

CHRONOS

An adventure through time by
MAX DRAYTON



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There is mild language, and scenes of an adult nature.

Cover by Phil Lewis

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SAMPLE

Lloyd is enamoured with Carolee, his client. He wants to impress her by travelling back in time to meet her hero, William Shakespeare. His Chronos colleagues are concerned over the danger to his health and the safety of all of them.

Carolee opened her briefcase and took out a blue file. 'In here somewhere' she searched until she found photocopies of old letters. 'Here right here.....'

She spread the papers over the large conference table. Russell and Angelique looked at each other and Angelique shook her head. Both Lloyd and Carolee were too absorbed to notice the concerned interplay between their colleagues.

'This is a map of London, around the year 1594. As you can seeit's very different from today's city. We're about here.' She tapped and moved a finger in a small circle. She moved the finger away and touched the paper again. 'About here, in Russell Street, was the home of a Mr Warrington. A close friend of William's.'

From beneath the larger sheets she drew out an A4 photocopy of a letter. The writing was very flowery and ancient. 'This is an authenticated letter written by William to his wife, Anne. Notice at the top the date and address, Eight, Russell Street. At the bottom of his letter, he's even added the time, four-thirty. The letter says how well he's getting on with his latest play, which he's just about to continue, hoping to finish it by that evening.'

'Fascinating.' said Lloyd, not taking his eyes from her face.

Carolee smiled. 'What this means, Lloyd, is that William Shakespeare was about three miles from where we're standing, on the afternoon of 3rd March 1594, at 4.30 pm.'

Lloyd looked at Russell, his eyes sparkling. 'Carolee will navigate, you drive Russell. Jelly, would you like to come along for the ride?'

'Lloyd, are you absolutely sure you're up for this?' from Angelique.

'I'm fine. Carolee, bring your camera and a coat. Where we park will be a problem. I suspect the whole car will have to go with us.'

‘Lloyd!’ There was concern in Russell’s voice. ‘We’ve planned nothing. There could be ... holes in the road...anything.’

‘Then we’ll take extra care. We’ve two important passengers. This’ll be a first for us. Russell, please. It’ll be a few minutes, there and back. We get to take photos for the museum too.’

Carolee said, ‘There’s only ever been one portrait of Shakespeare ever found. We can see if it’s a likeness.’

Lloyd grinned, ‘See! Come on. It’s exciting. Please!’

Lloyd saw the look exchanged between Angelique and Russell and he knew they were not in agreement with his impulsive decision. ‘Jelly, come with me. You know how to look after me. Please?’

‘Christ!’ from Russell.

The journey took less than half an hour but finding where the original street was, took some time. They settled for a wider road where they could stop the car for a few minutes.

Lloyd peered over to the back seat at Carolee’s map. She said, ‘We’re here, as near as I can tell. We need to get there.’ A finger touched a point on the map.

‘Russ, drive in a straight line, that way.’ Lloyd pointed an arm. ‘Everyone ready?’

‘What for?’ from Carolee.

‘The trip of your life. Here we go.’

The Portal appeared in all its green splendour and the ground rolled beneath the car, adjusted by Lloyd. Neither of the women had experienced this part of the Portal before and was left speechless.

Angelique gripped Carolee’s hand and said, ‘You’re in good hands. This is what they do, and you’ve seen the results.’

‘Is it dangerous?’

‘I’m not sure, it certainly isn’t healthy. You’re just going back in time.’

After what seemed like a long journey to the women, Lloyd said, ‘3rd March 1594, 4.30 pm. We’re here.’

The scene transformed.

They were still inside the car which now appeared to be parked in a narrow, cobbled street, with closely packed buildings only three storeys high. Thatched roofs stood next to rough slated tiles. The two sides of the street arched over the top, almost touching each other. Most of the windows of the dwellings were tiny and had distorted leaded glass. It was getting dark and some windows already had the warm glow of candles in them.

The smell hit them hard and Russell reached into the glove box for some scented handkerchiefs, which he passed around. 'We find these useful at times like these. History stinks.'

Before anyone could study the buildings, Russell was driving away along the street. Carolee gasped as the car drove straight through a house, but there was no collision, or damage. Angelique too had her hand to her mouth in sudden fear.

'What if we hit something that's been around a while, Lloyd?' said Russell, gripping the steering wheel tightly.

'The car's tough, it'll take it. Just a little further. Are you taking photos, Carolee?'

Carolee was too shocked to react. Angelique held her palm out; Carolee found her phone and handed it to her. Angelique took pictures through the car's window. Shaky they might be, but better than nothing.

'This looks like it.' said Lloyd and Russell braked the car to a gentle stop. Handbrake on and into Park, leaving the engine running.

They'd stopped at the front door of a large two-storey house. 'If Willy is on the upper floor, we're bugged.' said Lloyd.

Carolee shook her head slowly. 'Unlikely. Bedrooms and boudoirs upstairs, studies and receptions downstairs. Should we knock?'

Russell said, 'Your knuckles would go straight through the door. They won't hear you; they won't know we're here. We'll have no effect on their lives, or any historic events. You're simply an observer, Carolee. A fly on the wall if you like. Ghosts. Let's go meet your main man.'

Russell and Lloyd slid out of the car and assisted the two women, who were disorientated, not understanding what was happening to them.

There was little sound, other than people talking in a strange distorted version of English language. A few rumbling noises of wooden cart wheels

and horse's hooves on cobbles, but overall it was quieter than contemporary London.

The smell of human habitation was overpowering. Angelique dared not to stare too closely at what she was potentially stepping in, but knew it was unhygienic and unsavoury. Carolee's eyes tried to study everything at once, it was overwhelming.

Lloyd took hold of Carolee's hand and Russell did the same with Angelique. Lloyd led them straight through the front wall and into a small dark reception room, as if he knew where he was going. Everything looked so small and dark by comparison to the modern houses. Carolee looked in every direction as Lloyd pulled her gently through the next wall.

'Take pictures, Jelly.' suggested Russell.

Angelique pointed the camera and fired away, the smell affecting her. A wave of nausea started, and she forced it back.

They moved into a larger room and all stood still.

In the dimly lit room, Carolee found herself face to face with her hero, William Shakespeare. He even looked up at the exact moment they entered the room through a wall and appeared to be looking directly at her. Shakespeare even smiled before returning to his writing. A dark quilled pen scratched on a yellow looking rectangle of paper, one of many strewn over the small desk.

Carolee burst into tears. She dabbed at her eyes with the scented handkerchief, shaking her head slowly. Angelique remembered to take a picture, then changed it to a video and left the phone running for the rest of the time.

'Is that him, Lloyd?' said Carolee unnecessarily. Lloyd knew he didn't have to answer.

The man seated at the table was diminutive and dressed in a frilly blouse, which looked like it needed a wash. His high forehead displayed a receding hairline. What hair remained appeared dark, long and hung down his back. It looked like that needed a wash, thought Angelique. The thin growth of beard and moustache were neatly trimmed. He'd also trimmed his eyebrows, which arched over his eyes in an almost effeminate style. There was a sharp aroma of an unwashed body. He looked tired.

Two candles burned either side of the page on which he was writing. They gave off a greasy smell, adding to the dense atmosphere of the room. Carolee moved slowly around to read the manuscript. As she neared her

hero, the smell became almost too much for her. The handkerchief moved to her nose and stayed there. Tears still rolled freely down her face as William was reading the text and mouthing the words to himself.

‘It’s Romeo and Juliet’, said Carolee softly. She leaned over to see it in more detail and was slowly sinking to her knees.

Lloyd thought it was through emotion, then he realised she was in trouble. ‘Russ!’ he shouted. ‘Get ‘em back. She’s losing it’.

Both men took hold of Carolee, lifting her to her feet. ‘I’ll carry her!’ said Russell. ‘You take care of Jelly.’

Lloyd held tightly to Angelique’s hand and pulled her forcibly after Russell.

‘First time fatigue.’ said Russell. ‘I told you we shouldn’t do this.’

‘Let’s just get home. I hope you remembered where we started from?’

‘Right outside a Costa. Jelly okay?’

‘Yes, thank you. ‘Angelique said quietly. ‘Very tired though, what’s happening to us?’

‘We’ll get you home if Russell gets a move on.’

With some effort Russell supported Carolee on his shoulders and made off back through the walls to the car. The doors were still open, so Russell eased Carolee into the back seat, she looked like she was about to pass out.

Once they were all safely inside the car, Russell made a quick U-turn through the walls of the tightly packed buildings. They’d no time to see the people living inside, their home decorations or style of living. Russell headed back the way he’d come, trying to drive through the same houses, but in the opposite direction. He came to a familiar narrow road and suddenly realised he wasn’t sure exactly where they were.

‘Where did we start from!’ said an anxious Russell.

‘A few feet more.’ said Angelique, her eyes drooping. ‘I remembered we were right outside that shop window. Look at the toys in there.’

The car moved forward, and Russell said, ‘Here?’

‘Close enough.’ said Angelique her eyes closed, and her head lolled back.

‘Let’s hope so. Try it Lloyd.’ said Russell.

The Portal appeared.

With a sigh of relief Lloyd concentrated, willing time to rush towards him. He saw the vague current timeline wall in the distance and tried to judge the approach as finely as possible. On his own he could take more risks, but he’d an extra valuable cargo today. The wall solidified, and they slowed. Suddenly the air was cleaner and the sound of traffic deafening.

They were back.

Someone was behind their car hooting.

‘Home, James.’ said Lloyd with a nervous laugh.

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