

# **THE SCHWARZSCHILD RADIUS**



**CHRIS KLEIN**

P.O. BOX 1052  
LAFAYETTE, OR 97127  
CJKLEIN67@YAHOO.COM

The Schwarzschild Radius

A Sci-Fi Novel

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## SCHWARZSCHILD RADIUS

**Definition:** A critical radius of a body of given mass that must be exceeded if light is to escape from the body. It is equal to  $2GM/c^2$  where  $G$  is the gravitational constant,  $c$  is the speed of light, and  $M$  is the mass of the body. If the body collapses to such an extent that its radius is less than the Schwarzschild radius the escape velocity becomes equal to the speed of light and the object becomes a black hole. The Schwarzschild radius is then the radius of the hole's event horizon.

The Schwarzschild geometry describes the space-time geometry of empty space surrounding any spherical mass. Karl Schwarzschild derived this geometry at the close of 1915, within a few weeks of Albert Einstein publishing his fundamental paper on the Theory of General Relativity.

One of the remarkable predictions of Schwarzschild's geometry was that if a mass were compressed inside a critical radius, nowadays called the Schwarzschild radius, then its gravity would become so strong that not even light could escape.





## WASHOUGAL

Craig looked down a full starting gate at the Washougal motocross track. Forty bikes were ready for the gate to drop. This was the moment Craig lived for; nothing else existed except the race.

The track marshal gave the signal that meant there were only seconds until the race was to start. Craig's eyes focused on the top rail of the gate. Revving the engine, he leaned over the bars and started slipping the clutch, which caused the bike to inch forward. The gate dropped and he instinctively pinned the throttle and feathered the clutch to get the best traction.

He rocketed forward along with the forty other riders. Craig was on the inside approaching the first turn. All he needed to get the hole-shot was to be a few inches ahead when the pack reached the turn. It was a tough battle. He was racing against the best, and Craig was ten years older than the twenty-something-year-old hot shots that dominated Motocross.

On his best day he was competitive with these guys. His career prevented him from attending every race on the circuit, but Craig wasn't racing to rack up the points for a national championship. He was racing because it was the one thing that demanded such focus that he could forget about his life. For the 30 minutes while he was on the track only one thing mattered: winning. He didn't care about the fans, or the trophies, or the prize money. It was just winning.

The first corner was coming up fast and the rider next to him was a couple of feet ahead. Craig had the throttle pegged, and he scooted back on the seat to put more weight on the rear tire so the knobs would get a little extra bite in the dirt. It helped, but not enough. He only gained a couple of inches on the rider and soon everyone would have to chop the throttle and grab the brakes to make the corner. Craig's only chance was

to hold the throttle on longer than anyone else, then brake harder. The problem with riding on the edge is that there's a much greater chance of going down, and no one wants to go down with forty riders charging hard up your back.

Craig ran the bike deep into the corner before he chopped the throttle, grabbing the brakes as hard as he could. The bike started to slide. He got back on the gas, hoping it would hook up and stop the slide. It didn't. The only thing that stopped him from going over was the rider next to him. The slide ended abruptly with a hard collision. The impact drove the other rider to the ground, giving Craig the hole-shot for the second time that day.

As he came out of the corner he gave a glance back to the spot where he collided with the other rider. He saw bikes down, which meant that the rider he hit had been run over and caused a crash.

*Don't restart, don't restart!* Craig thought.

He wasn't concerned whether the rider was OK or not; but if there had been a bad-enough crash in the first corner, the track marshal could declare a restart and Craig didn't know if he would be as lucky another time around.

He floated over a couple of rolling mounds and steadily gained more distance on the rest of the pack. When he came to the big right-hand sweeping corner just before Horsepower Hill, he looked back once again to confirm that the race had not been waved off. It wasn't! As he exited the corner he pinned the throttle again and rocketed up the first step of the hill. When he came to the top of the step, he waited until he was in the air, shifted into fourth gear and got hard on the gas just before the rear tire came back in contact with the dirt, which showered the flagger with the roost. The bike lunged forward as Craig leaned over the bars to keep the front wheel down.

There was another bike behind him now, getting closer. He could hear it gaining on the left side. Craig started fading toward the rider, forcing him to take a different line and slow down. He heard the other bike ease up on the throttle meaning that he succumbed, for the moment, to Craig's tactics.

Craig laughed out loud, in part out of relief and in part to piss off the rider that he cut off. They both came to the top of Horsepower Hill too fast. It was the first lap and they were still feeling the adrenaline pit in their stomachs.

At the top of the hill both bikes left the ground for too long. At the bottom of the hill was a hard left. While they were still in the air they both grabbed their brakes out of instinct.

They landed at the bottom of the hill just a few feet from the turn and blew through the corner flying off the track and going down as they hit the hay bales. Craig was only thinking one thing; *Grab the clutch! Grab the clutch!*

Surrounded by a cloud of dust and sprawled across the far end of the track, Craig managed to grab the clutch and somehow hung on through the crash. His motor was still running as he struggled to pick up his bike as fast as he could. Craig jumped on the bike and got back on the track while the other rider was trying to start his bike.

Only four riders had gone past Craig. In most crashes the rider is relegated to the back of the pack because it takes so long to get the bike started, like the guy Craig left behind.

Craig was a smart rider. He didn't have the natural talent that some other riders did, but he had cunning and determination. He also had an "I'll do whatever it takes" attitude. His occupation helped him hone the skill of out-thinking his opponent and then doing whatever it took to get the job done.

He was back on the track and behind the four riders. His concentration increased as everything else evaporated, leaving only him and the four. He railed through the rolling whoops and launched off the blind double without a thought. He had four targets and they all lay less than 100 yards in front of him. The track wound through the woods for a couple of turns. He couldn't gain any ground there. He was patient and stalked the closest of the four riders when the track permitted.

He made his move on the big downhill jump. This jump was so big that even the best riders were hesitant. Craig held the gas on as he launched

into the air. He gained a lot of ground on the unsuspecting rider. He grabbed the brakes hard to scrub off speed for the upcoming S-turn, conceded nothing, and exited the last part of the turn faster than his target. He clicked fourth gear again and gave it everything it had as they approached the “Chuck Sun” tabletop jump. Craig hit the face of the jump just feet behind the other rider but because his approach was so much faster he passed the rider in the air. The crowd roared with excitement because this had happened in only the first lap. He heard nothing; he was now focused on target number three.

The third target knew he was there and was taking evasive action so Craig couldn't pass. He would come into a corner tight and then swing wide, which made it difficult for Craig to take any line to get around him. Craig was right on his rear tire through the second woods section and when they came to the corner before the big woops that looked like oversized plow furrows. Craig took the inside line, pivoted, and launched into them. The other rider was already committed to the wide line and launched right beside Craig. It was a drag race across the top of the woops, the bikes seesawing beneath the riders as they charged.

Craig's bike kicked a little sideways and he had to back off the gas and fall back behind the target as they completed the first lap. Craig took the inside line on the sweeping right corner. It was rough and rutted and most bikes took the outside line like the target did. He held the throttle on, even though the bike kicked and twitched beneath him, wrestling the bike through the corner. He pulled up even with the target as they entered a left 180 which put the target on the inside of the corner and gave him the advantage. Craig took the outside line and railed the berm, rocketing him towards the next corner that was a right 180 which would give Craig the edge. The target realized Craig's strategy and tried to cut him off by diving from the outside to the inside of the corner, cutting right across Craig's front tire.

Craig knew it was coming, he gassed it hard and leaned into the path of the target bracing for the impact. As he felt his foot peg hook something on the target's bike, he quickly lifted his leg so that it didn't get smashed between the two machines.

“Ahhhh!” he vocalized, loud enough for spectators to hear.

He got on the gas hard to try to escape from the mess but he was dragging the target with him. He leaned toward the other bike and nudged the rider with his shoulder causing him to lose balance and fall.

As he left the target on the ground, Craig could hear the rider cursing at him. Again he laughed out loud as he sped off after target two.

His concentration focused even tighter. The only thing that existed was the track between him and target two. As he passed the corner where he got the hole-shot, he realized that he had well over twenty-five minutes to go, so he could stalk the next two targets and move at the most appropriate time. He relaxed a bit as he shook off the first-lap jitters. He rounded the big sweeper at the bottom of Horsepower Hill and saw target two just landing off the first step.

Craig blasted up the first step faster than the other rider, but he took the outside line to stay out of view. He wanted to get as close as he could before the target knew he was there. As he soared over the top of the hill, he chopped the throttle earlier than usual to remain undetected.

They both ran through the rollers as Craig inched closer to the unsuspecting rider. Over the blind double the target glanced back and caught a glimpse of Craig, and the race was on. The other rider picked up the pace and blocked Craig in every corner. Craig stayed cool. He was now playing in the head of his target as much as in his shadow. Sometimes when coming into a tight corner Craig would hit the back tire with his front, and in others he would pull the clutch in and keep the motor revved so it sounded like he was charging. Craig was doing anything to break the target's concentration and increase the chance of a mistake. This was too skilled a rider for Craig to out-ride so he had to out-think him.

For two laps Craig played games with him. He could tell that his tactics were working, because he could see the defensive movements against him when it seemed that Craig was going to do something. Several times Craig just screamed, "STOP!!" at the top of his lungs and the target's head would always jerk in the direction that the yell would come from. This went on for several laps until the cumulative effect of the tactics took its toll. As they rounded the corner just before Horsepower Hill, the target missed a shift and Craig seized the mistake to take off for the lead rider. He quickly

pulled five bike-lengths on his former target because the worst place to miss a shift is at the bottom of a hill, and the rider knew it as he shook his head in disgust behind Craig.

The last target was 100 yards ahead and more than half the race was over. Craig picked up the pace.

Even though he'd get first overall because he won the first moto and the guy in front of him finished eighth, Craig still wanted first place in the second moto (each moto was a race within itself, adding points and qualifying for later races). He wasn't playing the numbers game that all the other riders were. He wanted to be first all the time and would take big risks to get it.

The exhilaration was rolling in as the pressure mounted. Craig chiseled away at the last target's lead. People were now lining the track cheering him on as he rocketed past them in a flash, leaving a spray of dirt. He had the attention of thirty-five thousand spectators, all cheering on the underdog privateer to beat the big names that so routinely brought home the trophies.

He blocked it all out as he bore down on his target. He was now within striking distance and the other rider knew it. Craig came off the tabletop low and headed for the inside of the next corner. He railed the berm and faded wide to block the path, but the target squeezed by, screaming at Craig like a banshee. He grinned to himself, as he knew that game very well. In the next corner Craig rammed the back of the target's bike hard, daring him to be so brazen again, and over the next jump the leader pulled a tear-off from his goggles and flung it in the air in a carefree gesture to let Craig know he wasn't rattled. The crowd was in a frenzy as they watched the dueling riders scream by.

Craig decided to make a bold move in the upper woods section where the target would be unsuspecting, and managed to pass for the lead with half a lap to go. Now it was Craig's turn to be the hunted. They flew off the big downhill jump together, Craig on the outside line and the pursuer tight on the inside. Craig cut hard into the corner as the target ran his front wheel up the back of Craig's leg, threatening to mow him under. Craig

held on tightly and got on the gas to escape, but it slowed his exit from the corner.

They both were now on the straight stretch side by side approaching the big tabletop fast, but neither would let off the gas to concede any ground. Craig hit the jump just feet ahead of the target and as he left the ground he swung the back end of the bike toward the target, both as a gesture of taunting and intimidation. He knew the target was going to take the wide line in the next corner, so he cut it off causing the other to jump on the brakes and fall behind for self-preservation.

The crowd was going wild, swinging their shirts and hats to encourage the battle between the two. Most came to enjoy a good race, but to see a *great* race, this was rare, and it brought out a fanaticism that reverberated across the track.

Craig knew he'd need luck to stay in the lead against such a great rider, but he managed to do so for several more corners. As they rounded the last corner, they both launched into the whoops at the same time. Craig kept the throttle pegged and his weight back, and the target almost mirrored his moves beside him. The bump that had caused his bike to kick sideways on the first lap hit Craig again, and as the bike bucked he stayed on the throttle and squeezed tightly with his legs to hold on. It didn't help. The next bump threw him even further sideways, but he refused to relinquish the throttle. The bike slammed the last bump, ripping him free from the bike and over the bars in one violent, fluid move. Everything went into surreal slow motion as he watched the ground coming to meet him. He instinctively tucked his head and landed on the upper part of his back and rolled. After the first roll he felt the bike land on top of him, breaking its fall.

All he could think was, *I hope my bars aren't bent.* The bike was lying on top of him as the gasoline dripped down his back from the over-flow tube.

"I can't believe I lost the race *right here!*" he said loud enough for the nearby spectators to hear.

"*Damn it!*" he said as he pushed the bike off of him.

He got up and noticed an all-too-familiar scene in front of him in the crowd. An agent was talking on a hidden mike in a frantic manner as if something hadn't gone according to plan. Craig shook his head in disbelief and glanced toward the finish line, and saw the subtle but unmistakable signs of a second agent who was also agitated about something. He suddenly had a bad feeling in his stomach. He knew it was about him.

The warning a colleague once told him flashed through his head: "Once you're in you don't get out."

"I'm not trying to get out," he said to himself as the feeling in his stomach grew worse.

This was his lucky day after all. He was lucky he didn't finish the race, But his luck would have to hold out a little more for him to get out of it alive.

He casually picked up his bike and kicked the starter as if he was going to finish the race. Riders flew past him as he repeatedly worked the starter. He watched the agent from the corner of his eye as he kicked.

The agent calmed a bit because it seemed Craig was going to start his bike and finish. Fortunately for Craig, the agent didn't realize he was the one being watched.

Finally the bike started. Craig revved it a couple of times and adjusted his clutch lever because the crash had moved it. It seemed to everyone, even the news helicopter hovering over the finish line, that Craig would just roll across the line and take his 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> place. The fans standing next to him were cheering, yelling at him to hurry up because they had been rooting him on for the whole race and didn't want him to lose any more places.

Craig looked at the closest fan with a twinkle in his eye that said, "Watch this!"

He buried the throttle, spun the bike around, and took off on the track going the wrong direction, straight into the stream of oncoming bikes. He had to dodge a couple of surprised riders as he came to the woods section. He was planning to ride off the track where he remembered a trail off the

end of a corner, but there was a car there that hadn't been there earlier. He stayed on the track, waving to the frantic fans who thought he must be confused as they emphatically motioned for him to turn around. Two more riders flew past him, also yelling at him to turn around. Only Craig and the agents knew what was really going on, and as he rode upstream he spotted other agents in the crowd, visually tracking him while talking into their hidden mikes.

He knew this had to be big for so many agents to be involved, and he also knew shots wouldn't be fired while all the ESPN cameras were on him. He waved to one of the closest agents, but the agent didn't acknowledge him.

"You guys want to ambush me?!" he asked with a clenched smile behind his helmet. "Let's see if you planned for everything."

He took off up the big downhill jump as more riders passed him going the other way, screaming at him to turn around as they flew past.

The news helicopter that was covering the event had picked up on the commotion and started tracking Craig. That was exactly what Craig needed because another chopper was observing and relaying information to agents on the ground, and as long as the news chopper was on Craig, he was temporarily shielded from the sharpshooter's bullet.

Craig crested the top of the big downhill jump still running the track in reverse. He was quickly moving out of range of any stationed sharpshooters.

Now he began to feel a hatred knot up in his stomach. He had served for so long. *It was always for National Security*, he thought. He was only briefed on the targets. He was only supposed to know a small piece and nothing more. He did it out of loyalty, even though he woke up every night at three AM with nightmares so real he could still smell the powder and see the blood spatter on the walls. Eventually he felt tainted because his targets didn't matter to him and somehow that numbness might be contagious if he were ever close to someone. Serious relationships were out of the question.

Even after all he had done for The Agency; he knew what had always festered in the back of his mind. He was expendable.

Craig turned now and rode off the track. He followed a trail that headed west. Luck was holding as the news helicopter still tracked him.

“Come on. Keep following me,” he mumbled to himself as he got on the gas.

Hoping to cut over to the highway heading into town, he rode in and out of trees as the trail ended at the road. He knew the news helicopter was going to be his eyewitness, and maybe his lifeline. He also knew the helicopter was a beacon pointing directly at him from miles away.

Craig pulled on to the curvy road that followed the Washougal River to the Columbia. His immediate goal was just to make it to the town before they could get their own helicopter within range to contain him. He glanced behind and saw a sedan with a flashing light on the dash.

He got on the gas and quickly put several hundred yards between himself and the car. The twisting road gave Craig a big advantage over the car and he was way ahead. The problem was, Craig wasn't accustomed to being chased; he was the one that stalked people, the predator.

Running on the edge of being in control, there was no margin for error, just like on the racetrack. He wasn't thinking now, just riding fast. If he wanted to live, he would have to learn from this mistake, and hope it would not be his last.

A hard right was approaching fast. He got on the brakes to scrub some speed, glancing behind him to track his pursuers. As he entered the corner he got back on the gas and looked up just in time to see a log truck right in his lane. There wasn't enough time to react or think before the collision, only to realize that it was happening.

Everything moved in a slow motion, out-of-body dreamlike state. No fear, no regret, just a consciousness of the upcoming impact. When it happened he heard the blow at a distance like someone dropping a bowling ball from several stories up onto a hard wooden floor. Then the noise

gave way to a silent shower of sparks everywhere, and another impact that sounded even more distant.

The news helicopter had filmed the whole thing, and it would play over and over on the news that night, in the same eerie slow-motion. It was Craig's lucky day. Three cars behind the truck was an ambulance returning to the Motocross track. It had just transported an injured rider to the hospital an hour before.

Maple trees were what he saw in his semi-conscious state. He saw maple trees from one blood-soaked eye. A big flap of scalp covered the other. His body, twisted and contorted under the guardrail, twitched with involuntary muscle spasms.

*I didn't know there were so many maple trees here,* Craig thought as a paramedic leaned over him and broke his stare.

The paramedic queasily lurched back, unable to maintain his stomach because of the gruesome sight in front of him. Most of the top of Craig's head was now relocated across his face.

*Oh God, it must be bad,* Craig thought, as he heard the splatter of vomit from the paramedic puking beside him. Is this what it's like to die?

"Oh geez, guy, let's put this back where it belongs," the other paramedic said as he hinged Craig's scalp approximately to the right place so it fit like a bad toupee.

"Thanks," Craig whispered. His mouth moved but his voice no longer worked because of the trauma to his throat.

The paramedics worked carefully and quickly to stabilize the spine and neck. They were also racing against time because the injury to Craig's head was obviously severe. When Craig hit the truck, the violent impact tore the helmet off of his head, careening him into a head-first trajectory directly against and then under the guardrail. As his unprotected skull took the full blow of his sixty mile-per-hour body, there was a good chance his brain would swell, killing him, if they didn't get him to a hospital fast.

A man from the sedan walked up to see Craig.

“Is he going to live?”

“It doesn’t look good,” the paramedic said.

“Where are you taking him?”

“We are going to meet the helicopter in Washougal and from there he will be Life-Flighted to OHSU,” replied the paramedic.

“Where’s that?”

“The west side of Portland,” the paramedic answered as they quickly loaded Craig into the ambulance.

“He’s saying something,” the man said as he followed them into the ambulance. Craig’s bloody lips were moving but the man couldn’t hear very well so he leaned closer.

“Natasha... Natasha... Natasha...” “Craig was whispering over and over with the glazed death stare.

“There’s no room in here for you,” the paramedic warned as he pushed the man out of the ambulance.

The driver rushed around the side of the ambulance and jumped in the front seat of the sedan. As they sped off, the man was already on his cell phone.

The ride was very edgy. Craig bounced lifelessly as the ambulance raced for the rendezvous with Life Flight. The paramedics knew every second counted with a head injury that severe. Craig was bleeding a lot, but the major concern was stabilizing the spine and reducing the pressure caused by the brain swelling.

Mannitol was administered to slow the swelling, but it had already begun. One eye was dilated and he was slipping in and out of consciousness. When in his semiconscious state he continued whispering, “Natasha... Natasha... Natasha...”

“How many minutes until we get to Life Flight?” the paramedic beside him asked.

“Two, two and a half tops!” yelled the paramedic from the drivers seat.

“He’s going to need a miracle.”

The Mannitol had slowed the swelling enough to get him to Life Flight. The helicopter was waiting for him near the Columbia River. The rush of air woke Craig briefly, causing him to struggle. The loud pop of the blades startled him, and his mouth opened in desperate attempts to breathe. His windpipe had been badly crushed from the chinstrap of his helmet when it was ripped from his head.

When he was secured in the helicopter, the paramedics performed a tracheotomy so he wouldn’t have to struggle to breathe. Now the focus was his head injury. The Mannitol had slowed the swelling but he was still running out of time as the pressure inside his skull had reached a dangerous level. The helicopter made a beeline for the hospital and radioed ahead to have an operating room prepped and to have a neurologist on standby for emergency surgery.

The transfer from Life Flight to the emergency surgical team was quick, and they had him on the operating table in a matter of minutes. Craig’s eyes opened wide for a moment when the doctor started drilling the first burr-hole to relieve pressure. No anesthetic was administered because it had to be done quickly. The grinding noise inside his head was that of a rat on speed trying to chew his way out of a box.

“He’s got a pretty thick skull,” the doctor said as he put more pressure on the drill. “Craig... Craig... can you hear me?”

Craig’s eyes broke from the stare, again, for a moment of acknowledgment and then he faded away. The doctor pressed a little harder on the drill to finish the hole. The bit tore at Craig’s skull more ravenously. The doctor felt a change in the progress; he knew he was getting close to drilling through the skull.

“I’m close!”

The drill finished gnawing through Craig’s head. A bloody fluid sprayed back at the doctor.

“Man! There was a lot of pressure. I hope I wasn’t too late.”

The doctor moved around the back of Craig's head to drill the second burr-hole. The doctor began to sweat as he cranked the drill. Its sharp edges tore through Craig's exposed skull as the doctor pushed the half-severed scalp out of the way so he could see better. It was like a mason's drill drilling concrete. Small pieces of Craig's skull fell on the table making a bloody pile of white sand. His head would move every once in a while when the bit caught a little and the torque would transfer to his head, making him look like he was ever so slightly shaking his head in spastic denial.

He began to come out of his catatonic stare. Maybe it was the noise, or maybe the relief from the pressure. He had a confused look on his face because he had no idea what was going on.

The doctor saw the look on Craig's face and smiled.

"I'll bet you have one hell of a headache!"

The look on Craig's face said, *Yeab, I've got a headache. Why the hell are you drilling holes in my head?*

"I've got just one more hole to drill, then I'll stop... I think the bit is getting dull anyway... either that or your head is getting harder," the doctor joked with a detached smirk.

He finished that hole and started the third. For some reason the drill had a better bite than the first two holes and drilled more quickly than the doctor expected. As it unexpectedly penetrated the skull the doctor pulled back, and as he did there was a little gray matter on the tip of the bit.

"Is he still conscious?" he asked a nurse that was assisting him.

"Yes, he seems to be breathing deeper... wait... he's dropping off... his vitals are OK now." she answered.

"OK... I think we can control the ICP now. We just need to watch him to make sure he doesn't seize. Let's get a CAT scan and see what other kind of damage has been done here."

Craig saw flashes as if lightning had gone off in the room. Then a rainbow of color cascaded in his peripheral vision and slowly expanded until

the only thing he could see was a magical kaleidoscope of colors. The noise of the operation was distant as if in a different room, muffled by several walls. He was sure that he was dying. He kept waiting for the tunnel and a greater out-of-body experience than the limited amount of Remote Viewing he had been able to do before the accident.

The drilling of the last burr-hole had nicked a part of his brain that allowed him to have an altered consciousness. Uncontrolled, it was like a trip on psychedelic mushrooms or LSD.

This was Craig's lucky day. Although he was in the hospital, almost dead with a broken neck and ribs, three holes in his head, and a couple of grunts from The Agency right outside his door, all these unfortunate events that could have ended his life, hadn't done so. In fact, they had stacked the deck in his favor.

That was how it all began.