

## Deleted scene

This was the original opening for Chapter 10 of *The Ancestor Cell*. It was one of the scenes we chopped late on in the writing of the book, to bring the book in below its agreed (and already-extended) word-count.

Stephen Cole and I both liked this nightmare sequence, but were content with losing it at that late stage. We had made our monsters-on-the-Edifice into spiders as an allusion to the Third Doctor's original regeneration, which would be reinstated at the end of the book, so the subtext of Fitz's fear of wasps was no longer integral to the book. The scene also seeded the idea of "moving the glass", but that wasn't enough to ensure its survival.

The one place where Fitz's wasp phobia does survive in the published book is in Chapter 2, where the Doctor calms him down and devises an escape plan from Fitz's recollection of a different, childhood trauma.

### Chapter Ten: Taken for a ride

The seance had begun mid-afternoon, but little natural light penetrated the attic. The hatch was closed so that no-one would know they were up there, hiding in the gloom. The flickering candles guttered as the wind blew under the eaves.

Fitz had pulled a glass-topped table from one of the dank corners, and propped it so that it sat securely on two firm crossbeams. Eleanor, the girl from the coffee shop with the poky flat in Archway and the wry smile and the tight sweater, sat opposite him. Her spooky flatmate squatted beside her on a rolled-up offcut of alarmingly-pattered nylon carpet. Fitz hoped that the flatmate would get a nasty shock of static electricity before they'd finished.

Eleanor hadn't bothered introducing her flatmate, but Fitz had heard her call him Bob at the Feathers the previous night. Bob was sitting too close to Eleanor, which was supposed to be what Fitz was doing this afternoon. Perhaps he could arrange for Bob to get a different kind of shock.

Eleanor scattered the Scrabble tiles over the glass sheet while Fitz lit the fat wax candles at either end of the table. Bob toyed with the drinking glass, finally upending it and placing it in the middle of the circle of letters.

Once they started, Fitz discovered it was too easy to steer the glass. He'd decided to be Indian Joe, a spirit from the other side, and was able to push the glass to each letter in turn to spell out a message from the Beyond. The edge of the glass drinking cup scraped on the surface of the table, making Fitz grit his teeth.

But Eleanor lapped it all up, as he'd known she would. One quick glance at her hippy shirt and the aspirational posters in her bedroom had been enough to tell him that.

Bob was less easily convinced. 'How come he can spell in English if he's an Indian?'

'I suppose the spirits are translating,' Fitz suggested in a soft voice, keeping his eyes on Eleanor's pretty eyes.

'He sounds like Tonto,' observed Bob, his voice a squeak as he took a drag on his spliff. He offered it to Eleanor, who accepted it wordlessly.

After eight more letters, Eleanor said: 'Oh my God.'

Fitz had made the glass spell 'Kimo Sabe'.

'Knock it off,' said Bob. 'You're pushing it. In fact, you're pushing your luck.'

Fitz steered the glass some more.

N-O-T-L-U-C-K-B-O-B

Bob's mouth was wide open.

Fitz smirked. 'I don't believe I've been told your name. But Tonto seems to know it.'

Eleanor stared at Fitz. 'Bob, he's heard your name at my place. Oh Fitz, you rotten little monkey, how could you? I thought you were for real.' She stood up, grasping the drinking cup tightly in her right hand. 'Do you get a buzz out of playing the fool?'

Fitz wasn't fast enough with his denial.

'I'll give you a buzz, love.' She flung the glass down. The glass table top crazed right across, and Scrabble tiles bounced off in all directions. Eleanor scrabbled across to the loft hatch, Bob trailing behind her awkwardly.

Fitz was about to protest, to calm her down, but the glass table surface suddenly dropped into pieces between the table frame. At once, there was a fierce, rising hum. And then the wasps started to pour from the ragged glass gap.

The humming, buzzing cloud surged over him. Fitz flung himself aside as the wasps enveloped him.

They batted against him like a handful of thrown sand, bouncing off the skin of his forehead, his cheeks, the backs of his hands where he threw them up to protect his face. He gasped involuntarily as he waited for the feel of the first sting, and one of the wasps fell into his mouth. He scrabbled with two fingers, scraping the tiny, fizzing creature from his tongue, spitting repeatedly and praying that no more got between his lips.

They were crawling in his hair, over his earlobes, into his ears. He wanted to scream out for help, but all he could do was howl with his mouth clamped shut, snorting air in short desperate bursts down his nose to stop them crawling up his nostrils.

Now they were under his collar, crawling into his shirt. He flung himself across the attic, knowing he could never reach the loft hatch in time. He buried himself between the torn boxes of mouldering paperbacks, and buried his face in the rolled-up carpet offcut, and screamed and screamed. As he breathed in, the dust from the carpet filled his lungs. He could feel the wasps tickling his neck, ruffling his long hair where it curled over his collar.

'Hey, hey, what is it?'

He stared about himself wildly. The bright, new light scalded his eyeballs, frightening him almost as much as the nightmare.

Tarra was clutching him firmly in her arms now, stroking the back of neck again and talking in the same soothing tone. 'Hey, come on, it's just a dream, Fitz.'

He gave himself to the hug, slumping against her in relief rather than any other motive. Besides which, he felt limp all over. His breathing slowly returned to a ragged kind of normal, though his heart continued to wallop his ribcage.

‘What was all that about?’ Tarra asked him.

Fitz reluctantly allowed her to stop hugging him. He kept hold of her hand. ‘Just a weird dream. I dunno.’ He stared about them.

Of course. The musty smell came from the undusted upholstery on the seat, the buzzing sound was the noise of the underground carriage - no, what had Tarra called it? Oh yeah, the Transtube. The travel system that would take them to the centre of the capital, or was it the Capitol, wherever that was. Their section of the Transtube was empty, unless his screams had scared the other passengers away. Just like the Northern Line late on Friday night, he thought. No matter how closely he looked, though, he couldn’t see any adverts for Beecham’s Powders.