

COSMIC MASQUE



DOCTOR
WHO
APPRECIATION
SOCIETY
CM XV

EDITORIAL

By Stephen Hatcher

The Land of Fiction Invasion

Welcome to the fifteenth issue of Cosmic Masque – as you will probably have noticed, this one is rather different. I am delighted to say that regular CM Editor Nick Smith and our friends and colleagues at the DWAS Publications Department have acceded to my request to make this issue a Fiction Special – the first such that DWAS have published in many years.

Since I came on-board as Fiction Editor of Cosmic Masque with CM VI, I have been delighted with the standard of stories submitted for inclusion in the magazine, from both new and established writers, ranging from the full-time professionals to those who write irregularly and for fun.

My reluctance to reject any story outright, together with the generous response to my regular appeals for more stories has resulted in something of a backlog – a list of excellent stories, ready to publish in Cosmic Masque, but without enough slots to publish them in.

The solution, of course is a delightful one – this Fiction Special.

So, I am proud to present sixteen

stories, covering almost all eras of Doctor Who. Of those sixteen, ten are brand new stories, including Part Two of Formation, by Paul Ebbs (Part One, appeared in CM XIV). We have stories by four more regular CM writers: Trinh Eke, Gary Merchant, Robert John Cumming, and Paul Burns; and five stories by writers new to CM (or in one case a writer who has been too long -absent): Ian Morgan, Andrew Blair, Christine Grit, David Brookes and Chris McAuley and John Peel. It is many years since acclaimed novelist John wrote for CM and it is a pleasure to see him back, as it is to welcome all our new writers.

The remaining six stories have been published before, but only briefly. In 2017-18, I edited an unofficial Doctor Who fiction anthology for charity, Time Shadows: Second Nature, which contained a selection of rather lovely stories by some very talented writers. We were all very pleased by the results, but sadly a mere two weeks after publication, the book had to be withdrawn for reasons beyond our control; and so very few people had a chance to read it. Those stories were just too good to waste, and I am delighted that many of the authors have now given their permission for us to use them in CM. So, here we have stories by Ian Farrington, Paul Sutton, Jenny Shirt, Daniel Tessier, Michael M. Gilroy-Sinclair and some chap called Hatcher; with more to follow in future issues of Cosmic Masque.

I hope you will enjoy reading these sixteen stories as much as I have; and that you will want to see another Fiction Special, some time before too long.

And remember, keep sending your

stories in – we really want to include them in Cosmic Masque.

Steve

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CHAT ROOM

by Trinah Eke

The Doctor was simultaneously walking around the console pressing buttons and explaining something, while gesticulating with her hands. "Sometimes it would be useful to communicate between ourselves without others hearing," she said.

"Like sign language?" suggested Graham.

"I know some sign language," said Yaz.

"Yeah, like sign language...but not. A neural network. We each wear one of these devices..." the Doctor held up a small circular disc, 1.5cm in diameter, "And we can talk to each other inside our heads."

"Like telepathy?" asked Graham.

"Sort of. Like a psychic chat-room," the Doctor replied.

"A chat-room... like with text?" Ryan asked.

"Not exactly." The Doctor thought for a moment, frowning. "Imagine if instead of re-telling an experience you could show it using all the senses, you could relay ideas, images, music, emotions..."

"I'm not sure of this Doc," said Graham nervously.

"It seems really intrusive," added Yaz.

"You can choose what you share, didn't I say that? It's like talking, but without actually talking."

"Does it have an off switch?" asked Graham.

"Why would you want to turn it off?"

"So, no off switch?" Graham asked.

"Volume control?"

"I'll add some settings," the Doctor replied.

A short time later the Doctor had fine-

tuned the settings on the discs. "OK, who's first?" Graham looked at Yaz and Ryan and then stepped towards the Doctor. "I'm just going to place this behind your ear... there you go."

"It doesn't feel any different," said Graham.

"It won't until we add another person. Yaz?" Yaz stepped forward and the Doctor placed the disc.

"Yaz, can you hear me?" Graham asked inside his head.

"I can hear you. The Doctor said share images so here goes." Yaz closed her eyes and concentrated.

"Is that a goat?" asked Graham

"We went to a farm on a school trip in year 7, there were goats," replied Yaz.

"Now there's two goats, hold on..."

"I didn't do that!" replied Yaz.

"That was me, sorry. I remember the goats," said Ryan.

"We are going to have to be very careful what we think about," Graham said.

"It's very quiet in here," said a male voice.

"Who was that?" asked Graham.

"It's me," replied the voice.

"Doctor? Doctor?" called out Graham, the second 'Doctor' booming in the chat-room.

"Let me adjust the settings," said the voice. "There, that should be better."

"Is that you Doctor?" asked Graham.

"Of course, it's me," replied the voice.

"It's just..." began Graham.

"You sound like a man," said Yaz.

"That's how I used to sound. The original you might say," replied the Doctor. "I'm definitely not the man I was," she said in another male voice.

"How many voices do you have?" asked

Yaz.

"A dozen or so. They're memories with personalities attached," said the Doctor in a Scottish accent.

"I'll say one thing for you, Doctor, you're never dull," said Graham.

"Aw, that's so sweet," replied the Doctor in her own voice. *"There's a street market on Wa'uli we could visit, try out our chat-room...what d'ya say?"*

Yaz smiled in response.

"Sounds good Doc," replied Graham. The Doctor looked at Ryan.

"Yeah, great," Ryan replied.

"OK, let's go to market," the Doctor said, setting the co-ordinates.

"OK, currency." The Doctor pulled four drawstring purses from a compartment in the console, filling them with coins. *"I'm a bit rusty on exchange rates, but it should be enough."* She handed them each a purse. *"OK, let's go."* She opened the door and ushered Graham, Yaz and Ryan outside.

Market stalls were placed anywhere there was a space leaving little room for pedestrians. The market was packed with people. *"Er, it's a bit crowded,"* said Ryan.

"Yes. OK stay close...and have fun," she said with a smile, before setting off for a nearby stall. Yaz turned, smiled at Ryan and Graham then headed to a stall.

"You OK Ryan?" Graham asked concerned.

"It's just... that thing in the chat-room... I..." Ryan blurted.

"Remember what your Nan always said, concentrate on one thing at a time."

"One thing at a time," Ryan repeated with a nod.

"OK," Graham looked around, *"Wanna check out that stall over there?"*

"OK," replied Ryan.

The stall was full of unfamiliar fresh food items.

"Um, maybe time to practise the chat-room. Concentrate on that one at the front, the red one," said Graham.

Ryan concentrated on what looked like a bright red mandarin the size of a watermelon, mentally trying to send an image. *"Don't let me eat pears. I hate pears,"* a new male voice said. *"Never, ever, eat pears,"* the Scottish voice said. *"Sorry, it's like a pear, fine to eat,"* the Doctor said in her own voice.

Graham and Ryan looked at each other and smiled.

"Ryan, look at this," Yaz said projecting an image into the chat-room.

"Is that a Rubik's cube?" asked Graham.

"Yep, and..." replied Yaz, projecting another image.

"A spinning top," said Ryan.

"Do they have a yo-yo?" asked a booming male voice. *"Ignore that,"* said the Doctor in her own voice.

Ryan looked around trying to spot Yaz. *"Where are you Yaz, I can't see you?"*

"I'm here, look," Yaz said, stepping into the sight-line of Ryan and Graham. Dodging around people as they went, they headed towards her.

The novelty of the stall wore off quickly for Ryan, he looked around and spotted the Doctor at a nearby stall. Weaving his way through the crowded street, he reached the Doctor, who was haggling over a price with the stall holder. *"375, it's not worth that, 230?"*

The stall holder tilted his head and said something Ryan didn't understand.

"There's no need to be rude," the Doctor retorted.

"Ryan, how much of the money do you have left?" she asked.

"All of it," he replied.

"OK, now we're in business."

He moved nearer the neighbouring stall, pretending to be interested in its contents. The Doctor had resumed haggling, *"275 and..."* the Doctor held up a finger as she rooted around in her pocket. *"A delicacy from Sol 3, very rare..."* She opened a cigarette case, inside were different coloured jelly babies, *"I'll even throw in the case. What d'ya say?"* Ryan glanced over and spotted the jelly babies, managing not to laugh.

The stall holder rubbed his chin, considering the offer. *"300 and those,"* he said pointing at the jelly babies.

"Done," she said with a smile. *"Ryan?"*

Ryan handed over his purse, she paid the stall holder and picked up her purchase.

"What's that?" asked Ryan staring at the oddly shaped purchase.

"This," said the Doctor excitedly, *"is an Emotion Spectrometer Extrapolation Phosphorescence Generator."*

"What does an emotion spec... thingy do?"

"Basically, it reads emotions and turns them into a light show. It'll liven up the TARDIS."

"A light show, like a disco?" asked Ryan as they made their way to the stall where Graham and Yaz were still browsing.

"Sort of, not really... It's..." the Doctor replied.

A man carrying a crate of assorted items bumped into Ryan, spilling his goods on the ground. *"Sorry,"* said Ryan instinctively. The man didn't speak, just bent down, quickly picked up his goods and hurried away. Ryan noticed he had forgotten some items, picked them up and called after the man. *"Hey, you missed..."* The man had already disappeared from sight. The Doctor stepped

closer to Ryan, visually inspecting the items in Ryan's hands.

"Seize them," came a voice from a few metres away. Three uniformed men rushed forward. One took the items Ryan was holding; the other two forced Ryan and the Doctor's hands behind their backs and pushed them forward.

"Stay where you are, don't interfere. When we are out of sight get back to the TARDIS and wait there," instructed the Doctor.

"Why, what's happening?" asked Yaz.

"Ryan and I are being arrested... but it's all a misunderstanding, we'll meet you back at the TARDIS."

"But Doc..." began Graham.

"Please do as I ask," the Doctor insisted.

A short time later the Doctor and Ryan were being processed at the local detention centre. *"Place all your belongings in the receptacles on the table,"* said the lead officer.

"Why are we being held?" asked the Doctor.

"You broke the law," the lead officer replied.

"Which law, specifically?" the Doctor asked.

"Ignorance of the law is not a valid defence," the lead officer replied.

"OK, noted. But still, which law?" she asked.

"Possessing contraband," he replied.

"What contraband?" she asked.

"That contraband." The man indicated the items Ryan had picked up, now deposited on a side table.

"That space junk is contraband...? It isn't ours," she retorted.

"It was found in your possession," he said.

"We were walking along, minding our own business and a man bumped into us and dropped them, we just... picked them up," the Doctor replied.

"A confession," he stated with a smile.

"No... it's an explanation," the Doctor said. We're innocent." The man laughed.

In the TARDIS, Yaz and Graham had just arrived. At that moment the chat-room filled with a montage of images, sounds and emotions. "Whoa...", said Graham. "It's Ryan," replied Yaz. "They're all police stops... I had no idea..."

"Ryan? What's happening?" asked Graham.

"It's all under control," replied the Doctor. The montage continued to flood the chat-room.

"Ryan?" asked Graham.

"Yeah," replied Ryan. The montage faded away. "Sorry."

"What's happening, mate?" Graham asked. In the chat-room there was a replay of the encounter with the man, the arrest and the processing. "It's a fit up," Graham said.

"I know... working on it," replied the Doctor.

"I shouldn't have picked that stuff up," said Ryan.

"If you hadn't, I would have," said the Doctor.

"No, it was stupid. I know better," said Ryan.

"It was a trap, if it didn't work, they wouldn't use it," replied the Doctor.

"She's right, mate," replied Graham.

"We want legal representation," stated the Doctor.

"As you wish; the circuit defender will be here again in twenty-four days," the lead officer stated. Ryan shifted uncomfortably. He relayed what the lead officer had said to the chat-room.

"twenty-four days, Doc!" said Graham.

"I know," replied the Doctor.

"Place all your belongings in the receptacles," the lead officer instructed.

The Doctor stepped towards a recepta-

cle and emptied her pockets. Ryan reluctantly stepped toward the table but misjudged and bumped into it. "Sorry," he said instinctively.

"We want receipts," said the Doctor once they had both finished. The officers laughed.

"All property is forfeit."

"What! Why?" the Doctor asked.

"To cover running costs. You don't expect the law-abiding citizens of Wa'uli to pay, do you?" he turned to his officers, "Search them."

Ryan tried to back away and bumped into the table again.

"Resisting," said the man. "Add it to the charges."

"What... no... I mean..." stammered Ryan.

"It's OK Ryan, I have a plan," said the Doctor.

Ryan remained still as officers searched him and the Doctor. "What's this?" asked the lead officer. One of the officers had handed him the sonic screwdriver which had been found in the Doctor's pocket.

"It's nothing, useless junk... not worth anything, sentimental value only," replied the Doctor.

"Doctor... did your plan involve the sonic?" asked Ryan.

"It's a minor hiccup," replied the Doctor.

"Great, they have the sonic," said Graham.

"I'm sure the Doctor knows what she's doing," said Yaz.

"Thanks, Yaz," said the Doctor. "OK, Ryan. I need you to knock over the table... once the sonic is on it,"

"I can't... not on purpose... it just happens," Ryan replied.

"Can't you knock over the table, Doc?" asked Graham.

"If I do it, they'll know it's a distraction," replied the Doctor. "It's OK, I'll think of something else."

The lead officer handed the sonic

screwdriver to one of his officers, who placed it on the table. "It'll fetch something," he said.

"If it doesn't can I have it back?" the Doctor asked, leaning against the table.

"You're a clumsy, ham-fisted idiot! Imbecile!" The voice boomed around the chat-room. Ryan jumped back and knocked into the table which fell to the floor, the Doctor fell with it. A few moments later the room filled with multi-coloured lights. The officers were transfixed. "OK Ryan, let's go," The Doctor grabbed hold of Ryan's arm and led him out of the detention centre.

"Wha... what happened?" asked Ryan when they were outside.

"I'll explain back at the TARDIS, come on."

A few minutes later the Doctor and Ryan entered the TARDIS. "Time to leave," the Doctor said. She rushed to the console, set the co-ordinates, and initiated take off.

"You OK, Ryan?" asked Graham.

"Yeah... just... not sure what happened," Ryan replied.

"I used the Emotion Spectrometer Extrapolation Phosphorescence Generator as a distraction. It can have a hypnotic effect. It affected Ryan too," the Doctor explained.

"Don't know what that is, but I got that you Paul McKenna'd him," said Graham.

"It can cause short term memory loss too, but it's temporary," the Doctor said. "How temporary?" asked Yaz.

"Should get his memory back any time now," replied the Doctor.

Ryan looked at the Doctor. "Clumsy, ham-fisted..." he began.

"I didn't mean that, just needed you to knock the table over."

"How do you take this thing off?" Ryan indicated the communication disc behind his ear.

"Why do you want to take it off?" the Doctor asked.

"I don't want you in my head," Ryan replied.

"It worked so well. We wouldn't have got out of there without it," the Doctor protested.

"I'm with Ryan on this one, Doc," said Graham.

"I agree with them," said Yaz.

The Doctor looked dejected. "OK," She pointed the sonic screwdriver at Ryan, Graham and Yaz in turn. "You can take them off now." Ryan pulled his disc off and stormed out of the console room. Graham removed his, turned in the direction Ryan had gone and followed him.

"Are you OK?" Yaz asked.

"Yeah, fine. I really wanted that Emotion Spectrometer Extrapolation Phosphorescence Generator. Shame I had to leave it behind."

"What is an Emotion Spectrometer...?"

"It reads emotions, analyses them converts them to light and transmits them. It's a spectacular show," the Doctor said excitedly.

"Kind of intrusive though," said Yaz. "Just like a psychic chat-room. Don't you already have enough voices in your head?" The Doctor didn't answer. "Ryan struggled with the chat-room; he couldn't always control his thoughts. I know you understand that."

The Doctor nodded and gave Yaz a weak smile. Yaz put her hand in her pocket and pulled out a yo-yo.

"Thanks, Yaz," the Doctor said giving her a hug. Yaz smiled and left the console room.

The Doctor inspected the yo-yo, smiling. She pushed on a section of the console which opened to reveal a stash of yo-yos, the Doctor added her new example to the collection.

THE CASE OF THE MISSING DOCTOR

by Ian Farrington

Vic Trussell slammed the door so hard the hinges asked for the afternoon off. He tilted his crushable fedora back on his head and slumped into his chair. The guy had wanted too much, cracked wise too much, and Vic couldn't waste time on time-wasters. He was in the middle of a class-A murder case, perhaps the biggest of his career. Everything else would have to wait until the sick perp was found. Booze, women, that joker who'd just left, everything.

He considered picking up the telephone and dialling his secretary, then thought about just hollering at her through the door – even though he knew doing that raised her hackles higher than the Golden Gate Bridge. But Vic resisted. He could predict with bookmaker-accuracy how the conversation would have played out: he'd call her through from the outer office; she'd saunter in with her legs that went all the way to the floor; they'd trade some dime-novel dialogue; and she'd say he was in over his head. She'd tell him to cut the Tremlett case loose, that it was best left to the SFPD homicide boys. But Vic couldn't do that. This one hurt.

He took out his smokes and was about to strike the match when a better idea struck his mind. Vic crept to the door, which had "llessurT cIV" printed on the glass – his name in reverse, hand-painted in Copperplate script. He cracked it open, sloooow, and saw that the coast was clear. Maybe his secretary had gone to lunch or to powder her nose. He made a dash for it and was out of the building and onto the streets of sunny San Fran in moments. The traffic

thundered past, but the air was cool, and the breeze woke him up. His breakfast of eggs and Scotch had finally settled, and for the first time that morning he felt able to tackle the case. Vic strolled towards the Embarcadero, stopping on Hills Plaza to smoke a cigarette and watch the world go by for a few moments.

It wasn't easy being a gumshoe in the Bay area, especially now that Vic was no longer an ingénue off the bus from Bisbee, Arizona or wherever it was he came from. He couldn't remember anymore. He'd lived through too many murder cases, too many blackmail rackets, too many abusive husband strong-arms, too many broads wanting to run away with him and too many heavies patting him down. The buzz had disappeared, and Vic had been surviving on adrenaline for longer than he could recall.

A few weeks ago, he'd realized that he was going through the motions and living his life like it was something to be tolerated until it was over. He voted for Harry S. Truman. He read about the new 49ers football team in the newspaper. He gave his secretary flowers on her birthday. But he craved excitement and something to keep him honest. Then Mrs. Tremlett walked into his life. She was a classy lady. Older than Vic, but she still felt young at heart. He liked her straight off the bat and couldn't figure why someone so poised and confident would need to employ a shamus. He was then shocked to his socks by what she told him. She sat down in his office and, without a quiver in her

voice, explained that she was going to die. It was okay, she said. There was nothing to be done. She had accepted her fate. But Vic couldn't take it in – she seemed so vibrant and bright and eternal, like a movie star in the flesh. It took a lot of coaxing before Vic convinced her to lay out the details. She'd been reluctant to tell him everything, but Vic was as good a private dick as anyone in the city.

For several months, Mrs. Tremlett had been hounded by a man called Johnny Pacific. He was punishing her for something she'd done and had made it clear that she'd soon be six feet under. She knew that her time was nearly up and had accepted it, though she refused to take any blame. Vic argued with her – he stood up and raised his voice and threw things across the office and said that it didn't have to be this way. It's never too late, he told her. The movie isn't finished until the final title card. You can always fight back.

"Not always," she'd said, tears welling up in her eyes for the first time. Vic had then noticed that she wasn't wearing any make-up. She was still as beautiful as the sunrise.

Mrs. Tremlett died a few days later.

That had been two months ago. When he found out, Vic had gone into a rage. Mrs. Tremlett had got under his skin; alcohol had got into his liver. Even his faithful secretary had been worried about his state of mind. It took several weeks for the world to come back into focus, but when it did, he saw everything in Technicolor. He had to solve the case. That was the only way to battle through this feeling. He had to find out what had happened. He had to track down Johnny Pacific. He had to know what Mrs. Tremlett was supposed to have done – what she'd done to de-

serve death. And he had to get pay-back.

Other than Johnny, the only lead was something Mrs. Tremlett had said about "the doctor." She'd said this doc had initially tried to help. He'd been a friend and been kind, but then one day he tipped her off that she wasn't going to make it. This piece of garbage had said to her outright that her days were numbered. Vic didn't have a name – Mrs. T had just said "the doctor" – but San Francisco only had so many sawbones. If he had to investigate every one in turn, he would do so.

Vic stamped out his cigarette and looked east. The sun was rising behind the Bay Bridge, glinting off the water. He decided there and then that both Johnny Pacific and his doctor friend would pay for what they'd done. Vic didn't like bullies.

He walked the city streets for hours, not caring for the shoe leather. He'd told everyone that his car was in the shop, but actually his 1940 Ford Opera coupe had been repossessed during the Bishop Brice case. He knew the city well, though, and was in good shape for a man of his indeterminate age. It took most of the day to cover everywhere north of Geary Boulevard. Vic scoped out doctors' offices and medical centres and pharmacies and veterinarians. He asked questions and flirted with receptionists and posed as a journalist writing a story on insurance fraud. But he came up bupkis. Nada. A significant amount short of zero.

His feet pulsing like they did in France in '44, Vic stopped off at a random coffee shop and grabbed a window seat. The waitress was cute, but he didn't have the energy to yack with her. The cup wasn't clean, but he gulped its contents anyway. He realized he hadn't

shaved in two days and felt embarrassed. Mrs. Tremlett wouldn't have liked that.

"Excuse me."

Vic looked up to see a young man standing next to him.

"Is this seat taken?"

He wasn't very old and looked fresh-faced. He probably hadn't started shaving yet, thought Vic. His dark hair covered most of his head, and he was dressed in a yellowish tunic and baggy pants.

"Are you religious?" asked Vic. "Some kind of Buddhist?"

"I'm sorry?"

"Your outfit."

"They're just my clothes. Can I sit down?"

Vic looked around. The coffee shop was busy, with nearly every seat taken. He pushed a stool out from under the table with his foot and the stranger took it. The waitress came over, notepad in hand, and asked for his order.

"What do you recommend?" the man asked Vic. "I'm hungry."

"The chow's all the same, my friend. I wouldn't put too much thought into it."

The man asked for the same drink and sandwich that Vic had been nursing. He smiled at Vic as the waitress walked away. Vic stared back.

"Can I help you?" he asked after a beat.

"Maybe."

Then Vic noticed it. Everything fell into place in an instant and he couldn't help laughing. The patrons at the next table looked over, disapprovingly, but he roared. He'd had many law-enforcement encounters during his career, but they'd all been on the level. Feds and local cops had never needed to play dirty before. They all knew the rules of the game.

"That disguise is not one-hundred-per-

cent convincing," he said. "Wouldn't fool a blind redneck on a foggy night."

"I don't know what you mean," said the young man.

Vic pointed at the star-shaped, gold-and-blue badge on the stranger's chest.

"What are you? Sheriff's department?"

We don't usually see you jokers this deep in the city. You know something? They call it undercover for a reason."

"Honestly, I don't know what you're talking about. What are sheriffs?"

The waitress brought over a coffee and a ham-on-rye and placed them in front of the boy. He took a sip of his drink nervously.

Vic eyed his new friend and thought again. No, he was too young to be a cop – he looked no more than twenty. The badge was a decoy, a bum steer. He probably got it out of a cereal box. But there was something about him. Vic had been in this world for too long to believe in coincidences. Nothing was insignificant: on the day he'd set out to catch Johnny Pacific, a stranger starting a conversation in a coffee shop was a hydrogen-bomb-sized development. He knew he had to tread lightly.

"My name's Adric," said the newcomer, holding out a hand. Vic shook it.

"They call me Vic Trussell."

"Vic? Really? What are you doing here, Vic?"

"I'm on a case if you must know." Let's spill some juice, he thought, and see if this guy clears it up. "A woman died. Do you know anything about that?"

"I might."

Vic's heartbeat hit a rimshot.

"Or at least," Adric continued, "the Doctor might."

The doctor. The doctor who threatened Mrs. Tremlett. The doctor who was in league with Johnny Pacific. Vic tried to hide the fact his hands were shaking

with nerves.

"Who is this doctor? What's his name?"

"I'm not sure, really." Adric laughed. "I just know him as the Doctor."

"And do you know where he is right now? Right this second?"

"Yes, I do. More or less."

Vic grabbed his hat and coat and threw a couple of dollars down on the table.

"Let's go."

Vic headed out onto the sidewalk. It was getting dark now, the city settling down for its evening. Vic thought of all the things he would normally be doing on a night like this: staking out a suspect, or catching a jazz show, or shooting pool with the boys from the precinct. But now he had work to do.

Adric followed him out after a moment, sandwich in hand. Hit by the glow of the streetlights, he seemed even younger. But Vic was a good judge of character and had made the decision to trust him. For now. His fingers had been burned so many times over the years – by duplicitous dames, by double-crossing crime bosses, by jumpy Joe Publics – that he was never going to go all-in with a stranger. But he had to admit that Adric seemed like the real deal. And how dangerous could someone with a Limey accent be?

"Where's your doctor friend now?" asked Vic.

"This way. It's not far." Adric started walking east, back towards Vic's office. This made Vic's chest freeze for a moment. Had he veered too far from the action? Had he made a mistake in assuming the case was citywide? Of all the detectives in San Francisco, Mrs. Tremlett had come to him. Maybe she was more local than he'd assumed.

"The Doctor's looking for someone," said Adric.

"Another victim?"

"What do you mean by that?!"

"Nothing. Keep walking. Let's get there quick." Vic then realized he needed information – even if Mrs. Tremlett was gone, perhaps he could save some other poor sap. "Who's he searching for?"

"A child, he said." Adric looked across the street, waiting for the traffic to clear. "A young boy who's gone missing. What about your case? Is that the right word? Case?"

Vic had to know if this doctor was Mrs. T's doctor. So, he dangled his feet in the water. He told Adric about Mrs. Tremlett coming to him and saying she was about to die. He told Adric about Johnny Pacific and the persecution. And he told Adric that he couldn't save her.

"It had gone on for weeks," he said. "Johnny bullied her and tormented her and threatened to take everything away from her. She was such a lovely lady; she didn't deserve that kind of low-life treatment. No one does."

"What did he do to her?" asked Adric as they turned a corner and found themselves on the shore of the Bay. "Did he hurt her?"

"He made her life a living hell. He was cruel and mean and vindictive."

"But how?" Vic wasn't really listening.

"And the doctor made things worse," he said. "He's just as responsible for her death."

Adric stopped walking.

"I can't believe that," he said. "The Doctor would have tried to help, I'm sure of it."

Vic laughed.

"He started out nice, sure. She told me about the early days, when Johnny Pacific was first on the scene. She went to see this doctor and asked him what she should do. He said he'd help. He said she'd be all right if she just did what he told her to do. But she wasn't. And he

couldn't stop Johnny. He didn't even try after a while. He just let it happen. He just let her die."

Adric sat down on a bench at the side of the road. Vic joined him and hunched over, his head in his hands.

"I need to find them, Adric. Your doctor is my only link to Johnny Pacific."

"That's a strange name, isn't it?" said Adric.

Vic turned to face his new friend. What did the guy's John Hancock have to do with anything?

"Johnny Pacific, I mean. Is that a common surname?"

Vic didn't know how to respond, which was as rare as an honest lawyer. He usually had a head full of snappy comebacks and no one could out-think him. He had Academy Awards for his performances in front of assistant district attorneys; landlords who wanted their rent; and wives engaged in cuckolding.

"I guess," he said at last. "I've not come across it before, but then again I've met a lot of strange people. Mrs. Tremlett told me he's also known as The Big Sea. Get it? Pacific, big sea? All those wise guys like having titles and aliases and handles. They think it makes them seem bigger somehow."

"It can also signify a change in a person's character," boomed a new voice from behind Vic's shoulder.

He turned to see a tall man in a long coat and even longer scarf. He had wild, unruly hair and a broad, dangerous grin. "Names are very important, aren't they?" he continued. "They can define us and limit us all at the same time. Think of a schoolteacher. They might be called Bob or Bernard or Sue or Riz, but the pupils have to say Mr. or Mrs. or Miss. That's about respect. Or power, I suppose. It's creating a divide between human beings, telling one group how to

respond to the other."

Vic stood up and pointed south. "The Salvation Army's that way, pal."

"Take my friend Adric here," the man continued, "who's been kind enough to bring you to me. Well done, by the way, Adric. You found him quicker than I did."

"Thank you."

"Yes, take 'Adric'. A nice, straightforward name. Five letters. Three consonants and two vowels. That's a name that's not trying to deceive you in any way, is it?"

So, these two clowns knew each other. That was interesting. Again, Vic pondered the fact that there's no such thing as a coincidence. This new man – he must be...

"This is the Doctor," said Adric. "The Doctor I was telling you about."

Vic's hand reached into his coat and fingered his holster. His 1911 Colt pistol wasn't there. In his rush to avoid his secretary's disapproval, he must have left it in his desk drawer.

"The Doctor... I see. And what's your name, then, Lord Fauntleroy?"

"Oh..." mused the Doctor. "Just the Doctor. That's the beauty of someone's name, isn't it? As I say, it can define you and limit you. Unless you choose not to use one." He smiled a smile wider than Route 66. "What's yours?"

Vic didn't reply, so Adric said, "This is Vic Trussell. He's a detective."

"Where do you work?" demanded Vic.

"Here and there," replied the Doctor. "Everywhere, really, although it's not really work."

"I mean which hospital? Which doctor's office?"

"I don't work in a hospital. I'm here looking for a child who's gone missing. A boy." He sat down on the bench. "Let's talk, shall we?"

"Let's not. I'm on a case."

Vic didn't budge. Adric took the free seat next to his friend.

"Tell me about your case, then," said the Doctor. "Perhaps I can help."

Vic eyed him suspiciously. What did he want? Why was he doing this? If he was the doctor who condemned Mrs. Tremlett to death, Vic needed to know why. But if he wasn't, this was a colossal waste of time, and Johnny Pacific was getting a step further away from justice. So, Vic laid it out again. Quickly. Just the highlights and headlines: Mrs. Tremlett and Johnny Pacific and the death threats and the doctor who wouldn't lift a finger to stop it. He deliberately kept his focus on the Doctor, watching to see if he'd twitch at the mention of any of the names or accusations. Guilt can do a lot to a man, even one who doesn't feel any. Vic had often caught out a liar by spotting an exhale or a furtive look when a key word was said.

But the Doctor was impassive – nothing but rapt attention. And when Vic had finished, he smiled.

"I'm the Doctor," he said. "But I'm not a hospital doctor or a family doctor. I've been both, but not now. I'm afraid I'm not the doctor you're looking for, though the doctor you're looking for did nothing wrong and was just trying to help. I've also never met Mrs. Tremlett. But from what people have told me, I'm sure she was a lovely woman."

"She was." Vic's voice cracked.

"Is it time, Doctor?" asked Adric.

"Yes, I think it is." He stood up, towering over Vic. "It's time to put away childish things."

Vic didn't know what he meant. This crazy cat with the strange clothes and deep voice said he'd heard of Mrs. Tremlett – he must be connected to the

case. Maybe he knew the doctor involved. Maybe he knew Johnny Pacific, aka the Big Sea.

"A death is always tragic," said the Doctor. "Life exists throughout this universe and beyond. It's spread to countless planets and moons and solar systems and astral plains. I've met carbon-based animals and sentient clouds, aeons-old trees and self-aware machines. Trillions upon trillions of lives across billions of years, and every single one of them is precious. The death of someone so important as Mrs. Tremlett must have hit you very hard."

"No," snapped Vic. "I hardly knew her. She was just some dame who wanted help."

"Ah, well, that's not true, is it? You knew her your entire life. A mother's death is a lot for any son to take in – let alone a boy of your age."

"What do you mean? I'm forty years old. I fought in the war. I smoke two packs a day and I carry a gun."

"No," said the Doctor. "You're fifteen. You're a schoolboy. And this has to stop. Your father is very worried about you."

"I'm Vic Trussell, private eye."

"No. You're not."

"Where do you get off—"

The Doctor pointed across the water to the huge bridge in the distance. "What's the name of that?" he asked.

Vic said, "The Golden Gate Bridge, opened 1937. Or maybe it's the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, built 1933."

"No, it's the Dartford Crossing, opened 1991. This isn't San Francisco. It's Greenhithe. We're not in California. We're in Kent." The Doctor squatted down, so they were eye to eye, and his voice turned soft and kind. "It's not 1948. It's 2018. And you're not Vic

Trussell. You're Sean Tremlett."

Vic – Sean – began to cry.

"I'm sorry," said the Doctor. "I'm sorry about your mother."

Adric put his hand on Sean's shoulder.

"You see, Adric," continued the Doctor, looking up at his colleague, "everyone reacts to grief differently. Young Sean here... well, he coped in his own way. He didn't like how his life was going – who could blame him? – so I think he imagined a new version. You felt powerless, didn't you, Sean? Lost. Alone. Scared. It was easier to exist in a fantasy world where you're the famous detective Vic Trussell who always catches the bad guy and gets his revenge."

"Famous?" asked Adric.

"In certain circles, yes," said the Doctor, standing up and folding his deep-red scarf around his shoulder. "Vic Trussell is a grizzled private eye and war vet who solves crimes in 1940s San Francisco. He's appeared in several novels and short stories. They're very exciting, some of them, and funny. There's a running gag where Vic's secretary is mentioned a lot but never actually appears – isn't that delightful? After a while, you start to think she's just a figment of Vic's imagination. My favourite story is the one about a woman who's having an affair with a mathematician."

"Something About Her Doesn't Add Up," said Sean.

"That's right. I saw a copy of it in your bedroom."

"Why were you in my bedroom?"

"Because I was helping your dad work out where you'd got to. He was the first person Adric and I met when we arrived this morning, and I've got to tell you he was in a right old state. Rushing around the town, looking for you. He's been terribly worried, Sean. He told us the two of you had a row this morning, is

that right? You slammed the door on him and then stormed out of the house. You've been missing all day and we've been searching for you. I know you're going through an awful time, a really awful time, but this isn't fair on your father, is it? He's grieving too. And he loves you very much."

Sean rubbed his sleeve across his nose.

"I know," he said.

"I don't understand," said Adric. "Who's Johnny Pacific?" "Ah, yes," said the Doctor. "Johnny Pacific. The Big Sea. He's the type of villain you often find in Vic Trussell stories – a ruthless gangster with a poetic name. But there's no such person. He doesn't exist. How did your mother die, Sean?"

Sean looked up through the tears. "Cancer."

"That's right. Sometimes called the Big C. Sean here needed someone to blame – someone to focus his anger on. But there wasn't anyone. There isn't with an illness like this. It just... happens. I wish it didn't, but it does. So, it was only natural that Sean's imagination should conjure up someone he could blame. But it wasn't anyone's fault. It certainly wasn't your mother's doctor's fault, Sean. I'm sure he or she did everything they could to help."

"Yeah." Sean took a deep breath. He knew the pain wouldn't go away any time soon. This wasn't a story with a perfectly pat ending, where the bad guy is arrested and sent to Sing Sing, and the hero gets the girl on the final page. He could only take it one step at a time. "Why don't we take you home?" asked the Doctor. "We can let your dad know you're safe."

"Yes, please," said Sean

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THERE SHALL BE NO DARKNESS

by Ian Morgan

Preston blew out his cheeks petulantly like a bored child and waited for Kilgallon to catch up. To be fair, he was grateful the pilot was with him. Standing well over seven feet, and as wide as he was tall, he cut an imposing figure. The oversized, completely tattooed bald head, with the deep scar down his right cheek, and a mouth that contained barely any healthy teeth just added to his image. A man of very few words, with an attitude that stank, a temper that was short, and a manner that verged on the psychotic, he was the perfect companion to have in a tight spot, especially for the short, dumpy, bespectacled figure Preston was. He was without a doubt the finest pilot this side of Pluto; and was quite prepared to tell anyone who listened that he was most definitely *not* cut out for the lifestyle he had fallen into. Whereas the others would throw themselves into any job they'd been employed to undertake, he much preferred to stay behind on the ship and catch up on his reading. However, he was the first to admit he thrived on the excitement of getting them out of tight spots, his position paid well, and he was still able to visit his nan on those rare occasions he had a free weekend.

They had stumbled across the sleek, jet-black craft that hung in the vast emptiness of space almost by accident. Via a scan, they checked the specifications, before attempting radio contact. Having no luck, Biggs suggested they dock and go across to see if there was anything that could be salvaged. Preston had argued against his inclusion, but having

recently lost Capes, their small group now numbering just the three of them, she told him she wanted him front and centre. Thankfully, she had agreed that Preston could partner Kilgallon, reasoning that, out of the two of them, she was the one least likely to wet herself at the first sign of trouble.

Between the pipes that ran the length of the metallic walls, fluorescent lights cast an eerie, dappled glow that only added to Preston's apprehension. Every breath he took fogged the air with a light cloud that had barely dissipated before the next condensed into another misty plume. He was fed up, and hungry, and just wanted to get away. For the last ten minutes, as they made their way down more identical, seemingly endless corridors, he'd been unable to shake off the feeling they were being followed. Occasionally he had stopped and held his breath, listening for anything out of the ordinary. The silence was so intense and palpable it made his teeth itch.

As they reached another intersection, Preston sighed. "Come on, this is ridiculous. Let's go back." Turning to head the way they'd come; he was startled to discover someone standing directly behind them. He pulled Kilgallon between himself and the figure, using him as a make-shift shield. Eyeing up the figure, he estimated it to be at least a good foot and a half shorter than Kilgallon, and it was hidden beneath a long, hooded robe.

With a turn of strength that took Kilgallon completely by surprise, a claw-like

hand shot out from the recesses of the robe and clamped itself tightly around his throat, forcing him to his knees. Exerting very little energy, the figure picked him up and smashed him repeatedly against the wall, oblivious to the cries of pain and the cacophony of sickening cracking noises created as a result.

Looking down with embarrassment, Preston realised that Biggs was right about him. He pulled himself up to his full height, and ran, screaming, barging the figure out of the way, hardly daring to look back.

With Kilgallon silent, his body limp and unresponsive, the figure released its grip, stared down at the crumpled corpse before moving silently away.

The wheezing and groaning of ancient engines shattered the oppressive silence and announced the arrival of the TARDIS. Both doors creaked open and a tall, thin man with short grey hair and fearless, effervescent grey eyes, strode out into a grimy, dankly lit corridor. Wearing a long blue coat, beneath which was a cardigan and an ivory shirt buttoned to the neck, the ensemble finished off with indigo trousers and a pair of black boots, he looked completely out of place against his surroundings. "It's alright, old girl," he said in a Scottish accent, patting the TARDIS. "We'll just let the navi-system reboot, then we'll be on our way. Won't take long."

Close behind followed a short, bulky, bald figure, wrapped tightly into a maroon duffle coat. "Well, where are we?" Nardole asked.

"In the year twenty-five twenty-five," announced the Doctor. "I think."

"Like the song, then?" enquired the young black woman who joined them, closing the TARDIS door behind her,

while attempting to pull on a red leather jacket. Nardole reached across to unfold the right arm of the garment that had got tangled; and helped raise it up to her shoulders. "Thank you."

The Doctor frowned. "Like what song?" Bill Potts hadn't known the Doctor for long, but she had already decided he was the most aggravating person she had ever met.

"The song: 'In The Year 2525.'"

Plunging his hands deep in his pockets, the Doctor marched off at a confident pace. "Never heard of it," he called over his shoulder.

Bill rolled her eyes at Nardole. "So, go on then, where are we?"

"Well, without seeing it from the outside, I would say we're on an old Wanderer class planet hopper." He ran a ringer down the nearest metal wall and sniffed at it. "I'd need to check *Jane's Spacecraft of the Universe*, but I'm guessing Mark III... no, Mark II. Obsolete, but functional."

"Just like the TARDIS," Nardole whispered to himself, almost careering into the Doctor, who had pulled up sharply at a crossroads of other equally dark corridors. Ip-dipping for a few, painful minutes, the Doctor decided they would take the corridor directly in front of them.

"Well, that was worth the wait," muttered Bill. "I mean, if... oh. Erm," she swallowed, hard, "Doctor..."

Nardole turned around to see a woman jabbing the muzzle of a Fission gun against Bill's head. Reacting swiftly, he hid himself behind the Doctor, much to his annoyance.

"I think," said the Doctor, "you need to let my friend go."

Peering out through a wild tangle of hair, the woman's steel-grey eyes were defiant and intense. She chewed gum with the air of someone who had been

told what to do once too often, but after an extremely one-sided discussion, had taken back control of her life in quite a serious way. Wrapped in an ensemble of black: Caterpillar boots, jeans, t-shirt, leather jacket, the image she projected was a warning for everyone to keep the hell away.

"Shall we start again? I'm the Doctor. This simpering idiot behind me is Nardole and the young lady with you is called Bill."

"I'm Biggs," she announced.

"Can I have my friend back. Please?"

"As soon as I get some answers."

"Very well."

"Where's the rest of my crew? They were supposed to meet me here ten minutes ago."

"No idea. We're travellers. We're here by accident."

"This isn't your ship?"

The Doctor shook his head. "Not yours either, I'm guessing."

Biggs shook her head. "No, we, er, we came to raid it."

"Pirates," Nardole sighed.

"Nothing so mundane: we're mercenaries."

"Oh, well that's better for all concerned."

"Do you know where we are?" asked the Doctor.

"You don't know?" Biggs wondered dubiously.

"Humour me."

"We're on a Wanderer class planet hopper."

"Mark III?"

"No, Mark II."

The Doctor shrugged nonchalantly. "Thought so."

Giving the Doctor a slow hand clap, Bill remarked, "Oh, you think you're so clever, don't you?"

The Doctor gave a curt bow, oblivious to the dripping sarcasm. Lifting his head,

his face scrunched up, nose twitching. "What's that smell?" A contagious bout of sniffing ensued as they picked up the aroma of ammonia, each of them looking in a different direction.

Coming into sight suddenly, Preston ran round a corner and into the arms of an equally startled Nardole. Biggs holstered her weapon and scurried forward, taking Preston's face in her hands, attempting to calm him down.

"Hey, hey, hey, look, it's me, look, focus on me, Preston, focus on me. Where's Kilgallon?"

Between wiping tears and snot onto the sleeve of his boiler suit, it took several attempts to get out of Preston what had happened, his voice cracking and rasping, at times becoming incoherent and stuttery.

Bill knelt down beside the young man. "It's OK. You're safe now. Nothing will harm you now. Will it?" She looked up at the Doctor.

"Won't it?" The Doctor pursed his lips. "No, it won't. Bill, you wait here. Nardole, Biggs, shall we go?"

"Can't I wait here too?" Nardole asked, squatting down. "I really think I should."

"I'll come with you," decided Bill, pushing past the Doctor.

Biggs did not need to be asked twice. She produced her gun with a flourish and, led the way, along the corridor from where Preston had appeared. She knew full well she was going to make whoever had killed Kilgallon pay and as they hit another junction, she felt a hand on her shoulder.

"I don't recommend it," the Doctor said, almost nonchalantly. "Revenge makes people do stupid things."

"How did you know I was...?"

"It's just a knack."

"A very irritating knack," Bill said.

"Let me deal with things. We don't want you going in all guns blazing."

"I don't think it's your... colleague who's ended up dead, Doctor," said Biggs, curtly.

"I realise that, but..."

Ahead, Bill had stopped. She stood before a large door, to the right of which was a control panel.

"That looks like the Bridge," she heard the Doctor say. "I think I can get us in. I just need to find which pocket my sonic screwdriver is in." Before the Doctor could finish ferreting around in his coat, there was an annoying squeak as the door opened. Bill turned to face her friend, a large grin on her face.

"What have you done?" the Doctor wanted to know.

"I just pressed that," Bill said, indicating the large green button that protruded from the panel. Stepping past, the Doctor shook his head.

"Aww. Did you want to be the big man and open the door?" she grinned.

The Doctor ignored her and stepped into a bright, clinical room, large white ceramic tiles panelling the walls. Blinking lights danced across an array of computer terminals. A number of coloured wires trailed across the floor, connecting parts of the machinery to a raised dais, on which stood a tall cylindrical chamber. Built into it was a small window through which the Doctor saw two undulating blue, wraith-like creatures. Every few seconds they released the most horrific screams, as though in competition with one another.

"What is it?" Bill asked.

"I'm not sure," said the Doctor, scratching his head. "Maybe he knows."

Bill and Biggs looked over to where the Doctor was pointing and saw a wizened old man, his face worn and saggy, who had seemingly appeared from nowhere, and was watching them from across the room.

"Who are you?" the man bellowed an-

grily. "What are you doing on my ship?"

"First things first," Biggs declared, marching over to the man. "Why did you kill Kilgallon?"

"Me? I've killed no one. Hugo may have, though."

"Hugo?"

"My 'guard dog', I suppose you could call him. He's supposed to stop annoying little visits like this."

Taking hold of the old man, Biggs wedged the gun under his chin, preparing to fire.

"Biggs, stop!" the Doctor barked, suddenly at her side. He snatched the weapon from her hand and threw it to one side. "Remember what I said." The Doctor took the old man's arm. "What's your name?"

"Wilson," the man said.

The Doctor directed him towards the chamber. "This is fascinating. What is it?"

"It's a Cunningham Chamber," Wilson replied, gleefully.

"And what's a Cunningham Chamber?" the Doctor wanted to know.

However, it wasn't Wilson who gave the answer. Caressing the box lovingly, Biggs smiled. "The answer to immortality, what else..."

Sitting with Nardole, his composure regained, Preston thought everything that had happened seemed less real somehow. Nardole's voice was gentle, soothing. It put Preston at his ease and reminded him of being a youngster and listening to his mother reading him a bedtime story. His legs were cold, and he winced as his trousers kept sticking to his thighs.

"Do you think they'll be much longer?"

"I hope not," replied Nardole. His buttocks were starting to go numb, and Preston was more than a bit smelly.

With some slight difficulty, he raised herself up and began to gently tap life into his backside. It was then he saw the figure ambling towards them. "Who's that?"

Preston popped his glasses back on and squinted at where Nardole was pointing. His heart began to pound faster, and his throat contracted.

"That's what got Kilgallon."

"Get up," Nardole demanded, reaching out a hand. "Get up, get up, get up."

"Which way?" Preston croaked, feeling bile burning the back of his throat.

"Well not that way. Come on." The pair turned, putting distance between themselves and the approaching figure.

After a little way, Preston pulled up sharply, clutching his side, breathing heavily. "Stitch," he moaned. "I'm not built for running. Or walking. Or anything that requires effort, really."

Nardole's patience was beginning to wear thin. He wanted to scream in his companion's face that his life depended on him not being so wet - in every sense of the word.

"The longer we rest, the more time it's got to catch us up. So, come on." Nardole placed a hand in the small of his back and propelled him along the corridor, throwing glances over her shoulder. Rounding another corner, they found themselves standing outside an open door. Hearing the Doctor's voice, Nardole heaved a sigh of relief and quickly ushered Preston inside.

"I never like the mention of immortality," the Doctor was saying. "I've met too many people over the centuries who were obsessed by the subject. It never ends well at all. Hello Nardole. Good to see you again, Preston." He tapped on the glass of the Cunningham Chamber, and the creatures inside released their unholy screech. "How does it all work?" "It's simple, really," Wilson said. "After

years of research that almost drove old Cunningham to the edge of sanity, he proved if he took a person to the very brink of death, a sort of personal Grim Reaper would manifest itself. He called it a Fisakkz. It would remove a person's life force, before simply vanishing, as if it never existed."

The Doctor was already ahead of the conversation. "You don't need to tell me what happened next. He believed that if he trapped his Fisakkz, and providing it remained contained, he could prevent himself from dying and live forever." He couldn't believe what he was hearing. No, what was he thinking - of course he could believe it. Where humans were concerned, he could believe any monstrous thing they did.

"Well, yes... and, no," replied Wilson. "Cunningham did briefly consider capturing one, but felt it was going too far. I, however, had no such qualms. However, I needed a guinea pig. And who better than my good friend?"

From the corner of his eye, Wilson saw the hooded figure step onto the Bridge. "Cunningham!"

In unison, everyone turned to see Cunningham reach up and with ancient, frail hands, remove the hood, revealing the face beneath. The almost milky-white wrinkled skin was creased with masses of uncountable lines that were as uneven as his turbulent life. Bushy eyebrows rested above drooping eyelids that covered sharp, watery blue eyes. Side whiskers that began on his temples merged into a large, unkempt beard.

"What have you done?" the Doctor demanded, running to Cunningham, helping him down to the nearest vacant chair.

"As I told you, I required a guinea pig. So, eighty-five years later, he still protects me, you see. He knows who made him immortal, and he's grateful for that."

"Grateful? He's a man who's existed beyond his allotted time, and you think he's grateful."

"Of course. Our Fisakkzs are stored in the Cunningham Chamber, completely safe from harm. We cannot die."

Bill scurried over towards the Doctor.

"When you think about it, who wants to live forever?" she asked him, innocently. The Doctor raised his eyebrows. "Now I like Queen as much as the next man, but this isn't really the time or place."

Bill grabbed him by the lapels. "I could quite easily throttle you, you know," she said through gritted teeth. Releasing the Doctor, she rounded on Wilson. "So, what have you done with this immortality of yours?"

"What?"

"You heard."

"We cannot die. Don't you think that's enough?"

"Enough? You expect this man to carry on living? Look at him."

"He may look like he's on his last legs," began Wilson, "but trust me, he has the strength of twenty men. It's a side effect of the procedure. I could rip any of you in half."

"I'd like to see you try," Bill told him.

"Don't tempt me."

Sensing the tone that the conversation was taking, the Doctor quickly placed himself between Wilson and Bill.

"Woah, woah, woah. Can I suggest you don't threaten my friend? After all, she's the one with my glasses."

Wilson frowned.

The Doctor span on his heel, tipping the wink to Bill. With no hesitation, Bill faced the Cunningham Chamber and put the sonic glasses on. The Doctor returned to Cunningham and the old man gripped onto the Doctor's arm, anticipating what was about to happen.

"Thank you," his voice a throaty whisper.

"It's my pleasure. Now, Bill - Setting 151."

"No!!" screamed Wilson.

Bill pressed a button on the arm of the glasses. A high pitch sound emanated and shattered the glass. The two apparitions made a beeline for Cunningham and Wilson, entering their hosts and feeding on what essence remained, before vanishing into the ether. The two men agonised and crumpled to the floor, their bodies little more than empty husks.

In the silence that followed, the Doctor focused his attention on Biggs. "Still want immortality?" he wondered.

"Of course." For the first time, she smiled, and her face lit up. "But not like that."

"You knew the Cunningham Chamber was here?"

"Yeah. Picked up bits of intel over the years. Thought I'd keep my eyes open. You never know. Then, there it was. Right there. The prospect of immortality. But you can keep it. Preston, we're leaving."

Dutifully, Preston ran after her, waving to Bill and Nardole as they followed the Doctor in silence. Reaching the TARDIS, he paused as he inserted the key into the lock.

"I've known for many centuries that immortality is a curse, not a blessing. The best way to achieve it is to leave behind a legacy."

"What, like saving planets and civilisations?" Bill asked.

Oblivious to what Bill was getting at, the Doctor pushed the doors open and stepped inside.

Smiling, Bill and Nardole shared a glance that spoke volumes before following the Doctor into the TARDIS.

*

WOULDN'T BE DEAD FOR QUIDS

by Paul Sutton

Tegan stepped out of the TARDIS and immediately felt the vastness of the room. "Six hundred and forty square metres," the Doctor had told them definitively, reading from the console instruments with satisfaction. "Give or take," he'd added after a considered pause. "Seventeen-point-four meters to its highest point. Sizable." "That's about the same as in yards, right?" Tegan had asked, giving up on her mental arithmetic. The Doctor's answer had been a tight-lipped look of forbearance. "Don't blame me," she'd retaliated, "blame the Commonwealth."

The TARDIS had landed in a corner, hard up against dark, panelled walls. Above a height of about ten feet, the surface gave way to a milky glass-like substance, which then rose on all sides like a perfectly smooth geological formation, arcing seamlessly into a dome. Whether sunlight was filtering through it, or it was itself an unfeasibly large lamp, Tegan had no way of knowing but that was where the illumination was coming from. As far as she could see, which was right to the other side of this shadowless space, the only other thing in here with them, out towards the centre across an immaculate expanse of herringbone parquet, was a small glass case resting on a tapering, jet black pedestal.

"Have you said hello yet?"

Tegan didn't jump, she'd noticed Turlough out of the corner of her eye leave the TARDIS, sneaking up behind her. He always seemed to be sneaking

somewhere; on his sneakered tiptoes, in his public-school uniform worn aerodynamically tight.

"Who to?"

The Sneaker gestured to the pedestal. "To whoever. This is obviously a reception area of some kind."

"Really? I thought it was more like a museum."

"A museum with one exhibit," Turlough scoffed, circling her. "I think I can say, with my more comprehensive experience of alien cultures, that this, Tegan, is a reception area." He looked about them, added as though from deeper consideration, "Perhaps a boarding zone for a transportation hub."

"Big-note yourself much there, Space Boy?"

Turlough turned to face her. "There was an Australian boy in my year at Brendon, you know," he said, his tone full of the awkward superciliousness she was used to from him. He was cocky yet unsure of himself in a way that Tegan found mildly endearing. "I barely understood a word he said either."

Tegan pulled a face to convey insouciance at this. "It means you're full of yourself," she informed him, "as you well know. And if you think..."

The air was suddenly filled with the punching trill of an alarm system.

Tegan started; Turlough, wild-eyed, wringing his hands, took a step back towards the TARDIS...

... just as the Doctor emerged urgently from it.

"Tegan," he said in exasperation. "What

did you touch?"

"And you needn't start either!" she told him, raising her voice above the din.

It wasn't anything personal, his continually assuming everything was her fault. Not really. The Doctor treated all humans that way. Well, similarly at any rate. And Tegan had always been the only human in the TARDIS so maybe it just seemed exaggerated. Maybe the next person to come on board would be from Earth. Tegan smiled. *Two humans! The Doctor would probably implode!* Maybe this was Earth. Quite a bit after her time if it was though, judging by the ceiling. And that alarm was like nothing she'd ever heard before.

As abruptly as it had started, the alarm cut off.

"Doctor?" Turlough inquired. Tegan could hear the concern in his voice.

"I don't think that was us," the Doctor reassured them, avoiding Tegan's eye, she noted. "That was someone turning off an alarm system."

"Thieves?"

"Turning off rather than disabling."

"Someone's starting work, you mean," said Tegan. "Like in a museum?"

"Or reception area," Turlough interjected combatively.

"Hmmm," intoned the Doctor ambivalently. Then: "Oh, not just *a* museum, Tegan." Tegan shot a look at Turlough, who, in concession, replied by pulling the same face she had treated him to moments before.

"The British one?" she hazarded, on a roll.

His back to her, hands in trouser pockets, craning his neck back to better take in the ceiling, the Doctor said, "I'm afraid not. Not unless it's undergone a fairly extensive refurbishment; and has been transported several thousand light years in a roughly south-south-

westerly direction. Although come to think of it that kind of thing isn't exactly unheard of. No." He spun round, smiling intently, leaning in. "This place is something on a far grander scale."

"More than just the one artefact on offer then, I take it," Turlough said dryly.

"Oh, this isn't the half of it. Actually, this isn't the approximately twenty-seven thousandth of it."

"You're serious?" Tegan asked. "We're in one of twenty-seven thousand rooms all like this one?" The Doctor's eyes and smile widened in affirmation.

"Approximately."

Tegan looked around them more carefully. Midway along the panelling of each wall she now saw were large, heavy looking double-doors.

"This is..."

But the Doctor was cut off as the nearest doors opened outwards.

Three people entered, two women and a man. The woman at their head, noticing the new arrivals, made straight for them. The other two followed at her heels

"They told us you would be arriving tomorrow by shuttle," the woman said officiously. "I told them, why would they put themselves through all that when they can transmat?" She glanced at the TARDIS. "Is that your orbital transmat? Interesting design. Personalised, of course. Isn't it a bit big for just the three of you?"

"We like the leg room," said the Doctor, not missing a beat.

"Yes, well, I suppose there's never any guarantee that good taste necessarily comes with the kind of money you people make, is there."

Ruffled, Tegan said, "'You people'? What's that supposed to mean?"

"Tegan," said the Doctor in warning.

Tegan bridled. To the woman the Doctor said, "Forgive her, she was looking forward to a shuttle ride."

Tegan laughed sarcastically. "You mean this isn't Disneyland?"

"I'm the Doctor, by the way. These are my... associates Tegan and Turlough."

The woman's manner left no doubt that she considered introductions to be beneath her and her own associates, although the man at least seemed to have the decency to look embarrassed by this. Tegan caught his eye and he immediately looked at his shoes. She had the idea that he must be some kind of trainee whatever-they-were, although he was dressed just the same as the two women, in a soft-looking, thin grey suit, the jacket zipped up to the chin. When it became clear the boss-woman wasn't going to say anything, the Doctor explained to Tegan and Turlough, "These are the Head Curators. They're responsible for countless items here from cultures throughout several galaxies and across hundreds of millennia. Here at the Walker-McCutcheon Repository for Other-world Antiquities and Curios," he added pointedly. "Which of course as you know is where we are."

"Catchy name," Tegan observed wryly, provoking a brief pursing of the Doctor's lips. Addressing the curators the Doctor said, "Remind me, how have you organised it? By solar system?"

"No. We have established a fixed timeline."

"Fascinating. So, a visitor can compare any given moment in one galaxy with that of another."

Turlough said, "Isn't that a bit impractical? I mean the exhibits could turn out to be miles apart."

Loftily, as though it explained everything, the woman said, "Intra-transmat."

To the Doctor, whom she seemed to be warming to, she said, "Of course there are many unidentifiable items that cannot be placed, either chronologically or spatially, yet we nevertheless seek to provide suppositious narratives for these wherever possible; unlike other, lax establishments I could mention."

"Ah yes. You're thinking of course of the Braxiatel Collection." Tegan thought she could hear a touch of mischievousness in the Doctor's voice, and sure enough the woman's nose wrinkled in disdain.

"Irving Braxiatel cannot hope to compete with us on so many levels."

"I didn't know that the study and preservation of history was a competition."

"Everything is a competition, Doctor."

"I see."

Boss-lady frowned. "If you don't mind my saying so I find that attitude a strange one coming from a cleaner."

"A cleaner?" Tegan exclaimed. "Is that what you think we are?"

"What my friend means," the Doctor interjected preventatively, "is that no one should be limited by definition to their profession. Isn't that what they say?"

"You can start whenever you're ready. I would recommend immediately. We haven't been able to trace the source of the... disturbance."

"Well, no, you wouldn't be expected to. You sound quite worried, if I may say."

"You have the equipment?"

"Of course. It's in the TAR- It's in our transmat. You know, your feedback could be extremely useful to us. We rely on people like you, you know, in our.... line of work. So if you could just tell us what you think it is we're dealing with here..."

"Just what we communicated to your

organization. A disturbance.”

“Yes you said. What kind of a disturbance?”

“That is for you to ascertain. Are you sure you’re professionals?”

“If you could just...” The Doctor raised his eyebrows encouragingly. “It would be a great help.”

The man looked up from his feet. “Emissions,” he said nervously. “We’ve registered emissions somewhere in the museum.”

Teasingly, Tegan chipped in with, “One of your unidentified bits of history is leaking, you mean,” earning her a glare from the Doctor.

“But you don’t know from where exactly,” he went on, addressing the man.

The woman said, with unrestrained impatience directed at Tegan, “Obviously.”

To himself, quietly and by way of summation, the Doctor said, “And we’re the cleaners, come to clean up the mess.”

Turlough muttered, “Nothing to worry about, eh, Doctor? Just a containment breach in one unidentified object among millions that could either be next door or fifty miles away.”

Turning on him an admonishing look, the Doctor said, “Probably nothing. Why don’t you pop back into our transmat there and scan for the usual radiation bands.”

“Yes, Doctor,” Turlough said, grudgingly playing the part.

“Oh, and Turlough.” The boy stopped with his hand on the TARDIS door and turned back. The Doctor took a step towards him and lowered his voice but Tegan was still close enough to hear. “Be particularly on the lookout for artron energy, yes? We don’t want a sarcophagus in a distant hall turning out to be the Master’s TARDIS without forewarning, do we. Good!”

“No, Doctor,” said Turlough, in that weary way he had that made it sound like he was always humouring you, and he disappeared into the interior of the time-and-space machine.

To the curators, the Doctor said, “Now then. Perhaps we could use this intra-transmat of yours to get to a central monitoring hub of some kind, help me get my bearings.”

“Hang on a minute,” Tegan chipped in. “What am I going to do?”

“Tegan. Yes.” The Doctor paused. Tegan knew what was coming. “Stay here and don’t touch anything.”

She watched as the four of them headed out into the room and towards a cubicle-type-thing against the wall opposite - a little smaller than the TARDIS, resembling an upright pellet, opaque like the ceiling - the Doctor visibly energized, all the while asking questions, the male curator giving him inaudible to Tegan but apparently informative answers.

Tegan felt neither use nor ornament. What was the point if she couldn’t help? She had a sudden realisation that she just wasn’t enjoying herself. In fact, when had she last enjoyed herself?

She felt a dull twinge of pain behind her eyes as though just thinking about it was giving her a headache.

She could help Turlough, she supposed. But he’d just be sulky and silent, probably just slouch off and let her get on with staring at whatever monitors needed to be stared at. Well stuff that, she’d explore on her own! Don’t touch anything indeed! As if she would in a museum, she wasn’t a child.

Tegan turned to the doors in the wall behind the TARDIS - the closest, and in a direction satisfyingly opposite to that taken by the Doctor - intending to stomp off through them, but just then

her head began to throb again and she stopped. The doors in the right-hand wall were... a better choice, weren’t they? She should go that way instead, shouldn’t she? Yes. Of course. What had she been thinking...?

A warm sensation of calm flushed slowly though Tegan. And as she made her way at a measured pace across the parquet, the pain in her head subsided, settled into a rhythmic pulse that was barely perceptible, and in any case not entirely unpleasant.

In the TARDIS, Turlough glanced up at the scanner just in time to see the image of Tegan - that ridiculous leather miniskirt, the ‘pop-star’ Jackson Pollock top - disappear through the doors.

“She’s off again then,” he said to himself archly. He returned his attention to the instruments on the console panel he was working at.

It was so much easier to set up this kind of wide-sweeping, catch-all detection net since the Doctor had reconfigured the controls in here - it seemed that from anywhere now, at any minute, a keyboard bristling with functions might sprout and make itself useful - and so Turlough had already completed the task the Doctor had set him. Or almost. One hand hovered for a moment over the execute key; then fell instead upon a series of switches and recessed pads to one side. “And not forgetting,” he said, as though he hadn’t actually until the last minute, “the artron energy.”

He brought the program online; and felt suddenly bored. Looking at the scanner again he saw that Tegan hadn’t closed the doors behind her.

“Born in a barn,” he commented. “Well, I’m not coming to find you when you get lost.”

Turlough looked around and began to wonder what to do with himself.

Not all the rooms contained just a single exhibit. Their décor, lighting, and size were all the same - precisely so in fact it seemed - but each successive space Tegan had passed through had been home to anything from one treasure or relic or remnant or whatever they were to dozens. Sometimes even, in crossing to the next pair of double doors Tegan had had to navigate low, maze-like corridors formed by the close arrangement of maybe a hundred of the pedestals. She’d seen crown jewels, pottery fragments, scraps of inked animal hide; technological devices whose purposes she could only guess at; shards and lumps of half-destroyed or decayed stone or metal or horribly organic-looking things that she doubted anyone could enlighten her about (nothing in the collection came with an explanatory notice and she hadn’t thought to enquire about renting a Walkman with a tour guide cassette...). But she hadn’t lingered over any, much less inspected for signs of anything acting up; she didn’t have time, she had to... What did she have to do? Tegan felt a faint tickle at the back of her mind. Did she have to be somewhere?

Unbidden, just behind the tickle, Auntie Vanessa’s voice said then, “He wants to be your young man. You can always tell by the way they sweat.” “I haven’t got time for all that now, not with the new job.” “Have we got any clean wine glasses?” “On the draining board, behind you.” “Well he’s keen. And he only lives upstairs. He could just nip down whenever you felt... you know.” “Auntie!” “I’m just saying, you take happiness when and where you can in this life, girl. If it happens to be attached to a man so much the better.”

Tegan kept moving.

She'd been walking for more than an hour by the time she came to the final doors. She knew they were the final doors – the final ones she needed to pass though – because as she turned the two crystal, diamond-shaped knobs, it felt like opening an airlock in her mind: an inrush of excitement, of achievement; a thrill of being welcomed; of being expected.

Tegan pushed open the doors and stepped forwards.

As she moved inside, the curious light from the domed ceiling began to dim. The doors clicked gently closed behind her, cutting off all illumination from the previous room. About twenty yards ahead and to her left, a greenish glow appeared beneath a single pedestal, picking it out from among the many. The welcoming feeling changed then, became more... insistent; as though she had gone from being an honoured guest to someone who, while still held in high regard, was respectfully required to fulfil a duty here, one which could under no circumstances be deferred. The understanding chilled her, yet at the same time, Tegan found herself wondering why on Earth she would ever choose to defer it.

"You know, if he just happened to decide to pop downstairs this evening to wish you luck," said Auntie Vanessa's voice in her head, "I'm just saying it wouldn't be such a bad thing. He could bring some chips with him if we're lucky. Or 'crisps'. Bloody stupid word, if you ask me."

"There are more things to life than boys, Auntie." "Name me three and keep a straight face while you're doing it! Now, pour us another of them cheeky Chardonnays and I'll explain to you about the birds and the bees. No disrespect to y'mother but when we

were growing up, she thought the only thing a boy kept in his trousers was gum and a pot of Brylcreem."

The green light stayed low to the floor but was radiating strongly out across the parquet. As it spread, it picked out the bases of the other pedestals around her more than well enough for Tegan to avoid bumping into them in her now otherwise pitch-black surroundings.

When she reached the source of the light, she realized it had been contracting, drawing back in, in step with her progress, until now it was no more than a circle in which she stood. In the next moment, it began to project slowly upwards, to form a column surrounding her. With nervous elation, Tegan looked down... and laid eyes upon the item she'd sought out: which had sought her out.

It was a lozenge shape, no more than two feet by one and perhaps six inches high, black with rounded ends. Still liquid – also black, or perhaps just clear water – covered its uppermost face, reaching precisely to the edges and no farther. It almost seemed to be a lidless container, like a narrow cake tin, collapsed in on itself with no surface at all. It called to her.

Tegan touched it.

"He offered you a lift?"

Tegan blinked rapidly, frowned, screwed up her eyes in confusion and forced concentration. Auntie Vanessa? The voice sounded different now somehow, as though it was outside her head. Tegan's mind felt muzzy, her thoughts jumbled, like she'd just come to, having nodded off in the chair for an instant. Chair? Hadn't she been standing? How come she was sitting down? She opened her eyes, looking down at her lap. Some funny kind of green light or

glow or something played on the backs of her legs. She must be tired. Flaking out. Can't keep up with Auntie Vanessa... She should go to bed. Where was her bed? Where was she? Wasn't this a... she wanted to say museum. Why would she think she was in a museum? She was so obviously in a kitchen. The vagueness behind her eyes began to clear. Yes, she was in a kitchen. Her kitchen. Sitting at the table. And there was no crazy green light under her chair.

"You know what that means. If he wants to take you tomorrow, he's got ulterior motives, girl. You're in there!"

Sitting at the kitchen table with Auntie Vanessa.

The tiredness or whatever it was lifted entirely, and the real world came back into sharp focus.

"There's a time and a place for ulterior motives, Auntie."

"And the front seat of a car first thing in the morning's as good as any in my experience."

"Auntie..."

"Alright, alright. But cancel the taxi, I'll take you in the Mini."

"Fine. But that means we're not opening a second bottle, right? I've still got to be up in the morning before God."

"So have I now!"

"Yeah, but you're just the chauffeur." She smirked mischievously, then stood, walked over to the kettle. "You can come straight back here and go back to bed. I've got to do a full day's work!" "Cooing at all the dishy pilots, my heart bleeds."

Tegan turned, pulled a face; Auntie Vanessa mimicked it exaggeratedly.

"Actually," Tegan told her in a gently informing, affectedly self-important tone, "air stewardesses have always performed a vital role in the world of

passenger aviation."

"Strewth, hold onto your hand luggage here comes the in-flight commercial," her aunt informed the room.

"And modern stewardesses," Tegan went on pointedly, ferrying the kettle to the sink, "are key not only to the physical comfort of the people in their charge but are also called upon to continually monitor the mood of a flight's compliment so as to identify any instances of passengers experiencing heightened anxiety levels, and are trained in a number of techniques designed to give reassurance in such circumstances."

"Yeah, like slapping them round the mush and telling them to get a grip."

"The modern stewardess is also fully trained in emergency procedures which time after time have been proven to save lives in extreme situations."

Auntie Vanessa raised her empty glass in salute. "In other words: stick your head between your legs..." she began. Tegan grinned, raised the kettle, "and kiss your ass...-sumptions of survival goodbye!" they finished together, laughing loudly. Tegan threw a dishcloth at her aunt's head.

"Ladies and gentlemen," Auntie Vanessa announced, catching it, "I give you my talented young niece: the world's only cross between a trick-cyclist and Skippy the bloody Bush Kangaroo, guaranteed to put you right, and get y'out of schtuck at the same time. *What's that you say, Skip? The businessman in seat twelve has had too much to drink and is acting like a dick? Well then let's go box his ears for him, shall we?!*"

"Let's go box his ears!" The expression resonated strongly with Tegan. She'd been seven when the family had moved out of Brisbane up to Caloundra. When

Auntie Vanessa had come to stay for Christmas, Tegan had been in her new school for a good couple of months: still feeling alone, still on the bullies' radar. Auntie Vanessa's arrival had been proof that her old life, her real life, still existed and she'd hugged her a little too hard in hello.

"They call me Goat," Tegan told her, not allowing herself to cry. "Why the bloody hell do they do that?" "Cuz daddy's born in Yug'slav'ya. They say that's where goats come from." Auntie Vanessa had grasped her firmly by both wrists, looked her dead in the eye. "You know their names?" Tegan nodded. "You know where the biggest one lives?" Nod, nod. "Right then. You get yourself over there, girl, and box his ears!"

Tegan hadn't done it, of course, but the next time Shaun Winters had yelled, "Billy Goat Gruff!" at her she'd grabbed him by both wrists, looked him dead in the eye and told him he smelled like a gerbil and that in Yugoslavia her grandparents had fed their goats on rats and gerbils. The poor boy had been called Gerbil for ages after that and had never come near her again. Since that Christmas, Auntie Vanessa's solution to anything that upset Tegan – the high school dance, college entrance exams, her father's death – had been that she find someone's ears to box. It had always helped.

Tegan put down the kettle, stepped quickly to the table, hunkered down, threw her arms around her aunt's neck. "What's all this about then? Eh?" "I've got it all, Auntie," Tegan said, releasing her. "Nice place to live, new job. You." Shaun Winter hadn't made her cry, but she was crying now. Auntie Vanessa put a hand to Tegan's

face. "Hey! It's OK. OK. You alright?" Tegan laughed. "Christ, Auntie," she said. "Alright?" I wouldn't be dead for quids!"

"Good on ya, girl! You deserve it!"

Tegan sat down, dried her eyes.

"I've been thinking," she said having composed herself. "I've loved having you here these past couple of weeks, Auntie Vanessa. What do you say you give up your place, move in here with me permanently?"

Auntie Vanessa's eyes glistened, her mouth turned down and: nod, nod. And Tegan felt she was looking at her own seven-year-old self, that the circle had completed its turn. Her hand flew to her mouth as the emotion burst forth again.

Through elated sobs, Auntie Vanessa said, "What are we like?" and she made to say more but was interrupted by a knock at the door. As Tegan wiped her eyes, she saw the guilty look already forming on her aunt's face.

"Auntie Vanessa," she said warily. "What have you done?"

Her aunt shrugged quickly, sniffed. "What? Don't look at me, I'm not expecting anyone." The expression of innocence she was attempting to assume, however, gave Tegan more than enough cause to doubt that.

"Well seeing as it's someone in the house knocking on the flat door and not out on the step ringing the front doorbell, I'd say the possibilities are pretty limited, wouldn't you?"

Auntie Vanessa held up her hands. "Like I say..."

"Come on out with it, what did you tell him?"

"Nothing!"

"Aunt-ie..."

"OK, OK. I just told him you were starting with the airline tomorrow."

"Well, I've told him that. I told him that when I got the letter. Why do you think he's been offering to take me?"

"Yes, but..." Auntie Vanessa winced, "He might have somehow got the idea that for your first tour they've rota-ed you on the Caribbean routes and that you'll be island hopping out there for a month."

"Auntie, I'm doing the Dublin shuttle!"

"Yes, girl," she said with some insistence. "But if I'd told him you'd be back tomorrow evening he wouldn't be here now to declare his undying heaven-only-knows-what before you disappear, would he!"

"No, you're right, he wouldn't! Stone the crows, Auntie Vanessa, I don't need anyone deciding for me when I need a man!"

"Your problem is you're a victim of your time, girl, you know that? You and your generation have made up your minds that all men are fundamentally rotters, when the truth is you just don't understand them."

"I understand men very well, as it goes. I happen to be very much in touch with my animus."

"Whatever that is. Sounds to me like you might be talking out your animus." Tegan scowled at her. "Look, you like the boy, don't you?"

"Sort of. I guess. Yes. Oh, I don't know!"

The knock came again.

"Why not open the door, dear, and see if we can't figure out which it is?"

With a parting glare for her interfering, Tegan got up, walked through the living room, answered the door.

And there, of course, was Terry. He seemed smarter than usual somehow. Had he ironed that shirt? His hair appeared less free-range than it usually did. He held both hands behind his

back like a headmaster.

"Hi," he said. "I... just thought I'd come down and wish you *bon voyage*."

From the kitchen in tones of innocence came, "Who is it, love?"

Over her shoulder, Tegan called, "It's a nice man wondering whether we'd like to subscribe to *The Watchtower*, Auntie. I'm putting your name down for a lifetime's worth. Which might not actually turn out to be too long!"

She turned back to Terry...

...and saw that he was outlined by a green glow, like sunshine haloing a supple leaf. Something familiar stirred in her mind, began to hurt deep inside. Tegan screwed up her eyes, shook her head. But the pain didn't clear. It intensified, radiated out; compressed her eyeballs, caused a vacuum in her ears; it pulled at the muscles in her neck and it shouted at her whole body to stop: stop existing; stop resisting! *come back!*

Tegan opened her eyes. A column of green light was lowering around her like liquid. Someone was shouting at her. Someone was holding her.

"Tegan!"

The face was at first unfamiliar and it scared her a little. But in the next moment the sickly pale skin, the thick mop of red hair, the thin throttling tie all came together to form a memory.

"Turlough?"

"It's OK, I've got you out of there." He had one arm around her waist, the other grasped her forearm, keeping her steady.

"I was back with Auntie Vanessa." She glanced at the smooth lozenge device on the pedestal. Its perfect liquid-surface rippled. "This thing's some kind of a mind-reading machine, it showed me images of my last night with Auntie Vanessa. But it was so intense. Like I

was really there..."

"I don't think they were just pictures from your past, Tegan," said Turlough. "The TARDIS registered faint levels of artron energy coming from this room. I think you actually time travelled. Not physically but somehow in your mind. Come on."

"How's that possible?" Tegan realized he was trying to lead her away from the pedestal. She didn't want to go. She wanted to stay here, by the device. She pushed herself fully upright, wriggled out of Turlough's arms.

"I don't know," Turlough admitted. "But I watched it all." In answer to her frown, he went on, "You were standing inside a... a tube of green light. The outside of it was like a screen. All the way around it showed a kind of hologrammatic image of your memory."

"Sounds like this thing is more like a hypnotic TV than a time machine. It's a glorified entertainment centre, that's all!"

"Using artron energy? No. I don't know what this device is for, but it could be dangerous. Now think: did you change anything in your past? Did anything happen differently?"

"No."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. I remember what happened. I was just talking to Auntie Vanessa and Terry the night before..."

The memory blurred. She looked down at the device again: she had to touch it; there was something she had to finish; something she wanted to finish...

"The night before what, Tegan? If you can't remember, then that might mean something."

"The night before... I went to the doctor's? Something about the doctor's. Was I ill? I had a doctor's appointment?"

"The Doctor? Was this the night before

you met the Doctor?"

The Doctor! Saying the name seemed to diminish the presence of the device in her head slightly, lessen its importance to her. And as though it had loosened its grip, Tegan found she could look away from it.

"The Doctor... Right!" she told Turlough, feeling it was little short of a revelation, but one that had still to fully convince her: she couldn't quite see this Doctor's face; he was young and blond, wasn't he? Or... brown curls?... Then the mug-giness was shot through with a clear image of hard, blue, wooden lines. "The TARDIS! We broke down! I met the Doctor in the TARDIS because we broke down!"

Turlough grabbed her tightly by the upper arms, roughly jerked her whole body round to face him. A panic seemed to have overtaken him.

"Tegan, this is important. Who was driving? Who was driving, Tegan?"

"Who was... what?"

"Changing a timeline is based on making different decisions, taking a different path. The only decision I saw you make on that screen was accepting your aunt's offer of a lift to the airport. Was that the way it was supposed to happen, Tegan? Tegan?!"

"The Mini broke down..."

"Your aunt's Mini!" His excited tone seemed to imply he had deduced something. "If you still remember the Doctor then I'm guessing the correct timeline is the one where your aunt gives you a lift and you break down." He let go of her arms, sighed with relief. "I think it's OK, Tegan. I don't think you changed anything."

Change...

In the lay-by, grit on her hands from the tyre, three wheels on the Mini...

Auntie Vanessa, small, rigid, like a doll...

Auntie Vanessa grinning and crying in the kitchen... She was going to move in...

Terry had offered to give her a lift...

The Mini broke down...

The kitchen...

Crying...

Happy...

... "Alright?" Auntie, I wouldn't be dead for quids!"

The tear-choked words pulsed and repeated and echoed in her head.

Tegan violently pushed Turlough away, turned, threw herself upon the alien device that she now knew was offering her so much...

...when she looked again, it was just Terry standing before her, no green glow, lit only by the orange electric light of the streetlamps, coming through the transom window of the front door.

Why had she been expecting a green light?

Terry had pulled his arms from behind his back, presenting her with a ribbon-wrapped bottle of wine.

"For you. Congratulations again on the job."

"Thanks," said Tegan taking the gift. "Doesn't come with any Monster Munch by any chance?"

"I could shoot down to the corner shop for you," he said, indicating keenly down the hall with his thumb.

"Never mind," said Tegan with a smile.

"Come on in."

She led him back to the kitchen.

"Terry!" said Auntie Vanessa. "What a surprise! How nice of you to just drop in like this." And thinking Tegan wasn't watching, shot him a theatrically executed wink. (*Give me strength...* thought Tegan.) "Oh, wine! We were just about to open another bottle. Or I was, Tegan's complaining about having to go to bed early."

"Very sensible," said Terry. (Did he sound disappointed?) "First day. Can't have a Stewardess sozzled on the job."

"I suppose I shouldn't either, really," conceded Auntie Vanessa. "I've got to drive Madam here to the airport at the crack of unearthly."

To Tegan, Terry said, "Really? I thought you were getting a taxi."

"Change of plan."

With concern he said, "Are you sure you'll get there?"

Auntie Vanessa took umbrage at this. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"Sorry, it's just—"

"A bit fried out she may be, sure, but my old Mini'll get you where you're going every time, no bother!"

"Sorry. It's just that... It doesn't always start, does it."

"Doesn't mean it'll bloody stop."

"No. But... Well, I work from home, don't I," Terry went on valiantly. "So, I could drive you like I said. I don't mind. I'd like to." A blush reddened his cheeks. "And I'd get to spend a bit more time with you before you go away for a couple of weeks."

"Ah, yes, Terry," said Auntie Vanessa guiltily. "About that..."

Pushing his case, Terry said, "I think you might stand a better chance of getting there."

Tegan paused.

"Would you mind, Auntie?"

"No, you young ones go on ahead. I'll stay in bed." Then genuinely brightening added, "I think I will have another glass of wine then!"

She reached for the bottle Terry had brought.

To Terry, Tegan said, "Looks like you're on then!"

A queasiness bubbled up in her stomach, a dizziness bloomed behind her eyes. For a second, it seemed to Tegan

as though she would collapse. But in the next moment both sensations subsided, faded, were replaced by a curious feeling of calm and well-being. She smiled at Terry. Terry smiled back. From upstairs came the faint but familiar sound of the front-door bell ringing in Terry's flat.

Tegan said, "Expecting someone?"

Terry frowned. "No. I'd, umm, better just go and... Sorry, back in a sec."

As he left, Auntie Vanessa turned to Tegan, clasped a hand to her chest in the tradition of melodrama, said, "My God, was that Tegan Keirsten Jovanka, accepting the possibility she may actually have a use for a man? I never thought I'd see the day!"

Tegan giggled.

Auntie Vanessa picked up the unopened bottle of wine, waved it suggestively at her.

Overcome by a sudden celebratory urge, Tegan moved lightly to the draining board, retrieved the corkscrew.

As she brought it back, a crash and a cry came from out in the hallway.

"What was that?"

The front door opened to reveal Terry. He looked taller than he had on the device's surround-screen.

"Yes?" he said.

Turlough clasped his hands together in front of him, took a deep breath.

"Hello, Terry," he began. "Look, you don't know me, but I've got something very important to say to you."

"How do you know my name? Hey, you're not selling *The Watchtower*, are you?"

"What? No. Look. What it is, is... You've won a prize draw in our magazine's monthly... competition thing... and we need you to be at home tomorrow morning to receive your... prize."

It was the best Turlough could come up with, although to be fair he had had more pressing concerns since noticing the image of his travelling companion on the scanner, standing like a zombie inside some sort of weirdly glowing movie projection of her own life, wrists -deep in what looked impossibly like a block of obsidian. Hacking into the call/send circuit of the museum's intra-transmat network had been simple; projecting a cone of frequency-matched artron energy from the TAR-DIS had taken rather more of his attention however, and only when he plunged his hands in on top of Tegan's had he stopped to think what the hell he was going to say.

It had all been a damn sight easier than coming up with a ruse to convince this Terry guy that he shouldn't take Tegan to the airport tomorrow. And it wasn't such a bad ploy, was it? Turlough's time on Earth had taught him that if humans on this side of the planet were susceptible to anything it was the offer of getting expensive consumer items cheaply or, for preference, free.

Terry said, "*Reader's Digest*? Sorry, mate, I don't think so." He began to close the door, not unkindly, in Turlough's face.

Turlough leapt forward. "No, you don't understand!"

What happened next was more the result of Terry's hesitancy than Turlough's physical strength – Turlough knew it the moment he felt the lack of resistance behind the door. The front door flew sharply inwards as Turlough landed against it, hit Terry on the side of the head, sent him crashing against the wallpapered wall bringing down a large mirror that hung immediately inside the hallway.

Turlough's own momentum had him

stumbling into the house, stepping awkwardly over the now prone Terry before just about regaining his balance. Terry lay grimacing amid orangely twinkling shards of mirror. Blood seeped through the arm of his shirt.

"Terry!"

Turlough looked round to see Tegan and her aunt rushing from their flat.

Instinctively he turned away: he couldn't let Tegan see him. Assuming he could still somehow ensure Tegan's aunt took her to the airport the next morning – *how?* – there was no point doing it only to set up a paradox at the same time: meeting Tegan before they were supposed to, when she and the Doctor had turned up at Brendon and the Black Guardian had...

His hesitation, he realised then, had given Vanessa enough time to move between him and the front door.

"Oh no you don't, you dirty little what-name, you're not going anywhere." With one hand pointing menacingly in Turlough's face she slammed the door shut with the other. "Tegan, call the police!"

He heard Tegan say, "Terry! Are you alright? What happened?"

Glowering at Turlough but addressing Tegan, Vanessa said, "You work some of that Air Stewardess first-aid magic of yours, love. Then I'll drive him to A&E."

"No!" Turlough blurted out.

By his side now, right at his shoulder, Tegan said, "What do you mean, 'No'?" Turlough raised a hand to hide his face from her.

If the Mini made an extra journey this evening it would break down tomorrow for sure. And then Tegan would be lost. What was he to *do*? He'd managed to get himself here, why couldn't the rest of it just... sort itself out? Why did the responsibility have to be all *his*?

From the corner of his eye, he saw Tegan kneel to help Terry up and while she was thus distracted, he risked a quick look askance at her.

He saw a person almost unrecognisable. Her manner, the way she held herself: he sensed it instantly. It was a lightness. An innocence? The absence of a reflection of all the death he knew she'd seen with the Doctor? And it occurred to Turlough in that moment – as Tegan held firmly onto this man she liked and who liked her; as he felt the strong dynamic she and her aunt shared – that perhaps she was better off here; that he should just walk away and leave her to this life...

"I'm sorry, Tegan," he said loudly, clenching his hands, almost shouting. "I don't know what to do!"

Then Tegan gave a yelp of pain, doubled over.

The front-door bell rang.

Tegan again felt the queasiness in her stomach. Terry had a steadying arm about her.

"Are you OK?" he was saying. "Tegan?"

The stranger was staring straight at her, but his features were deep in a darkness cast by an intense, green glow that outlined his entire body. He was saying something, apologising. For attacking Terry, presumably. The more she tried to make out his features, concentrate on his words, the worse the sensation in her stomach seemed to become.

Then she was all-but blinded as the same green light flooded the hallway from the direction of the street: the front door was opening. The stranger exclaimed something, loudly and in relief: one word; a name? Tegan squinted into the light. She made out the back of her aunt's head, over her shoulder the silhouette of another man. Somehow

she knew that both he and Terry's attacker were not merely standing in the light, they were the source of it. And coming off this newcomer in waves along with it – as unmistakable as it was inexplicable, conveyed by the way his outlined frame was standing: expectantly, hands in trouser pockets, shoulders back – was a sense of irritation tempered by concern.

The figure entered the house, its features still hidden by light, addressed Terry.

"Ah, Mr Bannister." He spoke hurriedly: politely but giving the impression that he'd brook no delay in the other's understanding of what he had to say. "I'm... Well, for our purposes perhaps you should just think of me as the Neighbourhood Watch. I'm afraid I have to inform you that your car has been stolen. Terribly sorry."

The sick feeling rose to Tegan's throat. She felt her body go suddenly heavy, felt hands grabbing her. Then the green was swallowed by black.

Tegan opened her eyes.

She was lying on her bed; in her room; in the TARDIS. The Doctor and Turlough were standing over her. The Doctor smiled.

"Tegan. How are you feeling?"

He meant well. He always meant well. She knew that. He was kind. But his smile in that moment hurt her; because it told her that nothing had changed. And she had had the chance to change so much. She wanted to be back there, back in the hallway.

"It was real," she said to Turlough. "All of it. I was there."

Turlough said softly, "We know."

"You were there too," she said: realising, accusing. "Both of you. It was you!"

Sheepishly Turlough said, "I saw you

were in trouble, so I followed you in. The Doctor rescued us both."

"You attacked Terry!"

"It was an accident."

"And you," she said to the Doctor. "How did you know which was Terry's car?"

"Tegan, the TARDIS is capable of navigating the violent vagaries of the time vortex. The DVLA is hardly what you'd call a closed book to her."

"Don't get all flippant with me!"

"No," the Doctor said, uncomfortably contrite. "You're right. I'm sorry." His tone changed then, became clinical, business-like. "How much do you remember?"

"Why? Afraid I might have changed something?" She sat up to better confront him. "Everything. I remember everything." But uncertainty clouded her thoughts. "I think. How do I know?!"

"Quite. I'm sure it wasn't a pleasant experience for you. But rest assured you've done some good. The device that trapped you, it wasn't the artefact the curators were looking for – we tracked that one down eventually, by the way; cracked outer casing of an interesting little device which..." He stopped, perhaps sensing Tegan's rising frustration with this irrelevance. "Anyway. Even though Turlough was scanning for artron energy, your device's output was so low through its shielding that it didn't register. The TARDIS didn't detect anything until Turlough aimed the scan directly at it. If it hadn't reached out for you, found you were susceptible to what it was offering then... Well. If not for you it would have stayed hidden and active, and who's to tell what it might have got up to?"

"What was it?"

"A nasty little piece of technology.

From what he saw, Turlough thinks it was designed to lure people in with memories of when they were last happiest and change their time stream from that point, give them the choice to, as it saw it, be happy again. We don't know its origin, but it was probably used as a combination of therapy and entertainment, hence the hologram."

"That's sick."

"Quite. Cruel certainly. But, in your case no damage done."

"No damage done? Doctor, I could have stayed there with Auntie Vanessa. She could still be alive today. Right now."

"Yes. I'm afraid that is true. And who knows, you and Terry might be married with a mortgage and goodness knows what else."

"Don't mock me, Doctor!"

"I'm really not trying to, Tegan. I'm merely saying that the past happened the way it had to. This device was offering you nothing. It was using your life as a spectacle, that's all. And you're worth so much more than that. Tegan, you've travelled so much in the TARDIS, helped to affect so many changes on so many worlds. Who knows how many lives would have been lost if I'd never

met you?"

Tegan pushed herself off her bed.

"So, Auntie Vanessa had to die so that... so that Logopolis could survive? So that London could burn to the ground, is that what you're saying?"

"Tegan," the Doctor said gently, but not without impatience.

"Maybe Adric would still be alive if I'd stayed on Earth, had you thought of that?"

"Tegan-"

"Leave me alone!"

She pushed past him and Turlough, out of her room. In the corridor she paused just long enough to recall which direction the console room was in, then set off the opposite way.

She knew he was right, that everything had to happen the way it had to happen, that Auntie Vanessa was dead, that Adric was dead.

But that night: in the kitchen: with the wine: the laughter: the memories.

I wouldn't be dead for quids, Auntie Vanessa.

Crying hard, Tegan ran to lose herself in the depths of the Doctor's time-and-space machine.



DR. WHO AND THE MISTS OF PREVALOUS

by Jenny Shirt

The man stood in the circle of light in the middle of the darkened room, not daring to hope. The creatures in the shadows circled, giving him their full attention. He knew that he had been lucky to survive until now. Every second was a bonus – but it was also further torture. He had bought himself all of the time that he could. He had been fortunate to have something to tell them – and he told them everything. He told them about the living atmosphere and about the Crystal. He told them about how the old man had tricked him and his fellow pirates and about how they had all died. He told them about how he had run and escaped the planet with nothing but his life. What was that worth now? He had nothing more to tell and they knew it.

Silence! Nothing other than the sinister throbbing of their machinery. Perhaps they would be satisfied. Perhaps at least they might think he could be of further use to them. Then it came. Those terrible voices proclaimed the death sentence. The beams cut through him, disintegrating him, bringing the welcome release of oblivion.

Without warning, the TARDIS lurched sideways. Gillian, Dr. Who's young granddaughter felt herself thrown violently against a wall and she slid down into a seated position. She glanced over to her brother John and to the funny little man in the scruffy coat and checked trousers and saw that they too

had been taken by surprise and were on the floor. Her grandfather's tall stove-pipe hat had fallen over his eyes. With relief she watched them pull themselves up and run over to the central console. Gillian joined them, just as a second lurch came. The three travellers clung onto the console, this time managing to remain on their feet. The Doctor was studying the instruments. Gillian had never attempted to understand how the ship flew, but it was clear, even to her untrained eyes, that the flashing lights were a warning. She felt John move to her side, and she grabbed his arm, holding him tightly for safety. Then a violent judder threw them forwards against the console.

"What's happening, Grandfather?" Gillian shouted. This was like nothing she had experienced in the TARDIS before. One look at the Doctor's worried expression told her that things were seriously wrong.

"I have absolutely no idea, Gillian, but I believe we may be in for a bit of a bumpy ride." He flicked a switch and the TARDIS seemed to settle for a moment, before beginning to shake alarmingly. "Gillian, whatever you do - hold on!" urged John.

Still clinging to the console for dear life, Gillian felt John lose his grip and fall. She checked to see that he wasn't hurt. Sitting in a corner, he had grasped one of the many roundels that covered the walls and was holding on as best as he could. She turned back to her grandfather, who in his concentration didn't seem to have noticed what had hap-

pened to John.

"We have to get her back under control! I'm going to try to fly her manually." He seemed to be pressing buttons and flicking switches almost at random. Not for the first time, it occurred to Gillian to wonder just to what extent this strange little man who was her grandfather knew what he was doing.

"There seems to be something out there. So why can't we see it?" He looked perplexed, and annoyed and seemed deeply uncertain about what to do next. By now, it felt as if the TARDIS was on some sort of enormous slalom course as it veered from side to side. "Ah-ha, there we have it." The Doctor pressed one more button and the sideways movement stopped. He smiled and chuckled to himself.

"For Goodness' sake, what happened?" asked Gillian.

"Well, I had a little help from the TARDIS. If I hadn't, I rather think we might have hit whatever is out there."

Gillian looked at the screen and then back at the Doctor. "But there's nothing at all out there, absolutely nothing."

"No, my dear, at least nothing that we can see."

A red light started flashing alarmingly. The Doctor's tone was composed and calm, but the note of unease was clear in his voice.

"John, Gillian, I believe that we may be under attack, and right now I really think..." The Doctor paused, his eyes drifting.

"Think what, Grandfather?" John shouted, still on the floor.

The Doctor snapped to. "What? Oh, yes, indeed, what. Well, between you and me, I think we may be about to crash! Something is drawing us down to that planet"

Gillian took a breath and felt her stomach leap as the TARDIS dropped sud-

denly downwards.

"It feels like we're on a roller coaster. Are you sure we're going to be OK?" she heard John ask. She turned to smile encouragingly to him. From nowhere, the floor around John seemed to be filled with a strange swirling mist. She saw him stare at it, moving his left hand through it while still gripping onto the roundel with his right. The mist swirled around his torso and appeared to be scanning him. His head was now all that was visible.

The Doctor was still studying the flight controls. He had to shout to make himself heard over the whine of the protesting engines. "Well, that might explain part of it at least. We are entering the atmosphere of the Planet Prevalous. It has a rather clever and very advanced security system based on a living atmosphere. The problem is... that it appears to have locked onto the TARDIS."

Gillian frowned. "A living atmosphere?" The Doctor simply nodded.

Any further questions were halted when John wretched violently. He was fighting vainly to keep his head above the cloud that had taken shape around his body. "Grandfather, I don't know what's going on but, this thing smells terrible! Can't you do anything to stop it? I think it's about to..." His last few words were muffled.

"John!" Gillian screamed as the swirling mist completely enveloped her brother and then began to head, slowly but purposefully, towards her and her grandfather.

The Doctor stared at the approaching mist. "Oh, no! Gillian, I know precisely what's happening. I am starting to remember now..."

Gillian waited for his explanation, but none came. "Well," she prompted, "What is it?"

The Doctor looked slightly puzzled. "But

this is different! This mist seems to have a mind of its own.” John gasped in huge, lung-aching gulps of air, as the mist surrounding his body suddenly, and rapidly, dispersed, releasing its hold on him, and creating a cloud that loomed above the console. Gillian remembered the Doctor’s words about the atmosphere and the mist. It really seemed to know what it was doing.

Without warning, Gillian and the Doctor were hurled to the floor as if the TARDIS had collided with something rather large and then catapulted off it. The mist flew from where it was hovering, and surrounded them all, pinning them to the floor, as the TARDIS went down. Gillian felt the craft land with a heavy crash, the doors were flung open, and she found herself thrown out as if tossed from a dice thrower’s cup. Gillian opened her eyes and shook her head, taking in the soft mossy vegetation that had cushioned her fall. Sitting up she was relieved to find her grandfather, picking himself up beside her. He held out his hand to help her to her feet. Of John there was no sign. She could see the mysterious cloud, coming out of the TARDIS door and disappearing back into the atmosphere.

With astonishment, Gillian took in the scene. They appeared to be in a forest. The towering trees stretched towards a purple sky; streaks of sunlight emerged from behind white fluffy clouds to cut through the treetops.

With a sigh of relief, Gillian heard John’s voice calling. “Grandfather, Gillian, I’m over here. It let me go. Come and have a look at this. There’s a light”. At that his tone changed. “No! Quick! Run Gillian! Grandfather, get out of there!”

With that, John’s voice faded into complete silence.

The Doctor and Gillian looked at each

other. She could see that he was as shocked as she was, but suddenly a loud noise, rumbling all around them forced them to cover their ears, banishing all immediate concerns for John. The noise was becoming more and more uncomfortable, and a searing pain shot through Gillian’s head. They fell into unconsciousness.

Gillian awoke to find herself resting on the floor of a small clearing. Two tall, lean figures, both dressed in white with dark hair approached them from the left of the glade.

Gillian sat bolt upright. “Where are we?” The Doctor smiled and offered his hand to the two strangers. “Hello, I’m Dr. Who and this is Gillian. Gillian, this is the planet Prevalous.” He turned to the strangers. “That’s right, isn’t it?”

Ignoring them, the taller of the two figures began to light a fire. It was growing colder, and night was drawing in. It was only once the fire had taken, that he spoke, “My name is Anto, and this is my grandson Tres, and you are correct. This is Prevalous, the home of the Falaspi.” He smiled, his eyes shining a bright sapphire blue.

Anto continued, “I remember your craft, your blue box. You came here once, many years ago, and helped us. You look different now, but it is you. My mind tells me so.”

“What does he mean, Grandfather?” asked Gillian, confused.

“Well Gillian, the Falaspi have a natural ability to transmit thoughts and memories of events past and present. They are able to join their minds and thoughts together. It’s a sort of telepathy.” The Doctor gave her a reassuring smile.

The Falaspi continued, “I am sorry if we hurt you; we had tried to lock onto your

craft but could not communicate with you, for some reason. It was important that we brought you into the safety of the clearing, and this was the only way we could do it. We have seen blue lights that rise and melt into the darkness. They weaken us in ways that we do not understand.”

Gillian watched the Doctor rest his head in his hand as if in thought, and then ruffle his already unkempt hair. “The mist we encountered earlier... this is your planet’s security atmosphere, which prevents unwanted invaders from landing here. Is that right? It’s being interfered with above your Planet’s atmosphere. Yes, that’s it, isn’t it? So, tell me. When did you first detect this?#

The younger Falaspi, Tres got up and paced around a little. “A few days ago, something locked onto the machines in the caves below the surface. The machines hold vital information, records of our Knowledge Crystal. When you were last on our planet, you will recall that you created a secure system, to prevent the whereabouts of the Crystal from falling into the wrong hands. We are relieved that you returned here Doctor, we need your help. Whoever landed on our planet knows that too and forced you down onto the surface, for their own evil intentions. My grandfather and I joined minds to protect you; and using our thoughts we were able temporarily to prevent the planet’s malfunctioning security system from attacking you; but we are weakened. Our thoughts are being blocked and our energy drained.”

Gillian took a minute to gather her thoughts. “What happened to John? He vanished into the trees, just before we passed out!”

The Doctor took her hand. “John is resilient. Whatever has happened, he can take care of himself.”

Tres sat down to join them by the camp-

fire “We have recently observed bright lights in among the trees. Whatever it is out there may have been the cause of your friend’s disappearance. Our family has generated a wall of protection, a barrier that we have created and positioned around this clearing. Nothing can go in or out of this area unless we allow it. Over the last few weeks, with our weakening powers, two of our own have vanished. They were far too headstrong and ventured out of the safety of the clearing to investigate where the interference was coming from. There aren’t many of us left now.”

Still confused, Gillian asked, “But what happened here, why did you need to create a barrier to protect yourselves?”

Anto replied, “Many years ago our race found a large crystal deep in the cave system beneath the planet’s surface. This is how we acquired our powers of thought sharing. It provided us with an energy like no other. We believe that some machine is being used to create an interference, which stops us from using our mental powers.”

Tres held Gillian’s hand. “I will go and look for my missing brother and sister and for your brother John. Dr. Who, stay here and I will return with news of them as soon as I have any.” Picking up a large stick he moved towards the edge of the clearing, where he paused for a moment and seemed to be focusing his mind. He waved to them and walked out into the forest gradually disappearing beyond sight.

John awoke to find himself in the corner of some sort of control room, tied up with two others. He looked over towards the three creatures who had captured him. They were crowded around a monitor. The squat, metallic shapes with their domed tops were all too familiar. Daleks!

But they had been defeated back when they had tried to build their exterminator weapon, to destroy the Earth, surely? As he was still assimilating the truth, they had taken him captive. He had to release himself and the others as soon as possible and inform his grandfather and Gillian, but he didn't know why he was being held there in the first place.

The first Dalek spoke in that again familiar grating, metallic voice: "Communication with Skaro has been established."

The second Dalek responded. "Excellent. We need to determine the location of the Knowledge Crystal.

It turned its eyestalk towards John. "When your friends come for you, they will guide you to the Crystal."

The three Daleks turned to their prisoners. "We will return. If you attempt to escape, you will be exterminated."

John shouted over to them. "What crystal? What are you talking about? How did you even get here?"

Without answering, the Daleks left the room and disappeared into the darkness of the cave corridor.

John whispered to his two fellow prisoners, "What's this crystal they're talking about and who are you two?"

One of John's fellow captives, a young man with a gentle face, took a deep breath before continuing in a whisper: "I heard them talking. They discovered that there was a crystal here that could give them the power to gain knowledge of the whole universe, and that the only way for them to control the crystal's power is to use us, to combine its strength with the power of our minds. Once they can do that, they will be like gods, and will use us to control future events. Without us, it is too powerful for them and would destroy them. We are able to absorb much more of its energy than they ever could."

The young man looked at the third captive, a teenage girl. He looked back to face John. "My name is Vel and this is my sister Mib." The young female looked frightened, but she clearly wasn't going to admit to it.

Vel continued, "We Falaspi are a peaceful race. The three Daleks you saw, arrived amongst us a few days ago. We had seen lights in the trees and heard strange sounds and Mib and I decided to go and investigate. My grandfather is not fast enough to outrun whatever dangers are out here, so he remained behind in the clearing with my other brother."

Mib looked at Vel and piped up with enthusiasm, "As we wandered further into the trees towards the waterfall, we saw a blue light heading towards us and then we came face to face with these armoured aliens. We were very afraid and didn't know what to do. We surrendered to their cries of extermination and remained still with our eyes closed, believing that this was the end of us both; but for some reason, they spared us."

Vel took up the story once more, "These caves were created by the Falaspi thousands of years ago to mine the crystals and trade with neighbouring planets in exchange for food and provisions. Prevalous was once quite a beautiful place, with its rich vegetation and towering trees." He paused, a thought occurring to him. Looking at John he continued, "I think you are a visitor to this world too. Another traveller came here once. His name was Dr. Who and he helped an ancestor of mine to defeat a group of pirates, who had tried to steal our crystals for themselves"

John felt himself react to the mention of his grandfather's name but decided not to let it show. He needed to hear more.

Mib interrupted her brother. "Dr. Who

was clever, telling the pirates that he would lead them to the location of a precious crystal which would be worth far more than any other that they might find, but he would only do this if they left the planet and its people alone. He knew they were not to be trusted, and he was right. They agreed and followed him further into the cave system in search of the crystal, but they took more and more of the caves' smaller crystals with them in their greed."

John looked fascinated. "So, what happened to these pirates? Did they get away with the crystals?"

Vel continued. "When they at last arrived at the cave where the Knowledge Crystal was located, they all fought one another and tried to take it for themselves. This was their downfall. As soon as their fingers touched the Crystal, their minds were overwhelmed and filled with information, far too much for a single brain to manage. They screamed in pain and died where they stood. They were all destroyed, all except for one lone pirate who had been too afraid to claim the Crystal. He saw what had happened and ran from the caves in his fear and left the planet never to return. Perhaps he ran into the Daleks somewhere. Perhaps he tried to trade information with them, who knows, but they found out about our planet somehow. Our security system built into our planet's living atmosphere, has broken down and has turned into the mists you saw. For now, it is still doing its job, but its decisions are increasingly unpredictable. We believe it may be dying."

John looked at them both. "This was that strange mist that enveloped me earlier?"

Mib saw John's face distort at this memory and put her hand in his to calm him. She continued, "Dr. Who helped

the Falaspi to store the Knowledge Crystal in a place where it would be safe"

John looked at him. "I just arrived on this planet with Dr. Who. He's my grandfather."

"Dr. Who has come back? We have to warn him about the Daleks."

John laughed again, "Oh, he already knows about them, believe me! Vel, perhaps we can send Mib for help? If we can find a way to free ourselves, she's quite small and may be able to hide in the shadows and escape the cave system."

Vel looked at Mib. She looked back at him and nodded. Before they could make more plans, the Daleks returned. As they did a voice emerged from a several speakers set against the wall. "Incoming message from the Dalek Supreme." The Daleks stopped in their tracks and raised their sucker arms, as if in salute. It was clear to John that they were listening intently. He did the same. He knew that if the Knowledge Crystal did happen to come into the Daleks' grasp, they would use it to... Well, he didn't truly know but going by what he knew about them, they would probably try to conquer everything and everyone in the universe.

A deep, booming Dalek voice filled the chamber. This, John decided, must be the Daleks' leader. "Dr. Who is on the planet's surface. Locate him. Force him to lead us to the Crystal. Your ship will remain in orbit above the planet in readiness for your return to Skaro."

The Dalek controlling communications answered. "We will complete our mission. We have produced an interference wave in order to decrease the power of the Falaspi mind. We will report back when we gain the power of the Crystal, then we will have dominion over the whole universe."

The Daleks chanted in unison, "Daleks will have dominion. Daleks will have dominion." Then one Dalek turned its dome towards another, which was clearly its subordinate. "Bring the girl into the caves. We will use her to access the Crystal."

It was only then that John noticed that Mib had managed to free herself, being careful not to alert the Daleks, he watched her escape through a crack in the rock wall. But it was only a moment until the Daleks noticed that the girl had gone.

"Alert, alert: the girl has escaped."

"Go after the prisoner. Once the child is located, exterminate her. The other prisoner will serve our purposes just as well."

Back in the clearing, Dr. Who was pacing up and down, agitatedly. He smiled at Gillian as she approached him. "Well, that's it. There's no sign of Tres - or of John. Gillian, listen to me, we need to see exactly what we are dealing with - and soon. I have a nasty feeling that this may have something to do what happened last time I was on Prevalous. Gillian, you stay here, in case they come back. Anto and I will go and see what we can find out."

Gillian nodded and leaving her grandfather to his thoughts, she wandered curiously away into the trees and further on towards the edge of the clearing. She had just reached the safety barrier when a sudden flicker of light ran across the invisible wall, making her jump. She cried out.

"Grandfather, I think something is happening to the barrier."

The barrier continued flickering and then gradually vanished as it lost its energy. The force field was dead. Gillian looked back towards the Doctor, who had stopped what he was doing. He called

over to the Falaspi. "The barrier has completely gone. You must all find somewhere to hide."

Gillian started as she noticed a movement in the distance. "Grandfather, I saw a figure over by that rock face." She began moving in the direction she had indicated. The Doctor got up to follow her, but Gillian was already well ahead. Bolting forwards he caught her hand, quickly pulling her back. "Gillian, no! You mustn't go any further without us!"

Tentatively, Gillian, Anto and the Doctor headed towards the rock face where she had seen the figure. As they arrived, Anto called out to the small figure, "Mib!" The girl emerged fully from behind the rock where she had been hiding and ran up to them.

The Doctor turned and crouched down to Mib's level. He gently took her hands in his. "Where have you come from? Tell me, what have you seen? What happened? You can trust me. My name is Dr. Who."

"Doctor?" She faced him with wide open eyes. "Daleks, they're called Daleks. They captured us and your grandson John too. We were taken into the caves. They wanted to use us to gain the Crystal's powers!" A sound made her jolt. "Quickly, we have to hide. They're not far behind me."

The Doctor took no time in getting the group into the caves, where they found a small side room not far from the entrance. "Hide behind the rock wall and don't make a sound," he said in an urgent whisper.

It was pitch black in the side cave and the entrance was well hidden. Silently, they all held their breath for what seemed like an eternity.

Gillian risked looking around the rock. Three Daleks had arrived at the main cave opening. The first Dalek turned towards the others

"Leave the girl, we will find Dr. Who. Then we will locate the Crystal." The second Dalek responded. "Dr. Who is close by."

The Dalek turned its eyestalk slowly towards the direction of the side cave where the Doctor and the group were hiding. The group froze to the spot and could hardly breathe. After seconds that felt like eons, the Daleks finally continued on their way, back down into the caves.

The Doctor took Anto on one side, "We must get to the Crystal? Come on Anto, lead the way."

"I am not as mobile as I once was. If the Daleks found us, I wouldn't be able to get away from them quickly enough. The others also know the location of it, but you will need me to open the cave door and to apply my mind to take hold of the Crystal. I know that I am able to carry its energy in my own mind without it damaging me. As a young man, I found the Crystal and I have experienced its power. When it is used properly it can do amazing things, such as healing and bringing knowledge of the universe. In the wrong hands it could be used to create extreme evil." He looked bitter, and remorseful, imagining possible future events. "It would be better if it had never existed, for the trouble it could cause!"

The Doctor turned to the others. "We must separate into two groups. A rescue group and another group to deal with the Daleks and secure the Crystal."

Mib held the Doctor's arm. "There's a path around the cave system if you're small enough to crawl through the tunnels. It leads through to the Daleks' control room. It's the way that I escaped earlier."

Anto nodded. "Dr Who and I are too big to manage that, but Gillian and Mib could crawl through. What do you think, Doctor?"

Crouching down, the Doctor placed his hands along the rock face in the area where they were hiding. He felt around the edge of the cave, until the rocks opened up into a tunnel about halfway off the floor.

"Gillian take Mib. There's a gap in the rock face, do you think that you can both get through it? It will bring you through to where John and Vel are being held. Here, take my pocket-knife in case you need it. Once you get there, wait for your chance to rescue John and Vel, then get back out of the caves and into the forest as soon as you can. Anto and I will find the Daleks and lead them to the Crystal to try and persuade them that it's within their grasp." He turned to Anto. "Once I have the Crystal, I will put it somewhere else, somewhere safe where it can be used for the right purpose, so your planet can be safe from danger again."

Anto looked at him. "That's exactly what they want, they want you to take the Crystal, so they can destroy you. Not even you would be able to handle the Crystal and its power. The Falaspi mind works differently, I have many years of understanding how to direct and focus my thoughts. The Daleks know that if they can get you to touch the Crystal, it would be the perfect way to eliminate you."

The Doctor smiled grimly. "Well yes, you are quite right. As soon as I discovered that the Daleks were on Prevalous, I realized that was why we were lured here. I think that the pirate who escaped, must have tried to trade with these Daleks. That's how they must have found out about the Crystal and about my connection to your world."

The Doctor gave a decisive shake of the head. "We must be careful. The Daleks are extremely evil, worse than that, cunning, and will do anything to get what

they want. But that very ambition can be used against them. The Knowledge Crystal is able to understand emotions, it can detect pure thoughts and can reach deep into the mind of whoever or whatever touches it. We have to find a way of persuading the Daleks to touch the Crystal." Anto nodded and looked to where Gillian and Mib were waiting to set off on their journey. He hugged them both and Gillian whispered to her grandfather in the darkness. "Ready when you are. I'll look after Mib," she assured Anto. "We'll come and find you once we are all together."

The Doctor held her hand. "No Gillian, you must get out of the caves as soon as it's safe to do so."

Gillian and Mib pulled themselves up into the tunnel and began crawling through to where John and Vel were being held. Arriving at the control room and finding it empty of Daleks, they climbed out of the gap in the rock face. They jumped down, and ran over to John and Vel. Using the pocket knife her grandfather had given her, Gillian cut the rope which bound them both together. Vel hugged Mib, and for a moment all was serene. Then hearing voices approaching, they ran and hid behind a large rocky wall.

The Doctor glanced at Anto and gave a nod. The pair stepped out into the corridor behind the Daleks. The Doctor called out. "Hello, Daleks! Hello, it's me, Dr. Who. I think you might just have heard of me."

All three Daleks swivelled around immediately and began chanting. "You are Dr. Who. You are the enemy of the Daleks! You will surrender."

"Yes, yes, I surrender. We both do"

The Doctor raised his hands straight up in the air, stepped forward and smiled. "Good to make your acquaintance once again. I was only wondering yesterday, or was it next Tuesday, where you were up to with your plans to destroy happiness all around the galaxies. So, you're plotting once more, but what is it this time? Why this planet? I am all ears so, please, tell."

The Dalek turned its eyestalk round to Anto and back to the Doctor. "You will help us locate the Crystal. Once we have it, we will have power over all existence. You will comply, you have no alternative. Show us its location."

The Doctor and Anto led the Daleks down the cave corridor. Carefully avoiding the Dalek control room, where John, Gillian and Vel were hiding.

Peering from behind a rock, Gillian watched her grandfather, Anto and the Daleks passing. She beckoned to John, Mib and Vel to follow her. She knew she was disobeying the Doctor, but he might need her. They followed behind, making sure to stay in the shadows.

With Anto leading the way and the Doctor just behind, they led the Daleks further along the corridor, taking a route that led left and up another side corridor, where they eventually arrived at a cave wall. Anto placed his hands on a pad, the cave wall slid open.

They made their way along a wide ledge, overlooking a deep crevice below them. It was a vast cavern with a river flowing through it, and beyond this they could see the Crystal, sitting on a ledge just off the ground, glowing and pulsating with so much beauty and power.

The Doctor and Anto saw the figure who

was standing in front of the Crystal in the same instant. Before the Doctor could stop him, Anto screamed his grandson's name in anguish. "Tres!"

The Daleks turned towards the Doctor. "You thought your plans to destroy us had worked, Dr. Who, but we had already found the Crystal. Your friend is wired to it so we can acquire its power." The second Dalek turned towards Anto, who was beside himself at the sight of his grandson wired up to the Crystal. "The young humanoid did not employ his intelligence. He agreed to help the Daleks in exchange for your planet's freedom. Instead of bringing freedom to your planet, you are now facing destruction. We forced him to wire himself to the Crystal. We know we cannot touch it. We will exterminate him when he is no longer useful to the Daleks."

Tres shouted over to the group. "I can sense the Crystal, its beauty. It's so rich, so incredibly beautiful, but I am fighting to hold its power. Grandfather, I am frightened of what may happen if I lose control!"

The Daleks turned again to the Doctor. "We have communicated with the Dalek Supreme who is waiting to transport us to our ship above the planet. We forced you to crash on Prevalous. Now, our plan is complete. You will take the Crystal and it will destroy you. We will reign supreme over the whole Universe."

The Doctor stared at the three Daleks. "You really don't get it do you? You don't understand love or compassion of any form. Yes, you wired up Tres to the Crystal, but you failed to realise one thing. Tres is Anto's grandson, he trained him in mind control."

Anto broke free from the Doctor's side and sprinted to Tres. Positioning himself right in front of the Daleks he turned to face the Crystal. The Daleks attacked. With cries of, "Exterminate!" they fired

their guns, the beams tearing right through the old man's frail body. For a moment he was bathed in an almost blinding light, then he fell, motionless to the ground.

But the beam from the Dalek gun had not finished its work. It carried on through to the Knowledge Crystal, shattering it into millions of tiny pieces which flew out and back into the Daleks' casings. The Daleks screamed out a horrible, almost indescribable noise. Disorientated, the Daleks began moving randomly back and forth and twirling around in circles, manically chanting, "Out of control, out of control!"

Gillian, John, Mib and Vel emerged from the shadows from where they had seen everything and ran to help. The Dalek guns were firing randomly in all directions. One beam caused Vel to dive to one side, another nearly hit Gillian. The Doctor called to his friends. "Quickly, we must push them over the ledge. Cover their eye stalks with anything you can find. They have been pierced with the Crystal fragments and they cannot take the beauty and emotion they are now experiencing. The fragments still have power left inside them, and it's destroying the Daleks' minds and turning them mad."

Devastated and angry at the loss of his grandfather, Tres, who had been thrown to one side and had avoided the Daleks' beams, leapt to his feet, and ran over to join Vel and Mib. Following the Doctor's instructions they covered the Daleks' eyestalks with items of their clothing, moss, anything they could find. The Doctor, Gillian and John helped and began pushing the Daleks from the rear. They were still firing the deadly beams and screaming "Exterminate!" and "Out of control!" manically as one by one the group succeeded in pushing them over the ledge. With one huge shove each

Dalek toppled off the cliff edge and plunged violently to the rocky floor below. They fell screeching, the impact shattering their outer casing, instantly destroying the angry creature inside.

All went quiet and the group sat on the floor completely exhausted and taken aback at what had just happened. The Doctor sighed. "I am sorry for the loss of your grandfather. He was filled with so much love for you all and I didn't expect him to do what he did. I thought he could control his emotions and I knew that you would be fine, Tres. Your mind controlled those powerful thoughts with not a single bit of hate within."

Gillian hugged the group. "Your grandfather was wonderful. You will remember him; and those feelings will never leave you."

Something occurred to John. "But what about the Dalek Supreme? He will know that something has gone wrong when this lot don't report in. What do we do about that?"

"Come along then, everyone." The Doctor motioned his friends to follow him and set off back to the Dalek control room, where he flicked a switch and turned a dial. Immediately the chamber filled with the throbbing sound of the Dalek Supreme's control room on Skaro. The Doctor smiled to himself, then spoke clearly into the machine. "Hello, Dalek Supreme, is that you? Can you hear me?"

The voice of the Dalek Supreme boomed out in reply. "Dr. Who?"

"Yes, quite right, it's me, your enemy."

The Doctor pressed another button and the ship above the planet revealed itself on a screen. "Oh hello. There you are then, bingo! I have located your Daleks' ship. You're wasting your time, you know. The atmospheric barrier is nearly back to full strength. You can't get in and there's nothing for you here any-

way. The Knowledge Crystal was destroyed along with your Daleks. You have no use for this planet now."

The Dalek Supreme looked out of the screen. "You will never defeat the Daleks, Doctor. We will be back more powerful than ever, and you will be destroyed."

The Doctor replied, still smiling at the screen. "Well, perhaps, but not for now."

"We will return! We will return!"

The Doctor sniffed, closing communications with Skaro as the Dalek Supreme's voice gradually faded. He typed a few instructions into the computer to the left of him. "That should do it. Your atmosphere was already resetting itself on its own and that should do the job now. There should be no more of those strange mists. I have reset its code, which should prevent it from going wrong again. The Daleks were able to intercept its coding this time, but I have altered it and I have made it impossible to change. You will be quite safe from now on. No, not quite safe - totally. Totally, totally safe."

Everything went quiet once more and the oppressive atmosphere had lifted. Gillian gave John a hug and forgetting what he was doing, he reciprocated for a moment before pulling away from his young sister in embarrassment.

Mib held her brother Tres and Vel's hands. "We will create a new world and learn to make this a planet where people will feel safe once again."

Dr. Who, Gillian and John said their goodbyes and walked into the TARDIS. The Doctor took the controls, and the TARDIS dematerialised, taking the travellers on their way. They knew this time they had succeeded in restoring serenity to this world. The Daleks had lost this battle, but it was an ongoing war which Dr. Who knew he might never win.

IN A STATE OF GRACE

by Stephen Hatcher

Something was definitely "in the air". In the three years that George Pemberton had worked in the Ministry, he had come to learn that there were days when not very much happened, other days when rather a lot happened and other days still when there was "something in the air"; and this day in the summer of 1896 was very definitely one of the latter days.

The signs were not difficult to read. The more fancifully inclined amongst George's colleagues tended to speak of an almost electrical crackling in the air on these days, but as far as George was concerned that was nonsense. It was a much more straightforward matter than that. The level of coming and going was higher than usual. Serious-looking men in expensive suits moved purposefully backwards and forwards between offices, wearing an expression that said, "something is up, and I am the man to deal with it." Clerks scuttled, as only clerks can, from basement stores to conference rooms, carrying ever larger bundles of dusty, ribbon-bound files. Typists groaned under the weight of ever longer and ever more secret correspondence.

In the reception area, a procession of increasingly impressive members of the good and the great swept past George's desk and up the stairs, presumably, if George had been inclined to speculate, towards the office of the Director. George, of course, was not inclined to speculate, beyond remarking to himself that something was very definitely in the air.

With luncheon appearing on the horizon, if not actually pulling up in a handsome cab outside the main doors, a sudden commotion caused George to cease contemplating his upcoming sausages, mashed potato and peas and to witness the arrival of a visitor. In both size and dress, the man stood out from the crowd of faceless civil servants and politicians, who were the usual denizens of the Ministry building. George wondered for a moment if he knew him. The man was certainly familiar, if not at all run-of-the-mill. Of over-large build and sporting a large beard, he wore a brightly coloured coat and a maroon and gold tie. He burst through the doors, turning as he did to address the cabbie in a booming voice. "Wait there, my good man. I won't be long." His whole bearing spoke of a general irritation and displeasure at finding himself here. As he strode towards George, he blustered loudly and angrily to himself and to anyone else who wanted to listen. George caught some of his words.

"The cheek of it... How dare they! Don't they realize, I have better things to do than... I've told them, I want no more of this." He stopped before the desk addressing George before the astonished man could welcome the newcomer. "I want no more of it, I say!"

George couldn't find the words to reply so merely looked at the man and waited for his outburst to continue. There was a long pause before the man resumed.

"Well?"

George blinked, still lost for words.

"Well," the man repeated. "Is it not enough that I have come? I have obeyed your summons, now kindly have me announced."

George recovered and smiled somewhat insincerely. "Good morning, sir. How may I help you?"

"I rather think it's a matter of how I can help you, judging by the message I received. I was summoned, so here I am. Now kindly stop wasting my time further and have me announced to Sir Mortimer."

The name of the Director brought George mentally to attention. "Certainly, Sir. What name is it, Sir?"

The man paused, pulled himself up to his full height and announced self-importantly, "I Sir, am the Doctor."

The Doctor stepped out of the lift doors onto the fourth floor and followed the young man towards a large oak door. The man knocked and in answer to the invitation from within, showed the Doctor into the room, closing the door behind him. The Doctor took in the scene, the large oak-panelled office was an impressive sight, as was the enormous mahogany desk; the man behind it, perhaps less so, but then so much of Sir Mortimer Charnley's power came from the tendency of others to underestimate him. The Doctor knew that this was one of the most powerful men in England. As Sir Mortimer rose to greet him, the Doctor's attention was caught by another figure in the room, whom he hadn't noticed before. Painfully thin, with untidy brown hair and wearing a badly fitting brown pin-striped suit, and what appeared to be some form of sports shoes, the man stood with his back to the window to the Doctor's

right. He reached into his top pocket and put on his spectacles, regarding the Doctor intently.

"Oh hello! Right, yes! Well of course, yes."

Sir Mortimer turned to the man, "Doctor, allow me to introduce you to *the Doctor*. Doctor W. G. Grace."

"Well yes, of course you are. I should say so." The man bounded up to Doctor Grace and began shaking his hand vigorously. "Doctor Grace, it's a pleasure to meet you". He paused for the briefest of moments, as if something had occurred to him. "Doctor Grace, I knew another Doctor Grace once. I suspect the name might be the only thing you have in common with her."

Sir Mortimer continued, "Doctor Grace is one of my most dependable operatives, oh and he also happens to be England's champion cricketer, the captain of the English Eleven."

The thin man continued to pump Doctor Grace's hand. "Of course, yes. That'll come in handy. Couldn't miss you, eh, W.G.? Can I call you W.G.? Or do you prefer William?" He didn't pause for a reply. "W. G. it is then. W.G. Grace, perhaps the last of the great Victorians, the nation's hero, an unmistakable icon of the nineteenth century... and with a great beard. Never could carry off a beard myself, sort of left that to 'you know who' really." The words "you know who" were accompanied by the universal hand-sign for quotation marks and something of a wistful expression, neither of which left Grace any-the-wiser.

Seemingly without drawing breath, the Doctor continued, "Cricket, eh? Used to love that. Funny thing, I can't remember why, come to think of it."

Doctor Grace opened his mouth to speak, but before he could say anything, he was distracted by a strange ringing

sound. The thin man reached into a pocket and brought out some sort of device. To Grace's astonishment, he began to speak into it. Even more surprisingly, Grace found that he could hear the faint sound of a woman's shrill voice answering the man, although he couldn't make out her words.

"Hello, Donna yes. Is everything OK?" The man looked momentarily concerned. "Oh, OK good... Shopping? Well, why not... Yes, I'm there now... Yes, you'll never guess... W. G. Grace... Yes, the cricketer... I know... Anyway, I'll see you later... Yes... Say hello to Professor Litefoot for me... OK, bye." He returned the device to his pocket. "Sorry about that, now where were we? Oh yes... W. G. Grace! And they call you the Doctor. Well, that'll be confusing. I'm the Doctor."

Grace took the opportunity to speak at last. "The Doctor?"

"Yes, and before you ask, just the Doctor."

"I see." Grace gave the Doctor a long look of suspicion. He turned to Sir Mortimer, whom he found had returned to his desk and had been watching the two Doctors make each other's acquaintance with an air of amusement. Grace awaited further explanation of who this Doctor was, but none came. "Sir Mortimer, can I ask why I have been brought here."

"Doctor Grace, once again your country has need of your services."

At the Director's invitation, Doctor Grace took a seat and waited for Sir Mortimer to speak. The thin Doctor moved to stand behind the great cricketer, fidgeting excitedly, as if scarcely able to contain himself.

"Doctor Grace, Doctor, some information has come to my attention, which has a terrible bearing upon this nation's security. It appears that certain forces,

inimical to this country's fortunes, have insinuated agents into the heart of society. As of yet, the specifics of their plans are not clear to us, but we do know that they intend to strike at the very existence of the Empire itself. Doctor Grace, it is vital that you discover their plans and that you thwart them."

Grace stroked the impressive beard. "But Sir Mortimer, it is some years now since I last worked for the service, why have you found it necessary to call me out of my retirement?"

"Doctor Grace, as I said, these foreign agents are at the heart of society. What I have not told you is where we believe them to be operating. What makes you the only man who can investigate and thwart the plans of these foreign agents, is that it would appear that they have infiltrated the very Australian cricket team, against whom you will be leading the England Eleven, tomorrow at Lord's Cricket Ground."

Grace was dumbfounded. His first instinct was to rail against such a monstrous suggestion. "But Sir Mortimer, I can assure you that all of the members of the Australian team are personally known to me. They may be colonials, even the descendants of convicts, but I can assure you that they are all, to a man, gentlemen. Even the Players are Gentlemen."

The thin Doctor observed this exchange, without comment. Sir Mortimer continued.

"I understand that, Doctor Grace, and I am sure that with regard to the majority of the colonials, both Gentlemen and Players, you are right. However, the information I have received is clear, the Australian team has been infiltrated. Whatever dastardly plan they hope to commit, is aimed at destabilizing the Empire itself, by striking at its very core. Now, am I able to count on you, Doctor

Grace?"

Grace nodded, "Of course, Sir Mortimer."

"And you Doctor?" He turned to the thin man, "You have helped us before. Your arrival here at this time is most fortuitous. Can we count upon your help?"

The Doctor took a strange, buzzing, tube-shaped device from his jacket pocket and studied it intently. Sir Mortimer and Grace exchanged puzzled glances. The strange man spoke, his tone now serious, "Yes, of course. But judging by these readings your problems are bigger than just a few foreign agents. Sir Mortimer, Doctor Grace, it may be that I'm the only person who can help you."

William Gilbert Grace took guard, relaxed into that familiar batting stance and tapping the bat gently on the ground in anticipation, raised his gaze to take in the bowler. The man began his long run to the crease. Rhythmically building speed as he ran, a look which combined concentration and menace on his brow, feet pounding the compacted earth, he thundered in. He reached the stumps and with a whirl of arms and a great leap into his bowling stride, he released the ball... which bounced twice before trickling along the ground towards the great batsman. Grace sighed to himself and clipped the ball off his feet into the netting on the leg side. In his head Grace heard the familiar applause from the Members' Pavilion and cheering from the popular seats. If it had been a First Class match the ball would have raced to the boundary and the champion would have added another four runs to his unequalled career total, but then a bowler quite

this lacking in the requisite skill would hardly have been playing in a First Class match. It had been the tradition for many years on the morning of a Test Match to place a silver thruppence on top of the stumps in the practice nets and to allow club bowlers to test their skill, with the promise of the coin as their reward, should they bowl the great man out. Very, very occasionally a bowler of some ability would be unearthed. Today, Grace reflected, his money was safe. It was hardly worthwhile practice though, for the contest ahead.

Grace prepared to take guard again and the next bowler began his run-up. Just as the man released the ball, an insistent call came from the crowd behind the net, "Doctor Grace, hello there! I say! W.G. ...!" The ball happened to be more or less on a line and length, Grace's attention was momentarily distracted, and it crashed into the off stump about half-way up. The bails were sent flying, and the coin spun in the air before dropping to the floor. The crowd gasped silently, Grace retrieved the coin and handed it over to his conqueror, shaking the hand of the man, who would now have a story to tell his grandchildren. He beckoned to a teammate to take his place in the net and ended his practice session.

"Oops, sorry. Was that my fault?" The Doctor bounded over towards the great cricketer with an apologetic smile. Grace rolled his eyes in reply. The two men moved away from the crowd and found a corner in which to talk. The Doctor pulled the tube-like device from his pocket and flicked a switch. The device buzzed furiously. Doctor Grace looked on in puzzled interest. "I've been tracking this all night. Something Doctor Grace, is definitely happening – and that something is something that

should not be happening in England in 1896."

Grace felt as if something extraordinary was about to be revealed. It was a feeling that made him nervous, but he wasn't quite sure why. The revelation never came. The Doctor looked him in the eye and paused for a moment, before putting the strange device back into his pocket, switching it off as he did.

"No, I don't think so. Doctor Grace, I think you need to see what you can find out about Sir Mortimer's foreign agents. Leave this stuff to me, I'll see what I can find out and I'll see you later on, during the lunch interval."

Grace nodded. The Doctor turned with an encouraging wink and hurried off. As Grace watched him go, he wondered again who this strange man was and where he had come from. The very thought as to what the answers to these questions might be sent a shiver down his spine.

Just before ten to eleven, under bright sunshine, Grace went out to the middle with the Australian captain, the genial Harry Trott and promptly lost the toss. Thus, it was Grace's England Eleven that took the field first. The Australian opening batsmen Donnan and Darling were soon parted, and the early breakthrough soon turned into a rout as England's champion bowler Richardson ran riot. Three wickets were down before double figures were achieved and six before forty was scored. A little after the luncheon interval, the last Australian batsmen were trudging their way disconsolately back to the pavilion, fifty-three all out.

Ten minutes later W. G. Grace and A. E. Stoddart took their places at the wicket to begin the England innings. Grace smiled encouragingly down the wicket

to his partner. With the Australians dismissed so cheaply, the match was theirs to win. Giffen bowled the first ball, which came cleanly off Grace's bat through the close fielders on the leg side for a single – off the mark. Grace settled to watch Giffen bowl the next to Stoddart, who also got smartly underway. No terrors here, the England captain thought to himself, before settling to receive the next ball. After a comfortable enough start, it was something of a surprise to see Stoddart go on seventeen, with the score on thirty-eight, but he was replaced by the diminutive form of the reliable Bobby Abel. Grace and Abel steadied the ship and saw off Giffen and Jones. Against Trumble and Trott, the pair began to prosper. With a perfectly timed clip off his legs to the boundary, Grace went to his fifty, raising his bat to the members' pavilion in recognition of the applause.

With the score on 143, and Grace on sixty-six, Trott surrendered to the inevitable and took himself off. Grace watched the Australian captain to see who he would choose to continue the attack and suppressed a chuckle when he saw him walk over to Cornforth. Grace and Cornforth were old friends and old sparring partners, with the key word being old. Grace thought back to that day at the Oval in 1878, when Cornforth had bowled faster than anyone had seen before, he was too good for the English batsmen that day, Grace included. Now however he was eighteen years older, the pace and fire had gone, and it was six years since he had last played in Australian colours. He had been following this team as a journalist and his selection for the Test Match had come as a huge surprise.

"Right-Ho, old man." Grace muttered to himself. "Let's see how much of it you've still got." He watched the old

demon bowler with a mixture of curiosity and pity as he walked to the beginning of his run up. Cornforth turned and stared at the England captain over his famous moustache and began running in. The old rhythm was still there as he ran, long dark hair flapping in the wind, but Grace knew that this was not the Cornforth of old. Cornforth bowled, or at least Grace presumed he did, because he saw nothing of the ball. He heard the thump as it hit the ground, felt the wind as it shot over his head and heard the gasps of the Australian wicketkeeper and slips as the ball continued over their heads to the boundary. The umpire signalled four byes and Cornforth returned to his mark.

The next ball pitched on a length and Grace got his bat on it, more by experience than by judgement. Cornforth followed through halfway down the pitch and stood glaring at the England captain. Grace returned the glare, unwilling to be intimidated. It was then that he noticed the peculiar stare of the Australian, expressionless, without recognition, without even a sign of hostility. This was a man whom Grace had known for eighteen years, but he did not know the man behind those eyes. It was a stare that Grace would have struggled to describe as human.

The third ball was a beamer, that most physically dangerous of accidental deliveries. It shot straight through Grace's beard, past the wicketkeeper hitting the boundary boards on the full toss. Grace heard the astonished whistles of the Australian fielders and the concerned apology of Trott, "Sorry Doctor, she must have slipped." Cornforth said nothing.

Grace didn't see the ball that bowled him. He glanced ruefully at the shattered stumps, took off his gloves, tucked his bat under his arm and set off

back to the dressing room. As he approached the pavilion, the crowd began to applaud in recognition of a good innings, albeit one brutally terminated. It was then that something occurred to W.G. When he was out, Trott the Australian captain had shaken his hand in commiseration and congratulation, but his old friend Cornforth had done no such thing and had just returned immediately to his mark, to await the arrival of his next victim. In many ways, that was even odder than his newly rediscovered ability to bowl like the demon of old. Something was not right.

As the two English batsmen led the teams off for the tea interval, they were observed from a balcony high up in the pavilion, where the English captain joined the Doctor. The two men spoke the same word simultaneously, "Cornforth!"

"Cornforth," repeated the Doctor. "So, you noticed it too. There's something odd about that man."

Doctor Grace nodded. "Absolutely, he's not the man I've known for so many years. Somehow he's different."

"Look." The Doctor indicated the scene on the boundary, where the tall figure of Cornforth was in deep conversation with another, smaller man, also in cricket whites and sporting an Australian cap. "Who's he?"

"That's Carter, the Australian twelfth man."

"Mr Cornforth and Mr Carter appear to be as thick as thieves, wouldn't you say, Doctor Grace?"

"Hmm, quite so Doctor. I rather think we should keep an eye on both of them."

"Good thinking, you take your friend Cornforth, and I'll see what Mr Carter is up to. Just one thing, Doctor Grace,

don't do anything to put yourself in danger. This may be beyond what you are used to."

Grace didn't reply, other than by giving the Doctor a meaningful look. "I must re-join my team mates." He stood and began to leave. "I will see you at the close of play, Doctor."

The Doctor replied distractedly, still watching the two Australians intently, "Right yes. See you later... One last thing, Doctor Grace..."

"Yes, Doctor?"

The Doctor flashed the great cricketer a broad smile, "Well played."

By the close of play England had lost their remaining wickets. Cornforth had continued to bowl for a while. For an over or two he had managed to keep up the terrific pace that had accounted for Grace's wicket and he had removed Bobby Abel too, but then the aggression seemed to disappear without warning. After an over of decidedly medium paced and rather mediocre bowling, he was replaced by Giffen, who together with Trumbull wiped up the English tail. The Australian openers came out to begin their second innings two hundred and twenty-five runs in arrears and despite the odd awkward moment against Richardson in particular, managed to see out the day without loss.

As the players left the field, Grace watched the Australian team come out on their balcony to applaud their batsmen in. He noticed the absence of Cornforth almost immediately. Where was he? Those keen eyes scoured the pavilion and found him. There he was, crossing the Long Room, behind the applauding members. Grace left his teammates to get changed and took off

after the demon bowler.

The concept of stealth was difficult for W. G. to pull off. Once seen, his immense stature and instantly recognizable beard were impossible to forget. Even without these distinguishing features, his achievements on the playing fields of England and Australia, where for more than thirty years, he had achieved things with both bat and ball that no cricketer of previous generations had come close to had made him instantly recognizable to all classes of society, in all parts of the Empire. It had been many years since he had passed anywhere unrecognised. The Lord's Long Room, during a Test Match against Australia was very probably the last place on Earth in which the great cricketer might hope to pass incognito. He didn't waste time in entertaining the idea, instead taking the time to enjoy the adulation.

He was reaching an age when time was catching up with him. Almost all of his contemporaries had long ago retired, or worse. His thoughts passed for a moment to poor Fred, his late younger brother, perhaps the most talented cricketer of them all, who had gone so young. W. G. had been luckier, but his glorious career was reaching its end. He had already noticed that his eyesight and timing were beginning to diminish, and his faster ball was no longer the threat it once was. No, he would hang on a while longer, but retirement beckoned – and with it, obscurity as those who remembered his great feats grew old themselves and younger men found new idols. His records would be broken, he was sure, but whoever did so, would have to be a true master. With a gracious smile he made his way through the throng of members, acknowledging each congratulation or kind word. "Well done, Doctor". "Got 'em on the run

now.” “You’ll finish it off tomorrow.” “Good to get one up on the Aussies, eh?” With a glance to the far corner of the room he noticed Cornforth, slipping anonymously through an unremarkable service door.

It took Grace a little while to cross the room. With a final wave to his public, he passed through the door. The contrast could not have been more marked. Leaving the crowds and the opulence of the Long Room, Grace had entered a dark corridor, which presumably led to the kitchens. In all these years coming to Lord’s, Grace had never been this way before. It was one of those areas used by stewards and waiters, where the cricketers and members never had cause to enter. There was no sign of Cornforth, but there was only one direction that he could have gone, so Grace followed. After a minute he was faced with a choice as the passageway divided. To the right was a door to the kitchens, behind which Grace could hear the sounds of activity as the last remains of tea were being cleared away, prior to the preparation of the members’ dinner. A small round window allowed Grace to peer through unseen. No sign of the Australian bowler. The other way then. A rough staircase leading downwards towards the basement.

Taking care to make no sound, Grace descended and found himself in another, darker corridor. He allowed his eyes to become accustomed to the darkness and took in what he could see. Four doors, all closed, all in darkness. But no, there! The farthest door, the third on the right, it was faint, but he could see a red light coming from around it. He approached the door and put his ear to it. He could make out a faint humming, like an electricity generator, but were there voices? No, he didn’t think so.

Carefully, he tried the handle. It turned. He opened the door just enough to see though. In the darkened room he could make out some sort of medical or scientific instruments, although as a medical man himself, there was little here that he recognized. Some of the equipment was glowing gently, providing the red light he had noticed. There seemed to be no one here. Grace stepped into the room, closing the door behind him. It was a large room, probably an old wine cellar, he reflected. However, in spite of the cavernous space, it did not take him long to take in the strange equipment standing in banks around a central operating table – one of the very few things in the room that he did recognize. Along the far wall stood a row of what looked like large bell-jars, each the size of a man. What caught his attention, however, was the figure on the table – Cornforth. He was completely still, eyes closed. Grace examined the figure. He wasn’t breathing, and there was no pulse. “Dead,” he whispered under his breath.

He heard a noise in the corridor. Someone was coming. Hurriedly he took shelter behind one of the equipment banks and held his breath. Just in time he managed to get out of sight as he heard someone come into the room. He risked a look and got away with it. It was Carter. Unseen, Grace observed the Australian twelfth man who had his back to him and was studying one of the pieces of medical apparatus, occasionally twisting a dial or flicking a switch. After seeming to establish that things were working to his satisfaction, Carter went over to the inert body of Cornforth and began examining him, raising first one then the other eyelid and peering into the dead man’s eyes. To Grace’s relief, Carter then turned and left the room.

W. G. Grace paused a moment to be sure that the coast was definitely clear, then moved over to Cornforth. He re-examined the equipment that Carter had adjusted but could learn nothing from the curious shapes and symbols that adorned it in the place of any legible numbers or letters. He moved over to the corpse. With a momentary pang of regret for his late former friend, W. G. again checked for a pulse. Nothing. He bent over the cadaver to confirm what he had already ascertained – that Cornforth was truly dead. He could hear no breathing.

In an instant the matter was put beyond question. Cornforth’s eyes shot open to reveal a dead stare of cold malevolence. Grace felt a hand grasp him by the throat and he began to choke. Cornforth sat upright and wordlessly tightened his grasp on the Doctor’s windpipe. Grace struggled but against such preternatural strength it was useless. He couldn’t even call for help. He was beginning to black out when he became aware of a figure over his left shoulder. He felt the needle enter his arm. The grip on his throat was released, but by now whatever Carter had injected him with was taking effect. As he fell to the floor, he felt himself lose consciousness.

“Donna! Donnity, Don, Don, Donna!” the Doctor roared enthusiastically into his mobile phone. He winced and pulled the phone away from his ear, before continuing in a more subdued tone. “No, no, sorry! No, I won’t do it again! Where are you...? Professor Litefoot’s house...? Dinner...? Dinner, Donna. Dinnerdonna, Donnadinner. Ooh, I like that! No... sorry! So, Dinner, lovely... No, I’m not going to be able to. Things are happening here that I need to sort out. Yes, with W. G. Grace... Well, we’ve become quite good friends... Yes,

I know... No, no... NO! Please tell the Professor and Mr. Jago to enjoy their meal and leave it to me. There’s nothing they could do here. No, that’s right. There’s definitely something going on of an extraterrestrial nature. Those signals we followed, yes. And the disturbances to the time stream too, yes! It’s all connected and with the help of me old mucker W. G...” The Doctor chuckled to himself. “... I’ll get it all straightened out and I’ll see you here tomorrow... Who’s coming...? Oh, right you’ll like him... One thing, if he thinks you are a boy, don’t worry about it... No Donna, I know you don’t look anything like a boy, it’s just his way... OK then, see you tomorrow. Oh, and one last thing... Mind your table manners... Donna..? Donna...?” The Doctor smiled to himself and put the phone away.

Most of the members had dispersed by the time the Doctor entered the Lord’s Long Room, some to homes in the suburbs or to hotels of varying degrees of luxury; some to gentlemen’s clubs in St. James and some to the Lord’s dining room, where they would eat before making their way to any of the above. The Doctor reached into his jacket pocket and took out the sonic screwdriver. He adjusted it causing it to buzz insistently but quietly. He held it out in front of him and began sweeping it towards the wide glass windows which gave the best view in the ground over the playing area. Immediately the tone of the buzzing lowered. The Doctor swept the screwdriver around the room, the tone remained persistently low, but then changed, increasing in pitch until it was positively whistling. The Doctor smiled to himself as he opened the inconspicuous service door

and entered the dingy corridor beyond. He followed the buzz of the screwdriver along the corridor, down the stairs into the basement to the closed door. He tried the handle, found it unlocked and slipped into the room.

He saw the large inert body of Cornforth on the operating table immediately and took in the banks of equipment. "Hello, what do we have here then? Ooh, now that's interesting!" His examination was curtailed by what he saw next. At the back of the room, standing upright under a large dome made of some sort of plastic, was an ample figure that the Doctor would have recognized even if it was not wearing one of sporting history's most famous beards. The figure was wearing some sort of metallic headset, which flashed with red, green and yellow lights. "Well, hello, Amazing Doctor Grace. What have they done to you?" The Doctor had little difficulty in lifting and removing the plastic cover. He waved the sonic screwdriver over the headset, which stopped flashing immediately and removed it from Grace's head.

W. G. Grace opened his eyes and blinked wordlessly, bringing himself back to consciousness. He tried to step forward, almost fell, but caught himself and brought himself upright. "Doctor? What's going on...?"

Without saying a word, the Doctor indicated the next plastic bell jar. Grace looked at what the Doctor had seen. It contained another figure of around the same size and stature of Grace. Although rough and unfinished, it was quite clearly a replica of the great cricketer himself.

The Doctor moved to investigate further but was interrupted by a shout from his companion. He turned to see Grace being attacked by Cornforth, newly resurrected from the operating

table. He had Grace by the throat, pinned up against a vacant bell jar. In his youth, Grace would probably have been able to put up some sort of fight, but now approaching his forty-eighth birthday, he was no match for the giant Australian. The Doctor came to the rescue. Reaching behind Cornforth's right ear he pressed gently, and the attacker froze. Grace removed the fingers from around his throat and stepped away, leaving Cornforth standing where he was.

The Doctor allowed W. G. to get his breath back before checking on his health: "Are you OK, Doctor Grace?"

"I am fine, Doctor. But that's no man. What is that creature?"

"An android."

Grace repeated enquiringly, "Android?"

"Yes, an android, an automaton, a mechanical man. At some point, your friend Cornforth has been replaced by this artificial creature, in order to carry out some plan or other. Now, I wonder what...? Yes, that would make sense. And if..."

"Doctor, Doctor please! Could you perhaps finish at least one of those sentences? What exactly is going on, how can a man be a machine and what does it have to do with the Test Match?" He indicated the unfinished android figure of himself under the bell jar. "And who or what is that?"

The Doctor began removing the cover from the replica of his friend. "Well W. G. this is you, or at least it was going to be, and if we don't do something about it, it still could be."

Grace stepped up and helped the Doctor to remove the cover.

The Doctor continued, "Whoever is behind this has replaced Cornforth, and perhaps others – and was going to replace you – almost certainly with the intention of committing some sort of

outrage. Imagine the reaction in England if a member of the Australian cricket team were, for example, to assassinate Queen Victoria."

"But the Australians won't be going anywhere near Her Majesty."

"Well, not that then, but something, something big... As I'm sure you are aware Doctor Grace, cricket matters to you English. There will come a time when an English fast bowler, bowling legside bouncers at the Australians will almost bring down the Empire. Some sort of incident, here at Lord's could be catastrophic. It could alter history. Doctor Grace, I came here tracking a temporal anomaly. This is a point where the future of Earth is at stake. Someone is trying to change the future. The century that is about to start will see enormous developments in engineering, science and technology that will eventually lead humanity to the stars. Whoever is behind this is trying to stop that future from happening and to leave the Earth of the future vulnerable to its enemies."

Grace looked puzzled. "Enemies from outside the Earth itself? Martians, then?"

It was the Doctor's turn to look puzzled. "Eh, what? Martians? No... Well yes actually, maybe, but probably not. Suffice it to say Doctor Grace, that this world has enemies."

"Indeed, it does." Neither Grace nor the Doctor had noticed Carter come back into the room, until he spoke. They turned to find him pointing what was clearly some sort of weapon at them. "Now Gentlemen, please move away from the android." They obeyed.

"Quite a good likeness, do you not agree? Or perhaps not just yet, but once we get you back into the machine and finish the process... And you will be

only the first Doctor Grace. Your Time Lord friend here has got it right, or very nearly." Carter addressed the Doctor for the first time "I have got that right, haven't I, you are a Time Lord?"

The Doctor nodded. "I'm the Doctor and yes, I am a Time Lord."

Carter smiled. "Imagine the scene Gentlemen. Tomorrow, at the conclusion of the Test Match, with the cream of society looking on, members of the England team, my androids, led by their heroic captain Doctor William Gilbert Grace, turn on their Australian opponents and with their bare hands, tear them apart. Then they turn to the assorted dignitaries present and kill them too."

Grace shook his head. "Monstrous, the diplomatic fallout would indeed be appalling."

Carter continued, "The Empire would fall, and the Earth would be on a new course, leaving it open to my masters."

The Doctor looked up keenly. "Your masters? Now who would they be? I've heard someone talk like that before"

"I'm sure you can work that out Doctor. Think about it while you are in the machine." Still covering them with the weapon, Carter reached over and flicked a switch on an instrument panel. Two of the bell jar covers began rising. Carter indicated that the pair should move underneath the covers. "Sadly gentlemen, you will not be witnesses to the great events of tomorrow, you will..."

Carter's speech was interrupted as he was shoved violently against an instrument bank. The weapon fell to the floor and slid towards the Doctor, who picked it up deftly and pocketed it. The W. G. Grace android had come to life and was attacking Carter. The unfinished android briefly held the upper hand, but as Grace and the Doctor

watched, Carter began to achieve dominance, forcing the Grace android to the floor, where he lay immobile, save for a gentle twitch. Seeing his chance while Carter recovered, the Doctor approached him unseen from behind, reached out and pressed behind his right ear. As Cornforth had earlier, Carter froze where he was.

"But he's..."

"Correctamundo, W. G. Mr Carter here is another android, working in the service of one of the Earth's enemies. Luckily, your duplicate over there Doctor Grace, had enough of the real you in it to allow it to help us out. Now, let's just make sure that all of these androids are completely and permanently deactivated..." The Doctor took out the sonic screwdriver and pointed it towards the two androids. The screwdriver emitted a high-pitched buzzing and the androids lay still."

"Doctor!" The Doctor could hear the urgency in the cricketer's voice. "It's Cornforth. He's gone!"

"Come on!"

The Doctor ran out followed at some distance by W. G. Grace, but there was no sign of Cornforth. He turned to his companion. "Doctor Grace, go and talk to the people in charge upstairs, get the pavilion cleared. I've got a feeling that we might be in very great danger. I'll find Cornforth."

Such was his standing among the great and good of the M.C.C. Committee, that W. G. Grace's request that the Lord's Pavilion be cleared was met with no resistance, other than a little good-humoured grumbling from some of the older members. Grace left them to it and set off to find the Doctor. Coming

out onto the playing area and looking back at the now empty Pavilion he saw him almost immediately on the home players' balcony. Grace ran back into the Long Room, through the doors to the main stairs from which he had so often emerged on his way to compile yet another great innings and raced up to the home dressing room. The Doctor stood with his back to him in the door to the balcony, looking down on the figure of Cornforth, who lay curled at his feet. The Doctor's hand shot back in warning.

"Stay back Doctor Grace, you need to get out. It's damaged, I think it might explode."

Grace ignored the instruction and came to stand behind the Doctor, who shot him an irritated look. "Can you humans never do as you are told?"

Grace became aware that Cornforth was trying to say something.

"Must... must... must..."

The Doctor began to raise the sonic screwdriver.

"No...no... Must... must... Must terminate."

The Doctor lowered the screwdriver. He spoke gently. "Terminate. But Cornforth if you do that, you'll take all of Lord's Cricket Ground and quite possibly most of London with you."

"Must terminate, now. Must terminate."

"But you could have done that already. Yet, you haven't, have you. What's stopping you? I rather think something within you is holding you back. Something of the real Cornforth, perhaps?"

The android ignored him. "Must terminate... must terminate..." The android's voice was growing louder and more insistent.

The Doctor gave a resigned look. Almost quicker than the eye could see, he had raised and used the sonic screw-

driver. The Cornforth android fell silent and still.

W. G. Grace realised that he had been holding his breath. He allowed himself the luxury of exhalation. "Is it over?"

"It's over."

Lord's Cricket Ground on a sunny afternoon was an idyllic sight. With the Australians all out in their second innings, the outsized Doctor Grace and little Bobby Abel were an incongruous pair, but they were getting the job done for England. In the stands, the Doctor and his friends looked on with varying degrees of interest and comprehension. They were an even more incongruous group, but the Doctor was a Member and they were all friends of Doctor Grace too, so no one queried their presence. Even the fact that one of the party was a woman was allowed to pass on this one occasion, given the special circumstances.

Henry Gordon Jago was studying the scorecard that he had been filling in as the runs were knocked off. He turned to his companion, an older man, who had been following play intently.

"Dashed shame, Professor. That poor cove Cornforth having to pull out of the game. Twisted ankle apparently."

"Quite so Henry. It's always nice to beat the Australians at full strength. Apparently their twelfth man is injured too."

The Doctor suddenly realised that Donna had been talking to him for a while.

"So, who was it then, go on Doctor, you've got it all worked out haven't you?"

He shook his head as if to clear it and looked at her. "Who was what Donna?"

"Have you not been listening to me?"

"Listening? Yes, yes, of course. Well, no, actually. What? Who was what?"

"Who was behind these androids then?"

"Well it could be one of many. Kraals... Kraals like androids, yes, maybe Kraals. Or the Master, but no, of course not. Chameleons then... but hang on, they weren't androids. You know Donna, the best androids I ever saw were on the planet Tara... absolutely extraordinary"

"So, it was them then."

"Who?"

"Those Taranians, Tarasians, I don't know, what do you call them?"

"No, no, not them."

They were interrupted by a loud cheer that went around the ground, mixed with cries of "Well done Doctor!" and, "You're the champion!" For a moment the Doctor almost started to acknowledge the acclaim, before he realised it was aimed at his new friend, the great cricketer, who had stepped out and driven majestically to the long-off boundary to reach his century.

The Doctor glanced at his friends, "The Earth is far from out of danger, Donna. We'll have to see how things develop, but with good people like Doctor Grace, Mr. Jago and the Professor here on hand, at least there will be a defence."

A loud cheer interrupted him as the crowd greeted another boundary. The Doctor jumped to his feet and joined in the applause. "Come on Donna, there'll be time to worry about that later. Just for today, let's enjoy the cricket."



THE THIRD CYBER WAR

by Andrew Blair

I was in a room with the most powerful people in the universe.
I resented being there.
I had made the point that transcriber software could minute this meeting far more effectively than I could, and my line manager had replied, as if etching the words into my face, "They are looking for a concise summary."
I'd much rather have been watching television.

Excerpt from Council Minutes 21/02/14
In attendance: The Minds of the Emperor (MOTE), Designator Okoro (DO), Influencer Rebrov (IR), Co-ordinator Sekar (CS), Transporter Vaka (TV), Faithful Azar (FA), Plentiful Ortega (PO), Agitator Roa (AR), Agitator Jervais of the Name-Searchers Alliance (AJ), Reddpil Tusk - Brother of the Guild of Technicians (RT), Platonic Abstract Joromy Croblym (JC).
Chair: Placator Morris (PM)

PM: So, last but not least: Co-ordinator?
CS: The Tiberian Spiral colonies have reported a deterioration in conditions. I'd like to table a motion to send support. (I raised my head. No one seemed to notice. A man with a face like a debating society scoffed)
CS: The terraform pods aren't taking root, and the soil is only suitable for a limited number of crops. The expedition, like most colonists, could not afford Byzantium-class ships and so have no ship-based agriculture.
RT: Can't they synthesise proteins until the terraform pods start working?
CS: Only for a few years.
RT: Gives them time to get the pods up

and running.
CS: But if they can't they'll have to find another planet.
AJ: So what?
CS: Well, that would require extra fuel, re-allocation of resources, interference in another colony's expansion... a lot of extra work compared with trying to make the Tiberian Spiral habitable.
AJ: Why do we have to do anything for them?
CS: ...
AJ: They've left us. That's the point. We set them up and then they stand on their own legs.
RT: He's right.
AJ: It's for their own good.
RT: It's a slippery slope if we help them, then before you know it other colonies start asking, we keep giving, hey presto they're completely reliant.
IR: They have a few years before the situation is irretrievable, yes?
CS: Yes, but not before it's bad.
TV: We have the resources to send out ships.
PO: The farm worlds can't take extra demand though.
PM: Show of hands, who supports this motion? ... Uh-huh. And against?... There we go then.
ACTION: None

Minuting wasn't exactly in my job description but was apparently covered by, "additional duties as necessary". I questioned whether I was the right person for the job. I later deduced that the right person for the job was my line

manager, but she would rather risk questions about her absence than actually sit through another Council meeting. I knew, though, that she was heading home, because HBO were releasing a new series of *Teletubbies* that night. It was the main thing we had in common, a burning desire to see if Dipsy would break the cycle of determinism.
And so. There I was. In a meeting. Not in front of the telly with a glass of wine and a four-pack of cookies. Something of a blow for free will, if you ask me.

Excerpt from Council Minutes 28/02/14
In attendance: The Minds of the Emperor (MOTE), Designator Okoro (DO), Influencer Rebrov (IR), Co-ordinator Sekar (CS), Transporter Vaka (TV), Faithful Azar (FA), Plentiful Ortega (PO), Agitator Roa (AR), Agitator Jervais of the Name-Searchers Alliance (AJ), Reddpil Tusk - Brother of the Guild of Technicians (RT), Platonic Abstract Joromy Croblym (JC).
Chair: Placator Morris (PM)
MOTE: Can you read that last part again?
CS: "The ships didn't show up on radar; we simply woke up to find them in the sky, landing in formation. Robotic figures then approached our settlements in imperfect unison. They surrounded us, stopped, and waited."
MOTE: Hmm.
CS: "They are humanoid. Tall. Their bodies are mostly metallic. They have blank faces that look like they might be crying or might be laughing. They have a sort of handle-like object on either side of their face, joining at the crown."
DO: Cybermen?
AR: Sounds like it.
CS: They have sent a recording. It is distorted but it sounds like they started chanting.
AJ: Really? Chanting?
CS: Mmm.

RECORDING PLAYS
CS: They clearly repeat a mantra.
DO: I hear it.
RT: It's very fuzzy.
CS: We think they're saying 'We can get rid of your hunger. We can get rid of disease. You could be like us.'
DO: That is not dissimilar to our records.
CS: So, what can we do?
RT: Have we been asked to do anything?
CS: We haven't had contact with Tiberius since this message.
RT: So, we haven't actually been asked for help?
DO: Presumably, they're not able to ask for help.
RT: Who's the leader on the Tiberian expedition?
AJ: Teller.
RT: Teller. Ol' One Eye.
PM: Is this relevant?
RT: A man who would lose his sight for political leverage? Who can't grow spuds properly so sends us reports of the bogeyman?
PM: He's not that cynical.
RT: He's trying to lure us out.
DO: We can't take that risk.
RT: And how do you think that will play? Sending off squadrons, our young people, to protect a bunch of hippies in the arse end of nowhere?
DO: With respect...
RT: Especially if it turns out they just need advice on how to grow turnips.
PM: This is a serious allegation...
RT: In an election year. You think on that. You think on how this will be reported.
DO: And if you're wrong?
RT: I'm not.
DO: Entertain it. As a possibility.
RT: Then we just send in the Desolators.
ACTION: None

Okay, so I get that confidentiality clauses exist, but no one ever really sticks to

them, right? I certainly hadn't been completely discreet. Partners and friends would get versions of the truth or – if I was angry – the whole truth. Those were in less powerful organisations, though. Like, I didn't mind if someone found out the M6 Library Services were cutting corners, or the figures for the Britbox Archive were being manipulated to stop the board asking questions. This felt too big to just complain about at home, too big to just let go of.

Edge Watch Recording 07/03/14

"Excuse me, Placator?"

"Can I help?"

"I just wanted to ask you about the Tiberius colonies."

"What about them?"

"The reports that are coming in..."

"I'm not at liberty to tell members of the public about the Outer Colonies."

"Members of the public?"

Indistinct noise.

"Administration... oh! So, you do..."

"Minutes, yes."

"Ah, so you know all this. Fine. Fine. What do you need clarified?"

"I er... I have family in the colony. The colonies. I'm worried about them."

"Okay, as am I. I thought..."

"Isn't there anything we can do?"

"That is not how we operate."

"Why?"

"You have overstepped the mark. If you talk to me again about this, you will be fired."

Excerpt from Council Minutes 07/03/14

In attendance: The Minds of the Emperor (MOTE), Influencer Rebrov (IR), Co-ordinator Sekar (CS), Transporter Vaka (TV), Faithful Azar (FA), Plentiful Ortega (PO), Agitator Roa (AR), Agitator Jervais of the Name-Searchers Alliance (AJ), Platonic Abstract Joromy Croblym (JC).

Apologies: Reddpil Tusk - Brother of the Guild of Technicians (RM)

Absent: Designator Okoro (DO)

Chair: Placator Morris (PM)

PM: Co-ordinator Sekar, any updates?

CS: We've had no further contact from the outer colonies.

PM: I see. Moving on.

Excerpt from Council Minutes 14/03/14

In attendance: The Minds of the Emperor (MOTE), Influencer Rebrov (IR), Co-ordinator Sekar (CS), Transporter Vaka (TV), Faithful Azar (FA), Plentiful Ortega (PO), Agitator Roa (AR), Agitator Jervais of the Name-Searchers Alliance (AJ), Reddpil Tusk - Brother of the Guild of Technicians (RT), Platonic Abstract Joromy Croblym (JC).

Absent: Designator Okoro (DO)

Chair: Placator Morris (PM)

PM: We have had an update on the Tiberius Colonies situation.

CS: We have?

PM: A rather urgent update, so...

CS: Why was I not informed?

PM: Brother Tusk.

RT: Thank you, Placator. We have been investigating the colonies – covertly, Co-ordinator, need-to-know basis – and received this drone footage before intercept. THE VIDEO, SHOT FROM ABOVE, SHOWED A SETTLEMENT OF GREEN COLONY DOMES AND GRASSLAND. IT WAS IN DISARRAY. BUILDINGS WERE ON FIRE. METALLIC FIGURES FIRED RED LASERS FROM THEIR ARMS. THEY CARRIED PRONE BODIES AS IF THEY WEIGHED NOTHING, DRAGGING THEM OUT OF SHOT TOWARDS THE TOP OF THE PICTURE.

(Something about this profoundly unnerves me.)

RT: So, as you can see, the Cyber-threat has been corroborated. We have similar footage from other planets of Cybermen

stunning colonists before taking them away for conversion. We therefore have to assume that the Tiberius Colony is lost to us.

(No.)

RT: I appreciate that my earlier remarks seem especially harsh, but please rest assured this was investigated thoroughly in conjunction with the Agitators. My behaviour was necessary to prevent interference in this process by well-meaning but inexperienced parties.

CS: Huh.

RT: So, I'm afraid that this footage gives us no choice. We must – with the Emperor's permission – use Desolators on the Tiberius Colonies.

MOTE: We will inform his Excellency.

MOTE: We have informed his Excellency. He has agreed to their use.

CS: Do we not get a say in this?

RT: This decision rests with the Emperor, not the council.

CS: When will this be carried out?

MOTE: The Emperor is ready.

RT: The Desolators are in position.

MOTE: The Emperor has... The Emperor has pressed the button.

RT: And they're launched.

CS: What? Can they be cancelled?

RT: Why would we do that?

"I'll tell you why!" A muffled shout comes through the doors. There's a high-pitched noise and the locks open. Designator Okoro pushes into the room. Tusk's face twitches. Very slightly.

"Sorry I'm late," she says. "I was chained to a radiator."

"Oh my god," says Tusk, apparently sincere.

"In the Tech Guild," adds Okoro.

"Whatever he's told you, it's a lie."

The Placator puts his face in his hands.

"Why is this happening?" he asks.

"I think that's my cue."

A blonde-haired woman in a beige rain-

coat enters, beaming at everyone as if she's a Labrador and they are literally any object. I'm torn between wondering who the hell she is and whether her ankles are cold.

"Hello! I'm the Doctor! Sorry about everything. This the guy?" she says to Okora.

"This is him Doctor," comes the reply.

"I had to rescue my friend from you," says this Doctor. "I gave her a fragment of crystal, quite some time ago. Telepathic properties. Very handy in an emergency. Also looks good in jewellery."

Okora nods, flicking her blue-gemmed necklace out for the room to see.

"Now why would you do that?" she asked, and just for a second her grin becomes predatory.

"I don't know what you're talking about," says Tusk.

Okora holds the gemstone like a dagger, pointing at him. "This man," she says, "This man would blow up a galaxy just for his profit margins. We've seen the records for the Tiberian expedition, and his shell company that sold them obsolete terraform pods."

"Bit past their sell-by-date," adds the Doctor.

"I have a lot of companies," said Tusk, "I don't micro-manage."

"A lot of companies, yes, funded by your main car company. The most popular brand on the planet."

"Why thank you."

"Eats up a lot of resources though, dunnit?" says Doctor. "Must be tough getting them in quantity. Especially Metallic Hydrogen. Superconductive, lovely smooth ride if you use Metallic Hydrogen. Still, not like you can just blow up a planet's core and harvest it, is it?"

"Reckon you'd need a very specific set of circumstances for *that* to happen," she adds, grinning right in Tusk's face.

"It's a lovely story," he says. "But it's pure conjecture. I have proof of hostile alien activity, right here."

He points at the video, paused, and his finger brushes something grey. I'd just dismissed it as a Cyberman before, but now I know. I know what this is.

"That's a set," I say.

Everyone in the room turns to look at me.

"It's what?" says the Co-ordinator.

"In the video. It's not real, it's a set. I recognise it from... WikiTubbies."

"From what?" Tusk can barely contain his scorn.

"It's the set from the old Teletubbies show. The old one. Look, you can see the telephone thing."

"Aw, the thing that says, 'Time for Tubby Bye-Bye?'" asks the Doctor, somehow ratcheting up her enthusiasm levels.

"Well, yes, in the old version."

"A twenty-first century show?" says Tusk. "You think the sets for those are still standing?"

"No, but the designs will be archived. Nearly all old TV shows have been. And they'll be interactive 3D models. We used to do the metadata for them at my old job. You could easily rig up a top-down view and animate something onto it."

Everyone in the room turns to look at Tusk. Okoro is all sweetness now.

"Brother Tusk," she says, "May we examine that video file?"

"What for?"

"Pretty please. After all, if it's real... where's the harm?"

"You realise that the Emperor himself has fired the Desolators? That what's happened now is irreversible. The Tiberius Colonies will be destroyed."

Okoro looks at the screen. "Well, that's bullshit for a start."

"Which part?" he replied.

"Well, technically, the Tiberius Colonies will be destroyed," says Doctor. "But the Tiberius colonists... are downstairs."

"Well, some of them" she says. "Gonna have to do a few trips. Anyway... They're very angry!"

She guffaws at this, as if it's a picture of a kitten.

"It's your word against mine," says Tusk. "Except," says the Doctor, "That crystal is linked to my ship's telepathic circuits. The colonists have seen everything that's happened here, which I hope will convince them to let me go back in time and evacuate the planets."

"I'm sorry, did you say, 'go back in time?'" asks Tusk.

"I did, yeah," says the Doctor. "So, you've lost. No one dies. No Cybermen. Just me and you, and what's happening next."

"You're sure there are no Cybermen?" asks Tusk.

"Nothing will happen," he continued.

"This isn't enough to convict me."

"Maybe not," says the Doctor, "But did I mention, my ship's just in the next room?"

The doors open again, and a man with one-eye is at the head of a furious group. They head straight for Tusk.

"Everything we built, everything we worked for, our whole lives... and you would gut that just for *parts*?" says Teller.

"Can we be reasonable here?" says Tusk. "I'm not a violent person."

"Neither am I," says the Doctor. "So, let's try diplomacy. Mr Teller, is there anything I can say to stop you attacking Mr Tusk?"

"No," says Teller.

"Oh well, never mind," says the Doctor breezily. "I tried."

And then she left. She said she was off to evacuate the planets, but none of us

ever saw her again. Well, Okoro probably did, but she said nothing. Tusk was tried by the Council and went into exile. Kept his companies though.

I don't know what they got out of him at the trial. I quit my job after minuting the follow-up meeting, started working for a legal aid charity. I do wonder, though, what the Doctor found when she got to Tiberius. We don't know what happened next. I haven't heard from my family. I did find a packet of cookies and a bottle of wine outside my door though, with a note saying, 'Thank you'.

The wine twenty years old. Designator Okoro denies turned out to be from 1857, and also all knowledge. I don't know what this means, but I'm choosing optimism.

Obviously, I was told I couldn't breathe a word of this to anyone. Those were the Placator's exact words. So, I haven't. Appropriately enough, I've typed it up, bolstered by a few FOI requests via my old boss. Now it's out there. Thank you for reading.

ACTION:

CHRYsalis

by John Peel and Chris McAuley

The images assaulted the former administrator's mind. His eyes began to bleed as he was forced to observe a maelstrom of violence. A mother's face was erased by the frenzied knife attack of a half-ape creature, she struggled to protect her new-born. A nuclear holocaust erupted and burned its image onto the back of the ex-administrator's optic nerves. As horrific as this was, it was nothing compared to the subsequent video feed of the aftermath. Desperate survivors emerging from shattered buildings, their flesh sliding from their skulls, hair falling from their heads. A shambling mass, shuffling and crawling towards the captive viewer, their clothing tattered and exposing the unnatural blue tinge of skin beneath. Calvin had been the chief administrator of the planet of Necros. It specialized in bringing hope to the terminally afflict-

ed. As they came to him, they presented the specialized techniques of cryogenics. Assured them of absolute comfort as they rested while a cure was found for their condition. They had even recently employed a frankly annoying DJ who specialized in 20th century Earth music. He was however, it was said, extremely popular among the staff and slumbering residents. He lived a productive and somewhat idyllic life; that was until the 'Great Healer' arrived. At first glance Calvin had mistaken him for someone in desperate need of his services. The grossly misshapen head and a barely functional body encased in a form of mechanized wheelchair led most to believe he was suffering from a wasting disease of some kind. It was soon revealed that their assumptions were mistaken however, this was the scientific genius who

had plans to eradicate the famines which threatened new colonies across the sector.

As the months progressed, the great healer began to take over the facility. He was rarely seen outside his laboratory and rumours of unconscionable experiments persisted. These rumours were suppressed by the order of the political powers present on the planet, as the food sources, which were promised, were delivered in record time. Calvin had not been satisfied either with the promises of his superiors or with the scientists' reasons for isolation. He investigated and found that this 'healer' was none other than Davros, the creator of the Daleks. A destructive race which had almost passed into myth. In punishment or perhaps rather, as a twisted reward for his indiscretions. Calvin found himself placed into a Dalek breeding tank. He was in the process of conversion.

The standard process revolved around psychological conditioning. A bombardment of violence to break any form of pacifist ideology. As this was occurring, an array of chemicals was being pumped into the body, withering the arms and legs. Flesh and muscle tissue shrivelled, and bones cracked. The subjects body became dissolved in its own acids and eventually only the head remained, kept alive by nutrients and shocks of cruel electric discharge. Calvin foamed at the mouth as the bombardment continued. The excruciating pain which he felt as his stomach contents burst and flowed over his other ruptured organs forced him into a scream which matched the individuals on the video feed.

He felt such anger at the indignity of his position, anger towards himself and his

family. They were the ones who had requested that he took up this position; isolated and alone, with only the company of the dead and the chattering of the embalmers to accompany his long, tiring work schedule. Damn them! They reaped the rewards of his steady income while he toiled towards nothing but their gain.

He would kill them.

Starting with Cassandra, his wife. He would wrap his claws around her neck and squeeze. Watching her Rubenesque face turn lily white as her blood flow was constricted. He could almost feel the satisfaction as he vividly imagined her struggling vainly against his newfound strength. Then he would turn his attention to the children. Spoiled and selfish brats. Playing with their new videogames, mindlessly consuming and spending his fortune. The scene in his mind changed to smashing down their bedroom door and butchering them with an almost infinite number of blades. Designs of knives, swords and blades appeared in his mind, many of which he had no previous knowledge of. It mattered little where they came from of course, all that mattered was the removal of his progeny's cheeks and mouths, and the popping of their soft sclera.

He would EXTERMINATE them, just like he would exterminate all resistance in the galaxy.

He would...

He would...

Calvin's mind returned to him for a moment. He retched at the thoughts which had surfaced concerning his family. He attempted to recall and recreate the moment when he had first seen his wife. He had been standing in the porch of the university on Mars when he saw her, arms full of books, dark features

and the frown on her face almost accentuating her beauty. It had taken him a full semester to approach her. They fell in love, were married, and had two wonderful sons, one of whom, to his father's joy, wanted to become an artist. He remembered the moment that Ulrich came to him in his study to relay his ambition. It was an unresolved life's dream of his own, which he was happy to pass on to his son.

A smile crossed Calvin's face.

Then the video began to play again.

Months passed and a strange blue box arrived on the purple and blue hued planet.

The Doctor skidded to a halt and turned back to face the Dalek. "I beg your pardon?"

"Why?" the Dalek repeated, in its mechanical tones.

"Why *what*?" the Doctor asked, puzzled.

Peri grabbed at his multi-coloured sleeve. "Doctor, come on! Ignore it!"

He spared her a brief glance. "Peri, he asked me a question. It would be rude to ignore him." He turned back to the Dalek. "Why *what*?" he repeated.

"You are the Doctor," the Dalek grated.

The Doctor stood erect and gripped his lapels. "Indubitably," he agreed,

"You are an enemy of the Daleks."

"The very worst," the Doctor agreed, proudly.

"Why are you an enemy of the Daleks?"

"Why?" The Doctor considered the question for a moment. "Because the Daleks are the most vicious, the most evil and the most repugnant beings in the Universe," he declared.

"The Daleks are the supreme beings in the Universe," it declared. Could the

Doctor detect a note of uncertainty there?

He grinned. "Why?" he asked.

"Doctor," Peri said urgently, "Don't you think we should get out of here?"

"Don't be silly, Peri," he replied, frowning. "He asked me a question, and it would be rude to run away without answering it. Aren't you the one who is always telling me that I need to be more understanding, more sympathetic and – what was it? Oh yes, less of a self-centred bastard?"

"But not to Daleks!"

He gestured. "This isn't *Daleks*," he pointed out. "It's just one Dalek."

"Doctor, when have we ever run into just one Dalek? They're like cockroaches – you see one, there's a thousand more around."

She did have a point. Still... "He seems to be having an existential crisis," he said, thoughtfully. "We can surely spare a minute to try and help him."

"Standing here trying to psychoanalyze a Dalek is liable to get us killed!"

"Where's your compassion, Peri?"

She glared at him. "Taking a backseat to my sense of self-preservation!"

"Oh, shush." He turned back to the Dalek. "Why do you think that the Daleks are the supreme intelligence in the Universe?" he asked it.

"That fact is in my data base."

"Ah!" The Doctor patted it on the top of its dome. "And *why* don't you believe it? What is going on in that nasty little brain of yours?"

What indeed?

Somewhere in the casing of the Dalek that had been Calvin, former administrator of Necros, father and husband to a family far-away, a silent sob emerged. The Dalek led the Doctor away. Towards Davros. Towards his execution.

THE GAMES OF MARISAL

by Christine Grit

Prologue - Gallifrey

The man who once called himself the Doctor but now confessed to no name was wandering about in the Archives Department of the Council Building of Arcadia. He wore a new leather jacket and had a small silk scarf tied around his throat. Arcadia was the second most important city of the planet, containing rather an extensive stock of data in which he had an interest. He thought he might be able to find a new place to visit. A place that would take him away from the bureaucracy at home. The daily politicking made him incredibly weary. He was looking for some place that would either need his help in getting out of the War, or in coping with it. Wishful thinking perhaps but he was getting so fed up with staying on Gallifrey coming up with strategies to outwit the Daleks and finding new ways of winning the War. Every day another planet was drawn in, while others ceased to exist altogether. It had become impossible to see the big picture and maintain a view over the situation as a whole. Perhaps a new place would help him in finding a new purpose. He was so fed up with it all. He could not visit his beloved Earth of course. It might make his fellow Time Lords get ideas if he even suggested the name. That was the one planet he wanted to keep well away from the War, in fact he didn't want Earth to know that the War was even taking place. Earthlings had enough problems of their own without being sucked into

a destructive war that they would not be able to handle. He would of course love to go there; perhaps even meet a good travelling companion. But no, no more friends. Certainly not from Earth. He had lost too many already. Somewhere entirely new might be just the thing!

The former Doctor had intended to sit behind one of the view screens to find such a planet, but he was side-tracked. One of the archivists, grey haired and grey bearded like all the rest, was talking to himself. Just as he couldn't help responding whenever people called him by his former name, he couldn't help listening in. The information the muttering archivist provided was rather intriguing. In fact, it might be about exactly the kind of planet he was looking for. He joined the archivist and watched the screen the grey beard was sitting behind and read the description. It looked perfect: an obscure planet about which nothing much was known, a planet that had even managed to fend off Dalek attacks during the earlier major Dalek wars, a planet that had managed to stay out of the Time War altogether until now, and as far as it was known, had managed totally to keep itself to itself and hadn't had to cope with any kind of alien intervention or invasion.

No Time Lord had ever visited, not during one of those earlier Dalek Wars or in any other period. Now, that was interesting. It could perhaps be a place to use as a kind of back up if Gallifrey it-

self became unsafe; a place to which to evacuate the children and other vulnerable citizens. A refugee planet even. His main objective, to prevent any involvement of Earth in the war, was difficult enough, especially as his people knew the place all too well. Earth produced enough refugees all by itself. Adding some more from a more developed society would probably be catastrophic – and not just for the humans. Focusing Gallifrey's attention on a different planet might be worthwhile. It would be an interesting new place to visit (he always loved those) and it might help him in ensuring that Earth would remain out of the equation. He thanked the archivist who seemed to be surprised he was there.

Rassilon, the once and future Lord of the Time Lords - at least that was how he liked to be seen by his peers, sighed deeply and looked at the man sitting opposite. The one man who refused to look up at him. Ever since the Council had brought him back to rule once again, the Doctor or whatever he called himself nowadays had turned out to be more of a renegade than ever, and he still wouldn't follow any orders. At least this time he was polite enough to inform him about his intentions.

"Well, if you think it would be a good idea," Rassilon said and waved both his hands in front of his face trying to affect indifference. "You might just as well be an official delegate and ask them about the weapon."

The former Doctor nodded. Why not? He had put forward his intention to visit the planet of Marisal, officially for once, if only to be certain that Earth remained out of bounds. The Council would be too involved in this possibility to start thinking of using Earth. He

would of course prefer just visiting these Marisallans in his own way, but being an official diplomat (just for this one time) might be helpful. He would absolutely not ask about any weapon, but there was no need to inform Rassilon about that. Just as long as the sentient beings there, be they humanoid or not, wouldn't doubt his personal intentions, everything would work out fine. The dark-haired man with some streaks of grey in his hair and as yet without a beard, who once called himself the Doctor actually had a certain buoyance in his step when he left the interview. That hadn't happened for a long time.

Marisal - Panja

The day the interesting alien arrived, was one of those terribly dull ordinary days. There were no Games planned that day, nor was there going to be a high table dinner, during which entertainment might have been provided.

My unit partners and I were there doing what we always do when we are at leisure: shopping, walking through the streets of Grasinge and meeting up with other units; socialising, discussing the happenings in the world (not that anything really spectacular had occurred), and of course talking about a possible next edition of the Games. So, one could say it was a rather boring and mundane day actually.

Don't get me wrong, we have had alien visitors before, so the arrival of something from space wasn't as big a surprise as it might have been. However, this one was exceptional.

We were walking across the central square when it started. The first thing we noticed was a peculiar wheezing and groaning sound. At first it was so quiet that we could hardly hear it, but it quickly became louder and louder.

Then as the strange sounds faded away, a blue box appeared out of nothing in the middle of the square. Now, that was something new: no starship with blazing lights and sophisticated weaponry; no transmat device containing aliens; not even some being literally dropping from the sky and immediately trying to enslave us or gun us down. Not any of those things at all, just a door in the box that was opened to allow someone to walk out - and that someone didn't even appear to be carrying a weapon. It was a strange someone though. It looked rather a lot like me, but when it spoke its voice was much lower and heavier than mine. Stranger still was the fact that it seemed to be alone. As always, Lorus was standing close to me, and I turned my head a bit towards his snout to hear clearly what my number two's thoughts were.

"Is this a bare, number one or not? Where will it have hidden its family members?" Lorus asked and I nodded. Lorus asked the right questions alright. No Marisallan would ever be alone; there would always be other unit members present, and usually more units as well.

This might need some explanation to readers from off world. Marisal has four kinds of sentient beings: ones like me who are bare skinned, stand upright, and are well able to make and use tools. We are the 'number ones' because we are the only unit members able to carry offspring. Then there are those like Lorus, taller than most number ones, also standing upright on two legs but with pointed ears, lovely warm blue-grey fur as well as dangerous claws at the end of their limbs. These are the numbers two. The number

threes are another sort of always present unit member. They are about half my size, upright again with short legs and a rather large head compared to the rest of the body. The number three of our unit is called Evrira. The number fours are the most distinct among us. They are Estraths; and look a bit like a cane stalk or a straw but are taller and broader than the number twos. Estraths cannot speak at all but communicate through the mind. An off-worlder would perhaps call it telepathy. Estraths utter sounds which are pure musical notes. Our number four is called [Note like a B on a normal music scale]. Listening to a concert of a choir consisting of various number fours is very beautiful. We all need one another. No number one, two, three or four can survive on its own. The whole unit is needed for survival, even if it's only the number ones that carry and deliver offspring.

Where was I? Ah, yes, this sole person stepped out of its blue box, and waved at us all. Then the someone started to utter sounds which turned out to be our own speech. To all our surprise, it truly spoke Marisallan. At first, we were of course a little side-tracked by the voice itself. It sounded a bit like Lorus in a bad mood, but it was clearly Marisallan. That was new too. Even Daleks only got to learn Marisallan after being compelled to stay here for a while, until their turn to enter the Games.

This someone introduced itself as a 'John Smith' (it had a name!) and told us that the planet where it came from was the planet of the Time Lords. Its visit could be considered as a diplomatic mission. Grasoga, our head number one, still looked surprised but answered courteously enough that John

Smith was very welcome to meet us. Would it be possible to explain which sex it was? The someone explained it was a male and could therefore be referred to as a 'he'.

Lorus again looked at me. "Is this person a number one or not?" Lorus asked, and I shrugged. How should I know?

The strange alien, although more normal looking than many others that have visited us in the past (usually staying on until their lives were cut short by the Games), was nonetheless from someplace else.

John Smith later explained to me that his people had two sexes, man and woman, as well as people who could be both. The version called 'woman' looked like me, and the one called 'man' like him. The one was a 'she', the other a 'he'. I still for the life of me can't decide whether such a bipolar life form is a simplification of how one manages existence and survival or, to the contrary, that it complicates things even further. It seems simpler to have four sexes, one to carry and deliver the offspring, a second to physically protect them against themselves when they are growing up, a third to teach them the ways of life and mathematics, and a fourth to make it possible to mentally join with each other and share. But then with two it might be somewhat easier to live together, as one doesn't have to take four but only two opinions into account within a unit whenever there is something to debate. The weirdest part of it all was that according to John the sexes of any species on his world, including the non-sentient ones, looked rather a lot like each other instead of being diverse in outward appearance like we are within a unit. Furthermore, the unit (or union as he called it) would be voluntary. For

the sake of this report, I will from now on call John a man.

Naturally, John Smith was invited to join us all at our communal meal, and for this occasion a special high table session was organised. This pleased everybody because, as I said earlier, it had originally been going to be a rather a dull day. As usual my unit was invited to join the meeting at the high table with Grasoga and its unit members as well as quite a few other units. To my great pride, [note like a B within a normal music scale] is one of the most successful competitors at the Games. As there are no other ways to become a high table participant than by regularly winning at these events, it is obviously something to be proud of. I tried to explain this facet of our lives to John Smith, but I don't believe he understood the significance.

The dinner was a disaster. It actually started off quite well. I was introduced to him, and he put out his hand to shake mine; but I showed him how we do introductions on Marisal and gave him a big hug. He was a bit taken aback, but that didn't last long, and he hugged me back - and then hugged my numbers two, three and four. He was the first alien who "got" our togetherness and understood that to decline hugging one of us would be insulting to the other members. We may not have a hive mind, as we all have our individual thoughts and ideas, but we are very close. Furthermore, John Smith showed himself to be sensitive to our feelings in other respects as well. Although he tested our food with a strange sonic device, he was careful to explain that he had no intention to be insulting to our hospitality, but that he wasn't sure that the food and drink of a people so different to him, would not be danger-

ous to him. Therefore, it was necessary to test the food. Of course, we understood, and were quite happy to note that none of our food - not even the bits especially prepared for the number fours, which the number ones, twos and threes hardly ever ate, because we detested the taste of the stuff, was detrimental to this particular alien. And we just applauded the stranger.

It was during this meal that he explained all kinds of things about his world, including the issue of the sexes, which seemed rather mysterious to me. He also told me about a terrible war that he was taking part in. All seemed well. But then he had to mention the Daleks. He wasn't blind, so he must have seen some of the examples of the partly destroyed and very dead specimens of this alien race earlier, during the walk to our main dining hall. These remains were highly important symbols to us and were kept standing as monuments to our deliverance. We kept some live ones, of course, for the Games, but that is not for now. He couldn't have known that yet. He should have realised though, that we don't and never will trust any strange alien, who even knows of these awful mutants, in their almost indestructible cases - although we know how to destroy them all too well.

Lorus put one big paw around me and uttered a rather unhappy growl. [Note like a B within a normal music scale] started to flute his tone, while Grasoga's Estrath offered a note to us that was just a little higher than its usual one and therefore rather spooky and harrowing.

Not surprisingly, Grasoga asked why this John Smith would be interested in this nasty and destructive species. John Smith sighed; he looked rather tired at

that moment and told us that his people were involved in a terribly destructive war with the Daleks. Not just a war with lasers, guns, bombs and other awful devices but one even involving time itself. He had been supplied with some information about our beautiful planet and had hoped we might help by divulging some of the secrets of how we had defeated the Daleks. He also wondered if perhaps we would be willing to offer refuge to more vulnerable members of his society?

It is easy to describe what happened next. Without warning, four number threes from different units (thankfully Evrira was not one of them) picked him up and carried him away to the Rooms of the Doomed. John Smith protested and struggled, of course; but the four number threes were too strong for him. John Smith did not know it yet, but he would be the prize alien in the upcoming Games.

Most of us were of course looking forward to enjoying another Games. Let me tell you (to anyone who will be reading these notes), the Games are our most important pastime. We live for it, it is our major form of entertainment, or to be more precise our only real form of entertainment. All other entertainment derives from the Games. John Smith told me later that such games had also been an important part of a society on the planet Earth aeons ago. Even later on when the people had become less savage and more civilized, they still organised this kind of Game, though now by letting a person fight a non-sentient being. It was nice to learn that other sentient beings also enjoyed this kind of thing.

Earth however was one of those planets I had never heard of before. We knew about Skaro, how could we not,

we were also well acquainted with a faraway planet called Mars that produced life forms that were excellent sport for us, and we knew of the existence of a planet called Gallifrey on which lived a species similar to the Daleks, at least in terms of war and destruction. John Smith convinced me eventually that there was rather a big difference between the Skarosian Daleks and the Gallifreyan Time Lords, even if the behaviour of the Council of the Time Lords did seem to resemble closely that of the Daleks. The main difference being that beside the Time Lords, there lived all kinds of other people on that particular planet, together with their offspring. They had nothing to do with any war, let alone a war that included time - destructive and painful, and causing all kinds of planets to just dissolve, return to a time of primitivism or even worse. It obviously pained him that even on planets like ours his race was known for a certain similarity with the Daleks. I agreed with this John Smith that youngsters of any species should be protected from the destruction war could bring. Even if the members of this Council didn't show it much, the Gallifreyans were different to the Daleks. John Smith certainly represented a faction within his people who would wish to protect the young. That is exactly why I helped him.

The Rooms of the Doomed

The man who once called himself the Doctor slowly sat up. He thought he had been conducting himself properly, understanding the cultural differences. Somehow, he had miscalculated in a rather bad way. He shook his head and rubbed his hand across his growing beard. It seemed that his wonderful

idea had gone spectacularly wrong. Four of the dwarves - or number threes as the people here called them had suddenly picked him up and dumped him down here in the dungeons. After that there had been a lot of pain, and he had passed out.

He wondered where these dungeons were located. There was some light, tinted reddish as the light outside had been. He wasn't outside now, that was obvious. He could see a locked door, a mirror, and he found out at once that his sonic screwdriver wasn't working. The mirror was probably a screen by which means the inhabitants of this room could be observed from outside. He wasn't alone. Behind him was a rather familiar blue lit circle on the end of a stalk - the eye of a Dalek - clearly also a prisoner. Somehow, it was helpless. It turned its eyestalk towards him. "Doctor", it stated in that awful metallic tone he had learned to hate and fear. The Dalek then pointed its weapon towards him, but nothing happened. In fact, it seemed the Dalek actually sighed with frustration. No deadly "exterminate" was even uttered.

As well as the Dalek, he recognized some of the other life forms locked up with him. Beside the Dalek stood an Ice Warrior, looking rather ill. It gave him a nod, and then turned away. Next to the Ice Warrior was a Kraal - it had been a long time since he had met up with one of those - who silently watched him, sighed and also turned away. The Kraal looked strange as if it too were ill.

What was going on here? Weapons did not seem to work, that was probably why they had not taken his screwdriver away. The screwdriver was no weapon of course but a sonic device might appear to be one. The former Doctor remembered a girl/woman among these

people when he arrived who had seemed sympathetic and with whom he had enjoyed an interesting conversation during dinner. However, he remembered that she had turned away from him when he started to talk about the Daleks. What exactly had been so wrong about that, that had caused him to be locked up like this? Surely, these people who had defeated the Daleks, understood why he was interested in how they had achieved that? Apparently not. He wondered what the Marisallans intended to do next.

Marisal - Panja

My whole unit followed the number threes carrying this John Smith, as did many others. He was unceremoniously dumped in one of the Rooms of the Doomed beneath the town. Grasoga gave our unit the task of giving him the treatment, so we shared our minds and let our number four blow its note with the combined mind powers of our whole unit behind it. All aliens pass out when they receive this treatment as it is very painful, and John Smith was no exception.

While we watched the unconscious alien silently, I thought about how odd it was that whenever we shared minds on the surface of our world, and we let our Estrath blow its note, it was so much more difficult to obtain the same effect as we could when underground. I believe this has something to do with the soil and the rock of our planet. If one is surrounded by rock as in the Rooms of the Doomed, the strength of the note backed by unit mind power is somehow magnified. The main reason why we hold our Games in an arena on the surface is that it increases the challenge for the local participants. Even-

tually any alien driven into the Arena would fall and die but it could be to the cost of the unit competing.

Finally, we left, locking the door behind us, and at the same time, opening the wall on the other side of John's room which had kept him apart from the other prisoners. I was worried. I had liked John Smith; his personality had appealed to me. I wasn't happy about taking part in the mind share which had felled him. Wherever a Dalek is concerned I love to participate in the mind meld and use all my mental power to increase the strength of the note of our number four. Practice sessions are always a hoot because one never tires of making a Dalek pass out. This time however I felt really bad about it.

During the night I slipped out of our dwelling and walked to the Rooms of the Doomed under the light of the stars. Once I had arrived and entered the complex, I practically ran down the stairs. I opened the main door, closed it behind me and looked inside through the window - the one that appears to be a mirror from inside the room. The alien John Smith was sitting against a rock wall, looking tired, obviously thinking about what had gone wrong, while the other prisoners in the room with him were farther away. I must have been a little mad because I opened the internal door and called his name softly.

He looked up and I gestured to him to get up and come with me. He stood up and followed me out. I locked the door again and took his arm, for which he thanked me. The effects of his treatment had left their impact, so our progress was slow and laboured, but I supported him while we climbed up the

stairs. On his request, I took him to his TARDIS, the strange blue box in which he had arrived. He invited me inside. At first, I was just surprised by the size of the interior and wandered around, trying to take it all in. I didn't realise it immediately so impressed was I by the size of the interior, but then I realised that I could hear the strange wheezing and groaning sound that I had heard earlier. We were in flight. I slithered to the floor in despair.

When I opened my eyes, I saw his face hovering above mine. Not for long, because he quickly turned towards the apparatus in the centre and pressed a button. That same sound came again, and I immediately felt much better. "So," he said, "you cannot leave this planet, not even to another period in time?" I nodded. That much was obvious. Where- or whenever he had tried to take me, I didn't even want to know. He sighed and again looked terribly weary as he told me that we had been unable to move.

He explained to me that he had wanted to travel back in time to find out how and when our people had become so entwined with the planet that we could fight off any enemy or invader. He understood how the Games could have evolved - it was a way to keep our fighting skills sharp and he frankly didn't care much about us using Daleks as the bait. He did however become quite angry when he discussed our use of other aliens - abuse he called it. I had to agree.

When the sun started to rise at dawn, he told me that he still wanted to visit our past but that he was concerned about me. He shouldn't have been. I wanted to go back home. I couldn't survive elsewhere or even elsewhen. I needed my unit members. There was

no choice. He couldn't park his TARDIS here forever either. We hugged, and then I left and hurried back to my homestead.

Marisal - Lorus

Panja has requested that I write down the last part of what happened. It is difficult for me to write, but I do owe something to our former number one. That John Smith person really got to Panja and with devastating consequences. Even if this Time Lord had used some kind of mind bomb to make Panja agree with him, it was a big mistake to let him out of the Rooms of the Doomed. Panja liked the alien perhaps a little bit too much on a personal level; otherwise our number one would never have been so stupid.

After a disastrous dinner with an alien who had turned out to be a fraud, we had retired in preparation for the Games which would take place the following morning. As usual, like all alien visitors before this one, the Time lord wanted to take our weapons that we had used against the Daleks; and perhaps he even intended to exploit our planet for our resources. Not that he said anything about this, but when have aliens ever wanted anything else? Obviously, they locked the alien up and we gave him the treatment. I had noticed that Panja had left my side during the night, and only returned after dawn. Our unit was used to Panja taking a stroll during the hours of the night, and if this particular one took a little bit longer than usual, we didn't remark on it.

Later that morning, once outside, it was made clear that the extra Games that day would include the last Dalek still held captive. Grasoga's number three informed us all. This obviously pleased

me no end, as the Games are what we live for. Panja was distracted however, and at first hadn't even wanted to attend. That is of course a major crime, as attendance is compulsory. I convinced her that it would be really unfair to Evrira, our number three, while [Note like a B within a normal music scale] our Estrath was one of the major competitors. How could Panja abstain from sharing the minds when it was [Note like a B within a normal music scale]'s turn to blow the killing sound in the midst of the arena? It could cost us our high status within the various units and shame our Estrath in a way that was not deserved. Long story short: I convinced Panja to come with us all.

Our Games are rather simple really. In the first round we match two different types of prisoners against each other, usually a Dalek against some other alien. On the surface their weapons will work to a certain extent, while the viewers are too high up and well within rock cubicles to be in any danger from this. The one who wins will then have to fight an Estrath empowered by the minds of its unit. The other watching units all cheer and stamp! Our Estrath had often enough been able to defeat a Dalek, and I was looking forward to another great victory. We knew of course that if our number four were to be blown up by a Dalek (and there had been some Estraths lost in Games long ago) it would be the end of our unit and of all of us. We can only survive as foursomes. Such a death was an honourable one even if it meant the remaining unit members would fade away.

The first Game should have been between the fraud from the day before and a Dalek. However, this was not to be, as the John Smith alien was no-

where to be found. The Dalek moved slowly into the arena, but no opponent arrived from the other side. Grasoga stood up from the seat and looked around the arena. To my surprise Panja also stood up and facing Grasoga, stated simply "I let the alien out."

The number twos, myself included, started to roar, the number threes began to shout loudly and the number fours sang horribly together. This was treason! All the other number ones remained strangely quiet. Grasoga raised her arms, and we all quietened down. "Then you Panja, once an honoured number one among us, will fight as an alien in the arena against the Dalek an hour from now," declared Grasoga and sat down. A communal gasp went up, in which our unit did not partake. We were all doomed, just as doomed as the Dalek would be, and as the fraud should have been. We just sighed and looked at our number one regretfully. Panja handed me a notebook and asked me to finish this story. Then Panja hugged the three of us and started to move downwards towards the arena. Evrira cried, our Estrath fluted mournfully, and I read Panja's notes.

Gallifrey

The man who had once called himself the Doctor was even surer than before that he had had to leave that honourable title behind. He had gone back in time and had registered how the society of which Panja had once been a part had begun. The ancient Dalek Wars had actually caused it. Even then there had been four kinds of sentient beings on the planet, and they had soon found out how, by joining their minds with the soil and rock of the planet, the Estraths could flute a killing tone. They

quickly learnt how to vary the strength of the tone and had soundly defeated the Daleks.

But Daleks never give up, they had continued to arrive in their saucers, although they were always driven off. Often some were left behind to be taken prisoner. But what do you do with such prisoners? Some felt that simply killing them was too easy, many agreed with that, and that is how the concept of the Games was developed.

Once there had been more than a thousand captive Daleks, a seemingly endless number of so-called gladiators for the competitions. However, the Dalek incursions suddenly ceased, and the Dalek Wars came to an end, although the Marisallans wouldn't have known that, and there were no more Dalek prisoners to take. So, they extended the Games to other visitors from space, some of whom did not arrive with honourable intentions either. In this manner it was possible to slow down the rate of decline in numbers of Daleks to fight.

It still made no sense why it was only when he had mentioned the Daleks had they had imprisoned him, but he did understand the importance of the Games - cruel as they were - a little better. The bitter irony was that the mind share combined with the tune fluting also provided a kind of radiation that though not lethal at once would cause enormous grief among any outsiders who would wish to settle on Marisal. His idea to use the planet as a refugee base had turned out to be entirely impractical.

It was the middle of the day when The TARDIS arrived back on present day Marisal. The Time Lord needed to be sure that Panja was alright. She had

taken an enormous risk in setting him free. He parked the TARDIS well out of sight and followed the sounds of loud roars and flutes to a place which looked like an arena. There were no gates or guards to prevent him entering so he went in, walked up some stairs and stood hidden in the shadow, without being seen.

All eyes were on the inner circle, where he could see two figures - A Dalek and...no! The Dalek raised its weapon and fired. He saw Panja's skeleton light up and she fell down dead. The audience in the arena had fallen silent. Still unseen, the man turned around and left, tears welling in his eyes.

As he dragged himself slowly towards his TARDIS, he became aware that he was being followed. He stopped and turned to see a lone figure - the big blue-grey cat-man, whom he remembered was called Lorus running behind him. The Time Lord put himself into a slightly defensive posture, his hands in front of him, but the cat-man hurled himself onto him, encircling his neck with his great furry paws, squeezing the life out of him. For a few moments he couldn't breathe, and he began to lose consciousness. Then with relief he realised that the cat-man had released his grip and let him go.

He stepped back and looked at the cat-man in astonishment, rubbing the place where he could feel the marks of the giant paws.

"Lorus, I'm so sorry... I had no idea... You have every right to be angry. Panja was very brave."

At first Lorus didn't react, then he gave a shrug and regarded the Time Lord with an expression of contempt. "Do you know what you've done?"

"Panja, she... I saw..."
"Not just Panja. Our unit has been bro-

ken. We other three cannot survive alone. Soon each of us will fade away. This is the result of your meddling." The alien knew that Lorus was right. He had no answer. There was nothing he could say.

Lorus continued, "I wanted to kill you, but that wouldn't bring Panja back – nor would it save our unit. Some small good will come of this though. No more prisoners will have to suffer the tortures of the treatment and the Games. They were all summarily executed; the remaining Dalek was the first to go. They have been spared further suffering from the radiation sickness."

The Time Lord nodded, "So, the Games are over for good... unless by chance another alien should accidentally land here."

"Yes. Perhaps by then we may have learned that we don't need to treat all visitors like that. Now go and don't come back to Marisal again- not you or any of your people." The cat-man just turned and walked away into the darkness. The man who was no longer a healer, returned to the TARDIS, closing the door behind him.

As he set the controls to return to Gallifrey, he reflected that so important were the Games of Marisal to the Marisallans, that they would probably continue, but in a different form. They would have to be replaced by a different type of Games, still including competitions between minds but less barbarous. Perhaps they would become competitions between different units. He accessed the TARDIS data banks and looked up the future history of the planet.

As he read, some of the sadness he felt was replaced by a small measure of satisfaction, even pleasure, as he dis-

covered that the diary notes that poor Panja had written down had convinced the Marisallans that it was wrong to hone their mental skills in torturing visitors from to their planet. But he also knew that if he hadn't come to Marisal at all, on this stupid, silly diplomatic mission, Panja and the rest of her unit would have lived on in happy ignorance and the Games would have continued. Despite the fact that the ending of such torture and useless slaughter was a good result, the cost had been high – perhaps too high – certainly for Panja and her unit. Again. Would it never end? The worst thing was that the whole expedition would not make any difference to the Time War itself. Nor had he found a bolt hole for the children and other refugees.

Back on Gallifrey, the man who refused to answer to the name 'Doctor', duly reported on his mission to Rassilon. Concise, and business-like, he pretended not to be depressed. After the debriefing, it was an older man, who slowly left Rassilon's office and returned to his TARDIS, his refuge. There he remained all night, in front of the view screen, looking at images of a beautiful blue planet with red clouds. His shoulders were hunched, and he did not, could not, sleep.

TIME CROSSED

by Daniel Tessier

Sara cautiously stepped through the TARDIS doors. Even though she had checked the exterior via the scanner, she was prepared for the worst. No soldier could ever be too careful, particularly in an alien environment.

She looked around. The bright blue of the TARDIS was incongruous between the two metallic grey walls that rose on either side of it. She stepped gingerly forward, moving out from the alleyway in which the Ship had materialised. A forest of metal greeted her; spires rose in the distance, gleaming in the afternoon sun. She squinted, raising her hand to shield her eyes from the glare.

A sudden hoot startled her, and she stepped back quickly. A tomato-red hovercar skimmed towards her, travelling rapidly above the road that was criss-crossed with metallic gridlines. It barrelled past her, swiftly disappearing into the silver city.

Sara realised she had been holding her breath. She breathed out and began to relax. The location was unknown to her, but the environment familiar. This was civilisation, not her own world, but recognisable.

"Sara!" came the brusque voice of Steven Taylor, the man who had, during the astonishing events of the last few weeks, become her travelling companion. She turned back, returning into the alley.

"Sara, you should wait for the Doctor and me before you go outside. You've no idea where we are or what could be waiting for us."

She should have been annoyed by Ste-

ven's chiding, but there was something about the way that he looked out for her that she found quite likeable. He was a military man himself, of course, and had been living this strange lifestyle for far longer than she had. It was only natural that he should try to take charge, at least in some little way. Still, she wasn't going to let him forget who he was talking to.

"Steven, how many years have I been in the Space Security Service? How many potentially deadly environments did I visit before I even met you and the Doctor? I am perfectly capable of scouting out a new environment without supervision." She thought for a moment. "Where is the Doctor, anyway?"

"I'm right here, young lady," came a strident voice, its elderly owner stepping through the doors of TARDIS, firmly shutting them behind him. "The TARDIS is a complex mechanism, requiring precise and delicate operation, you know. I can't simply barrel out of the doors the moment we've landed! There are checks to be made, measurements to be, ah, measured..."

The three of them walked out from between the buildings, the Doctor leaning heavily on his ornate cane. They took in the spectacle of the city in front of them, the blocks rising high into the sky, tenuously narrow structures of metal and glass. Hovercars of every colour scooted along the roads. The few pedestrians visible in the area walked with purpose, crossing from one roadside to the other by means of an elegantly sculpted steel bridge.

"Doctor," said Steven, "where are we exactly? I mean, it's obviously Earth, but it could be almost anywhere."

"Is your eyesight so poor, my boy? If you look ahead of us there, you can see the statue of King Charles the First, and beyond, Nelson's Column! This is the very centre of London!"

"Of course. You see, in my time," continued Steven, referring to his native era, some centuries before Sara's own, "almost the whole southern half of Great Britain is taken up by one enormous city that we call, well, the City."

"Yes, I see," responded the Doctor, "well, the developments here are no doubt the beginnings of your great City. Although they'll have the Daleks to contend with first," he added, ominously. "Come along!"

The trio ambled along, the population becoming denser as they reached Trafalgar Square. The archaic structures of Nelson's Column, surrounded by the four iconic stone lions, and the associated statues of historical British figures, still stood. The expanse of the National Gallery crowned the Square. However, the fountains were dry, and the roads leading from the square were lined with impersonal, towering buildings of metal and glass.

The people moved quickly and paid each other little attention, each of them seemingly busy with their own lives, although several did spare a glance for the oddly dressed travellers who had wandered into their midst.

"Busy sorts, aren't they?" observed Steven.

"There's nothing wrong with that," said Sara. "It is good to have a purpose."

"And it is a Monday, my boy," pointed out the Doctor, gesturing towards the huge, digitised date and time that was displayed on the side of one of the many metallic buildings. The bold red digits

read: 12:59 - MONDAY - 23 MAY 2012. "These people are most likely taking what little time they have for their lunch break. This is a busy city centre, after all. Not everyone is lucky enough to lead the life of leisure we do."

Sara wasn't quite sure if he was joking or not. Before she could ask, a fanfare sounded, seemingly from all around them. Many of the people who were dashing about their day stopped, turning to the northwest corner of the square. In their midst, an image appeared, hovering above the empty Fourth Plinth. The face of a mature man, reasonably handsome but unthreatening, in sober clothing. His face flickered, broken up into thin horizontal lines, before stabilising.

"A projection?" asked Steven.

"Indeed," said the Doctor. "If you look closely, you can see emitters on the corners of the plinth."

"Good afternoon," said the projection, in a cultured, English voice. "This is Calvin Bennett with *The Hourly Telepress* at one o'clock on Monday, the 23rd of May. In today's headlines, plans for the weather control station have been given the go ahead, and construction will begin on the Moon within the next three weeks. This exciting new development promises more beautiful blue skies than ever before, and rain that will fall precisely on schedule."

The Doctor stood, gripping his lapels as he contentedly listened to Bennett rattle off his summary of the day's news. Sara felt her toes begin to itch. While she was used to long periods waiting for orders, the SSS were a division dedicated to action, and she didn't like standing around in the open in what was, after all, an unsecured area, however familiar it might feel. They were still technically on a mission, even if they had seen nothing of the Daleks for weeks.

"Doctor, isn't there something else we could be doing?" she asked.

"Shush, shush, shush!" chided the old man. "I thought you would understand the value of reconnaissance, young lady." He turned his attention back to the projection, a gentle smile upon his face. "In any case, *I've long enjoyed the medium of television.*"

Steven gave Sara a look of resignation, and she smiled back to him. Inside, however, she couldn't shake her concern that they were always, potentially, at risk while on their travels.

"Finally," continued the projection of Bennett, "an unidentified mechanical object has been discovered during the excavation for the site of the new Regent Street PowerTube station in the Westminster District. Services on the Fleet Line are subject to disruption. Construction has ceased awaiting investigation by the British Rocket Group. *The Hourly Telepress* will return at two o'clock with an adventure with the Karkus." The projection blinked out.

"So, this is the City then," said Steven. "You don't get PowerTubes anywhere else." He pointed across the square, down the adjacent street. "Look, you can see a station over there."

"Strictly speaking, we're in Westminster," said the Doctor. "That is Trafalgar Square station. We can make our way along the line towards the construction site."

"You mean we're going to take a look at this 'unidentified object' they've found?" asked Sara.

"Of course!" said the Doctor, grinning. "We'd better hurry if we're going to get there before those busybodies from the Rocket Group make a mess of everything. Come along!"

Amy and Rory Williams - or, if you asked her, Amy and Rory Pond - wan-

dered along happily through the crowd of tourists that filled Trafalgar Square, even on a Monday. Neither one of them had anywhere they needed to be. They were enjoying a long weekend away together, and had decided that they were going to do the tourist thing and see the sights.

Amy sat next to one of the four famous lion statues around Nelson's Column, eating a Solero. Rory stood next to her, slightly awkwardly, relaxation never having come quite as naturally to him as it had to his wife. A traditionalist, he had opted for a choc ice.

A man stood opposite them, peering occasionally over his newspaper, before hiding again. Even if they hadn't spotted his face during his sneaky glances, they would have easily recognised the turned-up trousers held up by braces.

"Come over here, Doctor," called Amy, with a resigned smile.

The Doctor beamed a huge grin at them and bounded over to them on his bandy legs.

"Ponds!" he exclaimed.

"How did you know we were here?" asked Rory, fixing the Doctor with a quizzical look.

"I searched every city in Britain until I found you."

"OK, that's a bit weird," said Amy. An understatement, perhaps, but not much the Doctor did surprised her anymore.

"No, of course I didn't. I saw a receipt in your house in a few weeks time from now. Fancied a trip to London, thought I'd pop in on a day I knew you'd be here. 23rd of May 2012. An excellent choice."

"Slightly less weird," said Amy, "but still pretty freaky. Come here, you!"

She opened her arms wide and gave the Doctor a huge hug. After a moment of his standard awkwardness, Rory joined in.

"So, what's the plan, Ponds?" asked the

Doctor. "British Museum? I accidentally reactivated a robot mummy there once. Or Hamleys! Love a toy shop."
"Tube station's over there," said Rory, nodding across to the Westminster station sign. "We could wander around Covent Garden and then up Regent Street."
"Excellent plan," beamed the Doctor. "I might get some Lego. This is still before it achieves sentience and declares itself an independent nation, isn't it?"
"I still can't tell when you're joking" said Amy, which was the truth.

"If the British Rocket Group is here," explained the Doctor, "then there's more to this 'object' than they're saying on the *Telepress*." He gestured wildly around the train carriage with his walking stick. "You know, I can tell when there's something fascinating to be found nearby. It's a sort of sensation."
"Are you being serious, Doctor?" said Sara, who was beginning to realise that the Doctor's claims should be taken with a pinch of salt, to use an ancient idiom.
"Indeed I am, Miss Kingdom! I have a nose for mystery!"
The train came to a halt, and after a moment, the Doctor, Sara and Steven, along with the other passengers exited onto the station. The Doctor took in the silvered map on the wall.
"Now, the new station is being constructed on Regent Street. We can walk there from here. I'm not unknown to the scientific community of this period, so I'm sure we won't have too much difficulty making our way in."
The Doctor wasn't the fastest person on foot, and both Sara and Steven found themselves having to slow down their pace so as to avoid leaving him behind. It didn't take them too long, however, to reach the throng of people gathered around the, as yet unused, entrance way

for Regent Street station. Silver-uniformed guards stood in front of the entrance, preventing the various members of the press from gaining access. One side wielded holocameras, the other stun batons.
"What have they found down there?" shouted one of the journalists.
"What is the nature of the discovery?" called another, from a more high-brow publication.
"Is the object alien?" demanded another. A guard held his arms out in a blocking gesture. "This matter is under official jurisdiction. A full report will be made to state reporters when the nature of the object has been fully explored."
"State reporters? Come on, what about the real story?" cried one of the journalists, setting off a wave of vocal consternation.
The Doctor took the lead, moving past the ruckus in the hope of bypassing the guards altogether. While the majority of them were distracted by the growing commotion, one, particularly large and burly specimen, clapped a meaty hand onto the Doctor's shoulder.
"May I ask where you think you're going, sir?" asked the hirsute individual, politely aggressive.
"I'm, I'm needed urgently inside!" replied the Doctor, grasping his lapels with all the authority he could muster. "My expertise is required to identify this object! I am a noted expert in the field! You may have heard of me; my name is Doctor –"
The large man yelped, cutting the Doctor off, as Sara jabbed her knee into the small of his back. He fell to his knees, and she followed it up with a sharp chop to the lower neck, felling him completely.
"Sara, that was incredible!" said Steven, "Although he hadn't actually done anything."

"We need to get inside," she replied, "and if we don't go now while there's a distraction we never will. Come on!"
"My dear, I was just about to talk him around," said the Doctor. "There's no need to resort to such brute force tactics, you know. It's all a matter of finesse."
"Doctor, your finesse was getting us nowhere. Anyway, he'll be fine in half an hour. Now, we'd better get moving before we're noticed."
They hurriedly made their way into the station, with the Doctor complaining all the way.

Amy, Rory and the Doctor bundled onto the train, happily chatting amongst themselves, with the Doctor and Rory comparing their respective tastes in boys' toys.
"I don't care what you say, Doctor, Micro Machines were and always shall be far superior to Matchbox."
"Rory Pond, in the Acteon Group they use Miniscopes to time scoop cars and miniaturise them to make children's toys, and Matchbox models are still better."
Amy laughed at the boys' little dispute, as they sat down clumsily on either side of her.
"There really is no telling some people," said the Doctor.
Without warning, the train ground to a halt. The lights flickered, before going out. The jaded complaints of Londoners began, in equal parts anger at yet another unexpected delay and satisfaction at having something to complain about. The stop was momentary, however, and the lights quickly came back on. In a few seconds the train was running again.
The Doctor pulled his screwdriver from his pocket. The other passengers on the train had clearly noticed the eccentric man with his glowing, whirring gadget,

because they were all studiously ignoring him.
"Doctor, it's just a fault," said Amy. "The Tube trains always have something wrong with them."
"No, this is different," said the Doctor. "Don't ask me how I know, I can just feel it."
The Doctor studied his screwdriver intently, and not for the first time, Amy wondered how he could actually read anything from the gizmo.
"We're getting off," he said suddenly, leaping to his feet.
"Doctor," said Amy, "can we please wait until the train has stopped?"
"Fine," he said, "but that means we'll have to walk back down the tunnel."

Sara led the way into an open chamber, which was clearly in the process of excavation. Rubble was still strewn about the ground. In the centre of the chamber sat an object: roughly egg-shaped, it was a pearlescent blue-white colour and perfectly smooth.
"Undoubtedly alien," said the Doctor. "No wonder the scientists of the time are keen to get their hands on it. Completely beyond them, I'm sure, but one can't fault them for trying."
The three moved quickly down to the pod, the Doctor eager to investigate.

"Something's stirring down here," said the Doctor. "The sonic's going crazy. Temporal energy readings are off the charts."
"How worried should we about that?" said Rory. "Is this 'run for your life' or 'poke with a stick'?"
"Amy, please tell your husband to calm down. Everything's going to be perfectly fine."
"Really though, Doctor," said Amy, feeling her husband, as overly cautious as he could be, had a point, "what are we

dealing with here?"

"Well, I don't know. If I did, I'd know if doing this was a good idea."

The Doctor held the screwdriver aloft in both hands and pressed three buttons simultaneously. A pulse of sound reverberated around the tunnel.

"Doctor," sighed Rory, "what did you just do?"

"Whatever we're dealing with here, I just gave it a little alarm call," said the Time Lord, pocketing his screwdriver and straightening his bow tie.

On cue, a soft green glow appeared in front of them, dimly illuminating the tunnel walls, decades of dirt and lichen highlighted by the energy. The luminescence grew brighter, and slowly, tenuously, solidified.

In front of the trio stood a gently glowing green figure. Eight feet tall, broad and unmistakably masculine, its head was sunk into its shoulders and its arms reached down to its knees. It wore no clothes, but its body was almost featureless, its skin a smooth, almost carapace-like surface.

"Hello," the Doctor said, in quiet tones. "So sorry to wake you like that, but it looked like you needed a little help. I'm the Doctor, these are my friends, Amy and Rory. Do you have a name?"

The being turned its stubby head to the trio. Slitted eyes stared out at them.

"Azarath," came a deep voice, seemingly from all around. "My name is Azarath. How long have I slept?"

The pod glowed with its own faint internal light. It was just about large enough to hold a single person, although Sara knew now that external appearances could be very deceptive.

"I don't recognise the configuration," she said, realising how unhelpful this was.

"There's not really much to go on, is there," pointed out Steven. "It's pretty

featureless."

"Most definitely extra-terrestrial," said the Doctor, "and quite advanced, I'd say." He knelt down beside the object. "Most certainly a craft of some kind. There are no controls that I can see, however... I can sense an interface of some kind."

"Sense it?" asked Steven. "How so?"

The Doctor waved his hands irritably.

"Oh, how to explain... my people have a certain, mmm, affinity for time, I suppose you'd say. It's part of how I fly the TARDIS, although there's more to it than that. I have something of a special relationship with Time. Evidently the pilot of this craft has something similar."

Sara and Steven looked at each other. Anything that had to do with the Doctor's piloting of the TARDIS was not a source of great confidence.

"Perhaps, if I just..." the Doctor muttered, leaning closer to the pod. Supporting himself with his stick, he reached his free hand out to the object. "Yes... yes, I can feel it!"

The pod began to glow brighter. A sharp line of white light appeared across its circumference. Slowly, it cracked open.

"Doctor, was that a good idea?" said Steven.

Sara felt herself instinctively reach for a weapon she did not have.

"There's something coming out," she observed.

The glow brightened further, coalescing in the centre of the pod. Rising upwards and outwards, the glow left the pod altogether. It stood in front of the three travellers, resolving into a humanoid form. The Doctor straightened up and backed away, standing firm in the face of an unknown entity. The white light finally took shape. In front of them stood a figure, perhaps six feet tall, with a slender build and an almost featureless body. Nonetheless, from the lines of its

body and the structure of its alien face, it was undoubtedly feminine.

"What is this place?" she demanded, in a strident, powerful voice.

"It's alright," said the Doctor, hands raised placatingly. "I'm not sure how long you've been asleep, but we can find out. Maybe if you can tell me how you got here..."

Azarath was silent for a time, seemingly deep in thought.

"I came here with my co-pilot," he said, eventually. "We were passing through this plane on the way back to our own world. However, this world has experienced much temporal activity in this space-time region. We encountered unexpected interference. Our craft was grounded. I was rendered insensible." He paused again, almost as if he was listening for something. "This world has circled its star fifty times since then."

"You can tell that?" asked Amy, fascinated. "When you've been down here all that time?"

"Of course!" exclaimed the Doctor. "You're a Trizolian, aren't you?" He swivelled on his feet and faced Amy and Rory, flapping his hands about with excited expressiveness. "The Trizolians are a four-dimensional species. Exceptionally sensitive to time. They make Time Lords look deaf and blind in comparison. They make us look like... well, you lot. Anyway, poor Azarath here is obviously a bit shaken up still, he's only just got up after all, but once he's back to 100% he'll have perfect coordination within all dimensions of space-time."

"What happened to your co-pilot?" asked Rory.

Azarath's head sank, and he became silent again.

"You're on the planet Earth," said Sara, stepping in front of the Doctor and Ste-

ven, instinctively putting herself into harm's way ahead of them. "This is a city called London, in a nation called..." she searched her hazy memory of history lectures. "Merrie Olde England," she said, finally. "We mean you no harm. How did you come to be here?"

"What is your name, my friend?" asked the Doctor, an approach that hadn't occurred to Sara.

The being faced them with a piercing gaze.

"I am Coriu. My craft materialised here in error, grounded by the unusual temporal effects in this region. I have slept here for..." she fell silent for a moment, before continuing, "fifty of your years. I can sense the passage of time, both since my arrival, and throughout your worldlines. The three of you originate from different times. Not one of you is native to this space-time." She focused her narrow eyes on the Doctor. "You, in particular, are alien to this region."

"As are you," responded the Doctor, not unfairly. "Your craft is still intact; you can leave whenever you wish."

"My craft is dead," snapped Coriu. She reached out a hand and drew the energy of the pod into herself in a stream of blue light. The craft faded from view completely. "I was injured in the materialisation. I should not have slept so long."

"Your craft must have materialised within the structure of the ground," noted the Doctor. "You were unable to wake until these people began digging here. The disruption must have reactivated you and your ship, so to speak."

"I travelled with a co-pilot," she continued. "Yet he is not present. What have you done with him?"

"Nothing!" said Steven. "We've only been here a short time ourselves."

"Azarath... I can sense him. He exists here, now, but in a separate veil of pos-

sibility.”

“I don't understand,” said Sara.

“You've got me,” responded Steven.

“I think I understand,” said the Doctor.

“You and your associate are separated by quantum probability? Both of you arrived in 1962, but were left, shall we say, out of sync with each other? While one sequence of events has led to this 2012, another sequence of events has led to another 2012 in which he now resides.”

“That is correct. We are lost to one another.” Coriu strode over to the Doctor and loomed over him. Her eyes blazed. “You must have a craft. You will take me through the veil, and we will be reunited!”

“I can sense her, Doctor,” said Azarath. “She is close, yet so far. We are separated by the realm of probability, unable to meet even as we stand in the same space-time.”

“Two beings, separated by the dimension of quantum probability,” whispered the Doctor. “You poor old thing, Azarath. You must have been left slightly out of phase with one another when you crashed here.”

“We are linked,” continued the alien. “Neither of us can pilot our craft without the other. This is why I have woken now. She has recovered and needs to find me. Doctor, I can sense that you too, are a traveller in time. You have a craft, yes?”

“Azarath, I would love to help you, I really would, but you have to understand, I can't just jump across worldlines like that. Unless...” The Doctor smacked his forehead with the palm of his hand. “Oh, stupid Doctor, no, clever Doctor! If we go back to the exact point you crashed your ship in the first place, you can travel back up to now through the other timestream!”

“Doctor, what are you talking about?”

said Amy.

“I second that,” added Rory.

“Imagine time as a pair of tights,” said the Doctor, miming stretching something with his hands. “Flexible, malleable, but with a definite structure. Now, if you wanted to move something from one leg to the other, you could poke a pencil through both legs and move it across that way.”

“But then you'd ladder your tights and ruin them,” said Amy.

“Exactly. Tights destroyed, big rips in space/time. But, if you go up one leg and then down the other, you can make the trip without any damage at all. I'll just have to do something very clever at the crotch.”

“That is your worst analogy ever,” sighed Amy.

“Azarath, me old mate, I think we can do this. We just need to get to the TARDIS.”

“You craft?” asked the alien. “I can sense it. I can take us there immediately.”

And with that, all four of them vanished.

“It isn't as simple as that, Coriu,” protested the Doctor.

“Time traveller, you have a choice. You either take me to my mate with your craft, or I will break my way through the veil myself.”

“If you can do that, why don't you?” asked Steven, reasonably.

“Steven, my boy,” said the Doctor, fixing him with a hard stare, “if she tears through the dimensions like that, she'll take this whole city with her! Space and time will be ripped apart!”

“Then we have to help her,” pointed out Sara. “We don't have a choice.”

“My dear, it really is not that simple. I would have to pilot the Ship back in time to the very point of divergence and correct for the phase variance there. And while my piloting skills are certainly

up-to-scratch, I fear the TARDIS's navigational system is not.”

“You have problems with your navigation?” hissed Coriu.

“I confess that my Ship has developed a small fault, so that I do not always know precisely where I am going to materialise.”

Sara and Steven looked at each other again, impressed by the understatement.

“I can sense your craft. I can pinpoint its exact location. I can move us from here to there in an instant. Navigating the vessel will not pose a problem.”

There was a shout from the level above.

“There they are!”

Five armed, silver-suited guards piled in, followed by four soberly dressed individuals carrying various scientific instruments.

“Wait!” cried one of them. “They've made contact!”

“Don't do anything!” said another. “The object's gone!”

“This is the British Rocket Group. Please step away from the extraterrestrial immediately.

“Oh, that's all we need,” muttered the Doctor.

“I will not be delayed further,” snarled Coriu. She lashed out with her right arm, sending a tendril of blue energy across the assembled humans. With a vicious crackle it contacted them, flooring all nine. They landed with a heavy thud, unconscious.

“That was unnecessary!” snapped the Doctor.

“The terrestrial creatures shall survive,” responded the alien. “Should we delay further, this city shall not.” The Doctor sighed.

“Very well,” he said. “Steven, Sara, at my side. Take us to the TARDIS.

The four of them vanished.

“Blimey, Azarath, what's your hurry?”

asked the Doctor, a moment after he and his four companions appeared at the door of the TARDIS, parked behind the Leicester Square Odeon. “Come on then, this is my transport of delight. With your help, we can get to exactly the point we need to be.”

The Doctor opened the door, gesturing Amy and Rory inside before watching Azarath carefully as he entered. Finally, he stepped inside himself and locked the door behind him.

“An impressive vessel,” stated Azarath, casting his eye over the complex and cluttered control room.

“You ain't seen nothing yet,” replied the Doctor, getting to work on the console. “Just a couple of adjustments I need to make.”

Azarath stood stoically as the Doctor worked.

“What was her name?” asked Amy, quietly.

The huge alien looked down at her, his glowing eyes meeting her own. From this close she could feel the bristling energy that emanated from him. He could have destroyed her in a heartbeat. “Her name is Coriu,” he said, and turned away.

“Don't worry, big fella,” said the Doctor, “we'll get you back to her. Tune yourself into the theta band. We're about to go!”

“Doctor, I think I've had enough of being thrown across space,” said Steven, clutching his head as he fell back against the wall. They had appeared back in the alleyway, in front of the TARDIS.

“I don't see the problem, my boy,” replied the Doctor, “that seems like quite an acceptable way to travel. However, this is something else entirely.”

He unveiled his key and opened the TARDIS door, holding out his hand and gesturing for Coriu to enter.

“After you, madam.”

Sara stepped up to the Doctor and spoke quietly into his ear.

"How do we know she's not just going to take the TARDIS and leave us?"

"Because, for now at least, she has no idea how it functions," replied the Doctor, "only that it moves through space-time. Without me, she cannot fly it; without her, I cannot land it precisely."

They entered, along with Steven. Coriu stood in the gleaming white control room.

"This is acceptable," she stated, without elaboration.

"Well, I am pleased you find it adequate," huffed the Doctor. "If you're ready, I am going to set the TARDIS temporal circuits to band theta. We can then begin."

The TARDIS spun through the Vortex, the Doctor grabbing at the controls.

"Ooh, these precise hops are tricky," he said, "but even so, there's a lot of turbulence here."

"Will we be able to materialise?" asked Azarath.

"Oh, don't you worry, I'll get us there in one piece."

"Oh dear, this is most unusual," complained the Doctor. "The TARDIS is pushing against some severe interference."

"You had best not fail me," warned Coriu.

"Fail? Never! We'll be there in a jiffy!"

The TARDIS materialised.

The TARDIS materialised.

The Doctor stepped out, his cane clicking on the pavement.

The Doctor stepped out, whirring his screwdriver.

"Right, that's as close as we can get without actually being in the ground."

He saw his other self. "Ah," he said.

Out of one TARDIS came Sara, Steven and Coriu; out of the other, Amy, Rory and Azarath. The eight time-travellers all looked at each other, warily.

"What is the meaning of this?" demanded Sara's Doctor.

"Oi, don't blame me for this," said Amy's. "What are you doing here? I don't remember this."

"Coriu!" exclaimed Azarath, glowing brightly.

"Azarath, at last," she replied.

They clasped their hands together, bold white and unearthly green shining together. They were more than just co-pilots, Amy saw. They needed each other.

"Aw," said Amy, despite herself.

"Who are you people?" asked Sara.

Before anyone could answer, there was a violent shudder. The assembled humans almost fell to their feet.

"What was that?" questioned Rory, steadying Amy.

"Temporal feedback," said the bow-tied Doctor. "We shouldn't all be here at once. Two TARDISEs, two Doctors, two super-powerful trans-dimensional aliens. It's all a bit much."

There was another shudder, and a sudden, blinding flash. When it abated, all four humans were gone.

"What has happened?" demanded the stick-wielding Doctor.

"Oh dear," said the bow-tied one. "It's all gone a bit Pete Tong."

Amy, Rory, Sara and Steven found themselves, flat on their backs, in the middle of a gleaming metallic walkway. People, hurriedly going about their lives, stopped, in some cases almost tripping over these strangers who had appeared

in their midst. The four looked around, taking in the stone lions, the great column and the statues of noteworthy Englishmen.

"We're back in the Square," observed Steven.

"Yeah, but when," said Rory.

"Where we started, I think," said Sara, getting to her feet. "This is 2012." She helped Steven up.

Rory, likewise helping Amy, shook his head.

"No, that doesn't make sense. We're from 2012. This is the future."

"Right, said Amy. "We don't have metal gangways, or... or hovering cars, or... what the hell's that?" She pointed at a hulking man in luminous tight-fitting coveralls, who was flexing his exaggerated muscles atop a plinth.

"I think that's the Karkus," said Steven.

"Don't worry, it's just a hologram."

"He looks like a superhero," said Amy.

"I have seen every Marvel movie to date," said Rory, "and I have never heard of 'The Carcass.' I mean, what kind of name is that anyway?"

"Wait a moment," said Sara, butting in to avoid the conversation going off on a complete tangent, "the Doctor spoke of two different histories. One for Coriu, and one for her mate, each beginning in 1962."

"So, one is yours," said Rory.

"And the other is ours," finished Amy.

"And somehow, we've all ended up here," said Steven.

"Without the Doctor, or the TARDIS," observed Sara. "This poses a problem." The four of them stood silently for a moment, unsure of what to say.

"Fancy getting a coffee?" suggested Amy.

"Oh, this is most irregular," complained the Doctor, pacing up and down, his cane making a racket on the pavement.

"Well, these things do happen occasionally," said the other Doctor. "You might find you bump into yourself from time to time."

"How can you be so glib, young man? We are breaching the Laws of Time!"

"Don't you 'young man' me, I'm old enough to be your... well, your ancestor!"

"So, which one are you then, hmmm? How many have I gone through before I become this, this... whippersnapper?"

"Well, let's just say it's been a while since I looked as grumpy as you."

"Oh dear, oh dear, this is a sorry state of affairs. Do I really change so much?"

"You don't know the half of it, mate."

Coriu and Azarath approached the Doctors.

"Explain this situation," demanded the female.

"There is an overlap in your worldlines," observed Azarath.

"Well, obviously," said the younger-faced Doctor, running his hand through his hair. "That's because we're the same person. We obviously tried the same thing in different potential futures and, well, this is the result."

"Never mind all that," snapped the older-faced Doctor, "where are my young associates?"

"And why has no one noticed us standing here having this argument?" asked the other.

"We have projected a temporal envelope to prevent any of the natives of this space-time from interfering with us," explained Coriu, quite haughtily. "Now that we are reunited, this is well within our abilities."

"As for your associates," said Azarath, "they appeared to be downstream, in one of the worldlines from which you travelled. It is hard to tell which."

"Oh, don't give me that," said the younger. "Two Trizolians are better than

one, right? If anyone can find them and get them back, it's you two."

"Perhaps," said Coriu, "but why would we? Their whereabouts are of no interest to us."

"Coriu," said Azarath, quietening his deep voice, "these creatures helped us become reunited. Is it not right that we do the same for them?"

"You always were too sentimental, Azarath."

"It's lucky you had some money in your pocket," said Rory, sitting down at the transparent Perspex table. "We never know if we've got the right cash on us when we're travelling with the Doctor."

"Or even when we're just supposed to be out in town for a couple of days," added Amy. "Why are they using pounds, shillings and pence? That stuff went out in the fifties or something."

"1971," said Rory.

"Which is after the two histories diverged," noted Steven. "Luckily, we were in 1965 not that long ago."

"This is all quite fascinating," said Sara, cautiously sipping her coffee, which was quite unlike anything available in her own time, the coffee plant having become extinct some centuries previously. "You say you don't have these holographic displays in your version of London?"

"That's right," said Amy, "but we do have WiFi and a mobile network, which might make getting hold of the Doctor a bit easier."

"If he's even in this time-zone," pointed out Rory.

"He's coming," she stated, and left it at that.

"What we definitely don't have," said Rory, changing track, "is a Space Wheel. Seriously, the news here is amazing. And people just work up there?"

"Well, it's very hard to get a placement

on those things," said Steven, "but are you really telling me you don't have space stations in your time?"

"Well, we have the ISS," offered Rory, "but it's not quite the same."

"And you're from this time yourselves?" asked Amy.

"A little further ahead," said Steven, not elaborating.

"I joined the Doctor and Steven in 4000, Common Era," explained Sara, to be met with wide eyes from both Amy and Rory. "What?"

"You're from the Year 4000?" said Rory.

"A Year 4000," said a young voice. The four looked up. The Doctor stood there – Amy's Doctor – with a broad smile on his face.

"Where's our Doctor?" asked Sara.

"Yes, I think I might need that part explained to me again," said Steven.

"Well, we're both versions of the same person. We're the same Doctor, only different. I'm a little further ahead – well, a lot further ahead – as you can tell from my superior sartorial taste."

"So, what happens now?" asked Rory. "Are we stuck in a parallel universe?"

"Not at all," smiled the Doctor, clapping his hands together. "Together, Azarath and Coriu are far more powerful and more precise. They're able to gently shunt us across to our own worldline, no harm done. Kind of like tying the ends of a pair of tights together, only not very much like that at all."

"Thank you," said Steven, "that's all much clearer."

"Look, it's quite simple," said the Doctor, pulling up a transparent chair. "At any point in time, there are many possible sequences of events that might play out. Technology might progress rapidly in one area, but not another. Someone comes to power in one history, his opponent in the other. Both versions of 2012 are equally possible from the point

of view of someone in 1962, and both are equally valid, equally real – they're just separate."

He nodded at Amy and Rory.

"You two should never have been able to see this version of events. But it's fine, you should slip back into your natural timestream with a little help from the Trizolians. Because you're supposed to be there, it'll make things a lot easier." He stood up.

"Now, you two, drink up your coffee. We'd better be going. The TARDIS is waiting outside. We'd just best be careful to go into the right one." He turned to the others. "Bye Steven. Good seeing you again." He grabbed his hand and gave it a firm shake.

He looked at Sara, and she was taken aback by the sadness in his eyes. Although he looked so much younger than the Doctor she knew, she could see the weight of years bearing down on him. He put his hand on hers.

"Goodbye Sara. Take care."

The Doctor was waiting behind the café, standing by his TARDIS impatiently.

"Really now, what took you so long?" he chided.

"It was that other version of you," said Steven. "He doesn't half like to chat."

"Yes, well," sighed the Doctor, "I suppose I have all that to look forward to." The two Trizolians appeared in front of them.

"What are you going to do?" asked Sara. "Your ship was destroyed."

Azarath and Coriu spoke together.

"We are our ship."

They placed their hands together again, only this time, their glow grew ever brighter, green and white, coalescing into one pearlescent mass of solid light. In time, there was only a pod left, glowing faintly, which then vanished with a flash.

"Well, then," said the Doctor, "I suppose I shall have control of my Ship back."

"Such as it is," said Steven. "At least it looks like you'll be able to fly it better one day, judging by your other self."

The Doctor looked back, dumbfounded.

What are you talking about?"

The TARDIS materialised. Amy and Rory stepped out to a London filled with red double-deckers and Nando's adverts.

"Good to be back," said Rory.

"See?" said the Doctor. "Nothing to it. My earlier self will be forgetting about our little misadventure, everyone's back in their right time-stream, and our Trizolian chums will be happily on their way." "What now then?" said Amy. "Home?"

"We haven't finished our little holiday yet," said the Doctor, placing his arms round their shoulders. "Let me take you to lunch, and I'll tell you a little about my friends Steven and Sara."



MARGINALIA

by Michael Gilroy-Sinclair

The fake monk was not happy. The school party was late, and he had been reduced to simply staring out of the window. In the brightly lit education suite, he had neatly laid out a collection of fake parchment and quills in order to give the primary school children a taste of life as an eighth-century monk. It felt to him that he had been doing this, day in day out, for months and he was frankly bored.

He knew from the minimal research he had been required to do, that the real monks had used goatskin and octopus ink, but such extravagances were beyond most education department budgets.

Idly, he straightened a pile of A4 paper, which didn't need straightening, only to return to the window and glance across the car park for the fiftieth time that morning. The sky was the clearest blue with only wisps of white dancing in the heavens.

Surely, that blue portaloo

hadn't been there this morning. How could he not have noticed it until now? Maybe the council were finally going to fix those potholes?

Only... Now that he could see it properly, there seemed to be a flashing light on the top and it clearly wasn't a portaloo at all.

Rose was not impressed with the Doctor. He had landed the TARDIS without any of the usual build-up about their destination and headed for the door. There had been no talk of strange crea-

tures or stranger lands.

The Doctor's behaviour may have been out of the ordinary, but Rose reasoned that it must have had something to do with the sound.

Moments earlier, the extraordinary time and spaceship had made an extraordinary racket that sounded almost exactly like it had a stone in its shoe. Rose knew fine and well that the TARDIS didn't have shoes to get stones into, so this was a worry.

She had come out of the kitchen and headed straight to the control room, where she saw the Doctor heading past the pale coral roof supports and out of the old wooden door and into the daylight beyond.

"Oi, hold on!"

"Hmm," replied the Doctor; he was distracted by his sonic screwdriver as it beeped and flashed in a way she had never seen it do before.

"Do you have any idea what we are looking for?" asked Rose in her most patient voice.

"Err... no.... but I will know it when I see it." He seemed very positive about this.

"And the bleeping helps?"

"The bleeping will tell me when we are close to the source."

Rose's patience was wearing thin, "The source of what?"

The Doctor stopped walking and looked directly at Rose as if she were a child.

"The source of the temporal disturbance. Honestly, it's like I don't explain anything to you..."

"You don't. All I know is that the TARDIS started making a weird noise and

then we stopped, and you stormed off with that thing in your hand."

As if it were joining in the conversation, the bleep of the sonic screwdriver suddenly became slightly more frenetic, taking away the Doctor's concentration and causing him to walk off in a new direction.

"Where are we anyway?" demanded Rose as she raced to catch up with the Doctor.

"You tell me, Rose Tyler."

Rose looked around. "It's cold. And it's Earth... England."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because... unless we are in some pretty weird parallel universe, that's a Ford Escort and that's a Volvo."

Rose was on a roll. She took a deep breath and smelled the air. "We're near a river or close to the sea."

"Correct on both counts," the Doctor said, beaming. "Anything more specific?"

She looked over the Doctor's shoulder and said, "We're in Jarrow at a place called Bede's World, near the river Tyne. Quite close to the tunnel, apparently."

"Amazing! And how do you know that?"

"There's a whopping great sign on the other side of the road," said Rose smugly.

The Doctor beamed with delight.

"Fantastic! Anything else?"

"It's a World Heritage Site and it looks like the tea shop is open. Fancy a Hobnob?"

The Doctor flicked at the screwdriver until it stopped making a noise. "I don't mind if I do. Grab your coat, you're paying."

Calder, son of Eric, had not always been the Viking warrior he was today.

He had been nothing more than a farmer with a side-line in jewellery making, when the Northern Lights had come down to the land to visit him and him alone.

It had been an ordinary afternoon in the fields when the storm had risen. It was a tempest unlike any he had seen before.

In a single heartbeat, the sky had ripped apart causing his flock to scatter and Calder to shelter under the nearest tree. From his refuge he could see the incredible colours swirl and pulse as the afternoon sun twisted and bent in the storm. Suddenly, a gash of darkest night filled the air above him.

Beyond the hole in the sky, the stars swooped and curved, with a single shooting star at its centre, resembling a pendant of the gods.

And then it was gone.

Like a vivid dream, it passed and seemed to leave nothing but a memory. Calder shook his head as if to shake something loose, only finally to look up and see a small trail of smoke on the other side of the hill.

He ran, stumbling over loose rocks to see what was beyond the crest of the hill.

He arrived to find a short furrow in the ground, smoother than any plough could have made, with a small mound at one end. Calder could see something small and black embedded in the earth. He reached out and grabbed it. From that moment onwards, he was a changed man.

Now, all of these years later, he stood on the prow of the longboat and looked deeply at his left hand, examining the stone that had changed him so much. It was the shape of half an apple and blacker than a winter's night. Across its surface were a billion points of light.

The stone had taken him and his brethren on so many journeys. It had guided them from their homes in the West, across the seas to the fertile land again and again, only to have him return with a hold full of treasures and slaves and always an all-consuming feeling of loss. Calder was their guide; he used the stone from the heavens, the obsidian map of the sky to point the way, always listening to its silent whisper. Until today – today there was no wind; there were no birds in the sky and only tiny ripples on the surface of the water beneath the hulking mass of the long-boat. Tentatively, Calder's friend Tarben had suggested releasing the ravens in order to find the direction of the nearest land. Magic stones were one thing, but the crew were realists. Calder had told them to be patient; the stone would show the way. After all, it had never let them down before.

The tea shop was a small affair with a view over the river and beyond. Through the bay window, Rose could see the port with thousands of identical cars neatly lined up, ready for distribution around the world. They had come in through the main entrance which also acted as a small gift shop, complete with pointless stationery and guidebooks. The woman behind the counter had a smile as wide as the Doctor's and had welcomed them in like a seasoned pro. "Welcome to Bede's World, home of the Venerable Bede. As well as the Monastery and Visitors' Centre, we have a special exhibition on at the moment with some of the finest examples of..." "Is the coffee shop open?" interrupted

Rose.

"Yes, it is. And we do a storming hot chocolate, pet."

"Pet?" said the Doctor, worried that the TARDIS translation circuits might be on the blink.

"Aye, pet. The tea is nice too... I can bring it over if you like. Have you come far?"

Rose smiled to herself.

"Oh, about six parsecs as the crow flies," said the Doctor absent-mindedly.

"Yeah, you sound like you've come a long way. That accent... Somewhere in the South...? Manchester...?"

"South?!" sniggered Rose.

"Oh yes, pet lamb. Anything beyond Sunderland is the South as far as we're concerned," half joked the woman behind the counter.

The Doctor was clearly affronted and headed for the comfiest looking chair for solace.

"Your friend a bit touchy about his accent? Never mind. Now, what shall I get you?"

Rose ordered then joined the Doctor. "Did that woman really call me 'pet lamb'?"

With a snort of derision, the Doctor busied himself with his screwdriver once again.

"I've ordered you a tea, if that's all right."

The Doctor didn't answer.

"What's up? In a huff because you aren't quite northern enough?" She tittered.

"I'll have you know I used to be Scottish. Is that northern enough?" he said, then stared out of the window. Whispering to himself, "And, for all I know, I might be again one day."

Clearly, she had touched a nerve. "You don't half talk some rubbish... So... What's all this about then?"

"I have my suspicions about what made the TARDIS..." The Doctor started to wave his hands about as if to explain something complex.

"...Make an appalling noise and put you in a bad mood?"

"Yeah! Only... it shouldn't be possible. Not here, not now."

The drinks arrived and broke the conversation. "One tea and one hot chocolate, both with complimentary biscuits. Enjoy your visit. Make sure you see the special exhibition and be careful of that dig site. God only knows when they will be back."

At the mention of a dig site the Doctor sprang to his feet, almost knocking over his tea. Looming over them was a fake monk.

Calder smiled. A smile that the crew knew of old. That magic stone of his was telling him something. The wind began to rise, and they were on the move again.

The monk stood directly in front of the Doctor and Rose. His face was full of nervous energy, which Rose found more than a little appealing.

Suddenly the Doctor became tense. As Rose glanced in his direction, she could see that all of the usual warmth had evaporated from his face. He regarded the figure in front of them with the sort of suspicion he usually reserved for the galaxy's most wanted criminals, rather than a man in a brown habit.

The two men faced each other in silence.

"Welcome to Bede's World," said the monk. "I am the Venerable Bede, born in 672 and died on the twenty-sixth of May, 735." He paused for effect. "And I will be your guide today around my world. A world of knowledge and dark-

ness and light and..." He paused.

"And inspiration!" shouted the woman from the counter. "Gary, the line is 'and inspiration.'"

"You really know how to spoil the moment, Doreen... Anyway, I thought the line was 'and faith.'"

"They changed it at the last meeting, which you would know if you had been on time. You know, we never get this problem with Pete. Now there is someone who really inhabits the role."

The truth dawned on the travellers. "Inhabits the habit," joked the Doctor, his smile quickly returning.

Gary, the fake monk, was not happy with Doreen. "Look, it's Pete's day off and I am Bede today."

Rose felt sorry for the man in brown. "Don't worry... Gary, is it? I'm sure you'll get the hang of it. Why don't you tell us more about this place? Think of it as a practice run."

Doreen was still unimpressed. "Shouldn't you be with that school group?"

"They called and said they were running late. Engine trouble outside Middlesbrough, or something."

"There you go," said the Doctor. "Gary can tell us all about the place before the school gets here."

"For a start, you can tell me who this Bede bloke actually was," said Rose.

It felt like it had been raining for months. The land squelched underfoot. The sky, the river and the sea beyond were all the same dark murky grey.

Beyond the pond, where the trout waited until Fridays, lay the wooden fence which held the young goats, next to the tanning shed, where the living raw materials were turned into parchment and would form part of their greater pur-

pose.

Beyond the rudimentary farm was the small, wooden jetty, the edge of which disappeared into the light fog over the river Tyne.

The mist spread its tendrils out across the land, and yet the sun was fighting through increasingly larger gaps in the gloom, allowing shafts of light to warm the land.

A small bell rang calling the monks to prayer, dragging them away from one form of devotion to another, their rough garments soaked from the constant drizzle.

The heavy air made everything sound so much closer than normal. The echoing ring of the bell was both muffled and yet piercing, and the constant bleating of the goats seemed more immediate than usual.

Most of the monks now stood in the chancel in silent contemplation while one, standing at a wooden lectern, was reading from the Scriptures.

As always, one of their number was not at prayer. Novice Randal had a considerably more earthly task to fulfil.

At the edge of the jetty, he sat listening to the sound of his brothers' devotions travelling gently on the breeze, while his eyes were firmly fixed on the horizon.

This was an important job reserved for the novices of the order, as the younger monks had better eyes and could see further.

It was Randal's job to keep a watch out for ships. Some would carry emissaries or pilgrims, while others brought those with darker motives.

It had been some time since the last Viking attack, but you never knew when an innocent looking trading ship would conceal different intentions. He did not know which would be worse: to

die or to be sold into slavery. He had read the accounts of attacks on monasteries further up the coast. Such earthly horrors kept Randal awake at night.

For a fleeting moment, the sun fought the mist and won. At first Randal couldn't be sure. He blinked and strained his eyes. Yes, there it was, he was certain now. He could make out a black dot on the horizon and it seemed intent on heading their way.

As the Doctor, Rose and Gary (the fake Bede) walked away from the Visitors' Centre and down the small incline, the sounds of modern life went on around them. On the river, a gigantic tanker floated its way out to sea, while in the distance massive cranes were being dismantled. All around, the constant murmur of traffic impinged on this island of tranquillity.

Gary explained as they walked, "In all honesty, I'm just an actor in between gigs... And a bit of 'theatre in education' always looks good on your CV."

"You were going to tell us about Bede," reminded Rose.

The Doctor interrupted, "Bede was a monk and a historian who wrote one of the first history books."

"I think she was asking me," said Gary, "but like he says, Bede was this priest who wrote... *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*..." He pronounced the Latin words with exaggerated care. "I knew I'd get that right."

"And what's that when it's at home?"

The Doctor couldn't help himself: "The Ecclesiastical History of the English People. It's the first history book to use the AD system of dating. Without that book, you lot would know even less than you do."

Rose gave the Doctor a gentle punch in the arm. "Is it me or is it getting nippy?" "Time displacement does that... Or it could just be the wind off the sea."

"I'm just glad I get to keep my thermals on underneath this habit."

"That's hardly historically accurate," joked Rose.

"And neither are his sandals."

"I'll have you know, if eighth-century monks had had access to Crocs as comfortable as these, they would have worn them."

They were now getting closer to the actual monastery and could see it in more detail: a squat church made from heavy stone.

Gary continued with pride, "We've always got archaeologists of one type or another poking around. It's not like when Time Team came..."

"Time Team?" asked the Doctor with interest.

"It's a TV show. Now shush and let Gary tell us about the place," said Rose.

Gary smiled. "Well, it was long before my time; they made a hell of a mess and they didn't find anything much of interest, just a few pots and a lot of dead goats."

"Dead goats?"

"Yeah, goat skin is what the monks made their special paper from," explained Gary. "This lot are from the university; they only come a couple of times a week... The trench is just round this corner."

The Doctors sonic screwdriver began to buzz once more.

Novice Randal ran for all he was worth. The mist had cleared enough for him to be sure that the oncoming ship was the Norsemen returning. They had reached

the river mouth itself.

He had to raise the alarm. His feet pounded the soft earth, almost kicking a chicken as he ran haphazardly towards the church and his unsuspecting brothers.

The large wooden door felt as light as a feather as he pulled it open with all of his strength, the fear coursing through his body. Eyes turned to him, and he shouted a single word: "Vikings."

Every moment counted before an attack. Some of the older monks had sharp memories of times when the Norsemen had come and taken their friends and precious artefacts. Panic gripped them all.

Rose was not impressed; after all, if you have seen one hole, you have seen them all. "There's not much to look at it, is there," she said, stating the obvious.

The Doctor thought for a moment. "I don't know, you can tell a lot from a hole."

"You can?" asked Gary. "Like what?"

"Well, for a start, you can tell that there aren't any archaeologists about."

"I did say they only come a few days a week. In fact, I'm pretty sure they're due tomorrow," Gary explained.

Rose joined in: "Go on then Mr. Smarty-Pants, what else can you tell from this hole?"

"Well, the ground has been recently disturbed."

"Yes, it's a hole, someone dug a hole. They disturbed the ground. That's how you make holes."

The Doctor gave Rose the same sort of hard stare that Paddington Bear was famous for. "The earth at the bottom of the hole has been disturbed. There..." He pointed. "That line down the middle. The darker, dryer earth, it looks burnt."

Now that the Doctor had mentioned it, it was obvious.

"I'm guessing it rained last night," inquired the Doctor.

"Bucketed down," said Gary. "Why do you ask?"

"Because whatever made that mark in the dirt happened after the rain and left a dry scorched line..." He peered into the ditch. "And as there are no muddy footprints, we know your students haven't been anywhere near. I'm guessing whatever did it is still down there."

"Ohhhh! Get you! The new Mr. Holmes," Rose quipped.

"It's a shame really," said Gary.

"What is?" asked the Doctor.

"That we aren't allowed down there to see what it is."

"Tell that to Rose," replied the Doctor as Rose jumped into the hole.

* * *

The monks had only moments to act but they had prepared. With a few swift swings of an axe, the jetty had collapsed into the river and now lay beneath the surface.

This would only delay the landing, but there was no point in making it easy for the invaders. The novice monks had very precise instructions: they were to go to the library and rescue as many of the books as they could carry.

Each one had been given a specific tome to protect. They were to run and hide in the woods, and only come back once it was safe to do so.

The older monks would defend the buildings for as long as they could.

Once Randal had reached the library, a small room off the cloister, he was pleased to see that most of the other books had already been rescued. Only one remained and it was in the hands of

the old monk, Brother Bede.

The scholar was muttering to himself about the Norsemen and about how they would never take his life's work. In his hands he held his history book. Randal had yearned to read it for himself and hoped one day to do so. It had taken years to complete, and the old man was not going to let it go.

Quickly, the novice decided to do the only thing that was available to him: he would rescue the book and its author. Together they would protect the book. The knowledge would not go up in flames like so much had done in the past. He was convinced that the Norsemen might burn the church, but they would not take these words.

By the time they left the small room, it was already too late – the Vikings had arrived, splashing and slashing their way on to the land. Some of the warriors had split from the main force and were busy gathering up the animals, while the others burned the tannery.

From the mists of the river they came, organized and strong. At their head was a single figure holding a sword in one hand and a small black rounded object in his other. The sword was already dripping with blood.

"We must go!" the young novice urged the older monk. Seconds later, the warrior was on them.

The jump into the hole was further than Rose had been expecting, but she had managed to avoid twisting her ankle. And, after all, any landing you can walk away from is a good one.

"Hold your horses, Rose, I'm coming down," said the Doctor, as he jumped the short distance, much to the protestations of Gary.

"I only brought you here so that you could have a look."

From his position in the hole, the Doctor looked up and smiled his goofiest of grins. "And that's exactly what we're going to do. We're going to have a look... and maybe a poke around. But mainly a look."

Gary gave in. "Hold on then, I'll come too... I suppose someone from the museum should be present."

"That's the spirit, come on down."

Gary slowly slid himself down the side of the hole, revealing the manufacturer of his underwear at least twice before arriving at the bottom.

"They're rather anachronistic, aren't they?" said the Doctor judgmentally.

"Do you mind!?" said Gary, as he straightened his robes.

"I'm only joking," said the Doctor.

"No, not you, her! I said, do you mind not poking about! Do you want to damage any priceless artefacts?"

"Since when is mud priceless? I just want to have a look."

Gary still seemed unimpressed: "You look with your eyes, not your hands."

Rose bent down. "I think there's something in there."

"Whatever it is, don't touch it. I want to take a reading," said the Doctor, pulling out his sonic screwdriver.

Gary moved forward, making a grab for Rose's shoulder. "I told you not to touch anything."

As he touched her, she must have made contact with the thing that had made the gash in the dirt. It was small and black, and looked as if it contained a million tiny dancing points of light in the night.

"I just want to have a..." And then Rose and Gary were gone... leaving the Doctor alone in the trench.

Randal was terrified; his master held tightly onto his greatest possession, clutching it safely to his chest. They both knew they were about to die.

Randal knew that the Norsemen had no interest in the sacred words. Grimly, he realized that his last thoughts would be about the loss of the text, rather than concern for his own passing.

The old man suddenly seemed to be at peace, as if he knew his destiny and was willing to accept it without question. He pushed the novice to one side and urged the boy to run, forgetting the manuscript clutched in his hands.

The Viking was huge, at least two spans taller than the monk, and he had clearly seen battle. With a distant look in his eye, he raised his sword, ready to dispatch the old man. The monk simply held out a hand in friendship, his faith guiding his actions.

This caught the Viking off guard, and he froze with his sword ready to strike.

The monk touched the Viking's swordless hand, breaking the moment. The sword came down and hit the book with so much force that it embedded itself into it. In the same movement, the old monk touched something smooth in the warrior's hand.

There was a flash like lightning... and both monk and Viking were gone.

Novice Randal stood in disbelief; had God taken his master and his attacker to heaven? Was this the Rapture?

Standing before him, where his master had once stood, there was now an angel with purest yellow hair and standing next to her, her herald; a monk in the cleanest habit he had ever seen.

If the Doctor had been surprised by the disappearance of Rose and Gary, he was even more surprised by the sudden appearance of the huge Viking and a

more authentic-looking monk holding the tattered and smouldering remains of a book.

The angel remained still, in a crouching position, her hands held as if unexpectedly and suddenly empty of something that they had previously been holding. The look on her face told of her confusion, but then which of God's creatures would not be confused, after a fall from heaven?

The blinding flash had attracted the attention of all the Vikings. Randal watched their confusion as they struggled to understand the disappearance of their leader. For a moment, there was silence, then an uncertain muttering.

Randal knew enough of their strange tongue to pick out some of the words: "It's magic! Thor has taken Calder! What have we done to anger him? It's Freya! She's not taking me to Helheim." As the young monk watched, panic set in and the Vikings ran, back towards their ship, abandoning their captured treasures and animals.

Randal felt a surge of pity for the Vikings, who seemed to have taken this angel for one of their own heathen gods, when clearly, she had been sent from On High to save the monks from these savage invaders.

Rose gathered her thoughts. She was in almost exactly the same spot, only the ferry terminal, Visitors' Centre and car park were all gone.

The ancient church looked newer and there were more wooden buildings dotted around.

With astonishment, she noticed the group of people running towards the river – who seemed to be a group of

Vikings. Admittedly they were Vikings without horns on their helmets, but nevertheless they were clearly the warriors of legend.

It also occurred to her that her sudden appearance may have grabbed their attention.

Not one to let an opportunity slip – the Doctor had taught her that – she stood up and looked directly at the young novice. "Hello, I'm Rose." It was then she noticed Gary, the fake monk, lying at her feet, with an expression of utter disbelief on his face.

At the Viking's feet lay something the Doctor recognized. The Doctor smiled to himself in realization of what had happened.

Oblivious to his change in circumstances, the Viking raised his sword once more, taking the heavy book, in which it was still lodged, with it. He lifted the weapon high above his head and again prepared to dispatch the cowering monk.

"Oi, we'll have none of that!" shouted the Doctor as he brought his sonic screwdriver level with the new arrivals. The blue light on the end pulsed and the book on the sword blade burst into flames, showering the Viking's head in debris and breaking his concentration once and for all.

The Viking stood in silence, finally aware of his new surroundings. "What magic is this?" he spat.

"Now... I think one of you has something that doesn't belong to you," said the Doctor.

"Is this Valhalla? Or Helheim...?" continued the confused Viking.

"No, this is Jarrow. Just off the A19... Now, like I said... one of you has something that doesn't belong to them... Small black stone?"

Automatically the warrior raised his left

hand. It was clear that he had no control over his actions: the stone was guiding him. With the Viking's palm open the Doctor could see the hemisphere reacting to his words, a million points of swirling light danced.

The Doctor spoke to the stone directly, "You are beautiful... and I think you're looking for your friend, aren't you?"

As if in answer, the pattern of stars shone in unison, and the stone slipped from the warrior's hand and into the Doctor's. The Viking's expression changed almost instantly, as if he had been released from a long captivity.

"Well, I think your friend is over here in the mud." Carefully the Doctor took the Viking's stone over to the other, which remained embedded in the mud. Gently, he laid them together.

A white light glowed and then began to shine like a small sun as the two halves became a single ball of energy.

"I think we can leave those two to get reacquainted for a bit, don't you?" The Doctor turned his attention to the two confused humans.

"Now, did either of you see a girl in a white puffer jacket? She was probably with a very surprised-looking monk."

The old monk ignored the Doctor's question; he was weeping at the smouldering remains of his life's work, now reduced to little more than a pile of ashes. He had used it to defend himself from the blow from the sword, but the stranger's wand had utterly destroyed it.

"Erm... Sorry about the book... Here, let me help you up."

Once the Vikings had gone, things began to return to normal at the monastery. Even the novelty of having an an-

gel among them had worn off after a few days.

Rose and Gary had settled in quite well. They had started by lending a hand where they could, and Gary had even suggested more than a few changes to the overall layout, using all he could remember from the scale model in the foyer of the Visitors' Centre.

He was experiencing life in the eighth century first-hand and was surprisingly adept at the general day-to-day tasks such as milking the goats. He had even taken to attending early morning prayers.

Rose was sure that Gary wouldn't have thrown himself into his new life quite so quickly, if she hadn't been able to calm him down and had assured him that that the Doctor would be along to rescue them sooner or later; so, they may as well make the best of things while they waited.

This news had cushioned the shock to his system; and being treated like a visiting angel wasn't something Rose was going to turn down.

She knew in her heart that the Doctor would arrive... sooner or later.

It was however the best part of a month before she heard the familiar tones of the materializing time machine in the cornfield that would one day be the visitors' car park.

With a familiar squeak, the wooden door opened and revealed the Doctor and a smiling elderly monk looming over the Doctor's shoulder.

"We just had to drop off a couple of friends before I picked you up. I hope you don't mind."

Hiding her joy from her travelling companion, Rose said, "We've been here almost a month, Doctor. Honestly, for someone with a time machine, you really have no idea about time."

"You haven't been changing history behind my back, have you?" joked the Doctor. "I had this confused Viking to take home, but he seemed pleased enough to be back amongst his own people. And he did promise to give up on the pillaging and concentrate more on trade... so that's okay then."

"So, who was this other person you had to drop off?" Rose asked.

Smugly, the Doctor explained, "Oh, that was just your standard sentient time- and space-travelling sphere."

"Come again?"

The Doctor loved these moments: "That rock you touched... It was part of a couple who escaped the Time War."

"A couple? It was a rock. Was it a 'silicon life form'?" Rose grasped at a sci-fi reference in order to make sense of the Doctor's words.

"No, don't be silly, silicon life is incredibly rare. This was graphene life."

Rose was catching up: "So it was a couple? There were two rocks?"

"Yes, a couple... You know... a mummy and daddy, pair bond, lovers... that sort of thing. And they were attacked... out there." The Doctor pointed up, beyond the sky and towards the infinity of space. "They were split, and they fell through time onto the Earth. One of them could influence time and the other, space. Together they're quite formidable."

The Doctor looked off into the distance. "You know, strictly speaking, they shouldn't have been able come to Earth at all... Well, not after some bright spark time-locked this whole planet at the beginning of the War."

Rose knew when he was remembering the dark times in his life and touched his shoulder gently. "Doctor, sometimes I have no idea what you're talking about. So are Mister and Missus

Rock okay now?"

"Let's just say a shiny rock found its friend and they have gone back home, amongst the stars... to start again."

Novice Randal had heard the strange sound and came running from the other side of the buildings. He threw his arms around the old monk, before remembering his place and stood back, still contemplating the miracle of his master's return.

"Thank you. You truly are an angel," he whispered to Rose.

"Look Randal, we've talked about this... I'm no angel."

"That's true," said the Doctor.

"It is good to see you again, Brother" said Randal to the old monk. "We thought we had lost you forever."

The old monk smiled. "Don't worry, my son, it takes more than an angry Viking and a few magic journeys to take me away from my work."

"Do you still have the book, Brother?"

"Sadly, the book was destroyed... But we can still make another."

"How?"

The old monk simply held up his hands as if in prayer. "The Lord will provide." In the monk's hands, Rose noticed a Penguin edition of Bede's own famous history book.

"So how come me and Gary ended up here?" asked Rose.

"Well, the hemisphere in this time wanted to be with its partner in your time. It used your spare artron energy to shift itself through time... dragging you and Monkey Boy along in its wake." Gary had finally arrived, wheezing into view. "Rose tells me you can take me home in your magic box."

"Magic box?!" The Doctor appeared to be affronted. "There is nothing magical about it. It's simply a box that's bigger on the inside that can go anywhere and

anywhen. What is in any way magical about that?"

"So, you can take me home again?"

"If that's what you want, yes."

"Hell yes! I've got a classroom full of kids, and I've got so much to tell them. Now that I've experienced life as a real eighth-century monk first-hand... I'm the ultimate in living history."

"Well, let's get you home then. Into the TARDIS with you both."

Before the Doctor closed the door, he popped his head out for one last word: "Oh and Bede... One more thing... Try and check some of your facts, will you?"

After saying his goodbyes, Gary headed out of the thing he had mistaken for a portaloo and headed across the car park, up towards the Visitors' Centre. The genuine monk sandals made an odd scraping noise as he walked. Gary hoped that brother Randal would be happy with his Crocs and that the archaeologists wouldn't get too upset if they found them in their ditch.

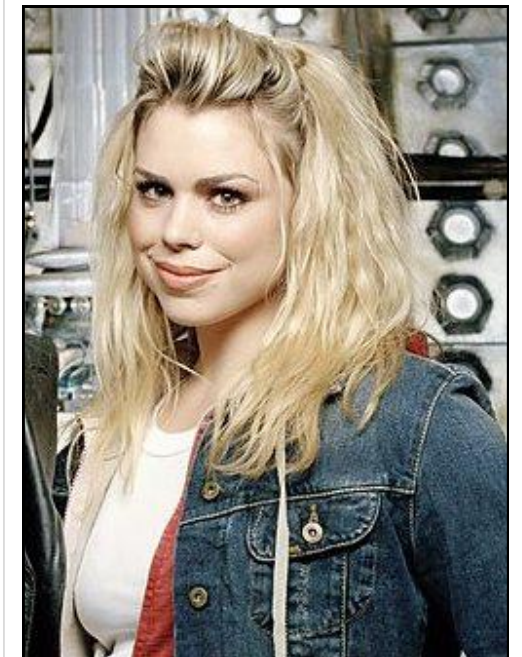
His head was full of new ideas about the things he wanted to teach the children – and according to the Doctor, the coach would be here in a few moments. "You look awful," said Doreen as Gary walked through the doors.

"This is one-hundred-per-cent authentic Dark Ages monk," replied Gary as he headed to the teaching room, full of new-found confidence.

Outside the classroom, Gary paused to look at the new exhibition – Marginalia, the marks made by monks on manuscripts, beside the columns of text. He stopped to read an information panel, which explained how these doodles had revealed new and exciting facts about life long ago. The most mysterious of them all was from Bede's history of the British people: a drawing of an angel

with a Saxon inscription, "Réðnes Heoruwearg." Underneath was the translation: "Bad Wolf."

Before setting forth on that inevitable journey, none is wiser than the man who considers – before his soul departs hence – what good or evil he has done, and what judgement his soul will receive after its passing. –Bede's Death Song



SECOND CHANCES

by Gary Merchant

Prologue: Reunion

She had been waiting nervously for some time. It was her own fault — she had arrived much too early and was still nursing the drink she had bought ages ago. She took in her surroundings. It was strange, she thought, coming back here; for The Inferno was the place where it had all started for her, all those years ago.

Of course, it was no longer called The Inferno. A number of years had passed since those heady days of the sixties. Now it was just one of many 'trendy' wine bars that had sprung up. It didn't even look the same.

Suddenly tonight didn't seem like a good idea. She downed the remainder of her drink and was about to leave when a familiar voice halted her, "Oi, Duchess! Where d'you think you're going?"

Her gaze led her to the top of the winding staircase, where a familiar figure looked down at her with a reassuring grin that said that everything was going to be all right. "Hello, Polly," said Ben Jackson. "Put the kettle on."

Memories

As he made for the bar to buy some drinks. Ben watched Polly return to the table she had almost vacated. It was weird, seeing her again; especially after all they had been through together. But he could well understand her caution, if only because he felt just the same. The difference being that he hid his concerns better. At last, with a drink in ei-

ther hand, he joined her at their table. "There you go, Pol," he smiled. "What shall we drink to?"

"Answers." Her reply was short and to the point.

Ben's cheeky grin was replaced by a frown. "Yeah. Answers," he agreed, sipping his beer. The atmosphere was becoming strained, and Polly was noticeably tense.

"Ben, I'm not sure this was a good idea." He shushed her. "Polly, all we're doing is going over old memories, and seeing if we can fill in some gaps." She shuddered at that word. "Now, calm down. No point in drawing attention to ourselves. Let's put our heads together, go over what we both know, and see where that leaves us."

She was calmer now and offered a smile. "That's what the Doctor would do, after all."

Ben nodded. "We learnt a lot from him. Let's see how much has rubbed off onto us. Polly, do you want to go first?"

"Not really, but here goes..."

She had been at a loose end after leaving Professor Brett's employ, so Polly was glad to have secured a job at London Television. The only dark cloud was someone who was a bit too smarmy for his own good. On her second day he had cornered her at the tea urn. "Well, who have we here?"

"Oh hello. I'm Polly," she replied.

"Polly, eh?" His charm was as oily as his hair. "What a pretty Polly you are. I'm sure we'll get on famously." He moved closer,

blocking any means of escape. "We're all friends here."

"I'm not sure I want to be that friendly." The cup in her hand offered her a way out, as she up-ended its boiling contents across his front.

"Arrgh!" He leapt back in shock. "You stupid girl." He looked down at his suit. "This'll take an age to clean!"

"Oh, I'm so sorry," Polly said innocently. "But you did make me jump." Nevertheless, she couldn't help stifling a giggle as he glared at her, then marched off in search of a dry cleaners', having lost all sense of dignity.

The other secretaries gave Polly a cheer as she returned to her desk. She smiled back and relaxed. "Who is that odious man?" she asked one of the girls.

"You don't know?"

She shook her head.

"That, Polly, is our 'roving reporter'..."

"...Harold Chorley?" Ben exclaimed. "Wasn't he the bloke on the spot when Central London was evacuated in '68?"

"The very same," Polly answered. "The thing is, once the emergency was over, and we were allowed back into work, Chorley was dashing around the office like a man possessed. He was trying to convince anyone who would listen to broadcast his story."

"What story?" Ben queried. "There was never anything in the papers?"

"I know, but he asked me to type up his notes." Polly reached into her handbag and pulled out a sheaf of papers. "These are copies I took at the time. Read the second page - about halfway down."

Ben did so. "... and on the scientific side were Professor Travers and his daughter, Anne. They were joined at a later stage by someone only referred to as the Doctor..." Ben smiled. "The wily old devil." He read on, taking in the references to the Yeti and the Great Intelli-

gence.

"Don't you see, Ben? That story couldn't be published due to security. Who would have believed then that Earth was under threat from alien invaders?"

"This Colonel Lethbridge-Stewart," Ben noted. "He's a brigadier now, isn't he?" Polly nodded. "Part of a top-secret military organisation."

It was as though a light flickered on in Ben's eyes. "UNIT!" Polly looked at him blankly. "I knew I remembered the name from somewhere. UNIT - United Nations Intelligence Taskforce."

He leaned across to Polly, conspiratorially. "While I was still in the Navy, I was transferred to a ship called HMS Reclaim," he explained. "We were stationed in the South of England, and we were asked to help out on a diving exercise. This bloke turns up dressed in fancy clothes, and gets permission to use our diving bell..."

"...Alright, Jackson. No hanging about."

"No, sir." Ben stood by with the other ratings, as the diving bell was manoeuvred over the side of the ship, then lowered into the sea, sinking slowly beneath the waves.

He couldn't help but notice the young girl staring helplessly as the diving bell sank further until it could no longer be seen. He strolled over. "You alright, miss?"

She looked up at him, smiling bravely. "Oh, I'm fine, thanks. Just a bit worried, that's all."

"About your friend?"

She nodded. "He's been in some tight spots before - well, we both have - but here," she indicated the water, "if anything went wrong..."

"Well, nothing will," he assured her. "These diving bells, they're safe as houses."

"Even so..." Their conversation was broken off as an alarm sounded, and the diving

bell began its ascent to the surface. "Why is it taking so long?" The girl was now very much concerned.

"They can't bring it up too quick," Ben explained. "All to do with the air pressure – look, here it comes!" The bell broke the surface of the water. Soon it was hauled up and manoeuvred back to the ship until it hung just a few feet above the deck. The girl ran across, dipping under the huge metal globe to enter the interior.

When she came out, her face was a white as a sheet. "He's gone," she said. "The Doctor's gone..."

"...And you're sure it was the Doctor – our Doctor?"

Ben shrugged. "It had to be. Sure, he had a different face, but we went through all that once before, Pol."

She put the memory of the Doctor's first regeneration to the back of her mind. "And you think they were part of this UNIT thing?"

"Definitely. Later on, I caught the girl's name – Jo Grant. Turns out she was a UNIT operative, not that she looked much like an agent. Nice though."

"And the Doctor?"

"Well, from what I heard, he was their scientific advisor; helping the Royal Navy to deal with some problem. We weren't given any details."

"But if the Doctor was involved, it had to be something big." Polly was deep in thought. "Isn't it strange how the Doctor's still a part of our lives after all this time?"

"Yeah, but we're still left with some gaps. Remember that day, Polly?"

"Ben, don't." She didn't want to relive this.

"Pol, we have to, if we're going to make any sense of it..."

"...Hey, Pol. Look!" A London Police Box

had been tied to a lorry, being driven away at high speed. Behind the departing vehicle were two men running after it. One was young, wearing a kilt, the other was older, dressed in a baggy frock coat. In other circumstances the scenario might have looked rather comical. But Ben and Polly could see this was deadly serious.

"Someone's stealing the TARDIS," Polly realised. "We ought to help, Ben."

"Yeah, you're right." They were still travelling in the Commandant's car, which was now taking them through Gatwick Airport, and away from the scene they had just witnessed. Ben rapped on the glass partition. "Oi, driver," he called. "Do a quick U-turn, will you. A couple of mates need our help."

There was no sign that the driver had heard. The car continued on its route.

Ben and Polly shared a worried look. "Something's wrong here, Duchess." He hammered on the glass. "I'm talking to you," he shouted. "Now turn back."

The driver reached forward and flicked a switch on the dashboard. With a click, the car doors were locked. Then a pungent smell began to fill the back of the car. "Gas!" The two friends quickly covered their faces with handkerchiefs, as Ben tried in vain to force one of the doors open. But it was no use. Within seconds the gas had overcome them both, leaving them slumped in the back seat of the car...

"...Ben, it was horrible!" Polly was shaking.

Ben placed a protective arm around her. "Polly, it's alright. It was years ago, and it's over."

"But we never found out who was responsible. Or why."

"Yeah, I know." Ben stopped short. "Hang about, I've just remembered something."

"What is it?"

But there was no immediate reply. "Come on, Duchess. We're out of here." Before Polly realised what was happening, Ben had grabbed her coat, draped it across her shoulders and led her out of The Inferno and into the cold evening air. "Ben, where are we going?" she asked, when he allowed her to catch her breath.

"Home, for now," he replied. "Tomorrow, we're off to the only place that could have the answers we need." In the back of Ben's mind, something had clicked.

Confession

...Ben was never quite sure how it had happened. One minute he and Polly were out to the world, the next thing he knew he was back on-board ship. He was relieved to find he had not been absent without leave. Apparently, he had returned to the ship in good time. But how? Discreet conversations with his shipmates had drawn a blank, and after a few days he was still none the wiser.

The only clue of sorts was a slip of paper tucked inside the lining of his cap. He had found this on the second day of his return. All the paper contained were a few words and a date. It wasn't much, but there had been times, he recalled with a smile, when the Doctor had had even less to work with...

Polly had been waiting outside Ben's house for some time. He had answered the door almost immediately but had asked her to wait. "Give me another minute," he begged. "I shan't be long." True to his word, it was barely a minute before he joined her outside, closing the door behind him. As he led her to his car, Polly noticed his old seaman's cap in his hand. "I had to ring a few people. Call in a few favours for the

address we need," he told her.

"What do you need that for?" Polly asked, indicating the cap.

"Something I should have remembered at the start," he replied mysteriously. "It's a bitter-sweet reminder of the old days." The car pulled away from the kerb side, as the two friends set off on their journey.

Polly looked at Ben. She could tell there was something wrong and he noted the look. "I s'ppose you ought to know – I didn't leave the Navy voluntarily. I was pushed."

"I don't understand."

"Nor did I, at the time," he continued. "I only found out later that I'd been made a scapegoat for someone else's mistakes. Nothing could be proved either way, but someone had to suffer. And that someone was me."

Polly felt wretched. "Ben, that's terrible. Couldn't you appeal, or something?"

Ben shook his head. "Not a chance. It was like everyone banded together against me. Even those who knew I was innocent. That's what really hurt – when I found out just who my real friends were. And d'you know what, Pol? None of them had the guts to tell me to my face. They just ignored me, as if I didn't exist."

"But surely, if they knew you were innocent...?"

"They weren't prepared to take the risk, in case they went down with me," Ben replied. "Like I said, they needed a scapegoat, and I was the one they picked."

Polly was shocked and could think of nothing more to say. The rest of the journey was made in silence, as the two friends wrestled with their own private thoughts. Thanks to the light traffic, within an hour they were parked outside a large, unobtrusive building. Ben

turned to Polly. "Look, I'm sorry about earlier. I just needed to..." "It's alright, Ben." Her expression was unreadable, but she offered an encouraging smile.

They looked up at the building and exchanged a glance. "Well, this is the place. Ready, Pol?"

She nodded. "As I'll ever be."

They exited the car and walked in step towards the imposing doors. A sentry barred their way. "Sorry sir, miss. This is a military training area. I'm afraid you'll have to move on."

Ben had been prepared for this. He pulled out a carefully folded slip of paper from his cap. He opened it up, and read the words written on it. "Tell Greyhound that Trap One is here."

The sentry hid his surprise well. "Just wait there a minute." He stepped back a few paces and spoke into his two-way radio, awaiting instructions.

Polly turned to Ben. "What was that all about?"

He smiled; his good humour now returned. "When I'd recovered from the gas attack in the car, I found I was back on-board ship. No one knew how I'd got there. But a few days after, I found this piece of paper in the lining of my cap." He handed her the paper and she read the message — 'Greyhound to Trap One'. "Now read the other side."

She turned the sheet over and read:

Ben, you may not need this for some time; but be sure never to lose it.

The note was unsigned. "Ben, you don't think..."

He shrugged. "I don't know, Polly. I honestly don't know."

The soldier turned away from the intercom and gestured to the now open doors. "You're to go straight in."

"Thanks," Ben smiled affably. The soldier chose not to return the smile.

Inside, a man in the uniform of an army colonel met them. "Colonel Crichton," he introduced himself. "How can I help you?" His tone was not unfriendly but guarded.

"My name's Ben Jackson, this is Polly Wright," Ben replied. "We're looking for Brigadier Lethbridge Stewart."

"Does he know you?"

"No," Polly admitted. "But you could say we have a mutual friend."

"I see." Crichton wasn't exactly being obstructive, but he seemed prepared to be less than helpful. "And how did you get that call-sign?"

"From the same mutual friend," Ben answered. 'This is like pulling teeth,' he thought. But if the positions had been reversed, he knew he would have been just as suspicious. So, he bided his time. "How did you know the Brigadier would be here?"

This question threw Ben slightly. "Well, this is UNIT. And he's the man in charge, isn't he?"

"Until recently." Crichton noted their confusion. "Brigadier Lethbridge Stewart retires from active service today," he explained. "You've arrived on the day of his official sending off."

"Blimey," Ben sighed. "Talk about cutting it fine."

"Quite." Crichton regarded the two people with a mixture of curiosity and amusement. "Can anyone else help?"

Ben and Polly exchanged a look. "I'm afraid not," Polly insisted. "It has to be the Brigadier."

"Very well," he decided. "This way." They followed the Colonel through a maze of corridors, until eventually, they arrived outside a laboratory. "He's in there, reminiscing with two of his former staff. If you'll excuse me?"

Crichton abruptly marched off, presumably in search of something better to

do, Ben decided. Through the door he and Polly could hear the sound of voices.

"...he'll be off in that TARDIS of his."

"Come on, sir. You'll be late for your own speech."

"And that would never do." The door then opened, and the man who was obviously the Brigadier came out from the laboratory, flanked by two other men. Though these two were dressed in civvies, to Ben they were definitely army types. "Hello, what's this? Friends of yours, Mike?"

"Nothing to do with me, sir."

"Nor me, before you ask, sir," answered the second man.

"Thank you, Benton." He turned to the newcomers. "Well, speak up!"

"Sorry," Polly apologised. "Are you Brigadier Lethbridge Stewart?"

"I am indeed." The Brigadier was curious. "And who might you be?"

"I'm Ben Jackson, and this is Polly Wright," Ben answered, for the second time.

"And what are you? Press? Autograph hunters?"

Ben was now at a loss to explain himself. He had come to UNIT with a barely thought-out plan of action. Now he and Polly were actually here, he wasn't sure what his next move should be. But it was Polly who broke the uneasy silence. "We know the Doctor," she blurted out.

This announcement brought a mixture of expressions from the three men. The Brigadier was the first to find his voice. "Do you now? I think perhaps we should continue this conversation somewhere more private." He turned to his associates. "Yates, see if my old office is free. Benton, see if you can obtain some provisions for our guests." The Benton spoke up. "Sir, haven't you for-

gotten something?"

Lethbridge Stewart looked at him blankly for a moment, then realised. "Good Lord, my farewell speech!" He turned back to Ben and Polly. "We'll talk later," he promised. "If you are telling the truth, we could be in for a rather long evening."

Shared Information

It was another two hours before the party broke up. After ensuring that Doris was driven safely home - with an assurance that he would join her later - Lethbridge Stewart headed back to his old office, where Yates and Benton were waiting outside. "Have they both signed the Official Secrets Act?"

"Yes sir," Benton replied.

"Good. Please come inside." Ben and Polly were waiting patiently. They had been glad of the food Benton had provided, aware that they had hardly eaten all day.

"Sorry to keep you both waiting," Lethbridge Stewart apologised. "Now, you must understand that none of this goes outside these four walls. Is that clear?" They nodded. "So, what's this about the Doctor?" Ben and Polly told him their story, relating their experiences, both together and individually. In return, the Brigadier obliged by filling in a few gaps for them about the Doctor's time at UNIT, without actually giving away details about specific cases.

When Polly handed over Harold Chorley's notes that Ben had seen hours before, a look of surprise passed across the Brigadier's face. It later transpired that Polly had held the only other copy of those notes. The originals, thought to be destroyed long ago, had instead been safely stored in the UNIT archives, in a file referred to as

'The London Event'.

"Well," the Brigadier declared, "from what you've said, it's clear to me that you did indeed know the Doctor and have certainly been aware of some of his later exploits. But that doesn't explain why you're here."

"Well, you could say it's a matter of memory," Polly replied. Lethbridge Stewart was no less enlightened. "You see, shortly after we left the Doctor and Jamie at Gatwick Airport in 1966, we were kidnapped."

"But you got away," the Brigadier assumed.

"That's what we don't know," Ben answered. "We were hit with some knock-out gas and passed out. The next thing I remember was waking up back on-board ship."

"And I woke up in my London flat," Polly chipped in. "But neither of us can account for the time in between."

Lethbridge Stewart considered their story. He'd heard more fanciful tales, which had turned out to be true. And with their connection to the Doctor, he could not dismiss this particular story. "Quite a mystery," he agreed. "And you thought you might find the answers here?"

"Either that, or see if the Doctor could help," Ben replied. "We both need to know what happened that day."

The Brigadier glanced at his watch and realised the time. "My word, it's getting rather late. Doris will be fuming - my wife, you understand." He seemed to reach a decision. "Look, I may have a proposition for you, but I can't go into details just yet. Would you be willing to meet me tomorrow morning, around 10.00?"

"I s'ppose so, but..." Ben was curious. "For someone who's just retired, you're taking a pretty active interest in all

this."

"A fair point, Mr Jackson," Lethbridge Stewart conceded. "But where UNIT and the Doctor are concerned, I find it pays to have, as you say, an active interest." He quickly forestalled any further questions. "Now, you've both given us a lot to think about. I hope you will keep the appointment." Somehow, without uttering a word, Ben and Polly felt they had already agreed.

It was close to ten o'clock when they arrived at the location the Brigadier had nominated. After receiving security passes, they were escorted to an opulently furnished room - it could hardly be termed an office, such was the vastness of it. The Brigadier - wearing civvies this time - and two others were waiting for them. "Glad you could make it." He set about making introductions. "You know Captain Yates, of course." He turned to the woman beside him. "I don't think you've met..."

"Ms Patricia Haggard." She shook hands with each of them. "Delighted to meet you both."

Morning tea had been arranged, so the next few minutes were taken up with small talk between the two groups. The Brigadier, Yates and Ms Haggard were deep in conversation, though only the slightest of whispers could be heard. Across the room, Ben and Polly took in their surroundings. "This is a bit of alright, eh Pol?" he whispered, more in awe than anything else.

"Absolutely," she agreed. "But what's it all for? What are we doing here?"

"I think we're about to find out."

Lethbridge Stewart indicated two empty chairs, and Ben and Polly took their seats alongside the main group. "Well

now, you two have proven yourselves to be quite resourceful."

Ben shrugged. "We were just in the right places."

"And in different times," Polly added. Both Yates and the Brigadier smiled knowingly, leaving Ms Haggard slightly left out of the joke.

"You said something about a proposition," Ben remembered.

"Ah yes." The Brigadier picked up two files from a side table. "We've been doing some checking on the two of you - just to clarify a few points." He read from the first file. "Ben Jackson. Joined the Royal Navy at eighteen. Served for ten years, until..." He glanced across at Ben. "Well, you know the rest."

He opened the second file. "Polly Wright. Attended secretarial college in London. Worked for Professor Brett, then on to London Television... I say, that business with Chorley and the tea. Was that really an accident?"

"Of course, it was." Her face was a picture of innocence, but there was a mischievous twinkle in her eyes, which the Brigadier noted, and approved of.

"Sorry if you think we're prying," he apologised, "but it's all a matter of security."

Yates entered the conversation. "The fact that you have, shall we say, other qualifications, would seem to make you ideal candidates."

Ben wasn't quite sure if he was hearing correctly. "You make it sound as though you're interviewing us for a job."

"I suppose we are," Yates admitted.

"Until recently," the Brigadier stated, "I've been in charge of UNIT. And although I've officially retired... well, to coin a phrase, UNIT looks after its own. "For some time, we've been working to create something new. Where UNIT

has been primarily concerned with the unknown, we've come to appreciate that not all life from other worlds seek conquest. To that end, Captain Yates will be in charge of a new section of UNIT in the field known as First Contact."

"And you want us to be involved in some way?" Ben realised.

"Well, we don't normally recruit from 'outside,'" the Brigadier stressed, "but you both have certain qualities which may be of benefit - to us and to yourselves."

Ben and Polly were at a loss for words. "We realise it's a lot to take in," Yates said. "And, Mr Jackson, the question of your discharge from the Navy would be investigated as a result."

At last Ben found his voice. "You could do that?"

"We have our methods," the Brigadier assured him. "You could be a great help to us. As for you, Miss Wright - well, I'll let Ms Haggard tell you more."

"I'm in charge of a new government backed organisation called P.R.O.B.E. - the Preternatural Research Bureau," she explained. "Our remit is to investigate unnatural, unexplained phenomena, anything which falls outside UNIT's expertise. After what I've heard from the Brigadier, I'd like to offer you a post in our investigations branch."

"Ms Haggard has already poached a former colleague of ours, in fact; a scientist from Cambridge," Lethbridge Stewart informed Polly.

"Who knows," Haggard suggested. "P.R.O.B.E. may have the facilities for you to investigate this memory gap."

Polly was still trying to get her head around all this. "I'm really not sure..."

"Hang on a mo'," Ben interrupted. "It's alright for me, I've got no ties. But you can't ask Polly to get involved in all this.

I mean, she's got commitments - a husband, for one thing."

"No, Ben." Her voice was barely audible. "I'm divorced. It's been almost three years now." Polly looked back at him; the others temporarily forgotten. "I'm sorry I couldn't tell you before. It's hardly something to bring up in conversation, and no one wants to admit that their marriage has failed. Even harder to bring the subject up in the first place. That's why I never mentioned it until now - there was never a right time."

"I suppose..." Ben gathered his thoughts. "I suppose there never is a right time - not that I'd know, Pol. I was too busy with the Navy at first, then afterwards... well, I wouldn't have been the greatest of company." Then Polly smiled at him. "Oh, Ben. Aren't we a pair?" And she reached for his hand. And he took it. Not out of romantic love, but from the purest and best of reasons. Friendship.

Yates and Haggard watched the proceedings with interest, while Lethbridge Stewart felt slightly awkward. He was on the point of breaking the mood when Yates stopped him. "Give them a few moments, sir," he suggested quietly. Haggard nodded her agreement.

Ben and Polly were still holding hands. "What a mess," Ben sighed. "Can things get any worse for us?"

"I don't know," Polly replied. "But they could get better. This job, for instance." Ben was undecided. "Pol, are you sure about this?"

"Ben, I don't know about you, but these last few days have been the best I've had for a long time, just like the old days." Her eyes were alight with excitement. "Like you, I've got no ties, no family to look out for. This feels like a

second chance for both of us."

"Well, when you put it like that..."

The Brigadier could see this was the right time to approach them. "Would it be fair to assume that you've made your decision?"

They turned to face him, and in that moment, he knew their answer. "Ladies, gentlemen, I think this calls for some sort of celebration."

"Er, no more tea for me, thanks," said Ben. "Any chance of a pint?"

Patricia Haggard never quite understood why everyone suddenly dissolved into fits of laughter.

Epilogue - Some Years Later

It was late in the evening, and a radar technician was coming to the end of his shift. He yawned and stretched in his chair, dreaming of a warm bed, when a blip appeared on the screen. Immediately alert, he double checked, then put a call through to the main office. Within minutes, Mike Yates had been informed. A first contact situation was confirmed. Except that it wasn't a UFO in the strictest sense.

When Ben Jackson joined Yates at the radar station, he had an idea of what was coming. And when he saw the picture on the vid-screen, his thoughts drifted back to the Doctor, Polly, and the coldest place in the world.

As far as Ben was concerned, it had happened over twenty years ago. It was about to happen all over again, but this time he knew what the outcome would be.

LOST CAUSES

by Robert John Cumming

Somewhere in The Tiberius Constellation

On board the vast neutron mining vessel known as *the Name Redacted*, stolen from the colony planet Arthur in the Tello Cluster, Tarakesk of the Selacavene sat steering the mighty ship through the dark cosmos heading to the Beacon, home world of the Existential Lampmakers with its artificial sun, its moon Onoskelis and the vast market known as the Floating Pavilion where he could barter for more fuel and oxygen credits, and of course deliver his prisoner to the Templars of Heavenly Discourse who would be crueller to the prisoner than the entire combined forces of the Selacavene Militia and Earth Empire could be.

The oxygen levels were currently at seventy percent, enough to get him to the Pavilion. He hissed as he checked the temperature: fifty degrees Fahrenheit; perfect for his cold blood. This temperature ran throughout the ship, except in the storage room of course, where the prisoner was cuffed to the service hatch. As he sat there, he pondered his predicament, his infamy as the only Selacavene to have ever been exiled, a fact which haunted his waking dreams. He often thought of his home planet of Sou'ra'tet in the Vrita Nebula, missing the Northern Quarter with its plush red meadows looking southwards to the southern towns and the Citadel of the Sisters. He missed the orange suns and the moon that illuminated the Eastern Rivers in the summer months.

His exile had been imposed after he

committed a crime that was comparable to murder, treason and heresy in Selacavene culture. It had not mattered that the crime itself had been committed to keep a tactical advantage, he had still shed his skin for a member of the human scourge - bringing shame on the entire Selacavene.

Before his exile, he had been the Lord General of the Militia, a high honour, which gave him the ear of the Empress herself. He had been victorious in the war against the fungal beings of Abholos, he had regained Thoon Tak Tar from the Galactic Enchanter and had, for ten years, led glorious campaigns against the Veptrigori, sworn enemies of the Selacavene leading to his exploits being mythologized in the minds of Selacavene youths. But now, he was spoken of in hushed whispers of ridicule, everything lost to him including his place above the stars in the heaven his people called the Coil.

He had been in exile now for seven years and in that time, he had seen and done many things, his job that of a bounty hunter and the "transporter" of dangerous, black-market cargo. He knew that his prisoner's associates would be after him, but he had no fear of them. What had brought him fear however, was the metallic wheezing sound he had heard and the cold breeze he had felt down his back. He knew of that noise, that wheezing, his people called it the sound of hope and fury.

South Dakota, June 14th 1876

The Sisco Kid was scared as hell. Mere hours ago, he had been in the Red River Saloon back in the small town of Nemo, South Dakota when the man dressed in strange fine clothes approached him, and dropped a sack of gold coins in front of him for his services.

It was no secret that he was the best Lakota Sioux tracker for miles around but normally, especially in recent months, his skills had been used in the service of the American army, who were desperate to keep hold of the Black Hills, without paying out any gold of course. The payment they offered him was his freedom.

Now, his hands were tied, along with those of the strange man he was assisting; the pair of them being led into the camp of *Talutah Kangee* as her people called her. She was a fierce Sioux warrior woman who had been made chief of her subgroup of Lakota Sioux. He had never seen *Talutah Kangee* before, although he had seen her and her tribe's handiwork; but he knew, as they approached the camp, that they were about to be introduced.

In the camp, he could immediately smell the unmistakable scent of buffalo, cooking over a small fire, as the remainder of her tribe ate and prepared for another attack on the unsuspecting US Army.

From a tent, a woman stepped out, and the Sisco Kid and the strange man were forced off their horses and made to kneel. Her hair was golden like the sun and her eyes glistened like rubies. She wore black war paint in a large V shape from eye to eye, while her forehead was simply decorated with a line of scarlet going straight down her face. She looked at the Sisco Kid first and then at his mysterious employer. Sisco's employer looked up at the Scarlet Crow and smiled.

"Hello Ace," he said. At this fierce warri-

or woman's face turned into a smile.

"Professor," she replied, "What took you so long?"

On board the *Name Redacted*

Tarakesk stood up and hissed as the doors of the blue police box opened and the Doctor, dressed in his habitual attire of an ivory safari jacket, Panama hat, white shirt, paisley scarf and carrying a question mark umbrella, stepped out followed by a fair-haired girl wearing a leather jacket. Tarakesk and the Doctor's eyes met as each recognized the other as a warrior and an outcast.

"Get off my ship trickster," Tarakesk hissed.

"Trickster?" Ace queried. "What is Monty Python talking about Professor?"

"Don't worry Ace," the Doctor told her.

"Tarakesk is right to be worried, I have stopped his race before, many times in fact, I remember Jamie and I once blew up their vessel while trying to stop a pretentious and rather clichéd invasion of Earth. But do not worry Tarakesk, this time I am actually here to help you."

"No games trickster," Tarakesk hissed angrily "I remember the events of *Eliseo Avok Ten*."

"Ah, you were there" the Doctor replied gleefully. "It's a shame that they exiled you a few months after that, they might be winning the war now, if they hadn't."

"They never should have taken *Pandora*, it is impossible to hold."

"Yes, especially when the enemy cheat and hire seven million Pontonese battle cruisers and six million Shlangi mercenaries. But enough small talk," proclaimed the Doctor, "What we are doing here is far more urgent than chit-chat about some ludicrous war."

"Ludicrous war!" Tarakesk shouted, "How dare you..."

"How dare I insult the might of the Selacavene race? Quite easily since you are no longer a member." The Doctor gave Tarakesk a piercing stare.

"What exactly are we doing here Professor?" Ace asked.

"Really Ace, you must pay attention" the Doctor told her. Ace recognized the disapproval in each word as he turned to look at Tarakesk once more. "You see Tarakesk my companion and I were enjoying a rather nice relaxing cup of tea in the Bellmox Café on Castillon Roe when we heard a rather unpleasant rumour that the Fourth Reich Schutzstaffel Movement were coming here to save their great and glorious leader."

"The F.R.S.S.M? Those would-be authoritarian imbeciles? They are weak; they cannot harm me."

"They can when armed with a Wallarian battle cruiser and temporal displacement rifles" the Doctor retorted.

"They have a Wallarian battle cruiser?"

"Yes" the Doctor told Tarakesk, "The Wallarian in question lost it in a game of Eight Card Stack."

"Wallarians will gamble," stated Ace. "I discovered that on *Iceworld*."

"Quite Ace, but we have more pressing concerns," replied the Doctor.

"Such as?" Ace queried.

"Such as the fact that this ship's radar seems to be indicating another vessel getting dangerously close to us," the Doctor declared, as Tarakesk turned his head to look at the radar screen. As he did, a small blast knocked the three of them to the floor. Tarakesk hissed in anger as he slithered back to his chair, taking evasive action as another blast hit the ship.

"I don't suppose we could reason with them?" Ace asked sarcastically.

"Reasoning with a Nazi is like asking a Dalek if he would mind not exterminating you," smiled the Doctor grimly.

"Neither scenario turns out well."

"What is it they want anyway?" asked Ace. "Just who is Sammy the Snake's prisoner?"

"De Flores" the Doctor replied.

Scarlet Crow's Tent

The Sisco Kid was shocked and somewhat relieved. The man who had hired him, who had finally introduced himself as the Doctor, was freed from his bonds and managed to get Scarlet Crow - or Ace as the Doctor had called her - to agree to spare his life; even so, as he sat cross-legged next to his employer, inside Ace's tent, the young woman staring intently at the Doctor, the Sisco Kid was very aware of the towering figure in war paint watching him intently and holding a Winchester 73 at the ready.

"I'm guessing he knows how to use that" the Kid finally spoke in his deep southern accent.

"Yes, all my men do; I taught them" replied Ace, without even looking at him. "But don't worry, they won't shoot you unless I tell them to. However, if he bothers you..."

This did not reassure the Sisco Kid in the slightest. Ace took out a small dagger and began toying with it against her fingertips, then she turned to look at the towering Sioux warrior above her.

"Mato Wi-Sapa, leave us" she ordered, and the giant warrior left, his hand gripping the gun tightly.

"Is it wise to send him away?" the Doctor asked.

"He'll stand guard outside, so we won't be disturbed. Now, what did take you so long?" Ace asked.

"Slight pinpointing problem" the Doctor admitted quite matter-of-factly, "I got the right year just the wrong location, I was forced to leave the TARDIS in the

while before he spoke.
“Talutah Kangee” he said. Ace looked at him with a stern expression, the one the Doctor had used on her more times than she could count.

“What does that mean?” Ace asked.
“Scarlet Crow,” the Indian replied, “You are the Scarlet Crow.”

Scarlet Crow's Tent

Burning. Burning. Always the burning first, then the screams that echoed throughout his head and made him want to break down in a pool of his own vomit and tears, at the horror behind the wooden house as it burnt, always burnt.

The Sisco Kid watched as Ace fiddled with her knife. She pricked her fingertip and didn't even flinch, smearing a small amount of blood on both cheeks before nonchalantly flipping the knife into the air and catching it, the blade pointing towards his sweating brow.

“I have heard about you Sisco,” Ace began to say, “from other Lakota tribes across the land - or rather, what is left of them. They call you *the Akicita Kangee*.”

“The Warrior Crow,” the Sisco Kid replied nervously.

She nodded, “And like the crow, you bring death in your wake. You have led the white man to slaughter my Sioux brothers and sisters across the land and you should die here today, at my hands.”

“Then why aren't I dead?” the Sisco Kid asked, a little courage growing in his stomach.

“I shall judge whether you live or die; but before I decide, I want to know why you have helped the white man, the soldiers, when you yourself are a wanted man who has killed many of their soldiers.”

The smell of smoke whined like a horse up

his nostrils as charred flesh cooked amongst the wood and the laughter of the soldiers echoed in his ears.

“I hate the soldiers of our supposed US Cavalry, who claim to fight with honour,” stated the Sisco Kid gulping slightly, “and yes, I have killed many of them. But if I hadn't helped them, they would have made sure I hung, back in the town of Nemesis.”

“You sold my brothers and sisters out to save your own skin, this doesn't make my decision in any way difficult, it just means your death will be more painful,” stated Ace. “Give me just one reason to spare your miserable life.”

The fire burnt, a blazing inferno as they rode off - the three soldiers of the US Cavalry.

“Scarlet Crow” the Sisco Kid began to say, “I was like the Sioux once, living off the land as a farmer, my hands were not used to firing a gun. I learnt real fast and became known as the Sisco Kid for a reason, a reason that has made lesser men take up the gun. I am only the best tracker of Sioux because my wife was a Sioux.”

The burning, the never-ending burning, and her scream as her once beautiful skin became the charred flesh of an abomination.

“Her name was Chumani Ska.”

“Dew Drops Bird” Ace stated.

“Yes. She taught me the language, the ways of the Sioux, we married with the blessing of her chief after I had earned the respect of the tribe. We married, had a child together. I held that child in my arms on only two occasions, the first was a few moments after she was born. The second, well...”

He always remembered their faces, the day he rode into town to collect some supplies and saw them whispering about him. He heard those two hate-filled words, 'Sioux lover'. He watched them without a care, he was the happiest man in the world until he rode back and saw the house burning.

“The three soldiers beat me up as I tried to stop them, one of them keeping my wife and my child inside. They forced me to watch. I saw my wife come running out screaming, her clothes on fire, carrying our new-born, trying to protect her the best she could, but her best wasn't good enough. They laughed before riding off. I watched as my wife died our child in her arms. I got up and took the child ready to dig their graves but when I held her, she was crying in agony, my beautiful child's face had been turned into an abomination by the flames.”

“Until then, I had always carried a gun on my belt but had hardly ever used it. On that day I used it and I have used it every day since.”

He held the child in his arms as the fire raged, his wife lay dead on the ground, her cries ringing in his ears as her perfect face had been destroyed forever by the flames of hatred. He lifted up his gun.

“I buried them together and spent the next two months becoming an expert with the gun. No lawman would ever arrest them, so I became judge, jury and executioner. I tracked them down and killed them, one at a time, and then after that, I just couldn't stop. That is why I betrayed the Sioux to save my own skin as you put it, because I wanted justice to end not with my hanging but with a swifter death, one which you can provide. So yes, kill me, please. I no longer care. I welcome death, it is the only

thing between me and my family.”
There was a silence. The Sisco Kid was sure he saw a tear running down Scarlet Crow's face. The silence was broken when the Doctor's head appeared through the curtain.

“Ace,” he said with a smile, “I have a plan, but we must attack tonight, and I need him alive.”

The US Cavalry Camp

The US Cavalry were camped five miles behind the tribes. Night had fallen as the Doctor, Ace and her tribe watched in anticipation as the Sisco Kid approached the camp. Two guards stood watching, waiting for a possible attack. They saw the man almost at once and aimed their rifles at him. Words were exchanged between the Kid and the guards, before one of the soldiers left, returning after a moment with two figures, whom Ace recognised as General Williamson and De Flores.

Ace watched as Williamson called his men to arms, two parties being made up. The first left the camp following the Sisco Kid, the remaining party stayed behind.

The Doctor smiled. “You see Ace” he whispered, “The General and his advisor always stay behind the lines, away from the danger.”

“OK, Professor,” Ace replied. “So, the Kid leads them into a trap, while we attack the rest.”

“Yes, and we start our part now. But remember...”

“No killing, understood Professor.”

Approaching from the rear, the Doctor and Ace, followed by half of her tribe, sneaked into the camp and awaited the signal. While they waited, the Doctor prepared the secret weapon, to Ace's bewilderment asking for saltpetre and

then producing lemons and vinegar from his seemingly infinite pockets. As she watched he cooked up his deadly brew - nitro-glycerine. The Doctor had even brought some ceramic containers to store it in.

The first warning was the sound of The Sisco Kid's horse galloping back towards the camp and then they heard three shots - the signal. The Doctor threw the nitro-glycerine container at the ground behind a group of soldiers, making sure to leave enough distance to ensure that they would not be injured, only scattered out evenly. The US Cavalrymen flew through the air and the Sioux charged, each one of them capturing a soldier. General Williamson stood alone and undefended, Mato Wi-Sapa picked him up with a firm hold, holding a knife against his back. The Doctor and Ace emerged from the smoke, the Doctor looking intently at Williamson.

"I suppose these savages are going to kill us?" the general asked in resignation. "No," the Doctor told him, "they will let you live on two conditions. First, you must leave and never return."

"You cannot be serious."

"Deadly serious General Williamson," the Doctor replied scathingly. "You are completely outnumbered, and the remains of your forces are being guarded by other tribe members. They shall not be released until you have left."

"So, it appears I have no choice?" Williamson agreed. "And the second condition?"

"De Flores, he stays and leaves with us."

"I don't think so Doctor," De Flores yelled from behind them. The Doctor and Ace turned in time to see De Flores fire towards the Doctor. The Doctor closed his eyes in reflex and heard two shots in quick succession. He opened his eyes again and took in the scene. De Flores lay dead a bullet between his

eyes. Ace rushed to the Sisco Kid, who was also on the ground, a bloody bullet wound oozing crimson.

The Kid looked up into her eyes, "Scarlet Crow," he whispered, "I lied. I am scared."

And life ceased in the Sisco Kid.

The House of the Sisco Kid

Four days had passed. Ace stood by the burnt-out house and couldn't help but be reminded of another house destroyed by fire - Gabriel Chase. She looked at the graves of the wife and child of the Sisco Kid and another, newly filled grave which lay beside them. She pushed the rough wooden cross into the dirt and stood silently for a moment in tribute to the man she had known for so little time. Turning she wandered over to where the Doctor was waiting for her on horseback, then lifting herself up onto her own horse, she looked at her friend. "What will happen to the rest of my tribe?" she asked in trepidation.

"Who knows? General Williamson will not return, his reputation has taken a knock or two. They shall live here a little longer - which is a gift to anyone and everything Ace. Now, come on, we have a TARDIS to get back to and more lost causes to fight for."

Ace gave the Doctor a sad smile, which he returned. As they turned and rode off into the distance. The name burned into the cross was caught in the rays of the setting sun...

The Akicita Kangee.

*The Warrior Crow,
Died for Justice.*

THE CONSPIRACY

by David Brookes

It started off as a simple sniffle, but by the time the Doctor was back on board the TARDIS (after a tricky diplomatic situation on the planet Bo-Mobo, where a major dispute between clans of elephant-sized Bo-Mobian hissing beetles over dung collecting rights had almost escalated to out-and-out civil war), it had developed into a full steaming head cold. Trumpeting into his hanky, the Doctor managed at the same time to guide the TARDIS shakily back to Mars, picking up his waiting travelling companions, Stacy Townsend and the inscrutable Ice Warrior, Ssard. The two of them had insisted on spending time on the Red Planet to sort out - as they called it - "personal matters"; but what kind of personal matters they were obliquely referring to, the Doctor could only begin to guess at. He'd made discreet enquiries of course, if only to find out if he could help at all, but they'd both been a bit evasive, secretive even. Well, the Doctor relented, they were both entirely entitled to their private lives so who was he to be so nosy? He left them both to it, promising to pick them up after he'd sorted 'beetlegate'.

As he welcomed them back aboard the TARDIS with an ear-blasting sneeze, they both expressed some concerns as to his health, noting he was looking a little 'peaky'. He told them he was satisfied that his functions and faculties were performing perfectly well thank you, and there was no need to fuss. However, after his two companions had retreated to their own rooms (in

some haste, the Doctor reflected) he could still sense that something wasn't quite right. Perhaps it had something to do with the mysterious box that Stacy had brought on board? "What's that?" The Doctor had asked. Stacy cradled the box in her arms, it was big enough to put a medicine ball in and looked just as heavy.

"Oh, just a few, you know, Martian rocks for Ssard's room. To remind him of home, that kind of thing."

The Doctor frowned. *Curious*, he thought, *but unlikely*. He didn't think Ice Warriors were that sentimental, especially about rocks. He wiped distractedly at the sweat gathering on his forehead. Stacy frowned at him. "Are you sure you're OK? You look wayyy pale."

"Oh, I'm as fit as the proverbial fiddle, just a little sniffle, that's all. Nothing to worry about."

Ssard sidled up. "Are you certain, Doctor?" he hissed. "Your nose is leaking peculiarly." The Doctor whipped out his hanky and quickly applied it to his offending proboscis, faintly embarrassed that his Time Lord immune system was letting him down.

"Don't worry," sniffed the Doctor. "Like I said, just a teensy-weensy cold. Will be gone before you know it." He pocketed his hanky. Stacy looked at Ssard and he shrugged.

"We should go. Lots to sort out," she said. "Just watch yourself Doctor. We need you healthy and well" (*'just watch yourself Doctor?'* What a peculiar turn of phrase the Doctor mused silently,

and then shook his head to clear it of such pernicious thoughts). Stacy lingered a moment, looking as if to say something more, but then with a signalled glance at Ssard they both turned on their heel and left the Doctor to his own devices. To punctuate this moment of sudden quiet the Doctor's nose let out a tremendous tornado-like sneeze causing him to stagger. He shrugged. He *was* being sensitive. This head cold had made him a bit impressionable. Perhaps Ssard really wanted to feel more at home in the TARDIS; and so what if he needed a few rocks? The Doctor decided that he was more than happy to let him do whatever.

So, *what next?* Ah yes! The Doctor rubbed his hands together vigorously, his beloved space/time capsule was long overdue a maintenance check, so what better time? He put all suspicious thoughts to the back of his mind, picked up his sonic toolkit and got down to brass tacks.

It was a short time later that the Doctor pushed himself away from the console on his wheeled creeper and sat up. He decided enough was enough; his head was spinning, and his face was feeling decidedly hot and clammy. He plucked off his gloves and welding goggles and saw, albeit ever so briefly, Stacy and Ssard re-entering the console room with their heads bent towards each other whispering conspiratorially. When they noticed the Doctor peering blearily at them, they quickly separated. "Doctor," said Ssard coming towards him and helping him to his feet. "You do not appear well. Perhaps you need some rest? Stacy and I can observe things here whilst you recuperate."

Stacy agreed, adding that she had seen more colour on a sugar cube, and ordered the Doctor to bed. "I'll only wake

you if the universe is exploding to death or something" she said, and no, she would brook no argument. Between her and Ssard, they guided the Doctor off down one of the TARDIS corridors. He put up a half-hearted fight of protest (he *was* feeling very tired, and his head was whirling like a top) until he was gently but firmly placed in a cot situated in one of the many TARDIS living areas. Stacy tucked him in tight and promised she or Ssard would, "keep an eye on him." (*Was that another turn of phrase laced with something other than thoughts of his wellbeing?* the Doctor groggily ruminated). When both Stacy and Ssard departed, the Doctor lay semi-awake in the half-light mulling it over, his body tingling with cold and sweat, wondering what was bothering him so much. Oh, how his head hurt! But even the pain in his skull wasn't impervious to the soporific rhythmic hum of the TARDIS inner workings, coaxing him ever closer to the void of sleep. It was true, he thought, his eyes slowly closing. He wasn't feeling himself; it *had* been a long day and he was totally exhausted and not thinking straight. Grudgingly, his eyes shut and finally he slept.

The Doctor awoke suddenly from the smog of a particularly anxious dream and smack-bang into the confusion of sudden bleary-eyed wakefulness. It was a period shadowed by the faint suspicion that all was still not quite right. *What was this?* The Doctor furrowed his brow. *Where is this feeling coming from?* And then he heard the sound of whispered voices.

His sat upright and looked about himself. The light was still low, and the voices had stopped, for now. Perhaps it was all part of the fever dream he'd had. But no, there they were again! He could hear faint murmurs, and it

seemed to be coming from the floor. The Doctor glanced down and saw a small ventilation panel set just above the floor in the wall next to him. He bent down and listened closely at the opening and could just about hear the low sibilant hiss of Ssard's voice. The Doctor leaned in close, straining to hear the words. Ssard was saying "...and the Doctor will never be the wiser. We must act fast, before he awakes."

The Doctor frowned, confusion etching his face. *Mutiny? On board the TARDIS?* He strained to hear Stacy's response but all he could make out were a few broken words, tuning in and out like a radio. "...When he least expects... suspicious... won't suspect a thing." The Doctor, holding his still pounding head in his hands, sat cross-legged on the floor contemplating this new revelation. What were they planning? Had this been going on a while? Had they made new alliances since their trip to Mars? Were they working for someone else? Were they *spies*??

The Doctor paused in thought. How much did he *really* know his companions? They had travelled together for a while but compared to others it wasn't very long at all. Had he perhaps put his trust in the wrong Ice Warrior? Was Stacy a willing accomplice? No. He shook his head. He was always a good judge of character. Wasn't he? Damn this cold, his head hurt!

His mind rolled over and over with the possibilities of betrayal. Sure, they had their differences but the three of them had already been through a lot together. No! He pulled himself upright, he *must* be mistaken. It just couldn't be, not Stacy and Ssard! He decided to confront them and find out what the truth was. Rising to his feet shakily, the Doctor walked over to the door and tried the handle. It was locked! He

patted his coat pockets and suddenly it dawned on him that his sonic screwdriver wasn't there. They must have taken it from him *knowing that he'd try it on the door!* So, that's that then. They'd purposefully locked him in there. Suddenly he was gripped by a loud sneeze which quickly accompanied the thought, '*well, they'll definitely know I'm awake now*'. He sniffed. This situation did not feel good at all. '*Think Doctor, think!*'

As he leant against the door pondering his situation, a slight movement in the corridor outside made his ears prick up. From the lightness of the tread the Doctor calculated it had to be Stacy. *How light on her feet she is!* he contemplated. *Quiet, like the proverbial thief.* The Doctor dived back on to the cot and feigned sleep just as the door was quietly unlocked and Stacy's head appeared around the doorway. "Doctor?" she hissed. "Are you awake?"

Deciding it was best to play it innocent, the Doctor pretended to yawn and stretch on the cot. "Is it that time already?" he sat up. "My, I feel very refreshed."

"Good, quick! You gotta help me! It's Ssard! I think he's flipped!" The tone in Stacy's voice convinced the Doctor she was most likely lying.

'I'd best be careful, maybe I can talk my way out of this'.

"Hurry! He's in the control room" she added.

"Then that's where we'll go!" The Doctor sprang down the corridor to the console room, with Stacy a few steps behind him trying to keep up.

The Doctor half-skidded half-fell into the console room, sneezing. He looked up through bleary eyes, quickly realising the room was in total darkness. "What's happened to the lights? Stacy?" He turned around only to discover

that Stacy was now not behind him. She must have somehow circled around. "Come out and stop with these games" the Doctor shouted. "Let's talk!"

All at once time seemed to slow down. From out of the swirling darkness there came a hideous hissing laughter. What was this cat and mouse game? Had he walked into a trap? Why did his head pound so? And why can't I stop blasted sneezing! He guessed that the lights being off meant that they had somehow tampered with his TARDIS. How dare they mess with his beloved machine! '*Conspiracy*', his mind shrieked! His face was hot, his legs felt like they were going to give way. He reeled around in the darkness trying to pinpoint his location, but the floor tilted, and his vision swam.

Suddenly the lights snapped on, and caught in the full glare was Ssard, standing upright by the console, swaying slightly. The Doctor peered at him. There was something metallic looking and cone-shaped sticking out of the top of his head. He could also make out what looked like a wire running from the device to Ssard's head. '*So that's it!*' the Doctor gasped, '*A mind control device!*' His thoughts although hazy and indistinct were nonetheless coalescing around this explanation for Ssard's strange behaviour. Of course! Now, it all made sense.

As the Doctor watched, Ssard's thick, mighty arms stretched out towards him. Through watering eyes, the Doctor could discern in Ssard's pincers a box-like weapon of some sort being pointed directly at him. '*Sonic weaponry?*' He wouldn't put it past an Ice Warrior. Suddenly, a loud rasping sound pulled the Doctor's focus from Ssard, and he turned around to see Stacy with a long, yellow and tubelike thing stick-

ing out of her mouth, flapping about noisily. The Doctor cursed at the revelation. This would also explain Stacy's odd behaviour. '*An alien parasite!*' The Doctor squinted at the thing but as quickly as it had leapt out of Stacy's mouth the snake-like tendril rolled right back in. So, the Doctor reasoned, an alien entity of some kind has control over Stacy, and probably Ssard too. No wonder they were both acting oddly. This would explain *everything*!

"So, what's this?" the Doctor challenged, steadying himself against the console. "Some kind of invasion?"

There was that rasping noise again, and the tube creature whipped and flapped insistently. '*Was it a message? Some kind of ultimatum? Why wasn't the TARDIS translating? Why did he feel so, so odd?*' The light caught the metal cone atop Ssard's helmet causing a dazzling spectrum of lights to flit across the Doctor's eyes.

"Doctor? I'm sorry to do this to you in your present state," said Ssard, lurching towards him. The Doctor couldn't agree more. He really was in no condition to defend himself. At least, he realised, he had stopped sneezing.

As Ssard approached, the Doctor was relieved to find that his eyes were slowly clearing. Also, the fog that had gathered in his mind was slowly beginning to dissipate. Thankfully, and without his realising it, the Doctor's immune system was in the final throes of conquering the tiny ravenous beast that had lodged in his body; a particularly debilitating but thankfully short-lived Bo-Mobian flu virus.

During this moment of blossoming clarity - in no small part due to the Doctor's recovery - what he thought was a wire connecting the mind control device to Ssard's head was not a wire at all but was in fact... string! Elasticated

string! He blinked. Sure enough, what the Doctor had first perceived as a mind control device now gradually resolved itself into a... what? A hat? Yes, a hat. A cocked multi-coloured party hat, strapped to Ssard's scaly head. '*What on earth??*'

The Doctor looked down at Ssard's weapon, only to find himself staring at a pair of green pincers on top of which were a couple of carefully balanced yet colourfully wrapped giftboxes. Definitely not any kind of weapon at all. "I believe we wish to congratulate you on your birthday Doctor" Ssard hissed. The Doctor was shocked into total confusion. He could have sworn Ssard's cheeks were turning a shade of pink through his proud warrior green. Stacy's party favour (not some alien snake-like parasite after all!) was rasping again loudly in the Doctor's face. Grinning like a loon, she planted an equally lurid party hat on top of the Doctor's head.

"But... but... but," the Doctor stammered, desperately trying to steer his runaway train of thought into the metaphorical station and calming the screaming passengers down. Thank goodness the effects of his head cold were fast diminishing. "But it's *not* my birthday" he declared weakly.

Stacy grinned. "Well, we figured you travel in a time machine, soooo technically your birthday could be either yesterday, today or tomorrow. So, we picked today. Ssard has even made a cake"

"*With those hands?*" the Doctor grimaced at the thought. Stacy lifted up the heavy-looking mysterious box that she'd carried into the TARDIS earlier and placed it flat on the console. Opening the lid, the Doctor peered inside and saw a large blue cake in the shape of a battered old police box.

"And we have got you presents!"

squealed Stacy, nodding at Ssard.

The Ice Warrior extended his arms again. "I think you will enjoy these offerings," said Ssard po-faced.

"Oh, and you must have dropped this when you were fixing the TARDIS" Stacy handed him his sonic screwdriver. "I know you can't bear to be parted with it." She winked. The Doctor slipped it in his pocket rather shame-facedly.

"Thanks," he muttered. "You know, for a while back there, I could have sworn you two were out to get me. I think you were right Stacy. I really wasn't well. That cold, or whatever it was, really had affected me more than I realised. It must have made me think all kinds of crazy paranoid thoughts." He paused, just suddenly remembering. "Or maybe not? You did lock me in a room!"

Stacy blushed. "Sorry, just a precaution. We didn't want to spoil the surprise as we were getting the stuff ready. Didn't mean to freak you out. Speaking of which," Stacy narrowed her eyes at Ssard, "You almost gave the game away earlier Ssard, what with your creepy laughing," she scolded.

"I could not help myself," said Ssard defensively. "It was a devious plan, it amused me." He paused reflectively. "I think I may have imbibed a little too much Nog."

"Nog?" The Doctor looked down to find Stacy had already slipped a glass in his hand. "Ah, Nog." He took a sip and tried not to screw up his face. "Mmm. Delightful. Um, can I ask," he was still a little nonplussed, "Why did you do this?"

Stacy shrugged. "You're always doing nice things for everyone else. How many times do nice things happen to you? So, we decided to throw you a party."

"Just the two of you?"

"Nottttttt exactly" said Stacy, with a mischievous grin. "Our time on Mars was well spent, um, doing... this!" With a flourish Stacy flicked on the TARDIS monitor. It lit up and the Doctor almost dropped his cup of Nog, his head decidedly clearer now thanks in no small part to the spectacle laid out before him. Filling the whole screen were faces, a lot of faces, smiling faces, joyful faces, of friends and fond acquaintanc-

es from so many times and places, all of them smiling and so happy to be part of the party. As one they all raised a glass to the screen in a toast. "To you, Doctor!" they chorused.

For a man who's always running towards danger, the Doctor had for once in his life run out of words. So, he just nodded, and smiled, a smile that lit up his face brighter than any star.



TIME ON HER HANDS

by Paul Burns

"So, a signed David Bowie album. Ink still fresh on it. How much do you think you'll get for it?" Graham looked up from his prized possession and glared at Ryan.

"First of all, it's signed to Graham, you doughnut. Secondly, I would never ever sell this, even if we were living in cardboard boxes and having to eat our own clothes to survive." He picked up Ryan's phone and looked at his playlist. "Well, you've got someone called Dave on here, but it ain't Bowie. Educate yourself!"

Ryan snatched his phone back. "I heard some of that stuff in the Blitz Club. It was... weird."

Graham threw his arms up in exasperation. "I give up! For your information Ryan, weird is good! Am I right, Doc?"

The Doctor emerged from behind the TARDIS rotor with a handful of cables and a quizzical expression. She wrinkled her nose. "Absolutely! Weird is all I know. It's the new normal. What isn't normal and is a bit weird is having Chameleons loose in your TARDIS and they start pulling everything apart because it all looks a bit interesting. Can someone give me a hand?"

Yaz smiled and took some of the cables from the Doctor. "Have to be quick," she said. "I'm on duty in an hour, and it's going to be pretty tricky telling the sarge I'm late because I was helping my alien friend clean up her time machine from a mess some shapeshifters left behind, after we met David Bowie back in the Eighties."

"Excellent summing up, Yaz." said the Doctor approvingly, humming Space Oddity to herself.

"Seriously though," whispered Yaz to the Doctor, watching Graham and Ryan bickering. "Meeting David Bowie meant so much to Graham. I haven't seen him cry like that since Grace's funeral. This ship, and you Doctor, are amazing."

The Doctor felt slightly uncomfortable at Yaz's praise. "Well, we also stopped an invasion by the Chameleons." she added, with an air of efficiency.

"Exactly." replied Yaz, softly. "We get to do everything, and I never want it to end."

Later, the Doctor sat on the steps around the TARDIS console and sighed, she was alone, the Fam were gone. It didn't used to be like this, in the past there was a constant second presence in her ship. Susan, Jo, Sarah, Leela, Romana: all constant companions, satisfied with giving up their previous lives to travel with her. The universe used to be enough, but now it was all shifts, family therapy and bus driver poker nights. The Doctor mused to herself: "Suppose I could sanitise the whole sick bay; or feed the parrots in the Rainforest room. Maybe rearrange the entire library; at the very least wipe all the books down from the Chameleon fingerprints on them. Or actually remove the bits of their fingers stuck to them..." She stopped. "OK, talking to myself again, so used to exposition. I'm

now my own commentary. I'm a Blu-ray extra!"

The Doctor hovered at the door of the library. Looking in, she sighed at the disarray the Chameleons had left behind, with treasured books scattered on the floor. "It's times like this I miss Nardole," she mused.

She grimaced at the small traces of charred Chameleon flesh imprinted on the dust jackets. She bent down and picked up a book discarded at the entrance to the library. "Aww, not the first edition of *The Philosopher's Stone*," she wailed, scraping the flaky residue from the book. "Never mind, no such thing as magic!"

She slowly closed the door of the library and regarded the room next to it. She always found it pleasing these two rooms, situated side by side, were labelled 'Words' and 'Pictures'. She reached for the door handle to the Pictures Room.

The room mysteriously held no pictures at all. Indeed, it was in darkness, but as the Doctor took two steps into it, a spiral staircase appeared, with steps leading down into seemingly endless inky blackness. She climbed onto the staircase and began her descending journey. Time in its relative concept could not be measured on the staircase, but the Doctor reached the bottom eventually, where she stood in front of a wall, with white slits of light imbedded in it. The Doctor smiled as she approached the glowing slivers of light, which illuminated her face, highlighting the delight in her wide, expressive eyes. "Earth, 1960's," she said, excitedly. "Back to the beginning. Sort of." She selected one of the tablets by touching its protruding base, which

caused it to eject from its slot. The Doctor looked at the thin white tablet in her palm. She gently brushed her thumb over it, and suddenly an image flickered into view. In front of her stood a young dark-haired girl, her holographic glow casting a ghostly light on the newly revealed roundels on the surrounding walls.

"But Grandfather, why Earth? The whole universe and you have chosen Earth to settle?" The form of Susan stood before the Doctor. She remembered the conversation, word for word, and didn't need the TARDIS databank to remind her. A familiar crotchety voice filled the room:

"Why child, you need friends of your own age, and these humans seem kind, on the whole." The Doctor, slightly entranced, mouthed along with her former self:

"It is also a perfect opportunity to study the humans, and to find out exactly what they are teaching their children in this school you are going to." The Doctor smiled at Susan rolling her eyes.

"They are hardly going to teach me anything I don't already know, Grandfather." The Doctor furrowed her brow and aped the annoyance of her former self.

"And it will be a perfect opportunity for you to learn some humility young lady!" he snapped. The Doctor smiled to herself. "Always so grumpy!" She tilted her head. "And sneaky, I never did let on about the Hand of Omega."

The Doctor lovingly traced her hand around the outline of the face of Susan's hologram and she yelped as it suddenly fizzed and disappeared. "No, no, no..." she said, scrambling to a large

databank next to the stored tapes. She closely examined the many cables and wires contained in the large container. Nothing seemed out of place. She ran her sonic screwdriver over it but still, nothing. "Must be a glitch on the actual tape," she said to herself.

"Or perhaps it's the TARDIS telling you that you do not belong here young lady." The voice chilled the Doctor as she turned from the databank and looked at the hologram of her original form. It was directly addressing her. "Oh, that's weird. And a bit impossible." She gulped.

"What are you doing in my library?" the First Doctor demanded.

"Well," answered the current owner of the TARDIS. "I'm actually in *my* library too, and you should be a recording, and definitely not alive."

"Poppcock!" the First Doctor snorted. "You appeared out of nowhere as I was writing my journal."

The current Doctor smiled broadly. "The dusty book!" she said, running to a shelf and pulling out a large leather-bound book. She blew the dust off, making her sneeze. "The book! Blimey, not written in this for ages. It was all about the book when I was younger." She tilted her head slightly to look at the First Doctor. "...I mean older, I mean, younger me now looking at older me years ago."

The First Doctor looked furious. "Young woman, have you been hit on the head? You are talking nonsense."

The current Doctor proudly displayed the book. "Arriving on Earth in the Sixties with Susan, meeting Ian and Barbara, never getting Ian's name right, that wasn't forgetfulness, I was just teasing him. I was always a bit cross he thought he knew more than me because he was a teacher. Well, that, and the fact he

called me Doctor Foreman. Then: cave-men, Daleks, Marco Polo, oh I would love to see him again, and giant ant creatures...love a giant ant on two legs...!"

"Enough!" scowled the First Doctor. "My book is here, exactly where I left it. How do you possess it? Who are you?" The current Doctor smiled. "Oh, I know that look. Furrowed brow, barely containing your anger, at the same time trying to navigate the unmapped paths to find solutions. Million things in your head jostling for position, and you've probably already thought of a load of ways to defeat me. Keep saying 'your' when I mean to say 'our'. Listen to this." She turned to the last page in the book and read aloud. "My time is drawing to an end. I can feel it. I won't alarm Polly or Ben. They know nothing of what is about to happen and that is right and proper. I do not want them fussing."

The First Doctor's face dropped. "Child, I have just written those words..."

"I remember them well," replied the current Doctor. "Just before I went to the South Pole."

"How extraordinary. I have just set those coordinates," whispered a confused First Doctor, shaking his head.

"It's not the end. It's the beginning," the current Doctor urged. "So many lives, so many brilliant, dangerous, heart-breaking but glorious years ahead. Until... me."

"You... are my replacement? Is that true?" asked the First Doctor, raising his eyebrows in horror. The current Doctor had tears welling in her eyes.

"Cross my hearts... Oh Doctor, I love the book, but all these tapes contain everything that happened since we arrived on Earth. Once I realised the TARDIS was backing everything up,

keeping a living record, I stopped writing. Left me more time, which is always handy. But I kept the book. Treasure it. Always will."

The First Doctor laughed. "What glorious nonsense. I don't believe a word of it! This is a trick! It's a plot by the Monk. Yes, that's it, the Monk living up to his Meddling moniker!"

The current Doctor's sonic screwdriver beeped in her hand, and she peered back into the databank. She picked her way through a bunch of dark wires and smiled in satisfaction. "Gotcha!" she exclaimed, as she produced a fizzing cable. Attached to the end was a small, fat green insect.

"Satenser!" she said, removing the wriggling parasite from the cable. "The Chameleons must have brought it in with them. Chewed through one of the cables and brought you here from my past. These things are always meddling with time and this one discovered the TARDIS is full of delicious time energy. Funny, how many times do people watch videos of the past, with lost loved ones, wishing they were able to climb into the footage and join them? That's kind of what's happened here, but it must never happen because the Satenser feed off artron energy and rip holes in time. And the more holes they create, the more likely the universe could be destroyed." She looked at the First Doctor who was giving her an incredulous stare.

"Soon as I put this worm in a stasis lock, time will revert, and our link will be broken." She held the book to her chest and warmly smiled. "Don't be afraid. It's so not the end. I won't lie, it will hurt... a bit... well, a lot actually... but nothing lasts forever. Well, apart from us."

"I sense no malevolence in you, child." the First Doctor sighed, holding his lapels. "I think you're a bit confused, but you are firm in your belief that you are part of my future and that is something I will have to accept. As for being scared, I have always said: fear makes companions of us all, and I believe that is what you are, a companion, a companion from my future." The current Doctor froze, unsure of what to say.

"Just one question." the First Doctor said, fixing his gaze on the suddenly uncomfortable current Doctor.

"Susan... all of my friends... are they safe?"

The current Doctor laughed through her tears. "Typical Doctor, making sure everyone else is OK. Yes, Doctor, I promise, everyone is safe."

The current Doctor returned her book on the shelf next to the databank. She took her sonic screwdriver from her pocket and waved it over the Satenser, trapping it in a stasis lock.

"My word, child, what is that extraordinary device?" he said, peering at the sonic. But the current Doctor had no time to reply. The Satenser had been disabled, and the rip in time repaired. The First Doctor was no longer visible. "Never said goodbye." she said sadly. "Quite right too. Silly old buffer."

The Doctor wiped her eyes and looked at the Satenser. "Luckily, you guys are solitary, only like your own company, unlikely any more of you will be in the TARDIS but it can't hurt to do a total-systems check." She hesitated. "Blimey, I must be lonely, I'm talking to a worm." She placed the frozen Satenser in her pocket. She took the tablet containing the First Doctor and Susan's holograms and returned it to its small storage compartment in the wall of tapes.

She looked admiringly at her collection. The TARDIS had always automatically recorded everything that went on within it, which the Doctor had sometimes thought a waste of time, as she had always considered her brain the ultimate storage unit. But over time, she found it was comforting seeing her old friends once again, without the risks involved in fixed-point time travel. She never thought she would get to have a conversation with her original self, and she had to come to terms that it was a one off. Her former selves should never exist in the same place at the same time, even via an old hologram tape powered by a Satenser.

The Doctor sat down in front of her collection of stored memories, neatly displayed on the slightly dusty tapes, in as chronological order as her life would allow. All the ephemeral moments shared with her chosen family on board her ship, recorded since that theft on Gallifrey. Those brief snatches of time, always limited and never constant, captured forever. There were gaps, Liz Shaw, who never joined her in the TARDIS, the reticent Mike Yates, and a mysterious time-tablet which had contained data, but had been wiped. It was an impossible mystery which the Doctor always intended to investigate, and perhaps, now, with time on her hands, this was the perfect opportunity. She gently pulled the tablet out, nestled between Amy Pond and Bill Potts, and stared at it.

Suddenly, a telephone rang from upstairs. "Knew I should have put in an extension down here." the Doctor sighed. "Maybe another day my little blank slate," she said, replacing the tablet. She started her journey back up the spiral staircase. She raced into the room holding the TARDIS control console and reached under it to pick up the

receiver, blowing a layer of dust away. "Another job, clean the phone!" she whispered to herself as she put the receiver to her ear.

"Doctor?" The Doctor instantly recognised the woman's voice.

"I thought you guys were off the radar. This is a blast from the past. Or is it a call from the future?" There was slight pause at the other end of the phone before the caller spoke again.

"This is hugely important, Ms Oswald, I need to speak to the Doctor."

The Doctor echoed the caller's obvious confusion. "Oswald? Where have I heard that name before?" she said to herself. before returning to the conversation with the unexpected caller. "You're speaking to the Doctor." There was silence on the other end of the phone. The Doctor smiled and began tinkering with the TARDIS console, preparing to set coordinates.

"Now, Kate Stewart, what's going on?"



FORMATION—EPISODE 2

A Script by Paul Ebbs

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

The PLANE is still making emergency manoeuvres, THE DOCTOR crawls to the console and hits a couple of controls and the room stabilizes. He stands up.

PRIME PILOT: (getting up): What are you doing? Don't touch that!
THE DOCTOR: Ok.

THE DOCTOR hangs onto the console and flicks the switch off, FLEET and many others are thrown off their feet again as the plane heels.

THE DOCTOR: Or shall I leave the compensators on?
PRIME PILOT: Alright!

THE DOCTOR flicks the controls and the control room settles again.

PRIME PILOT: Now move away. (pointing at a GUARD): You! Cover him!

The GUARD is a bit dizzy but covers THE DOCTOR with his crossbow. THE DOCTOR moves away from the console.

THE DOCTOR: There's only a small amount of residual energy in the TARDIS systems, I don't know how long I can keep the TARDIS internally stable.

FLEET pushes THE DOCTOR away from the controls.

PRIME PILOT: Touch nothing.
THE DOCTOR: (pointing): Fleet, Press that button there.
FLEET: Why?
THE DOCTOR: It'll show us what's going on outside.
PRIME PILOT: We know what's happening outside. We're being attacked!
THE DOCTOR: How many times do I have to tell you? The dragons could have burned you out of the skies years ago! Stop attacking them and do what they want--

FLEET operates the control and the screens show the battle outside.

EXT. SKY. BREATH OF FIRE. - DAY

Many formation fighters are engaging the Dragons, some getting burned up-- Dragons howling as lines of bullet holes appear along their flanks.

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

THE DOCTOR stares at PRIME.

THE DOCTOR: --before they get bored and burn you all to cinders.

PRIME thinks, looks at PRIME.

FLEET: Prime Pilot?
PRIME PILOT: We're busy fighting a war here

THE DOCTOR picks up the microphone from the radio-set, holds it out to PRIME.

THE DOCTOR: Prime, call off your fighters. The Dragons will stop attacking if you do. They are herding the formation. They are not attacking!
PRIME PILOT: Then what are they doing?
THE DOCTOR: They will stop if you stop. Give the order Prime. For once in your life act rather than react!

EXT. SKY. BREATH OF FIRE. - DAY

A phalanx of fighters about to drop on the Dragons.

PRIME PILOT: (O.S. radio FX): Abort, abort, abort.

The planes pull out of the dive, the Dragons not fired upon.
The LEAD DRAGON flies alongside the BREATH OF FIRE. It shoots a stream of fire away from the plane, but it's clear what it is. It's a new heading for the formation.

THE DOCTOR: (O.S. radio FX): Give the order Prime. That's a new heading.
PRIME PILOT: (O.S. radio FX): It could be a trap!
THE DOCTOR: (O.S. radio FX): What have you got to lose man?
PRIME PILOT: (O.S. radio FX): New heading. Follow the Dragons.

The LEAD DRAGON breaks for the new heading, joined by her cohorts, and the Formation begins to turn.

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

While THE DOCTOR has been intent on PRIME and the screen, FLEET has been turning more stopcocks in the panel on the console. THE DOCTOR

realises what she's been doing.

THE DOCTOR: Fleet! No! Stop!

There's a finality to a BOOM from within the TARDIS. PRIME'S paranoia bubbles and he moves toward the TARDIS door.

PRIME PILOT: What's happened?
THE DOCTOR: That was the sound of 25% of the TARDIS interior collapsing into a singularity. You have made a terrible mistake.
PRIME PILOT: Why? We're still alive. How can that be a mistake?
THE DOCTOR: By making an enemy of me.

INT. TARDIS GREENHOUSE. - DAY

An ornamental pond shivers and ripples.
CLARA breaks the surface and spits out a stream of water and takes a lily-pad off her head.

CLARA: Ok. Never doing that again.

AVERY breaks the surface with the BABY.

AVERY: What happened?

CLARA looks up at the spiral stair, there are still sections missing. The GUARDS are climbing easily around the filigree barrier and heading on down the stairs.

CLARA: They are. Come on.

CLARA begins wading desperately to the edge of the pond. AVERY follows, wiping weeds from the BABY'S blanket.

AVERY: Where are we?
CLARA: Inside the TARDIS.
AVERY: What's a TARDIS?
CLARA: Yeah. This isn't something we really have any time for right now.

CLARA climbs out of the pond and gets her first look at her surroundings. The GREENHOUSE is full to bursting with plants of all sizes and descriptions, many not recognisably Earth plants. They are on long wooden trestles and stretch in both directions as far as CLARA can see.

AVERY: We're on land. Land! I don't believe it!

A CROSSBOW BOLT thoks into the trestle next to where she was just standing. The GUARDS are running down the stairs.

CLARA: We need to get undercover. Now!

CLARA grabs AVERY and drags her into the trees.

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

FLEET turns valves.

THE DOCTOR: This isn't a trick. Prime Pilot, you have to stop.
PRIME PILOT: Continue.

FLEET flicks off another switch. Another **BOOM!** Somewhere deep within the TARDIS.

INT. TARDIS GREENHOUSE. - DAY

The GUARDS are running.
CLARA and AVERY are running.

Two more CROSSBOW bolts thud into a post as they pass it. CLARA makes a quick turn at a junction and dives for cover behind trunks of some mangrove-like plants growing in tubs on the floor. She pushes AVERY's head down and puts a finger to her lips. Looks at the BABY. Crosses her fingers and waves them in front of its mouth. Breathing hard, CLARA looks for their pursuers. The GUARDS clatter to a halt nearby. CROSSBOWS at the ready. CLARA ducks down as low as AVERY **BOOM!**

The bright sunlight and fluffy clouds through the windows fade to a sick twilight. The GUARDS are confused.

STOMACH GUARD: Come out now! We won't shoot you!

CLARA isn't convinced. A GUARD taps STOMACH GUARD in the shoulder and points. Through the mangroves, he can see the very edge of AVERY'S foot. The GUARDS move forward slowly, as a unit. Cocking their CROSSBOWS as they go.

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

FLEET finishes with another valve.

PRIME PILOT: Scared? Helpless?
THE DOCTOR: You know I am!
PRIME PILOT: Welcome to our world.

FLEET's fingers move towards another switch.

INT. TARDIS GREENHOUSE. - DAY

The GUARDS step forward, raising

their CROSSBOWS. CLARA knows the game is up. Closes her eyes. **BOOM!** The roof buckles and frighteningly sharp shards of glass rain down. Then the GREENHOUSE explodes with shattered glass! The GUARDS have to dive for cover. One of them is wounded in the arm. As the GLASS falls, CLARA knows this is her only chance, takes a deep breath, grabs AVERY'S HAND... They run SLO-MO for their lives, dodging huge panes of glass as they crash around them...

INT. MONTAGE - INTERCUT AS NECESSARY - VARIOUS.

CLARA and AVERY go through a series of ever-decreasing in sized rooms. AVERY shields the baby as best she can...

TARDIS: FLEET continues with the valves and switches.

GREENHOUSE: SLO-MO: CLARA and AVERY appear through a rain of glass. CLARA brushes glittering specks from her hair. They get to a door at the dark end of the GREENHOUSE, go through into:--

VICTORIAN SCHOOLROOM: Desks and caps on pegs, tatty books. Dark outside, CLARA pushes desks aside to get to a door that seems to lead into a garden. **BOOM!** The wall is suddenly brick, and there's a HOSPITAL DOOR in the wall. A CROSSBOW bolt thoks into the door. The GUARDS are behind them across the classroom. CLARA pushes AVERY through the

door and follows into:-

HOSPITAL CORRIDOR: CLARA AND AVERY running along the echoed Victorian corridor.

Trollies are in their way:- CLARA pushes them aside!

The BABY is wailing from inside the blanket across AVERY's chest.

Light-bulbs pop above their head as they run.

CROSSBOW BOLTS whizz past their heads.

THE GUARDS are still pursuing.

BOOM! Bricks start flying out of walls, crunching into opposite walls and shattering mortar.

AVERY looks back as she runs, almost impossibly she sees the GUARDS are also being pursued, by the BACK END OF THE CORRIDOR!

AVERY (tapping on CLARA'S shoulder): Look! The Wall!

CLARA looks back - her eyes widening with shock.

The Door the GUARDS have just come through is racing with its bit of wall after them, as the corridor shrinks!

BOOM!

A GUARD falls before the wall and is crushed in the onrush!

CLARA and AVERY reach the end of the corridor, where there is a nondescript pine door, the kind you might find in a terraced house, ending the corridor.

CLARA opens it at a run, and they go through into:--

MODERN MINIMALIST LOUNGE: Wide-screen TV on the wall, big Scandinavian sofa, pine floors, tasteful modern-art prints on the wall. CLARA looks for something to barri-

cade the door behind her - drags the sofa across it.

BOOM!

The TV next to AVERY explodes and the walls around them seem to buckle. CLARA and AVERY staring at each other. What are they going to do now?

INT. MONTAGE - INTERCUT AS NECESSARY - VARIOUS.

MODERN MINIMALIST LOUNGE: There is a hammering on the door - The GUARDS are desperate to get through.

STOMACH GUARD (o.s.): Please! Please! Let us through!

CLARA hesitates.

What should she do?

The room around them continues to slowly buckle, the walls advancing...

The PICTURES on the wall have changed - they are now huge splashes of BLOOD which seems to extend from the pictures over the Buckling wall.

A Long rippling gout of blood splashes across the ceiling, as if from the severed artery of an elephant.

BOOM!

The screaming and the banging on the door abruptly stop.

In a panic, CLARA goes forward, pulls away from the sofa, and opens the door.

There is nothing but a brick wall, mortar trickling between the bricks in gradually increasing torrents. The wall falls apart showing a:-

PRISON CELL: CLARA looks behind, sees the wall is rapidly rushing towards her - creaking, buckling, collapsing. She has no choice but to go into the CELL.

AVERY: We can't.

CLARA: We have to.

AVERY: No!

CLARA looks at the closing walls behind them. She sets her face, grabs AVERY, and propels her into the cell.

The huge Metal Door slams shut behind them.

The cell is old, Victorian, white tiled.

There are a bed and a bucket. There are bars over a dark window. AVERY cowers in the corner, the BABY completely enclosed in her arms. Tears in her eyes.

AVERY: Please... Please make this stop.

BOOM!

The walls start to move in, there is no escape. AVERY starts up and leaps to the centre of the tiny cell.

AVERY: Make it stop!

CLARA looks up to the ceiling. Full of rage and fury.

CLARA: Doctor! Doctor! Doctor! Help us!

On CLARA surely about to be crushed to death we:-

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

THE DOCTOR is struggling against the GUARDS.

THE PRIME PILOT is sorting through a pile of already reclaimed metal. FLEET working on the valves.

THE DOCTOR: You've got to listen to me! I've given you the shutdown sequence to the TARDIS! As the power is reduced, the internal topography of the TARDIS will shrink towards zero. The

people, your people, will be crushed to death!

PRIME PILOT: Fewer mouths to feed are never a cause for concern.

THE DOCTOR: They are for me!

FLEET is reaching for what appears to be the last switch.

THE DOCTOR stops struggling, we see him edging his leg towards the railings that surround the console.

HOOKING himself on with the back of his knee around an upright.

THE DOCTOR: Alright! Alright! It was a trick! I admit it, you're not shutting down the TARDIS, you've been arming it. Turning it into a bomb!

FLEET's finger hovers over the switch.

THE DOCTOR secures himself.

The GUARDS are looking scared, one lets go of his arm, backs towards the open doors.

PRIME PILOT: (to the GUARD): Remain at your post! He's bluffing to save his friend.

THE DOCTOR: I'm not, I swear!

PRIME PILOT: (striding towards the console): Get out of the way!

The PRIME PILOT pushes FLEET out of the way, reaches into the hatch, and flicks the LAST SWITCH!

THE DOCTOR: (suddenly calm): Well, I did try to warn you.

On THE DOCTOR holding the PRIME PILOT'S gaze. Like steel.

INT. TARDIS CELL. - DAY

The walls are creaking closer. CLARA and AVERY hug with the baby between

them.

CLARA: What are you calling it?

AVERY: What?

CLARA: The baby? What are you calling it?

AVERY: Are you mad? The walls!

CLARA: Yes. But I don't want to think about them.

The walls shudder closer.

AVERY (screwing up her eyes): Zachary.

CLARA: Nice.

AWKWARD silence. They've got nothing else to talk about.

CLARA: Now would be a very good time Doctor. I've run out of the conversation.

The walls grind and close.

In the distance, something huge and rumbling is building slowly...

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

From the very bowels of the TARDIS comes an increasing rumbling roar, building like a thunderclap, building and building and building.

The GUARDS' survival instincts kick in, and whatever the PRIME PILOT says, they're getting out of there.

They run towards the doors.

PRIME PILOT: Come back! I order you to come back!

But even the PRIME PILOT is scared, something is coming and it's obvious that it's not going to be good.

FLEET has noticed that THE DOCTOR is holding on for dear life now and she

throws herself back to the railing and does the same.

A fierce wind starts blowing through the control room from the internal corridors, wind, and rain. Lights flicker.

A crack of thunder - as if a tornado is coming.

The TECHNICIANS are following the GUARDS towards the door.

Metal is being picked up from the floor of the TARDIS and is scything through the air.

The PRIME PILOT narrowly avoids being decapitated.

A metal bar crashes agonisingly into his leg. He falls onto his back.

The wind is at such a force now that it starts to push the PRIME PILOT along the floor, he has no control over his direction of travel, he desperately tries to hold on but can't, he's heading out of the TARDIS whether he likes it or not.

As THE DOCTOR struggles to hold on to the railings, he's being blown almost vertically by the force of the WIND, he manages to get his feet on the ground and reaches for the console.

The PRIME PILOT is thrown from the TARDIS.

THE DOCTOR slams the door control down and the door shuts.

He reaches into the access panel, in the very bottom corner there's another concealed hatch. He pulls it open.

THE DOCTOR: The Prime Pilot wants to get that seen to, doesn't he? He's suffering from--

Behind the hatch is a small red lever. THE DOCTOR throws it.

THE DOCTOR: --terrible wind!

BOOM!

And the wind stops.

Everything is calm. The only people left in the consoles room are THE DOCTOR, FLEET, and the still unconscious SEZAN.

THE DOCTOR operates another control while spitting fury at FLEET.

THE DOCTOR: If she's so much as grazed her elbow--

There is a buzz of static from the console.

THE DOCTOR: Clara! Clara! Are you there?

FLEET: (looking about in awe): What happened?

THE DOCTOR: Clara!-- (to FLEET): Shut up and do something useful. See to the boy. Clara!

THE DOCTOR frantically flicks the control back and forth.

FLEET stumbles down from the control dais to see to SEZAN who is wedged up against the wall in an awkward heap.

FLEET: I don't understand. What did you make me do?

THE DOCTOR: Save me. Now shut up. Clara? Clara?

CLARA: (o.s. From radio): Doctor? Doctor? Is that you?

THE DOCTOR. Air punch.

INT. TARDIS CELL. - NIGHT.

A fitfully inadequate light filters through half a barred window. The cell has shrunk to the size of a very small phone box. CLARA and AVERY are understandably terrified... crushed against each other.

THE DOCTOR: (o.s.): Huzzah! Where are you?

CLARA: I don't know. There's a window. I can't move, the room's too small. I think it's a prison cell or something.

THE DOCTOR: That should keep you out of mischief. Where are the guards? Are they with you?

CLARA: They're-- Doctor--- they were--

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

As before.

CLARA: (o.s.): Crushed-- I didn't-- I couldn't--

THE DOCTOR thumps the console and looks daggers at FLEET.

THE DOCTOR: It's not your fault OK? It's not your fault. Now I need you to hang in here, while I locate you, and re-power the TARDIS so that I can get you out. Ok?

CLARA: (o.s.): Yes-- Doctor-- there's something else --

And on cue ZACHARY starts to whimper and cry.

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

As before.

ZACHARY'S cries rising from the console. THE DOCTOR doesn't really know what to do with this.

THE DOCTOR: Clara? Umm. Did I miss something rather fundamental over the last nine months? I mean you're normally oddly shaped but--

CLARA: (o.s.): Stop it, you idiot. Meet Zachary Crosshair. Son of Avery and Justin Crosshair. Say hello to the Doc-

tor, Avery.

AVERY (o.s.): Hello Doctor.

Off FLEET'S incredulous look--

THE DOCTOR: What are they doing there?

INT. TARDIS CELL. - DAY

As before.

CLARA: I have no idea where I am, or if I can-- even find my way back to you.

THE DOCTOR: (o.s.): Don't worry. Let me deal with that.

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

As before.

FLEET: The boy is fine, just unconscious, now Doctor, what is the Formation's child in a generation doing in your MACHINE!

THE DOCTOR: Is it pinching?

FLEET: What?

THE DOCTOR: The boot being on the other foot?

FLEET: Answer me!

THE DOCTOR: I told you how to shut down the TARDIS. When the sequence is completed, the TARDIS vents the atmosphere no longer required through the nearest exit. Here. How Avery and the child got in there-- I have no idea.

FLEET: You didn't know this was going to happen?

THE DOCTOR: You think I make this up as I go along?

THE DOCTOR, knowing that's exactly what he does begins working at the controls, while simultaneously reaching under the console, flicking switches, and closing valves.

FLEET: I don't understand any of this.
THE DOCTOR: You were tricked. That's all you need to understand.

SEZAN is waking up.

SEZAN: Where am I?
THE DOCTOR: You're safe. For the moment we're all safe.

BIGGEST! BANG! YET!

The inside of the TARDIS is thrown upside down, through several rotations. THE DOCTOR, FLEET, and SEZAN are catapulted across the room!

EXT. SKY. THE BREATH OF FIRE - DAY

A moment for us to see that the BREATH OF FIRE is falling upside down, a huge plume of black smoke behind before it explodes with a sickening detonation into a million smithereens.

Through the fire and the smoke and the debris come Three DRAGONS, flapping, breathing fire, and pursued by a squadron of fighters.

From the cloud we pick out the TARDIS, falling lazily towards the lava.

FIRST DRAGON: Tiiiiime Lord. Tiiiiime Lord. Give us the Time Lord.

EXT. SPIRIT OF BARNABY, FUSELAGE DOOR - DAY

Two GUARDS falling off the wing as the BREATH OF FIRE falls away. The PRIME PILOT desperately throwing himself along the wing to the door, where he is caught by some other GUARDS and hauled into the plane. The PRIME PILOT lays on the deck for the moment, breathing hard.

PRIME PILOT: Scramble! Scramble everything! Kill every dragon you can find!

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

The three occupants being thrown around like rag dolls as the TARDIS ends over ends.

SEZAN: You said we were safe!
THE DOCTOR: Everything is relative! Hold on! We're going down!
FIRST DRAGON (o.s.): Come to us, Doctor. Come to usssssssss.
THE DOCTOR: Like I have a choice!
FLEET: What?
THE DOCTOR: If I knew, I'd tell myself.

INT. TARDIS CELL. - NIGHT.

CLARA and AVERY are upside down and spinning in the cell - screaming as they fall!

EXT. LAVA. - DAY

The TARDIS splashes down into the lava with an almighty splooooosh, sending up plumes of smoke. We hold for a moment, but it doesn't surface. The shadow of three dragons flies over the place where the TARDIS hit. And then, almost unbelievably, the TARDIS bobs to the surface.

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

Silence, save for the hissing of some steam, the room lit by emergency lighting.

THE DOCTOR: Everyone alive?
FLEET: I think so.
SEZAN: Yes.
THE DOCTOR: Okay, that's a start.

THE DOCTOR gets up, the control room is on its side, and the three are effectively standing on a wall. THE DOCTOR does an experimental bit of standing up and wobbles before steadying himself.

THE DOCTOR: That's not good.
FLEET: (getting up): What? (she wobbles too.) What's that?
THE DOCTOR: We're floating.

EXT. LAVA. - DAY

The TARDIS, bobbing on the sea of burning lava. Hissing.

THE DOCTOR: (o.s.): On the lava.

From the sky, the FIRST DRAGON drops down and plops into the sea, next to the TARDIS. It climbs on the TARDIS and blows a triumphant fiery breath.

FIRST DRAGON: Time Lord.

On the FIRST DRAGON triumphant we:--

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

THE DOCTOR is trying to shake the voice out of his head.

THE DOCTOR: Look, whoever you are it's really very excellent that you want to talk to me and everything, but, you know, a little less mystery and a bit more information wouldn't go amiss!
FLEET: Who are you talking to?
THE DOCTOR: Field Marshal Enigma of the Enigma people.

Having the Dragon on top of the TARDIS isn't making it easier to stand up.

THE DOCTOR has located a step ladder from somewhere and is setting it up, under the console, under the valve hatch.

THE DOCTOR: You two. Hold this steady.
SEZAN: Why aren't we burning up?
THE DOCTOR: (climbing the ladder): The TARDIS is a little tougher than you imagine, but if we don't get all the systems back online, we won't so much burn up as--

THE DOCTOR reaches into the Valve Hatch.

THE DOCTOR: --roast.

FLEET and SEZAN exchange worried glances.
THE DOCTOR turns a valve.

THE DOCTOR: You might want to hold onto something.
SEZAN: We are. The ladder.
THE DOCTOR: No something--

THE DOCTOR flicks two switches in quick succession.

THE DOCTOR: --a bit sturdier.

The GRAVITY is suddenly back on and the three are falling all over the console room again, smashing into things.
THE DOCTOR lands with a thud.

THE DOCTOR: (sitting up, rubbing his back): I'm far too Scottish for this.

THE DOCTOR gets to the console and flicks the communicator switch.

THE DOCTOR: Clara? Clara?

Only a buzz of static replies.

THE DOCTOR: (reaching into the valve hatch): Pray for her elbows Fleet, pray like your life depends on it.

EXT. LAVA. - DAY

Three more Dragons are plopping into the lava to surround the TARDIS.

Directed by the FIRST DRAGON they hook their tails around the TARDIS and begin to drag it across the lava sea, using their wings as oars.

We get the impression, as their scaly skin sizzles, that this is terribly painful for them.

A dragon in the lava screams a smoky howl of anguish.

The FIRST DRAGON on the TARDIS, strokes her head with her wing.

The howling dragon lowers her head in supplication and continues swimming, dragging the TARDIS behind.

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

THE DOCTOR puts two sparking cables together, hits a control and the Screen comes on, showing the outside of the TARDIS.

The three look on in awe.

FLEET: What are they doing?

THE DOCTOR: Well, they're not attacking us, that makes a change. Maybe they're the ones talking to me. Who knows? If today gets any weirder, I'm going to give it a medal.

THE DOCTOR operates controls.

The view spins up and around to the Formation.

There is an immense dog fight going on above them, hundreds and hundreds of fighters engaging many dragons.

Some dragons are being shot down, other dragons are blowing up fighters like they're going out of fashion.

FLEET: Doctor, you've got to get us back up to the Formation! They need us!

THE DOCTOR: There's nothing I can do.

FLEET: My people!

THE DOCTOR: Are going to have to make do without you, now, help me get the TARDIS back online, if you do that, then we might have a fighting chance of saving somebody.

FLEET nods.

SEZAN: Is there anything I can do?

THE DOCTOR: (considers for a moment): What do you know about tea? I'm parched.

INT. TARDIS CELL. - NIGHT.

AVERY is not doing a very good job of being calm. She's sweating and the heat is definitely rising.

ZACHARY is snoozing happily.

CLARA wipes a hand across her sodden forehead.

CLARA: Doctor!

But there is no reply.

CLARA flaps the front of her blouse in an attempt to cool herself down - this seems to cause a coughing fit.

CLARA: Doctor! The air! There's hardly any air!

On CLARA'S concern and AVERY seriously starting to panic we--

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

It's getting hotter.

THE DOCTOR is taking off his hoodie and rolling up his sleeves.

He returns to the console.

FLEET is turning valves and flicking switches, whilst THE DOCTOR works at the console, fingers fluttering desperately.

The SCREEN shows an interior schematic of the TARDIS.

THE DOCTOR thumps a few switches and levers, and a pulsating blip appears on the screen.

THE DOCTOR: Brilliant!

An ALARM goes off and the pulsating blip, goes red and an indicator to the side of the screen shows

OXYGEN WARNING: WARNING: 10% AND FALLING:

THE DOCTOR: Not brilliant!

SEZAN (handing THE DOCTOR a cup of tea.): What does that mean?

THE DOCTOR points at the screen.

THE DOCTOR: That's Clara and AVERY

SEZAN: That's good.

THE DOCTOR: Not really. That's the graph showing her suffocating to death.

SEZAN: Oh.

INT. TARDIS CELL. - DAY

AVERY is sinking to the floor, the last gasps of air trickling into her wracking lungs.

AVERY: Zachary-- He's not asleep-- he's--

CLARA: Doctor-- please-- I--

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

THE DOCTOR: I've got to get some atmosphere in there. (he takes a swig from the tea. Spits it out.) I've also got to show you how to make tea. But first priorities--

THE DOCTOR goes down to the Valve hatch and pushes FLEET out of the way.

He begins sinning valves two-handed.

THE DOCTOR: Fleet! That switch (indicates with his nose while still twisting) There. Now! Come on! Come on!

FLEET throws the switch.

THE DOCTOR: That should buy them some time.

INT. TARDIS CELL. - DAY

Light streams in through the window suddenly illuminating CLARA.

She is pale and blue-lipped, but there is a HISSING of air from somewhere, and her eyes snap open in panic, but she can breathe.

Taking huge breaths she stands. AVERY is cuddling the baby tight. CLARA looks down with concern-- is he--

ZACHARY'S eyes come slowly open-- he begins to breathe--

CLARA, relieved looks up to the window at the light, gathering herself.

CLARA turns and sees that the prison door has gone, and beyond is a dark cobwebby corridor.

CLARA: I hope you're telling us to go down there, Doctor--

CLARA helps AVERY to her feet.

CLARA: You OK to walk?
AVERY: Just get us out of here.

Nodding but simultaneously screwing up her courage, CLARA takes a deep breath and leads AVERY out of the cell.

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

THE DOCTOR is watching the blip move along the schematic.

THE DOCTOR: Good girl, that's the spirit.

THE DOCTOR, FLEET, and SEZAN are thrown off their feet as the TARDIS makes an unexpected move.

FLEET: What now?

THE DOCTOR pulls down a secondary screen and flicks it on. It just shows lava, read hot, viscous, rapidly stirring lava.

FLEET: What's that?
THE DOCTOR: The view outside the TARDIS. The dragons have--

FX SHOT. LAVA.

We're under the surfaces of the lava, rushing forwards, everything is light and heat.
We catch up with the back end of the TARDIS still wrapped around with dragon tails.
The dragons are dragging it down, down into the depths.

THE DOCTOR: (o.s.): --taken us below the surface--

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

THE DOCTOR is checking controls and dials.

THE DOCTOR: This is bad, badder than bad.

FLEET: They're dragging us down?
THE DOCTOR: Yes, we're already at thirty metres, and going deeper.
FLEET: Why?

THE DOCTOR: Your guess is as good as mine. Well to be honest and with the deepest respect, that's probably not true, I'm very good at guessing, but --

FLEET: You're babbling.
THE DOCTOR: Yes, I am.
FLEET: That's not good either is it?
THE DOCTOR: No. It really isn't.
FLEET: Because that means you don't know what to do--

THE DOCTOR: Yes. Doesn't matter what we do now if this continues, the heat outside the TARDIS will cook us long before the TARDIS engines come back online.

SEZAN: So all this has been for nothing?

THE DOCTOR: Well, I can still teach you how to make tea. Transferable skills are the way of the future after all--

They look at the screen, a flapping dragon wing moves lazily in front of the camera. Then--

THE DOCTOR: What is that?
FLEET: What?
THE DOCTOR: (pointing at the screen): That!

Something is appearing out of the lava. A black speck getting bigger as we get closer.

Cigar-shaped, and around it whizz arcs of energy.
It shudders the lava in sick pulses, it twists and turns, it's spiky and evil.
THE DOCTOR flinches from the screen as the object resolves and falls over onto his backside - as if his legs have buckled under him.

THE DOCTOR: No! No no no no!
FLEET: Doctor! What is it?
THE DOCTOR: The beginning of everything.
FLEET: The beginning? Not the end?
THE DOCTOR: No. This is much worse.

FX SHOT. LAVA.

The DRAGONS push the TARDIS up against the ugly piece of Technology. They wrap their wings around it and the TARDIS, forming a shield against the lava.
They are all howling with the pain of being in the lava.
Their heads thrash about.
We know this is hurting, and we can see it, vast black sizzling blisters are appearing on their skin as they writhe.

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

THE DOCTOR is staggering to his feet, everyone is silent.
THE DOCTOR stares at the screen, wiping his face and running his fingers through his hair.

THE DOCTOR: It's-- it's not possible. They were outlawed on every conceivable world and in every conceivable time zone. I led five missions into the heart of Silvelta Compact and the Kijiiri Protectorate to destroy the last batch. There were none left. None survived!
FLEET: Doctor, you're not making any

sense.
THE DOCTOR: They're an affront to history; an attack on the very nature of reality. Knowledge of their existence was a crime. It was a crime to even think about the possibility of their existence. Good Friends were put to death just for writing the word down on a piece of paper!

There is a banging on the TARDIS door. THE DOCTOR flinches again as if the grim reaper has just come around for tea.

SEZAN: What was that?

THE DOCTOR operates a control and three levers.

FX SHOT. LAVA.

The TARDIS doors open onto the conflagration and through a bubble of extruded atmosphere we see the dragons swarmed around the door.
A blast of incredible heat and light enters the TARDIS, surfaces steam, and paper spontaneously combusts.
The dragons push the OBJECT into the TARDIS - where it clatters onto the floor, buzzing with evil energy, the size of a man.
Through the open doors, THE DOCTOR stands motionless - face grave. Still.
Automatically his fingers reach for the door control.

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

The FIRST DRAGON sticks its head into the TARDIS.
SEZAN and FLEET dive for cover.

FIRST DRAGON: Save us--

THE DOCTOR falls to his knees by the object.

FIRST DRAGON: Please save us.

THE DOCTOR: All these years. You've been trying to make the Formation come here, trying to show them this--

FIRST DRAGON: Yes. We had to show them.

THE DOCTOR: But they fought you.

FIRST DRAGON: Yes. When we sensed you, we knew that you would understand.

THE DOCTOR: I can't-- this--

FIRST DRAGON: You know what this object is. You can save us. You can save us all.

THE DOCTOR: I can. But you know what that will mean for you? For the Formation?

FIRST DRAGON: Yes. Even so. Save us.

THE DOCTOR: Take us back to the surface.

The FIRST DRAGON nods, and retreats. The doors swing shut.

FLEET and SEZAN approach THE DOCTOR.

FLEET: What is it?

THE DOCTOR: It's a-- (he can hardly say the words): It's a Fiction Bomb.

FLEET: What?

THE DOCTOR: Fleet. I'm sorry. I'm truly sorry. But nothing, not one thing that think you know, is real.

On FLEET. The enormity of what THE DOCTOR is saying dawning.

INT. TARDIS. CRYPT. - DAY

CLARA and AVERY making her way through the dark across sandy, cob-webbed stone floors. CLARA lingers. Looking at ZACHARY.

CLARA: How is he?

AVERY (looking daggers): In danger.

CLARA: I'm sorry.

Looking around.

AVERY: Sorry doesn't get us out of here.

Walls have collapsed and they have to sidestep slews of stone, Ivy curls and statues have fallen to crazy angles.

The HEAT is still a problem, CLARA is clearly parched.

Recesses in the walls hold crumbling and charred coffins.

She stumbles on rubble and puts out a hand to steady herself, it passes straight through the side of a coffin.

CLARA flinches and gives a little scream.

Wiping her hands down her front leaving smears of dirt, CLARA and AVERY pass a wooden door set into the wall.

There is a note pinned to the wood. It says "**This One.**"

CLARA hesitates, holds out her hand to push it open. Gets suddenly scared, walks past it.

CLARA: Like I'm gonna trust any doors in this place.

Not three feet away is another door, pinned to this one is another note. AVERY picks it up and passes it to CLARA. It reads: "**No, you knuckle-head, really that one! And stop whinging! Love, THE DOCTOR.**"

CLARA takes the note and screws it up with fury and throws it to a corner of the crypt where it combusts in the heat.

CLARA needs no further bidding, she goes back to the first door and pushes it open.

Through the door, we see the control room!

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - CONTINUOUS.

CLARA and AVERY rush in, her face alight with relief.

CLARA: Doctor! I am not leaving the control room ever again. You understand me? I want a bed there and I want you to sort out the plumbing! I want a shower over there by tonight! Understand?!

CLARA's voice trails away.

CLARA: Doctor--?

The control room is empty.

CLARA: OK. I don't know whether to do confused or scared. (thinks) I'll do both.

On CLARA and AVERY. Abandoned.

EXT. SKY. PARLIAMENT PLANE. - DAY

We're in the middle of a battle.

Fighters cascade down on a phalanx of DRAGONS, firing their machine guns.

DRAGONS break off and hold them off with gout of fire.

Through the smoky confusion fly three dragons, burnt and scarred from their time in the lava.

FLEET is on the back of one, SEZAN on the back of another holding on for dear life.

A third dragon, the FIRST DRAGON, carries THE DOCTOR on her back and the FICTION BOMB in her claws.

The dragons, given cover by their

brethren, land gently on the wing of the PARLIAMENT PLANE.

THE DOCTOR jumps down from the FIRST DRAGON and runs along the wing to the hatchway.

He flings it open, and ushers FLEET and SEZAN inside, who between them are carrying the still fizzing FICTION BOMB, they are wearing arm length asbestos gloves and welding goggles to protect themselves.

THE DOCTOR: (to the FIRST DRAGON) We won't meet again.

FIRST DRAGON: That is my fervent wish Doctor.

The FIRST DRAGON leaps into the air to return to the battle.

FIRST DRAGON: Goodbye Time Lord.

THE DOCTOR closes his eyes for a moment to gather himself and then goes into the Parliament Plane.

INT. PARLIAMENT. - DAY

The PRIME PILOT is meeting with the CO-PILOT. They are surrounded by aviators and are in full session.

PRIME PILOT: We cannot retreat!

AVIATOR: But the losses are too great. We must retreat and regroup!

PRIME PILOT: We don't have enough fuel to make it back to the last Plume field! Unless we win this battle now, we're dead anyway.

THE DOCTOR barges in with FLEET and SEZAN still holding the FICTION BOMB.

THE DOCTOR: Sorry. Are we interrupting?

PRIME PILOT: Seize them!

GUARDS rush forward but--

THE DOCTOR: Wait. This is a bomb!

The PRIME PILOT looks to FLEET for confirmation.
FLEET nods.

PRIME PILOT: I was right about you all along. You've come to destroy us!
THE DOCTOR: Normally I'd disagree at this point. But, yes. I have.

This stops the PRIME PILOT right in his tracks.

SEZAN: You have to listen to him.
PRIME PILOT: Your treachery will not go unpunished Fleet! Mark me!
SEZAN: All of you, you've got to listen to what the Doctor has to say. Our lives depend on it.
PRIME PILOT: No! Guards, seize them! It's a bluff.
CO-PILOT: Wait!

The PRIME PILOT is stunned.

PRIME PILOT: What?
CO-PILOT: I said wait. I want to hear what he has to say.
PRIME PILOT: I'm Prime Pilot!
CO-PILOT: Let him speak.

The PRIME PILOT is too stunned to speak. He's not used to this level of disobedience.

THE DOCTOR: Thank you. First of all, I'm sorry, really very sorry, but what I'm about to tell you won't be easy for you to listen to, or to understand, but I'm going to be asking you the most difficult question you'll ever have been

asked in your lives.
CO-PILOT: What?
THE DOCTOR: I'm going to ask for permission to destroy your world.

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

CLARA is roasting. She has found a Moses basket and AVERY is putting the baby into it.
CLARA is by a sink in the corner of the control room, turning a tap, all there comes from both taps is a thin drizzle of sand.

CLARA: We need water.
AVERY: That's what got me into this mess in the first place.

INT. PARLIAMENT. - DAY

The place is stunned.
Aviators are openly weeping.
The PRIME PILOT sits boiling in a chair. His knuckles white, his jaw set.

THE DOCTOR: The Fiction Bombs were created over a billion years ago, when the first races, even mine, were experimenting with time travel. They discovered a process that would localise a change in the baseline authenticity of the universe. They realised that this could be a weapon of enormous power. Why fight a war when you can turn someone's world into ash or dust? Why use conventional weapons, when all you had to do was Weaponize Reality?

The room is stunned. Aviators are still crying and holding each other's hands.

THE DOCTOR: My people outlawed them and spent a million years making sure there were none left across time

and space. It appears that we missed one. A world of lava and dragons? A civilisation that cannot land? Flying forever?-- Pure fiction. You are all fiction. Casualties of a war that didn't even take place in this reality.

THE DOCTOR comforts an Aviator with tears streaming down his face.

THE DOCTOR: I'm sorry. The fiction bomb created all this. I don't know how it got here, I don't know who sent it, but it's here. It's created this whole reality and you are all part of that reality. But it is not real. I don't know if you are real yourselves. You may all be part of the fiction.

THE DOCTOR goes to stand by the FICTION BOMB.

THE DOCTOR: I need to disarm the bomb, and I need to return your world to how it was before the bomb was dropped here.
CO-PILOT: But what about us?
THE DOCTOR: I don't know. If you're not part of the fiction, then you'll be safe if you are--
CO-PILOT: We cease to exist?
THE DOCTOR: Yes. I'm sorry. But there's no other way.

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

CLARA staggers across the control room to the console. Looks at the screen. At the wide sea of lava and the battle raging overhead.

CLARA: Doctor-- why did you leave me?

INT. PARLIAMENT. - DAY

PRIME PILOT: He's lying. Can't you see? He wants to kill you all so he can have the planet for himself! He wants us dead so that he can have everything!
THE DOCTOR: Don't judge me by your standards.
FLEET: Is there nothing you can do?
THE DOCTOR: I may be able to ensure you survive in an unreality interface. It's theoretically possible, it might protect you as everything reverts, but-- Fleet, I just don't know--

Only we can see THE DOCTOR has crossed his fingers behind his back. The PRIME PILOT gets to his feet.

PRIME PILOT: Well, you've heard what he says. Now let's kill him and get on with winning the war.
THE DOCTOR: What will winning the war achieve?
PRIME PILOT: Our survival.
THE DOCTOR: This is survival? Living like this? Always flying, always dying? This is life?
PRIME PILOT: It's the only one my people know.
THE DOCTOR: They're not your people! They're their own people and they can make this decision for themselves. When I disarm this bomb, your planet will return to what it was before.
PRIME PILOT: But we might all never have existed-- what kind of choice is that?
CO-PILOT: The right one.

The PRIME PILOT rounds on the CO-PILOT with a roar of anguish and hatred. The CO-PILOT neatly sidesteps the PRIME, who sprawls comically on the floor.

CO-PILOT: You've kept us alive this long, and for that, we thank you Prime

Pilot, but--

The CO-PILOT turns to the Aviators--

CO-PILOT: His time is over. Even if we cease to exist, we owe it to our people, to our world to do this thing.

The PRIME PILOT gets to his feet and runs from the room.

CO-PILOT: Let him go. We have work to do. All in favour?

One by One the AVIATORS start raising their hands, in a few moments, all their hands are raised.

CO-PILOT: Then return to your 'planes, and tell your people to prepare for the end of the world.

INT. PARLIAMENT PLANE - RADIO ROOM - DAY

THE DOCTOR comes into the radio room, SUNGLASSES SONICKING as he goes, he's followed by FLEET. A shower of sparks erupts from the RADIO and a technician dives for cover.

FLEET: Doctor! Wait!
THE DOCTOR: No waiting.

THE DOCTOR goes to work on the RADIO, ripping out wires and soldering as he goes.

FLEET: Doctor, I have to know--
THE DOCTOR: And I have to get in touch with Clara, she's still down there in the lava-- remember?
FLEET: Will I die?
THE DOCTOR: (crossing his fingers again): I don't know. I don't even know if I'll die or not. Now, wait!

Another shower of sparks. THE DOCTOR picks up a flying helmet and radio mask.

THE DOCTOR: Clara? Clara? Are you receiving me-- come on!

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - CONTINUOUS.

The interior of the TARDIS looks ready to burst into flames at any moment. CLARA is laying by the console, roasting. Her face is red, everything around her steams.
AVERY, almost unconscious, laying by the basket.

THE DOCTOR: (Radio FX): Clara, are you there? Have you made it back to the console room?

CLARA reaches up and flicks a switch.

CLARA: You left me-- us--
THE DOCTOR: (Radio FX): And I'm coming back, for all three of you. I promise, but I--
CLARA: You left me! You left me to die!
THE DOCTOR: (Radio FX): No, no. I couldn't wait, but the TARDIS should be ready to come back online, all you need to do is reignite the engines, and you'll be able to--
CLARA: Can't--
THE DOCTOR: (Radio FX): Clara-- come on--
CLARA: Too hot-- can hardly breathe--

AVERY sinks into complete unconsciousness, arm across the Moses basket.

INT. PARLIAMENT PLANE RADIO

ROOM. - CONTINUOUS.

As before.

THE DOCTOR: Come on Clara, you're not a giver-upper, are you? Not like you--

CLARA (Radio FX): You gave up on me-- Avery and the baby.

THE DOCTOR: No, I didn't I just couldn't wait for you to get back to the console room. Clara, everything is about to change, I need you to reignite the TARDIS engines, and then you can fly her back to me, and then I can put everything right. But I can't do that with you there, can I?

CLARA (Radio FX): I don't know-- You seem to make most of this up-- as you go along-- I sometimes--- think-- I'm just interchangeable-- It doesn't matter who plays this role for you-- as long as we play it--

THE DOCTOR finds this painful to listen to.

CLARA (Radio FX): You talk about-- Rose-- Martha-- Donna, Amy-- you talk about them as if they were the same person--

THE DOCTOR: It's the heat Clara, the heat is making you delirious--

CLARA (Radio FX): On the-- contrary-- it's making everything very clear--

THE DOCTOR: Clara! Please!

CLARA (Radio FX): So tell me-- Doctor--

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - CONTINUOUS.

As before.

CLARA: What's so special-- about me?

INT. PARLIAMENT PLANE RADIO ROOM. - CONTINUOUS.

As before.

THE DOCTOR: Clara--

CLARA (Radio FX): Your hesitation tells me-- tells me-- everything I need to know--

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - CONTINUOUS.

As before.

THE DOCTOR: (Radio FX): Clara please -- restart the TARDIS-- I have a million things to tell you, but I just don't have the time--

CLARA: And you-- a Time Lord.

THE DOCTOR: (Radio FX): A useless helpless and dead Time Lord if you don't restart the TARDIS. I've heard some self-pitying, boo-hoo rubbish in my time, but this about takes the biscuit. Come on Sarah-Jane, do you have to be so self-absorbed all the time?

CLARA: Sarah-Jane?

THE DOCTOR: (Radio FX): Well, it worked on the Nerva Beacon.

CLARA: I'm even more-- insulted that you think-- reverse psychology is going to work on me-- more than getting my name wrong!

INT. PARLIAMENT PLANE RADIO ROOM. - CONTINUOUS

THE DOCTOR: That's why you're special Clara-- You don't let me get away with everything else the others did. I need that. I need to be told that I'm wrong. I need to be told when to stop. You do that for me.

THE DOCTOR rests his head on the radio apparatus.

THE DOCTOR: The fact is Clara, that-- you don't travel with me--

Silence. THE DOCTOR sighs. Is it too late?

THE DOCTOR: I travel with you.

The silence continues for as long as we can get away with it.

CLARA (Radio FX): Doctor--

THE DOCTOR: Yes--

CLARA (Radio FX): Tell me what to do--

THE DOCTOR: That's the spirit! Right--

But before he can say a word, the room explodes with bullets as the Parliament Plane is attacked from outside. THE DOCTOR pulls FLEET to the deck and the Radio is KILLED.

EXT. SKY. PARLIAMENT PLANE. - DAY

A small squadron of fighters is attacking their own planes!

A vicious trail of bullets strafes the side of the Parliament Plane. Not enough to destroy it, but enough to make things very uncomfortable for the people inside.

We zoom in on the lead fighter. The Pilot is the PRIME PILOT!

PRIME PILOT (Radio FX): Angel squadron. Fire at will.

INT. PARLIAMENT. - DAY

The Parliament Plane is taking evasive actions, the Aviators are diving for cover as the deck bucks and kicks. THE DOCTOR and FLEET make it back in -

CO-PILOT: It's the Prime, he's got a

squadron up there and he's trying to start a civil war--

THE DOCTOR: I need time to disarm that bomb, and I need a portable radio. Can you get me one?

SEZAN: I can!

SEZAN heads out.

CO-PILOT: I'm scrambling everything I can Doctor, I'll try and buy you the time you need, but, it'd better be worth it.

THE DOCTOR: (can't look him in the eye): Good luck.

CO-PILOT (Saluting): Chocks away.

The CO-PILOT heads out as SEZAN runs back with a portable radio. THE DOCTOR is SONICING it, almost before it hits the ground. A shower of sparks fountain into the air.

SEZAN: Goodbye Doctor.

THE DOCTOR: What?

SEZAN: I'm going to fight. This is no life for my people - if you can put it right, then I want to help.

SEZAN runs out, pulling on a flying helmet and radio mask.

THE DOCTOR, face pained, is left alone with the FICTION BOMB and FLEET.

THE DOCTOR pulls on a radio mask and SONICKS the radio.

THE DOCTOR: Clara? Are you still there?

CLARA (Radio FX): You left me. Again!

THE DOCTOR: Oh, don't start that nonsense. We have work to do. I need to work on disarming this bomb, while you restart the TARDIS. Okay?

CLARA (Radio FX): Yes. (pause) Bomb?

THE DOCTOR: Long story. And not a

good one.

THE DOCTOR approaches the FICTION BOMB pulling a small leather tool roll out of his inside pocket, dragging the radio set behind him.

The deck heels again and a row of bullet holes appear along the ceiling, letting in the light from outside.

THE DOCTOR: Well, we wouldn't want it to be easy, would we? Fleet, I need you to keep the bomb steady.

FLEET nods and pulls her gloves back on.

CLARA (Radio FX): And what about us?

THE DOCTOR: I was getting to you! Right-- Clara, can you see the hatch where Fleet was working to shut down the TARDIS?

CLARA (Radio FX): Yes.

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - CONTINUOUS

CLARA is dragging herself through the heat to the Valve Hatch. AVERY stirs in her unconsciousness.

THE DOCTOR: (Radio FX): Well, where you need to be is the direct opposite of that, on the other side of the console.

CLARA: Now you tell me.

THE DOCTOR: (Radio FX): There's a comparable hatch on that panel. Let me know when it's open.

CLARA begins dragging herself around the console. It's hot and painful.

CLARA has to cover her exposed arms in her blouse to stop her arms burning on the metal.

INT. PARLIAMENT. - DAY

THE DOCTOR has undone his tool roll to reveal a large collection of metal tools, more akin to a lock picking kit than to anything else.

THE DOCTOR thoughtfully selects two tools and begins to work on the bomb double-handed.

FLEET holds the bomb steady as the plane bucks again.

FLEET: Do you actually know what you're doing?

THE DOCTOR: Generally or specifically?

THE DOCTOR gingerly puts his hands inside the fizzing field around the BOMB, it's not painful, but we can see that it's more than a little uncomfortable.

FLEET: Doctor. I don't want to die.

THE DOCTOR: You might not.

A hatch clicks up on the surface of the BOMB, the fizzing subsides a little.

We can see inside the BOMB, it's horribly and sickly technological, humming with dark energy.

THE DOCTOR wipes his brow.

CLARA (Radio FX): Here. I'm here!

THE DOCTOR: Good--

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - CONTINUOUS.

CLARA is all the way around the other side of the console now.

THE DOCTOR: (Radio FX): Open the panel.

CLARA: Okay.

As the panel is opened, we see a wealth of complicated electricricker inside, dials, switches, and read outs.
A paper ticker tape chunters merrily into the space below the console.
The ticker tape combusts and CLARA has to put it out with her hands.

THE DOCTOR: (Radio FX): Now it may look complex--
CLARA: You think?
THE DOCTOR: (Radio FX): But it's really quite simple--
CLARA: If you've got three heads and fifteen arms, I'm sure it is.
THE DOCTOR: (Radio FX): In the top left corner, are a bank of switches. They should all be in the down position - they would have tripped when Fleet shut down the TARDIS, can you see them?
CLARA: Yes.
THE DOCTOR: (Radio FX): Push them into the up position, starting with the right, and moving to the left, in sequence. Okay?
CLARA: Yes.

INT. PARLIAMENT. - CONTINUOUS.

As before.

CLARA (Radio FX): Ow! Ow!
THE DOCTOR: (panicked): What?
CLARA (Radio FX): They're hot!
THE DOCTOR: Well yes. Carry on.
CLARA (Radio FX): Your sympathy is overwhelming!
THE DOCTOR: Just do it, and tell me when you've finished.

THE DOCTOR returns his attention to the BOMB, selecting another tool he reaches into the hatch.

FLEET: Do you think we could deal

with me for a moment? I know you're busy and everything, but I really, really don't want to die.
THE DOCTOR: Fleet, what do you want me to do exactly?
FLEET: I want you to exactly tell me I'm not going to die.
THE DOCTOR: (Sighs. He can't lie anymore.): I can't do that.
FLEET: Then I can't do this.

FLEET lets go of the BOMB and pushes herself away.

INT. PARLIAMENT. - CONTINUOUS.

THE DOCTOR: What kind of scientist are you?
FLEET: An alive one.
THE DOCTOR: But a scientist who only wants to deal in certainties. That's not science. That's faith. Your world was destroyed by this bomb, everything that was changed. The whole potential of your species was-- murdered.
FLEET: I know all that. But it happened over seventy years ago.
THE DOCTOR: And your point is?
FLEET: I'm forty-five. I'm part of this reality. This reality, the one you're about to destroy is the only reality I know. Once you change this, you change me out of existence.
THE DOCTOR: Fleet--
FLEET: Let me come with you. Let me travel with you, like Clara. Let me-- I--
THE DOCTOR: I can't--
FLEET: Why?
THE DOCTOR: Because you're not real.
FLEET: But you told the others there was a chance--
THE DOCTOR: I lied.
FLEET: What?
THE DOCTOR: I lied. This bomb has to

be disarmed. And then it has to be destroyed. It's the most dangerous thing in the universe.
FLEET: No Doctor, it isn't.

FLEET looks at THE DOCTOR

FLEET: You are.

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - DAY

As before.

CLARA: Done! (nothing) Doctor? (nothing)

INT. PARLIAMENT. - CONTINUOUS

THE DOCTOR is neither working on the BOMB nor replying to CLARA.
FLEET is standing over him with a CROSSBOW pointed squarely at his head.

FLEET: I can't let you do this.
THE DOCTOR: Fleet, this isn't about a single person, it can't be.
FLEET: It can today.
THE DOCTOR: No.
CLARA (Radio FX): Doctor? What's happening?
THE DOCTOR: Little busy. Hang On a sec--
CLARA (Radio FX): Oh great, I'll just baste myself for a bit while you get your backside into gear.
FLEET: Move away from the Bomb Doctor, don't make me kill you.
THE DOCTOR: I wouldn't be. It'd be all your own work. You know I thought the Prime Pilot was the enemy, he's not, he's just misguided and wanting to save his people. The real villains are the ones who kept him in power by their acquiescence. The ones who through selfishness and cowardice give him the

power to rule. The people like you.
FLEET: I'm glad you understand.
THE DOCTOR: All too well.
FLEET: Then move away from the bomb!
THE DOCTOR: No.

On FLEET cocks the crossbow.

EXT. SKY. PARLIAMENT PLANE. - DAY

A dogfight, even more extreme than anything we've seen before.
Explosions, machine guns, fighter fighting fighter.
THE PRIME PILOT heading towards the PARLIAMENT PLANE, guns blazing.
A fighter cuts across his vision making him pull out of the dive.
We zoom in on the CO-PILOT in the cockpit of the second fighter.

CO-PILOT: Don't make me shoot you down Sir, because I will. Without a moments' hesitation.
PRIME PILOT: You've already hesitated.

The PRIME PILOT brings his fighter in an inside loop and suddenly he's behind the CO-PILOT'S plane.

PRIME PILOT: And that hesitation was your last act of cowardice.

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM!
The CO-PILOT dies screaming.
His plane explodes as it swings under the PARLIAMENT PLANE.
WHUMP!
A massive explosion rocks the PARLIAMENT PLANE, causing it to bank sickeningly.

INT. PARLIAMENT. - CONTINUOUS

The deck heels.

FLEET fires the crossbow and the bolt misses THE DOCTOR by millimetres.

The bolt thuds into the FICTION BOMB causing it to spark fizz and shudder, as the deck tips at an even crazier angle.

The BOMB starts to roll, knocking THE DOCTOR for six and crashing into the fuselage.

FLEET is desperately trying to cock the CROSSBOW again, when THE DOCTOR slams into her, knocking it out of her hands.

THE DOCTOR: Fleet! You hit the bomb!
FLEET: I don't care!

THE DOCTOR heads back towards the BOMB, holding CROSSBOW safely out of FLEET'S reach.

FLEET tries to attack THE DOCTOR but he easily sidesteps, sending her sprawling.

THE DOCTOR: Stay down, Fleet, or so help me I'll--

FLEET: What? Kill me? At least I'll be dead but still have existed.

THE DOCTOR: I really don't have time for this.

FLEET: I am going to kill you, Doctor, you are a dead man walking.

THE DOCTOR: (heading for the BOMB): Do your worst.

THE DOCTOR goes to the BOMB, it's making sickening new noises, the bolt sticks out of the side, it's leaking energy into the air.

FLEET rushes THE DOCTOR as he tries to peer into the hatch.

THE DOCTOR ducks and FLEET sails over him--

--and crashes to the fuselage winded.

THE DOCTOR reaches with a tool with one hand into the BOMB, and with the other hand reaches for the Radio Mask.

THE DOCTOR: Clara?

CLARA (Radio FX): I'm here Doctor!

THE DOCTOR: Three dials under the switches. Turn them all to ten and punch the green button five times, understand? Five times.

CLARA (Radio FX): Got it.

FLEET is up and going for THE DOCTOR again, picking up a chair she aims it at his head.

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - CONTINUOUS

CLARA turns the dials and punches the button, five times.

CLARA: Done!

From the radio, we hear THE DOCTOR scream.

THE DOCTOR: (Radio FX): Fleet! No!

CLARA: Doctor, nothing's happening!

AVERY wakes. Sitting up. Panic on her face.

INT. PARLIAMENT. - CONTINUOUS

FLEET isn't hitting THE DOCTOR with the chair, she's hitting the BOMB!

THE DOCTOR tries to fend her off, but she swipes him out of the way with the chair.

FLEET: You. (CRASH) Will. (CRASH) Not. (CRASH) Disarm. (CRASH) This. (CRASH) Bomb! (CRASH!CRASH!CRASH!)

The deck goes the other way and the BOMB rolls, FLEET is knocked off her feet.

CLARA (Radio FX): Doctor!

THE DOCTOR: Cross your fingers! Cross everything!

INT. TARDIS CONTROL ROOM. - CONTINUOUS

The TARDIS comes back on.

Suddenly the lights are bright.

A cool blast of air hits CLARA and AVERY full in their faces from the air conditioning units in the ceiling.

The central time-rotor begins to rise and fall. The TARDIS is beginning to dematerialise! AVERY grabs the baby from the basket and clutches it tight to her chest.

CLARA: Doctor! The TARDIS is taking off!

EXT. LAVA. - CONTINUOUS

The TARDIS is indeed dematerialising. It disappears from the gloopy lava.

INT. PARLIAMENT. - CONTINUOUS

FLEET is coming to her senses. She's fixated on the bomb.

THE DOCTOR: (into the radio): It's okay, the TARDIS is on automatics, it'll move itself out of danger.

FLEET is getting up, she begins a loping run with the chair towards the BOMB.

CLARA (Radio FX): Where to?

THE DOCTOR: Here.

The TARDIS starts to appear between

FLEET and the BOMB.

It's too late for her to stop, she hits it before it is fully solid.

The TARDIS materializes around FLEET she screams and screams. She's held in mid-air, the time engines grinding.

The TARDIS shudders and rejects her from the space it's trying to appear in.

FLEET is catapulted away and crashes into the wall, sliding down. Unconscious.

THE DOCTOR is getting to his feet and goes to the BOMB.

The TARDIS door opens and CLARA stumbles out.

CLARA: Hi, home. I'm honey.

AVERY and the baby come out behind her.

But THE DOCTOR has no time, he must disarm the bomb.

He bends to it, it's been battered and broken by FLEET's attack.

THE DOCTOR: I don't even know where to start.

CLARA: They should put that on your gravestone.

THE DOCTOR gives CLARA a pained look. CLARA sets about getting AVERY strapped onto one of the benches so she and the baby won't be thrown around.

Deep breath from THE DOCTOR and he sets to work. But--

The air is torn apart by another volley of bullets from outside sending THE DOCTOR and CLARA diving for cover.

CLARA: On balance it was more fun in the lava.

EXT. SKY. PARLIAMENT PLANE. - DAY

The PRIME PILOT has strafed the PARLIAMENT PLANE again--
--but he's got another plane on his tail.

INT. SEZAN'S FACE - DAY

Close up of SEZAN'S face, he's wearing the flying hat and radio mask.
We hear but cannot see the machine gun he is firing.
SEZAN'S face is lit up with flashes--

EXT. SKY. PARLIAMENT PLANE. - DAY

Other fighters are going down into the lava sea on fire.
Two more crash into each other.
Suddenly the PRIME PILOT and his attacker are the last planes left.
They zero in on each other.

INT. SEZAN'S FACE - DAY

SEZAN fires then looks perplexed, as if what he is firing at is gone.
We can see a small amount of blue sky through the glass behind his right ear.
SEZAN begins firing again.

EXT. SKY. PARLIAMENT PLANE. - DAY

The two planes engage, coming at each other guns blazing, the PRIME PILOT feints, banks and spirals up.
Suddenly he's coming out of the sun, and he's on the other plane in a flash.

PRIME PILOT: A few tricks in the old dog yet.

The PRIME PILOT opens up with all guns, and the other fighter is destroyed in a hail of fire and smoke.
It falls lazily towards the lava.

The PRIME PILOT has a free run at the PARLIAMENT PLANE.
He banks turns and puts both his thumbs on the fire buttons.
Nothing. He's out of ammo!
The PRIME PILOT brings his plane around and sets his sights directly on the centre of the PARLIAMENT PLANE.
The steely look in his eyes tells us all we need to know about what he is about to do.

INT. PARLIAMENT PLANE. MACHINE GUN TURRET. - CONTINUOUS.

Pull back to show that SEZAN wasn't in a plane!
He's in a belly slung glass bubbled machine gun turret!
SEZAN turns in the glass turret, trains his double barrels on the PRIME PILOTS plane
- and blows him out of the sky!
We hear the PRIME PILOT'S final scream as his plane falls towards the lava.

SEZAN: I'm sorry.

On SEZAN'S tears we...

INT. PARLIAMENT. - DAY

CLARA is at a porthole. Looking out to the battle.
THE DOCTOR works feverishly on the BOMB.

AVERY: If that's a bomb, shouldn't we be getting as far away from it as we can?

THE DOCTOR: (to CLARA): Is she your plus one? Did you have to bring her? She's silting up my head.

CLARA: She's just had a baby. You

could cut her a little slack...

THE DOCTOR makes his yawny yap yap yap sign again. CLARA rolls her eyes. FLEET is by CLARA'S feet, she's been tied up with flex and rope. She can't move.

THE DOCTOR looks grave, the bomb's fizzing is winding down, the vibrations slowing.

CLARA (coming from AVERY): It's over. The fighting's stopped.

FLEET: Got a clear run now eh Doctor? Going to kill us all?

CLARA: Shut up.

FLEET: Oh hasn't he told you what he's about to do?

CLARA: I don't want to hear it.

FLEET: So I suppose you think he's some kind of hero. Saved the day, all that rubbish, yes?

CLARA: That's what he does.

FLEET: Is it? Is it Doctor?

THE DOCTOR: Not today. No. Today, I'm-- Today I'm nothing like that at all.

CLARA: Doctor?

FLEET: Will you tell her, or shall I?

THE DOCTOR stands up from the bomb. His face resigned.

FLEET: Can't bring yourself to say the words? You coward. You morally corrupt coward. Your Doctor, Clara, your hero, has just consigned me and my people to the slag heap of reality.

CLARA: What is she talking about?

FLEET: We were created by that. The Fiction Bomb, and now the Doctor has disarmed it, me, and all my people will cease to exist.

CLARA: You're not real?

FLEET: I feel real! And your Doctor has decided that I don't deserve to exist. Not me, not Avery, and certainly not

that baby.

CLARA: Is this true? Are you going to kill them all? (points at the baby) Even Zachary?

THE DOCTOR is silent. FLEET triumphant.

FLEET: Yes, he is.

THE DOCTOR: No. I'm not.

CLARA: What?

FLEET: What?

THE DOCTOR: It doesn't matter what I do now. Doesn't matter at all. Fleet, you disarmed the bomb when you attacked it. You've destroyed yourself.

FLEET: Liar!

THE DOCTOR: It's over Fleet.

The BOMB stops dead in mid buzz--

THE DOCTOR: Over and out.

--and then EXPLODES!
Reality fails and falls apart.

FX SHOT. SPACE.

Gulfs of stars. We twist through the heavens and find a beautiful blue-green world, all seas, and clouds.

CAPTION: PARADISE.

And we're back in our reality, the two STAR-FIGHTERS are going at it hammer and tongs in exactly the same way as the first scene.

The craft WHIZZ past us, zapping bolts and bombs.

For a moment, everything fades to silence, and it's just us and the planet.

Then WHAM! The ships are heading back towards the planet, right past us again!

The planet shivers and ripples and then

is suddenly all lava again!
Time and reality to, steal a phrase, are out of joint.
One second PARADISE. Next second HELL. Endlessly looping. Space banding. Time shredding...

INT. STAR-FIGHTER BRIDGE - NIGHT

Sparks shower from the ceiling.
The lumpy bodied ALIEN is again slumped very dead over a console, a massive wound on the side of its head. In the command couch next to it, is another ALIEN, lumpy and ugly. The ALIEN works at the controls with desperation.
Stabbing buttons and twisting control columns.
A blast lights up the room - this is terminal.
Alarms. Extinguishers.

RADIO VOICE (OOV): Surrender your ship and prepare to be boarded!
ALIEN: Never!
RADIO VOICE (OOV): You are in direct contravention of the Silvelta Compact.
ALIEN: Prove it!

The ALIEN pulls back a cover on the console. Three red buttons that look like they're the "**Press in the last resort**" kind of buttons are revealed.

RADIO VOICE (OOV): What is that???
Emergency power! Evasive! Evasive!
ALIEN: What?

Alarms even more insistent.
The ALIEN looks up, his blobby eyes widening with amazement.

ALIEN: This cannot be!

A screen in front of him shows a phal-

anx of DRAGONS flying straight towards him through SPACE!
Up from a planet that is flickering between lava and blue/green beauty!
The ALIEN reaches for the control stick wrenching it to the left, the RED BUTTON forgotten.

FX SHOT. SPACE.

Both ships are taking emergency evasive action--
WHUMP!
--but in their panic smash into each other!
A huge terminal explosion and fiery debris spiralling out in a terrible fireball!
And out of the centre of the explosion fly the DRAGONS, beating their wings, blowing fire and then...
Fading...
Fading...
And gone.
Hell shivers, convulses.
A blossom of green and brown and blue starts to spread across the planet. Moving out from the night terminator, a line of beautiful curls and swirls - extinguishing the lava - it gathers pace, the volcanoes dying, turning to land and sea.
A new world born in a moment. Clouds. Seas. Triumph!
A sun burning upon a new/old world and a beautiful moon.

CAPTION: PARADISE.

CAPTION: FOUND.

EXT. A LUSH VALLEY IN SUMMERTIME. - DAY
The TARDIS rests by a stream.
The day is perfect. The sky is blue, the clouds benign.
The TARDIS door opens - CLARA

emerges, pulling sunglasses over her eyes against the sun. She carries two Mint Juleps.
THE DOCTOR sits disconsolately by the stream, throwing in pebbles.
CLARA sits by him. Holding out a drink.
THE DOCTOR shakes his head.
CLARA begins drinking from each Julep in turn.

THE DOCTOR: An empty world with no one to enjoy the view.
CLARA: How long before we can leave?
THE DOCTOR: Don't like it?
CLARA: Creepy. Empty.
THE DOCTOR: The TARDIS should be ready in a few hours, a few days and she'll be back to full working order.
CLARA: There was nothing you could have done.
THE DOCTOR: Perhaps. But I was going to do it anyway.
CLARA: You had no choice about that either. The bomb was too dangerous to leave there--
THE DOCTOR: I know. But it doesn't make it any easier.
CLARA: What will we do with it? You can't just leave it in the TARDIS.
THE DOCTOR: I'll do what I did with all the others. Bury it in a black hole and forget about it.
CLARA: Will you forget about the Formation?
THE DOCTOR: No.
CLARA: You should.

EXT. A LUSH VALLEY IN SUMMERTIME. - DAY

THE DOCTOR stares into the distance.

THE DOCTOR: If I forget them, then they really will cease to exist. They deserve better than that.

SEZAN (O.S): You did okay.
THE DOCTOR: (without thinking): Generally or specifically?

THE DOCTOR'S voice trails away and he and CLARA turn around.
SEZAN is there, walking down a slope, behind him come all the Aviators. Then the CO-PILOT, AVERY carrying the Moses basket.

SEZAN: Hello Doctor.
THE DOCTOR: But--
SEZAN: One minute we were in the Formation, next we were here, all the aircraft, just sitting in the fields. Everyone safe, everyone accounted for.
THE DOCTOR: Everyone?
SEZAN: Everyone. Even Fleet.

FLEET steps out of the crowd.

FLEET: Doctor-- I'm--
THE DOCTOR: So am I. Truly.
FLEET: You said we would all cease to exist.
THE DOCTOR: Well, you should have done, but I guess that thrashing you gave the bomb must have damaged it more than I thought.
FLEET: Yes.
THE DOCTOR: Prime? What about him?
AVERY: Him too, but...
CO-PILOT: He ran away screaming. We'll find him when he's calmed down.

THE DOCTOR hugs FLEET so tight she might burst.

THE DOCTOR: Oh yes! A good day, A good day all round! Everything back to normal! Where's my guitar?
CLARA: Hopefully, it spontaneously combusted.
THE DOCTOR: I can buy another one.

CLARA: Not without a broken nose.
SEZAN: There is one thing that hasn't been returned to how it was before though--
THE DOCTOR: What?
SEZAN: And look, they're...

SEZAN points to the sky.
A huge phalanx of DRAGONS flies over.
Benign and glorious.

THE DOCTOR: In formation.

SEZAN: Yeah. In formation.

On THE DOCTOR laughing and waving at The Dragons, and then everyone following suit and waving as the Dragons fly into the sun—

END TITLES.



COSMIC MASQUE XV

Our Writers

Trinah Eke

Trinah is a life-long *Doctor Who* fan and occasional writer of fan fiction. She is a regular contributor to *Cosmic Masque*.

Ian Farrington

Ian has written fiction, articles and reviews; edited anthologies and factual books; and produced audio dramas. He currently works in the magazine industry. He also loves film noir and crime fiction.

Ian Morgan

Ian is the author of four stories in the *Time Scope* anthology e-books. He lives in Gloucester with his wife Natasha, a cat called Saxon and way too many books.

Paul Sutton

Paul works as a language teacher and proof-reader in Budapest. He has so far contributed eight titles for Big Finish, with a ninth to be released in 2022.

Jenny Shirt

Jenny likes writing, acting for audio when she can and enjoys watching *Doctor Who*, *Ghosts*, and *Worzel Gummidge*. Jenny's story, *The Mists of Prevalous* pays tribute to the DWM comic strips of yesteryear.

Stephen Hatcher

Steve is the Fiction Editor of *Cosmic Masque* and has contributed to many unofficial *Doctor Who* fiction anthologies, including *Time Shadows: Second Nature* (which he edited), *Time Shadows*, *Master Pieces*, *Master Switches* and *Mild Curiosities*. He is the director of the popular annual *Whooverville* convention.

Andrew Blair

Andrew is a writer, poet and performer based in Edinburgh. He writes about *Doctor Who* for *Den of Geek* and has contributed to the *Time Shadows* and *Master Switches* anthologies.

Chris McAuley

Chris has been a *Doctor Who* since the 90's and lives in Edmonton, Canada. He is known for his work in the *StokerVerse* and has previously teamed up with John Peel in the novel - *Dracula's Bedlam*.

John Peel

John Peel is the writer of many *Doctor Who* novels, including the first ever Virgin New Adventure, *Time Wyrms: Genesys* and the first ever original novels to feature the Daleks, *War Of The Daleks* and *Legacy Of The Daleks*. John has also written spin-off novels from other

films and TV series including *Star Trek* and *The Avengers*.

Christine Grit

Christine's Doctor is the Fourth, as he's the one she grew up with in The Netherlands. She's also a Dalek nut and always wears a Dalek ring.

Daniel Tessier

Daniel has written reviews and blog posts about old television for many years. He has contributed stories to anthologies including *Shelf Life*, *Myth Makers*, *Iris Wildthyme of Mars*, and *Time Shadows: Second Nature*.

Michael Gilroy-Sinclair

Michael has been the host of the renowned *Tin Dog Podcast* for many years. He has contributed stories to *Cosmic Masque* and *Time Shadows: Second Nature*; and his plays, short stories and novels – including *Geek Myths* and *Jane Of The Air: A Villain in Venice* are available from the usual online outlets.

Gary Merchant

Gary came to this writing lark fairly late - about 2.30 in the afternoon. As long as the ideas keep coming, he'll keep writing.

Robert John Cumming

Robert John Cumming is a writer from Carlisle studying for his PhD. He dreams of one day finding the TARDIS on his doorstep with the Seventh Doctor and Ace awaiting inside.

David Brooks

Dave's stories first appeared in the Terraqueous Distributors range of fanzines. This is his first contribution to *Cosmic Masque*. He has written a couple of plays for local theatre and can't stop buying books which he never gets around to reading.

Paul Burns

A regular contributor to *Cosmic Masque*, Paul has also contributed to *Celestial Toyroom*, *Time Scope*, *Twice Upon a Time Scope*, *A Target for Antoni* and upcoming unofficial *Doctor Who* annuals. Next goal: *Horse and Hound* letters page. His story *Time On Her Hands* is the middle part of a trilogy, the first part of which *Scary Monsters*, appeared in *Cosmic Masque XIII*; and the final part (although written and published first), *Devil's Keep*, was published in *Cosmic Masque XI*.

Paul Ebbs

Paul is an author and screenwriter, who has written *Doctor Who* fiction for the BBC, Big Finish and BBV. His latest two novels, *Tree Face And The Cripple* and *The Town With No Name* are available from an internet near you.

