

## The Memory Stone

Frances Ainslie

(Inspired by Hironori Katagiri's 'Nostalgia')

Lewis looked at the massive stone and scratched his head. He was sure it hadn't been there yesterday.

'Looks like a dinosaur egg,' said Chloe.

'In Stirling? – don't be daft,' Lewis laughed. 'When did you last see a dinosaur around here?' Sometimes Lewis wondered what planet Chloe was on.

He decided to text his best mate. Chaz just loved science. He was a walking encyclopaedia of mostly useless stuff. He'd know exactly what it was.

TXT: CUM 2 UNI, BESIDE LOCH.

Lewis kicked the stone with his trainer just as Mack the gardener rolled up on his fancy new ride-on lawnmower. He looked like he'd just swallowed a wasp.

'Hoy. You two. Get aff ma grass!' Mack yelled. He lumbered towards them.

Then, he stopped and stared at the stone.

'What's that?' he said, 'You can't leave that here.'

'It's NOT mine,' said Lewis.

'Looks a bit like a giant conker,' said Mack, 'Mmm, and it was a full moon last night.'

Lewis fell to his knees and pulled his blazer over his head.

Dinosaurs?

Mutant conkers?

What next?

Everyone was acting weird and with Chaz on his way it could only get weirder.

'Well. How cool is that,' whispered Chaz, adjusting his glasses. 'Have you touched it yet?'

'Eh, NO way!' said Lewis.

'You must be joking!' said Chloe.

'I'll head. Things to do,' spluttered Mack, and he chugged off up the hill.

Chaz crouched down and hugged the stone but he couldn't get his arms right round it. He put his cheek against it, and sniffed it. The square outer stone was grey with spots of mossy stuff on it, like it had chicken-pox. But the inner stone interested him the most. It was

polished smooth, a rusty, red colour. It looked like a massive brain. There were squiggly cracks running across its surface, as if it had been cracked open and glued back together.

Chaz scrambled up onto the 'brain stone' and pressed his hands flat on its surface. It was icy cold to the touch, even though the sun was out.

'Shhh,' he said to the others, 'Listen.'

Chaz clamped his right ear to the stone. He closed his eyes. A black cloud blocked out the sun and the birds stopped singing. After ten minutes Lewis saw Chaz starting to twitch. He and Chloe rushed

forward and pulled him away from the stone. He opened his eyes and grinned at them.

'I wasn't far wrong,' he said smugly.

'Well?'

'It's a brain of sorts - a memory, in fact.'

'A memory of what?' said Chloe.

'Of a planet that's no longer in our universe. Before it exploded into smithereens, it launched this memory pod into space, so someone would find it.'

'Like a message in a bottle,' said Lewis.

'Exactly,' said Chaz, 'This memory pod holds the history of an entire planet.'

The three friends sat down on the ground beside the stone. They closed their eyes. The stone warmed to their touch and pictures flashed through their minds like multi-coloured dreams. They saw a land of jaggy mountains and trees with purple leaves and strange shaped fruit. People sat around on giant stones. The people were tall with silver hair that trailed on the ground, and long fingers. They reached out their hands pointing to something just outside the picture.

They were smiling.