

*From the classic era of Doctor Who*

# LETHBRIDGE STEWART



## THE WISHING BAZAAR



**SHARON BIDWELL**

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# LETHBRIDGE-STEWART

## THE WISHING BAZAAR

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

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Sharon Bidwell



CANDY JAR BOOKS • CARDIFF  
*A Russell & Frankham-Allen Series*  
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— CHAPTER ONE —

## *The First Wish*

Brigadier Alistair Lethbridge-Stewart broke into a run, making heads turn. He ignored the open-mouthed stares of the Dolerite Base staff, checking his pace only to avoid a collision. As he approached a corner, he angled his body to perform the perfect pivot, hardly slowing. His heartbeat kicked up several paces, not because of the exertion, but the anticipation.

He burst into the office where 2nd Lieutenant William Bishop awaited his arrival. ‘Is it true?’ Lethbridge-Stewart snapped out, breathless, fearing another false alarm.

Bishop did an about-face, with what appeared to be delight in his eyes. ‘Yes, sir. There are more incidents. You may get your wish, um... sir.’ A hint of colour bloomed across his cheeks and rightly so.

Luckily, for Bishop, his commanding officer never issued reprimands over a simple case of poorly chosen words.

‘If I’m late my parents will kill me,’ Effie said.

‘More likely I’m the one they’ll murder, and mine will help with the burial, but I cannae drive any faster in this.’ Craig McKinnon tried rubbing at the windscreen but since the visual interference remained on the outside of the glass, his attempts were pathetic. A real pea-souper, as his father

would say. Surely, the turn in the early-November weather allowed them some leeway.

He couldn't believe it: their first date night as a couple now ruined by returning late. He'd borrowed his father's car to take Effie Dunn to the pictures. Both families were keen on them getting married, but that didn't mean her parents didn't expect him to act like a gentleman and have her home by eleven. That was how these things were done, his father had told him. Until the wedding.

'Is that a streetlight?' Effie asked. 'Only the beam's wavering.'

Craig peered into the gloom. 'Could it have no' come loose?'

'How? You didnae think...' She glanced over, looking decidedly worried. 'We're no' like in *War of the Worlds* or something? Those things with the lantern-like eyes.'

Was she serious? 'Ya talking about a movie. This...' Well, Craig could think of no real explanation for what now appeared to be lowering... coming right towards them.

He jammed his foot on the brake; so hard he made the car slew and wobble. Effie let out a little mew of alarm and then a full-throated scream. When the world calmed, instead of berating him, she stared out and, wanting to avoid an argument, Craig did too.

'It's a star,' Effie said, sounding delighted.

'Ya aff yer heid,' Craig replied before it occurred to him that calling his girlfriend a bit daft might not be the best move. 'No star flies.'

'Well, then it *is* something alien.'

The word 'stupid' died in his throat, in part because, having called Effie daft, another insult might destroy any

future notion of marriage, and in part because the light now spun circles around their car, examining them.

‘First star I see tonight.’ Effie sounded breathless. Her gaze, Craig saw when he stared at her, focused on the brightness, her expression rapt. ‘I wish I may, I wish I might.’

For some reason, Craig’s blood ran Arctic. He grabbed Effie by the arm and shook her, overcome with the urgency she not finish. ‘Didnae say that!’

The glow spun away as Effie turned to him. ‘But I see the wishing star,’ she said trance-like.

Craig didn’t care. ‘Dangerous is what it is,’ he said, not understanding why. They both gazed out and gaped at the spec of illumination as it whisked off into the darkness.

Joshua Low sat alone in a room for which he paid too much rent, eyes closed, holding his breath. When he drew on enough courage to look, he stared around like something wild and hungry on the hunt for a swiftly darting mouse.

Nothing. No pile of notes on his lap, or on the table. He knocked his chair over in haste as he stood, and began a manic search. Items in the cupboards became a heap upon the floor. He searched his pockets, ripping what clothes he owned. He moved on to an examination of the bed. Unable to find cash tucked among his sheets, Joshua ripped apart his pillows and his mattress in case the stash hid therein. Nothing.

‘Must be somewhere.’ A promise was a promise. His gaze fell to the floor.

Later, he opened the door in answer to the banging of his landlord.

‘Ya gettin’ skelped, all this commotion. What the...?’

The man's eyes went wide as he tilted his head and stared into the room.

For the first time, Joshua spotted the mess, though he couldn't remember making it. Torn carpets and pulled up floorboards created a pyramid of chaos.

'See you, pal, ya deid,' the landlord said.

Joshua Low looked at the other man and wondered if he was hiding the money.

'Aye, right.' Police Sergeant Waters scrutinised Lethbridge-Stewart's identification and the orders to allow him access to the prisoner. 'He's no' even been fully processed yet.'

'I realise that and you're doing your duty, but he may have information regarding the whereabouts of someone vital to another more important investigation.'

'More important than murder?'

'Yes.'

'Humph. Well, these papers seem to be in order.' The sergeant called an officer forward to escort Lethbridge-Stewart through to the cells.

Joshua Low sat in the corner on the other side of the bars, rocking back and forth.

Lethbridge-Stewart got to the relevant point. 'What was your wish?'

'For money.'

'Why then did you kill your landlord?'

'Didnae.' The man appeared shamefaced even as he said so. 'Didnae mean to,' he corrected. 'Just wanted the money I thought maybe he'd hid inside him.' The rocking never stopped. 'I'm all right, though, ya ken,' Joshua Low said, grinning. He opened his hand, giving Lethbridge-Stewart a

quick flash of what he held. ‘See, a man gave me this penny.’

As Lethbridge-Stewart left the cells, he pretended not to see the spec of light following him, hovering near the ceiling. Against the beige paintwork, the untrained eye might never have noticed. Lethbridge-Stewart had sensed a presence before he even searched. When he first glimpsed the radiance he reacted without surprise, somewhat aided by the reports of recent sightings. That the spec should appear here in the cell of a man accused of murder left no doubt in his mind that both were connected.

For now, Lethbridge-Stewart pretended to be oblivious. He needed to consult Miss Travers about his findings, and to do that he couldn’t risk drawing attention from this... entity. He had seen so much in the last year that he was happy to accept that the spec of light was sentient. Letting on could put his own existence in jeopardy and, dead, he would be of no help to anyone.

When he once again stepped out into the sunshine, the spec vanished.

Maybe he just couldn’t see it, but Lethbridge-Stewart believed more than that. He no longer *felt* it.

Next time, though, he would give chase.



— CHAPTER TWO —

## *The Wishing Star*

The young woman pushed through the crowd of shoppers, holding the bag tucked in the crook of her left arm with a tight grip. A ferocious expression set her face in a rictus. In her right hand, a sheet of paper balled up in anger scratched her palm. She wasn't angry with the note, or the one who had written it. Maisie Drummond's fury focused on a disease currently killing her father and so many like him, an illness no one knew how to cure. The best she could do for him was to pick up a few items of shopping for which she had a list, and that seemed like nothing at all. She wanted to do so much more.

The passing people were a blur of bright versus muted colours. She saw eyes and imagined they all glared at her accusingly, but of their faces, she noted no particulars.

'I want, I want,' she mumbled under her breath, uncertain what she longed for.

'Perhaps I can give you what you're looking for.'

Maisie blinked, surprised to find she had stepped into a shop. Even more oddly some kind of antiques shop and she certainly needed nothing sold there.

'Are you so sure? Who can pass up an item of good fortune?' The man speaking stood on the other side of a long counter, leaning upon it so she couldn't tell how tall he

might be. He possessed a pleasant enough face, though she couldn't tell his age.

Maisie blinked again, and for a second a much older man stood there, thin as a beanpole – skinny malink longlegs, as her grandma would have said – with longer, greyer hair and greedy gaze. Then *blink* and a blinding light stabbed into her eyes, making her flinch.

‘I’m going mad.’

‘Then it definitely behoves you to accept some good luck.’

She gaped at the grotesque and ridiculous thing in his hand. ‘Oh, aye?’ Maisie projected as much sarcasm as the single word allowed. ‘Didnae do the rabbit any good.’

A grin came with the reply as the man put away the rabbit’s foot. ‘There are other charms. What about something as simple *asssssss...*’ He strung out the word as he reached beneath the countertop. He lay out several things as fast as a magician’s trick.

Strange temptation drew her forward.

‘What do you want?’ His melodious voice provided her with the first moment of peace in weeks. All else fell away except the line of small objects.

‘I want...’ What did she want? Was there ever any doubt?

Without realising, Maisie had chosen. She reached out...

‘Miss Drummond? Miss Maisie Drummond?’

‘Whit? Yes?’ Maisie looked around, dazed. She remembered... *a strange shop, peculiar man, objects on the counter...* Slipping a hand into her pocket, she closed her fingers around an item and squeezed. Of the journey from the shop to here, there came no recollection. That she’d brought the things her father wanted was obvious for they were in a bag beside her, but the memory of her purchasing

them... gone.

A nurse stared at her with concern. 'Are you all right?'

'Fine.' Maisie offered up a weak smile. 'Tired.'

The nurse's expression softened. 'You can go right in. He's sleepy but resting easy.'

Moments later, Maisie stood at the bedside of her father. These were to be his last days and her best efforts amounted to a few magazines and a few digestible treats his doctors said could no longer harm him. 'Bring him anything he wants' meant 'not much time left'. He lay there, eyes closed, for now peaceful.

'I didnae expect miracles,' Maisie whispered. No, Maisie Drummond wanted something altogether different. Not one to long for divine intervention to cure one man, she wanted the knowledge to cure others.

Opening her hand, she let the little bell dangle as the shopkeeper had instructed, and rang it. Her wish would not work, but nevertheless...

'I wish,' Maisie Drummond began. 'I wish for knowledge.'

'We've restrained her.' The doctor hurried along by Lethbridge-Stewart's side. 'Never seen a case quite like this.'

'Please explain.'

'Well, she's obviously suffering from some form of psychosis. Such conditions show two main symptoms, that of hallucinating or delusions. Difficult to tell which she's presenting. We've decided she's likely more delusional, but the things she's saying...' The doctor looked at Lethbridge-Stewart sideways. 'Hard to explain.'

'Keep trying.'

Maybe his tone sounded a little too abrupt, but Lethbridge-Stewart didn't care if he shocked the doctor as long as he complied. Lethbridge-Stewart had no liking for the things they did to patients here under the guise of meaning well. He hoped there would come a day when institutions like this were no longer required. The painfully sterile ward, the white tiled floor and painted walls made the black iron security gates stand out in stark contrast.

'We thought at first that maybe she presented both. A combination can cause the most severe disruption to one's thinking as well as behaviour. Unfortunately, this psychotic episode seems not to stop, and even appears to be growing worse. Such episodes are triggered by other conditions but we've worked to rule those out. We can find no trace of drug or alcohol abuse, she's not on any medication that we've not prescribed, and so far all medical checks paint a woman in perfect health. She has had recent stresses. Her father is in the hospital dying, and she has no other immediate family to help. Still, nothing has shown itself that warrants... this.'

Lethbridge-Stewart put his eye to a spy-hole and looked into a room that turned out to be a padded cell. Within, a young woman dressed in a straitjacket threw herself from wall to wall.

'She can't hurt herself,' the doctor said, as if that made everything all right. 'We can only sedate her so much, and the safe levels no longer seem to work.'

'And her delusion?'

'That's the problem. She doesn't have a precise one. She simply keeps shouting information at us.'

'Information?' Lethbridge-Stewart withdrew from the distressing sight and turned his gaze to the doctor.

‘History, geography, maths... You name the subject and she supplies the answer. Ask her anything. She’ll tell you. We’ve never heard of a case like it. She must be incredibly intelligent to have so much knowledge.’

Before he left, Lethbridge-Stewart spoke with the patient and she answered everything he put to her: all the subjects the doctor listed as well as ones more complex. Her replies snapped out in a manic frenzy. When asked, she told him all he needed, including what the star was, and where it was hiding.

— CHAPTER THREE —

*Being Careful What You Wish For*

Raindrops fat enough to sound like hail hit the windowpanes lining the corridor. People murmured complaints about a miserable day, but the weather matched Lethbridge-Stewart's mood. Some assignments were harder than others, and this one was particularly difficult.

He patted his side before remembering he was unarmed, out of uniform, undercover. Just another visitor. Nothing alarming going on here. Nothing to see.

He reached his destination without incident, pausing to check the number on the door, but in truth steeling his resolve.

With only a slight rap of a knuckle, he went in. The man sat where Lethbridge-Stewart predicted, by the window, elbows bent, hands together in front of his mouth, fingers entwined. The small table held the chessboard at the perfect height. The concentration in once-bright blue eyes, now watery with age, belied the senile decay. The only truly unforeseen thing was the floral chintz pattern of the chair. Lethbridge-Stewart had never expected to find Air Commodore Benjamin Dumont-McCulloch sitting in a field of flowers. Lethbridge-Stewart wondered what his father would say, if he could see his old commander reduced to this?

Lethbridge-Stewart took command of the adjacent seat. Only then did the man seem to notice him.

‘Come to play a game of chess?’

‘With pleasure. Maybe with a drop of this.’ Lethbridge-Stewart removed a smuggled-in flask from his pocket. Aged eyes once more turned bright.

‘I know you, don’t I?’

Lethbridge-Stewart had hoped the single malt might provide some lucidity. ‘That you do. It’s Alistair, and we’ll spend a quiet afternoon together, but first we need to talk. We’ve one last assignment for you, my old friend.’

A quick glance at the sky revealed the light quickly fading, though not fast enough as far as the running man was concerned. Lethbridge-Stewart pounded down a shady alley, emerging onto a busy road. Additional daylight made the star difficult to follow, but Lethbridge-Stewart dashed after it. He ignored shouts from passers-by when he bumped into them, offering a quick, ‘Sorry, sorry. Important business. Coming through.’

He stopped at an intersection only to get his bearings, locate the direction the star took, and dodged across against the traffic. More cries and now the blaring of horns joined the chorus of disapproval. The star zipped off to the left. Like a firefly, the spec fluttered in the shadowy spaces between the brighter areas. For now, enough light remained for it to glide over the heads of pedestrians without much concern. Not that any who saw would know what to make of it. They would never guess the truth.

He had almost caught up when a pram became an obstacle. Gathering his strength, Lethbridge-Stewart

hurdled over the obstruction, aware of the danger his hurtling form posed to the tiny occupant. He heard the mother's cry as a physical blow but didn't have the breath to spare to ask her pardon.

Lethbridge-Stewart landed badly, turned his pitch into a roll, made it to his feet, off again... until a pair of hands descended on him.

'Whit's wrong with ya, man? Say sorry!'

'An admirable sentiment, sir,' Lethbridge-Stewart said, looking into a face containing glaring eyes, a snarling mouth, and sneering anger. He dangled from the man's meaty fists, one toe narrowly making contact with the pavement. 'But I'm an officer on duty. Now unhand me.' He jammed his gun into the fellow's ribs with no intention of firing, but the man didn't know that. His eyes went wide and he dropped Lethbridge-Stewart like the proverbial tonnage. If Lethbridge-Stewart hadn't prepared for that he might have fallen, but he managed to stay on his feet, tuck his weapon out of sight without anyone noticing, and dashed off round the corner before someone could raise an alarm. No shouts pursued him so the man either took his threat to be one of the nation's securities or feared to engage with a lunatic.

The star hovered at the end of the street. A woman stood alone by another set of traffic lights. When the lights changed Lethbridge-Stewart expected her to cross, but she remained immobile as if seeing nothing. Others noticed but politely stepped around her. Lethbridge-Stewart didn't hesitate. He increased his pace, stopping only when he reached her.

'Madam?' He waited until she focused on him with



apparent surprise as she took in his uniform. ‘Say nothing. Nod if you went to a shop earlier today. A shop that sells antiques.’

A frown creased her brow as she nodded.

‘Did you accept anything while there?’

Her frown grew while she seemed to consider. ‘Why—?’

‘I implore you. Please, say nothing. I know this is a strange request but it’s imperative. What did the storekeeper give you?’

The woman pulled her hand from her pocket. She held something that Lethbridge-Stewart couldn’t identify.

‘You must give it to me,’ he instructed.

She shook her head.

‘Please, believe me—’ He tried to ignore the crowd they were drawing. ‘Come with me. It’s important.’

‘I’m fine,’ the woman told him. ‘You don’t need to worry.’

Lethbridge-Stewart moved forward, to put a hand over her mouth if need be, but someone stepped in front of him. The burly man had followed.

‘Awright, radge, ya a menace. Leave the lady be.’

‘Everyone, please. Nothing’s wrong here.’ The woman spoke up for him. She looked at Lethbridge-Stewart, who opened his mouth again to tell her to be quiet, but she was already speaking. ‘I understand. I’m one of the few who do.’ She smiled at him. ‘I wished for nothing.’

Right before Lethbridge-Stewart’s gaze the woman winked out of existence.

Although he knew what to look for, Lethbridge-Stewart almost walked past the establishment. Predictions claimed markets such as these would become history, replaced by

huge constructions of interlinking shops where people moved like zombies under the bright glare of lights. There was one man he could ask, if he ever saw him again, but sometimes Lethbridge-Stewart felt he understood too much about the future already. Here, a line of shops sat at the base of soaring housing tenements, while people shouted out about, and sold, their wares from stalls in the central thoroughfare. This particular street was so over-crowded he would have known he'd found the right place even without tracking down his quarry by other means. The awnings alone blocked out most of the day, giving the road a secretive feel. A spark of light caught his peripheral vision.

Lethbridge-Stewart looked left and right, made certain no one was paying him attention, and then stared at his intended destination. On the right, he saw a barbers with photos of rather poor haircuts trying to entice the unsuspecting. A red and white striped pole adorned the front like an out of season candy cane. The left-hand shop's window revealed a display of brightly coloured beads making him consider a possible error. The cheap jewellery may have been what had drawn his attention. Still, he stared, ignoring the one person who bumped into him and told him to watch where he was going. He stared so long his eyes began to water.

The shop, when it appeared, blended well with the surroundings. Without blinking, for it would vanish if he did, Lethbridge-Stewart entered.

— CHAPTER FOUR —

## *The Wishing Bazaar*

The rake-thin man behind the counter wore a ragged suit, and had long scraggly hair; looked, in fact, as if a cut in the establishment next door might even be an improvement. Lethbridge-Stewart knew all this to be an illusion.

‘What can I do you for, sir?’ The voice sounded rich, melodious... enticing. The tone contained no concern and maybe even a touch of amusement.

As he edged closer, Lethbridge-Stewart glanced at the items on sale. Lucky pennies, dream catchers, horseshoes, rabbits’ feet, four-leaf clovers, pieces of jade, conserved wishbones. The figure in the corner could have been a manikin or a preserved chimney sweep. The shop contained every recognisable example of lucky charm and then some. Lethbridge-Stewart only allowed himself a small pause before attending to the conversation.

‘I’m here to talk reason. You’ve hurt far too many people.’

The man’s gaze appeared more calculating than surprised. ‘Can’t stop people wishing.’ He slowly moved his head and gave a lazy shrug, an indication that none of this was his fault.

‘This isn’t real,’ Lethbridge-Stewart insisted.

‘It is if you believe in it. Or I should say, as real as the

strength of someone's belief, though they don't always believe in what they wish for. Tell me, what kind of wish would *you* make?'

Lethbridge-Stewart opened his mouth, and then closed it again. He looked down at his hand. Without knowing, he'd picked up a curved oil lamp of some sort. A word came to mind: genie. Some would call it magic. Lethbridge-Stewart knew better. He also understood how to destroy the problem.

'Let's discuss this,' Lethbridge-Stewart said. He placed a penny on the counter.

The shopkeeper's smile grew. 'He wished for money.'

'A penny? That you gave him to make the wish on?'

'What can I say? He should have been more specific.'

The second object Lethbridge-Stewart produced was a tiny bell, broken now so it would never toll again for anyone. 'I'm presuming she wished for knowledge.'

'Spot on. Don't look at me that way. I give people only what they ask for.'

'What object did you give to the woman who wished for nothing?'

'Does it matter?'

'I suppose not.' Lethbridge-Stewart paced around the store. 'A wish like that... I expected something more spectacular. Why didn't you wipe out the entire planet?'

'I could, but where would be the fun in that? Far more entertaining to create headlines, let people wonder what they really saw that day, leave families asking what happened to her.'

'Fun?' Despite knowing better, Lethbridge-Stewart couldn't restrain himself. 'You call this fun?'

For the first time, the storekeeper's grin faltered. 'Only fun left to me. My wish, you see, was to be the king of wishes.'

'If you expect me to be compassionate, you shouldn't be a man to make such foolish appeals.'

Anger now coloured those sunken cheeks. 'You think it foolish to want to grant pleas that can help others?'

'No, but in reality if helping others is what you want, you *help* them. Do something practical. Don't wish for it, and don't look for a reward for the good you do. Your wish itself, the way you phrase it, to be the *king* of wishes, tells me all I need to know.'

Almost as though in response to his raised voice, the shop door opened. As expected Lethbridge-Stewart's good friend, Air Commodore Benjamin Dumont-McCulloch, walked in.

'Ah... I...' Dumont-McCulloch's face brightened upon seeing him, but now his expression clouded. He looked around the store, confused. 'Do you think they have a good chess set around here?' He edged along the cabinets peering into them. 'Fancy a game, Al... er anyone?'

A true pang of compassion and something like guilt twanged inside Lethbridge-Stewart, but he stood his ground, as was his duty. Dumont-McCulloch... Benjamin would choose to end his days like this. He had accepted this. Even now, he played his part despite the slight waver, almost giving away that they knew each other. Even now the lucid moment waned.

'Only a winnable one,' Lethbridge-Stewart said softly. He studied the shopkeeper staring at the old gentleman, a mix of puzzlement and alarm written across the vendor's face.

Dumont-McCulloch looked up. He peered first at the shopkeeper then at Lethbridge-Stewart. 'But you're serving this gentleman first.'

'I'm not sure I'm serving either of you.' The entity in the shape of a man backed up a step. Gaze narrowed, he examined the old man before shaking his head, dismissing him.

Lethbridge-Stewart, standing to one side, knew exactly what occurred but remained motionless, playing out their plan. 'I'm sure we can come to some sort of understanding,' he told the star, knowing the creature would laugh. Which it did.

Dumont-McCulloch ignored them. He moved to the counter, bent over, and inspected its contents.

'You should leave, sir,' Lethbridge-Stewart said, hoping that Dumont-McCulloch would recall this was their plot. If Benjamin walked out, the strategy might yet fail.

'Nonsense.' Dumont-McCulloch straightened and faced the entity. 'I'm looking for a good chess set.'

'We don't sell chess sets here.' The creature dismissed the old gent with a wave of his hand, turning back to Lethbridge-Stewart. 'As for you, there can be no *understanding*. You can't touch me here. Come to me with intent and you know what happens?'

The star didn't mean it as a question, but Lethbridge-Stewart nodded. He knew everything. Firepower couldn't break through the barriers or any item in the shop. A hand-to-hand physical attack wouldn't work either. The counter was more than a piece of wood. Lethbridge-Stewart couldn't pass it, couldn't lay a hand on the star as long as it remained on the other side.

‘You can’t stop me, Lethbridge-Stewart, and I’ll prove it.’ The star stood gloating.

‘What’s that?’ Dumont-McCulloch jabbed a finger at one of the items on display.

‘A monkey’s paw,’ the shopkeeper said, in a distracted fashion.

‘Like in the story? By Jove!’ A smile spread across the old man’s face. ‘How about that? Dangerous things wishes; but if I could wish for anything—’ He picked up the paw.

‘Give that back.’ The shopkeeper made to grab it.

‘I would wish for...’

Some beings were predictable. Lethbridge-Stewart watched the star’s eyes flash with greed and triumph.

‘Yes?’ The shopkeeper stopped trying to grab back the paw. Instead, he pressed it into the air commodore’s hand. ‘Here take it. Go. Make a wish.’

‘I’d wish...’

‘Yes. Yes! Outside. Make a wish. Take it.’

The two were still tussling. Dumont-McCulloch looked up. ‘I wish you and this shop, and your bundle of wishes there ever was, out of existence.’

The star blinked, staring into the other man’s face. Wide eyes swivelled down to where their hands clasped. Dumont-McCulloch refused to let go, so they both held the paw.

‘This isn’t possible,’ the star said. ‘No one knows.’

‘Wishes are dangerous things,’ Lethbridge-Stewart said, thinking back to the previous day. ‘Especially giving someone all that knowledge.’

*‘I’ve one more question for you,’ Lethbridge-Stewart said to the woman in the straitjacket. ‘Thanks to you I can now find the star,*

*but how do I destroy it?’*

*‘Only one way, only one way.’ Maisie Drummond’s eyes rolled in their sockets. She gasped, rocking where she knelt. ‘It hurts, it hurts, my brain. There’s too much.’*

*‘I understand and I’ll try to save you if I can, but you must tell me how.’*

*‘Wish it out of existence.’*

*Lethbridge-Stewart straightened where he stood. If it were that simple... He wasn’t there for this. He longed for solid solutions. Wishes were dangerous. The star protected itself somehow.*

*Maisie stopped rocking. Her gaze held Lethbridge-Stewart frozen, the look in them the stuff of nightmares. ‘Wishes are never made in the shop. No one ever thinks of trying. Even if you could... the star will realise. It recognises threats. You need an unclear mind, but that’s not all. You both need to be touching the object for the wish to break through the shop’s defences.’ She shook her head. ‘And it’s suicide. Can’t let go. You can’t let go. A wish against the star must stay within the shop. Outside it has no power. Whoever makes the wish must stay and wink out with it.’*



— CHAPTER FIVE —

## *A Last Assignment*

Even as they all stood frozen, items in the shop began to disappear as if sucked into a vacuum.

‘She explained everything,’ Lethbridge-Stewart told the star. ‘What you are, where to find you, how to destroy you and save all those cursed, even the idiot who’s been helping to give out these wishes and whose body you inhabit. All I needed was someone who could slip by your defences.’

Dementia. Dumont-McCulloch was the only man Lethbridge-Stewart knew who suffered from it. The star couldn’t read a brain waging a current battle, a mind that wanted nothing than to play a little chess.

The star looked at the old man, leaned closer, and, Lethbridge-Stewart guessed, scanned him. With a cry, the entity jerked back, pulling free from the old man’s grip; too late. Even now, a quarter of the shop had vanished.

‘Out! Out! Get out!’

‘I’m going nowhere. Last assignment, don’t you know. For Queen and Country.’ Benjamin was smiling.

‘No, no, no.’ The star entity started to move around the counter.

Lethbridge-Stewart stopped it with a well-aimed firearm. ‘Come out from behind there. In that form you’re nothing more than a man and I can, and *will*, shoot you. Either way,

it puts an end to this.'

'But you can't! You can't! People must believe wishes *can* come true.'

'People need to wish. They don't need you twisting what they wish for.'

The air commodore turned to look at Lethbridge-Stewart. 'Goodbye, Alistair, your dad would be proud,' he said. 'Give me the gun. You'd better leave now.'

Lethbridge-Stewart looked around. Half the floor had disintegrated and the path back to the door seemed to elongate even as he glanced. The quick look cost him as the star exploded out, flinging something at him. A heavy object hit his arm and the firearm went flying. A demon flung itself at him, its eyes and mouth open to reveal an ugly pool of yellow light that had no business shining. This thing was no heavenly body. Its light would scorch him.

A shot rang out and Lethbridge-Stewart and the entity both halted.

'Go, Alistair, go.' Dumont-McCulloch was on his knees, gun in one hand, and the wishing trinket firmly in the other. 'Go before I forget my duty.' He smiled as Lethbridge-Stewart scrambled to his feet.

He wanted to say something but stepped back as the boards beneath his feet grew spongy. Even as he turned to flee, he shouted out a thank you.

'Pleasure, Alistair. A pleasure.' Dumont-McCulloch's voice boomed out along with the sound of floorboards and cabinets erupting.

Lethbridge-Stewart ran as splinters of wood rained down on him, embedding in his skin, ignoring the pain of them. He ducked as a large golden statue sailed overhead. He

dodged around a chair that snapped apart, threatening to trip him. He pelted toward the doorway as the windows started to bulge from pressure of the store compressing them, and while he ran, he heard Benjamin's singsong voice urging him on and thanking him.

'One last assignment, fulfilling my promise to an old friend. One last duty. Best parting gift ever given to me. A brilliant game of chess well-played.'

The floor fell out from under him and Lethbridge-Stewart recalled the story of Alice shutting up like a telescope. The walls folded in on him, squeezing, and all he could do was to keep going, turning sideways as the space narrowed until he could barely breathe. Lethbridge-Stewart pushed and pushed... Just as he felt sure he would never escape, the pressure ejected him into the street like a cork popping from a champagne bottle.

Lethbridge-Stewart sat in the road with people moving past. He ignored their glances at a man in military uniform sitting and staring at the space between two buildings. The shop was gone. He rose, dusted himself down. Priorities.

He had a few people to check on but if the wish had worked, they would now be back with their families. He looked forward to a glass of malt whisky to celebrate.

He had walked a few paces when a chill crept over him. Of course, if none of those wishes had occurred, how had he obtained the knowledge of how to destroy the entity? Did ending the wishes alter real time or only memory? Could be he needed that drink for another reason entirely.

Lethbridge-Stewart gathered his courage and looked behind him.

*Available from Candy Jar Books*

**LETHBRIDGE-STEWART: THE FORGOTTEN SON**  
by Andy Frankham-Allen

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

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

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**LETHBRIDGE-STEWART: THE SCHIZOID EARTH**  
by David A McIntee

Lethbridge-Stewart was supposed to be in the mountains of the east, but things didn't quite go according to plan. On the eve of war, something appeared in the sky; a presence that blotted out the moon. Now it has returned, and no battle plan can survive first contact with this enemy.

Why do the ghosts of fallen soldiers still fight long-forgotten battles against living men? What is the secret of the rural English town of Deepdene? Lethbridge-Stewart has good reason to doubt his own sanity, but is he suffering illness or injury, or is something more sinister going on?

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## **LETHBRIDGE-STEWART: BEAST OF FANG ROCK**

by Andy Frankham-Allen

*Based on a story by Terrance Dicks*

Fang Rock has always had a bad reputation. Since 1955 the lighthouse has been out of commission, shut down because of fire that gutted the entire tower. But now, finally updated and fully renovated, the island and lighthouse is once again about to be brought back into service.

Students have gathered on Fang Rock to celebrate the opening of the ‘most haunted lighthouse of the British Isles’, but they get more than they bargained for when the ghosts of long-dead men return, accompanied by a falling star.

What connects a shooting star, ghosts of men killed in 1902 and the beast that roamed Fang Rock in 1823? Lethbridge-Stewart and Anne Travers are about to discover the answer first hand...

*“With a story of ghostly recordings much in the style of Nigel Kneale’s Stone Tape, Anne Travers rather steals the story and becomes the key character. Overall a good tale. Worth a read.” – Starburst Magazine*

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## **LETHBRIDGE-STEWART: MUTUALLY ASSURED DOMINATION**

by Nick Walters

The Dominators, the Masters of the Ten Galaxies, have come to Earth, and brought with them their deadly robotic weapons, the Quarks!

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

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

ISBN: 978-0-9933221-5-0

*Also available from Candy Jar Books*

## **LETHBRIDGE-STEWART: MOON BLINK**

by Sadie Miller

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

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

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

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

ISBN: 978-0-9935192-0-8



*Also available from Candy Jar Books*

## **LETHBRIDGE-STEWART: THE SHOWSTOPPERS**

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?

There’s something very rotten at the heart of weekend television, and it isn’t all due to shoddy scripts and bad special effects.

ISBN: 978-0-9935192-1-5

*Also available from Candy Jar Books*

## **LETHBRIDGE-STEWART: THE GRANDFATHER INFESTATION**

by John Peel

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

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

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

ISBN: 978-0-9935192-3-9

*Also available from Candy Jar Books*

## **LETHBRIDGE-STEWART: TIMES SQUARED**

by Rick Cross

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

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

ISBN: 978-0-99351-92-9-1

*Also available from Candy Jar Books*

## **LETHBRIDGE-STEWART: BLOOD OF ATLANTIS**

by Simon A Forward

Could Atlantis really have arisen in the Aegean Sea?

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

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

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

ISBN: 978-0-9954821-0-4