can we do that?" Drew started to look really frightened.

"I've got other news that might help. The curfew is only in Tilany. The rest of the country seems to be OK. And you've noticed there's not much traffic when the curfew's lifted?"

"Yea," Drew nodded.

"I think you can get out of Tilany within the two hours if you use your car."

"Gertrude?" exclaimed Rose.

"Yes, Gertrude."

"They must have checkpoints, or everybody would be gone by now," remarked Drew.

"They do, mainly at the perimeter of the city," responded George,

"But in The Hills area it seems you could make it."

"The Hills?" queried Seaton.

Drew and Rose knew The Hills area was where the forest to the north of Tilany touched the suburbs. It was a maze of rough tracks that they had often walked. They described it to Seaton.

"To make it better, Andre lives out that way. You get there one day and then the next day, go on into the forest. You'll be long gone by the time the curfew is on again."

The idea started to gel and Drew, Rose, Seaton and George started to plan. Maps of Tilany and the rest of Borovia were spread on the floor. After the helplessness of the last few days it felt good to be doing something. By eleven pm they had a plan. Getting out of Tilany was good, but didn't solve the problem as they couldn't arrange anywhere safe to stay elsewhere in Borovia. If they went, they needed to go all the way to the border and across it. The northwest border with Austria seemed best. It was mountainous terrain with two ranges of mountains separated by a long and deep

lake. In June that year, after the end of the semester, Drew and Rose had spent a month hiking around the area so they had a good idea of what the terrain was like. They both loved walking and camping and were well equipped with boots, weatherproof clothes and full camping gear, including tents. Luckily they had told Seaton to bring walking gear with him in case they wanted to see some of the countryside. So far it had stayed packed, but it now looked as if it was going to get used.

Gertrude, their Trabant, called that because the starter made a mooring sound, should get them over the first range of mountains, the Silenca Range, on a single tank of petrol. Then there was a problem. A long narrow lake separated them from the Altras Mountains and the border. There was a ferry across the lake, running from a short peninsula to the northern shore. They'd have to play it by ear then. If it looked good, taking the car would really help and let them get well into the second range, minimising the walking to be done. If the car would attract attention, then they'd cross as foot passengers and walk the mountains. They knew the border area from their summer trip. It would be impossible to seal such wild country. They'd strayed to and fro across the border for a week, so the chances of them getting into Austria were very good.

There were some difficulties. Petrol for Gertrude was the first. George was certain that the group could get a tank full given a few days. They'd start tomorrow. Provisions were the next. They could get food, but to carry it would be too heavy if they ended up walking. Dehydrated camping rations were not easy to get, but candy bars, dried potatoes and some vegetables would work for a short time. Then there was Rose's and Seaton's hair. It was like a beacon, screaming 'I'm foreign!'

"Cut it off!" said Drew looking at Rose.

Rose would not even consider it.

"I'd rather be bald!"

"Hey I've always had a thing for shaven headed women!"

“Dye it?” suggested Seaton.

“Could work. Anyway Seaton you can just crop your hair. It will make it so short the colour will be difficult to detect.”

Seaton, who always wore his hair slightly on the full side was not impressed.

“If needs must,” he said, hoping it would not come to that. Jeorge thought he could get some dye and that put Rose’s mind at rest. The planning done they started to relax and opened a bottle of Bulgarian wine to toast their enterprise.

“You’ll be safe. And when all this is over come back to us will you?” said Jeorge with his glass raised in expectation.

“You bet,” said Drew.

Rose leaned across the maps and planted a big kiss squarely on his lips. He looked delighted.

2.6

Saturday, 30th September

The Saturday morning brought good news. At eight am the radio broadcast announced the daily break in the curfew would start at twelve o clock and last until five. That made their exit from Tilany even easier. At twelve on the dot Jeorge rushed out to start the preparations. Fifteen minutes later Drew and Rose left to try and get some provisions they would need, leaving Seaton to assemble bags and the stuff they needed for their expedition.

They had walked less than 100 metres when something splashed onto the pavement beside them. It was a rotten apple. They stopped and looked round. Across the road was a small group of ordinary looking citizens, some young, some middle aged and grey looking, but they were all shouting abuse. Another apple was blatantly thrown and Rose had to dodge it.

“Come on,” said Drew, “Let’s go back.”

They ran back, using the back entrance to avoid showing where they lived.

“Bastards!” screamed Drew when they were back i doors. “What did they shout?”

“You really want to know?” asked Rose.

“Yea I do.”

“Foreign whore! Was one and I heard ‘She’ll bite your dick off son!’ as well.” Rose could not resist a little giggle, but then she looked serious again.

“This is bad,” said Rose tugging at her hair. “I’ll have to cut it all off!”

Drew took her in his arms. “Don’t. We’ll be gone in a few days. You stay here with Seaton and I’ll get the stuff we need. Don’t answer the door to anybody, I’ve got a key.” Drew left and Rose burst into tears. Seaton took her gently into his arms and said, “We’ll make it out of here, don’t worry.”

“I know we will, I’m just a bit scared,” she replied softly and ran her hand across the stubble that now covered Seaton’s head. He had all but shaved his head in preparation for their trip.

“OK Bruce Willis, what’s left to pack?”

Drew got back around two p.m. with a lot of chocolate bars, some tinned vegetables, matches and batteries for torches. The news he brought with him was not good. He’d seen three Europeans pulled out of a car by a group of locals. When the military intervened all they did was bundle them into the back of a truck and drive them away at gunpoint. Jeorge arrived about ten minutes later and asked for Gertrude’s keys so he could pour in the petrol he had brought. Jeorge had just returned when Maria arrived. She was carrying a litre bottle of petrol as well, but she rushed in shouting breathlessly.

“It’s terrible! It’s terrible!”

Jeorge tried to calm her down.

"I came through The Square," she panted. "They have people, Europeans in suits, tied to posts in front of the TV station offices. Soldiers are guarding them."

"What?" gasped Drew.

"Yes it's part of the human shield. Britain has threatened to bomb strategic targets, starting today. Bratishic says he will shoot hostages if the planes cross the border. He's shouting off about oppression by super powers and that Borovia will defend itself to the last with any means. North Korea has promised to help him. The prisoners were called enemies of Borovia." Maria finally ceased her rushed account; she was flushed and looking very angry. They stood open mouthed, shocked by the news. Rose looked confused, her head nodding from side to side and murmuring "no, no, no." She turned to Maria and started to speak, but words would not form. Maria held her and she tried again.

"Maria, George, if the British, we, bomb your country they are only trying to help." She struggled through the words. "They don't want to hurt your people."

Maria stroked her hair. "There are some we want them to hurt!" exclaimed George. "Any help is welcome."

At that moment a disturbance in the street below made them all go to the window. Army trucks had arrived in 'Heroes' and troops were entering the buildings opposite. George went down to see if he could find out what was happening. He was back within minutes. He burst through the front door.

"Quick you have to leave! Now!" he screamed. "They are taking all foreigners! Someone reported seeing a blonde haired person here, they'll be coming to this block when they've finished across the road!"

Luckily Rose and Seaton had managed to pack most of the stuff they had into rucksacks. They grabbed one each, George and Maria bundled as much of the provisions into bags as they could and all of them started down the stairs. At the second landing soldiers burst into the ground floor hallway, orders were shouted and troops started up the stairs. They all froze, exchanging fearful glances.

Silently Drew beckoned them to a door at the corner of the landing. Quietly they went through, along a short corridor and down the back stairs to the mews.

Outside all was quiet and they quickly got to Gertrude. She was an estate version of the Trabant, painted grey with a cream roof, two doors and a rear hatch back. Maria poured the extra fuel into the tank as they loaded the rucksacks through the hatch back. Drew took the driver's seat, Seaton scrambled into the back and Rose was getting in the passenger door when George said, "I'll come with you and direct you to Andre's."

George lifted the front seat for Rose to get in the back. At that moment two soldiers wandered into view.

"Rose, get down!" hissed Drew. George gestured to Maria to go back into the building, so she closed the filler cap and melted back down the mews. Rose lay across the short seat, head in Seaton's lap, feet in the rear seat footwell. The soldiers did not seem to be searching for anything, instead they took out a packet of cigarettes and lit two from one match. George struggled out of his coat and passed it into the back.

"Cover yourself with this," he commanded. With Seaton's help Rose was soon concealed under the coat.

"Let's go Drew."

Drew pressed the starter. Gertrude mooed. The soldiers looked vaguely distracted from their conversation by the strange noise, but quickly turned away, flicking the ash from their cigarettes. Drew tried again. Moo, but no engine. This time the soldiers fixed their stare on the car.

"Come on Gertrude, you can do it," hissed Drew. He tried again. Only a moo. The soldiers started to walk towards them.

"Come on!"

Moo

The soldiers were within metres of them now. George opened his door and stepped out.

“Hey lads! Give us a push will you? We have to get off the roads within an hour,” he requested in Borovian.

Seaton tensed himself and felt Rose’s hands gripping his leg. He didn’t hear the answer, but the soldiers shouldered their rifles and went round to the back of the car with Jeorge. With three people pushing Gertrude moved quickly. Drew dropped the clutch and the car virtually stopped dead. Rose rolled off the seat and partly into the footwell, her hair spilling out of the coat. Seaton struggled to get the coat back over her. Fortunately the estate back and rucksacks prevented the soldiers having a clear view of the back seat.

“Try again!” called Jeorge and they were off down the mews. This time Drew tried top gear, let the speed build up more and dropped the clutch again. Gertrude burst into life. Drew braked, revving the engine to ensure it did not stop again. Jeorge thanked the soldiers, jumped into the passenger seat and hissed “get the fuck out of here!” Drew did not need telling twice and they were off.

“Wave!” Jeorge smiled, speaking through his teeth. Drew waved an arm out of the driver’s window. As they turned onto the road running parallel to Heroes they glanced at each other. Both were covered in sweat.

It was gone four and there were a lot of trucks and cars on the roads. They came to a checkpoint but the troops seemed overwhelmed by the volume of traffic and all cars were being waved through with only vans and trucks being stopped and searched.

“Can I sit up?” called Rose, her voice muffled by the coat.

“Stay down!” was the answer from both men in front and Rose settled her head back down into Seaton’s lap.

“My lucky day,” added Seaton and received a sharp jab in the leg from Rose. With Jeorge’s directions they were making good progress. He had directed them off the main roads, through the side streets and residential areas. The centre of Tilany was way behind them now and they passed through some much more

modern looking suburbs, with individual houses, most with a small garden in front of them. At a set of traffic lights they took a left and started climbing up into The Hills district. Here it was very suburban, with larger houses standing in their own grounds, but as they climbed higher the buildings changed their look and became more like chalets or summer homes. The roads were rougher and Gertrude gave all four of her passengers a bumpy ride at the speed Drew forced her along at. For the last few kilometres they were always on side roads and all seemed reasonably quiet. While Drew still charged along Seaton felt it was safe for Rose to surface.

"Rose I think you'll be OK now," he said while the car made a sharp right turn.

Rose pushed the coat off her and sat upright, tossing her blonde mane off her right shoulder as she did. She was red in the cheeks from her confinement.

"Thank god for that," she exclaimed, "much longer and I would have been sick!"

"Guess that would have ended my luck day!" suggested Seaton and got a black look in response. He helped her back onto the seat next to him, and then he looked at her with a slight grin.

"Don't even think of saying a word," she yelled at him, but her eyes were smiling now. Drew continued to charge up the rutted track.

"That's it there, the one with the white gable," said George, pointing at a house to the left of the track.

Most of the houses were alpine chalet style with steeply ridged roofs, standing in small gardens, the boundaries marked by low, chainlink fences. Many of the fences were covered with creepers from the summer. There were few trees near the houses and most of the land was just covered with long grass. Just behind the houses the thick pine forest started, looking black and impenetrable as it covered the steeply rising ground. Drew swung into the front drive of Andre's chalet.

"Best drive round to the back of the house and keep the car out of sight," suggested Seaton.

"Good idea," agreed George and looked at his watch. It was five minutes to five.

2.7

Saturday, 30th September

Andre was a very hospitable host and made all four welcome. He quickly sorted out sleeping accommodation allowing Rose and Drew to take his room while he squeezed into the box room upstairs and Jeorge and Seaton each had a sofa in the open plan lounge. The inside of the house was all pine floors, pine columns and beams. The lounge was near double height, with the two bedrooms on a balcony above the kitchen and bathroom. The furnishings were old, worn but comfortable.

“This is a great area to live. You can be in centre of Tilany in twenty minutes using the tram from the terminus at the bottom of the hill, but when you are here it’s like being in the deep country,” Andre told them. He was a short, thick set man forever wearing a sweater of some kind. Although he was not on the same course as they were, Rose and Drew had met him at Tilany University. His dark hair was near shoulder length with a central parting.

“Mind you winter can be fun. Although we’re only a little higher than Tilany we can be snowed in while they just have a sprinkling! And the frosts on clear nights are quite something.”

“Nothing a little wine can’t handle I’d imagine,” said Jeorge. They all laughed.

“Is that a hint?” asked Andre.

Jeorge just shrugged in reply.

“I’ll get some!”

“Tomorrow,” Jeorge started, “I must head back to Tilany. Maria will worry about me, and I about her. As soon as the curfew is lifted then you want to be on the road, well track really. Andre’s mapped it out for you.”

He handed them a local map with the route marked on. Each turn had notes to help them identify it.

“Within a kilometre or two you’ll be in deep forest for the rest of the way. About 20Ks I think and it won’t be fast. You’ll come out here,” he said and pointed to the map.

“It’s a logging town and we’re told it is outside the Tilany curfew so whatever time you get there should be OK. Go through the village, down to the main road and head northeast. The long distance sign posts will probably say Budapest.”

“They do,” put in Drew. “We went up there over summer and hiked the mountains, so we know what to expect.”

“The mountains will be very different even by now,” warned George, “Up high you’ll already get bad weather, even snow.”

“We’ve all got good boots and waterproofs, just have to put the layers on to keep warm,” said Seaton as Andre returned with an open bottle of red wine. He poured them all a glass.

“To freedom!” said Andre, raising his glass, and they all toasted that great thought.

END OF PREVIEW

An Article about Jurassic Era is attached below

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17 – Jurassic Era

The Rock Band extraordinaire

By Gerry Harris

(Reprinted with kind permission of GME)

Jurassic Era, better known as ‘The Jurassics’, were formed in 1975 by three students at the Royal College of Mines, South Kensington. The original members were:

- Don Urban Edwardes-Newton (Lead Guitar, Vocals)
- Jeff Morden (Drums, percussion)
- Al Garrett (Bass Guitar, Vocals)

They were all studying Geology, hence the name of the band, and the reason for a geological theme running through the names of their albums. They initially did college and local gigs in the evenings as an outlet for their musical talents and a way of making the student grant go further.

Don’s name, famously called ‘extensive’ by Al in an early interview with Time Out, meant a nickname was needed and the one that stuck early on was Dune. Later the band said it was due to Don’s long term love of the novels by Frank Herbert, but the truth was it owed more to Don’s frequent and multiple conquests from college days onward, and a spontaneous session of giggles all three shared when a staid professor commented on ‘a nice bit of dune bedding’ in a geology lecture. On graduating in 1977 they gave themselves one year to make it in the music industry. Their mix of heavy rock and dreamlike interludes was compared with Pink Floyd but their early work was said to lack depth. Early in 1978 Daniel Cardosa, a black musician from Cape Verde via Lisbon and London joined them as the keyboard player. They gave him rock, he gave them African and Latin rhythms and the result is history.

Their first album, 'Seismic Discontinuity – (IRL, 1978 & EMR, 1979)', was released early in 1978 on IRL and became a worldwide hit through Indie and underground sales. At the end of 1978 they were signed by the EMR label and 1979 and 1980 saw the first world tours, playing to sell out arenas across Europe, North America and Australia.

They returned to the studio in 1981 and produced the thunderous Bedrock (EMR, 1981) album. The title track filled one side of the album, with heavy rock guitar building into African drum and keyboard rhythms, then the pure bliss of Dune making the guitar sing and cry. The Bedrock tour of 1983 was the most hectic covering North and South America, Europe, Far East and Australia / New Zealand. It was a sell out and their album sales topped the charts across the world.

From 1984 to 1989 they rested on their success, setting up their own record label, BabeRock, to promote undiscovered artists, and finally bringing out the 'Pyroclastic Flow – (BabeRock, 1989)' double album just before Christmas 1989. With the icon image of the Mayon Volcanic eruption in the Philippines in 1984 on the cover, shops opened at midnight to meet the demand from fans, or 'The Followings' as they preferred to be known. The tour started in June 1990 having been delayed to perfect the light and video show that gave the audience the sensation of being in a volcanic eruption, complete with seismic floor shaking effects. But the delay allowed them to add the newly free Eastern European states like Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary. Their concert in St Petersburg caused a riot as ticket numbers were reduced by the organisers fearing the seismic effects would collapse the stadium. By the time the tour wound up late in 1992, it was the biggest grossing rock tour ever. The tour went back on the road in 1995 to play a series of dates in newly open South Africa and a special free concert in Cape Verde dedicated to Daniel's mother who had died the previous year. The new phase of the tour led to Daniel Cardoso being proclaimed the greatest African born musician.

It was a further 2 years before the last album, 'Recumbent Fold - (BabeRock, 1998)' was ready. It was released in 1998 and while it

had its fair share of heavy rock, the three CD format allowed them to include more relaxed, dreamlike tracks and sequences. The Followings either loved it or hated it, with the majority hating the softer sequences, and a shortened version, excluding most of the softer music, was released by the end of 1998 and immediately took their sales to new heights.

The next tour started in 1999 and included millennium special concerts in Sydney, Cape Town and Buenos Aires. These included much of the original, 'softer' material and finally 'The Followings' got it and the original cut of 'The Fold' was hurried back to the presses. The tour wound up in 2001 with the Band telling 'The Followings' they needed to rest and recharge. Individually the band members appeared in many tributes, concerts and collective performances. Through the early years of the 21st century all band members did collaborations, none as successful as 'Mountains – (BabeRock, 2002)' between Dune and Sierra High. The accompanying video was widely believed to be of them in the actual act of making love, something that neither ever denied.

Then disaster struck in 2003 when an executive jet, chartered by Don/Dune depressurised heading south over the Caribbean. Brazilian fighters were scrambled to intercept but they saw the crew slumped over the controls. Shortly afterwards the jet ran out of fuel and plunged into the Atlantic. Dune and the crews' bodies were recovered together with those of two young women, a point picked on by the press with headlines like 'Naked Babes die with Dune'.

Since then the Jurassics have not appeared or recorded music as a band, although recent rumour suggest they may return to the studio with an as yet unnamed replacement for the iconic Dune.