



SUPER GHOST

SUPER GHOST



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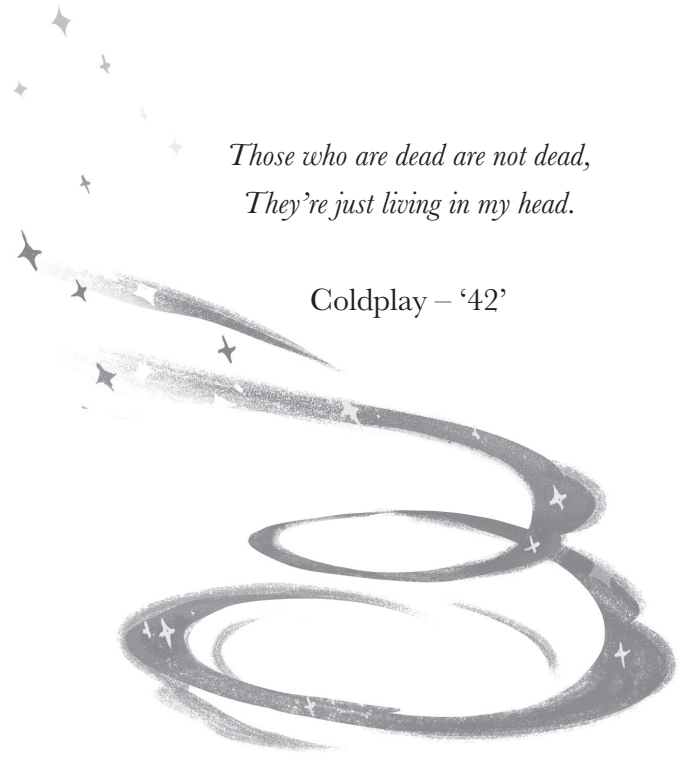
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*Those who are dead are not dead,
They're just living in my head.*

Coldplay – '42'



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PROLOGUE
**THE LAST STAND OF
DOCTOR EXTRAORDINARY**

Don't worry – the hero doesn't die at the end of this story.

He dies right at the beginning.

**WAIT-
WHAT?**

That's an unexpectedly sad opening for this kind of book, isn't it? I mean, it looks like a lot of fun – there's a load of pandas on the cover and everything. And then we go hitting you with that kind of sentence right at the

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start. Well, sorry. But this is a story about a ghost, and you don't become a ghost without . . . well, you know. But fear not. We'll be here all the way through to make sure things don't get too miserable. And the pandas show up a bit later – you'll love the pandas. They do a little dance; it's brilliant. Just wait.

But – as the old saying goes – before you meet the dancing pandas, you've got to get through the sad part. So strap yourself in for a dramatic prologue. Because, as this story starts, Paragon City is under attack. *Cue the stirring music.*

**DUN DUN DUN DUN DUN DUDDA DUN DUN DUN DUDDA
DUN DUN DAAAAAAA!**

(It's hard to write stirring music down, but just try and imagine it, OK? Ooh, here comes a good bit.)

**DUN DUN DUN DUN DUUUUN DUDDA DUN DUN DA DA
DUN DUN DAAAAAAA!**

You know Paragon City, right? With its tall skyscrapers and busy harbour, set beside the sparkling waters of Lake Sunrise? Paragon City, famous for its excellent seafood and the scenic walks you can take on the slopes of the nearby Shadow Mountains? Oh, and it's also famous

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because it's constantly under attack from a very evil villain called Captain Chaos. But luckily Paragon City has a protector. Or at least it used to have one. Which brings us back to the sad thing that's about to happen.

Where were we? Ah yes. Paragon City was under attack. And this is the part of the story where the hero comes in, so please imagine the stirring music swelling to a climax at this point, as the camera pans across the surface of a lake, and the sound of jet engines builds.

**DUN DUN DUN DUN DUN DUDDA DUN DUN
BA-BLAAAAARP!!!**

SWOOOOOSH!

A massive plane has just zoomed right above us. Everyone in the cinema goes 'Ooooooh!' and bursts into spontaneous applause. The superhero has just made his big entrance.

Doctor Extraordinary glanced down at the controls of his supercharged plane, the gleaming black Extra-Jet, as it skimmed across the surface of Lake Sunrise, golden in the early-morning light. He adjusted one of his silver-edged black leather gauntlets (known simply as gloves to us non-superheroes) and nudged the joystick



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forward just a fraction, bringing the jet's underside so close to the lake that the twin engines shot up a rainbow of spray.

That'll look amazing on the TV news, he thought to himself.

He reached up and clicked a button on the side of his large black flight helmet, which had a stylized letter 'E' on the front. 'What are we dealing with today, Holliday?' he asked calmly.

His earpiece crackled. 'Multiple blasts detected in the northern quarter of Paragon City, Doctor,' replied the voice of Professor Lana Holliday from the control centre back at Extraordinary HQ. 'I'm not sure what the threat is just yet, but we can't rule out . . . Well, the usual.'

'A giant robot?' said Doctor Extraordinary with a slight sigh.

'I mean, it might not be a giant robot on this occasion,' said the professor in his ear, attempting to sound cheery and convincing.

'Let's face it, Holliday. It's going to be a giant robot,' said the hero of Paragon City.

Bluey-white bolts of electrical current crackled round his gloved hands as he eased back on the joystick, and



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the Extra-Jet rose above the burnished lake surface. Suddenly the skyscrapers and bustling port of Paragon City were spread out before him with the dark mountains beyond. Through the windscreen he could make out a large smudge of green directly in the city centre – the huge expanse of Paragon Park. And, beyond the park, a thick inky plume of black smoke rose into the pure morning sky.

‘It’s always a giant robot,’ muttered Doctor Extraordinary resignedly, gunning the engines to urge the squat jet forward and hurrying, as usual, to the rescue.

‘Massive breaking news this morning, Susie,’ said the young man in the leather jacket standing on the lakefront. ‘This is Ben Bailey, reporting live from the shores of Lake Sunrise for *Good Morning Paragon*, and I can exclusively reveal to our *GMP* viewers that Doctor Extraordinary, the defender of Paragon City, is on his way to save the day once again.’



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Ben Bailey, with his tousled dark hair and rugged good looks, was Paragon City's most fearless and successful roving news reporter. (At least that was what it said in his online profile, which he had written himself. This profile can be found at benbaileynews.com, which he had purchased, funded and kept updated on a daily basis.)

Ben gripped his microphone dramatically, staring seriously down the camera lens. 'Just a few moments ago, I witnessed the superhero depart from Extraordinary Island on his latest rescue mission,' he told his audience.

Back in the TV studio, Susie Carpenter watched the live footage from Bailey's camera operator as her lens zoomed in on a dark, distant dot above Lake Sunrise. Susie – three-times winner of Best Morning Show Presenter at the annual Paragon Television Awards – was very used to covering this kind of story. After all,



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Captain Chaos tended to attack the city every few weeks without fail.

‘It looks like Doctor Extraordinary’s flying the Extra-Jet today, Ben,’ she said, stifling a small yawn.

‘That’s right, Susie,’ confirmed Ben Bailey, squinting theatrically into the dawn. ‘We’re trying to show you some exclusive breaking live-news footage right now – are you getting it?’

‘Yes, we’re seeing that here in the *GMP* studio,’ said Susie, turning to the big screen behind her.

One of the camera crew let out an involuntary ‘*Ooh!*’ as the feed showed the shiny black aeroplane dipping so close to the lake a trail of sparkling spray was kicked up behind it.

‘Any idea what threat the doc is facing this morning, Ben?’

Most Paragonians (as they’re known) simply referred to Doctor Extraordinary as ‘the doc’ these days. He’d been protecting their city for twenty years now – he was pretty much part of the furniture.

‘Well, we know that he’s chosen to use the jet rather than the Extra-Speedboat, the Extra-Cycle, the Extra-

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Mobile or the rarely seen and frustratingly slow-moving Extra-Hot-Air Balloon,’ the reporter replied. ‘Meaning he wants to get there fast and airborne.’

‘Giant robot, possibly?’ asked Susie Carpenter.

Ben Bailey bridled. True, Captain Chaos did usually attack using a giant robot of some variety, but it wasn’t really the done thing to pre-empt the news in this way. He’d been looking forward to a dramatic motorbike ride across Paragon City followed by a big reveal.

‘No confirmation of what Doctor Extraordinary is up against so far, Susie,’ he said irritably. ‘But I can tell you that, as your roving reporter on the spot, I’ll be bringing you the news first – live – right here on *Good Morning Paragon*.’

As he spoke, the Extra-Jet zoomed above his head, and he glimpsed one black-gloved hand held out of the window with the thumb upraised.

‘For now, Ben Bailey, live on the lakefront, thank you,’ said Susie Carpenter, gathering up her scripts and tapping them on the desk for no reason whatsoever. ‘We’ll bring you the latest on that possible giant-robot attack as we get it, but let’s cross over to the *GMP* kitchen and see what Harriet’s cooking up for us this morning.’

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The camera cut to a grinning woman wielding a frying pan enthusiastically.

'Why, HELLO, Susie!' she bellowed.

'Change the channel! Argh! Change the channel immediately! Help! Emergency!'

With a triangle of toast clamped between his teeth and one scuffed school shoe hanging off his toes, Sonny Nelson hopped round the breakfast table on a frantic mission to find the TV remote.

'We're missing it! Quick! Find another news station!'

'Mmm?'

 Sonny's father looked up from his newspaper with an expression of mild surprise. 'What's going on?' He'd just come in from his night shift at the local police station, and his dark-blue officer's hat hung on the back of his chair. Rubbing his tired eyes with the palms of his hands, he looked around the small, cluttered flat wearily.

'*Da-aaaaad!*' wailed Sonny in frustration. 'We're *missing iiiit!* Doctor Extraordinary's on a rescue mission – it was being broadcast live on TV and they've cut away to the stupid cooking segment!'



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‘Ooh, is it that Harriet Wallace? I like her,’ his dad said. ‘What’s she making?’

‘Today, Susie, I’m going to be rustling up a cheese toastie with a difference!’ burred the voice from the TV. ‘A turbo-toastie, if you will!’ The studio broke into polite laughter.

‘Cooking on TV is the most pointless thing ever!’ complained Sonny, still hunting desperately for the

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remote control. ‘Only one person in the whole world gets to taste the food! Ah! Got it!’

He discovered the TV remote behind a cereal box and started clicking through the channels, searching for a live feed of Doctor Extraordinary. As he did so, a deep roaring from outside began to rattle the windows of their fourth-floor flat.

‘Sounds like a plane,’ said Sonny’s dad through a mouthful of toast. ‘Hey!’ he protested as Sonny dashed excitedly to the window. ‘If you’re not watching that, put *GMP* back on! I want to find out how Harriet turbo-charges her toastie.’

He grabbed the remote and changed channels as Sonny threw open the window and leaned dangerously far out, looking up and down the wide street. Early-morning traffic stretched away below Sonny in both directions. The roaring grew louder and louder.

**‘DAD! COME AND LOOK!
I CAN SEE HIM! DAD!’**

The gleaming ebony shape of the Extra-Jet was

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approaching, filling the street with the scream of its engines.

‘I’ve already seen it on telly.’ Sonny’s dad was still glued to the toastie preparation taking place on screen.

‘Now the secret to a really great toastie is to butter BOTH sides of the bread!’ Harriet Wallace was shouting excitedly into the camera. ‘DOUBLE BUTTER!’ she added at top volume, opening her mouth so wide that her quivering tonsils were clearly visible on screen.

‘But it’s him!’ cried Sonny. ‘It’s Doctor Extraordinary! He’s about to fly past our actual window on his way to actually rescue the actual city!’

In case you hadn’t realized, Sonny Nelson was Doctor Extraordinary’s number-one fan. His bedroom was plastered with posters of his hero, diagrams of all the doc’s various vehicles and maps of his headquarters on Extraordinary Island. Sonny’s shelves were crammed with books about the doc’s missions and back issues of the magazine *Extraordinary Weekly*, which was only available to members of his official fan club, the Sidekicks.

As Sonny leaned out, waving frantically, the Extra-Jet

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approached the window. Abandoning all thoughts of safety, he let go of the window frame so he could wave with both arms, frantically signalling to the passing plane. To Sonny's utter delight, the black-helmeted figure in the cockpit noticed him.

Doctor Extraordinary eased back on the controls, the twin-jet engines rotating to bring the plane into a momentary hover so he could give a quick thumbs up in the direction of the windmilling arms in a fourth-floor window. Then, with a screech, the jet lurched forward and away.

Shortly afterwards, there was a roar from below and a large crimson motorbike drove past, weaving rapidly in and out of the traffic. Roving reporter Ben Bailey was on the trail of the day's big story, his camera operator



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perched on the back of the bike and holding on for dear life.

As Sonny ducked away from the window, grinning from ear to ear, the Extra-Jet was already roaring over the trees, lawns and fountains of Paragon Park. Doctor Extraordinary allowed himself a brief look down. And, to be fair, it's hard not to fly above an enormous statue of yourself without at least glancing at it. Because that's exactly what was at the very centre of the sprawling park.

The statue stood with its legs apart, straddling a wide plaza surrounded by lawns, benches and trees, and behind it was a sparkling white concrete building with a gigantic letter 'E' emblazoned on its roof. This was the Doctor Extraordinary Museum – although, to be quite honest, he hadn't visited it since the day he'd conducted the official opening ceremony five years ago.

(Sonny Nelson, as you can probably guess, had a season ticket and spent hours every week gazing at the various exhibits – including the remains of the mysterious meteorite that had given Doctor Extraordinary his



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superpowers in the first place. And – as roving reporter Ben Bailey might say – more on that later. The large rock was kept in the very centre of the building in a special reinforced glass case, the strange crystals at the heart of the stone pulsating with an eerie blue-tinged white light.)

‘Come in, Holliday,’ said Doctor Extraordinary, tearing his eyes away from his own huge bronze doppelganger and steering the jet towards the plume of thick smoke. ‘I’m almost there. Will have eyes on the threat in a moment. Stand by.’

He zoned out for a moment, gazing absently towards the distant horizon. After twenty years of constantly saving Paragon City, Doctor Extraordinary had recently been finding himself unable to shake off a slight weariness. He’d even, once or twice, caught himself dreaming about retiring and going off to save something else for a change. But somehow there was always a new threat the city needed defending against.

‘Roger, Doctor,’ replied the professor’s calm, capable voice in his ear, snapping him back into the moment.

‘Though I might as well tell you now,’ the doc went on. ‘It’s going to be a giant robot. It’s always a giant robot.’

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(Just to put things in context even further for you, this was the fifth time that year Captain Chaos had attacked Paragon City, and all previous times she had done so using a giant robot. And it was still only 12 May.)

DOCTORS AND CAPTAINS - A QUICK NOTE

We just want to break into the story here because you're probably all wondering, What the actual coleslaw is going on? You've got a hero who's called Doctor Extraordinary, and a baddie called Captain Chaos. You've got your doctors and captains the wrong way round, you pair of absolute antelopes.

It's true that, up until now, most doctors in this kind of story have been villains. (See Octopus, Evil, No.) But we've realized that in real life doctors are kind of amazing, so we've decided to reclaim the word 'doctor' by having a good character called Doctor something. Plus, doctors are generally great. Like really great.

Similarly, most captains have been reasonably heroic. (See America, Marvel . . . Actually, we can't think of a third one right now, but you get the general idea. Birdseye! There you go – that's another.) And, although captains are all right, we think doctors are better. So in this book the hero's a doctor, and the villain's a captain.



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If you think we've gone mad and you hate this idea, then please make this book into a smoothie and drink it. Otherwise, read on.

Yours,

Captain Chris and Doctor Gregory (or the other way round, depending on which one of us you like best)

End of quick note.

The Extra-Jet roared above Paragon Park, passing the tracks of the city's public-transport system, the Loop. This monorail coiled round the city on overhead lines, looking from its vantage point in the sky not unlike a large snake curled up between the buildings. Doctor Extraordinary pulled the joystick back to gain more height as he drew closer to the cloud of smoke, which he could now see was billowing out of the windows of a high skyscraper. And, clinging to the side of the building and shooting flames into the smashed windows from its gaping mouth, was a gigantic metal figure.

'Come in, Holliday,' said the superhero into his mouth-



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piece. 'I have visual confirmation. It's another giant robot.'

The professor chuckled. 'Looks like I won the bet.'

'What?'

'Oh sorry,' she said apologetically. 'I was talking to someone here in the control room.' She cleared her throat. 'That's confirmed, Doctor,' she added in a more official tone. 'Giant robot attacking the city. Again. I'll inform the police department – should I tell them you've got the situation under control?'

'Why don't you contact the scrap-metal department while you're at it, Holliday?' said Doctor Extraordinary dramatically as he eased the jet into a hover above a smaller building next to the giant-robot-bedecked tower block. 'You can tell them to expect a big delivery. Of, er, scrap metal. Because I'm about to turn this heap of junk into . . .'

At this point, he realized he was about to say 'scrap metal' again, and he'd already done that twice. But give him a break; this was the fifth robot attack of the year, and he was starting to run out of puns.

' . . . into, erm, spare parts!' he concluded, smiling to himself with relief.

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‘Affirmative, Doctor.’ Holliday was also relieved that the Doc had salvaged the cool superhero quip – they were always repeated on the evening news bulletin. ‘See you back at HQ for brunch.’

‘Start the pancakes, Holliday,’ said Doctor Extraordinary confidently as he brought the Extra-Jet in for a smooth landing and pushed back the canopy with a thickly muscled arm. ‘This won’t take long. Although –’ he spoke quietly to himself as he eased himself out of the pilot’s seat – ‘I can’t help wishing now and then that Paragon City would save itself. Just occasionally. Anyway . . .’

He broke off with a sigh, vaulting neatly over the edge of the cockpit to land on the rooftop in the established hero landing pose – one hand in the air, the other fist on the ground, rear leg stretched out to full capacity. (DO NOT allow your parent or caregiver to replicate this pose at home; they’ll probably do themselves a hamstring-based mischief or something. It’s for heroes only.)

As the doc left the jet, the lights in the cockpit immediately blinked out, and the engines began to wind down. That’s because the Extra-Jet, instead of running

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on normal aviation fuel, was actually powered by Doctor Extraordinary himself. That's right – one of his two incredible abilities was the mysterious electrical power that flowed through his body. He was basically a human battery.

And what was his other superpower? we hear you ask. Well, it's a slightly less unusual one, but just as useful. Doctor Extraordinary was the strongest being on the entire planet. To be exact, he was one of the two strongest beings on the entire planet. He was not only more powerful than a locomotive, he was more powerful than eight locomotives that had all been welded together to make some kind of incredible super-locomotive. Not that anyone would ever actually bother to do that; it's very silly.

Anyway, we're getting sidetracked again. Where were we? Ah yes, that's right. Our hero, Doctor Extraordinary, was on a rooftop, about to leap into action.

DUN DUN DUN DUN DUN DA DUUUUR!

He tensed his legs, squinting up at the giant robot clinging to the building above him, his brain calculating angles and velocity.



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'HEY, DOC!' came a shout from across the street. Ben Bailey and his camera operator had taken up position on the roof of an office block opposite. 'You're live on *GMP!* Do you have any words for our viewers?'

