

VIRGO THE VIRGIN

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'Look, sit yourself down and relax. Okay? You're making me nervous an that.'

The woman was . . . young, he supposed. Older than he was, though. Pretty in a kind of dishevelled way. Not that he noticed, of course. He was above things like that. Didn't have time for them. No, he had much more important things on his mind. But she did have striking eyes, a crystal cornflower blue. And her mousy hair curled around them, and down across her shoulders, soft and thick and (he assumed) warm and sweet smelling. She hadn't yet asked where his parents were either, which was a novelty.

He sat himself down on what looked like a randomly strewn cushion.

A quick tug rearranged his linen trousers, pulling the crease viciously back into them.

The woman returned, something in her hands.

'Here you go. Shuffle these. Okay?' she said, passing him the oversized cards. 'Would you like a dram of something? Whisky? Er, sherry?'

He shook his head, instantly regretted it.

'O that's interesting,' he said, to hide his embarrassment. He picked up the little string necklace, ran the stone through his fingers to feel the rough edges of the carved rune. 'It's an agate of some sort.'

The pretty woman shook her head.

'It's Virgo,' she explained. 'You know, the star sign an that.'

He shook his head automatically.

'No, no, the stone. It's agate. I've seen it before, lots of times.'

She looked at him blankly.

'You can keep it if you like it. I sell em at the market come Saturday.'

Right. Shut up and shuffle, he thought, looking at the cards in his hand.

But he slipped the necklace into the breast pocket of his starchy shirt before he did.

The cards ruffled through his hands, and he found himself growing slightly nervous that he would drop them. That the pretty woman would laugh at him; show him how to do it properly. His fingers caught on the edge of the cards. It flipped the wrong way up - the cards were larger than he was used to - and he caught sight of a delicately painted portrait of a devil complete with horns and a third eye. The surprise nearly caused him to scatter all the cards, but he mastered it. The card was replaced face down in the pack.

'These are Tarot cards, aren't they,' he said, almost smugly. Perhaps it was the comfortable feeling of knowing something, just some fact, no matter

how small.

The pretty woman nodded, and took the cards from him.

'Well, *Tarock* anyways. Tarot's what the punters call em, but they haven't got a clue. They've been around since forever. The cards, not the punters, like. They don't understand but. The punters, not the cards. It's no the cards themselves. They're just a link, a connection, a *symbol* okay? It's all stars and planets and influences they put on you since you were born. Take this one, okay?'

She pulled a card at random from the pack and showed it to him. A man in a long coat was stood behind a table of assorted odds and ends, in his left hand a wand pointing to the sky. The title beneath him identified him as 'The Magician', but there was something about his pale blue eyes and cold blond hair that suggested he might prefer a different name.

'See they say he's a magician so it's all magic and that. But this Magician here is ruled by Mercury, the planet. See, stars and planets and that. Okay?'

He kept his mouth shut, almost sullen. There was nothing guaranteed to take the shine of a snippet of information than someone who already possessed bigger, better, shinier.

He almost caught himself thinking how she wasn't all that pretty really, but then she started laying out the cards.

'Right, let's get started, eh?' she said, and turned the first card over.

She looked down at the patterned back of the card.

'Oh,' she said, surprised.

She turned the card over again.

Again the patterned back looked up at her, the card's identity safely hidden on the other side.

'Oh,' she repeated, looking up at her Questioner.

He looked awkwardly down at the cards that stubbornly refused to reveal his future.

He began to blush as he realised the problem, trying to hide behind his thick dark fringe instead. It was all stars and planet and their influence on your future, she'd told him. The influence they placed on you from birth, and before. What he hadn't realised, of course, was that none of these stars or planets had any influence on him. Why should they? Their influence didn't stretch to where he was born, did they?

He mumbled an apology and stood up to leave.

As he did, a stone necklace tapped briefly against a bright golden star, both secreted inside his breast pocket.

'I hate this place, Doctor,' Adric had announced, matter-of-factly. 'I do, really.'

He stood in the TARDIS cloisters, moss from the dank stones clinging here and there to what Tegan laughingly referred to as his jim-jams. They were out in the corridor, of course, laughing at him. They didn't even really like each other, but they soon ganged up at his expense if the opportunity presented itself. Because he was different. Because he was cleverer than

they were. Because they were women and he wasn't. He'd only been trying to demonstrate his theory about the light sources in the TARDIS, before he'd slipped. He'd only wanted to talk to them, to be a part. They didn't have to laugh when he was trying so hard.

The Doctor fixed him with a soft, sad stare. Cornflower blue eyes.

'Now, Adric, it's not as bad as all that, is it?'

Adric found himself possessed by the urge to agree, just to make those sad eyes sparkle.

'Yes!' he said instead. 'It's time I left, I think.'

He hadn't really meant it, not really. The words had come out before he'd even really thought about them - he *hated* that; thinking was what he *did!* - and once they were out they sounded small and petty. His only consolation was the way the Doctor's face fell, the way he was upset by the idea of losing such a valuable member of the team. Would he look as sad if Tegan had decided to go? No, she threatened it every day, and his face never sagged like that. At least he would have the comfort of being asked to stay.

'Oh,' said the Doctor, crestfallen. 'Well if that's what you really want.'

Adric felt something electric spark in his belly.

'Yes, yes it is,' he heard a voice say.

It took a few moments for him to realise it was his.

Edinburgh was an interesting city. It hadn't been his choice, of course, but then since he hadn't really expected the Doctor to let him go so easily he

hadn't got a choice in mind. But here he was, settling in quite nicely. He had a little flat with a picturesque view of the Salisbury Crags. No computer. No job. No friends. No real idea of what exactly he was meant to be doing, or why. All he had was a mind that kept whirring to itself, and a little agate necklace carved with a rune that meant nothing to him.

He slipped the necklace over his head, felt its cool reassurance against his breastbone.

He pulled on a light summer jacket - a deep wine colour that swished lightly against his knees. The change of clothes had been the Doctor's idea - best to try and fit in, just at first - and Nyssa had helped him choose his new wardrobe. Tegan had merely raised an eyebrow and tried to find another part of the console room to be in. Nyssa had always been the nicer of the two. The cleverer. She had soft velvet curls that fell around her shoulder and were (he imagined) warm and sweet smelling. Before he'd left, she'd extended her hand and formally wished him a safe journey.

He didn't like the clothes: shirts, trousers, jackets - they were all so restrictive. At least his 'jim-jams' let him breathe, let him move. He wore them anyway, the shirts, the jackets, the trousers. Anything to fit in.

The idea had struck him just after dinner that perhaps he should get out of his little flat and do something. He wasn't sure what, but the idea persisted and eventually he just gave in. He wandered around the city for a few hours, watching tourists scurrying to and fro without any real sense of connection. Now he was sitting up on Calton Hill, feet dangling over the drop as he looked down on The Playhouse, watching the sun set beside him. He could see everything from where he was, or at least everything Edinburgh: the

observatory beside him, Princess Street snaking away and drawing the eye up towards the Castle. It seemed . . . small, somehow. Out of perspective with what he knew of the universe.

He was still sitting there, watching street lights flare on, when the man approached him.

'Hallo,' he said gently, his accent . . . well, Adric was no good with accents, but it sounded local. 'Are you alright over there?'

Adric looked over his shoulder at the man. He was . . . young, he supposed. Older than Adric, but younger than . . . Well, he had a sort of smooth agelessness to him. Impossible to judge. His eyes were a clear hazel, catching the dying embers of the night. They looked warming, themselves. They looked timeless. It made Adric instantly feel safe with the man, like he was somewhere familiar. He wore mostly denim, faded, battered, and a T-shirt so tight it made Adric catch his breath in sympathy for the poor man's constricted lungs.

'How old're you anyways?' he asked, an eyebrow raised, the rest of him unmoving. 'Won't your folks be worrying bout you up here all by yourself?'

Adric felt a catch then, the thought of his parents.

'My parents don't worry about me,' he said, haughty but true, hiding behind it. 'I can look after myself, you know.'

'Aye, I'm sure you can,' the man agreed, a soft smile creeping in. 'But it's not a place for a young lad up here. Tourist is it?'

'I live here, actually.'

'Oh aye?' he seemed surprised. 'Well, you shouldn't be alone here is all



I'm saying.'

Adric eyed the man cautiously, squinting slightly in the moonlight.

'Well I'm not actually alone, am I?' the man looked about at that, and Adric laughed abruptly. 'I mean you're here, aren't you.'

A sigh.

'Aye,' the man said. 'Aye, I guess I am at that.'

And then he sat.

The conversation came slowly after that, but not that crushingly awkward slowly Adric was used to. This wasn't a silence filled with desperate brainwhirrs trying to churn up something interesting to share. This was something else. Laconic. Relaxed. The air was heavy with melancholy, and it was only natural that it should start to osmose into the two of them. The man listened, his eyes on the road, while Adric told him his thinking and calculations on how easy it would be to finish the monument behind the observatory. He wasn't even too put out as the man smiled wryly and asked why they'd want to do that.

Occasionally, the man's doe eyes would drop to Adric's chest, and the necklace tapping there.

It was, then, only natural that the conversation should turn to the heavens.

'So when were you born?' the man asked casually, his eyes still on the necklace.

Adric didn't even need to think.

'September 4th,' he said, then paused. '1989.'

The man nodded, his eyes shifting to look out to the Craggs behind them. Arthur's Seat poked up into the night, blocking out some of the first stars. It was an extinct volcano, Adric knew. He wondered vaguely what it looked like when it was still active, bleeding out the Earth's hot blood to cool in the night. Perhaps he should've asked the Doctor to take him to see, before he'd left.

'That's why you've got the necklace, then,' the man said.

Adric thought for a moment.

'It's my star sign,' he said, hoping it came out as a statement.

The man looked at him, soulful eyes sinking deep.

'It's your sun sign. You don't really have a star sign, not like the papers'd have you think, anyways. Your natal horoscope's a wee bit more complicated than they'd have you think: it's all based, y'see, on the exact position of the sun, the planets, the moon when you were born. Where were you born?'

'Edinburgh,' Adric answered immediately. When the man raised his eyebrow, he added: 'My family moved to London just after I was born.'

'Okay,' the man replied, fixing Adric in his eyes again. 'What time were you born?'

Adric thought, his mind whirring back a few weeks.

'Four thirty-three in the morning,' he answered.

A broad smile broke out on the man's face. Adric found himself grinning in return, even though he didn't know what they were so happy about. The man didn't explain, just clapped a hand on the young boy's shoulders.

'What's your name, son?' the brown eyed man said, happily.

Adric smiled back.

'John Richards,' he answered without hesitation.

'Now Adric, if you're going to do this, it's important that you do it properly,' the Doctor said, looking stern. 'We both know that you're different.'

Adric's face had twitched slightly at that, the dreaded word.

The Doctor noticed, of course.

'I mean you're not human,' he flustered, wringing his floppy hat between his fingers. 'We both know the kind of trouble you could get into if somebody discovered that. I just think it would be a good idea if you tried not to attract attention to yourself. Which means they'll be a few things you'll need before you go.'

They'd stopped walking then, pulling up outside an anonymous tenement building. The Doctor looked up at the five storeys of it, and then scanned the buzzers for the name he was looking for.

'Which is why we're here,' Adric said, trying to see which button the Doctor made for.

'Which is why,' the Doctor agreed, pushing a brass buzzer with no name plate, 'we're here.'

Nobody spoke, but the door buzzed open anyway.

The Doctor motioned for Adric to go in first.

The inside was dark, and smelt vaguely of cat's pee. Stairs curled

around and up, leading into the gloom. As Adric stood beneath them, looking up, he felt a swirl of something similar to vertigo. Anti-vertigo. The fear of tall things, towering over you. Like parents. Like gods. Adric felt a shiver crawl slowly down his spine. Light tried to push its way down through the tiny skylight above, but it got caught up in the dust spinning in the air before it reached him.

'Come on then,' the Doctor said cheerily. 'Best foot forward.'

Adric kept staring up at the skylight.

'I don't know where we're going, Doctor,' he said.

He wondered briefly whether he was talking about the staircase.

'Ah yes,' flustered the Doctor, and lead the way.

The Doctor took the steps two at a time without showing even a hint of slowing. Adric didn't mind - his metabolism was more than equal to the Time Lord's, and he managed to keep up without breaking a sweat. Of course the flat they wanted was on the top floor, but it only took them seconds to reach it - rather than the minutes it would have been if Tegan had thought to accompany them. Not that there was any danger of that. Unless she wanted to make sure he was really gone. No, she was probably in the TARDIS, emptying his room out instead.

A broad shouldered man opened the door, wisps of grey touching his temples. His eyes seemed unnecessarily dull, and his speech ranged between non-existent and glacial. Adric barely spared him a glance: obviously not one of the great brains of the planet. The Doctor, however, smiled politely at him and enquired whether they could come in. That was the Doctor's way: ever polite, to everyone. The silent giant just stood to one side, leaving the

way clear. The Doctor doffed his hat and bobbed in, Adric at his heels.

Once inside, the flat seemed lighter and friendly than the stairwell and the welcome. One end was dominated by large bay windows, open to let the light, the breeze and the noise inside the little room. The furniture was all plush and comfortable, a little threadbare but all the better for it probably. There were no pictures on the walls, and the floor was just polished floorboards. It made the room seem a little empty, but in an opulent and spacious way, rather than a deserted, cold way.

The albino sat in an armchair by the window, in silence.

Adric had never seen an adult albino in the flesh before, and he had to do his best not to stare. Normally, of course, he would just let his curiosity go where it wanted, but the Doctor had a warning hand on his wrist. The albino wore a neatly tailored suit, pastel but sharp. It made it look like he was slowly fading out of existence, given the icy skin and snowy hair. His eyes were hidden behind delicate sunglasses, the lenses a translucent amber the colour of honey. Adric suspected they were worn to hide the perfect white irises, rather than to protect them. He sat with one leg resting across the other, his arms splayed indelicately out behind him.

'Hello,' the Doctor said, not quite as relaxed. The mute giant appeared in the doorway behind them. 'How are you today?'

The albino didn't speak, but his fingers danced on the arm of his chair. Looking closer, Adric could see that there was a handheld computer resting there, its silver skin catching the morning light. So furiously did his mind whirr and twirl trying to work out the use of it, its maximum capacity and how it could be improved, Adric almost missed the synthesised voice coming out of

a small speaker hooked to the albino's breast pocket.

THE INFORMATION YOU REQUIRE, the albino's computer voice informed them flatly, IS ON THE TABLE.

The Doctor gave up on the pleasantries, and instead nodded as he motioned for Adric to pick up a sheath of papers on the glass coffee table.

'And you're sure he won't turn up again and make things difficult for my friend?' the Doctor asked.

My friend, he'd said.

HE WAS AN ASSOCIATE OF MINE, the computer voice responded to the slender finger's tapping, WHO GOT HIMSELF UNFORTUNATELY KILLED. I WOULD RATHER IT DID NOT BECOME COMMON KNOWLEDGE IMMEDIATELY.

'Ah well, I'm glad we could help each other out. I take it you'll waive your fee on this occasion?' the Doctor asked hopefully. 'Perhaps?'

The albino's fingers didn't move for the keyboard.

'You're leaving,' said the giant behind them, one slab-like hand dropping on the Doctor's shoulder, one on Adric's.

'Yes, it would appear we are,' the Doctor said cheerily. 'Goodbye, then.'

The giant steered them towards the door, but not before Adric heard the albino's synthesised voice call:

READ IT. MEMORISE IT. IT IS IMPORTANT. IDENTITY IS, TO SOME.

He looked down at the package in his hand: John Richards, the folder read, born 4. September 1989. There was an address for a flat in Marchmont,

with a reasonably good view of the Salisbury Crags.

The Doctor shook his hand and bid his farewells shortly afterwards.

Over the next few weeks, John "Adric" Richards and Pete "the man from Calton Hill" got to know each other reasonably well. It worked to the advantage of both of them: Pete had a lot of things that needed doing, and Adric needed something to do. Equipment was lugged from one side of Edinburgh to another (mostly by Pete), calculations performed (mostly by Adric), and much information and conversation shared (by both of them). They even - to Adric's surprise - discussed their endeavours in the sexual realm, or lack of them in the boy's case.

So when Pete said he had to pick something up from the airport, it was only natural that Adric would go with him. After all, the two of them were inseparable. The best of friends.

'I'll be honest with you,' Pete said in his gentle brogue, 'it's no duty free he's bringing in. He's liable to be nervous. You best stay here. Pick up a paper or something, eh? I'll find you when I'm done here.'

And so Adric wandered for a while, unconcerned.

He found himself in one of the newsagents, flicking through the day's newspapers, trying to decide which one Pete would like the most. They all looked the same to Adric, just a little variety in size or colouring. Like birds, he thought idly. He glanced around the shop a little more - perhaps a chocolate bar while he waited? He was feeling a little hungry - and picked up the nearest

paper, flicking through to the horoscopes. It only seemed natural, after all: most of his conversations with Pete had been about the science behind Astrology. He was fast becoming a convert, now he could see the mathematics behind it.

The stars signs were from a 360-degree section of space, dividing neatly by twelve and each given its own name, like Virgo. His fingers ran idly down the page until he reached the symbol that matched his necklace. The planets themselves moved inside a 7.5-degree sector of that space - or appeared to from Earth - that Astrologers called the zodiac. For some reason, zodiac meant 'circle of animals' in Greek, or so Pete - who seemed to know about Greek - had told him. There were all sorts of complicated equations to work out the exact position of the planets at any given point in his history, and all sorts of rules that dictated what that meant to your life. Pete said they used computers to do all the tricky maths work these days. Adric like to do it with an old abacus he found in his flat.

*A message will be delivered, his horoscope said, too important to ignore. Make sure you listen. Make sure you obey.*

From behind him, he heard a crash of breaking glass.

He turned automatically, just an instinct. Not because he knew. Not because he thought that noise could have anything to do with him. It was just the way he was wired: nervous, like prey darting about the open savannah. He kept his ears and eyes open, just in case.

Tegan was stood a few feet away from him in her full uniform. There was a broken bottle at her feet, some sticky orange liquid trying its best to ruin the shine on her high-heeled shoes. She looked older, somehow: in the eyes



more than anything - he could see they'd seen a lot. She was looking straight at him, her mouth opening and closing but no sounds coming out. Her face had gone pale, like the albino's was. She was, in fact, all but pointing and shouting "There he is! There's the little freak!". After a few seconds, she managed to regain some of her senses. Just enough to take a step forward, her hand coming out to touch him.

'Adric?' she stammered.

She was the last person he wanted to see. He'd left her behind now, her barbs and her coldness. He had his independence. He was better than her, still running around on the Doctor's coat-tails. Or perhaps she'd left him too, now he'd got her so close to home: only twenty years out - would that be too much for her? No, she wouldn't leave him, not now. She couldn't. This was his idea, his own plan, his own life! No!

He dropped the paper and ran, leaving Tegan still stood, her hands brushing the air where he'd been. Face pale, mouth open. There were tears rolling down her cheeks.

Adric ran so quickly, he didn't even notice that all the horoscopes in the paper were the same.

*A message will be delivered too important to ignore, they said. Make sure you listen. Make sure you obey.*

When Pete got back to the flat, Adric was waiting there for him. The boy was tinkering with the apparatus the two of them had constructed, making

minute corrections in his logic. Adric was calm, composed, lost in his work. All he had to do was think it, and it would be true. Pete was carrying a box with him in both hands, delicately, as if the thick cardboard was only a spider's web, ready to tear and rend in his clumsy hands. Pete didn't ask what had happened at the airport, and Adric didn't offer to tell him.

Pete placed the box at the centre of the apparatus and stood back.

'Now we can finish this,' he said, a grin splitting his face from ear to ear.

Adric looked at the cardboard, incongruous amongst the brass work.

'Is that it?' he asked, trying not to sound too derisive.

Pete gave him a look that the boy couldn't read. Then he reached forward and opened the box. Reaching inside, he reverently pulled out what looked like a powder blue egg. Motioning with his head, he told Adric to get the box out of the way, and then placed the egg in its cradle. It sat there, doing nothing but look snug in its new home. Adric looked from it to Pete's grinning face. He assumed that yes, that was it.

'A mundane egg,' Pete said. 'Maybe the last, I don't know.'

'And that's going to be the power source?' Adric asked. 'It doesn't look like much.'

Pete didn't answer, said instead:

'Have you finished your sums? Can we start?'

Adric almost swelled with pride. Of course he'd finished his calculations. They'd been difficult of course, not least because they seemed to involve inventing a whole new branch of mathematics that blended Astrology

seamlessly with Astronomy. But - of course - he'd been up to the task.

Numbers were his universe; they were quantifiable and set, always reacting the same. No matter what mood it was in, a two was still a two.

'So you've got the co-ordinates?' Pete said again, scarcely believing it could be true.

'Of course I have. I said, didn't I?'

'Aye, good. So we can start.'

So here it was, at last. The day that they had talked about, the fruition of their plans. Sometimes it seemed like all they had talked about. In fact, now he thought of it, it had been all they'd talked about. The calculations, the practicalities, the possibilities. It had been more Pete's scheme than Adric's, but as always the boy couldn't resist the opportunity to show off just how clever he was. And arranging to receive a transmission simultaneously from astronomical Mercury and astrological Mercury at the same time was particularly clever indeed.

It was only now that he started to wonder just who would be transmitting.

Pete started flicking switches, and the egg began to glow softly.

An almost inaudible crackle filled the air. It buzzed at the back of Adric's mind.

'Just who are we going to be talking to?' Adric asked, unease starting to build.

Pete danced between switches and dials, seeming to count to himself under his breath.

'Eh?' he said between beats.

'Well,' said Adric. 'It's just that we've set up all this equipment to receive a transmission from a particular point in conceptual space. Or I have, with some help from you. I was just wondering where the transmission will be coming from.'

'Mercury,' Pete said, fixing his brown eyes to Adric's once more.

'Well I know that,' Adric said, 'but who from?'

'Mercury,' Pete repeated, more urgently. 'Mercury. Mercurius. Hermes. The gods' messenger. He'll be bringing the message.'

'I see,' said Adric softly. 'And this message, that will be considered a good thing will it?'

'They'll tell us we're no alone. That we're all a part of the gods' creation. That we needn't worry about fear, death, war or anything ever again,' Pete said, almost sadly, his eyes elsewhere. 'The gods are coming home, and they'll worry about it all for us from here on in.'

Somehow, Adric didn't feel comforted.

'And if somebody wanted to stop it . . . ?'

Pete smiled.

'Take a look outside,' he said.

So he did.

Out in the streets, there were people. Nothing strange about that. It was a Saturday afternoon in the centre of Edinburgh - there were always people about. Of course, they didn't always stand about staring up at the sky as if waiting for it to fall on them, but there was always something new in a city

like Edinburgh. If you'd built the machinery to bring it about without really thinking about why.

Adric turned back to Pete.

'They're a part of it too, you know. We're all under the influence of the planets. So who's going to stop us?'

Adric thought of somebody, briefly. Until the words "this Magician here is ruled by Mercury" popped into his head from nowhere.

'No-one,' he said then, flatly.

Pete smiled.

'It's ready. You need to power up the egg.'

'Me?'

'Well I can't do it, can I? It needs virgin blood,' he said.

Adric felt something give in his heart then. Fear crept into his belly.

'Don't look at me like that. You think I'd do that to you?' Pete said, genuinely upset. 'It only needs a few drops. But it's got to be you. You're one of Mercury's children. Me, I'm a Scorpio worse luck. But you . . . just a few drops of your blood could tie Mercury to this world, give him the start he needs.'

Adric looked at the power blue egg, and the pin that Pete was offering him.

Outside, no-one moved. How could they?

'Come on Adric. We need you. I need you,' Pete implored. 'Can you just do this? Take it away, will you? All this fear and hatred and madness and death? Please? Be a part of this.'

Adric looked at him.

Be a part.

He took the pin, and stuck it deep into his finger, barely feeling the sting as it bit.

The blood dripped onto the egg, drip drop drip.

And the egg cracked open and birthed light into the universe.

For a moment, everything stood poised. The light ripped through the room, through the world, through space, all of it opened up by three drops of blood and the virgin potential trapped within. The laws of time and space were broken. Nothing was real any more. Everything was just an idea, churning and whirling and writhing in a teenaged boy's head. Adric imagined that he could see him, see Mercury - not that burning rock hanging in space, but him! The god, the *concept!* - racing through the light, wings on his feet and fire crackling from his body as he pushed the gods' message onwards.

Of course, part of Adric though calmly. Mercury is a very hot planet.

He caught sight of Pete, ecstasy blossoming across his face.

He caught sight of the mundane egg, pastel blue and powder-like, as it folded in on itself. It distorted in the centre, the light falling into the rift and curling away into blackness. The powder of the egg ran into it, and Adric reached out his fingers calmly to touch it. The grains ran around his fingers and then away, slipping into something else. They pulled the light with it, until the room itself was pitch black. Adric could feel the pull of it deep within him,

sucking him in. It felt good. At last, he thought bitterly, somebody wants me.

Then, with a crack, it was over.

The sunlight leapt back into the room.

Outside, the people started shaking themselves, wondering what had happened.

Adric shook himself back to wakefulness. He was still holding his hand out over the egg, or at least where the egg had been. Now it was just an empty space, not a trace of anything pastel blue. The machinery of his creation had warped and buckled as if under some immense heat. He looked over to Pete, who had frozen, a strange look on his face. He looked like he still expected a god to pop up from behind the sofa and introduce himself.

'What . . .' he said, and then stopped.

Adric couldn't look into his eyes.

'There's something I didn't tell you,' the boy said, shamefaced. 'I can't tie your god to this planet. I can't even tie him to this universe. I'm not one of his children; I'm not a Virgo. I'm not anything.'

Pete's mouth flapped like a drowning fish.

'But you did it,' he stammered. 'You did it. You freed him. You bound him. You bound him *here!*'

Adric shook his head.

'Not here,' he said, holding out his finger. 'I'm not from here.'

Adric looked out of the window. He didn't want to see the look on Pete's face when he realised the boy's finger had already healed up.

'I'm from another planet, another universe,' he said. 'That's where I

bound him, where I sent him. To a dead universe, with no way home.'

Pete said nothing.

What could he?

'I thought it was best,' said Adric.

But he thought: be apart.

He sat on Calton Hill again, watching the sun go down, watching the streetlight come on. There was melancholy heavy in the air, but this time it was pouring out from him and infecting the world. He'd try to stop it, if he could work out how. All it would take was the right sum. A little bit of mathematics to take the blues away. It had to work: mathematics was the song of the universe, the building blocks it was made from. So somewhere there must be an equation to make him fit in, to give him a home.

All he had to do was work at it.

But he didn't try so hard that he didn't notice the Doctor pacing up behind him.

'Would you like to come home now?' he asked, gently.

Adric thought about it a little longer