

HERITAGE

Dale Smith

*A novel featuring the Seventh Doctor
and Ace, set after Prime Time.*

Bang! A shuttle craft fires out of the sky to land on Heritage, becoming the first to do so since the colony's foundation. As a crowd gathers expectantly, the colony's Sheriff pushes his way to the head. With a belch of dust, the door opens. Out of the cloud, the Doctor and Ace slowly appear: 'I still don't know why we had to leave the TARDIS behind, Professor'; 'Quiet, Ace: we don't want to attract any undue attention'. Trying to assert his authority, Sheriff can barely control his panic when the Doctor tells him that they've come to Heritage to visit the Heyworths.

'Well you've had a wasted trip: they left. Couldn't stand the dust.'

'Left on the last shuttle, did they, mush?'

The shuttle howls into the sky again, ready to return in 24 hours. The Doctor and Ace head for Cole's Bar. Picking his jaw off the floor, Sheriff hurries to warn the "Professor".

In his bar, Cole cleans his arm – a basic robotic prosthesis. The problem is, the dust gets everywhere, into everything, grinding it down, making it seize up and stop. When the colony was founded to mine Thydonium, people could put up with it. Two years later, when the first

synthetic Thydonium was mass produced, it became unbearable. But by then, the colonists had nowhere else to go. When Cole mentions that things tend to go missing on Heritage, Ace's interest is piqued. The Doctor's curiosity, however, seems to shut down.

The "Professor" – Professor Wakeling – is performing test on a young, red-headed girl called Sweetness when Sheriff barges in: 'We have a problem, Professor'. All eyes go to Sweetness.

Instead, the Doctor asks about renting a jeep or some horses to get out to the Adobe Flats. Cole's face freezes. No-one will rent him horses: the Flats are too dangerous, too full of old mines that collapse and bad memories that devour. And nobody's got any horses they can spare for a day. Except for Lee. Cole clamps his mouth shut, but is too late. Ace volunteers to arrange the hire of Lee's horses.

The Doctor sits, and finds his feet overrun by the Fussies – small robots designed to clean the dust away like a vacuum cleaner (their name is a corruption of Sisyphus, a nick-name that reflects the unending nature of their task). He is distracted from them by Bernard and his cronies. Bernard is a dolphin in a cradle – like R'tk'tk in STORM HARVEST – who thinks of himself as human. Moving to Heritage meant there was no sea to remind him of his nature and a changed name completed his humanisation. He and his two friends try to intimidate the Doctor into leaving. It doesn't work: instead, the Doctor rents a room for the night from Cole.

Lee is (like most of Heritage) an ex-miner who is roughly the age the Doctor looks. His house is furnished in a distinctly retro fashion: it is filled with the furniture he tries to sell to make a living. No-one buys it, thinking it reeks of the past. The past is where Lee does most of his living: the house is filled with photographs of his lover, Ryan, but no traces of another occupant. Embarrassed by having to ask for money, Lee agrees to take Ace and the Doctor to their unmentioned destination.

A triumvirate gather to discuss the Doctor. Cole wants to leave him be, Bernard wants him killed, Sheriff wants to know more. It is Sheriff who prevails, invoking the mighty "Professor" and heading upstairs to question the Doctor.

Heading to Lee's paddock, Ace half expects to see cyborg-horses or hover-cars. On Heritage, however, the dust is too unrelenting for machinery to survive: man has been riding horses for thousands of years, and will continue for thousands more. However, Ace doesn't get to see the horses of the future: when they arrive, the paddock is empty.

Sheriff finds the Doctor in his room, the Fussies writhing all over him as he sits cross-legged, impassive, on the floor. As much as Sheriff tries to find out about the Doctor, instead he finds himself telling more about the Heyworths. They left, end of story. The dust got too much for them, and they moved to Sale – the small town by the coast that desalinates seawater to provide Heritage's water supply. End of story. Why not just leave Heritage, look for them elsewhere? The Doctor considers this, but instead leaves Sheriff to go and find Ace.

Sheriff heads to the bar, suddenly in need of a drink.

Ace is busying herself jumping to conclusions. As Lee repeats the stories of things going missing, she looks for clues: the dust seems to laugh as it eddies over any tracks. Is this the first time something alive has gone missing? Lee has a story he is reluctant to tell, a story about Ryan's disappearance one night years ago, but Ace can tell something is not being said. What would the Doctor do? Well, at the moment he'd probably sit and brood and not tell her what was going on. Or perhaps a good mystery would bring him out of himself, bring him back from wherever he's gone. Yes, Doctor knows best: best find him, quickly.

Searching the streets for Ace, the Doctor finds an amiable and over-friendly Professor Wakeling instead. To make up for the townsfolk's mistrust of strangers, Wakeling offers tea and crumpets, and the Doctor allows himself to be distracted from his search for just a few moments.

On entering Wakeling's house, there is a rustling of feathers and a burst of clack and caw. A giant black raven launches itself at the Doctor, who is only saved by Wakeling's intervention. The Professor is the colony's geneticist, the raven his hobby: it is a clone re-created from the Earth archives. The Doctor is impressed, knowing that contemporary cloning techniques are a dismal failure. Wakeling ums and defers, but is visibly annoyed when the Doctor points out the defect in the raven's eyes.

At the mention of the Heyworths, Wakeling's congeniality slips again, even as he trots out a story of moving to Sale almost word for word identical to Sheriff's. Deciding he will learn nothing new from Wakeling, the Doctor leaves. As Wakeling watches him go, Bernard joins him, musing on what the Doctor will do if he finds out that the little girl in Wakeling's charge, Sweetness, is Heyworth's daughter. Wakeling knows exactly what the Doctor would do under such circumstances: he'd have a terrible accident.

As Ace hurries up to the Doctor, she is already telling him about the disappearances. The Doctor, however, seems more concerned with not getting involved: he has made a grave error by coming here and wants to leave immediately. Ace wants to know who'll find out what happened to the horses, to the Heyworths, to Ryan if they don't. But the Doctor is unsure: does he really have the right to interfere? Ace, however, is convinced and vows to help Lee herself.

A new triumvirate meet: Wakeling wants to know what his workers have discovered about the Doctor; Sheriff has found nothing; Bernard is convinced he is a nobody. He could easily disappear, without anyone coming looking for his bones. Wakeling merely nods.

The Doctor arrives at the bar to try and arrange an off-planet call. All lines are currently engaged, please try again later: Cole offers to keep trying whilst the Doctor waits in his room. Once the Time Lord is out of earshot, Cole tries to get Sheriff to do *something*. Doesn't he feel guilty about not doing anything last time? Of course he does, but unfortunately his solution is to crawl into a bottle of vodka and never come out again.

Ace is fuming. Of course the Doctor has to have some great master plan up his sleeve, something dark and dangerous and devious. Why does he insist on trying to keep her out of the crossfire? She's a big girl now, she can take care of the monsters herself. So, plan of action: some *thing* is taking people, animals, equipment some *where* for some *reason*. Some monster that wants to crawl around the dark corners where nobody can see it. The answer is obvious: the mines. When Lee tells her the mines are out on the Adobe Flats and not worth bothering with, she is even more convinced. The Heyworths lived on Adobe flats, until they saw something that made them move away, or got swallowed up by the monster themselves. As she heads off, she leaves Lee fretting behind her.

Bernard creeps as quietly as he can to the Doctor's room. Bursting in, a gun built into his cradle fires, once, twice, three times at the lump in the bed. After the third shot, the gun jams: the dust has claimed another mechanical victim. The Doctor comments on how annoying that must be, and Bernard sees that he wasn't in the bed: he was sitting on the floor, toying absently with one of the Fussies.

Catching Ace up, Lee offers her a more plausible reason for Ryan's disappearance. When the mines were closed, Ryan couldn't handle it. He brooded, sitting silent sometimes for days. And when he got really bad, he used to go back to the mines. When they were in regular use, they were safe and comforting places, but as they died they began to decompose: cave-ins became a regular feature of life on the Flats, and the mines are deep enough to swallow a man without a trace. Still convinced by her own monster theory, Ace counters that Ryan might have met one of the monsters on his last trip. 'There are no monsters,' Lee insists, 'not in the mines. I go there every night, looking for him. I haven't seen anything.'

Ace is almost convinced, but still senses that the Flats are the key to this mystery. She'll investigate, with or without any help: it's what she does now.

The Doctor and Bernard, in duet:

'Leave.'

'Tell me what happened here.'

‘Nothing.’

‘The past makes us, shapes us. Take you: as much as you deny yourself, you still need your cradle to pump water over your body. Without that, you’d overheat and die. Deny your past, yourself, and it will destroy you. Don’t let what happened here destroy Heritage. Tell me what happened!’

But he gets no answers.

And Ace heads for the Adobe Flats, on foot, watched by a troubled Lee.

The Doctor walks down the stairs and announces that unless anybody else would like to try and shoot him, he is going for a walk. Cole says there’s nowhere to go, but the Doctor just walks out. Bernard instructs Sheriff to arrest the Doctor – on any charge he can think of. Sheriff bristles and says that he is the law around here, not the dolphin. Bernard wants to know how long that will last if the Doctor keeps nosing around their business . . .

Wakeling is performing a series of tests on Sweetness when he spots the Doctor walking out of the town. One of his henchmen arrives to tell him there’s a visitor with some news he ain’t gonna like. Lee is waiting to speak to him, looking sheepish.

Ace arrives on the Flats, her complaints about the lack of horses drying up as soon as she spots a grave, beside a burnt out house.

Bernard sets off to follow Ace, his cronies behind him on horseback. Before he leaves, he thanks Lee for the information, and – with a laugh – for providing the horses.

Pushing through charred and blackened furniture, leaving footprint in inch-deep ash, Ace investigates the house. Patches of bright wallpaper and family possessions survive, making the place seem even more dead with their hints of life.

She hears someone else in the house.

It is the Doctor, staring at the mantelpiece. "I'm so much older than you, Ace," he tells her. "I've known millions of people. Seen millions die. But these two . . . I just didn't want to find out that these two were dead, too. And as long as I didn't come here, I didn't have to know for sure." Ace is sorry, asks who they were. The Doctor indicates the mantelpiece: there is a damaged picture still resting there. It is Mel Bush and her husband.

Ace is shocked. She refuses to believe that Mel is dead – the idea that someone who travelled with the Doctor could die seems . . . wrong: 'You've seen the universe at work, Ace. Look around: do you think it would have spared them from this?' 'But you don't know for sure!'; 'I know. Don't you think I know? I've spent a lot of time considering – more time than I should have – thinking how I could sew some different tuck into the timelines. And if we leave now, I could do it. The timelines have only been rewoven if we perceive them to be, do you understand? But if we take the risk – if we stay, hoping they're still alive, somewhere – and we find out we're wrong . . . There's nothing I can do to hold back death, Ace. If I see you die, if I hold your body in my arms . . .'; 'If it was me, I'd want to know that you cared enough to find out what happened, to find out if someone was responsible and to make damn sure they didn't get away with it.'

The Doctor says nothing, his face a shadow.

As Ace and the Doctor leave the house, Bernard and his henchmen appear, trying to run them down with the horses. As they struggle to get out of the way, the Doctor tells Ace to dive to the floor as the horses won't step on her. He dives, soft sand parts and he is swallowed by a cave in. Bernard merely watches, collecting Ace to be taken back to Wakeling.

Lee sits in his house, a picture of Ryan in his hands.

Sweetness is sent to bed as Ace is brought in kicking and screaming. She manages to catch Wakeling tell one of his henchmen to take Ace outside before her bedroom door is shut.

The Doctor finds himself in one of the underground mines, surrounded by the Fussies. They have sucked him through the fine sand, into the chamber. He takes a quick look around, seeing a variety of objects stolen from the townsfolk that have been wrought into a city for the

tiny computers. He also sees that they are guiding him to a rudimentary bed that has been made for him. Too exhausted by the day to resist, he falls into it and sleeps. For at least an hour.

Bernard is gloating, enjoying the idea of shooting Ace, perhaps even letting his friends have a little fun with her. He would himself, but . . . His plans are interrupted when things start blowing up all around him. As the henchmen run off in fear, Ace bolts, but is caught. Luckily, it's Lee who does the catching. He lets Ace throw a couple more of the explosive charges (old mine equipment) in Bernard's general direction, and then tells her they'd better get the hell away. Ace agrees: she's got to find the Doctor.

The Doctor's eyes flick open. Most of the Fussions have returned to Heritage to continue the war with the dust, but a few remain. One couple are warily guarding a smaller, less well designed robot. As the Doctor comes closer, they part and he realises that this Fussy has been made by the others. He finds the plans for the robots – dotted with annotations in Mel's hand – and asks if they know what happened to his friends. The robots are silent, and he does not expect an answer.

However, he gets one.

They lead him to a newer structure, in which the Doctor finds the TARDIS key. Chiding the machines, the Doctor falls silent. There is a heavy piece of equipment in the structure. It has blood on it. 'Mel, I'm so sorry.'

Not wishing to cause another cave in, Lee instead takes Ace to the entrance to the mine the Doctor must have fallen into. Their search is called to halt almost immediately as the Doctor comes strolling out looking right as rain. He has a plan of action: he talks to Sheriff whilst Ace calls up the shuttlecraft and gets them to contact the Adjudicators. Lee is concerned that Wakeling controls the town, and that he'll never let them make an off-planet call. The Doctor seems disheartened, but suddenly brightens: "We'll just have to use somebody else's radio, then, won't we."

As the new day breaks, the Doctor finds a dishevelled and hung-over Sheriff in his jailhouse. The lawman's advice is simple: get back on your shuttle and get away. Don't get involved. The Doctor fixes him with a slate grey stare: 'I agree entirely. I'm starting to think I've spent far too much time getting involved in other people's business, meddling and tinkering until I've botched up a solution that suits my mood. But I don't need to, do I? Because people can make their own solutions. People can do what's right, can make things right, no matter what they've done in the past. Can't they, Sheriff?'

The Doctor puts the bloodied instrument on Sheriff's desk.

Sheriff stares at it for a few seconds, his face unreadable.

The Doctor tells him that he will leave the matter in his hands, but leaves him a few hints: if he DNA traces the blood, he'll find it belongs to Melanie Heyworth, nee Bush; if he checks up on the instrument, he'll find out it's fairly standard issue for any serious geneticist.

As the Doctor leaves, Sheriff watches him go.

Ace and Lee are crawling through the abandoned mines, on the Doctor's instructions. According to him, the Fussies have acquired quite a collection of components from the colony since they were "born", and in particular two of their structures contain enough bits of a sub-space communicator to get a message to the shuttle. If they're connected up properly. And if they can find them. And if they don't have the whole mine fall in on them. Ace decides that the Doctor must be feeling better, because his plans are back to their old standard.

Sweetness – the red-haired girl – decides that its time she had an adventure. She escapes from Wakeling's house, and heads into Heritage.

The Doctor arrives back at Cole's bar, telling the nervous barman that 'sometimes, if we look too hard for answers, we find out things that we shouldn't ever know. Perhaps . . .' He is interrupted by Sweetness' arrival in the bar, and immediately launches into a frenzy of magic tricks and spoon playing to entertain her.

Ace and Lee, in duet:

'Look out!'

'That was close.'

'Closer than you think. I've still got some dynamite in my pack. One of those rocks hits that . .
'

'Wicked.'

In his lab, Wakeling explodes. Where is Sweetness! Which idiot let her wander off! Who's going to be the first to get it if she's not found! Bernard and his entourage scurry away.

As the Doctor watches Sweetness eat some ice cream, he asks her about her parents. She doesn't answer, but as she turns her head, the Doctor notices something in her eye. 'I think I have very nearly made a terrible mistake,' breaths the Doctor, as Bernard and his lackeys stride in.

One of the henchmen takes Sweetness away from the Doctor. Whilst Bernard taunts him, the Doctor asks about Sweetness' parents. Instead of answering, Bernard offers to take the Doctor to Wakeling, so the Professor can thank him for taking care of Sweetness personally. Before he answers, the Doctor spots Sheriff climbing unsteadily onto a horse and riding away, out of town. With a sigh, the Doctor agrees to go with Bernard.

Lee and Ace:

'Why do you stay here?'

'I deserve Heritage.'

Wakeling is making several preparations to some kind of large scale experiment. It involves lots of technical equipment, and a video link. When the Doctor arrives, he is quite chatty, discussing the future with the Time Lord without a care in the world. He seems quite jolly, even. The Doctor wants to discuss the past. Wakeling merely nods, saying the he expected as much: he suggests that the Doctor is an agent, sent to investigate something big on Heritage. The Doctor is non-committal, choosing instead to needle Wakeling for answers. He manages to get out of the scientist that he believes that under certain circumstances, certain people can only be held accountable to history, those people resting on the hub of immortality and greatness. The Doctor informs Wakeling that he is something of an expert when it comes to history, and that sometimes all that matters is that there is a grave on the Adobe Flats, next to a burnt out farm. Sometimes, history only remembers where the bodies are buried.

Wakeling loses patience with the Doctor, telling him that the farm was burnt down by the local kids when the Heyworths went away, that the grave was the horse they couldn't take with them. 'And they asked you to take care of their daughter for them?' the Doctor asks, darkly. Instead of answering, Wakeling instructs Bernard to escort the Doctor to his hotel room while he waits for his shuttle.

Ace and Lee find the cavern.

The Doctor tries again to reason with Bernard, explaining that if he works for someone so ruthless, sooner or later he will become the next victim: Wakeling can't afford any witnesses. Bernard won't listen, though, and simply escorts the Doctor to his room. The Doctor enters first. Bernard enters behind him and is struck a cruel blow across the jaw, knocking him unconscious. As the Doctor spins around, he sees Cole standing there, grinning.

Sheriff is sitting on the Adobe Flats, Mel's murder weapon in his hands, looking out at the burnt out farm house, remembering. In his other hand, is a bottle of vodka. There is a pistol by his side, just within reach.

Ace and Lee wire up the different structures as per the Doctor's instructions. They manage to contact the shuttle and get it on its way, but the equipment shorts out before they can ask for Adjudication. Lee is more concerned by something else he has seen in the Fussies structure: human bones and a knife he recognises. It used to be Ryan's.

The Doctor takes some components from Bernard's cradle, leaving the dolphin immobilised and only able to speak in his natural clicks and whistles. Cole and the Doctor hurry away, Cole explaining that there just comes a point in a man's life where he has to do something, stop running away. The Doctor agrees and says that it's time all secrets were out in the open. Cole looks worried.

Examining the bones, Ace explains to Lee that it looks like Ryan had a fall on one of his trips to the mines. The Fussies must have found his bones and used them like they would anything else. Lee whispers that Ryan didn't fall: he knew the mines too well. His death was deliberate. Ace looks at the tiny Fussies, milling around them, eyes lit.

Sheriff and Cole recount the story; Cole to the Doctor, and the Sheriff through his memories as he sits looking over Adobe Flats:

Wakeling and Ben Heyworth arrived in Sheriff's office, Ben accusing Wakeling of killing his wife. When Sheriff asks whether it was true, Wakeling merely nodded. Sheriff and a deputy went to look over the scene of the crime. After a brief look, Sheriff decided that Mel had tripped and fallen down the stairs: an accidental death. Ben cannot believe what he is hearing, and Sheriff tries very calmly to explain that the work Wakeling is doing is the only thing that can stop Heritage from crumbling into the dust. It will bring jobs and money to the colony, to everyone. None of them can afford for Wakeling to be taken away, for that work to stop. Sheriff instructs Ben to go home and think about it, to go home and look after his child. Ben is furious, but the deputy and Sheriff form a formidable team. He walks home in the desert, barely comprehending what has happened.

The Doctor is appalled, but Cole tells him the story gets worse.

Lee tells Ace that Ryan killed himself. Because he was ashamed. Ashamed of what Lee had done, one night.

The story is now remembered by Cole and Lee. Heyworth did raise his child, and keep his farm going, burying his wife right by his farm house. But he also built up a damning case of evidence against Sheriff and Wakeling. It was only when he came to present that case, that he needed help. He asked Cole – the only man on Heritage he trusted – to help him. To his eternal shame, Cole went and told Sheriff what Ben was planning, and Sheriff told Wakeling. The response was immediate – he held a rally to talk to the whole town, to tell them what would happen. If they sided with him, prosperity and rebirth; if they sided with Heyworth, the same dusty poverty they had known since they landed here.

Heritage's decision was almost immediate: they followed Wakeling and his gang out to the Adobe Flats, and burnt the Heyworth Farm down to the ground. When Heyworth escaped the flames, he was beaten to death by the townsfolk, and left to rot in the desert. Wakeling claimed Sweetness as his own, vowing to look after her.

Heritage had been damned since that day.

The Doctor stares at Cole in silence.

Sheriff throws the murder weapon at the burnt out farm house, tears streaming down his face.

Lee reaches out to touch Ryan's bones, Ace sat wordless behind him.

Wakeling watches the Doctor's shuttle come flying back in, and landing on the landing pad.

The Doctor decides on his best course of action: make sure that Ace gets taken to safety on the shuttle, and then confront Wakeling. Cole thinks he's insane – 'You can't take on the whole town!' – but the Doctor is adamant. Wakeling won't prevail.

Ace doesn't know what to do. She doesn't want to leave Lee, but she can't bring herself to forgive a cold-blooded murderer. Lee tells her to leave, to tell the Doctor what happened, to make sure the universe finds out what they did. Without a word, Ace leaves Lee to the bones.

As they reach the shuttle, the Doctor and Cole find that the pilot is dead at the controls. The Doctor tries to power the ship up himself, but it too is dead. One of Wakeling's henchmen appears behind him and says it looks like the main power cells have been damaged. He gives the controls a hit with a crowbar just to make sure, and the whole ship goes into meltdown.

Ace pulls herself out of the ground just in time to see the ship explode.

Clear of Ace's line of sight, the Doctor, Cole and the henchman are lying where they leapt clear of the ship. The henchman picks himself up, and dusts himself down and says that yeah, it looked like it was the power cells. He says he'll see the Doctor later, and wanders away, grinning to himself.

Ace arrives on the scene, berating the Doctor for not stopping the ship exploding, for not doing something Doctor-ish. She can't believe that he wants to sit back and do nothing whilst the universe dumps on him from a great height. The Doctor is quite philosophical, saying he's owes Wakeling something. He had come to Heritage to tidy up a few loose ends before he crawled away home to bury himself in obscurity. But Wakeling has made him realise that he can't afford to sit back and do nothing. Evil has to be fought, regardless of the consequences. And suddenly, the only thing that Cole is afraid of is the little man standing in front of him, his eyes ablaze.

As Wakeling begins his experiment – watched by some of the greatest minds in the universe, via a conference link – the Doctor and Cole barge in. The Doctor waves at various pieces of equipment: 'An ocrideoscope! A splice 'n dice refractualiser! A DNA extractor! Oh, yes,' he stops in front of Wakeling, 'and a murderer.'

And while this goes on, Ace is creeping round the back of the house and enticing Sweetness out into the wide world.

Everything happens at once. Every delegate demands to know the meaning of this outrage! Wakeling tries to reassure. The Doctor glances at his pocket watch. Sheriff burst in and tries to arrest Wakeling. Bernard overreacts and a bullet is fired. As Sheriff lies dead on the floor, Wakeling turns to see every videoscreen is now a blaze of static.

Hearing the gunshot, Ace pulls Sweetness onto a horse and – with a half-meant prayer – gallops away.

Everything is ruined. The Doctor knows that being the site of the galaxy's first stable cloning experiments would have made quite a profit for Heritage, and that Sweetness really is a most impressive piece of work – despite the flaw in her eyes – but that the achievement was still built on the bones of others. 'It was an accident! When they found out Sweetness was a perfect clone of her mother, not the splicing of mother and father they wanted . . . There was an argument, and . . . and . . . I went to Sheriff myself. I wanted to be punished. But he knew that the rest of Heritage didn't deserve to suffer for my crimes. We did what was best for Heritage – and now you're trying to destroy us again? Do you think we've come this far, just to let you stop us?'

And suddenly the air was filled with dust, belched out of a gathering crowd of Fussies. The Doctor and Cole wisely take the opportunity to escape on Sheriff's horse, out to the Adobe Flats.

Down in the mines below the flats, Lee sits staring at the structure that contains Ryan's bones. He is obviously distressed, toying with one of the explosive devices.

Ace and Sweetness arrive at Mel's farm, where Ace says that all they need to do is wait for the Doctor. As she looks behind her, she sees dust clouds getting closer. Sweetness, however, has spotted something else.

Wakeling and Bernard and the remaining henchman follow on their horses, close behind the Doctor and Cole as they reach the Flats.

The Doctor decides it will be best to split up. They go separate ways, the Doctor heading towards an old abandoned mine, Cole heading the other way. When Wakeling and Bernard arrive, they too split: Wakeling goes after the Doctor, Bernard and his henchman go after Cole.

Ace watches as Bernard and his henchman catch Cole and proceed to toss him between the two of them like a football. Telling Sweetness to stay put and not move for anything, she

rushes to Cole's aid. Sweetness picks up the object she has been eyeing: Mel's murder weapon, lying in the dust.

Lee stares at Ryan's skull, willing himself to press the button.

As Ace arrives and knocks Bernard away from Cole, his henchman tries to help and suddenly disappears into the ground: Cole shouts out that the whole area is unstable. Bernard doesn't care, he will still kill Cole.

Lee can't kill himself, and instead drops the explosives and attacks the earth around the structure, bringing the roof down on it and setting the ground shaking all around.

Wakeling finds the Doctor, who has stopped by Mel's grave. Wakeling attacks, and looks like he will be victorious: the Doctor comments that perhaps it will be easier to give in, to not have to make the difficult decisions any more. Then the ground shakes and rumbles and Wakeling finds himself knocked onto an unstable patch of ground. As he falls, he clings on for dear life and begs the Doctor to save him.

Bernard catches Cole a good clunk across the forehead, sending him down. Ace manages to take him by surprise, however, and pull out some of the tubing on his cradle. The tubing is part of the system that keeps Bernard moist even in the desert heat, and with it gone he soon starts to overheat and pass out. Ace is triumphant, and checks on Cole. He'll survive, and he'll try to keep Bernard from drying up too much as well. Ace goes to help the Doctor.

Before the Doctor can help Wakeling out of the pit, Sweetness arrives, holding the murder weapon. As Wakeling reaches out for his rescuer's hand, Sweetness drops the murder weapon. Reflex makes Wakeling catch it, and he plummets to his death. Sweetness bursts into tears.

Lee pulls himself away from the collapsed tunnel: "Rest in Peace," he murmurs.

Ace arrives, and finds the Doctor looking down at the bawling Sweetness. He cannot bring himself to comfort her. Ace moves in and hugs the girl, giving him a questioning look. The

Doctor doesn't say anything, but as Ace looks away, he keeps looking at the two of them.

There is a tear in his eye.

Heritage holds a funeral for Ben and Mel Heyworth, and after the service the Doctor and Ace slip away to meet with their shuttle, after arranging for Sweetness to be cared for by Cole.

Ace wants to know if the town will survive, to which the Doctor replies: 'They've got a chance.

A chance to move on from the past, and into the future. That's all any of us have, really. Just a chance.'