



## **Time Crystal Volume 1**

*by Wyken Seagrave*

### **Episode 12**

Extract from  
2nd Edition of  
Time Crystal Volume 1  
by Wyken Seagrave

Part of ISBN 978-1-871281-15-6  
Publication Date 5 April 2010



Issued under a Creative Commons Attribution, Noncommercial, No Derivative Works License



Copyright © 2009 by Penny Press Ltd  
Complete copies of this eBook are available from  
[www.timecrystal.co.uk](http://www.timecrystal.co.uk)

Trackaway ® is a Registered Trademark of Penny Press Ltd

The right of Wyken Seagrave to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted.

## Episode 12. An Arrival, a Departure.

Sam looked up through the triangular gap in the top of his crystal cave, but still could not see or hear the insect. *Maybe it's gone away*, he thought, but a cold fear in his heart told him it hadn't. If Michael was so worried about it then it must be a real threat. *He says he's as wise as a god so I suppose he must know what he's talking about. But then he said Marianne would believe me if I told her I was an angel and it terrified the pants off her, so maybe he's not as clever as she thinks he is.*

Sam turned to face the crystal wall which seemed to be in Marianne's pocket. He could see her mobile phone and a handkerchief lit by blue highlights. He heard her say: 'Lift your feet inside the bubble. That's what I'm telling you. I think something strange happens if you're outside. I think that's what happened to Robert. His head was outside the bubble and—'

'I can't,' Catriona screamed. 'My feet won't move. Oh God! Help me, Alex! I'm trapped! Oh Jesus! What's wrong with me?'

Then Sam heard the buzzing sound again and looked up in alarm. The insect was almost as big as the triangular gap now, its long legs dangling down below the middle section of its body. *It's coming closer! What's it going to do when it gets here? How big is it really?* He turned back to the crystal and started screaming at the top of his voice, calling each of their names in turn, but Catriona was making so much noise they couldn't hear him.

'You need to pull me down,' Marianne said above the screams. 'The bubble moves with the baby and with this blue thing. Here, pull me down Alex. You've got to get your whole body inside the bubble.'

'What blue thing?' Alex said. 'Okay, honey. Come to papa. That's it. Now you, little Kata. Calm down baby.' Catriona stopped screaming. 'That's it, sweetie. Your feet are inside the bubble now. Just lift your legs up. I promise not to look up your skirt. That's it, sweetheart.'

'Oh God, that stings,' Catriona said. Sam could hear her slapping her legs and yelping in pain.

'Yes, it's like the hot-aches,' Alex said.

'It's the circulation coming back,' Marianne said. 'I think when you're outside the bubble your blood stops. Yes, that must be it. Robert's body was inside but his head was outside. That must be what killed him.'

'And what's this blue thing you're talking about?' Alex said.

Sam saw her hand come into the pocket and his heart thumped. *She's going to take the crystal out! Now's my chance to talk to them!*

'I found this stuck underneath the stretcher,' Marianne said.

The view changed and Sam could see Alex's face between her fingers, then more fingers came close and his dark eyes were staring straight at Sam. The image looked huge, with a pale blue light shining across his nose, casting a dark shadow over his cheek, and Sam felt naked and vulnerable. Sam began calling his name.

Alex frowned then his dark eyes moved away from the crystal. 'Look!' he said. 'This thing's got its own bubble! It moves when I move it.'

*Did he hear me? I don't think he saw me anyway.* Sam began calling Alex again but he was facing towards Marianne now.

'Yes,' Marianne said. 'I think there are two of them.'

'So where's the other one?'

She opened her jacket and showed him the stain on her blouse.

'Oh Jesus,' Alex said. 'Is that blood?'

'Mmm,' Marianne said. 'I think something's gone in there. I think it was another one of these crystals.' Then she started groaning and panting.

'You having another contraction, kedvenc?' Alex said.

The buzzing grew so loud that Sam could not hear what they were saying. He looked over to see an enormous pair of feathery objects reaching down and running gently over the crystal net where Michael was trapped. Sam felt his eyes drawn upwards, following them. Towering over him was the vast head of an insect covered in long fine downy hair. It dwarfed Michael, dwarfed the net. It made the whole planet look tiny. It was utterly enormous and terrifying. The feathery things were fixed to the top of its head. *Antennae*, Sam thought.

The head moved forward, two short jaws folded down from the lower part of its face and began to cut a neat hole in the net just above Michael. The buzz changed pitch and became a low, contented hum.

All Sam's hopes collapsed. *It's too late. It's going to eat him!* He turned back to his crystal and screamed Alex's name. The hum changed back into an angry buzz. Sam glanced across the crystal network. The bee had stopped cutting and its antennae were waving around as if it were trying to pick up a trace of something. Sam fell silent. *No good both of us being eaten.* He shuddered and turned back to the crystal Alex was holding.

'...think I heard Sam,' Alex was saying.

'Sam?' Catriona said. 'Where is he? Sam? Sam?' she started screaming.

'Be quiet Kata!' Alex said. 'I can't hear with you screaming.'

'Come here, Catriona,' Marianne said. 'What time is it?'

'Eleven twenty-nine,' Catriona said after a pause.

'So that's five minutes,' Marianne said. 'Looks like the baby isn't due right away, Alex.'

'I don't think it's a good idea for you to move more than you have to, Marianne,' Alex said. 'I'll go and get the doctor. There must be one up on the surface by now. If I take this crystal I can go up and get him and bring him down. You two can stay here. That bubble's just about big enough for two little women.'

'D'accord!' Marianne said. 'You go.'

'This framework leads up to the shaft doesn't it, Marianne?' Alex said.

'Yes. There's a walkway from the top balcony across to the platform at the bottom of the shaft. But I don't think there are any ladders in the shaft.'

'No but there are pipes,' Alex said.

'And the rope,' Catriona said.

'Yes, that's right,' Alex said. 'I'll get up there somehow, don't worry. You keep my watch Kata,' Alex said. 'It looks like Marianne's is broken. *Au revoir mes enfants braves!*' Sam saw him kiss Marianne and Catriona on the cheek. 'See you soon. Now, where are those stairs? Ah yes, that way.' He smiled at them and jammed the crystal into his shirt pocket. Sam could see nothing but the yellow of his shirt lit by the blue of the crystal.

Sam looked at Michael. The giant bee had lifted him out of the net, but it wasn't eating him. Instead it was holding him in two hand-like claws on the ends of its front legs. They made Michael look tiny. The insect was stroking his long white body with its antennae. Michael was not struggling. He was staring at Sam with a smile on his face. When he saw Sam looking at him he said 'Samuel' He sounded perfectly calm. 'Has the Schneider woman got help yet?'

'Yes, Lord,' Sam said, his voice trembling. 'Alex Karolyi has one of the crystals now.'

'Karolyi? Excellent! He will be a good agent.' Michael seemed totally at ease. 'Help him collect all the other fragments.'

The insect lowered Michael and rested him back in the gap in the crystal network like putting a baby into a cradle. He made no attempt to escape. A long round tube emerged from the insect's mouth, curved down like a snake and hovered near Michael's mouth. Something began to pump in the insect's throat and a drop of liquid appeared at the tip of the tube. Michael opened his mouth and began to drink. Sam felt overwhelming nausea.



Alex Karolyi pulled himself along the handrail deep in thought. Red and green rings opened ahead of him, moved around the bubble and closed near his feet.

*What do I know about this crystal? It came out of the blue explosion apparently, when the black hole hit the ground. But then the next moment Marianne was floating along the balcony saying she had just pulled herself up the rope. I never saw that. So what happened to me and Kata in the mean time?*

He reached the stairway and stopped, still trying to figure it out. The rings broke up into random coloured patches, with black areas growing within them.

*What else do I know? A piece of crystal makes a bubble. When you're outside a bubble your blood stops, according to Marianne. How can that happen? My watch and Marianne's were telling different times yet they were both still going. There's something really strange going on here, and it's all connected with this crystal. So whatever it is, it's obviously very important.*

Half of him wanted to go down into the cavern and search for more crystal. Throughout most of his twenty-six years Alex had been the first to seize any new opportunity. That was why he had come to

CERN, in that hope of discovering some exciting new idea whose potential the scientists had missed, something which he alone could exploit.

Now he had found this crystal, something which exceeded his wildest dreams, and he wanted more. But the other half of him felt he should keep his promise to Marianne and go up to find the doctor. Despite the fact that she had broken off her affair with Alex last summer and got pregnant by that stuffed penguin Danny Schneider, Alex still felt a deep affection for her. He still kept her photograph beside the bunk on his yacht, although he hid it whenever he took a new girl there for the night, and he tried never to show Marianne how he felt about her. She seemed to have lost all interest in him and he did not want to make himself look a fool.

*Guess I'd better go and get the doctor.*

He sighed and began to pull himself up the stairs heading towards the ceiling but seeing a thousand new opportunities in the red and green rings which were opening up before him up. His past life and all the old rules of civilization seemed to be slipping away behind him like the stairs which disappeared beneath his feet.

He reached the top of the stairs, where it passed through a hole in the balcony above, and looked around trying to work out which way to go. A broad blue beam ran at right-angles to the balcony on the far side of the handrail. *That must go all the way up to the cavern ceiling. There's no gravity holding me back, no reason I shouldn't just go straight up.* He pushed himself away from the stairs, floated over to the beam and began to hand-walk along, full of excited anticipation. *Nothing in the world is holding back Karolyi Alex! I ain't afraid of anything. I've faced rival drug-pushers on the streets of Budapest threatening me with knives and guns. I've faced the biggest software companies on Earth and produced a better product for CERN at a lower cost than anyone else could. And now I've got—*

Suddenly the end of the beam came into the bubble and before he could stop himself it had disappeared out the back and he was alone. The place where the rings opened drifted round to the back of his head and he lost sight of it. *I must be spinning.*

The point where the rings closed moved up level with his knees, then something hard hit the back of his head, and moved down his left shoulder. He raised his left arm to protect himself, got a glimpse of a white surface moving out of the bubble and he was floating and spinning once more, faster than before.

*That was the cavern wall! Could even have been the ceiling. Shit! Now where am I going? Time wasted. Sorry Marianne. Still, it's not all bad. I must be moving, otherwise the rings would have broken up. I'll hit something soon. It'll probably come in at the point where the rings open. That's the direction I'm going. Want to be ready for it.*

Seconds passed. He kept his hands directed towards the opening point, palms outwards, even when it went behind him, trying to concentrate on the rings, to stay alert, tracking the front of the bubble with his hands and eyes.

But he found it hard to concentrate. *I'm going down. I might even reach the cavern floor. Maybe I'll find more crystal down there.*

Then a large blue tube entered the bubble, just missed his head and hit his left shoulder. There were no hand-holds so all he could do was fend it off. The slippery surface slid rapidly down his arm, rubbed against his leg and drifted out of the bubble. The rings still moved past him.

*That was the beam pipe shield. I'm halfway to the cavern floor.*

Something else loomed before him, a large brown sheet of plastic, then some wires, then another sheet. *The Big Wheel!* He reached out and clung to one of the cables, stopping himself drifting, catching his breath, trying to work out where he was and what to do. *Don't think I'll try drifting back up to the ceiling. If I miss the shaft I could be bouncing around forever in this freaking cavern. Better stay in contact with solid objects.*

He knew there were two Big Wheels at each end of the cavern, one attached to the cavern wall, the other fixed to the ATLAS detector, with the blue beam pipe shield bridging the gap between them, but he was not sure which Big Wheel this was. He pulled himself further down towards the floor, trying to see round the end of it. Rings began to open up in the bubble ahead of him and then a gap appeared, a sort of round ridge travelled towards him and he was looking through a window, a round window, looking out of his bubble into another. There was a blue light shining out of a thick bank of cables. Alex pulled himself forward eagerly and prized the black wires apart with trembling fingers. Sure enough there was another crystal inside. He reached in and pulled it out.

*So there are more of these little beauties! Wonder what something like this would fetch if the world ever gets back to normal? Depends on how many there are, I suppose. Wish I had time to look for more, but I've got to go and get the doctor for Marianne. Time's hurrying by.*

He put it in his trouser pocket. One edge stuck into his hip but it was safer than putting both crystals in his thin shirt pocket. He pushed on to the edge of the Big Wheel. Beyond he could see the blue balcony that ran along the cavern wall.

*Better go up the stairs I suppose. Safer than going up the Big Wheel. Don't want to waste any more time drifting around.*

He pulled himself along the balcony to the stairs and started going up.

*Wish I'd kept to the stairs in the beginning. But no. Then I wouldn't have found this second crystal. Perhaps things have worked out for the best.*

He had gone up three flights and was going along the balcony to the next when something red came into his bubble. *Somebody on the balcony.* A firefighter's red helmet came into the bubble and George Gabor's hard eyes moved towards him. Alex held on to the handrail to stop himself and gave a whoop of delight, floating before him, grinning silently. Although they both came from Budapest the two Hungarians had never met before coming to CERN and did not know each other well. But this morning they had worked together to rescue Sam and Catriona from the stairs and a mutual respect had built up between them.

*He looks as shocked as I was when I first saw Marianne. Give him time to get used to seeing me.* At first the startled look in George's eyes made Alex laugh out loud, but he grew alarmed as George's face crumpled and his head fell forward.

*What's the matter with you, old man? Oh shit! His head's in the bubble but his heart's outside!*

Alex pulled himself forward along the handrail so his bubble enclosed George's chest.

'Gyorgy, wake up!' he said in Hungarian and slapped the firefighter's face.