



THE
STORYTRAILS
BOOK
OF

SPACE
ACTION

Terror in the Fourth Dimension

The Stone of Badda

The Second Conquest

Night of the Comet



Allen Sharp



THE STORYTRAILS BOOK OF

SPACE FICTION

Terror in the Fourth Dimension

The Stone of Badda

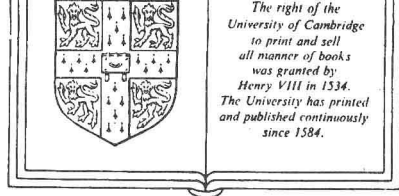
The Second Conquest

Night of the Comet

Allen Sharp

Cambridge

New York New Rochelle Melbourne Sydney



Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
32 East 57th Street, New York, NY 10022, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1987

First published 1987

Printed in Hong Kong by Wing King Tong Printing Co. Ltd.

British Library cataloguing in publication data

Sharp, Allen
The Storytrails book of science fiction.
I. Title
823'.914 PZ7

ISBN 0 521 34020 9

GO

Cover design by Pavel Büchler

Illustrations by John Storey (*The Second Conquest*, *Night of the Comet* and *Terror in the Fourth Dimension*), Hugh Marshall (*The Stone of Badda*), and Laszlo Acs (*Terror in the Fourth Dimension*). Photograph by Stephen Sparks (*Terror in the Fourth Dimension*).

TERROR IN THE FOURTH DIMENSION

Can you return from a two thousand year journey through time?



Read this first



This book may be like no book that you have read before, because **you** decide the story. It is just like having an adventure in real life. What happens in the book happens to **you**. You decide what to do next and, like a real-life adventure, the end may not always be a happy one. That is up to **you**.

There are plenty of thrills and scares and you will have lots of chances to decide what you would do if you were really caught up in the adventure.

Your adventure is a journey into time. If you have ever wondered what you might see and do if you could travel into the past or the future, then read on, following the simple instructions printed below.

How to use your book

The left-hand pages are numbered in the top left-hand corner. Flick the edge of your book through your fingers and you will see that the numbers are easy to find.

You start reading on the page marked 1 and when you come to the end of the opposite page it

will tell you where to go next. As you go through the book, there will be times when you have to make a choice about what to do next. As you come to the end of the page you will see what the choice is. You choose what you are going to do by turning to the number of the page shown in brackets beside your choice.

Example: 'Should I choose to be Nero's guest (26), or should I try for the balcony (28)?'

If you decide to stay with Nero, then you will turn to page 26. If you decide to try to escape over the balcony, then you will turn to page 28.

You have one other way of making a choice. If you wish to travel through time, then you will choose one of the numbers on your Time Zone Selector. You will learn all about that once you are seated in your Time Machine.

To be completely successful on your journey, you must succeed in returning to the present time. If you fail the first time, you can always try again.

Now turn to page 1 – and good luck on your journey into the fourth dimension.



'Have you ever watched a moth flying against an old curtain that's got holes in it? Most of the time it just bangs its head. To get through the curtain, it has to find a hole. If the moth knew where the holes were, it would find that easy. If we knew where the holes were, then we could travel through the curtain of time!'

That was Professor Zuckermann talking to his students at Chicago University. Not many of them believed him. With Zuckermann weighing twenty stone, it was hard to think of him flying anywhere!

**INSTRUMENTATION CHECK COMPLETE.
TIME ZERO MINUS TWO MINUTES THIRTY SECONDS
AND COUNTING.**

Those were the words flashing across the videoscreen in front of me. Carl Zuckermann had lived just long enough to see the beginning of Project DITAS. DITAS stands for 'Displacement in Time and Space'. That was five years ago. It had taken five years and two billion dollars to build a computer which could find Zuckermann's 'holes in time'. I was now sitting inside it.

will tell you where to go next. As you go through the book, there will be times when you have to make a choice about what to do next. As you come to the end of the page you will see what the choice is. You choose what you are going to do by turning to the number of the page shown in brackets beside your choice.

Example: 'Should I choose to be Nero's guest (26), or should I try for the balcony (28)?'

If you decide to stay with Nero, then you will turn to page 26. If you decide to try to escape over the balcony, then you will turn to page 28.

You have one other way of making a choice. If you wish to travel through time, then you will choose one of the numbers on your Time Zone Selector. You will learn all about that once you are seated in your Time Machine.

To be completely successful on your journey, you must succeed in returning to the present time. If you fail the first time, you can always try again.

Now turn to page 1 – and good luck on your journey into the fourth dimension.

SWITCHING TO ONBOARD COMPUTER.
ROCKET MOTOR SEQUENCE ACTIVATED.
TIME ZERO MINUS TWO MINUTES AND COUNTING.

In fact, what I was sitting inside was a bit more than a computer. It had two powerful rocket motors and looked like a small spaceship. It could fly through space. What it was meant to do was to fly through holes in time. This was a Time Machine.

TIME ZONE SELECTOR PROGRAM SWITCHED IN
AND RUNNING. TIME ZERO MINUS ONE MINUTE
AND THIRTY SECONDS AND COUNTING.

It was a funny feeling sitting in a rocket ship in the depths of a large building and knowing that there was no blue sky directly above me, only tons of steel and concrete. You don't need blue skies to fly in time!

I hoped that the computer was going to get its sums right. If I missed the hole, then I would be heading for the wall opposite. With two tons of dipropyl tetrazol in the fuel tanks, there would be a very big bang!

Your adventure begins in one minute fifteen seconds. If you still want to join it, then turn to page 2.

2

TIME ZONE DISPLAY ACTIVATED.
INJECTION SYSTEMS ACTIVATED.
TIME ZERO MINUS ONE MINUTE AND COUNTING.

Two years ago, we had sent the Project Director's watch into time. It had come back in pieces. Last year, we had sent two mice. We had failed to get them back. I was hoping to do better!

TIME ZERO MINUS THIRTY SECONDS AND COUNTING.

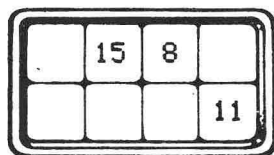
I was looking at the Time Zone Selector Panel. This was the most important thing in the ship. The numbers were still flashing off and on very quickly. When they stopped flashing, then one or more of the numbers would remain lit. Each one would be a hole in time. It might be a hole into the future or a hole into the past. There was no way of knowing. I would have to choose which number to press.

TIME ZERO MINUS TEN SECONDS AND COUNTING
- NINE - EIGHT - SEVEN -

The Environment Panel, next to the Time Zone Selector, was lit. This would tell me whether it was safe to leave the ship, wherever we landed.

- FOUR - THREE -

The flashing numbers on the Time Zone Selector Panel were slowing down. They stopped flashing – and there they were!



I had just two seconds to choose one of them.

- ONE - ZERO - IGNITION - IGNITION - IGNITION

I felt the vibration of the rocket motors. I caught a last glimpse of the underground launch pad before the videoscreen went black. I felt myself forced back in my seat. I felt a pain across my eyes and I could no longer see the instruments in front of me. I was floating in a sea of sound and colour. I was travelling through time!

You have chosen your number, now turn to that page. Good luck on your journey in time.



I was standing at the edge of a huge arena. My eyes were still not used to the bright sunlight, but I could make out a sea of faces above me, row upon row of them, seated all around the open space at the centre.

I knew of only one place in history big enough, it was said, to seat a quarter of a million people and even big enough to hold chariot races – the Circus Maximus in Rome at the time of the great Roman Empire!

On the sand-covered floor were two men. One was on the ground, lying in a pool of blood that had soaked into the sand. The other was still standing. He was wearing a kind of leather armour which covered his chest, but he had no other protection. He carried a three-pronged spear – a trident – and a net made of thin rope. Walking slowly around him were three, full-grown, lions.

The crowd hadn't spotted me. But one of the lions had! I thought it could reach me before I could reach the ship. I had a .45, eight shot, automatic pistol strapped to my hip. I decided this was the time to use it.

The first shot missed. The second caught the beast between the eyes. The other two lions were now running towards me. I fired once, twice, three times. The second lion, I hit as it sprang at me. It passed so close that it knocked the gun out of my hand. I turned and saw the lion lying dead against the wall behind me. The third lion was also wounded. I saw it disappear into the passage from which I had come.

I looked at the man with the net and trident. He was standing quite still. The crowd began to hiss and boo. To my horror, I realised that they wanted him to fight me! He started moving towards me and the crowd began to cheer.

With a wounded lion somewhere down the passage, I had no way of retreat. My gun was lying on the sand a good way off. The man had begun to swing his net. I knew the idea. First catch me in the net, then finish me with the trident. I knew a bit about unarmed combat. If I could catch the net and throw him off balance, I might have a chance (7).

On the other hand there was still the gun. Had I time to reach it (5)?

4

It was only half a mile from the Circus to the Imperial Palace. I didn't think that I was under arrest, but my gun had been taken from me and, with the centurion walking beside me and six soldiers behind, I had little choice in where I was going.

Rome was quite breathtaking, the Imperial Palace, magnificent. The room where I was to meet the Emperor must have been the biggest that I had ever seen. There were all of a hundred people sitting or standing around in it, yet still it looked half empty!

The whole of one side opened through a series of arches onto a wide balcony. Beyond the balcony, shining white buildings and dark green cypress trees climbed a hillside and ended in a deep blue, cloudless sky.

My escort of soldiers led me across the room to one end, where the marble floor was raised and reached by three wide steps. In the centre of the raised floor, dressed in robes of white and purple, and seated on a throne of golden lions, was Nero (10)



5

The man was a well-trained fighter. He knew that I was about to move. He didn't know that my move would be not towards him, but towards the gun. He flung the net, but it passed over me. I was already skidding across the ground towards the gun.

The hot sand burned the palms of my hands. As I stopped skidding, my fingers closed over the butt of the pistol. I caught a glimpse of the trident raised in the air and knew that he was going to throw it. I rolled out of the way, and as my arm holding the gun came free, I fired.

A bullet from a .45 at that range does not leave much to chance and leather armour will not stop bullets. I stood up. The crowd was on its feet and cheering. This time, they were cheering me. I wasn't feeling very proud of what I'd had to do.

I stood, holding the gun and waiting for whatever might be coming next. Perhaps someone had decided that I was killing off the afternoon's entertainment too quickly. Soldiers had started moving into the arena.