There are some evils in the universe that need to be fought.
And others that need redeeming...

Many years ago the Doctor, a student at the Academy on Gallifrey, lost a friend to the mysterious and malevolent force known as the Celestial Toymaker. Now, in his fifth incarnation, the Doctor receives a telepathic call from his long-lost classmate, begging for help.

As he sets out to rescue his friend and exact revenge, the Doctor's companions become increasingly involved. Adric, determined to justify his place aboard the TARDIS, opts to face the Toymaker's game challenges while Nyssa, angered by the Doctor's actions, finds herself excluded by the people she thought were her friends. And what is the connection between the Toymaker and the planet Dymok, whose comatose inhabitants find a new saviour in the shape of Tegan Jovanka?

Featuring the Fifth Doctor, Adric, Nyssa and Tegan, this adventure takes place after the TV story THE VISITATION.

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BBC

DOCTOR WHO

DIVIDED LOYALTIES

GARY RUSSELL

For Brian Hayles, Innes Lloyd, Donald Tosh, Gerry Davis and Graham Williams for providing the sandbox and the bucket and spades

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Her Body in My Soul

The TARDIS was hovering in the space-time vortex - drift compensators stopping it from going anywhere hazardous - although soon its automatic guidance controls would silently operate on a pre-programmed set of commands, opening a gateway between the vortex and real space. From there it would, to all intents and purposes, step sideways and out into a charted but near-empty region of space - one of the Doctor's favourites in fact.

He rarely needed sleep - certainly not as often as his three young travelling companions did, but when he did so, he slept deeply and well.

He could have parked the TARDIS on a planet somewhere, but somehow that nearly always led to an adventure of some sort, and he felt they all needed a break from that - on their last stopover, they had accidentally started a fire in a city called London. As Pudding Lane fell victim to flame and cinder, he had abruptly sent the TARDIS spiralling back into space, wanting to be as far away from that little mishap as possible.

Thus, he had elected just to float in an uninspiring region of the galaxy while they all rested.

The Doctor's bedroom was a bizarre affair, consisting of a large four-poster complete with ornate awnings, silk sheets and an enormous chocolate-coloured toy rabbit. An original Jackson Pollock was attached to the door with chewing gum.

Hey Doc was scribbled in the corner, *Happy times and places, J.* All the Doctor had done was accidentally knock one of Pollock's paint pots over but this had impressed the artist so much he later presented him with this unique picture which he insisted was 'Azure in the Rain by a Man Who'd Never Been There'. Travelling with the Doctor at the time had been his old friend Romana, who made the pithy comment, 'Gosh, you'd never know'. But then, Romana would.

However, that was a lifetime ago - almost literally. The Doctor currently asleep in the TARDIS appeared to be a young, fair-haired man with a not unattractive face that was designed to smile. He normally wore Edwardian cricketing gear, complete with long beige overcoat. That coat was currently attached to the end of the four-poster via a plastic Mickey Mouse coat hanger. The Doctor currently wore white pyjamas, with tiny question-mark motifs sewn on to them.

If sleep was rare enough for him, dreaming was more so.

But at this moment, his unconscious mind had situated him in a bizarre corridor, with no end. On one side the walls, ceiling and floor were a perfect white, on the other, jet black, the shades meeting dead centre of ceiling and floor.

The Doctor stood astride both black and white and discovered that the side of him in the dark seemed to be like a monochrome photographic negative.

He held his two hands up, surprised that he wasn't actually more surprised.

'Doctor... you have to help me...'

The voice was male, but he didn't recognise it. He tried to call out, but couldn't make his voice work.

Behind him, a door slammed, but he was unable to turn.

Then another.

And another.

'How many doors must you slam, Doctor, before you understand the magnitude of what you did?' asked a different voice.

Then everything went dark - except the Doctor was now caught in a harsh spotlight from above. It surrounded him but offered no other illumination. He was no longer in any way negative, but the harshness of the light made the outlines of his hands indistinct and he couldn't make out his own feet - just a blast of halogen from the knees downwards.

'Doctor... I need your help. We need your help. We are dying...'

The first voice sounded plaintive.

And unbidden, a series of co-ordinates flashed through the Doctor's mind, and the name of a planet. Dymok.

He'd never heard of it.

'You have to come...' The voice faded away, and the light around his feet began to get brighter. He tried protecting his eyes, but even with them closed he could still see his own skeleton, so bright was the light.

It consumed him and he finally found the voice to scream!

He awoke in his bed, sweating and shaking.

'A dream...' he muttered. 'I had a dream of... of...'

But no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't bring into his memory one iota of the dream.

So he opted to forget about it and drifted back to sleep.

And didn't dream again.

Dymok was a small planet, the fourth in a solar system. It had no satellites and few distinguishing marks. With a scattering of landmasses and a number of large oceans it was, in human terms, pretty average.

And yet it had recently become the centre of attention simply because of its inhabitants. Recluses in an age when 'recluse' was a word people had to look up in *The Dictionary of Archaic Phrases,* their determination to shut themselves off from the universe around them intrigued everyone.

Over the last few decades, people had ventured forth towards Dymok, ignoring its inhabitants' protestations of seclusion and anonymity. Nothing intrigues the masses, or sells news, better than people who don metaphorical dark glasses, scarves and hats, screaming 'Bugger off'. And the Dymova were shouting louder than anyone else via their silence.

The biggest yell had been when a cargo ship hired by news reporters had run the blockade into the planet's outer atmosphere. If anyone had been able to get a message back to Earth, or even the nearby space station that acted as beacon, warning buoy and first-line defence all in one, it would have been incoherent.

Why?

Because to some, the ship was invaded by giant twenty-legged spiders. To others, voices demanded that the airlocks be opened and everyone walk out to meet their ancestors. And to the three holovid technicians in the cargo hold? They were suddenly told to overload their famously

temperamental equipment, unusually stored next to the solar stacks, which naturally would ward off the extra-dimensional brick-men who were entering the universe with proclamations of conquest.

No one would ever know this of course because, when the solar stacks went up, so did the rest of the ship and everyone on board.

But why had the crew experienced these ridiculous images and phantoms?

It was the work of one elderly man - the Observer.

And today he stood on slightly arthritic legs, gazing up at the night sky, seeing far beyond what his natural eyesight should allow. He could see beyond the dark clouds that threatened to douse him in rain. He could see beyond the radiation belt that protected his world from the sun's harshest rays. And he could see far beyond the dark skies -

among the stars in fact.

His gaze settled upon the area surrounding the Imperial Earth Space Station *Little Boy II.* More specifically, he was focused on the tiny tear in the fabric of the universe that would enlarge shortly to spew out something currently occupying the space-time vortex. A unique craft, manned by unique people. In particular, he was focused upon one of its occupants.

'Yes,' he croaked to anyone who might be listening. 'Yes, she is the one we seek. She is the one I need.'

He refocused his mind on the immediate terrain. Behind him, the black pyramid pointed far into the air - that was where he needed to be. At its apex.

He swallowed hard, closed his eyes and concentrated. This was going to hurt, but it was necessary. He knew that the one thing he must never do was allow his eyes to open once he reached the pyramid. He needed to ensure his concentration was not broken by outside stimuli.

'Move.'

And slowly, eyes still closed, he walked to the base of the pyramid, reached forward and found handholds and footholds, then began climbing, using his mind rather than his sight to feel, to know, where the grips and ledges were. Slowly but very safely, the old man began his ascent.

Because of her.

The New Dark Age

‘And I’ll wager you, good sir, that none can beat this hand.’

Sir Henry Rugglesthorpe sat back in his leather chair, a self-satisfied grin on his face. And why not? It was not as if this strange man could possibly beat him. He had three aces in his hand. The six of clubs matched the six of diamonds on the table - the wild card which automatically acted as his fourth ace. And the fifth he had passed back to the dealer at the start of his game. As everyone else had folded, the chances of his opponent having five of anything were non-existent and thus, confident, Sir Henry took the gamble.

‘Is that so?’ murmured the smiling newcomer opposite him as he placed his cards down on the green baize table with a slight theatrical flourish.

There was an audible gasp from the others grouped around the club table.

‘You consider yourself to be... adequate at this game, don’t you, Sir Henry?’

Sir Henry stared at the fanned cards facing him. A six of hearts and four aces - the wild making it five. ‘King of the tables, they say, good sir. King of the tables.’

In his own hand were four cards - less than a minute ago, there had been three aces. Now, a three of clubs, the six, a jack of hearts and an eight of diamonds.

Useless.

Gritting his teeth he let the cards flop face down on to the table, his heart beating faster, his eyes widening. How had this happened?

Back at home, his wife would be doing her needlework. His daughter would be preparing for her coming-out ball. His son would be studying for his place (guaranteed, naturally) at Marlborough.

All three awaiting the return of their husband or father to the familial bosom for another night.

But tonight, if Sir Henry returned home, it would be as a broken man in every sense. No one else at the club actually knew the wager he and the stranger had undertaken. It was enough to bankrupt him - but Sir Henry’s method was infallible. It always had been - that was how he had made his fortune. Bought his title. Lied and cheated his way through society. For no particular reason, a memory of last year’s greatest triumph - dancing with his wife at King George’s accession ball - flickered through his mind, but it vanished in an unfocused mental shrug.

How had the cards changed?

How had the stranger cheated?

But to accuse him - effectively for no good reason - was bad form. And who would believe him?

Silently Sir Henry rose from his chair, bowed slightly and gave the stranger a tight smile.

‘If you will excuse me, sir, your victory has unsettled me somewhat. I shall return in a moment.’

As he turned away towards the lavatories he heard the stranger speak, his rich, educated tones resonating throughout the club.

‘Please, Sir Henry, it is but a game. I have enjoyed the sport, but I have no intention of ruining you. Or damaging your reputation as a king of the tables. Let us discuss my...

rewards.’

Sir Henry froze on the spot. Such behaviour was unspeakably rude, especially at the club. His honour was further impugned by the stranger’s offer to erase the debt -or whatever he intended.

Angrily, Sir Henry turned on his heel and prepared to face his tormentor. For a split second he shut his eyes: he felt giddy but that cleared and he opened his eyes again.

He was no longer in the club.

There were no leather chairs. No quiet murmured speech and the occasional rustling of *The Times.* No subtle clink of ice in glasses and a boy pouring Scotch or a good brandy.

Instead, Sir Henry was standing... somewhere else entirely.

His giddiness had cleared due to the slight breeze that kissed the back of his neck, and as far as he could see the ground was a series of bizarre splashes of colour that seemed random and indistinct. They stretched away in every direction and the furthest ones he could see appeared to be squares.

It was like a grotesque, child’s version of the countryside, he realised. Like tiny fields, all of differing colours rather than just grass, mustard or turned earth. The corners of each one were marked by vast oak trees that looked dark and aged, vast branches spreading sideways.

Good shelter from the rain, he thought and momentarily relaxed until he was jolted back to reality.

‘There’s something missing,’ murmured a bass voice in his ear.

Sir Henry discovered the stranger beside him, no longer dressed as a member of the Firestrong Club of Jermyn Street, W1. No, he was now in some ludicrous garb, multicoloured like that of a jester or a circus magician. No, wait, it was more distinctive than that. Sir Henry remembered his schoolboy drawings and paintings. This was the clothing of some Chinese official, an ancient figure of authority. A mandarin. But the stranger was no oriental - his language and visage were those of a cultured Englishman in his late forties.

He had a lined but not unkind face that seemed almost serene as he smiled and waved his right arm out towards the furthest coloured fields - blue and orange and green and purple and pink and...

‘Do you like my home, Sir Henry Rugglesthorpe? My realm? Is it not the most beautiful and charming place you have ever seen?’

‘Where are we?’ Sir Henry asked, rather more quietly and less angrily than he intended. He cleared his throat. ‘Where is the club?’

The stranger, the mandarin figure, laughed - rather unpleasantly, Sir Henry decided. ‘The club is exactly where it always has been. Observe.’

Sir Henry stepped aside involuntarily as, beside them, part of the green square they were standing on slid away. Rising upwards by means of some infernal machinery was... was something sir Henry had not, until now, ever encountered. It was shaped like a man, but was larger - its arms, legs, torso and head all squared off. It had a circle of wire on its head and a crude approximation of a face. Upon its chest, a tiny window glowed.

The mandarin pointed at the window. ‘Observe the screen, Sir Henry.’

Sir Henry flinched as he leant towards the metallic man and peered at the window.

No, not a window - a projection screen of some sort. Like one of those television receiver things that the radio people had begun using last year. On it Sir Henry could see a flickering monochrome image. It appeared to be the interior of the Firestrong Club, the card table at which he had sat. He frowned in concentration.

With a sigh, the mandarin reached over and gave the mechanical man a blow around the back of its head.

'Magic Robot, perform!' he commanded.

The image flickered and strengthened, becoming full colour and perfectly sharp.

'I recently upgraded his receiver to digital,' the mandarin figure muttered, but to his companion he might as well have actually been speaking Mandarin. Sir Henry understood only that his colleagues, his friends at the club, were seated at the card table playing poker as if nothing had changed. The grandfather clock in the hallway could clearly be seen reading a quarter after seven. Only moments had passed since he and the stranger had been sitting there, playing the infernal hand that had resulted in this phantasmagoria.

'I am dreaming...'

The mandarin laughed again, this time notably more cruelly. 'No, you pitiful creature, not dreaming. But you may find this a nightmare. Observe.'

And Sir Henry nearly lost his balance as the ground shot away beneath him... No! No, he was growing taller, the trees receding until they were no larger than mushrooms at his feet.

He could see for miles now and the fields were indeed tiny coloured squares covering the flat lands. The tops of the trees formed familiar shapes at the top corners of each field.

Numbers.

'Do you understand now, Sir Henry?'

Sir Henry shook his head. He did not want to understand.

The mandarin shrugged. 'It doesn't really matter, my friend.

Understanding I do not require. Sport, I do.' He pointed forwards. 'We are standing on Square 1. Observe the tree below us.'

Indeed, the branches formed the Arabic figure 1. Those on the tree on the next field, a 2, and so on. In the furthest distance, he could see field 100.

'As I said, something is missing. 'The mandarin held out his hand, palm upturned. 'Gaylord LeFevre?' he called.

A puff of purple smoke appeared upon his palm, and re-formed into the shape of a man. He wore a green baize jacket, a top hat, chequered waistcoat and a long moustache. 'Monsieur LeFevre joined me on his way to New Orleans in 1846,' the mandarin said by way of explanation. 'He shared your passion for the colourful cards. I liked his steamboat but, alas, not his manners.' He addressed LeFevre directly. 'Something is missing, Monsieur. *Regardez-vous.'*

LeFevre, clearly not at all affected by either his abrupt arrival or the gargantuan size of his master, turned and looked.

'Apologies, Lord,' he drawled. 'I will get it sorted out immediately.'

LeFevre was replaced by the purple smoke, which then withdrew completely into the mandarin's palm once more.

Before Sir Henry could speak, his companion gestured forward with his head. 'Look, Rugglesthorpe, look.'

And one by one, each coloured square of land was suddenly linked to another by either a giant ladder or a green serpent that hissed and wriggled.

'My God, man... snakes and ladders!'

The mandarin clapped his hand. 'Exactly. Observe.'

The ladders shimmered and became snakes, and vice versa.

As Sir Henry watched this happened at irregular intervals, and on different squares. 'It makes the game more interesting, don't you think? One moment, square sixty-eight is the head of a snake. But by the next roll of a die it becomes the foot of a ladder. You see, Sir Henry, it is quite possible to win. Not very probable, I'll admit, but certainly *possible.* I have to take a slight risk myself, or life would be boring for all of us. So, you have the opportunity to win. And go home safe and sound.'

A table, plus three chairs that hovered above the ground, blinked into existence in front of them.

'Sit,' commanded the mandarin.

Sir Henry sat. On the table was a die. 'A six gives you another go, by the way,' he was told.

The third chair was filled suddenly by another man -

muscular and cruel-looking. He had a scar down his left cheek and a front tooth missing. He wore a one-piece white coverall and a small peaked cap.

'Forgive his undignified attire, Sir Henry, but Stefan here is forever busy and, as my most loyal assistant, I allow him not to wear the clothing he arrived in.'

'Where is he from?'

Stefan grinned. 'I met our lord in what you would refer to as 1190. We had a wager. I lost.'

'Obviously,' said Sir Henry. 'What was your game? Cards?'

Stefan just shrugged. 'I believed my previous master, King Frederick, could swim from one side of the port to the other.

I lost.'

'And dear Redbeard sank to the bottom of the Bosporus without a gurgle. A brave warrior. But his death cost the German army the Third Crusade and Stefan his freedom.'

Stefan stared at his lord and Sir Henry could see nothing but admiration - indeed love - in his gaze. 'I have a better fife now, Lord. Serving my new messiah, the Celestial Lord.'

The mandarin laughed with false modesty. 'Oh Stefan, you flatter me.' He looked at Sir Henry. 'Most people call me the Toymaker. A sort of pan-dimensional Walt Disney, Charles Darrow and Hiroshi Yamauchi if you like.' Sir Henry stared blankly. 'Oh, well, never mind' The Toymaker pointed to the die.

'Shall we begin, gentlemen?'

'If I lose?' Sir Henry asked quietly although, after what he had seen of LeFevre and Stefan, he knew the answer.

The Toymaker just smiled enigmatically. 'Don't go there, Sir Henry.' He clapped his hands and the table and chairs rotated and then moved of their own free will so that the three players could get a better view of Square 1. The mechanical man had gone and in its place were the three

playing pieces.

‘My God..’ Sir Henry felt ill.

Standing and staring forward, clearly unaware of their surroundings, were his wife and two children.

‘Oh yes,’ the Toymaker said. ‘I *knew* there was something I forgot to tell you..’

The Beginning and the End

Commander Oakwood stood inside the elevator that would lead directly on to the command bridge of the station; although not a space ship as such, the old nautical terminology was still utilised by the crews of relay stations such as this. He ran a finger around the inside of his high-collared white uniform, desperately wishing it was made of some unstable compound that would stretch as his neck widened and his chins multiplied.

Sadly, no one back on Earth had got around to inventing such a thing, and so he was forced either to wear ill-fitting attire or go on a crash diet to get back to the more slimline Commander Oakwood who had been assigned this job two years previously.

Breathing deeply, he opened the door and stepped out on to the bridge, noting instantly that everyone else was at their positions. The morning shift were always punctual. Chief Petty Officer Townsend smiled up at him from her workstation, a multitude of diagrammatic readouts of the various sections of the station flashing unread across her terminal. ‘Morning, Kristan,’ she said, passing him a sheaf of print-outs. ‘ Nothing to report’

Oakwood shrugged. What a surprise. Two years stuck out on the Wastelands between the solar systems had taught the commander that very little actually happened here. ‘Oh look, a new star has been seen’ or ‘My my, the Fipenz are blowing the crud out of the Phailes again. That’s another generation irradiated,’ tended to be the most exciting messages that they ever received. Actually seeing something themselves, oh no. After all, it was only through some bureaucratic cock-up that the Imperial Earth Space Station *Little Boy II* was ever positioned this far out. Overseeing the planet Dymok and checking that the marker buoys, which kept the world secluded from everyone else, remained in working order.

Thirty years ago, Dymok had demanded isolation from nosy neighbours. As Earthmen had been responsible for upsetting its inhabitants in the first place, it fell to the empire to ensure their privacy was never invaded again. As Oakwood’s name had been pulled from a metaphorical hat, it fell to him to be placed as commander for a three-year fixed term. Only Sarah Townsend and Nikos Paladopous were there for the entire haul - the remaining seventeen crew rotated with other stations and ships every sixteen weeks.

Oakwood tossed the readouts over to Nikos. ‘You read ‘em, Niki.’

‘Cheers, boss,’ replied Lieutenant Paladopous, winking at Townsend. ‘Good to see you happy and bright today.’

With a weary sigh, Oakwood flicked a switch at his own terminal. The tinny treated voice, translated into Earth Standard, rattled out.

‘Your Masters have ordered you to come no closer to Dymok. We are restating that imperative. We do not tolerate outsiders. Go away.’

Theoretically, the message was to be heard all the time, throughout the station, but Oakwood had tired of that after the first eight hours he’d spent there and now had it down to a regimen of thirty seconds every four hours. Any newbies who came aboard and questioned that got very short shrift from their new commander and tended to spend much of their two months cleaning out waste disposal or the airlocks.

‘Anything personal?’

Townsend shook her head, a little sadly. Oakwood had been

waiting for news of his daughter’s wedding. Circumstances (both professional and personal) meant he couldn’t attend the ceremony, but he was hoping some holograms, or even a recording, might have been beamed up from a relay station by now. Even allowing for the time delay, the wedding had been three months ago - something should have arrived by now.

Sarah Townsend had once expressed the hope that his daughter had not been unduly influenced by the ex-Mrs Oakwood and ignored her father, and deep down he thought that was probably the case. Exes could be like that. As indeed poor Sarah knew from her own experiences.

‘Another drop in about three hours, Kristan,’ she said.

Oakwood just shrugged and settled down in his chair, staring at the main view-screen showing Dymok and a few local stars. Occasionally he overrode the computer and changed the view. He could see beyond Dymok. Or back, towards Earth (relatively speaking, anyway).

‘Computer, open file OakThreeOhFour.’

‘You never give up, eh, bossman?’ said Paladopous.

‘I have to do something Niki, or I’ll go mad out here.’

The view-screen changed, showing a recording of the cargo ship *Convergence* orbiting Dymok, the tiny figures in the corner indicating this was just over twelve years previously.

The same recorded warning from the planet could be heard, but the cargo ship apparently ignored it. A second voice was added, one of Oakwood’s predecessors, telling the cargo ship to back off. Then in a strange plume of orange and then nothing the *Convergence* vanished, apparently exploding. No sign of what, or who, caused it. Oakwood knew that the records of his predecessor showed that nothing from the station was behind the explosion (well - *Little Boy II* didn’t possess any armaments, bar a gravitron to deflect meteors and any other debris) but no one could say what had. And no one could go and ask the people on Dymok if they were responsible.

Besides, what was the cargo ship doing there in the first place? Common rumour supported the idea that one of the big news corporations had hired it to break the treaty and learn more about Dymok. News InterGalactic, GalWeb and even EBC

denied doing so, but Oakwood secretly doubted them all. He rather supported the theory that it was a group venture and that by all the companies claiming no knowledge, each was protected. This itself was weird - usually one corporation was quick to blame another for the slightest thing.

He found himself freeze-framing the scene immediately prior to the explosion and then moving on frame by frame until the first sign of decompression showed. Just as he always did.

‘Computer, zoom in on site of decompression bottom right.’

And, just as it always did, the computer gave him a digitally enlarged picture of the decompression - a tiny fragment of ship jettisoned from the main hull. Frame by frame he watched as a flash of flame shot out of the resultant hole, only to be extinguished three frames later by the vacuum.

Over the next eighteen frames that first hole became a massive gash in the hull of the ship, occasional blooms of fire rapidly vanishing as the oxygen ran out. He ordered the computer to zoom out a bit until the cargo ship filled the screen and was then rapidly consumed by the eruptions throughout its body. Twenty-three frames on there was just empty space, bar two or three fragments of debris spinning uncontrollably in different directions. They would hang in space until a salvage team from the station collected them a week later.

How many times had he replayed it? How many times had any number of his predecessors replayed it?

‘Niki, how much d’you know about our computer system?’

Paladopous frowned at the unexpected question. ‘Not my field, Commander.’

‘Oh bugger the regs, Niki. Using your interest in anything shady, how do the computers work?’

Ignoring the startled looks from the rest of the bridge crew

- and a wryly raised eyebrow from Townsend -Paladopous sucked in his top lip and sighed. ‘What exactly do you need to know?’

‘Whether or not, using the links between computer systems, there would be some way of artificially creating an image of the cargo ship seen from the other side.’

‘You mean, using all the computer babble going on at the time?’

Oakwood nodded. ‘Surely it’s stored in a mainframe somewhere. These days I can’t sneeze without someone on Earth knowing four seconds later due to these wretched computers’

Paladopous started tapping at his console, muttering to himself, and Oakwood settled back in his chair, grinning. ‘

Nothing better to do today, Niki. Might as well work on the mad commander’s pet project.’

If Paladopous thought Oakwood mad, he sensibly kept quiet. Instead, he concentrated on his new task.

‘Commander,’ Townsend was frowning over to Oakwood.

‘Have you noticed something odd about Dymok?’

Oakwood instantly tapped away at a keypad, linking his operations console with hers. He looked at the same readings as Townsend, and likewise began frowning.

‘Niki,’ he said sharply, ‘forget that now.’

With a sigh, Paladopous glanced over at Townsend’s workstation and took in what had alarmed his colleagues.

‘There’s nothing there,’ he said. ‘It’s just... stopped’

Paladopous was referring to the steady stream of readings that emanated from the planet recording their movement, their planetary transmissions, their everyday life.

‘Is something blocking the signals?’ This was the first moment of action Oakwood had seen since getting to the station, and already he had a sense of dread trickling down his back, along with a dribble of sweat. Around him, the bridge crew were rapidly trying everything they could to re-establish contact. Townsend’s fingers ricocheted over her keypad with expertise, tying in every possible malfunction, cross-checking all their on-board sensors. Paladopous was going over the alignment of their exterior satellites, while everyone else noisily did their jobs. After only a few seconds Oakwood suddenly yelled out.

‘Shut up, everyone.’ The crew froze. ‘Thank you. Yes, we have a potential situation, but we’d all get a clearer idea of what that situation is if we did our work quietly and efficiently, OK? Carry on.’

Everyone did, but at a lower pitch - and the communications officer cut off the chatter from the rest of *Little Boy II,* confining himself to his own earpiece.

Oakwood waved Townsend closer. ‘Well?’

‘Everything’s fine, Kris. The station’s as good as it was four minutes back. It’s the planet that has stopped. It’s like it was switched off or something.’

Oakwood nodded, and hit the station-wide intercom.

‘Attention everybody. Note that we lost contact with Dymok at 08.47. Everyone is to go through their records and search for anything unusual - space phenomena, equipment failure, anything at or around that time. Report to CPO Townsend any findings you have within fifteen minutes.’ He cut himself off.

‘Niki, Sarah, in my quarters in twenty minutes, OK?’

They nodded and he stood up, exited the bridge and headed back to his private room, mentally writing the message he was about to send back to Earth. Every fibre in his being told him to wait, to ensure that he had all the relevant information, each segment of the puzzle before alarming Earth. And yet, deep down he knew that he had as much information as he was likely to get. He had a crew who knew their jobs. Fifteen minutes or fifteen seconds, they were good enough to tell him everything instantly, as a matter of course.

Nothing unusual had happened at 08.47 except that Dymok had, to all intents and purposes, died on him.

And somewhere in the back of his head he felt the irrational tickle of fear and guilt.

Fear that something somewhere was powerful enough to wipe Dymok out.

And guilt that it had happened on his watch.

Of All the Things We've Made

'It's not Heathrow, is it?'

'No'

'It's not even Earth, is it?'

'No.'

'Twentieth century?'

'No'

'Do you actually know where we are? Or when?'

The Doctor was staring at the TARDIS scanner-screen rather intently. Not, Tegan suspected, because he gave a flying fig what was on it, but simply because he didn't want to meet her gaze. Which, she knew, was accusatory, unforgiving and non-conciliatory. She felt her lips purse in what her father had once, rather charmlessly, referred to as her 'cat's-arse pout'.

'So?'

The Doctor sighed, straightened up, and moved back from the TARDIS console. Its flashing lights, little levers and computer screens were all blinking out of time with each other like an epileptic disco.

'You know, Tegan, it would be far easier to concentrate on getting you home if I didn't feel that every time I failed you were going to try and sue me.'

Tegan snorted. 'Well, if you didn't... hadn't failed quite so often, maybe I'd be more forgiving!'

Adric, who was sitting cross-legged by the TARDIS double doors that led to whatever was outside and munching on a bright red apple, looked up from the book he was reading as if noticing them for the first time. Tegan hated that look -

superiority and arrogance from someone who thought green and yellow pyjamas were the height of cool fashion.

'Of course,' he said, presumably thinking he was being reasonable, 'if you stopped arguing with the Doctor, we wouldn't be so keen to be rid of you and we all might start enjoying our trip around this universe.'

He then dismissed them and returned to his book.

Tegan wasn't sure whether to ignore him or kick seven bells out of him. It wasn't her fault that the Doctor had failed to get her home. Back to the job she wanted to do, flying in aircraft not in mobile police boxes. And it wasn't her fault that her temper got the better of her now and again. And it certainly wasn't her fault that she was living with three aliens from alarmingly different backgrounds, none of whom she understood. She was, if she was brutally honest, rather frightened of her companions. They were all basket cases and she was locked up with them!

Take the Doctor, for instance. When she first met him, he was about fifteen years older than he was now, with curly brown hair and a commanding personality that everyone was in awe of, including her. Then, after an accident he changed, literally before her eyes, into a younger, blond man who liked cricket and looked only five or six years older than she was.

Then there was Nyssa. Hey, there was a classic example of damage. She was what, seventeen? Eighteen maybe? Her parents were dead. Her stepmother was dead. Her entire world had been consumed, obliterated and she was the only survivor, anywhere. And what did she do? Shrug it off, wallow in scientific books to learn more about something called Telebiogenesis' which she claimed to be ignorant of. Hardly what most teenage girls did. When Tegan had been eighteen, it was music, R-rated movies and boys - poor Nyssa should be dreaming of movie stars, calling friends, going to the clubs.

Hell, grieving wouldn't be a bad thing either. It couldn't be healthy hiding away her emotions after all that had happened.

Then there was Adric. King-size brat and arrogant adolescent, with his posturing and posing. Oh yes, mathematical genius he might be, but here's another teenaged boy with too much brain and not enough exercise. So what does he do? He masters the art of the sarcastic, but unfunny, retort, is lazy and workshy and, above all, forgets to bathe regularly. Both she and Nyssa had suggested that the Doctor should have a man-to-man chat with him about how his body was changing as he went through his teenage years, and should offer to give him some deodorant, but the Doctor had suddenly mumbled something like 'been there, done that centuries ago, no thanks' and headed off somewhere else. As far as Tegan's sense of smell could tell even the TARDIS automatic-cleaning atmosphere couldn't stop Adric's armpits ponging. With a sigh Tegan realised that Adric was right, however, about one thing. Picking arguments with the Doctor got neither of them anywhere and just created a bad atmosphere.

She was about to apologise, she really was, when with an exaggerated sigh the Doctor tugged his cream hat from his cricketing coat pocket, unfurled it and jammed it on his head.

'Well,' he said darkly, 'anyone who wants to join me outside is welcome to do so.' He looked straight at Tegan. 'We might as well find out just how far from Heathrow 1981 we actually are.'

'Doctor..?' Tegan started to say, but he just rolled his eyes towards the ceiling.

'Not now, Tegan, please. You have made your point.' And then, fixing her with a steely stare - the sort of stare that reminded her that he was nearly a thousand years old rather than about thirty; the eyes shrieked of an old and wise man, trapped inside a young man's body, never getting the automatic respect and reverence he deserved - the Doctor casually flicked back the red-topped lever that opened the TARDIS doors.

At which point Adric squealed like a young puppy as the doors moved inwards, pushing him to one side and sending book and half-gnawed apple in different directions.

'Owww!' he whined.

'That'll teach you to sit in stupid places,' Tegan heard herself say, automatically taking her angst and annoyance out on the boy.

Adric, naturally, took the comment as he did everything else - water off a duck's back.

Nyssa came into the TARDIS console room. The brown corduroy trousers she'd dug out of the TARDIS wardrobe matched her Traken jacket (even her hair was always immaculate and styled) and both looked as if they'd come straight from the shop. How *did* she do that?

'Oh. Have we landed somewhere?'

Immediately the Doctor's mood changed - and he beamed at his young protégée. 'Yes, Nyssa,' he said. 'And I think you might find this quite interesting.'

Ignoring Adric and Tegan, Nyssa strode towards the Doctor and together they left the ship.

With a last withering look at Adric, Tegan scurried out after them. 'Hey! Wait for me…' she yelled indignantly.

The Doctor was standing, one hand in his pocket, gesticulating with the other, and using his hat, now furled up again, as a pointer to show the particular marks and design points of the frankly dull, grey room they were in.

The Doctor and Nyssa had a rapport that Tegan never understood and was more than a little envious of. In many ways, Nyssa was like a young, female version of the Doctor.

They shared a love of science, of exploration and knowledge. They also shared an amazing ability to get lost, locked up, shot at and generally tumble into trouble wherever the TARDIS took them.

It amazed Tegan how quickly she had got used to the idea that it was the ship that actually guided them rather than the Doctor, who seemed content to ramble around the twelve (at least) galaxies at the mercy of the TARDIS's apparent whims.

Tegan was aware that Adric was at her shoulder, equally bemused by the room, his little snub nose almost twitching as he feigned disinterest when really he was just as curious as the other two - albeit through an innate need to be nosy rather than because of any genuine intellectual advancement he might achieve.

'It's big,' he said pointlessly.

'Any suggestions as to where we are, hmmm?' The Doctor looked down at Adric as a schoolmaster might look at a particularly dense pupil.

'A space ship?' offered Tegan, as encouragingly as she could. If they could get past the recent argument...

'Possibly, possibly,' the Doctor nodded, bringing her back into the field trip. He gave a couple of jumps into the air, to check the gravity. 'But there's no feeling of movement.'

'There is,' said Adric. 'But it's slower, more constant.'

'A space station,' Tegan offered up. 'It's going around very slowly, creating an artificial gravity. Or something.' She realised the others were looking at her. She'd got it wrong again.

'Spot on,' beamed the Doctor, pointing at her with his hat.

'Top of the class, Ms Jovanka.'

'It's from Earth,' Nyssa said dryly. 'As usual.' She was standing by a doorway. A sign in red and green displayed OPEN and CLOSE in English.

'Oh good..' murmured the Doctor, and Tegan wasn't sure if he was being sarcastic or not. 'I wonder where we are?'

Adric, impatient and pragmatic as ever, waddled towards the door and pressed the green OPEN panel. The door silently slid back.

'Adric!' cried the Doctor.

'What?'

With a sigh, the Doctor took Adric by the shoulders and eased him to one side. He looked through the door, left and right, before turning back to the boy. 'How many times must I tell you not to just open doors, hmmm?' He shook his head.

'Anything could have been out here.'

'But it wasn't,' was Adric's answer, 'there's no one here.'

'Hardly the point..?' started the Doctor before wandering out into the brightly lit corridor with identical grey metallic walls. He stuck his head back around the door of the room where his companions stood. 'Well? Coming or not?'

Tegan shook her head, taking up the rear as Nyssa and Adric duly followed him into the depths of the space station.

Hey, at least she'd known it was a space station. Things must be improving.

Commander Oakwood folded his arms, rested his feet on a chair opposite the one he was sitting on and let his head lean back against the rest.

Breakfast was barely over and they had a crisis. First one, admittedly, but a biggie. He still wondered about telling Earth but thought it better to wait until he had more facts. Or more possibilities, maybes and perhapses, so that he could at least anticipate Earth's questions and have answers, even if they weren't exactly the solutions that would be wanted.

There was a buzz on the door.

'Yup?' He didn't move or open his eyes. Important to let everyone know he was as calm as ever.

Sarah Townsend seemed equally unflustered as she marched in, a data pad in her hand, reading from the scrolling notes. She liked her pad. And why not? She was one of only three people to have one. Had this been a big frontier-expanded exploration ship everyone would have one.

Probably two or three. But not here. Not on a space station guarding a silly planet.

'Well?'

Sarah was frowning. 'Nothing sir, except a momentary energy surge in the stacks. Which is odd...'

'As there aren't any energy pods or devices in the stacks,'

Oakwood finished.

'Kris, this spike happened at exactly the same second we lost contact, give or take a point three shift.'

'Exact second?'

'As I say...'

'Give or take a point three shift. Hmmm' Oakwood stood up and straightened his uniform. 'Nothing, no matter how insignificant, should be overlooked CPO Townsend. Care to accompany me to the stacks?'

Grinning, Sarah Townsend nodded, automatically tapping her wrist communicator. 'Mr Braune, meet myself and the commander at Elevator 4, please.' A bleep by way of reply made her smile. Braune, their solitary security officer, had been with them for less than three months and already had it reputation for an inability to waste words.

She followed Oakwood out of his quarters and towards the elevator. Lieutenant Paladopous caught up with them. 'Hey, bossman, the readings from that energy spike are really weird.

Nothing I've ever encountered before, but at the same time there's nothing to link it with Dymok and the situation down there. It could be a coincidence.'

'Bloody convenient one,' Oakwood snapped. 'How weird is weird?'

'A displacement field in some respects. But whereas our displacement fields are used to move heavy machinery and cargo, this is more like it displaced... well, nothing. And everything. For a moment, it's like the air in the room was just eased around. Compacted.'

Townsend frowned now. ‘You mean, like something replaced the air?’

‘Molecularly yes. Like something just appeared in there. So the air molecules had to move around to accommodate it.

Which is, of course, nonsense.’

‘Absolutely. Arrant nonsense,’ confirmed Oakwood. ‘Still, let’s go see if the laws of physics have been changed or not.’

He buzzed for the elevator and the doors slid open, revealing a bear of a man: Braune.

‘Morning, Drew,’ Oakwood said brightly. Braune nodded his acknowledgement but said nothing. A smile passed between Townsend and Paladopous - Braune was acting exactly as they knew he would.

The rest of the elevator trip was in silence until they arrived at the stacks.

The stacks was the station’s ‘engine room’ - a vast series of interlinked box-like rooms with control panels featuring a life-support system, power, computer relay and similar essentials. There were also, along the walls on the outside of the station, a series of small cargo bays where supplies could be brought aboard and where links to ships could be attached.

The station was not designed to allow them to dock - indeed, the station only possessed one six-man scout craft attached by an umbilical arm directly below the stacks.

It was towards one of the cargo bays that Braune led the officers right now.

Suddenly he stopped and put his hand up, regulation style, to stop them.

They listened.

Voices. No one from the crew should be down here - it was all automated. Besides which, the voices weren’t talking about the current problems that were on everyone else’s lips.

‘Pirates?’ mouthed Townsend.

Paladopous shrugged but Braune shook his head and mouthed two words back, taking a side-arm from under his jacket as he did so.

‘Or saboteurs!’

‘Fascinating structure, this,’ the Doctor was saying. ‘One of a class of space station constructed, oh, around the mid-twenty-fourth century, when Earth’s empire was at its height.’

‘Why are humans so interested in empires?’ Nyssa asked.

The Doctor stopped suddenly and looked around him in every direction, as if trying to get his bearings. ‘Err... this way I think actually. Sorry, Nyssa? Oh yes, well you see whereas on Traken your union only stretched through five or six planets in your own solar system, Earthmen are a very inquisitive, adventurous breed. They hate confinement, always seeking to better themselves. And in any species, there’s always room for improvement. Wouldn’t you agree, Tegan?’

Tegan, however, had found something interesting. It was an identification plate embedded in a wall of the corridor.

The Doctor peered at the plate, then breathed hard on it and wiped the brass clean with his sleeve. ‘Well spotted, Tegan. Yes, look I was right. How nice.’ He tapped at the wordage. ‘Look Nyssa, commissioned in two thousand, three hundred and seventy-eight..’

‘Place looks a bit battered actually.’ That was Adric.

The Doctor briefly closed his eyes. ‘Yes, thank you, Adric, you may be right. The structure may have been out here a few years already. But essentially we’re looking at a classic of its type.’ He tapped the nameplate again. ‘Little Boy II,’ he read.

‘How typically human - irony, coincidence or ignorance, I wonder which?’

Nyssa frowned, clearly confused.

‘—Now I have become Death. The Destroyer of worlds.II‘ The Doctor peered at the inscription. ‘I do rather hope it’s coincidence.’ He wandered on and Tegan shook her head at Nyssa’s inquiry. The quotation was probably Keats or Wordsworth. Or maybe Shelley - that ‘Ozymandias’ thing, perhaps.

Adric pushed past them to keep up with the Doctor and then stopped. ‘Look,’ he said, as if he’d discovered a treasure chest rather than a directional indicator. ‘Elevator 4 is this way.’

‘Why are we suddenly looking for an elevator?’ Tegan asked, but before the Doctor could think of an answer, Adric had speeded up his pace and vanished around the corner, in the direction of the elevator.

With a groan, the Doctor started after him and then, as he reached the corner, stopped.

‘Oh dear,’ he said quietly, more to himself than Tegan or Nyssa.

As they caught up with him, Tegan could see the cause of the Doctor’s worry.

Adric was being held by a large bearded man who was holding a gun to his head. Three other people, two men and a woman, faced the Doctor and the two girls.

‘Terribly sorry,’ the Doctor began, ‘boyish enthusiasm.

Always gets him into trouble..’

The people opposite him weren’t buying any of it.

‘Who the hell are you?’

The Doctor raised his hands in surrender and Tegan did the same. After a moment’s pause, Nyssa seemed to grasp the idea of the gesture and did likewise.

‘Hello. My name is the Doctor. If you could just release Adric, it would make discussions less stressful for all of us, you know.’

Instead, the man with the gun gripped Adric tighter, making the boy wince.

The man who had spoken walked forward. Although he wasn’t obviously armed, Tegan was impressed by his presence. He seemed to be in his early forties, slightly thinning on top, and with a small scar above his left eye. His rich, jet black skin suggested to Tegan that his origins were probably somewhere in Ethiopia, or whatever the equivalent was by the twenty-fourth century

‘Commander..?’ This was a soft warning from the tall, blonde woman behind him. Beside her was a thin man with a lean, but attractive face which, despite his current frown, somehow looked as if it normally never stopped smiling.

The commander held up his hand to her and continued forward. ‘It’s OK, Chief. If this doctor makes any untoward moves, Mr Braune will shoot his young friend instantly.’

‘That really won’t be necessary. We’re not here to hurt anyone. We are just travellers who got a little lost.’

‘Yeah, too right,’ Tegan heard herself say. She wished she hadn’t - and a look from the Doctor suggested he echoed that.

‘Lost? Out here? I don’t think so, Doctor whoever you are.’

The commander didn't seem to be fazed by their appearance, however, Tegan noted. He seemed more curious than worried. 'You're from Dymok, right?'

'Traken actually,' offered Nyssa.

'And he's from Gallifrey,' Tegan said.

Again the Doctor screwed up his face in despair.

Hey, she'd only been trying to help.

'This is irrelevant,' he said. 'Please, our... craft is docked in your cargo bay back there. We'll just be on our way and you can forget all about us.'

The commander shook his head, the overhead lights glinting on his high cheekbones and strong jaw. 'No. I think we need to see a —craftll that has managed to dock with this station.'

'Of course,' the Doctor tutted. 'No docking system – access by transfer tube from a larger ship. This is a Mark VI, isn't it?'

The commander shrugged. He pointed back the way they had come.

'I had a model kit of one of these once, you know,' the Doctor continued. 'Lost the umbilical to the scout ship, though. Broke off I suppose. Nothing lasts..?'

His banter stopped as the commander propelled him onwards with the muzzle of his gun. With a shrug and a sigh, Tegan walked ahead. 'Guns. Always men with guns...'

'Break into space stations a lot, do you?' That was the woman, the chief. 'Don't look like traditional space pirates to me.'

The Doctor started to try and explain the rhetorical nature of Tegan's comment but the fourth, as yet undemonstrative, member of the crew bustled past them, a small portable doohickey bleeping in his hand. Tegan just knew it was homing in on the TARDIS and by the time they all reached the cargo bay, the man was walking around the craft, frowning.

'It's here, Commander, and yet it's not. It is registering but constantly fluctuating. It's like this thing isn't real..?'

'Thank you, Lieutenant,' the commander said. 'That's very helpful'

Tegan thought it was quite a good description of the TARDIS - she'd not been travelling in it for more than a few weeks now, and she certainly didn't understand it. However, she expected the Doctor to agree with the lieutenant's description, and was taken aback when he moved away from the commander's gun and snatched the contraption the young man was using right out of his hand.

'That's not right..' he muttered. 'Not right at all.' Then with a long sigh he lowered the device and, with a resigned look on his face, turned towards her.

'Tegan, have you been messing with the TARDIS controls again?'

'No,' she said. As if he could think she'd do that!

'No, Doctor, I am very much afraid to say that was me,' said a new voice, apparently out of thin air.

'Because if you have, we could be in trouble,' the Doctor continued as if no one had spoken. 'I really think it's time we left before involving these poor people in anything...

problematic.'

But Tegan wasn't really concentrating on him. Someone, someone not actually in the cargo bay with them, had spoken. She knew it wasn't just her that had heard it - Nyssa and Adric were frowning, looking around. But the Doctor and the station personnel ignored them, concentrating on the lieutenant's portable device. The Doctor pocketed it and reached out towards the TARDIS. He whipped his hand back suddenly.

'A force field!' he exclaimed.

'Who spoke just now?' was Tegan's question.

'Can someone let me go please,' was Adric's rather feeble whinge. At a nod from the commander the burly security man, Braune, indeed relaxed his grip on the boy, who walked jauntily over to Nyssa. He was all smiles, completely forgetting that it was his pathetic need to explore that had got them into this mess.

But the Doctor took no notice. He was standing staring at the TARDIS door, frowning hard. Then he shoved his hands disgruntledly into his pockets, turned around suddenly and stared at the commander.

'Time for the truth I'm afraid, Commander.'

'That is rather what I have been asking for,' retorted the older man.

'And *who* spoke?' asked Nyssa aside to Adric, but he just shook his head.

'Tell me when you lost contact with Dymok exactly. And why you haven't reported it to Earth yet, hmmm?'

The commander frowned and brought his gun up again, but this time the Doctor eased it back down with a finger, fixing the commander with... with *that* stare. The one Tegan knew so well. The one that said, 'I am a very old, impatient alien who is really fed up with having to lower himself to the level of mere humans but I will because you need to be humoured. And pitied.' *That* stare.

The commander clearly sensed something along those lines himself because he answered the Doctor's question, saying that the station had lost contact about fifteen minutes earlier.

How the Doctor knew anything of the sort had happened confused Tegan, but whatever his ploy was, it worked. As the Commander led them away from the TARDIS he was telling him everything, as if they were old friends. The Doctor had a way about him like that.

She glanced back to the TARDIS and then reached out to touch it.

To touch home.

The only home she had right now, lost in space and time until the Doctor fulfilled his promise and got her back to Earth. 1981. Real home.

And her hand pressed against the invisible force field that had kept the Doctor out.

She was dimly aware of the voice - from somewhere else entirely, she was sure.

'Hello, Tegan!'

And then she was somewhere else entirely.

Mysterreality

Everywhere Tegan Jovanka went she saw the same things.

Vast skyscrapers around the harbour area, shopping centres and business districts, cafes and parks.

Tall, gleaming glass structures mixed favourably with smaller, traditional brick buildings, each one nestling against the other, bisected occasionally by small streets dotted with the frontages of smaller businesses.

A typical city in fact. Brisbane. The nearest 'town' to the family's farm - and scene of many a Saturday afternoon escapade with Susannah, Hiss, Dave and Richard. Taking a ferry to the shops. Buying clothes and John Lennon and Abba records. Make-up and purses. All the things that thirteen-year-olds buy to tell their friends, parents and, more importantly, themselves that they are grown up. Have entered the world of the adults.

Hopping in and out of the larger stores, trying on ten different tops and skirts. Meanwhile the boys impatiently joking about tits and bums, completely ignorant of how their own bodies were changing in more subtle but, to the girls, equally obvious and far less attractive ways. God, their skin, their hair. Their breath!

Dashing into McDonald's, then down to the market, trying to find jewellery to shock everyone back at their respective homes. Richard getting his ear pierced because he'd seen someone from Britain on a pop show with a pierced ear and back-sprayed hair.

Tegan Jovanka knew central Brisbane backwards.

So why wasn't anything quite where it should be now?

She glanced over at her reflection in one of the eighteen-storey glass-fronted banks, the darkened glass reflecting back rather than enabling her to see in. But instead of her reflection staring at her, it seemed to be laughing at her. Pointing. And it was about twelve storeys taller than it ought to have been.

Oh, and Brisbane was completely deserted. Cars parked on the streets. Buses waiting at stops. But no one in them. No one in the streets. In the shops. In the cafés.

No birds in the air. No sounds of water even from the harbour.

Nothing. It was as though she was walking through a three-dimensional photograph of Brisbane.

Suddenly there was a sound. Something was falling from above her and she jumped aside just as a huge black bin-liner *thwumped* to the tarmac in front of her. Immediately it burst open, and scraps of paper were scattered in every direction, moved by a soundless, apparent gust of wind that Tegan couldn't feel. But one piece of paper didn't move. It lay there, curled at the edges on the dry street.

Tegan picked it up.

Hello Tegan it read.

There was another.

Or is it a dream.

And another. But there had only been two a second ago. *Or a nightmare.*

She scrunched the papers up and threw them aside.

'Hello?' Her voice sounded small amidst the vastness of the buildings. But it didn't echo back as she thought it might. It was almost as if the city was swallowing her voice. Most probably, she could only have been heard by someone standing right beside her.

'Hello?' she shouted, but still her voice came out barely louder than a *sotto voce* whisper.

'Oh rabbits - this is ridiculous.' She started to walk in the direction taken by the scraps of paper she hadn't caught.

Towards the harbour - she could see the water glistening in the bright sunlight.

'Doctor? Nyssa?'

If anyone knew what was going on, they would. Nothing. In desperation, and against her better judgement, she tried again.

'Adric?'

She thought she heard something behind her, but there was nothing there.

But as she wheeled back towards the harbour, the road ahead was blocked.

By a skyscraper.

'That wasn't there just now,' she said. With a shrug, she turned away and headed down a small side street that she remembered would take her towards the main open-air shopping precinct with its covered top.

Yes, that was still there. Except that the way was blocked by a wire-mesh gate with five... no six, huge padlocks keeping it closed. As she looked up she saw tiny slivers of jagged glass grow from the top of the gate until they were about seven inches high.

'Now I know I'm dreaming,' she muttered. Still, it meant that she wasn't supposed to go that way. A quick glance to the left confirmed the skyscraper still blocked off the harbour.

Tegan

continued

walking,

periodically

encountering obstacles that hadn't been there last time she looked, and suddenly it hit her. 'Of course!' she yelled. 'It's a maze!'

'At last,' came a voice from all around Brisbane and also close to her right ear.

'Hey, I've coped with worse dreams than this,' she said loudly, her voice again swallowed by the lack of reality. 'I fought off the Mara. I can deal with you.'

'Really?' came the voice. 'Bored with my little maze, are you? Well, let's see if I can jazz it up a bit for you, my friend.'

That hadn't been the response Tegan wanted. She had hoped that by bringing up her recent mental battle against the Mara, the disembodied entity that had tried to re-enter the real world by manipulating her dreams, her foe would realise that she was stronger than he anticipated. All that was going to happen, by the sound of it, was an upping of the ante.

Which was exactly what followed.

‘Adric!’

There in front of her was her travelling companion, hands in pockets, staring at her. No, staring *past* her. Tegan turned and was greeted by the sight of Nyssa, hands behind her back.

‘It’s very simple, my dear,’ said the disembodied voice. ‘You must escape from my maze. I imagine the rules are fairly obvious. You can’t cheat.’ Tegan wondered if she knew the voice. It wasn’t harsh, like the Mara’s had been. It was older, almost relaxed and kindly. This voice reminded her of her English grandfather - it had those same cultured tones, an easy but educated way of speaking. However, it also had a smugness that suggested to Tegan that it liked hearing itself. She, on the other hand, was already rather naffed off with it.

‘Anything else I need to know?’ she called out, and was pleasantly surprised that for the first time her voice carried.

Indeed, she felt a rush of air around her. Like the slight breeze from the surface of Brisbane harbour on a September morning.

As if to answer her, a third figure materialised at the far end of the street. It was a robot - a real 1950s idea of a robot. Tegan immediately thought of an old game she had owned as a child, a spelling game called Magic Robot. To spell a word out, the robot would walk towards the correct letters on a board. This robot was in the same mould - dull grey metal, square head and body, stubby jointed legs and arms, and a screen on its chest. On the screen, LEDs flashed, reading 1800.

‘Oh yes,’ the voice finally replied. ‘My robot is there to help you find your way out. I suggest you listen to him when he bothers to give you aid. And you have thirty minutes. Oh, and one last thing. Your young friends here are not your friends. At all. In any way whatsoever. I shouldn’t trust them if I were you.’

As if to confirm this, Nyssa brought out from behind her a small rectangular box with a nozzle on it. The ion bonder she had used to help the Doctor on Castrovalva. But Tegan knew it could also be used as a weapon and realised that, here, that was exactly what it was.

Adric meanwhile undid the rope belt around his waist and started making a lasso of it, wheeling it expertly around his head.

Tegan knew then these were not her real friends from the TARDIS. Nyssa was never that cold, and Adric never had that degree of hand-eye co-ordination!

The robot held up a big sign - a wooden arrow with the words THIS WAY on it, pointing to the left.

‘When do I start?’ asked Tegan, tense and ready.

As an answer, the LEDs began counting down on the robot’s chest. 1799, 1798, 1796...

And Tegan ran for her life.

The man atop the pyramid on Dymok was grimacing.

His eyes screwed tightly shut, he was concentrating. His...

their... last hope was being... abused.

‘No,’ he said to no one, his voice cracked and weary, his vocal cords dry through lack of use. ‘No, this cannot be right.

She is our salvation. She is our future. She is our destiny.’

His eyes snapped open, blazing with something new.

Something unbidden.

‘Do not interfere,’ screeched a new voice through his mouth

- harsh and bitter. ‘Leave us, old one. Your time is over.’

But, clearly struggling with whatever demon was within him, the old man managed to screw his eyes shut again, took a deep breath and hissed in his own voice ‘We shall meet our saviour. We shall meet our saviour. She is coming and there is nothing you can do about it. Nothing!’

Tegan dashed around a corner, expecting to find a way towards the harbour, but instead the robot was there, the countdown clicking away on its chest.

‘Who are you?’ she yelled out angrily. ‘I’m fed up with this!’

She was tired, rather grubby and knew full well that what was happening wasn’t right. She stopped. ‘All right, you win. I’m not running any more. You know why? Because this isn’t real. I know a dreamscape when I see one. My mind has been plucked by experts, you know!’

The robot began striding towards her, emitting a hydraulic hiss every time it curled a knee joint or an arm joggled.

Taking a deep breath, Tegan closed her eyes and turned her back on it. She opened her eyes again, preparing to march forward.

Before her stood a man. In his mid-thirties, his dark, almost olive skin gave him a Mediterranean look. He wore a long burgundy robe and on his head a small burgundy skullcap covered most of his black hair.

‘Help me,’ he was mouthing silently. ‘Help me!’

‘Who are you?’

He seemed to frown at her, as if noticing her for the first time.

And then, to her right, another figure walked out of the shadows. He looked like a traditional stage magician she’d seen in countless television shows and on circus posters. A Caucasian man dressed like a Chinese mandarin, and lacking nothing except the fake moustache and badly made-up Chinese eyes.

The man was tall and somewhat imposing. He wore a circular black hat embossed with many interweaving gold and silver threads. Upon his silken robe were coiled Chinese dragons, their eyes and scales picked out in rubies, emeralds, diamonds and even pearls.

‘This really is not good enough,’ he said to the mouthing figure. Tegan recognised his voice as the one that had started her on this foolish errand in the first place.

‘Hey, what do you think -’

The mandarin held a hand up towards her and Tegan felt an invisible grip around her throat - she couldn’t speak. Couldn’t utter a sound. ‘Be silent,’ he said rather pointlessly. Tegan didn’t have much choice.

The mandarin continued walking towards the mouthing man, who clearly hadn’t noticed him. The two figures collided but neither fell over. Instead, Tegan watched as the silent man seemed to fade away, almost as if the mandarin had absorbed him.

‘Some trick,’ she said, her mouth vocalising what she thought as the mandarin’s spell relaxed.

The mandarin turned to her. ‘You are no fun, Tegan Jovanka. You lack what I need. Be gone from my realm.’

‘Now wait a minute,’ she said. ‘You can’t just chase me around and then -’

The mandarin was suddenly face to face with her, as if by magic.

‘A Toymaker may do exactly what he desires in this universe, child. Remember that. Now. Go.’

Tegan found herself sitting on the floor outside the TARDIS.

Her companions and the crew members were grouped around her, concerned.

‘Are you all right?’ asked the Doctor.

Tegan nodded, allowing him and Oakwood to ease her up. She took a deep breath and snapped her eyes shut as she tried to regain her balance.

And two faces flashed through her subconscious. Firstly, the silent, mouthing man in purple. Secondly, what seemed to be a very old, frail man standing impossibly atop a pyramid.

Both were saying, ‘Tegan Jovanka. Help me!’

And they were gone.

‘What happened, Tegan?’

‘I… I don’t know...,’ she said, trying to hold on to a memory, a fragment of whatever had just gone through her mind. But whatever it was had gone. ‘I can’t remember a thing...’

The Doctor put an arm around her shoulders. ‘I think you’ve been overdoing it,’ he said.

‘I think you’re right,’ she mumbled back.

As the whole group left the cargo bay, Tegan took a last look back.

Standing in front of the TARDIS was the mandarin, a smug smile on his face, his hands enveloped in his sleeves.

So she screwed her eyes tight shut, took a deep breath and wished he would go away. When she looked again he was indeed gone, along with the last fragments of Tegan’s memory of him.

Tegan took a last look back.

Standing there, serene as ever, was the TARDIS.

Alone.

As it should be, surely?

With a shrug, she followed everyone else back down the corridor.

The Lights Are Going Out

She didn't like this, whatever and wherever 'this' was, but she wasn't going to let anyone else know that. 'This isn't Kent?' she asked.

'No, madam. This is my master's realm.'

'My toy room,' explained the Toymaker, materialising from behind a dark velvet curtain. 'Who do we have here, LeFevre?'

'A true gambler, Lord,' LeFevre replied.

'The stakes?' The Toymaker stared at the young woman and smiled. 'Somewhat high, I should imagine'

'Oh aye, and just why d'you imagine that, Mr Mandarin?'

The Toymaker bowed, arms folded within the large sleeves of his robe. 'Because, madam, you have an air about you. A certain ambience that suggests you live life to its fullest and, mayhaps, a bit beyond.'

The woman shrugged and slipped off her leather jacket, slinging it over her shoulder casually. 'Aye, perhaps I do, sir.

Care to tell me why I am here?'

'I am the Toymaker, madam. Monsieur LeFevre here is one of my most devoted acquisitions. We play games. For the highest stakes.'

The woman looked around the vast room she was in. Many life-sized statues were placed there haphazardly, facing different directions, in strange poses. It was as if someone had just dumped them and no one had got around to arranging the display area properly.

She walked up to one, a Roman legionary. Next to him was a woman in Edwardian dress - she even held a party invitation, intricately carved so that the words were readable, and wore a beautiful necklace. 'These are true works of art, I must say. Not that I'm an expert, mind, but the detail is amazing. Who's this fellow?'

She was looking at a tall man with a moustache. The cut of his suit seemed a bit... unusual and he was standing proud and erect. He was holding a wallet and she peered closely at it -

it contained bank notes but it wasn't the king's face on them: it was a woman. A queen she didn't recognise.

'Oh that's —Luckyll Bingham. Except he wasn't. Not one of the more pleasant members of your species and a quite dreadful sportsman. I picked him up out of the water on a rainy night in 1974. If he'd beaten me at backgammon, I'd have sorted out a spot of bother he'd got himself into. But I won.

I usually do.'

Of course it could all be tomfoolery, but something about those bank notes sent a shiver down her spine. And the look on the faces of some of the statues ranged from calm to terror, resignation to... bewilderment or surprise. These were not ordinary statues.

'I don't like to be rude, but I'd rather be on my way. I do have an aeroplane to deliver, you see.'

'A flyer? Is that what you do?' The Toymaker closed his eyes, and she noticed LeFevre did the same. She went rigid. It was as if someone was rifling through her mind, her memories. So many long-forgotten thoughts and feelings rushed into her mind's eye.

'What a fascinating life you have led, my dear. So many accomplishments - the world, your world that is, is justifiably proud of you. Now, let's see where Monsieur LeFevre rescued you from. Ah yes... Earth. The Thames estuary - near Kent, is it? Heading towards the English Channel, flying solo... 6th January 1941.'

The Toymaker's eyes popped open and he smiled. 'The Second World War. One of my favourite periods. Madam, allow me to introduce you to Lieutenant-Colonel Mark Conrad, US

Marine Corps.' He stood before a statue of a man in battle fatigues, although again she couldn't quite place the uniform.'

He wasn't much of a challenge, I must say. Part of the force that stormed Avranches in July 1944. Oh, of course, for you that hasn't happened.'

'The Americans are not taking part in this war,' the woman said flatly, but something about the Toymaker's confidence sapped hers.

'They will, madam, they will.' He clicked his fingers as if he was trying to remember something. Out of thin air, a mechanical man appeared and she stepped back. It was like something out of a Buck Rogers serial. On its chest was a small projection screen. The Toymaker pointed at it. 'Is this yours?'

On the screen was her plane - the one she had been flying when Monsieur LeFevre appeared beside her. At first she had assumed he was a stowaway but he told her to fly towards a cloud. The next thing she remembered was standing beside the plane in a vast wooden hangar, LeFevre telling her that his master wanted a word.

'Why am I here, Mr Toymaker?'

'I am preparing a new game for one of my old foes, madam. I'm seeking out some extra players and Monsieur LeFevre saw you on my memory mirror and thought you looked as if you enjoyed a good challenge.'

'I am on official government business, sir. There is a war on in case you have forgotten, and the Auxiliary Air Force need me to get that plane to... to...'

'Yes?'

'I. .. I can't remember where I was flying to...'

The Toymaker smiled. 'I think she is coming around to our way of thinking.'

'If you torment cardsharps and such like, why am I here?'

She finally put aside her fears. Whatever phantom zone she had found herself in, she would conduct herself with all the strength of a true daughter of Hull. 'I don't gamble!'

'Don't gamble?' The Toymaker laughed loudly. 'Don't gamble. Dear lady, you are in a rather flimsy flying contraption, crossing a vast expanse of water amidst some of the worst weather of the year, during a war, and you say you don't gamble. You were gambling your life versus the elements.

Merciful heavens, madam, the greatest gamble possible. And you lost!' He roared the last words out, almost shaking with outrage. 'And you say you don't gamble. Monsieur LeFevre saved your life, madam, offered you a place in history. Play the game and you will reach your destination safe and sound.

Fail and... well, what can I say?' The image of the plane vanished from the metal man's chest, leaving the Toymaker holding a scale version of it in his hand.

A model. A toy.

And yet something told her it was more than that. The scratches she could see on the wing tip were similar to the gash her craft had received moments earlier. And that crack in the cockpit...

‘My God,’ she breathed.

‘How very kind, but —lord‖ will do. Or —master‖.’ The Toymaker pointed to a table that hadn’t been there seconds beforehand. ‘A simple game of cribbage, madam. How can you lose?’

She looked at the model aircraft, which LeFevre had taken from his master, and her eyes were drawn to the empty cockpit. Then she looked at the statues.

Or whatever they really were.

And she fixed the Toymaker with a steely stare for which she was famous back home. ‘I doubt I have a chance to win, Toymaker, but I won’t go down without a fight. Prepare for the crib game of your life.’

‘I love spirited people’ He looked over to LeFevre.

‘Refreshments, Gaylord. And my congratulations on finding me the first worthy opponent since... well, yourself!’ He began dealing.

‘You begin, Ms Johnson. After all, it’s your game...’

Pretending to See the Future

‘And you say the communications were cut off just as we...
arrived?’
‘Almost to the second, Doctor.’
‘Well,’ the Doctor smiled at Commander Oakwood, ‘I can see why you thought we might be involved.’
‘Thought?’
‘Ah, so you still do, eh?’ The Doctor took a step back. ‘We really are on the side of the angels, you know.’
Adric butted in, unhelpfully adding ‘And when we do something wrong, then you’ll know not to trust us.’ The silence which greeted this made him frown.
‘Oh, thank you, Adric,’ the Doctor said. ‘Helpful as ever.’ He looked sheepishly at the bridge crew. ‘What my young friend here is trying to say is - ’
‘Irrelevant, Doctor,’ cut in Oakwood. ‘Fact is, we haven’t got a clue what’s happened on Dymok and, convenient as it would be if you were to blame, it would be an enormous coincidence... not to mention a stroke of luck for our security teams.’
Nyssa piped up. ‘We have a saying on Traken about that -
we say that the universe is made up of coincidences all coming together to make one happy accident.’
Oakwood, Townsend and the others gave her quizzical looks.
‘Tell me, Doctor,’ said Paladopous, ‘d’you travel with these people out of friendship or have you committed a crime and they are your penance?’
The wave of short, but necessary, laughter, broke the tension on the bridge and everyone relaxed a bit, although Nyssa and Adric were left wondering what they’d said.

The Doctor put on his half-frame glasses and began sifting through the traffic records on Townsend’s computer screen, replaying the last transmissions from Dymok, while Tegan tried to avoid being stared at by Paladopous.
After a few moments she turned round to him and, slightly more forcefully than even she intended, she went straight for the jugular. ‘Is it common practice to eye up every woman on your station, or are you just really sad?’
Oakwood tried to stop a smile growing on his face, while Townsend raised an eyebrow in mock alarm. Paladopous had the decency to look embarrassed, made an excuse and left the bridge.
‘Tegan,’ the Doctor leaned towards her. ‘We are trying to make friends here.’
‘You may be, Doctor, but I just want to go home.
Remember?’
He gave her another one of *those* looks. ‘We need to talk about things. What happened when you tried to touch the TARDIS?’
Tegan opened her mouth to speak but no words came out.
She didn’t know the answer to his question, and this worried her. As usual, though, she answered with a touch more aggression than she intended. ‘What do you mean?’
The Doctor smiled suddenly, and Tegan felt herself calm down, almost as if someone had turned off her aggro switch.
‘Well,’ he said, ‘as soon as I can find out what the problem is here, we’ll have proved our innocence and can be on our way.’
‘And will that be difficult?’ she hissed at him, hoping no one would hear them.
‘In what way?’
Tegan sighed. ‘In every way. You know, in that it’s difficult to get me home. In that it’s difficult to land on a planet when you want a space ship and vice versa. In that it’s difficult to go somewhere where people don’t start dropping dead by the dozen...’
Tegan stopped, realising she had gone too far.
The Doctor peered over the top of his lenses. ‘Tegan, has anyone told you how nice it is to have you around?’

‘Not recently, no’
‘No? Hmmm, I wonder why that is?’ The Doctor returned to his task.
With an exaggerated sigh Tegan straightened up and smoothed down her uniform. (Nyssa had promised to go through the TARDIS wardrobe with her soon so that they could both choose something new to wear instead of forever getting the TARDIS to work its overnight magic on her lilac air hostess outfit.)
Weird that - so far, she and Adric had always worn what they were wearing when they arrived in the TARDIS. Even Nyssa had only swapped an impractical skirt for trousers. It was as if none of them wanted to feel settled, to feel relaxed enough to change their clothes. As if the Doctor might actually live up to his promise and take them home - in her case, ready to board that aeroplane and start her old life again.
Or perhaps all three of them were just clinging on to the remnants of their old lives, their previous existences which, deep down, they knew they would never get back to.
Tegan shook that thought out of her mind - it was for a less stressful time.
Everyone on the bridge was intent on their work, and she could see nothing of Adric and Nyssa.
Touching the TARDIS... she had reached out to touch the TARDIS and... Something was nagging at the back of her mind, something she meant to tell the Doctor.
For some reason she started thinking about Brisbane.
Home. Her father’s farm.
Why now?
She looked back at the Doctor, busy working alongside Townsend, and realised that whatever it was she needed to tell him was irrevocably gone.
Which meant it probably wasn’t important.

Stung by Tegan's rebuke, Paladopous had met up with Nyssa and Adric in the mess, where Braune had escorted them a few moments earlier. The lieutenant was now preparing something for them to eat - or rather, preparing something for Adric. Nyssa just wanted a glass of water.

'So, where are you from?' He decided he needed to strike up a conversation, and that was as good a place to start as any.

'Traken,' said Nyssa.

'Traken? Never heard of it. Is it in Europe?'

'Don't be silly,' said Adric between mouthfuls of pink goo,

'it's in another part of the galaxy.'

'Mettula Orionis,' Nyssa said. 'Or was'

'Was?'

Nyssa shrugged. 'It was destroyed. The whole constellation.

By the man in my father's body.'

Paladopous wondered if he should follow this one up.

'Come again.'

'Oh look, it's really quite simple. I should have thought even an average-intelligence Earthman would grasp it,'

snapped Adric. 'The Doctor's oldest enemy, the Master, killed Nyssa's stepmother and then absorbed her father because he was dying.'

'Who, her father?'

'No! The Master, of course. He needed a new body and he used the power of the Source on Traken to merge with Tremas and thus rejuvenate. Then later, when he attempted to take over the universe, he used entropy to completely wipe out the system Nyssa comes from. She's the only survivor.'

Paladopous wasn't entirely sure how much of this was true and how much was the food doing something odd to Adric's brain. He looked at Nyssa. 'Is this true? Is your father trapped inside this Master character?'

Nyssa said it was. 'I'm not sure how much of my father is still there or whether he's 100 per cent the Master now. I once asked the Doctor if there was any way to separate them, get my father back.'

'And what did he say?'

'I... I don't think he ever gave me an answer. I don't suppose it's possible to do so, really. But I do often think about my father. When I close my eyes at night, I see him, my mother, Kassia, the Keeper, all of them in the garden on Traken' she sighed deeply. 'I miss him enormously.'

Paladopous reached out and touched her small hand, hoping she wouldn't react like Tegan. Instead, Nyssa just looked down and then smiled at him. 'I'm all right really. I've got my studies, my science experiments and everything in the TARDIS. The Doctor is fun, and Tegan and Adric are there. We all keep each other sane, I suppose.'

'I'm an orphan, too,' said Adric, presumably noticing that he hadn't yet become the centre of attention.

'Really?'

'Yes, and I'm from another universe entirely. My parents are dead, my brother's dead, my people are really spiders grown inside river-fruit. It's great where I come from' He paused. 'And the Doctor was different then, too. Much older-looking. It's funny - as he gets older, he becomes a younger man.' He grinned at Paladopous. 'Isn't life odd?' He finished off his food.

'Anyway, I preferred the old Doctor.'

Adric!'

'It's true, Nyssa. It was just him and me for ages. We had adventures and everything' He reached out for his drink but as he touched it, the world seemed to swivel and he fell off his chair.

'What the...'

He reached out to grab Nyssa as he fell.

But she wasn't there. Wherever 'there' was.

He wasn't in the station anymore - he could feel a wind and see leaves rustling on trees.

And rolling along the floor towards him was a river-fruit. He was home - on Alzarius!

'Adric!'

He whirled around - the voice, it was... it was Varsh. His brother! And there were his parents, Morell and Tanisa! But weren't they dead?

'Come home, Adric,' they said in unison. 'We need you here. The Starliner needs your mathematical excellence - we can't start it without you.'

'No, Adric, here.'

He turned, and saw Deciders Draith and Garif staring at star charts. They were the leaders of the colony - surely he had to obey them.

'Adric,' Draith was saying, his long grey beard blowing in the wind, 'you've seen the universe. Come and use your skills to plot us a route home.'

'Adric?'

It was Jiana, his old friend. He had grown up with her, but she had run away from him when he said he wanted to be an Outler, a rebel, like Varsh. He never saw her again...

'Adric, you are so brave, so clever. You've done all those things. Beaten the vampires, saved the Tharils, fought the Master, trapped the Ferutu and even burned up the Terileptils and their plague rats. You're my hero' And Jiana swooned against him.

Gingerly, he eased her off and went to give the Deciders a quick once-over, calling to his family that he'd be with them in a moment.

'You've got it all wrong,' he said with a deep sigh as he looked at the star charts. 'Why didn't you listen to what the Doctor told you to do?'

The Doctor had, of course, told them exactly how to get home but, as usual, no one had listened to him.

No one except Adric.

He had been there the longest. Aboard the TARDIS, that is.

Ever since Romana and K9 had stayed in E-Space, it had just been the Doctor and him. Exploring the universe. Having lots of adventures. Together they had visited planets of fire and water, faced off armies of monsters and defeated terrible despots. Armed with the Doctor's guile and cunning matched with Adric's charm, wit and mathematical skills, they had vanquished the wrongdoers wherever they had gone.

The Doctor liked Adric - that was obvious. They had been a team.

A family.

Until the girls came along.

'I am your friend, Adric. I am someone who understands you.

Who wants to help you,' said a new voice from... the air.

‘Who are you?’

Then Adric wasn’t beside the Deciders any more.

Unsurprisingly, neither Jiana nor his family were with him either. He now stood inside the Deciders’ hall... no, he was on the bridge of the Starliner, the huge ship that was going to take his people back to Terradon, the planet they’d never actually been to. Which was certainly a bit confusing, but he understood it.

The man who was talking to him was standing at the top of the command centre, where Decider Draith usually stood.

The man who was talking to him was about the same height as the Doctor - the real Doctor, the one Adric had originally met, rather than the one he had become. The Doctor Adric knew. And trusted.

The Doctor Adric missed.

The man who was talking to him was dressed in a strange long robe decorated with dragons and swirly patterns, and wore a straight flat hat, similarly embroidered. He was smiling, holding his hands outstretched, welcoming.

‘How can you help me? I don’t need help. I’m fine.’ Adric knew he had often been suckered into other people’s plans. At least, he knew that’s how the *others* thought of it. But no - he always had a plan. He always pretended to go along with people, ready to switch back to the Doctor at the last minute.

But not this time. This time he would not play the fool. He would not give Tegan the chance to put him down in that oh-so-superior way she did.

He wouldn’t need those pitying looks from Nyssa, who always said she knew what he had been planning, but still joined forces with the new Doctor and Tegan and assumed he had been fooled.

Not this time.

This time Adric would show them.

‘Good. That’s very good.’ The man’s smile widened.

‘What’s good?’ asked Adric. ‘I don’t understand.’

‘Oh yes you do, young Adric. You understand very well. We are alike, you and I. Strangers in a strange land. Losers in a lost land even.’

‘How so?’

Suddenly the man was right in front of Adric, although he hadn’t seen him move. He put his face very close, and Adric could feel his breath, smell how sweet and nice it was, feel tiny gusts of air on his nose each time the man breathed out as he spoke.

‘I, too, am from another universe, Adric. Born elsewhere and forced to live out my life in a place not my own. Oh I know you *wanted* to travel with the Doctor and see places you had only ever dreamed of before. But the truth is, you want to go home now, don’t you?’

Adric shook his head. Of course he didn’t. He liked it here with the Doctor. If only he was still *the* Doctor, rather than *this* Doctor...

‘Tell me, Adric, what happened? Who took away your Doctor?’

Adric was intrigued now. ‘You understand regeneration?

Are you a Time Lord, too? Like the Doctor?’

The man smiled, and breathed out again.

‘Oh no, Adric. No, I am far more than just a Time Lord’

‘Who are you?’

‘I have had many names - my people are... were... weavers.

Spinners. Creators of dreams, Adric. But I got bored and left their tiny, insular existence and struck out on my own. Now, Adric, now this universe is my playground.’

‘Playground?’

‘Yes, Adric. Playground’

The man was no longer in front of him. This time he was standing to Adric’s right, beside a crudely built robot, all square and grey, with huge round eyes, a rectangular slit for a mouth and clenched fists for hands.

And they were... nowhere. Certainly not on the Starliner. ‘I don’t think we’re on Alzarius any more...’ Adric murmured, looking around at the vast room they were in. He couldn’t see exactly where the walls ended and the ceiling began. It all seemed to be one big dome, marked out with black and white checks - like that game he had played with Nyssa once. Draughts.

The man was on the far side of the dome. He started walking towards the wall, only stepping on the black squares, which seemed to enable him to walk up the walls, on to the ceiling. He wandered towards Adric until they were face to face - the man was hanging upside down.

‘Which of us is the wrong way up, Adric?’

‘You are.’

‘Are you sure?’

‘Yes.’

‘Why?’

‘Because...’ Adric realised he actually didn’t know why.

Maybe he *was* upside down and this magician was the right way up. Adric looked over to the robot, but it was standing on a wall, at a right angle to both him and the...

‘Toymaker,’ the man said helpfully. ‘Sorry, reading minds is second nature to me. I’ll stop.’

He snapped his fingers and all three of them were side by side, the same way up. But Adric wasn’t sure which of them had actually moved - the room had no horizons which would have allowed him to gauge this.

‘So, you don’t need help, is that right?’

Adric nodded. ‘Everything is perfectly all right, you see.’ The Toymaker nodded slowly. ‘Fair enough. If you do ever need anything, Adric, just ask me. Next time we meet.’

‘When will that be?’

‘Oh, that depends on the Doctor.’ The Toymaker laughed. ‘But to be honest, I think it’ll be really rather soon. You see, it is time for me to get out my favourite toys. Look’

An ornate, lacquered table had appeared beside them. On it were four rag dolls, recognisable by their clothing. One doll of Adric, one each of Nyssa, Tegan and the Doctor.

‘You’ll have to make a choice very soon, Adric. Time is not, as they say, on your side.’

And before Adric could ask what he meant by that, he found himself sprawled on the floor of the mess, back aboard the *Little Boy II,* with Nyssa and Lieutenant Paladopous helping him up.

'You took a bad turn there, Adric,' Paladopous was saying.

But Adric just stared into space, desperately trying to remember something... somewhere or someone...

Garden City

‘This way, please.’

The American man led them through the meadow, clearly taking them somewhere. But where?

The Honourable Mrs Henry Rugglesthorpe stumbled over yet another clump of heather, trying to hold her long skirts above the grabbing stems. Beside her, the two children looked around them in bewilderment. Behind were the staff, equally amazed.

‘Mother, what is this place?’ asked the younger child, a pubescent boy wearing a well-cut school uniform. ‘How did we get here?’

Mrs Rugglesthorpe was wondering that herself. She recalled Eliza announcing that there was a visitor to see her -

‘An overseas gentleman, if you will, ma’am,’ Eliza had said.

Then the tall, bearded man had walked into the living room without being announced. He bowed slightly and looked at Eliza.

‘That will be all, Watkins,’ he said quietly.

Only now did it occur to Mrs Rugglesthorpe that few people outside her own household knew Eliza’s surname.

Why would they? How would they?

The man had settled into one of the leather armchairs and looked around him, as if he had not been in such a place for a while. And yet he carried himself as befitted society - he was no lower-class jackanapes, despite his accent. A lot of Americans had settled here after the Great War, but many of them were either cheap labourers or kings of industry. This man was neither - he was... unique.

‘Your husband has been called away on a... a business trip,’ he finally declared. ‘It is my employer’s desire that you join Sir Henry as soon as possible.’

‘That will not be possible right now, Mr...?’

‘LeFevre, ma’am. Gaylord LeFevre, late of New Orleans, now a hard-working servant to my most generous master. As, I am happy to say, is your husband.’

‘My husband,’ Mrs Rugglesthorpe replied tartly, ‘is a prominent backbencher. He has no —master‖ bar His Majesty’s parliament. It is not allowed. Therefore I have no reason to believe anything you say, Monsieur LeFevre. Kindly leave or I shall have my butler call for the assistance of the local constabulary to have you escorted -’

LeFevre suddenly offered something to her - something that he had not been carrying when he came into the room and yet was now simply... there. In his hands was a long, thin box with a silver clasp. Chinese by design, she thought. ‘Open it, please,’

he said. ‘It will explain everything.’

Mrs Rugglesthorpe refused, naturally. After all, who knew what it might be? She was beginning to feel alarmed by LeFevre’s presence when the door to the room opened. For a moment, she hoped it was Jenkins, or even Tom the footman.

Even Eliza - someone who could rid her of this bothersome stranger.

Instead it was Charles, her thirteen-year-old son.

‘Mother?’

‘Leave, Charles. Now. Call Jenkins to me’

But Charles Rugglesthorpe was fascinated by the object he saw the stranger holding out to his mother. As if sensing this, LeFevre turned to him.

‘Charles, do you know what this is?’ He opened the lid and showed the boy the contents.

‘It’s a chess set,’ Charles said.

LeFevre nodded. ‘A special set, Charles. Carved from wood from the Far East.’

‘It’s silly,’ Charles said. ‘Look at it.’

LeFevre shrugged. ‘Tell me what is wrong with it, Charles.’

Mrs Rugglesthorpe felt a chill run down her spine. She wanted to cry out, to run forward, knock the chess set to the floor.

But she couldn’t move - it was as if she was floating in treacle. And yet Charles and LeFevre weren’t affected. She tried to shout to Charles, but she couldn’t draw the breath needed to whisper - let alone shriek.

All she needed to do was stop Charles touching the chess set - somehow she knew that was where the danger lay.

Instinct? Possibly. But her instincts had rarely let her down in the past.

Charles reached out. ‘It’s incomplete - there’s only a white set,’ he said.

‘Oh dear,’ said LeFevre. ‘Show me where the other pieces should be.’

Mrs Rugglesthorpe’s last thought before she blacked out was to scream at Charles not to touch. But she was mute and he was inquisitive. And by the time his hand touched the edge of the chess board, her world had sunk into a cold darkness.

The next thing she recalled was walking through the meadow. Beside her were Charles and her daughter, Elisabeth Jane. LeFevre was in front and Eliza, Jenkins and Tom the footman followed on behind.

‘Not far now, my friends,’ LeFevre called out. ‘Just through that gate into the next field.’

And Mrs Rugglesthorpe noticed for the first time that he was not actually walking on the ground, but just slightly above it.

Walking on air?

She shot a look of confusion at the three servants, but they seemed to be idly chatting, as if this was some sort of picnic.

Elisabeth Jane was picking flowers and even Charles had begun laughing as he chased a rabbit.

‘No,’ she muttered. ‘No, this is wrong. We were in the house, in the living room’ But no one seemed to take any notice, if they even heard her.

They were at a gate in a high hedgerow that separated the meadow from the next patch of land.

Bird song greeted them as LeFevre held the gate open and ushered them through.

They saw not grass, as she had expected, but a huge expanse of black and white squares.

‘A chess board,’ Charles murmured.

Trying not to show her terror, Mrs Rugglesthorpe reached out to LeFevre. ‘Monsieur, kindly explain this tomfoolery.’

‘Madam, rest assured this is not tomfoolery,’ said a new voice to her right. ‘My games are never to be taken lightly.’ The speaker was an older man, who was smiling charmingly with his mouth but not, she noted, with his eyes. His eyes were quite, quite dead-looking.

‘I am the Toymaker,’ he said. ‘Welcome to my domain.’

‘Where on earth...’ started Jenkins, but the Toymaker held up a hand.

‘Not on Earth, Mr Jenkins. Not any more.’ The Toymaker took a step to the left. ‘I believe you know this gentleman.’

‘Henry,’ breathed Mrs Rugglesthorpe, relieved. ‘Oh Henry, what is going on? Who are these awful people?’

Sir Henry couldn’t speak; he lacked a mouth. Indeed, his skin was slightly shiny, almost glazed. And his cheeks were very red, as if they had been painted. His eyes stared dimly ahead, registering nothing.

‘You’ll have to excuse your husband, but I’m afraid he’s not quite the man he was.’

‘What have you done, you fiend?’

The Toymaker walked towards the centre of the chess board. ‘Your husband, Mrs Rugglesthorpe, is a very bad card player and a sore loser. I have met a lot of bad card players over the aeons - indeed, Monsieur LeFevre will confirm that but few have been as disappointing as your husband.’

He stretched his arms out, as if in apology. ‘I offered him a second chance. An opportunity to redeem himself. All he had to do was play a simple game of snakes and ladders but, alas, it was not to be. He didn’t really try, you see.’ The Toymaker said this as if it explained everything. ‘No stamina for all those ladders, no skill at avoiding the reptilian aspect of the game, either. So, well, he lost. And so, by default, have all of you.’

There was suddenly something at the back of Mrs Rugglesthorpe’s mind. A memory of a giant, brightly coloured game board, filled with stepladders and hissing snakes... but it was like a dream from... a long time ago.

Or yesterday.

She couldn’t be sure, but it struck a chord.

The Toymaker clicked his fingers and from nowhere came a terrible creature made of metal, which walked like a man but made a strange noise with every step - akin to that made by a steam train as it departs a station. In its crude hand it held the chess set LeFevre had brought to the house. There was still only one team. The creature dropped the white pieces to the ground and instantly the far end of the chess-board meadow was filled with them. All were on the correct squares, all were the size of human beings, albeit in the form of traditional chess sculptures.

‘You’ll notice, Mrs Rugglesthorpe, that I appear to have lost my red set. And that is where you come in.’ He smiled and pointed to her entourage.

Mrs Rugglesthorpe was alone, apart from the Toymaker and her glassy-eyed husband.

The three of them now stood at the other end of the meadow, next to an accurately positioned red chess set that was minus two pieces.

And Mrs Rugglesthorpe wanted to scream.

Both rooks had Eliza’s face carved into the battlements.

Each knight had its horse face replaced by that of poor Jenkins. And the bishop was clearly Tom the footman. But these weren’t facsimiles. The faces were moving, contorting as if trying to stretch away from their new bodies.

They were screaming silently.

But before Mrs Rugglesthorpe could do the same, the eight pawns wobbled around to face her. And each alternate one was an identical terrified, painted face of either Elisabeth or Charles.

‘Just think,’ the Toymaker said in her ear. ‘Despite your husband’s inadequacy, the two of you can now achieve your dreams. You are now royalty.’

And Mrs Rugglesthorpe realised she was towering over her pawns, over her bishops, her knights and her rooks.

Beside her was her king - Henry’s face staring blankly ahead, unaware of anything.

And she was the queen.

Just as she had always been, ready to battle it out with the white team opposite.

At the edge of her mind she felt sure there was something she needed to think about, something to remember.

No. No, of course not, it was time for a new match.

Time to do as she always had - to play to win for her master.

What else was a red queen to do?

Taking Sides Again

‘Are you mad, Doctor?’

The Doctor sighed. Couldn’t this silly Oakwood man see that what he was suggesting was by far the quickest solution to their problem? No, clearly not, as he was stomping around his bridge, getting flustered. Most likely because he couldn’t see a logical reason to ignore the Doctor’s idea and therefore was getting frustrated.

‘To go down to Dymok would break every rule, every reason for this station’s existence. What you’re suggesting is the equivalent of treason. Not to mention a court martial for any of the crew who go with you.’

‘Let us go by ourselves, then,’ Tegan suggested - the first sensible thing she had said all day.

Oakwood shook his head. ‘Riiiight, just let the four of you jump into your weird space ship and vamoose, leaving me no closer to solving the problem.’

‘We’ll solve your problem,’ insisted Tegan.

‘I rather think, Tegan,’ the Doctor said quietly, ‘that Commander Oakwood feels we’re more likely to just run away and do nothing.’

Tegan laughed. ‘Doesn’t know you, then, does he.’ She faced Oakwood. ‘Believe me, Commander, I wish the Doctor was the sort to just give up and go. Get me home, perhaps. But oh no. You’ve got a mystery here - and that is the cheese in whatever mousetrap he wants to get caught in.’

‘Nice analogy, Tegan,’ the Doctor muttered, easing her aside, and so facing Oakwood himself. He slowly took off his glasses, folded them and placed them in his breast pocket without actually taking his gaze from Oakwood’s eyes. ‘Two things, Commander. Firstly, Tegan is right - I sense something here that isn’t very straightforward. Something... familiar even. Secondly, if I am going to help you, I need a shuttle to go down there. My TARDIS isn’t too good on short hops.’

‘No, it’s not,’ Tegan murmured. ‘Still, try it. You never know, maybe it’ll accidentally take us to Heathrow.’

The Doctor ignored her. ‘So I promise you, Commander, I want to sort this mystery out just as much as you do.’

Oakwood shook his head and turned away. The Doctor let his shoulders slump. Tegan put a hand on one.

‘What did you mean, —something familiarll?’

‘Why?’

Tegan frowned. ‘I don’t know, really. There’s something at the back of my mind... Remember at the TARDIS, something happened to me?’

The Doctor quickly turned to face her, bending slightly, staring hard. ‘Yes, Tegan. What was it?’

‘I... I don’t know, but there is... was something.’

‘Something important? Something I need to know?’ Tegan nodded. ‘I’m sorry...’

‘Think, Tegan! It could be important.’

CPO Townsend started frowning at her console and then tapping furiously at it.

Oakwood was beside her in a moment. ‘Problem?’

Townsend nodded but said nothing. Instead she pointed something out to him. Oakwood’s eyes widened and he hurried to the readouts on his own console. They confirmed her readings.

‘Anyone care to say what’s going on?’

If the Doctor thought Tegan’s question was out of order, he didn’t say so. More likely he was equally intrigued.

‘Massive energy spike emanating from Dymok,’ murmured a telemetry technician called Desorgher, tapping away at his own readings.

‘Aimed directly at us,’ Townsend added.

‘What sort of energy?’ The Doctor was at Townsend’s side, peering closely at the facts and figures in front of him.

‘Unknown,’ replied Desorgher. ‘But it’s aimed directly at us.

specifically... at the bridge...’ Desorgher trailed off, staring at the centre of the bridge.

One by one, the others, including the Doctor, followed his gaze.

‘Tegan?’

She stood, head lolled to one side as if she was asleep, her eyes wide open. Not blinking.

Her mouth dropped open and a voice came out. She didn’t form the words. They just came from within her.

‘Come to Dymok,’ said a rasping voice. ‘It is imperative that you bring her to Dymok.’

‘Bring who?’ the Doctor asked loudly. ‘Tegan?’

‘This one,’ replied the alien sounds from the girl. Oakwood walked towards her.

‘I really don’t think that’s a good idea...’ the Doctor started, but Oakwood ignored him.

‘Who are you?’ asked the commander.

‘Come to Dymok. Now.’ Tegan spasmed and fell into Oakwood’s arms, gasping. Holding her, as Townsend called for a medical officer, the commander turned to the others.

‘Best invite I’ve ever had,’ he said. ‘Townsend, Desorgher, Braun, you’re with me. You too, Doctor.’

‘That’s very... trusting of you, Commander,’ the Doctor said quietly.

‘Have I any choice, Doctor? I want... I need to solve this and get things back to normal. I have to take whatever opportunities offer themselves up.’

The Doctor smiled at him. ‘Which is why you are the commander,’ he said quietly.

The doors to the bridge slid open, disgorging Paladopous, Adric, Nyssa and an albino female medic called Dieter, who joined the Doctor beside Tegan.

‘I need my team with me,’ the Doctor said. ‘Particularly Tegan.’

‘Is that wise?’

‘Possibly not, but whoever that was, it used Tegan as a medium. It may need to do so again. And I’m sure she won’t mind.’

‘I’m not,’ muttered Adric, evidently taking in what had happened as quickly as usual.
‘Niki, the station is yours until we get back,’ Oakwood said.
‘Adric.’ The Doctor put an arm around the boy’s shoulders.
‘Oh no...’ Adric started, but the Doctor cut him off.
‘No, Adric. You’re staying here. I need someone to look after the TARDIS.’
‘Leave Nyssa, then’
‘If Tegan is possessed again, I may need Nyssa’s knowledge of bioelectronics to help her.’
Adric almost stamped in frustration. ‘Tegan’s always being possessed! She just wants attention.’
The Doctor took a deep breath, then spoke softly in the boy’s ear. ‘I need someone here I trust. Implicitly. If for any reason something goes wrong, you are far more capable of persuading Lieutenant Paladopous to keep hunting for us than Nyssa is. Agreed?’
Adric threw him a look - he knew he was being sidelined, but also knew the Doctor was right. It was a sort of compliment, but the old Doctor would have handled things far better. ‘Oh, all right,’ he said eventually.
‘Thank you,’ the Doctor smiled. ‘It’s always good to know I can count on you.’
‘Doctor?’ called Oakwood from the exit. ‘The shuttle bay is this way.’ He hurried over and took the comatose Tegan’s weight from Dieter, sharing it with Braune.
‘Commander,’ Townsend thought she was whispering, but the Doctor could hear her. ‘Commander, does it strike you as odd that one minute the Doctor’s talking about wanting to go to Dymok, you say no, and then the girl throws this fit. It could all be an elaborate hoax.’
Oakwood nodded. ‘Could be, but that’s why I went close up to her. It was a very convincing act, if that is what it was. But just in case, your job, Sarah, is to keep a close eye on the Doctor.
Keep Braune up to speed at all times.’

She nodded and they continued walking.
The Doctor paused briefly, clicked his tongue in despair and continued towards the shuttle bay.
This was going to be a very difficult expedition.

Adric watched bitterly as the shuttle departed, tracing its course towards Dymok on the station’s vast holographic image screen.
As he stared he became aware that Paladopous was standing behind him.
‘I know how you feel,’ said the human.
‘Do you? I doubt it.’
‘It’s not easy always being the one left behind. I should know. The commander and Sarah are just like every other captain and exec I’ve ever served under. Do it all themselves. There’s a special bond between them and no amount of pointing out that I might be better suited or more experienced, the team sticks together. I can see it’s the same with you.’
Adric shrugged. ‘I’ve got used to it’ He turned away from the screen and looked at Paladopous. Anything I can do?’
He could see the lieutenant’s initial instinct was to say no, but the human seemed to stop himself and then smile. ‘Yeah.
Yeah, how good are you at astrometrics?’
Adric shrugged. ‘Probably better than most here.’ He briefly wondered if that sounded conceited but then decided it didn’t matter. It was, after all, true.
‘OK,’ said Paladopous, unflustered. ‘I want you to check the surrounding area. See if there’s anything out there we can’t detect yet that could be causing problems to Dymok. If the commander needs a hand sourcing information, I’d like to have it at my... *our* fingertips.’
Adric nodded and crossed over to the astrometrics console and began working.
Well, it was something to do.

Martyn D’arcy was an engineer assigned to *Little Boy II* three months previously, and due to return to his assignment aboard a cruiser ship in four weeks.
He missed his old job, his colleagues and everything. On his last night on the ship, they’d thrown a small party for him
- everyone had been there. Even the captain. It was a sign of his popularity that so many people wanted to say *au revoir,* even though he’d only be away for a short time. Here, he felt rather out of place. There wasn’t much for the engineering staff to do
- no engines as such to maintain, just stabilisers and a few routine gyroscopes. More than anything, the engineers found themselves doubling up as computer technicians and maintenance men. Not that Martyn objected - sometimes it was fun, but it wasn’t really a challenge. It wasn’t bringing him into contact with alien races and new phenomena.
Until today.
The first thing that struck him was that rectangular blue boxes were not commonplace in cargo bays.
The second thing that struck him was that tall, bizarrely dressed men were an equally rare occurrence, especially when they were accompanied by a rather antiquated idea of a robot, complete with red-flashing LEDs and hydraulic pumps on its leg and arm joints, that hissed as it moved. The third thing that struck him was a medieval dagger which embedded itself between his shoulders, just below the neck, severing his spinal column and cutting off his brain stem.
Of course, Martyn had no idea about this last thing - only that he suddenly felt very tired and momentarily very annoyed that something was wrong and he couldn’t focus.

Stefan plucked the dagger out of the man’s back, and wiped the blood on the corpse’s crisp, white uniform, leaving a red streak. With a smile he bisected the line with another, forming a red cross against the white - the flag of the English crusaders from his own time whom he so despised. Smiling at his own dark humour, he walked over to the Toymaker.
‘Master?’

‘We must find a way to take this marvellous craft back with us, Stefan. The Doctor will play hard to retrieve it. Or rather, his young friends will on his behalf. Such is the way of things.’ The Toymaker closed his eyes and began an incantation.
Stefan took a step back - there was always something frightening about his master doing this sort of trick.
The Toymaker’s face seemed to shimmer, to dissolve, and was replaced by a head-shaped image of stars, planets and space.

Then the blue box he wanted so much began similarly to shimmer, growing indistinct around the edges and blurring.

At the centre of the box, what the Toymaker had referred to as a 'swirling vortex of energy' on previous occasions when he had performed this trick, manifested. Once, Stefan would have called it the work of demons, spirits of evil. Now he knew it was just the science of the Toymaker - the magicks of the Great Old Ones.

The vortex flowed outwards - it was as if the blue box were no longer a solid object, but a metallic liquid. It momentarily held its shape then, slowly, from the centre, poured upwards and into the Toymaker's visage, as if he was sucking the liquefied box into himself.

A moment later the Toymaker's face returned and he smiled at the space where the box, this TARDIS, had stood.

Gesturing expansively, he drew up his robes. The robot walked obediently into their folds and Stefan did likewise, feeling a momentary sickness as he travelled back out of time and space and into the eerie whiteness of the Toymaker's realm.

Recovering himself, he was about to return to another of the tasks set him by his master when he felt the Toymaker's hand on his shoulder.

Touch was rare - Stefan was either very popular today, or in severe trouble.

'Neither, my loyal one,' the Toymaker purred. 'But the casual brutality of the murder you committed on the space station was perhaps misjudged. We could have temporarily incapacitated and convinced the man he was seeing things.

Now, I fear, the humans will begin games of their own, searching for a murderer.'

'Master, surely they cannot find us here?'

'No, but they have tools that will recognise the energies I used to transport the TARDIS and ourselves. It alert the Doctor.'

The Toymaker stopped, then laughed. 'Mayhaps, loyal one, you have done right after all. It cannot hurt to give the Doctor more pieces of the puzzle.' He looked behind Stefan, who turned to see a huge ornately-framed jigsaw puzzle suspended in mid-air. On it was the Doctor.

'Four
thousand
pieces,
Stefan.
Four
thousand
opportunities to get it wrong'

The Toymaker clicked his fingers and the puzzle rotated, showing Stefan that the same picture was on the reverse, but backwards and upside down.

'I shall enjoy watching the Doctor put this together. And of course the last thing he will expect will be that, when he does, he will be mine.'

Stefan drew his dagger. 'Master, if this creature vexes you so, why not allow a loyal servant to dispatch him?'

'A man would be foolish to fight that which he cannot kill, Stefan. Remember that. It is not the flesh and blood of the Doctor which I seek, my friend. It is his soul - his indomitable spirit that I... require in my service. To destroy him would be unrewarding.'

The Toymaker suddenly smashed the jigsaw, sending the pieces in four thousand different directions. His face screwed up in anger, his eyes darker than ever, and Stefan felt a chill sweep the realm. 'But to own him,' the Toymaker spat out harshly, 'to manipulate him for eternity, to make him pay for the wrong he did unto me aeons ago... that, Stefan *that* is what drives me.'

Stefan took a step back at the Toymaker's sudden intensity.

He had never seen him like this and for just a brief second, the result of a strange flicker of light perhaps, there seemed to be another face in place of his master's.

Twisted and etched with malevolence, bitterness and sheer, unrestrained evil.

Then it was gone.

The Toymaker was himself again, unfazed, as if nothing had happened. Perhaps it hadn't - mayhaps, Stefan, you need a rest, he told himself.

The Toymaker was frowning at the destroyed jigsaw but, seemingly realising that Stefan was watching, he assumed his usual calm expression. With another click of his fingers, all the pieces rose up and hovered in the air. From a pocket in his voluminous robes the Toymaker extracted a brightly coloured tin.

'Ye Olde English mint humbugs,' he announced, and took off the lid. Silently the hovering puzzle pieces poured themselves into the tin, like bees into a honey pot.

'Ye Olde English trap,' he muttered. He held the tin up, turning it one way then another and staring at it proudly as if it were the most beautiful object in all creation. 'This is going to be such fun, Stefan,' he laughed. 'Such fun.'

The Place You Fear the Most

The shuttle made an uncomfortable landing - it was as though it had been pulled down from the sky by some vast magnetic force. After a few moments its occupants disembarked quickly, Braune at the front and Desorgher bringing up the rear. Both were well armed.

'Nice trip, shame about the arrival.' Tegan addressed Desorgher waspishly, clearly back to her old self. The technician shrugged. 'Wasn't my fault. One minute I was in control, the next we were being dragged down here and the shuttle didn't have enough guts to break free from whatever it was.'

The Doctor eased Tegan back. 'I'm sure Tegan didn't mean to be rude, Mr Desorgher. We're all just a little shaken and surprised. Congratulations on getting us down here in one piece, considering the problems you faced.'

Desorgher shrugged and hoisted his blaster rifle, ready for anything.

'Although I must say,' the Doctor admonished, 'I'm not sure that walking around with guns cocked is exactly going to impress our hosts, you know.'

The look Braune shot back at him told him to shut up.

Nyssa touched his sleeve. 'What are you worried about, Doctor?'

The Doctor stopped and surveyed the landscape. They were on the top of a mud bowl, literally a huge crater. At its centre was a jet black pyramid.

'Something very powerful dragged us down to this exact spot, Nyssa. I'd like to know what, bearing in mind this is supposed to be an antisocial planet and, apparently, suddenly very quiet.' He held a finger up. 'Slight wind, possible rain soon.' He sniffed. 'Good clean air. No pollution.

No industry of any sort I suspect.'

Nyssa was shivering. 'It's also extremely cold,' she said.

'Oh, you'll get used to it,' the Doctor beamed at her enthusiastically.

'So,' Tegan said, pointing at the pyramid,' did they build that with their bare hands?'

'Good question, Tegan. And looking at it, that seems unlikely.' He shoved a hand into the inside pocket of his cricketing jacket and retrieved a large set of binoculars. He twirled them in his hand as if surprised to find them there then, with a small shrug, passed them to his youngest companion. 'Nyssa?'

Nyssa peered down at the pyramid through the binoculars. 'It's built from smooth black blocks, Doctor. We have a jewel on Traken that looks like this.'

Tegan eased the binoculars away from Nyssa to take a look herself. 'Onyx,' she said after a moment. 'We have jewellery on Air Australia flights that looks like that.' She smiled at Nyssa.

A hand reached over and took the glasses from Tegan - it was Sarah Townsend. After a pause, she handed them back to the Doctor.

'You'll notice there are two small stumps on either side of the pyramid,' she said.

The Doctor looked, and nodded. 'I recognise this.

Somewhere in the back of my mind, I recognise this.'

As he lowered the binoculars he was aware that everyone was staring at him. 'Yes, well, let's not waste the daylight,' he said, and began going down the side of the crater, using a combination of tentative steps and quick leaps that sent up showers of grey mud.

Oakwood and Townsend looked at the Doctor's splattered form and their own white uniforms, and then at each other.

'I'm just glad the shuttle didn't blow up like the *Convergence*,' Oakwood said.

Townsend smiled grimly. 'Glad to know the same thoughts were going through your head as mine, particularly just before we landed.'

They grinned at each other suddenly, and watched the Doctor. 'Haven't done this since I was ten,' the commander said and followed the Doctor, jumping slightly more often.

Only Braune looked irritated at the mess that was about to go all over him. Desorgher and Dieter gave him a friendly push, which resulted in the security man almost falling. He dropped to one knee and shot his comrades a vicious look.

Desorgher shrugged his apology and followed the others.

Finally Braune eased his way down, carefully and precisely, making sure that little else other than his knees got too muddy. When he finally reached the bottom, he was faced by a group who looked as if they had been bathing in mud.

Desorgher, particularly, was caked from his neck down.

'I fell in to a... er... hole,' he said.

The Doctor, Nyssa and Oakwood were first to reach the base of the pyramid, while Dieter, Townsend and Desorgher went to look at one of the stumps.

'What did you mean when you said you recognised it, Doctor?' asked Oakwood.

The Doctor was crouched down, scraping at the base of the pyramid. 'To be frank, Commander, I don't know.' He straightened up. 'Pyramids usually exist for a reason, you see. They are either beacons or cemeteries or land markers. One thing they usually have in common is that they are rarely alone. I would have expected to see the point of another in the distance. Or something else that would imply a method to the placement. But this one is just stuck here. It doesn't seem to relate particularly to the sun or the stars, it doesn't cast a shadow pointing at anything significant and it's situated in the centre of a crater. All very odd, wouldn't you say?'

Oakwood pursed his lips. I'm no expert on Egyptology,' he said, and walked away to join his crew.

The Doctor shook his head. 'Egyptology. Humans are so limited in their perceptions, so insular in their approach. You see, Nyssa, humans believe that the universe revolves around them. That everything must either affect them or be irrelevant.'

'Ahem,' coughed Tegan. 'I *am* still here, you know.'

The Doctor turned to her and frowned, then smiled and gripped her shoulders. 'Of course you are, Tegan, I was talking generally not specifics. You are a particularly fine example of humanity and that's why we travel together.' He turned away and crouched down to examine the base of the

pyramid again.

Tegan looked at Nyssa, trying to work out whether she had been insulted or complimented, or if the Doctor was just being obtuse. Nyssa shrugged, clearly unable to help.

'What are you doing, Doctor?' Tegan wanted to know.

'I'm trying to see how far down the pyramid goes. Whether it has been here for centuries or was placed here recently for our amusement.' He stopped. 'Amusement...'

His thoughts were interrupted by Desorgher. 'Hey, Doctor, look at this.'

He led the others to the left-hand stump. Townsend was pulling wads of mud away from the base. 'Doctor, it goes a long way down,' she said between exertions.

'But has only been put here recently, as I surmised,' the Doctor concluded.

'How d'you know that?' asked Desorgher.

'Chief Townsend is finding it too easy to get the mud away.

If it had been here for centuries, that mud would be immovable once she got past the top soil'

'Bit of a puzzle then,' said Oakwood.

'Puzzle...' the Doctor frowned, then sighed deeply. 'Of course, why didn't I see it earlier!' He ran back to the pyramid, splashing mud everywhere.

'Look,' he was saying as the others caught up with him,

'look, it's built in flat sections.'

'Each one about two feet high,' Tegan added.

'What exactly is it, Doctor?' Oakwood was staring upwards, trying to count the sections.

'It's a trap, Commander, and I think we should get away from here as fast as possible.'

'A trap?' Dieter frowned. 'Who for?'

'Me,' the Doctor said. And I've almost fallen right into it.'

'Correction, Doctor,' said Townsend. 'You *have* fallen right into it. Look.'

A door had appeared at the base of the pyramid and was sliding upwards. As it rose, they could make out a person standing in the entrance, waiting for them.

The door vanished into whatever slot it fitted into above the space and a man stepped forward. He was dressed in a simple linen hooded smock that stopped just below his knees. He wore sandals on his feet and a belt around his waist, giving him the appearance of a monk. He tugged his hood back, revealing a bald, deeply lined head with almost grey skin and two bright eyes that stared intently at them.

'He's so old,' Tegan muttered.

'I am the Observer,' the man said simply. 'Thank you for coming.'

'Hello, I'm the Doctor and this is -'

'I know who you all are. You will enter the pyramid.'

'Remember,' hissed Oakwood, 'it's a trap, you said.'

'Yes,' the Doctor replied, then called out to the Observer. 'I'd rather not actually. Sorry to disturb you but my friends and I were just leaving.'

'I think not.' And behind them, on the ridge, the shuttle exploded into millions of tiny fragments that embedded themselves in the mud.

Braune brought his gun up to bear, but the old Observer didn't seem perturbed. The gun just fell apart, as if corroded by rust and age. Braune frowned - and Desorgher discovered that his gun had similarly disintegrated. The Observer was, if anything, merely amused.

'Enter the pyramid,' he repeated, then turned away and walked into the darkness.

'Well,' the Doctor said after a few seconds. 'I rather think our options have been reduced to two. Stay out here or go inside.'

'We should stay here then,' suggested Nurse Dieter.

Oakwood shook his head. 'Night's coming. Before long the temperature will drop even further and we know from our surveys how cold the surface gets. I'm afraid we'd best walk into this trap of the Doctor's.'

'Not mine actually,' the Doctor said quietly, 'but I take your point. Tegan, Nyssa, in you go.' He counted everyone in until just he and Oakwood were still outside. 'I'm sorry about this, Commander. I really had no idea what to expect. And I think we can assume that the Observer was responsible for bringing us here.'

Oakwood smiled at him. 'Not to worry, Doctor. I've been waiting for an excuse to have an adventure ever since I got this posting. Makes a change from watching the news.' He marched inside after his crew and, shaking his head at the continual surprises humanity offered, the Doctor followed. The door slid shut behind him.

Apart from a few recent footsteps and the mound of mud that Townsend had disturbed, there was no evidence they had ever been within the crater.

Adric was seated once again in the mess, making notes. He always carried a small pencil in his breast pocket and Niki Paladopous had miraculously dug up some sheets of paper from somewhere.

Art appreciation was, the Doctor had told him, a purely subjective matter. One artist may paint a glorious sweep of yellow flowers in a field, capturing the image perfectly, almost like a photograph. Another may opt to exaggerate the image, making the flowers out of proportion to the background and foreground. Another painter could make the flowers angular and two-dimensional, and yet another represent the scene with three yellow splodges of paint on a blue background. But each of them had their own worth and their own admirers.

Adric never understood why people painted pictures. Art was almost unknown on Alzarius - after all, who needed it?

The only time it existed was in the purely practical application of schematics and design. Illustrations in the books to show which parts of the Starliner fitted where, and how to replace them. They were line drawings essentially - colour was an even bigger rarity.

Adric had found his appreciation of art going in the direction of an interest in the art of pure mathematics. He wore his gold-edged star badge with pride - it marked him out as having achieved much in the field of maths and related sciences.

So when Niki Paladopous had given him a pile of trajectories, positionals and theoretical astrophysics problems, he was, as Niki had said, like a pig in mud'. This was his domain. This was where he was an artist - sifting through numericals, cosines and astronomical trigonometry, making sense of it all. He sort of guessed that Niki had given him this stuff to keep him happy and amused, but he didn't mind. If the Doctor didn't consider him reliable enough any more, well, that was *his* problem.

Maybe he could stay here, with these people. If the Doctor had everything he needed in Tegan and Nyssa, maybe this was somewhere he could call home now. Oh, it wasn't exactly racing around the space-time vortex, saving civilisations and righting wrongs, but that wasn't as much fun as it had been any longer.

He tried his best - really he did, but still no one really wanted him there. He tried being nice to the girls, telling them when they weren't looking as nice as they had the day before, but they just said he was being rude, which was so stupid. One day they would spend ages putting make-up on their faces, getting it right. The next day, they wouldn't spend quite as much time and look a little different, but then not want this pointed out.

'How do I look today?' Tegan would ask, and Adric would tell her.

Typical girl - just like the ones back at home. He never understood them either.

He'd make jokes - asking for the sodium chloride instead of salt at meal times, educated sort of quips like that. Even if Tegan and Nyssa didn't get them, the Doctor ought to. But no, he just sided with the girls and ignored him.

Adric looked down at the notes he had been making, doodles more than anything, while his mind wandered to his role within the TARDIS crew.

Earth was at co-ordinates 5XA8000-743-7, while *Little Boy II* was at 6AA2357-576-8, on a curve of 314 degrees from the galactic centre. If the Doctor, the *old* Doctor, had been travelling away from Earth on a similar trajectory - the TARDIS always shifted through the space-time vortex before entering real space at 67 degrees on a curvature of... of...

Yes! When he had left Earth a year or so ago, with their old friends Romana and K9, they had been travelling... there... Adric made a crosspoint on his notes, and drew a series of curves, allowing for spatial drift and the slight variance given by the space-time vortex distortion as the TARDIS shifted...

The entry point into his own pocket universe was the CVE

through which the Doctor and Romana and K9 had travelled to reach Alzarius. They had been going to the Doctor's home planet, Gallifrey, but went through the Casseopeian CVE at 3C461-3044-7. If Adric reversed those co-ordinates, maybe he could plot a course back through the CVE

- go home! Find out what was happening on the Starliner, see if they'd got to Terradon yet, or returned to Alzarius or...

Alzarius? Something at the back of his mind nagged him.

He'd... dreamt about Alzarius recently, or something. Only it wasn't a dream - it was more recent than that surely? He hadn't en asleep for about eight hours and this was definitely something newer...

Then it struck him - a flood of memories, breaking through whatever had blocked them.

'The Toymaker,' he muttered.

All thoughts of piloting the TARDIS back into E-Space and home forgotten, Adric rushed from the mess and off to find Paladopous.

He had to get a message to the Doctor. Urgently!

Tegan felt strangely calm as she stood outside the chamber.

The Observer had taken them down, way under the pyramid, through a labyrinth of twists and turns guaranteed to confuse them. Tegan had heard the Doctor mutter something about wishing he had brought Theseus, but he was always making classical allusions, and her head was too fuzzy to try and work this one out.

It had to be something to do with the depth - they seemed to have been walking for ages and had to be quite some way beneath the surface.

She noticed Desorgher was suffering as well, periodically shaking his head or squashing his palms against his ears, trying to get them to pop.

Nyssa, Oakwood, Townsend and Dieter were also showing signs of fatigue, but she noticed that neither the Doctor nor Braun seemed to be affected. She guessed the Doctor's Time Lord physiology was responsible for his state, while she doubted that Braune would flinch even if he had an arm amputated.

To call him a stoic was an understatement.

After a few more moments, the Observer had brought them up to a vast arched stone doorway that reminded Tegan of a cathedral entrance. Indeed, she could almost smell incense and feel an atmosphere of reverence.

'We are here. Please prepare to enter.'

It was a holy place.

Tegan wasn't particularly religious but when her mother had told her that her father had cancer and had to retire from running the farm and let Richard Fraser, her uncle, take over, she had cast a small prayer upwards.

Hell, if anything had happened to her dad now, she wouldn't know!

The Observer looked at her.

'Your pain will pass, child'

'My... my pain?'

'Your father has passed on, child. It was a painless and very dignified departure.'

'How do you... know this...?'

The Observer reached out a hand and touched her cheek with the tips of his fingers, letting his middle finger rest on her temple. 'I am the Observer,' he said. 'You are the Chosen. It is easy.'

And Tegan was somewhere else.

It was warm, humid in fact, the grass a rich green and the sky a beautiful blue broken by white clouds.

'Oh my God - I'm home. It's the farm...' And suddenly a chill went up her spine and she gasped. 'No...' she was filled with a horrible dread. 'God no...'

She was running, her feet making no mark on the grass, past the paddock, around the tractor and up to the main house.

The doors were open and the family were gathered.

Mum was seated, being comforted by Mrs Michaels from the town and Uncle Richard.

Mum's sister-in-law, Tegan's Aunt Felicity, was there too along with her cousins Colin and Michael.

Her Serbian grandparents were there - Gramps and Grammie Jovanka had flown in from Yugoslavia. No Grandad Verney - oh God, he would still be mourning his niece... Aunt Vanessa, who had died at the hands of the Master.

Mum had lost her husband so soon after losing her sister...

no, this wasn't fair!

Tegan was trying not to cry, not to scream out how unfair this all was, that no family should have to suffer so much!

Mum was speaking. Crying. 'First Vanessa, then Tegan and now Bill...'

‘But I’m not dead, Mum!! I’m here!’ Tegan wanted to shake her mum, hug her, tell her that she was all right.

But of course they must have thought she had died with Aunt Vanessa on that Saturday in Barnet. How could she tell them otherwise?

But it didn’t matter. All that mattered was that her father was gone and she hadn’t been there. Hadn’t been able to say goodbye. Hadn’t been able to tell him how much she loved him.

To recall her childhood, to talk about cars and space ships, to remember watching television and listening to music. And to remember how Dad had encouraged her drawing, enthusiastic about her free spirit - he always understood that farm life wasn’t for her. Dad had encouraged her to spread her wings, to see the world.

She remembered one sunny day, years ago, when they had lain in a pasture looking up at the sky as a jet plane flew over, heading up to Cairns. ‘Daddy, I want to go in one of those. I want to fly.’ And her dad had smiled, hugged her and said,

‘My special girl - one day you will.’

Tegan realised the image had changed - they were at the cemetery, beside the grave, as the rabbi spoke, recalling William Jovanka’s life. Mum was being comforted by Uncle Richard and Aunt Felicity. Mjovic and Sneshna Jovanka were on either side of the rabbi, heads bowed, saying farewell to their beloved son.

Suddenly the rabbi looked up, straight at Tegan, and saw her - although that was impossible.

Until she realised that the rabbi had the Observer’s face.

Then, one by one, the other mourners seemed to see her.

‘Where were you?’ snarled her mother.

‘Useless daughter, couldn’t be bothered to be here.’ That was Uncle Richard.

‘Too busy with her new friends to even let us know she was alive,’ said her grandmother.

‘Whose fault is it?’ asked Aunt Felicity. ‘Who has kept you away from your family? Your duty?’

‘Who has stopped you being a comfort to a lonely mother?’ asked her mum, tears cascading down her face. ‘No...

please...’ Tegan dropped to her knees. ‘Please. It wasn’t my fault. I’ve tried to get back to Earth, but the Doctor couldn’t do it. He couldn’t get me here’

‘Oh, so it *is* someone else’s fault, is it?’

And standing behind the rabbi/Observer, mouthing pointless apologies, was the Doctor.

‘Yes,’ she breathed. ‘Yes, if he hadn’t taken me away, if he had lived up to his promises, I could have been here, Mum.

It’s all his fault...’

And the vision was gone.

Tegan was back outside the stone doorway. The Observer was beside her, his hand at his side.

Had she imagined it all?

‘We are here. Please prepare to enter.’

Had the previous few moments actually occurred?

Tegan saw the Doctor out of the corner of her eye and for the first time ever, she felt furious. Livid with him and his empty promises and his useless TARDIS and...

It was all his fault. Her father was dead. Her mother was coping alone. And it was all his fault.

So when the Observer eased open the stone doors, Tegan stormed into the room thinking of nothing but revenge.

Unseen by her, or indeed anyone else, the Observer was smiling as he watched her.

As everyone filed into the room, there was an audible gasp.

It was larger than the cathedral Tegan had been expecting. It seemed to have no end - the long, cavernous room stretched back and back, and was quite wide, although she could see its sides. It was quite dark and smelt a bit musty, as she’d expect a cathedral to smell. But the remarkable thing about it was that it was occupied.

Row upon row, until they faded into the distance, there were people, dressed in the same garb as the Observer, lying on slabs. Men, women and children.

‘Are they dead?’ Tegan was standing by the nearest slab. On it lay a youngish man - she guessed he was young, simply because his face was smooth although he was as bald as the Observer. He didn’t appear to be breathing and his skin was ice-cold.

The Observer did not answer. Instead he dropped on to one knee, bowing his head before her.

‘It is my place in the world to remain on guard. Preparing for this day, when the Chosen would walk amongst us.’

The Doctor stepped forward, before Oakwood could speak.

‘Hello, I’m the Doctor. I wonder, could you possibly explain what you mean by —the Chosenll? You see, you’ve mentioned that a few times and I rather think you mean my friend here.

Tegan.’

The Observer nodded, smiling. ‘Of course, that is why you have brought her here, Doctor. Your path is not hers. Her destiny lies here.’

‘Ah. Thank you. That clears that up.’ The Doctor turned away, and winked at Nyssa.

‘Look,’ Oakwood began. ‘Did you destroy our shuttle? We have no way of returning to our space station now.’

The Observer turned away. The Chosen one is here - the rest of you are irrelevant. There is food and water for four days in that alcove.’ He waved a hand dismissively to the left. ‘By then, Paladopous or the boy, Adric, will have arranged a rescue mission.’

The Doctor was not surprised by the Observer’s knowledge of those they had left on the space station. ‘And if they don’t?’

‘Then you will starve to death. Dymok is only for the Chosen.’

The Doctor crossed over to the alcove. ‘Well, I suppose we’d better get rations sorted out, Commander. We may be here for some time.’

‘Doctor!’ Nyssa’s cry made him turn around sharply - and it was easy to see why she was alarmed.

Of the Observer and Tegan there was no sign. It was as if they had never been there.

‘Tegan!’ he called out desperately. ‘Tegan, can you hear me?’

There was no reply. The Doctor caught Nyssa’s look of anxiety and smiled at her. ‘Well,’ he reasoned, ‘if Tegan is this

—Chosenll, then I very much doubt that the Observer intends her harm. I think we should settle down for the night and worry about our predicament after some sleep. Hmmm?’ If Oakwood was about to argue, he was stopped by Sarah Townsend.

‘I think that’s a fair idea, Doctor. But in the morning we need some real answers from the Observer.’

The Doctor nodded and he and Dieter began sorting through the rations, while Desorgher and Braune cleared some space near the doorway -

which required gently casing the nearby slabs and their occupants into a corner. Oakwood and Nyssa pushed the doors shut, to retain what little warmth existed in the cathedral.

After a while, the Doctor and Dieter shared out the food and everyone ate and drank in silence.

'I feel very tired,' Nyssa announced.

'I imagine so,' said the Doctor. 'The food and drink were drugged after all.'

Oakwood tried to comprehend this, but was clearly feeling the effects of whatever the Observer had given them.

'You knew?' asked Dieter.

'I suspected.'

'But why didn't you say something?'

The Doctor leant back against the wall. 'Because we all need some rest and relaxation and this ensures we get it. If the Observer meant us harm he could have killed us in the shuttle, or trapped us in the freezing outside once he'd got Tegan inside the pyramid.'

He smiled at Dieter but she, like nearly everyone else, was already comatose. 'Besides which, we'd all eaten enough for the drugs to have an effect before I began to susp... sus...' He tried to swallow, to clear his throat. With a slight cough, he did so.

Only Braune was awake, arms crossed, by the doorway.

'You didn't have anything, did you, Mr Braune. I'm glad... I feel better having someone reliable to watch over us while we sleep.'

Braune stared at the Doctor. 'Why did you go on eating, then?'

The Doctor raised his eyebrows in surprise. 'How nice to hear you speak, Mr Braune. I went on eating because I want to sleep. Because whatever is going on here works on a different plane of reality to ours. And maybe a good night's sleep will clear the passageways in my mind so I can see what's happening more clearly.'

'You said you thought this was a trap. Set for you. Who by?'

The Doctor shrugged - but it took an effort. The drugs were finally having an effect on him, and his eyes began to feel heavy. 'I'm not entirely sure. Someone I know, I can feel it.

But I can't quite... put my... finger on...'

Darkness.

The Doctor was standing in a large dark room. A harsh spotlight was directly above him, its beam just wide enough to envelop him in a column of light.

'Doctor.' A soft voice, young and desperate. Tiny tendrils of familiarity scratched at his memory, but still nothing was clearer.

He turned, trying to work out where the voice was coming from.

'Doctor... please help me! No matter what happens in the real world, you must help me.'

'Doctor!' A second voice, equally pleading, but far older, richer and deeper. 'Doctor... please help me! No matter what happens in the real -'

'Yes, I get the drift,' the Doctor interrupted. Each voice was coming from a different side of the darkness. 'Show me yourselves. I want to help, but I can't unless I know whom I'm helping'

'You brought us together.' This was the young voice. 'You must take us apart,' finished the older one.

'Please, Doctor, finish what you started!' they both said simultaneously.

Then a shaft of light splashed down from the ceiling, illuminating a figure to his right - where the older voice had come from.

And the Doctor nodded to himself. Huddled on the floor, knees tucked under his chin, almost hidden under his mandarin robes, was the Celestial Toymaker. He turned his head towards the Doctor and, even in the dim light, the Doctor could see he had no face - just a blank space at the front of his head - a gateway leading to a vista of stars and planets, as if the whole of the universe was within his skull.

A second light appeared, to the left, where the young voice had been.

The figure that stood there was upright, arms clasped behind his back. He wore the recognisable robes of the Prydon Academy, where the Doctor had studied as a young man on his home planet of Gallifrey.

The Doctor started - this he had not been expecting, but suddenly the claws scratching at his mind tugged away the veil over his memory.

'You left me to die here, Doctor!' spat the young man, no longer soft or lost. His face, like that of the Toymaker, was non-existent, replaced by the same galactic panorama.

'Help me,' pleaded the Toymaker. 'Help us'

'Repair the damage you did, Doctor,' said the young Time Lord.

'Make us whole... please' The Toymaker seemed to hug himself closer, as if terrified of the faceless Time Lord.

'Or this time,' the Time Lord threatened, 'this time, you won't get away with it. You left me, Doctor. Abandoned me.

Betrayed me.'

The Doctor suddenly went very cold. And he understood.

'No... it wasn't like that...'

'You left me to die!' The Time Lord suddenly screamed and the Doctor stepped back, out of his beam of light, plunging the whole room into darkness. He stepped forward again, hoping to illuminate the other two, if not himself, but to no avail.

'You left me to die.' The Time Lord was at his side, hissing savagely in the Doctor's ear.

'Rallon, no, I... I...'

'I hope you remember everything, Doctor. Because I haven't forgotten. You gave me to him!'

Then the Toymaker was also at the Doctor's side, but not weakened as he had been seconds earlier.

'Yes, Doctor,' he said. His voice echoed, bringing memories flooding back into the Doctor's mind's eye. 'You created all this.

And now you need to put it right. Think back, Doctor. Search your memory for a clue as to how to help us. How to undo the damage you wrought upon us.'

The Time Lord took up the baiting again. 'Think back to home, Doctor. Think of Gallifrey.'

Gallifrey...

Gallifrey...

The blackness finally engulfed the Doctor's mind. The last things he saw were the two faceless figures leaning over him and millions upon millions of stars and galaxies swirling before his eyes.

Gallifrey...

Round Two
Dreaming

Dream of Me

Gallifrey. Home. Apparently.

‘I’m not convinced, you know,’ said Koschei. ‘I don’t think it would be the wisest course of action’

The Doctor shrugged at Koschei’s pessimism. ‘It hardly matters, eh? They’ll never let us go.’

Above them, the dark orange blanket that was Gallifrey’s night sky was punctured by occasional bright lights.

Artificial satellites. Or time ships breaking through the transduction barrier before activating their time rotors and dematerialising, preparing to traverse the space-time vortex, taking their occupants to who knew where or when. ‘They have no sense of adventure,’ he finished, putting his hands into the looped sleeves of his burgundy Prydonian robes. ‘Unlike us.’

He looked around at the Deca, as they called themselves.

Rallon. Koschei. Drax. Mortimus. Magnus. Ushas. Jelpax.

Vansell. Millennia. And himself. The pinnacle of their class - the pride and joy of teachers such as Sendok, Borusa and Franilla. And, by association, the enemies of just about all the other freshmen in that semester’s influx of students.

He looked beyond the group, back towards the Academy itself: proud glass turrets and covered walkways linking them, dormitories and lecture halls. TARDIS bays and scaphe ports.

Gymnasiums and eateries. A self-contained city annexed to the infamous Capitol, it sprawled over twenty-eight square miles of Gallifrey’s surface, surrounded on all sides by the horizon -

stretched desert plains where the Outsiders lived, rejecting the conformity of Gallifreyan society. Or rather, Time Lord society, administered by those lucky few who were honoured with the ability to live forever - barring accidents. Well, thirteen lives seemed like forever to him. All but three of the Deca were on their first regenerations and were forbidden to regenerate, should the whim take them, until after their five-hundredth birthdays.

If Gallifreyans could be said to have birthdays.

Vansell, Ushas and Rallon had already become junior Time Lords and were now in their final semesters, whereas the rest still had two to go before they received the Rassilon Imprimature - the genetic coding that gave them their regenerative powers, the ability to withstand time travel, the telepathic connection to TARDISes, time rings and all the other transtemporal feats of Gallifreyan engineering.

Drax broke the Doctor’s bitter, reflective mood. He was grinning - another inane plan no doubt forming in what passed for his mind. Oh, Drax was bright enough. A genius in fact with all things mechanical - they always said that if you gave Drax eight unconnected objects, he would find a way to put them together and make a TARDIS

dematerialisation circuit, or a chameleon circuit or even a food synthesiser. Sadly, like many clever people, he lacked common sense. No doubt he could give you the molecular density of a paper bag - indeed, he could probably work out its atomic structure to the nth degree - but shove him inside it and tell him to punch his way out and... well, forget it.

‘Let’s head into the relic room. Find the hand of Omega or Pandak’s staff or Heiron’s...’ but Drax’s enthusiasm was cut short by an indignant howl from Jelpax.

‘The relics should be left alone,’ he shouted. ‘They are there for future generations to observe, record and learn from.’

Koschei shrugged. ‘OK, let’s go and play with the President’s cat - oh no, we can’t! Ushas’ little experiment put paid to that!’

Ushas clipped Koschei around the ear, but not entirely playfully. She wasn’t known for her long fuse or self-deprecating humour.

Magnus and Mortimus shivered. ‘It’s getting cold,’ Magnus said quietly. ‘I believe it’s time we returned to the dorm before we are missed.’

The others shrugged. Magnus had a commanding personality and most of them found it difficult to argue with him. Rather sheepishly, they followed him back towards the Academy. Koschei was muttering to Vansell about how jealous he was of Magnus. ‘I mean,’ he was saying, ‘he just speaks, clicks his fingers, or whatever, and we all follow. One day I must find out how to do that.’

Vansell ignored him. No one quite knew why Vansell hung around with them, really. He said little and smiled less.

‘Hey, Thete,’ Drax said, ‘ask that tame co-ordinator of yours if he can sneak us out some information about Earth. I’m sure I can work out how to get us there.’

‘Please, Drax, don’t call me Thete, Theta, Theta Sigma or anything else, all right? You know I don’t like it.’

Drax threw his hands up in an exaggerated gesture of surrender. ‘Sorry, *Doctor,* I won’t do it again.’ He paused, then nudged the Doctor. ‘So, how about it?’

‘Azmael is far too busy to help us,’ interjected Millennia, tossing her long hair over her shoulder as she always did.

‘Azmael is always too busy to help anyone. Except him,’

grinned Rallon, the moonlight glinting on his olive skin and accentuating his bone structure.

The object of his finger-jabbing shrugged. ‘It’s not my fault that Azmael and I work well together.’

‘Oh Doctor,’ laughed Millennia, ‘he positively worships you’

‘And you him!’ Rallon slapped the Doctor on the shoulder, causing him to wince slightly. Rallon was big, his hands seemingly larger than both the Doctor’s put side by side. A

‘gentle pat’ from Rallon was similar to being hit by a skimmer.

‘Anyway, I’m not abusing our... friendship just to gain access to the relics so that Drax can make a fool of us all. I won’t do it.’

The others shrugged and moved slightly away from him.

Only Koschei stayed, walking in time with the Doctor. The two of them, along with Magnus, had been friends since their first day at the Academy. Three different young Time Lords from different Houses, brought together by the need to learn.

And a burning desire to learn was the basis of the Deca -

ultimately all ten of its members were the cream of the crop.

None of them could be outsmarted by anyone else in their year. The Doctor was aware that their fellow students held them in equal amounts of envy and contempt. Koschei shrugged this off easily, but it upset the Doctor that they were effectively being punished by their peers, simply for

being more than adequate.

'Tell you what,' Koschei was saying, 'let's see if we can find a way to keep Drax's inquisitive nature occupied without actually going into the relics. Vansell has managed to hack into the co-ordinator's systems. If we got Drax to gain access to the Matrix -'

'No,' gasped the Doctor. 'No, that would be... wrong!'

Koschei laughed. 'He'll never be able to do it, but it'll keep him occupied long enough for his enthusiasm to wane.

Within a couple of weeks, he'll have forgotten about the relics and be far more interested in those new Type 30s the Time Lords are testing.'

Mortimus was beside them in an instant, rubbing his pudgy hands in anticipation. 'Mark Ones or Twos?'

'Ah, here's old aerial ears, ready to butt in as always,'

Koschei murmured. 'Twos, if you must know,' he told his rotund compatriot.

Mortimus nodded and wandered back to the others, muttering to himself - about what, neither the Doctor nor Koschei knew.

Slowly the group made their way back to the Academy.

Three hours passed before they reached the dormitories. There was a rather lengthy period of waiting as Millennia and Rallon said their farewells. It was a ritual that had been going on for a few months now - and everyone was taking bets as to how long it would be before they announced a more permanent relationship. They finally moved away from each other after a last kiss, and more than one of their compatriots let out a grateful sigh. Being outside after 'curfew' was not a wise course to take. The cardinals took a dim view of students who failed to get the required amount of sleep. Even those in the Deca.

Finally Ushas and Millennia headed left, the males going right. Magnus watched Ushas' retreating form with an admiring eye, until Mortimus nudged him.

'Don't go there, Magnus,' he laughed. 'She'll eat you for breakfast'

Magnus shook his head slowly and wandered away. 'You'll never understand, Mort, you'll never understand.'

'Understand? Understand what?' Mortimus turned round but the hallway was empty - his fellow Decas had all gone, leaving him alone.

As always.

'What are you doing out here after dark?'

Mortimus jumped at the nasal, whiny voice that emanated from a dark side-corridor.

'Oh, it's you,' he said, and relaxed.

'I am hall monitor for this semester and you are late. Not out with your fellow stuck-ups?' The voice belonged to Runcible, a thin, gangly student with features as pinched and surly as his voice. In his hand he carried a clipboard and Mortimus knew he was writing his name on one of his interminable lists. Like all anal-retentives with personality defects and self-insecurities, Runcible always made lists. Of everything. None of them of any use.

'They were all here, actually,' said Mortimus smugly.

'Obviously you weren't doing your job well enough, or you would have spotted them.'

Runcible shrugged. 'Well, I missed them. But I caught you. I shall inform Cardinal Zass of your tardiness and she will take the requisite action.'

Mortimus couldn't care less and told Runcible so. 'I have far more interesting things to do,' he said. 'If you want to add me to a list, add it to the longest one. You know, the one with the names of everyone in the academy, tutors and pupils alike, who despise you, Runcible. It must be the one you write up most frequently.'

Runcible just shrugged and walked away.

'Oh, what's the use,' Mortimus muttered to himself. 'Some people wouldn't recognise an insult if they tripped over it.' As he headed towards his room another figure emerged from the shadows. But this one said nothing. It just watched Mortimus go.

After the figure had been standing in the empty corridor for a few minutes he was joined by another - this one just popped into existence, a faint shimmer in the air heralding his arrival.

Both of them wore long white tabards with black trimmings.

Their hair was slicked back and tied in tight ponytails, their hands were folded within the large sleeves of their clothes.

They were recorders. From the Celestial Intervention Agency.

'That one is destined to be trouble,' the first CIA recorder said.

'But he is not the one we are charged with tonight,' said the other. 'He has already gone to his room.'

The first recorder suddenly cocked his head, as if listening.

Presently he nodded, understanding whatever comments were being passed to him telepathically. He smiled at the second recorder. 'Our target must not be disturbed after all. The seventh door has been activated, the Matrix secrets revealed.

He has a destiny that we must not interrupt. Yet.'

And as silently as they had arrived, both recorders disappeared in seconds, leaving the corridor empty once more.

Runcible suddenly came around a corner, clipboard in hand.

'Who is there? I heard you talking, I know you are here.

You'll be added to the list, you know...'

The Doctor, Rallon and Koschei were in their corridor, Vansell and Magnus having already gone to their rooms.

Drax and Jelpax didn't stay in the residential dormitories, as both their Houses were close enough for them to live there.

Drax had his own home-made skimmer and was happy to give Jelpax a lift.

The Doctor thought it was amusing that they could strongly disagree about things like the relics and yet neither thought twice about companionship on the way home. That was the good thing about the Deca - no matter what their differences, deep down they were all friends.

Good friends.

Loyal to the end.

'Let nothing come between us,' he murmured.

'I'm sorry?' Koschei had just opened his door.

'Hmm? Oh, nothing, my friend. Nothing.'

With a nod of good night, Koschei went into his room.

Rallon and the Doctor stood alone.

'You and Millennia, then,' the Doctor started. 'Should we prepare for... an announcement sometime soon?'

Rallon laughed heartily, then glanced around in case they attracted the unwelcome attention of Runcible doing his rounds.

'She is a lovely person, Doctor. And yes, one day I think we may share our lives. But not yet, my friend. In many ways she is still a... a...'

'Child?' prompted the Doctor, and immediately regretted it as Rallon frowned.

'Well, since you put it so bluntly, let's just say that for all her brains, all her instinctive skills in applied cosmic sciences and transcendental engineering, she has some maturing to do.' Rallon held his arms wide. 'But what can I say? I have fallen for a beautiful face, a gorgeous body, a fantastic mind...'

'...and a very influential family,' grinned the Doctor.

Rallon feigned annoyance for a second, and then shook his head. 'You'll find someone one day, Doctor. Then you'll remember this ridiculing and regret it, mark my words.' They were standing outside their rooms now. 'And yes, she does have an influential family - but, to her credit, she never flaunts it!'

'Good night, my friend,' the Doctor said. 'I fear I shall spend most of tomorrow trying to avoid the influence of my own, dear, family.'

Rallon was by the door to his room, opposite the Doctor's. 'I have not forgotten, Doctor. Tomorrow is your ...'

They both stopped as the Doctor pushed his door open and a seven-foot-tall furry creature faced them. It had a pig-like snout, two black eyes with red specks in the pupils and curled horns on either side of its head. Its powerful frame was covered in downy white fur threaded through with charcoal grey stripes and its massive clawed paws were resting on its hips.

It was an Avatroid.

Rallon took an involuntary step backwards, but the Doctor just sighed.

The Avatroid adjusted the collar of the Paisley waistcoat it wore, rather pointlessly, bearing in mind that the garment barely reached the creature's well-developed pecs and was dangerously taut across its shoulders.

'If you tear that,' the Doctor said crossly, 'I'd be very upset indeed, Badger.'

Badger shrugged and the Doctor winced as a loud ripping sound preceded the waistcoat dropping to the floor in two distinct halves.

'Now look, if you want a waistcoat, I'll get you one. That's the fifth one of mine you've destroyed.'

If Badger was in any way concerned, Rallon couldn't tell it from the expression on its face. Instead, the creature reached down and, ignoring the Doctor's feeble struggling, scooped Rallon's friend up in a huge bear hug, snorting slightly.

Rallon realised this was from pleasure - the Avatroid was pleased to see the Doctor.

'Rallon,' the Doctor said between short breaths, 'this is Badger, my... friend from the House of Lungbarrow. Badger, the person watching you crush me to death is my associate here at the academy, Rallonwashatellaraw of the House of Stillhaven.' Badger eased the Doctor to the ground and went to hug Rallon, who backed off rather too rapidly before realising he might appear rude.

'You have an Avatroid as a pet?'

The Doctor looked alarmed. 'Don't call him a pet,' he hissed. 'He's my best friend in the world. He hates being thought of as a pet! He has been known to get... angry when called a pet.'

Rallon nodded. Not a pet, he thought to himself. All right.

Not a pet. 'Pleased to meet you, Badger,' he said aloud.

Badger nodded and then turned back to the Doctor.

'Tomorrow,' it said in a deep voice that seemed to come from eight different directions (including outside *and* the basement) at once, 'Tomorrow is Otherstide, Snail. It is also your name day. Two important events you are expected to celebrate.'

The Doctor nodded. 'And I suppose the Kitriarch expects me home hmmm?'

Before Rayon could ask why Badger referred to the Doctor as

'Snail', the Avatroid had nodded and pointed to a small bag on the bed.

Suddenly angry, the Doctor stomped over to the bag, tugged it open and began throwing the contents on to the bed and floor and at Badger. 'No! No, I will not come just because Quences clicks his fingers. And I am the Doctor, thank you.

Not 'Snail'. Not —Wormholell. Not —Thetell. Doctor!'

'But, Sna... *Doctor,* the family...'

'Can go and rot,' snapped back the Doctor. He looked straight at Rallon and for the first dine Rallon could recall there was a real fire in his eyes. A real resentment and anger at something.

'Last Otherstide,' the Doctor raged, 'the Kitriarch told me that it wasn't enough that I wanted to learn. It wasn't enough that I wanted to study here at the Academy, get my doctorate, have a life. No, he expected better of me. He expected me to become a Time Lord with all their little genetic perks and then sit in some room and study the galaxy. Said that I, *I,* had ideas above my station. Well, I won't go back. No, I won't.'

He jabbed a finger into Badger's hairy chest. 'And you can tell him that the next time he wants an audience, and to tell me how worthless I am, what a disgrace I am to the House, the family and all the cousins, he can come himself rather than sending you just because we are friends.'

Badger
took
a
deep
breath.

'Ordinal-General
Quencessetiano-bayolocaturgrathadadeyyilungbarrowmas insists that you...'

The Doctor pushed past Badger, past Rallon, and headed back down the corridor. Without a pause, Rallon and Badger dashed after him.

At the apex of the steps from the lower floors the Doctor was suddenly stopped by a hand grabbing him.

'You should be asleep by now -' started the ever-ridiculous Runcible. The Doctor shrugged him away and, with a short cry, the monitor lost his footing and tumbled out of Rallon's view, down the few steps to the landing below.

By the time Rallon and Badger reached the steps, Runcible was back again. He had opened his mouth to shout at the Doctor when Rallon saw his eyes widen at the sight of Badger.

'No!' he cried. 'Academy dormitory rules expressly forbid the keeping of pets in rooms! I shall report you to Card...'

'I am *not* a pet!' Badger gently shoved Runcible in the chest (Rallon had never seen anyone shoved gently before, but Badger managed it rather gracefully), sending him back down the steps. This time his copious lists scattered everywhere.

Rallon stopped and took a moment to scoop them up, roll them into a ball and throw them at a window which obligingly rearranged its molecules

to create a small gap that allowed the paper to go through and no doubt plop to the dusty surface six storeys below.

With a smile of satisfaction and a muted murmur of 'The Deca - one, Runcible the fatuous - nil,' Rallon caught up with the Doctor and Badger, who were arguing furiously.

One by one room doors slid open and sleepy students poked their heads out to see what the commotion was about.

As soon as they saw Badger and the Doctor yelling most of them ducked back in again, but a few decided to watch. A couple took a quick bet as to who would win: the huge Avatroid or the famously antagonistic Doctor.

* * *

The next morning, things were quiet at the Academy. Very quiet indeed.

Rallon did not mention the previous night's activities, and nor did the Doctor. Miraculously, not one other student made any comment about Avatroids, noise, or the various bumps and bruises that covered Runcible - although it was muttered that half of them were probably self-inflicted for dramatic effect, as neither the Doctor nor the Avatroid had pushed him that hard.

The first time the affair was brought up was in Cardinal Sendok's class on stellar cartography.

'Working on the principle of the galactic centre being a fixed point just to the apex of the space-time continuum, can anyone suggest the co-ordinates of the planets Brus, Mollassis and Ava and the quickest routes to take in all three, starting in the Alys System and ending up back at Kasterborous?' He fixed his gaze on the Doctor. 'I understand some of us here have a passing acquaintance with the inhabitants of Ava...

which has been noted by the Academy Council, by the way.'

The Doctor had the temerity to at least look embarrassed.

Sendok shook his head slowly and carried on with his lecture, asking an off-world student, a Gresaurus, to answer the problem he had set.

It was only later, awaiting Chancellor Delox's philosophy class, that Rallon took the opportunity to whisper a question to his friend.

The Doctor's response was straightforward 'Badger has taken my reply to the Kitriarch. Suffice to say, my friend, the House will celebrate Otherstide without my presence.'

'Wish I had your determination,' muttered Koschei. 'The House of Oakdown would never let me off so lightly.'

'They'd send a chair to get you, though,' said Ushas coldly.

'As would my House. Only the House of Lungbarrow would send a... pet.' Ushas spat out 'pet' as if it was the first time she'd ever uttered such a word. It certainly seemed a distasteful one to her.

Vansell waved them into silence as Chancellor Delox entered the room. Unlike most of the casually dressed lecturers or students, Delox always wore her full heliotrope robes and neck brace. It meant she had to walk more slowly than other people through the lengthy corridors, and she used this to remind everyone at the Academy that, for Time Lords and those in training, time was not something that should be, or needed to be, hurried. She was like that. One of the old school.

When she had started working at the Academy, it was purely a place for the chosen few, who went there to determine their suitability to ascend to Gallifrey's elite. These days, it was a place where enlightened races could also send their students, to learn the ways of the Time Lords, their morals, their philosophy and, to a lesser extent, their science. Of course, no one was ever allowed to learn even the basics of time travel technology - oh no. That was exclusive to Gallifreyans. After all, who else could be trusted with such knowledge? Even those worlds fortunate enough to be allowed to know of Gallifrey's existence lacked the moral fibre necessary to manipulate time.

Besides, the only task of the Time Lords was to watch and make notes, entering details of everything they witnessed in the Net. Seeing alternative time lines evolve, watching different parallel universes blossom into existence before their tired and unadventurous eyes, observing the births, lives and deaths of trillions upon trillions of individuals. That was what the Time Lords did with their special gifts.

And woe betide any member of any alien race (and aliens they were, here on Gallifrey, as if the term automatically implied some kind of inferiority) who asked questions about the properties of time travel, or how a TARDIS worked. They were sent home in disgrace.

I've heard rumours of a race who deliberately let themselves be known as Aliens and came to Gallifrey,'

Magnus had said over tea one afternoon. 'They sought time travel to help them conquer the universe because they were warriors, who lived to fight, but the Time Lords expelled them

- not just from Gallifrey - and said if they ever returned, they'd wipe them out of existence.'

'How could they do that, exactly?' Ushas snarled.

Magnus shrugged. 'Apparently they threatened to imprison the Aliens' world behind a force field and then run time backwards, erasing them.'

Jelpax nodded excitedly. 'It's true. The Time Lords said the Aliens would not only cease to exist but they'd never *have* existed. I saw it in one of the record books in co-ordinator Azmael's library.'

A memory of this conversation flashed through Rallon's mind when he saw Delox. Yes, she was just the type to do exactly that.

Before she reached the podium from which she always lectured, or hectored, she clicked her fingers and pointed at the Doctor. She continued to point her fingertip at him as she walked, without setting eyes on him.

'Stand. Explain to the class the philosophy of Gallifrey. 'The Doctor stood and, unsurprisingly, he stammered as he replied -

it was the sort of request that needed parameters. To answer it exactly and concisely could take several days. He said so.

'Wrong.' Delox's voice sounded like a tree dying and breaking when hit by lightning. She pointed at Runcible.

'You.'

'Obedience. Honour. Understanding. Loyalty. Respect.'

Delox lowered her hand. Almost. You omitted to say

—Tradition‖. And tradition is as important as all those other qualities.'

She turned her attention back to the Doctor. 'You and your arrogant young friends seem to have forgotten everything instilled in you since the Loom. You believe that with your wanderlust, your desire to know and understand the universe, to see what is out there, those of us content to abide by the rules which govern us are somehow weak. Lazy.

Immolators of knowledge. You are wrong. Our philosophy is based upon the word —Tradition‖ and everything else your fellow student said grows forth from that one concept. Without tradition, we have no life. Without tradition, we have no purpose. Without tradition, we have no - to use an archaic term - future. The society to which you belong has been created and continued, bettered and enriched by your forebears. By your families. By your Houses. To reject its rules because you do not agree with them is the ultimate conceit.

And this Academy does not require conceit. It requires obedience, honour, understanding, respect and, above all, your loyalty. Loyalty to yourself, your fellows, your people and your family. If you wish to achieve your doctorate, to join the ranks of the educated and wise, you - and I am talking now to all of you in this room, Gallifreyan or alien - will reject your immature predilections, your arrogant belief that you are somehow better than your elders. And you will work to learn.'

Delox returned her attention to the still standing Doctor.

'And you. You in particular have got away with a great deal in this Academy. You stand there, thinking you are clever, educated and intellectual. You believe your desire to escape your home world makes you unique. Worthy of special attention. You are wrong. You are nothing. Your work is patchy, your attendance more so and even your appearance is a disgrace. You believe that getting a few high marks, a few eight out of tens from Cardinal Borusa, means you no longer have to work so hard, that you can relax.'

Delox suddenly slammed her hand down hard on her lectern, making everyone jump in surprise - not least the Doctor, who visibly blanched.

'How dare you presume any of those things. You are nothing. You are one microscopic cog in the vast machinery that is this universe. Without you, the universe would go on and never notice your non-existence. You are unimportant to everyone and everything except yourself. Sadly, your belief in your own self-worth far outweighs reality - you lack the most important ingredient in an intelligent, reasoning being.

Humility. Until you learn some, I no longer require you in my classroom. Return tomorrow when you have visited your Kitriarch. If you do not do that, you need not bother returning to this Academy except to reclaim your belongings from your rooms in the dormitory.'

Silence. Rallon realised that he, like Koschei, Ushas, Millennia and everyone else he could see, was holding his breath. He could swear he heard multiple hearts beating faster than normal. Everyone found something in the room to draw their attention away from the angry lecturer.

Only the Doctor did not take his eyes off Delox. Slowly he reached down and picked up his writing pens and clipboard, his notes and his data pad. One by one he placed them in his pockets, still never daring to take his eyes off the woman at the head of the room.

'One day, Madame,' he said very quietly but very firmly, will make you proud of me and you will understand that the one word missing from your concept of our philosophy is the word

—changell.'

And he walked out, head held high.

And Rallon, Magnus, Koschei, Jelpax and the others in the Deca all realised that nothing was ever going to be the same again.

Rallon, Magnus and Millennia found the Doctor a few hours later. He was sitting on a rock at the base of a mountain not far from his ancestral home, Lungbarrow.

He was still wearing his dark, one-piece Academy suit, its pockets packed with pens and data pad. He clearly had not been home. He also looked as if he had been crying although none of them opted to mention this.

Despite this he was grinning from ear to ear, holding a quail flower in his hand. 'I understand now,' he said. 'Now it all makes sense!'

Which was more, Rallon decided, than the Doctor was doing.

'Delox has done me the greatest favour possible. She has made me look inwards, discover the truth. She was so right, my friends, but also so terribly wrong!' He suddenly turned and looked back up the mountain, staring at a small hut where, presumably, one of the Outsiders lived. There was no one there, but the Doctor waved anyway and then carefully placed the flower in a pocket.

Millennia let her hand slip away from Rallon's and put both her hands on the Doctor's shoulders, concern in her eyes. 'Are you sure you are all right, Doctor? We were so very worried.'

He tapped her hands gently, and smiled up at her. Rallon didn't think he'd ever before seen a smile so cheerful, so exultant.

'I am fine, my dear. Thank you so much!' The Doctor stood and looked at his three friends. 'Come,' he said. 'We have work to do.'

Some while later they were in one of the libraries dotted throughout the Academy. A few other students were hunched over computer data bases, making notes with pens and paper - a strangely incongruous mixture of technologies that the Academy seemed keen to encourage. The Doctor sat down and produced the small flower he had been holding near the mountain. Millennia reached out for it, but he slapped her hand away. She gave the others a look that spoke volumes, but he failed to notice it.

Instead, he scanned the flower and looked at a massive blow-up of it on the screen. He sectioned it, rotating the image 360

degrees. 'Do you see? Millions of tiny atoms. Each one of astonishing complexity and beauty. Individually they are nothing, but put together they create something as beautiful as this.'

'It's a daisy, Doctor,' Magnus grunted. It is white, yellow and green. Hardly beautiful.'

The Doctor shook his head. 'No, that's the mistake I made. But look harder. The beauty is not in its outward appearance but in the sheer brilliance of what it represents. Why? Why do daisies exist? How did they come to exist in this way? Why not red? Why not three foot tall or a yard wide?'

'Because that is the way of the universe, Doctor,' Millennia said quietly. 'The Academy teaches us that the intricate mathematics that cause creation have been examined and -'

'Can't you see, Millennia?' the Doctor interrupted gently.

'There's more to life, to *us,* than this place. This Academy. This planet. I thought all that we, the Deca, could really do was dream. That it was our destiny to stay here and regret what we had been born into avoiding, just as it was our destiny to dream. But no. No, I see now we can change things. We can be as significant in our universe as each of these daisy molecules is in its. There is such beauty in this flower, so much depth. So much more than we ever see at a glance as we walk through the meadows near the hills.'

'Or as we tread on the daisies as we walk on them to get back to the sands.' Rallon was bored. 'C'mon, Doctor, where is this taking us?'

The Doctor started tapping at the computer, leafing through sheet after sheet of documented data. 'It's all here, you know. The secrets, the rumours, the legends and the facts.

The Time Lords have access to it but are afraid to use it.' His fingers breezed over the touch-sensitive keys as he used his natural skill for mathematics to upload terabytes of Information to his data pad.

Rallon smiled slightly at a private memory - of Cardinal Borusa telling their class over and over again that the truth, the answers to all questions, could only be found in pure mathematics. The science of the legendary Logopolitans made real. That was what Millennia had referred to. But here was another kind of truth - the truth that there was more to life than maths. Science. There was a universe of life to be explored. Rallon suddenly understood, and shared, his friend's haste.

With a rather exaggerated flourish, the Doctor logged off the computer and tapped his data pad, now filled with the uploaded information. 'We need to get the others to see all this, choose our target.'

Magnus stepped back. 'Our target? What do you mean?' The Doctor looked hard at him and, for the second time in less than a day, Rallon saw that look in his eyes.

A look of fire. Of danger. Or something not quite...

Gallifreyan.

Not normal.
'Millennia wants an adventure. That's what we're going to have.'
'I do?' she mouthed at Rallon, but he just kissed her cheek and spoke softly.
'Go along with it!'

The Doctor grabbed his pad and almost ran out of the library. The others followed a few paces behind, smiling sheepishly at the angry looks from other students who wanted nothing more than to study in peace.

Unseen by any of the departing students, or any of the library staff, was an extraordinary occurrence by the computer console at which the Doctor had been working.
Unseen, because for just a few moments Gallifrey stopped.
Totally and utterly stopped.
Time, for the galaxy's only beings who could really claim to understand the concept, simply ceased to exist.
A piece of paper knocked off a desk by Millennia's departing robes hovered immobile in the air. A red liquid being drunk by a librarian solidified as an unmoving lump between the edge of the glass and his throat.
And in the corridor outside the four hurrying students simply didn't move.
Inside the library, the air shimmered and distorted until the effect was large enough for two black-and-white attired recorders to step out, as if the air were a door.
Which, in a way, it was.
Silently, they looked around and then one of them picked up the Doctor's discarded daisy.
'Definitely the one.' He reached over to the console the Doctor had used and tapped on the keys. The shimmering air stretched with his arm and enveloped the computer, reactivating it. He made a few keystrokes and withdrew. The computer once more regained its frozen composure.
'Erasure completed!
And, daisy still in hand, the recorder stepped back into the air, followed by his compatriot.
The air stopped shimmering.
The librarian drank his drink, the piece of paper flopped to the floor and, outside in the corridor, the quartet of hurrying students continued their running.
No one on Gallifrey was even aware that time had stopped.
Except those who had made it happen.

Later that night, it was obvious to Rallon that the Doctor had forgotten about his Kitriarch's orders.
There was to be no visit to Lungbarrow tonight.
Instead most of the members of the Deca were in Jelpax's room, watching as he, the Doctor and Mortimus – their history expert - assimilated the Doctor's procured data.
Drax wasn't there, nor Ushas. Both were finishing an Academy project. If the Doctor even noticed their absence, Rallon could see it mattered little to him.
Vansell was apparently disinterested, hovering by the door.
Rallon thought he looked very preoccupied - perhaps he was already rather behind with his assignments and another night spent with the Deca would make him even further behind.
Vansell had always been the most dedicated.
In fact, come to think of it, he was an odd one to have become involved with the Deca.
But then Millennia and Magnus weren't very typical secret-club types either. Nor were Ushas or Jelpax...
Anyway, whatever the Doctor, Jelpax and Mortimus were up to now, Vansell was clearly disinterested.
Rallon caught a look from Koschei that said it all: the three with the data pad were like time-tots with new Otherstide gifts.
Mortimus, in particular, was enjoying ploughing through the records.
'This planet is fascinating,' he said.
'Which one?' asked Jelpax.
'Earth,' interrupted the Doctor.
'Oh...' chorused some of the others, well used to the Doctor's love of this rather primitive planet. No one quite understood why he studied it in such detail. 'A remarkable place,' he continued, addressing just Mortimus as if giving a lecture. 'A very violent world, but very civilised at the same time. Unlike most planets, it rises and falls regularly.'
Mortimus was pointing at the data. 'According to these notes, Time Lords have been known to visit other planets to observe them first hand...' he trailed off. 'Time Lords leaving Gallifrey?
But that's... that's...'

'Enough to blow the lid off their precious perfect society,'
Koschei said grimly.
The others all looked at him, so he smiled. 'Hey, just an observation.'
But Magnus seemed to be considering his comment carefully. Perhaps he was remembering the stories about the Alien planet, the force fields and the threats of time erasure.
'What do you make of this then?' The Doctor was tapping at the data. 'Ever heard of Minyos?'
Over the next couple of hours, the Deca ploughed through the various secrets of the past.
After some time, Vansell sardonically observed 'Has it occurred to any of you that these supposed deep, dark secrets just happened to be very easy to get hold of?'
The Doctor was indignant. 'I had to look very hard, actually. It took a lot of code breaking to get past the APC Net security devices.'
Vansell shrugged. 'OK, but it still strikes me as a bit too easy. Almost as if they wanted them to be found.'
Millennia shot Vansell a filthy look. 'Oh, you are just so boring, you know? The Doctor worked jolly hard to get this.'
Jelpax sucked in his breath. 'I have to say, however, that there is something in what Vansell says. I mean, we may be stumbling on something top secret here.'

‘Good,’ said Koschei. ‘Fewer secrets would be better for everyone. Come on, keep going. Let’s see what else is buried in the files of the Time Lords.’

Mortimus was scanning. ‘A race of people in suspended animation as a result of a gamma war... two identical planets on different sides of the universe, neither knowing about the other but with identical populations and culture... a water planet in which life exists in huge cities floating in the skies, kept there by the mental powers of its inhabitants... a city built around a vast weapon to hide it...

Cybermen... Daleks... the Giant Vampires...

‘Well, *obviously* the Vampires would be in there,’ Vansell said. ‘this is very tedious. Is there nothing interesting to be found?’

‘Oh, so we’re interested now are we?’ said Magnus.

Vansell shrugged and began examining the door, trying to find a scratch or blemish to keep him occupied.

‘The Elders of the Universe...’

The Doctor tugged the data pad away from Jelpax and Mortimus and began reading:

THE RECORD OF RASSILON: THE GUARDIANS OF THE UNIVERSE. THE UNIVERSE
IS IN A CONSTANT STATE OF FLUX - AND IS ESSENTIALLY BALANCED BY THE
COSMIC POWERS OF THE GUARDIANS. BEINGS SUPERIOR
TO EVERYONE.

‘—Everyone‖. Well, that’s helpful I must say.’

‘Keep going,’ laughed Millennia, ‘this is such fun!’ The Doctor continued reading aloud:

RASSILON ONLY KNEW OF TWO GUARDIANS - LIGHT AND DARK, GOOD AND EVIL, BLACK AND WHITE. BUT RASSILON WAS AWARE THAT THERE MAY BE OTHERS. BEINGS
FROM ANOTHER UNIVERSE, COME TO EXPLORE, INVADE OR COLONISE OUR OWN. HE
DEFINED THEM AS SUB-GUARDIANS - FOR MANY WERE THE CREATURES THAT CAME
UNTO OUR UNIVERSE AS IT WAS BORRN, OR AS THEIRS EXPIRED.
AND RASSILON NAMED THE SUB-GUARDIANS ’THE GREAT OLD ONES’, SPECULATING
THAT MAYHAPS THEY WERE TIME LORDS FROM THAT OTHER UNIVERSE, FAR MORE
ADVANCED, FAR FURTHER EVOLVED. AND RASSILON GAVE THE GREAT OLD ONES NAMES
AND WARNED ALL FUTURE TIME LORDS TO BE ON THEIR GUARD AGAINST THEIR EVIL, THESE MALEFICENTS:
HASTUR
YOG-SOTHOTH
SHUB-NIGGURATH
CTHULU
MELEFESCENT
TOR-GASUKK
GOG AND MAGOG
LLOIGOR NYARIATHOTEP
DAGON AND FINALLY THE THREE CHAOS-BRINGERS WHO SOUGHT
EQUIVALENTS IN OUR UNIVERSE: RAAG, NAH AND ROK, WHO TOGETHER
WOULD ONE DAY CAUSE THE END OF THIS UNIVERSE AS THEY HAD
THEIR OWN, AND MAYBE COUNTLESS OTHERS BEFORE.
BUT, RASSILON QUESTIONED, DID ALL THOSE GREAT OLD ONES HAVE
A ROLE TO PLAY IN OUR UNIVERSE?
AND WERE THERE MORE GUARDIANS?
A GUARDIAN OF JUSTICE?
A GUARDIAN OF MORTALITY?
A GUARDIAN OF IMAGINATION?
AND SO RASSILON BEGAN TO ASK QUESTIONS OF THE TWO
GUARDIANS. WHERE DID THEY COME FROM? WHAT CREATED THEM? WERE
THEY TRULY A PRIMEVAL FORCE? HOW COULD THEY ASSUME A SHAPE
FAMILIAR TO THOSE WHO ARE GRANTED THE RIGHT TO SEE THEM? DID A SILICON LIFE FORM SEE THE BLACK GUARDIAN *AS* A MONOLITH? WOULD A MACHINE SEE THE WHITE GUARDIAN AS A BOX?
AND THE GUARDIANS REFUSED TO REPLY AND CAST RASSILON DOWN
FROM THEIR REALM - TAUGHT HIM HUMILITY. TAUGHT HIM THAT AMONGST
EPHEMERAL BEINGS, THE TIME LORDS OF GALLIFREY WERE SUPERIOR, BUT THERE WERE THOSE MORE SUPERIOR THAN THEM. AND FROM THIS, RASSILON LEARNED TO RESPECT LIFE IN ALL ITS FORMS, FOR HOWEVER
POWERFUL ONE MIGHT CONSIDER ONESELF TO BE, THERE IS ALWAYS
SOMETHING SUPERIOR.

‘Rubbish,’ said Mortimus. ‘What can be more advanced than the Time Lords?’

Vansell chipped in from the doorway ‘No wonder they don’t teach this at the Academy. Imagine if Delox discovered she’s not the highest form of evolution in the cosmos?’

The others laughed, but the Doctor, Mortimus and Jelpax were engrossed in scrolling through the data pad’s information.

‘Look at this.’ The Doctor was pointing furiously.

LATER TIME LORDS REFER BACK TO THIS LIST WHEN DISCUSSING A BEING, OR BEINGS - THE DIFFERENT ACCOUNTS ARE INCONSISTENT
- KNOWN AS THE TOYMAKERS.

Mortimus was nodding excitedly as he read on. ‘Yes, yes, yes.

A being - or beings, if you like - of vast mental powers, who could build and destroy entire realms with his mind.’ He turned and grabbed the Doctor’s shoulders. ‘Find out about them, Doctor, and Delox won’t ever be able to criticise you again.’

‘What?’ Vansell was incredulous. ‘You think that the ten of us, neophyte Time Lords, will be able to do what Rassilon, the Dark Lords, the Time Lords and the CIA, probably, haven’t been able to do? How conceited are you, Doctor?’

The Doctor was on his feet in an instant, and crossed over to Vansell, his fists balling.

Magnus was quickly between them, while Koschei eased the Doctor back, gently but thinly.

'Listen you two,' said Magnus quietly. 'Stop getting at each other. You,' and he addressed Vansell, 'should not be in the Deca if you don't believe that we can achieve something. And you, Doctor, you should concede that he may have a point. If Rassilon couldn't find the answers, why should we?'

'Maybe,' said Millennia quietly, now crouched beside Mortimus, consulting the data pad, 'because he didn't look far enough.' She began accessing information drawn from all the different sources. She clicked her fingers and both Rallon and Jelpax passed her their pads, to give her as much data space as she could get.

Magnus felt the Doctor relax as he became distracted by Millennia's efforts. 'What are you doing?'

'Creating a multiplane interactive data base, using every cross-reference that exists about the Toymakers. Now wait and watch.'

Seconds ticked by as, in silence, the eight of them saw terabytes of information correlated from aeons of research, legend, truth, and hearsay. Finally the Doctor's data pad flashed up three sets of co-ordinates.

'You know,' breathed Rallon, 'you are very gifted, my love.'

Millennia winked at him. 'Sometimes I amaze myself. But to amaze you, now that takes a genius.'

The Doctor snatched up the pad, mentally running the co-ordinates through his head.

'May I?'

It was Koschei. 'Cosmic science is my speciality,' he said by way of an explanation.

After a beat, just long enough, the Doctor nodded and gave him the pad.

Koschei laughed. 'Well, I don't know how reliable this is, Doctor. I mean, these co-ordinates put you at the heart of a star in Orion. But these other two - well, they could be anywhere. Take your pick.'

Vansell snorted. 'You people are mad. On the say-so of one of Millennia's lash-ups, you're going to break every law of Gallifrey, leave the planet, and end up where? Dead, probably.'

The Doctor's eyes flashed in fury. 'No one is asking you to join us, Vansell.' He turned to the rest of the group. 'Yes, I'm proposing breaking the law. Yes, I'm proposing something risky. But if we stay here, if we don't prove to those dormice who call themselves Time Lords that there's a Universe out there which needs to be explored - not just watched, observed and recorded but participated in - then we might as well die now.'

'And if we are caught?' ventured Magnus.

'If we are caught, we take the blame. But with any luck, even if we are caught it'll shake them up a bit, do a little damage to their cosy little world. Look at those records. There was a time when Gallifrey explored. Look at Minyos. Look at the Death Zone. Look at the early days of Gallifrey when explorers in nothing more than scaphes ventured into the vortex. They had a sense of adventure then. Those genes are still within us.'

'Within you, it seems,' said Vansell quietly.

The Doctor stopped.

Mortimus was eyeing him carefully, but still scrolling through the data pad's information.

Jelpax was determined not to catch the Doctor's eye, and stared at his feet.

Koschei was furiously scratching his arm, as if the itch was suddenly the most important thing in the world.

Millennia was tugging at a loose thread on her robes. Only Rallon was nodding at him, eager to go.

'And you, my friend?' The Doctor was addressing Magnus.

Magnus wanted to say yes, he wanted to explore, wanted to know why the Time Lords had so much power, so much technology and squandered it on philosophical debate and little more than spying on other planets.

But he wanted to finish his course at the Academy. To understand the energies necessary to harness time travel, to understand not just that a TARDIS could work but *why* it worked. How to build one. If he went with the Doctor and Rallon, he would probably be sacrificing his future.

'I'm sorry, Doctor. But I will ensure that you can get a TARDIS. It's the most I can do.'

The Doctor looked crestfallen. 'I'd say it's actually the least you can do, but still, I am grateful.' He turned to the others.

'Koschei? Mortimus? Jelpax?'

They all shook their heads.

'Rallon?'

'Oh yes, count me in.'

'Vansell?'

Vansell just laughed. 'Oh, right, like I'm going to throw my future away for you. You are a fool, Doctor. You too, Rallon.'

'I'll come with you,' said Millennia, rather quietly. Then she nodded furiously and spoke more loudly. 'Yes, yes I *want* to see what's out there.' She walked over to Vansell. 'The others here, they've discussed this, made their decisions based on the facts. But you, Vansell, what have you done except make caustic remarks? Staying here might well be safer, but it won't be more interesting.'

'Maybe not.' he shrugged. 'But I'll still have a career at the end of it.'

Vansell turned and left.

'Will he betray us?' Rallon wondered aloud.

The Doctor shook his head. 'No. Not even Vansell could do that. Our loyalty to each other is what has kept us together all these years.'

'Nothing can divide that,' murmured Koschei.

'No,' the Doctor agreed. 'Nothing…'

(Forever) Live and Die

'You don't know how to fly this thing, do you?'
The Doctor, who had been hunched over the TARDIS console, stood up. 'Of course I do,' he snapped at Millennia.
'Have you two got nothing better to do than criticise?'
Rallon laughed. 'I'll check the fault locator.'
'Fault locator,' muttered the Doctor. 'I am the fault locator. I can find the fault.'
Millennia peered over his shoulder. 'I thought there wasn't a fault.'
'There isn't a fault,' retorted the Doctor. 'But if there was, I'd be able to find it, not some ridiculous machine.'
'It's in the navigational systems,' Rallon called over from the fault locator room. 'G3 4S.'
'I know where the navigation systems are, Rallon.' The Doctor tugged up the corner of the panel on the TARDIS console that was nearest the outer doors, peered inside, shut it and opened the next panel. 'Well, if they didn't keep moving things around...'
Millennia resumed her wandering around the console room.
'The TARDIS is smaller than I thought it would be.'
'It's only a Type 18, Millennia,' Rallon said. 'Now, if we'd acquired a Type 35, or even a Type 30 Mark III, we'd be more comfortable.'
'Well, if someone had distracted the traffic controller longer than she did, I might have had the opportunity to find one.'
The Doctor slammed the panel shut. 'As it is, this is the best I could do.' He glowered at Millennia. 'As usual, I have to do everything, hmmm?'
'To be fair, Doctor,' said Rallon, ever conciliatory, 'this was your idea. We're just along for the ride!'

'I want to see Chancellor Delox's face when we get back, see if she still thinks you're worthless, Doctor.' Millennia suddenly clapped her hands together. 'Oh, oh. I want to get a souvenir. A rock or something. Just think what we can do with it!
'What exactly?' asked the Doctor, retrying the navigational controls.
Millennia's thought processes clearly hadn't got quite far enough to answer him - geology wasn't her field of interest after all. 'Oh, I don't know. It'll be different rock to Gallifrey rock, so the geologists will be fascinated. And anyway, I want to show it to my family, to prove how we can learn to do things without using our —influence‖.'
The Doctor shot her a curious look - the sad fact was that her family had connections and money rather than brains. To them, Millennia's time at the Academy was an excuse to get her out of the house and away from whatever harm she might do to herself. But although she was a bit young and given to flights of sulking, the Doctor was as impressed by her aptitude as Rallon. He had little doubt that one day she would prove to her House just how clever she was. Maybe after this very excursion.
'I think I'll throw a party when we get back, you two. A big welcome home for the brave adventurers.' She looked around her. 'Where is the computer?'
'Why?' asked Rallon.
'I want to start a list of who to invite, silly.' She kissed his cheek. 'Oh, and my family are *not* on the list.'
Without saying anything, Rallon touched a switch on the console and a data bank unfolded itself. Millennia was greeted by a screen and keypad. 'Oh, how quaint,' she said.
'It's as —quaint‖ as the library computers,' the Doctor said.
'I know that,' Millennia replied. 'I'm not stupid. I just think the way it was inserted into this console thing is quaint.'
'Millennia,' Rallon eased her away. 'I think there's a secondary console down the corridor. Why don't you use the one in there and then the Doctor and I can work in here, and in a couple of hours, you tell us all about the party, all right?'

Millennia smiled adoringly at him, but she knew she was being sidetracked. 'Oh, Rallon, you're always full of good ideas,' she said sarcastically, but still headed off to find the other control room.
'Thank you,' said the Doctor. 'Now tell me again why she is here?'
Rallon smiled. 'Because she wants adventure as much as you or I, Doctor. And,' and he reached over conspiratorially and gripped his friend's shoulder, 'because if it were you and me, we'd take risks. Silly risks. This way, being the gentlemen we are, each of us will ensure nothing gets too out of hand and we don't do anything life-threatening. After all, would you want to tell her family something had happened to her?'
The Doctor pursed his lips. 'I wouldn't want to tell her furniture, let alone the whole family.'
Rallon winked. 'Exactly my point, old man.'
For the first time, the Doctor allowed a smile to slip across his face. 'All right, —old man‖, but she's your responsibility. I don't like having to be responsible for other people.'
Millennia popped her head back around the door from the inner sections of the TARDIS. 'I got bored making lists. That's the sort of thing our housekeeper used to get me to do when she wanted me out from under her feet. Why do I suddenly get the impression that it's happened again?'
The Doctor and Rallon shot a look at each other, each hoping the other had a quick enough answer. 'You can help me here,' the Doctor said. 'Could you start to tell me some of those readings?'
Millennia's eyes sparkled for a moment and, for the first time, the Doctor noticed how very attractive she was. No wonder Rallon was besotted.
He coughed and sidled up beside her. 'I think I should apologise, Millennia. I've not been the best of... companions since we started this little journey. A bit concerned about getting there, and all that. You do understand, don't you?'
Millennia shrugged, but was still smiling. 'Of course I do, Doctor. We're all used to your weird eccentricities by now.' She looked down at the TARDIS console. 'Which numbers need reading?'
But the Doctor was staring open-mouthed at her, and then over to Rallon, who merely mouthed 'touché' back at him.
'Those ones. There.' The Doctor jabbed his finger at a dial.

He had no idea what it was for, but it would keep Millennia occupied and feeling useful.

'Point 01,' Millennia started to say.

And then everything went... bizarre.

Harsh thick beams of light suddenly ricocheted off the TARDIS's walls, accompanied by a loud humming noise. The TARDIS itself was pitching and tossing.

The console started shorting, sending sparks and a wailing Millennia in various directions.

The TARDIS lights themselves dimmed, and the three of them could only see each other as the new beams bounced around them.

'They're searching for something,' the Doctor muttered, his brain immediately trying to analyse the new problem. He moved to one side and, sure enough, one of the light beams hit where he had just been standing. 'Intelligent and diligent,'

he murmured.

Millennia was huddled in a corner, but Rallon suddenly rolled towards the Doctor, dodging the beams as they stabbed down.

'I calculate a point 03 second delay in their readings of movement,' he said. 'While we're still, they don't —seell us.'

'Is this some kind of TARDIS defence?' moaned Millennia.

'Are we in trouble with the Time Lords?'

Rallon waved over to her, to reassure her.

And vanished in a column of light that hit him and seemed to elongate him, stretching him upwards and into the TARDIS's ceiling.

It was over.

The TARDIS was no longer moving, its lights were back on and the noise had stopped.

'Rallon?' Millennia crawled towards the Doctor. 'Where's he gone?'

The Doctor could see she was terrified. Truth be told, so was he.

He carefully reached up and activated the TARDIS scanner.

One of the roundels that indented the wall shimmered and gave way to the outside image.

White. A pure white that the Doctor had never seen before.

Not snow, as on the mountains in southern Gallifrey; or paint, such as in the walkways to and from the academicians'

offices.

Just whiteness. Nothingness.

'Can we go home now?' murmured Millennia. She had drawn her knees towards her breast and was hugging them, rocking slightly as if to calm herself down.

The Doctor realised he needed to take control of the situation. Borusa always told him never to let a situation take control of him.

And even the voice of the old man on the mountain seemed to penetrate his brain. 'Your destiny is yours, my boy. External forces can shape it, maybe even direct and influence it, but your destiny lies within you and is determined by what you do with the events you are faced with.'

His two most significant teachers.

This was the time to find out how well they had taught him.

No. To find out how well *he* had listened and learnt.

After checking the exterior readings and finding them safe, he opened the TARDIS's doors.

The white glare he was expecting wasn't there, and so he gingerly poked his head out.

He could not see a floor, a roof or walls. Just a white void.

Was the TARDIS on solid ground or was it floating?

He got on his hands and knees and patted the nothingness outside the TARDIS's doors. It seemed firm so he stood up again and walked out, holding his breath, preparing to drop.

But no, whatever it was, it was solid. Without looking back, he reached his hand inside the TARDIS, calling for Millennia.

After a second's hesitation, he felt her hand slip into his, her fingers sliding between his and getting a firm grip.

Together they walked out of the TARDIS and looked back. The chameleon circuit hadn't activated - clearly the TARDIS could not read anything from its surroundings to prompt it to create an illusion of change.

'How intriguing,' the Doctor muttered.

'Look!' Millennia almost took a step back. A path seemed to be laying itself, rushing towards them, yellow flagstones appearing rapidly, one after the other, three abreast.

'No, wait,' said the Doctor, giving her hand a squeeze.

The yellow flagstones stopped their construction at his toes.

'Doctor!'

He turned at Millennia's cry. The TARDIS was in the distance, receding rapidly as if being pulled back at great speed. Within seconds, the familiar white dome had blended so perfectly with its surroundings that they couldn't tell if it had ceased to exist or was too far away to be discernible.

Except it was not the TARDIS that had moved - it was them. They found the yellow flagstones beneath their feet and realised the path was moving away as fast as it had arrived.

The slabs behind them were whipped up and moved ahead, forming an ever-moving walkway.

'Brilliant,' the Doctor said. 'Scientifically speaking, this is -'

He stopped. Millennia's face told him everything he needed to know. She was terrified, completely and utterly terrified, and his babbling was not helping her. 'I'm sorry, my dear,' he said. 'I do go on a bit.'

When the path stopped moving they were in a square. The floor was a pure white void again, but around them was a wall made from massive blocks. At one end, it was neatly broken - to leave a gap.

'Hello' said two dull voices behind them.

They turned to be greeted by two severe-looking humans, immaculately dressed, the man in a grey pinstripe suit and bowler hat, the woman in a tight grey sweater and skirt. Both wore horn-rimmed glasses and the man carried a newspaper and an umbrella.

They were the epitome of dullness. Greyness.

'I'm George. This is my wife, Margaret. We've been sent to tell you to go on through. 'The man spoke in a flat monotone -

as if the appearance of the Doctor and Millennia was the single most boring event ever to have happened. ‘Delighted to finally meet you.’ he added, sounding as if he meant anything but that.

‘Don’t keep him waiting,’ said Margaret. ‘He hates being kept waiting.’

‘Through there?’ Millennia asked, her rational mind beginning to function again. She pointed at the gap in the wall.

That’s right, thought the Doctor. Good girl - treat this as a problem to be solved, not a situation to panic about.

But George and Margaret were gone, like phantoms. It was as if they had never been there.

The two Gallifreyans had started to move towards the gap when something made them stop - a sound. A growling, marling, roaring sort of sound. It was alien but, the Doctor thought, somehow not quite right. As if something was trying too hard to be noisy and frightening.

Through the gap came a scaly, reptilian creature on four stumpy legs. Flame red all over, it had a big wide mouth, a scaly mane, and huge rolling eyes. A wisp of smoke curled out through one nostril.

‘What is it?’

The Doctor stared hard. ‘A reptile of some sort. Look at that tail...’ Something at the back of his mind clicked. ‘It’s a dragon. A red dragon.’

The dragon pawed at the ground - but stayed where it was.

It was as if something was stopping it getting into the square arena where the Doctor and Millennia were standing.

Or it was there to stop them getting out.

Swallowing hard, Millennia opted to ignore the dragon and instead walked over to the wall of blocks. Each block was slightly wider than she was tall and they were lying flat, two high. She could not quite reach the top.

‘Doctor, they’re made of something hard but not artificial.’ The Doctor was beside her in an instant, mumbling to himself.

‘We’re here for a reason ... we can’t get out despite the gap because someone wants us to stay here.’

‘The dragon?’

‘Oh no, no. I shouldn’t think he can think for himself.’ The Doctor tapped the tiles. ‘Bone,’ he said after a moment. ‘Ivory to be precise.’

‘Doctor, look!’

One of the tiles near the dragon lifted and then came down in the centre of the arena. A second later another followed, then another. Something was dismantling the wall and dropping the blocks near the Doctor and Millennia.

The Doctor ran to the nearest one and peered over the top of it.

‘It has markings on, Millennia. See there? And there?’

Millennia was looking at another block. ‘This one is covered in roundels.’

The Doctor was tracing the scratchy outline of the markings on his. They made no sense. He crossed to another, which showed four green lines and the number 4 in the corner.

‘How many roundels?’ he called suddenly.

‘Err... five.’

‘Is there a number 5 in the top left corner?’

‘Yes. Yes there is!’ Millennia called back. Is it important?’

The Doctor crouched atop the block with the four lines on it.

‘Millennia, where were we headed?’

She shrugged. ‘The realm of one of the Great Old Ones.’

‘The Toymakers! Yes, yes, that’s where we were going, my dear. And, if I’m not much mistaken, these are tiles in a giant game of some sort.’

‘It is called mah-jong,’ said the dragon from the rapidly diminishing corner, ducking slightly as another tile was picked up and discarded.

Both Gallifreyans stared at it in surprise. The Doctor recovered first - what had his old mentor in the mountain always said about never judging by appearances?

‘Good day, sir. My name is -’

‘The Doctor. And your friend is Millennia. Yes, Rallon told me all about you.’

And the world went bizarre again.

The dragon blurred and re-formed as a man.

The walls around them shrunk until everything was reversed and the three figures were standing on either side of a lacquered black table. The game tiles on its surface were now just that.

The man wore a long silken robe, beautifully coloured and decorated with dragons and other strange but beautiful designs. On his head was a round hat, similarly patterned, while his feet were encased in red velvet, pointed slippers.

The only thing wrong was that his head lacked any features

- it was just a glowing ball of energy.

He spread out his arms, long silken sleeves drooping. It was a gesture of welcome.

‘I’m sorry it took so long to get the dimensions adjusted to suit you,’ he said, not unkindly. His voice was that of a mature man: rich, deep and well spoken - really rather charming. ‘Visitors to my realm are few and far between and when I scanned your craft the interior dimensions were at odds with the exterior, which suggested a technology and advancement that your actually choosing to come here belied.’

The Doctor put his hands behind his back. ‘Oh really? So you are saying we made a mistake coming here?’

‘For you or for me?’ asked the man.

Millennia spoke up. ‘Where’s Rallon? What have you done with him?’

‘I am here, my child. This body is being sustained by him.

Me. Whatever. Here, let me explain.’

And the man’s head morphed into Rallon’s, although when he spoke, it was still in the smooth sophisticated tones of the original. ‘I needed a body - sadly my original one did not...

suit this Universe. Your friend’s is the first I have come across that isn’t enfeebled and prone to wearing out every seventy years. Mortality is such a burden, I find. This one could last a good thousand years I should imagine.’

‘Rallon?’ Millennia whispered. ‘Rallon, are you still alive?’ The figure with Rallon’s face shook his head. ‘Oh no, not really. I think there is a tiny spark of him somewhere inside me, acting as a cohesion to keep this frame together. Would you prefer it if I assumed a different visage for now? This one does rather seem to upset you.’

The face morphed again, this time into one far better suited to the voice it possessed.

Lined, but seemingly through years of smiling rather than age, it was not unpleasant. It reminded the Doctor of one of the lecturers back at the Prydon Academy - it had that same worn look, yet it was a face that spoke tomes about its wisdom, its experience.

And spoke nothing of its intent.

The Doctor decided not to dwell on Rallon for now - if he was truly lost to them, it was something he would have to deal with later, a matter for his conscience. Right now, he needed to return himself and Millennia to their stolen TARDIS where they would be safe again.

'Pragmatic as always, Doctor,' said the man, who had clearly been reading his thoughts. 'But sadly, not an opportunity available to you.'

He held out his hand - in the palm was the TARDIS, shrunk to a couple of inches high. He closed his fist around it and shook it. When he opened his hand again, the TARDIS had been replaced by a pair of dice.

'Let me show you around,' he said, and dropped the dice on the table. 'Double six,' he said, without actually looking. 'Oh, that means we start ...'

'... Here.'

The Doctor and Millennia were standing in a huge room in which everything was made of wood. The floor, walls and ceiling, with supports and beams, all wood. Chairs, tables, wardrobes and cupboards, even a small lamp: everything was natural pine.

Hanging on the walls were toys, clumped together like badly arranged flowers. Every conceivable toy from every conceivable civilisation. Dotted among them were masks and kites - and rolling pictures with blue, green or red goo slopping about with their gravity-inspired movements.

Every so often there were clocks - some of their origins were so diverse as to be unimaginable. They told the time in it variety of ways, differing methods for differing time measurements. The sounds they made as they clicked and ticked combined to form a bizarre symphony of regulated noises, simultaneously soothing and jarring.

The floor was littered with tables of different sizes and shapes. Although they were all made of pine, they were carved in a variety of different styles. On top of them were dolls' houses, table-top video games and platoons of tin soldiers set on relief maps. The sheer variety of objects was , phenomenal, and despite their numbers, the room did not seem overcrowded. Indeed, it was sometimes difficult to focus on the walls and work out where it ended.

The grey couple, George and Margaret, stood by a set of arched wooden doors, impassively staring forwards.

Scattered around the floor was a series of pine buccaneer chests and, to one side, the small lacquered table with the mah-jong set.

The Doctor did his best to seem unimpressed. 'Is this the best you can do? Simple transference? My people could do this when...'

'... the universe was still young.' The mandarin was now seated on a Chinese, black-lacquered wood chair with a high back, its legs and rear decorated with a silver embossed willow pattern. 'Oh, yes, I know all the rhetoric, Doctor, believe me. Unlike the Time Lords - oh sorry, *Gallifreyans* - I don't use mechanical means. I do it by the force of will.'

And he gave the Doctor a look that dared him to try and answer that.

Which was a mistake - the Doctor always took up dares.

'Even so, I'm still amazed that, if you can do such things, this is the best scenario you could come up with. Where are we?'

'Allow me to formally introduce myself. I am the Toymaker.

And this, my friends, is my toyshop. My celestial toyshop.'

'You sell toys?'

The Toymaker shook his head. 'No, Doctor. I make them.

Or adapt them, at least.'

He snapped his fingers and, with an audible click, each of the buccaneer chests unlocked and their lids rose up. A variety of toys began climbing out of them. From one came a troop of clockwork soldiers. From another emerged soft toys including teddy bears, fluffy rabbits and Spanish golliwogs.

And from a third came dolls in a variety of sizes and shapes.

Others disgorged everything from string puppets to action figures, plus a never-ending supply of trains, cars, planes and boats, mostly carried by the other toys.

Again, the Toymaker snapped his fingers and everything stopped moving. Then, as one, all the toys turned to face him and, as best they could, bowed or curtsied.

'My friends,' he beamed, 'there are some new people come to play with you. Who wants the first game?'

Two of the blue-jacketed clockwork soldiers marched forward.

'Excellent choice. Doctor, Millennia, please meet Captains Bimm and Bamm.'

The Doctor watched as the two clockwork soldiers grew until they were the same size as him.

'My soldier friends here want to test your mettle, Doctor.

Find out if you have what it takes.'

'Takes to do what?'

'Why, join us of course.' The Toymaker snapped his fingers again. George and Margaret reached out in unison and each pulled open one of the arched doors. Into the room came a man-shaped robot with a monitor on its chest. On the monitor was a readout, a countdown.

'My Magic Robot here will go with you. Enjoy your fun. Oh, and Doctor, you have four minutes to beat Bimm and Bamm.

Good day.'

As the Doctor was being led away by the robot and the clockwork soldiers, he looked back at Millennia. She was terrified.

George and Margaret were beside her, still nonchalantly looking bored.

'Don't worry, my dear,' the Toymaker was saying. 'I'm sure the Doctor will win and then I will have lost and you won't be trapped here any longer.'

But the Doctor did not believe a word of it.

The Doctor was unsurprised to find himself magically in another location.

It was a huge muddy field, dotted with just a few trees.

Ropes hung from some of their branches and there was a canvas tunnel in a far corner. A broken cannon was lying on its side in another and, every so often, pennants were stuck in the ground. Five were burgundy, five blue.

On the furthest side of the field, the toy robot stood.

Waiting.

‘The object,’ said a voice in the Doctor’s ear, ‘is to get your opponent’s flags back to your base.’

The speaker was a gruff, rotund man in his forties, wearing the same army clothes as the clockwork soldiers. But this man was human. He held out a hand.

‘No bad feelings, what? Topping day for it, though. Name’s Bamm. Captain Bill Bamm. Pleased t’meet you, Doctor.’

‘Oh rather, and my name is Captain Bimm. Ben Bimm.’ The Doctor whirled around to find that the other toy was now a lean, angular man. ‘That’s your base over there, what.’ He was pointing to the broken cannon. ‘Ours is the trees by that gate. Equidistant, y’see?’

The Doctor nodded. ‘Trouble is, Captains, there are two of you and only one of me, which seems a tad unfair, hmmm?’

The two soldiers looked at each other. ‘Lawks, Captain’

Bamm, what shall we do?’

‘Don’t know, Captain Bimm. I s’pose we could give the poor blighter two of our flags as a sort of advantage.’

‘Oh yes, Captain Bamm, that would be rather decent of us.’

The Doctor saw that two of the blue flags were now sticking out of the front of his cannon. ‘Why, thank you,’ he said sardonically. ‘That’s most generous.’

‘Tsk tsk, Doctor.’ The Toymaker’s voice boomed from all around them, making the two soldiers quake. ‘Be grateful.’

‘Grateful? grateful? And just why should I be grateful to you, sir, eh?’ The Doctor looked straight up into the sky. ‘You kidnap my friends and me, you claim to have murdered Rallon and now you expect me to tromp around in a field getting my robes wet and dirty, just to amuse you! Why, I say to you why, should I go along with all this?’

‘Because, Doctor,’ said a voice, suddenly harsh, in his ear,

‘of this!’

The Toymaker was beside the Doctor, hovering just a few inches above the ground, his own robe unlikely to get dirty.

In his hand, he held a small water-filled dome. A tiny sculptured city lay inside it, covered in snow. ‘It’s called a snowstorm, Doctor,’ he said. ‘All I have to do is shake it and watch what happens.’ The Toymaker shook the dome vigorously and the snow whipped up and around, then fell back on the city. ‘Recognise it?’

The Doctor snorted as if disinterested, then took a look.

‘The Capitol... ‘

‘That’s right, Doctor. Your home on Gallifrey. Oh, and look who has come for a visit.’

The Doctor saw a tiny, minuscule figure pop into existence and start to move. He stared hard and, after a few seconds, recognised it.

‘Millennia... ‘

‘Oh, so it is,’ laughed the Toymaker and shook the snowstorm again. ‘Now, that’ll be bad enough for anyone, Doctor, but, should you refuse to play...’ He drew back his arm as if to dash the snowstorm against a tree.

‘All right,’ snapped the Doctor. ‘And if I win? Do we go home?’

‘Home?’ The Toymaker laughed. ‘It will be a long time before you see anything called —homell again, Doctor. You are my guests here. For a long time. A very long time. But, if you beat the captains here, you will at least remain alive.’

The Doctor suddenly felt very cold. He had not anticipated this.

He had thought the Toymaker irreverent, wily and almost playful. Spoilt. But now he saw the truth. The Toymaker was the personification of sheer malevolence, evil given form.

The truth was that he was facing a foe as ancient as the universe itself - probably older, in fact. And he simply didn’t have the knowledge or experience to fight him.

The Toymaker smiled more broadly. ‘That’s right, Doctor.

Fighting me is pointless, but you’re still going to. Because like all the ephemeral beings that populate this ridiculous cosmos, you want to live, want to find a shred of hope where there is none. So, play my games, Doctor, and maybe, just maybe, you’ll stay out of my toyshop and be the first person ever to beat the Celestial Toymaker.’

And he vanished along with the snowstorm.

‘But I sincerely doubt it,’ were his parting words.

The Doctor looked at the two soldiers, who were shuffling around, trying not to catch his eye.

‘No point, old chap, in trying to stop him.’

‘Oh no, indeed not, what?’

The Doctor frowned. ‘You’re not toys, are you?’

The captains looked at each other and shrugged. ‘We don’t know. ‘We vaguely remember fighting in a war once, then meeting the Toymaker in somewhere called no-man’s-land... but maybe we’ve always been his toys. Maybe he made us and we just think we were once human,’ said Bimm.

‘Or maybe we think we’re toys who think we were men,’

Bamm said.

‘Or maybe we’re men who think we’re toys who think we were men who think -’

The Doctor held his hand up. ‘Enough. Perhaps if we joined forces, fought against him instead of for him... ‘

Bamm suddenly gasped, then went flying backwards through the air with a cry as if a giant, invisible hand had flicked him over.

When Bimm and the Doctor found him, they too gasped.

Lying in the mud was a small clockwork soldier, his arms and legs twisted and broken, his tiny tin head snapped off and lying a few inches away.

Bimm looked at the Doctor, terrified. ‘I think that’s your answer, Doctor, what? We fight, old man. To the death. For king and country.’

Millennia sat huddled in the snow, trying to find warmth in one of the nooks and crannies that dotted the walls of the Capitol.

‘Doctor? Rallon?’ She had been calling for what seemed to be hours now. But no one had come to her rescue. George and Margaret had brought her here, through the double doors from the toyshop. But as soon as she had felt the biting wind, seen the snow, they had simply faded away again.

So she had walked for hours through the snow, but although the place she was in looked like the Capitol, it wasn’t. The walls were plastic, not rock. The snow was synthetic rather than frozen water.

It was, however, freezing cold. She tugged her Prydonian robes around her, throwing off the skullcap so that she could hide her face under the flowing garments and letting her naturally long hair hang down freely. She began sucking a strand of it. A comfort move, from her childhood.

She had not seen another living soul. This was one of the Toymaker's traps, of that she was sure.

So she sat and waited.

And waited.

And waited.

And...

The Doctor was trying to run as fast as he could. He had already thrown away his heavy university robes, and was dressed in just a white collarless shirt and a pair of breeches and boots. All were caked in thick mud. He had managed to get two blue flags back to his cannon, but Bimm had three of his burgundy ones by the copse of trees.

He was exhausted - the Prydon Academy trained you for the mind, not for the body. Certainly, there were physical exercises to stay reasonably fit - but few involved countless journeys around muddy fields, climbing ropes, running through canvas tunnels to evade capture, protecting flags and trying to steal more, all at once. Worse still, the muddy field was slowing him down - each step was becoming more akin to traipsing through quicksand.

On the other side, the toy robot stood impassively, its chest monitor recording, with a series of coloured blobs, who had which pennants in their base.

The Doctor watched as Bimm gained a fourth pennant.

Only one more and the game was his. Even one on one, as the Doctor had wanted, the soldier/toy was more competent.

This was not good enough. If losing this game was all that life on Gallifrey taught him, then a new syllabus was needed. He would have to use his brain. The distance between pennants and bases was reasonably similar. And it couldn't just come down to endurance - Bimm was obviously the victor there. He was trained for this.

Therefore, the Doctor was left with a third option - to take Ben Bimm out of the game completely.

He looked down at the ground - his boots were sinking into the mud - run over once too often, it was getting very boggy indeed. And Bimm was wearing big, black boots that were probably heavier than his own.

The Doctor turned his attention to a tree nearby. Ropes were hanging from it and he quickly undid two of them. He hurried back to his cannon, tied the end of one rope around the wheels and tugged the other end towards the canvas tunnel.

No! It wasn't long enough. He quickly tied the second rope to the first and the other end to the tunnel. Now he had a crude tripwire which, to be honest, only a blind man in the dark could miss.

Which was exactly what the Doctor wanted. He staggered back through the mud to the tree and hoisted himself into the branches, selecting the lowest, longest one that would support his weight.

To get the Doctor's pennants, Bimm normally ran directly from the cannon to the tunnel - now he'd have to go around, suspecting a trap.

Which it was.

Sure enough, Bimm came running with the last burgundy pennant, saw the rope and stopped. He scratched his chin -

yes, the two ends were taut but apart from tripping him, what purpose did it serve?

Shrugging, he decided to be cautious. He circled around the rope - and promptly stood exactly where the Doctor wanted him: in the muddy area. The Doctor gripped his branch tighter. He needed Bimm to get a tad closer.

Bimm was heaving himself through the mud - which was climbing over the top of his boots and seeping through the face-holes. Each step took more effort.

And he realised what was happening. He might have walked into the trap, but at least he understood that it was one!

Angrily, he tried to pull his feet out of the mud, but it was difficult - and the Doctor had to act now. With a yell to throw Bimm off guard, the Doctor dropped from the branch, right on to his back, pushing them both face down on the muddy ground.

The Doctor rolled aside immediately, scrabbling away from the clawing mud, grabbed his pennant from Bimm's hands and broke it over his knee. Then, ignoring his own base, he ran to Bimm's camp and grabbed the other burgundy pennants, snapping them one after the other and hurling '

the bits in different directions.

Mature it might not be, he thought. But it was satisfying.

He looked back. Bimm had heaved himself up, but his feet were firmly stuck in the mud now and the more he roared with anger and twisted and turned, the more stuck he became, as first one boot then the other sank completely. The Doctor ignored Bimm's plight and dashed, breathless and out of condition, his hearts pounding, to where the last of Bimm's blue pennants lay. He grabbed it and ran back to his camp.

'Victory!' he yelled.

'You cheated,' said the Toymaker, suddenly floating in the air above the trees.

'No I didn't. I laid a trap.'

'You broke his flags. Unfair.'

The Doctor dropped to his knees, completely exhausted. 'I still won,' he gasped. 'I did what you wanted and I won.'

'Cheating, Doctor? Is that all you will be good for in life?'

And the Doctor found himself back in the toyshop, dripping mud and bits of grass everywhere.

As one, every doll, teddy bear and other toy in the room turned their heads to look at him.

He could feel the malevolence radiating from them and took a step back.

He felt his heel press on something and looked down. The broken clockwork soldier that had once been Captain Bamm was there. He bent down and scooped the bits up, trying to refasten the head, but the tin neck was badly twisted.

The door opened and, again as one, the toys looked around as the Toymaker made his appearance. The huge toy robot clanked after him, its hydraulic limbs hissing with each move. Behind it limped the bedraggled Captain Bimm.

'Master, I am sorry... '

The Toymaker shrugged. 'Winners and losers, Captain. I told you that at Ypres. You lost, the Doctor won. Square, if not

entirely fair.'

The robot rested a metal fist on Bimm's neck and wrenched it. The Doctor winced, but the robot was now holding just a broken tin head in his palm, and on the floor lay the tiny broken body of the Bimm toy.

'You are evil,' the Doctor hissed. Are they dead?'

'They are toys, Doctor -'

The Toymaker lurched suddenly, grasping at a shelf and knocking sail boats and a couple of jigsaws to the floor.

And the snowstorm he was holding hurtled towards destruction - until the robot neatly caught it.

The Toymaker gasped loudly and for a fleeting moment the face changed - it had Rallon's dark complexion and it was staring wildly.

'Doctor,' cried Rallon, 'save me... get me out of here... I can't ... I can't...'

The Toymaker threw his head back with a growl, shaking his head into an indistinct blur. Both faces struggled for dominance until finally the more familiar features that the Doctor recognised as the celestial being took a firm hold again.

'Fascinating,' the Toymaker murmured. 'He fights me from within.'

The Doctor realised the being was thinking aloud, and that neither he nor the toys mattered at that moment. 'It's going to take longer than I anticipated to appreciate corporeal existence.'

And he vanished.

'Rallon? Rallon!!' The Doctor rushed to the doors of the toyshop, flung them open and raced through into...

space

He stood there, aghast. He was simply floating, thousands of galaxies surrounding him. It was as if the whole universe had been captured within one small area and he could see everything.

Everything in creation.

Everything that constituted the Toymaker's playground.

Behind him, the doors to the toyshop were open, suspended in the middle of nothing.

Covering his eyes to keep out the mind-blowing enormity of the universe, the Doctor stumbled back into the shop, and collapsed to the floor.

'I have reasserted control, Doctor,' said the stentorian voice of the Toymaker.

He stood in front of the Doctor, smiling, his eyes burning with... life.

Rallon's life-force. Consumed completely by this... animal, this twisted, monstrous, primeval force for negativity that...

that...

The Doctor's anger boiled over and he hurled himself at the Toymaker - but he went straight through him, crashing into the toys ranged on the floor, trying to blot out the echoing laughter of his nemesis.

'Aggression, Doctor? I like you. I like this battle of wills between us. We will play again, one day, when you are better equipped to deal with me. When you are a Time Lord rather than a mere Gallifreyan student. Oh yes, Doctor, everything Rallon knows... knew... is part of me now. I thank you for bringing me my form, my shape. For aeons I have jumped from body to body, disposing of each one as it wore out, never keeping the same face for more than a century. But now, with the potential energy of Rallon to play with, to manipulate and expand upon, I can keep this form for an eternity. Or at least until this universe dies and I move on to the next.'

The Doctor was surrounded by toys, but he didn't care. He kicked and punched and lashed out, sending them sprawling, ignoring those that simply got up and resumed their observation of him.

Hundreds of dead eyes gazing at him, staring inside him, knowing his guilt, feeling his anger.

Laughing at his fear.

'Give me back Rallon and Millennia and we'll leave for ever.

We'll never, ever come back.'

'Rallon is mine, Doctor, he cannot be given back. He no longer exists. His unique energy has given me my new life.

And Millennia? She stays too. I can always use a new doll around the place.'

The Doctor looked at the toys he had kicked, among them the broken bodies of Captains Bimm and Bamm.

'Oh yes, Doctor. They too were sentient once. Those I collected, those that ventured here. Some even volunteered.'

He indicated George and Margaret, now back at their familiar door duty. 'They all played my games, tried to defeat me, to escape. They all lost. As a result, they stay here. My playthings, Doctor. My friends.' He smiled. Coldly. 'But you, Doctor, you I don't want here now. Inside you burns something so passionate, something so completely different to Rallon, to Millennia, that I need to watch you, need to see you get out among the stars and live.'

The Doctor seemed to relax, but it was a feint. He suddenly scrambled up, snatched the snowstorm from the robot's metallic fist and threw himself at the mah-jong set on the lacquered table.

If he had calculated correctly...

He landed with a thud on the ground. White ground. Around him, the mah-jong tiles towered upwards.

The Doctor scrabbled over them and made for the yellow path.

Still clutching the snowstorm, he ran and ran along it, glancing once over his shoulder to see the tiles thrown upwards in a maelstrom of destruction - but not fast enough to overtake him.

The TARDIS!

He could see its white dome in its natural state on the horizon.

He realised he was crying. Fear? Panic? Or just the loss of his friend Rallon?

His fault. Rallon was dead and it was his fault.

And what of Millennia? Maybe, if he could escape the Toymaker's realm, get away from this bizarre dimension where nothing was logical, she would revert to normal.

Yes, that had to be it!

He reached the TARDIS, pushed open the door and dropped to the floor of the console room.

Home.

Barely looking, he set the controls for Gallifrey, operating on adrenalin and instinct, and held his breath as familiar sounds indicated departure.

And on the scanner was the space-time vortex.

'Made it,' he whispered. 'I... we made it, Millennia. We're free.'

He looked at the snowstorm.

It was empty - just liquid sloshing about and a few flakes of snow.

No miniature Capitol.

No Millennia.

And all around the TARDIS echoed the now-hateful sound of the Toymaker's laugh.

George and Margaret stood behind their master, staring over his shoulder at the screen on the robot's chest.

On it, a fuzzy monochrome picture showed the TARDIS

materialising on Gallifrey and the unresisting Doctor being dragged out by chancellery guards, humiliated and distraught.

The Toymaker laughed. 'One day, Doctor, one day we shall play the games again...'

And he turned away, clicking his fingers at George and Margaret who followed him like the faithful grey people they were.

Lying prostrate on the Chinese lacquered table, replacing the mah-jong set, was a string puppet. The robot reached over and picked it up by its control rods. As it was carried towards a toy cupboard it swung heavily on its strings.

It had a dull, bleached female face with painted-on red cheeks and tiny black eyes. Its limbs hung limply, poking out from under a distinctive set of burgundy robes...

Watch Us Fall

The Deca was broken. For ever. There was no going back now.

The High Council stood arranged around the dais in the Panopticon, their faces unreadable as always, the ever-present green lighting reflecting back on their skin. Were they angry? Amused? Concerned?

They might as well have had blank faces like the Toymaker.

The Doctor did his best to look confident, to look assertive.

But inside, he felt neither.

Standing to one side was the Kitriarch of the House of Stillhaven - Rallon's family. The Brightshore family, Millennia's House, were not present - they could not bear to be in the Capitol alongside the Doctor.

And his friends?

Where were they?

Koschei and Ushas were on Academy research projects elsewhere. Jelpax was most likely too busy, working for records and libraries alongside co-ordinator Azmael.

Mortimus and Drax had both dropped out of the Academy and simply vanished. (There had been some panic when they did so, as it had been assumed that they, too, had departed with the Doctor.)

Only Magnus had come to watch, standing on one of the carved jade walkways that went high up into the domed ceiling - somewhere on the fourth or fifth level, no doubt. As the Doctor had been led towards the Panopticon, Magnus had caught his eye and given him a reassuring nod. He had got himself assigned to the scientific research department for the rest of his time at the Academy.

But what now for the Doctor? Self-pity wasn't one of his more regular traits but, right now, flanked by Gold Usher and a troop of chancellery guards, he felt an overwhelming sense of dread.

The chapter cardinals. The department heads of the Academy. The entire High Council. Castellan Rannex and his guards. All it needed was an appearance by the CIA and his humiliation would be complete.

An appearance by them, or the president.

His reverie was broken by Gold Usher thumping his staff against the black polished floor.

Silence reigned - the Doctor could have sworn everyone held their breath. Unsurprisingly. The steps from the dais to the floorway split slightly, and a dark area was revealed. Behind the steps was another flight of stairs, these ones going downwards.

The Doctor's skin crawled, and he was sweating. His shame had indeed drawn the attention of President Drall. Preceded by two chancellery guards, their customary red-and-white uniforms replaced by gold-and-black facsimiles, the President silently emerged, looking agile for his age.

His immaculate white robes, white headdress and white sandals were a stark contrast to the ebony of his skin. He wore the Sash of Rassilon around his body, carried the Great Key and on his forehead wore the diadem that linked him to the Matrix.

From behind him stepped three more figures, all dressed in black-and-white tabards. All three were members of the Celestial Intervention Agency. All three had been in conference with the President.

The eyes of the President of the High Council of the Time Lords skimmed across his audience, and focused on the Doctor.

And the Doctor felt a probing in his mind like millions of fingers brushing his consciousness, flicking through his memories, experiences, thoughts, beliefs and fears as he himself had flicked through ancient card indexes in libraries so many times.

Millions of minds, deceased and living, connected to the Matrix, all finding out in one second everything he had witnessed.

'Contact,' he heard himself mutter, unable to hold back the word.

A handful of Time Lords and Gallifreyan students in the room said it simultaneously, their minds, like his, untrained at dealing with telepathic investigation.

President Drall held up a hand and Gold Usher thumped the floor again.

If the Doctor believed he could not be more ashamed, he was wrong. Cardinal Borusa was being summoned forward. Held responsible for his failings.

Borusa nodded to the President and then turned to address the assembled crowds. Those on the floor, those on the countless walkways and those watching the vidcast in the Academy.

Thankfully, his words weren't being publicly broadcast to the Houses or workstations.

Borusa swallowed and then looked at the Doctor. For a brief moment, it was as if they were the only two people in the universe, such was the concentration on both their laces.

'You have been educated at Gallifrey's Academy. You have spent many decades here, as part of the Prydonian Chapter, as is your birthright.'

Birthright. It always came back to birthright. The Doctor felt himself becoming angry. Blame him. Shout at him.

Punish him. But why keep on dredging up familial connections? Next thing, he'll mention Quences.

'Ordinal-General Quencessetianobayolocaturgrathadadey-yi lungbarrowmas put the request in for your formal education, your possible ascension to the rank of Time Lord and all that is bestowed with it, before you were brought into existence. Many people have given much of their lives trying to instil within you the capacity to think, to act and to understand as a Time Lord should. You have chosen to ignore all of that, believing that you possess a destiny different from everyone else. You have a gift, an intellect and an inquisitive nature that need channelling.'

'Whether or not you believe that this Academy can provide you with something to satisfy your precocious character is irrelevant. This Academy is all you have. All you *had.*

Recent... events have meant that we can no longer rely upon you, or your studies.' Borusa cast his eyes downwards. 'In all our history, we have never had to expel someone from the Academy before.'

The Doctor took a deep breath and clasped the folds of his Prydonian robe near his neck. 'I am glad to be unique, then,'

he muttered, and immediately wished he hadn't.

A muted gasp circulated through the assembled Time Lords, and the Doctor felt himself go red.

Borusa shook his head. ‘You have a brilliant mind, but you will never amount to anything in this galaxy while you retain your propensity for vulgar facetiousness. So many of your classmates have achieved the highest honours, the highest positions.’ Borusa cast his eye to the left, and the Doctor followed his gaze to where Jelpax stood to attention. So, he had actually turned up then. And there was dear Azmael, a few paces behind Jelpax, but refusing to catch the Doctor’s eyes.

Of course - he had a position in society to consider.

Borusa was still droning on, pointing to Jelpax ‘The proud purveyors of the next wave of Time Lord history have sat at your side, and yet you hold them in contempt.’ He turned to President Drall. ‘With your permission?’

The President nodded slowly.

Borusa re-addressed the Doctor. ‘You have broken every edict we have tried to give you, every rule we have written and ignored every principle we hold dear. You are expelled forthwith from the Academy, and all you have so far achieved will be erased. You will spend the next five hundred years in the records area and traffic control. Whilst there, you will study in your spare time for your doctorate.

Should you finally gain it, you will be allowed to reapply to become a Time Lord.’

The Doctor was aghast. Five hundred years, plus a subsequent reapplication to gain rank? Why not sentence him to exile from Gallifrey or disperse his atoms or...

No! No, he would face this with some shred of dignity, if only in memory of Rallon and Millennia. He could never bring them back, but he would do it all again, for them.

Not for Quences. Not for Borusa. Not even for dear Azmael.

For his friends, because they had stood by him in adversity, even though it cost them so much.

The Doctor was aware that the crowd was dispersing, but no one came to him. He was left alone for what seemed like ages but was probably just a few moments. Then a hand rested on his shoulder.

‘Magnus? You are still talking to me?’

Magnus shrugged. ‘Someone betrayed you, Doctor.

Someone contacted the Celestial Intervention Agency.’

The Doctor frowned. It couldn’t be dear Koschei? And Ushas, driven as she was, would only do such a thing if it benefited her directly, which this did not. So, Mortimus?

Wax? Unlikely. That only left two possibilities. Jelpax or Vansell.

Magnus, as if reading his mind, pointed towards the archway leading out of the Panopticon. Easing himself away from the last of the Time Lords and guards was Jelpax.

‘It was not me,’ Jelpax said, once he got closer. ‘I admire you, Doctor. I believe you were wrong, but I admire you for having the courage of your convictions.’

The Doctor suddenly felt very tired. ‘Those convictions cost us dearly, my friends.’

Then he felt Magnus tense up beside him.

Standing to the rear of the hall were three CIA recorders -

plus Vansell, similarly attired in black-and-white robes. Vansell marched towards them and the Doctor suddenly understood.

‘You were with them all along, weren’t you? Watching to see which of us would break free of the Time Lords first.’

Vansell shrugged. ‘Yes and no. Yes, I was with the CIA from the day I entered the Academy. No, I was watching you specifically. Drax, Mortimus even, your old friend from the mountains of south Gallifrey near your House, they’ve already left Gallifrey. They’re not the first to choose exile, freedom, whatever, rather than stay here. But you, Doctor, you are the first to interest the agency. You have... potential. We saw it in your genes from the day you came into existence.’

The Doctor wanted to shout, to scream his anger. But no, that was not the way forward. From now on, he was going to have to be very careful, plan very slowly. And if it took five hundred years to get what he wanted, then that was what he would give it. So he just smiled at Vansell.

‘However,’ he said calmly, ‘I have something you lack.

Despite what Chancellor Delox believes, I do understand loyalty. To my friends. To what I believe to be morally right. I have gained a victory over you, Vansell, when I was not even aware there was a war. I have friends. You? You have a job to do, and nothing more. My friends will mean more to me over the coming years than your wrangling, your duplicity, your maliciousness.’

He placed his hands on Magnus’s and Jelpax’s shoulders.

‘Friends, Vansell. Look the word up. I will always be there for them.’

‘I will always be there for them.’

‘I will always be there for...’

‘I will always...’

‘I will…’

Round Three

Universal

Then You Turn Away

Nyssa felt the warmth of the sun on her cheeks and rolled on to her back, distractedly waving her arm across her face. As if brushing away cobwebs. Outside, the birds were singing and a slight and pleasant breeze washed over her, entering from the tiny window above the bed-head.

She opened her tired eyes, feeling the softness of the grey silk nightdress she wore. At the foot of the chintz bedspread sat a row of her stuffed toys, guarding her during the night, as always. She smiled down at Big Bear, top guardian and leader of her pack.

‘Morning, BeeBee,’ she said. ‘Thank you for another safe night.’

‘Always our pleasure, Miss Nyssa,’ Big Bear responded, with a salute.

‘I think today, BeeBee, I shall go and visit Melkur again. My mother-to-be took her role as its guardian as seriously as you take the way you guard me - I can do no more than that.’

Nyssa climbed out of her bed, washed and dressed, adjusted her hair and, with a final look at her toys, left her room.

She took the yellow-stone staircase down to the ground floor, smiling at a couple of fosters and one of the proctors who was taking a message or delivery of some sort to the consuls.

She followed him at the last moment, hoping for a peek at her dear father and her mother-to-be at work. Sneaking in behind the proctor, she hovered at the back of the grand meeting-room, with its raised throne at one end encased in a glass chamber with gilded edges. In front of the throne room were some steps, and on either side of those a small array of electronic power banks. Further into the room was a large table, at which the consuls were seated.

‘Nyssa, my daughter,’ Tremas beckoned her over, ‘you know you shouldn’t be here. We have work to do.’

‘Now then, Consul Tremas,’ said an elderly woman to his right, Consul Katura, ‘it is always a delight to see your beautiful daughter amongst us.’

‘Indeed, she keeps us feeling young,’ said the eldest consul,

- Seron, their leader.

‘I’m sorry, Father. Consuls. I just wanted to say good morning to you all.’

Consul Kassia, Nyssa’s mother-to-be, smiled at her. She was a lot younger than Tremas, barely old enough to be Nyssa’s, or anyone’s, natural mother, and was definitely the most beautiful lady in the Traken Union. ‘Have you visited poor Melkur this morning, my dear?’

Nyssa shook her head. ‘Not yet, but I shall do so now.’

A younger male consul, Luvic, laughed not unkindly.

‘Consul Kassia, if Nyssa serves our famous statue as lovingly as you have done over the years, I swear one day the statue will walk again and sit with her upon that throne. And with the Keeper’s blessing, they shall be married.’

The other consuls laughed as well.

The proctor whom Nyssa had followed approached the table.

‘My Lords, I have an important message for you all.’

Nyssa looked at him. He was not anyone she recognised.

He was older than most proctors, with a deeply lined face that seemed built to wear a perpetual smile, yet was sad now. His voice was rich, melancholic, not at all appropriate for the consul chamber.

‘Speak, proctor,’ said a gentle but forceful voice, aged but distinct, from the other end of the room. The Keeper of Traken, society’s elder statesman and benefactor, had materialised within his glass-enclosed throne room.

The consuls bowed and Nyssa curtsied to him.

‘A man walks amongst us, Lords. Beware of him. He brings death and destruction for you all. No one upon Traken this day shall be spared his touch. His interference. His meddling.’

For some reason, Nyssa was not surprised to see the array of toys from her bed standing in the doorway behind the doom-saying proctor, all of them eagerly staring up at him. And standing to one side of the Keeper’s throne room, unremarked upon by everyone, was Melkur, the calcified immobile statue that normally stood in the fosters’ grounds, outside the citadel, awaiting her ministrations.

Why was it here? How was it here? What relevance did this apparition of evil, solidified and made impotent by the tranquillity and purity of the Traken Union, have now? Was this the evil the proctor spoke of?

‘Each and everyone within this room, bar Nyssa, will be dead soon, all directly due to the machinations of this one person.

He calls himself the Doctor. He will bring with him a devastation unrecorded in the galaxies, unleashing powers and a maleficence undreamt of.

‘Only young Nyssa will survive. A testament to everything you have created, you have recorded and built. This Doctor will take her away from here - and although he will be her saviour before Traken is consumed by the universal night, it is important that she questions his motives. She will believe him to be a hero but she is misguided. Use what time is left to you, Keeper, consuls, to educate her in the ways of evil.’

The proctor indicated the Melkur statue. ‘This is not the evil you seek, consuls, although it houses an evil that, ironically, will be a partial saviour to one other of you.

Concentrate your forthcoming witch-hunt not on that lifeless object but on the beguiling man who will present himself.’ He looked down at Nyssa. ‘Remember me, Nyssa of Traken. We shall meet again.’

‘Nyssa?’ said a new, urgent voice in her ear. But there was no one there.

She turned around, to locate the voice.

Instead, she saw the proctor fade away. Her toys burst into momentary flames, writhing and screaming in agony before being extinguished. In the far corner the Melkur statue splintered into a million pieces, shattering the ornate glasswork surrounding the Keeper’s throne.

He himself had vanished, and the consuls were skeletons in torn rags, grouped around the table. As one they turned towards her, the last vestiges of flesh dropping off their yellowing bones, on to the floor. Then, one by one, they too caught alight and disintegrated to ashes before her eyes.

‘Save me, daughter!’ The skeleton that had been her father, Consul Tremas, was dragging itself across the floor to where the Melkur had stood. Nyssa, only you can save me now,’ it croaked, before splintering into fragmented bones that then flared and faded to ashes.

‘Nyssa?’ It was the same voice.

‘Father?’ Nyssa whispered.
‘No, Nyssa, it’s me...’
And Nyssa closed her eyes to shut out the terrible sight of her family and friends, dead.
She slumped to the floor as flames from the skeletons and toys took hold of draperies and wooden doors and furniture. In an unnaturally rapid blur, the room was filled with flames and smoke, and through the windows Nyssa could see that the whole of the Traken Court was ablaze. The screams of the dying echoed around her, then the ceiling vanished, revealing stars.
And within the starscape a cloud of blackness was getting nearer, swallowing up the other planets in the union, sucking the whole system into its light-less maw.
Nyssa gave a final scream as the blackness absorbed the flames and then the room. She tried to scream once more but realised that the blackness had engulfed her, drawing the breath from within her, forbidding her to scream.
‘Nyssa!’ The stranger’s voice was urgent this time.
And Nyssa woke, sobbing.
The Doctor was at her side in a second, holding her, comforting her. Yet she found herself pushing him away.
Irrationally and inexplicably, she did not want to be near him.
She lashed out, her flailing hands forcing him back.

She could see the concern on his face, but was it real?
She thought of Tegan, of how her will had been subverted by that awful Mara creature the others had told her about.
Tegan had told her later that she feared that ‘unpleasant aspects of my psyche’ had been revealed. Was this what had happened to Nyssa? She knew she had been dreaming. Had a nightmare, in fact. But the Doctor himself once said that dreams tell people things about themselves.
What had this nightmare meant? She didn’t know, but she needed to be alone and not with the Doctor.
‘I need air,’ she said suddenly, her throat dry, as if... as if she’d been near fire.

The Doctor watched as Nyssa almost ran out of the room, and frowned. How unlike her.
He looked at the floor - at the sleeping forms of Commander Oakwood and CPO Townsend.
Through the doorway came Desorgher and Dieter.
‘We’ve recced around, Doctor, but nothing,’ said Desorgher.
‘No way out.’
‘Where was Nyssa going?’ frowned Dieter. ‘She looked a bit upset.’
‘A bad dream, I think,’ the Doctor offered, and added that if she couldn’t go far, she probably couldn’t get into trouble and would be back soon.
Townsend stirred, and smiled up at the Doctor. ‘Hi. How’s things?’
The Doctor helped her up. ‘Any dreams, pleasant or otherwise?’
Sarah Townsend frowned as she tried to recall, then brushed herself down. ‘Nope, not that I can remember.’
‘Some drugs trip,’ Desorgher said. ‘Why’d they do it, Doc?’
Both the Doctor and Dieter started to answer, but Dieter graciously gave way to the Doctor as it was apparent that Desorgher had been addressing him.
‘I don’t know, Mr Desorgher. Apart from Nyssa’s nightmare, and some weird ones of my own that I can’t bring to mind right now, nothing much seems to have happened.’

Townsend was bringing the now-awake Commander Oakwood up to speed. He chipped in at the end of the Doctor’s answer.
‘Someone drugged us, Doctor. I imagine there was a reason for it.’
The Doctor shrugged. ‘Normally I’d agree, Commander. But none of us seem to have any ill effects.’
Dieter frowned. ‘You know, there is something wrong, but...’
‘Yes?’ The Doctor was beside her in an instant, willing her to think. ‘What do you think it might be?’
Dieter opened her mouth as if to answer, then stopped. ‘I’m sorry. I don’t know. It’s at the back of my mind.’
‘Look around you, Dieter.’ The Doctor eased her around 360
degrees. ‘Anything changed? Anything weird since we arrived last night?’
The others were also looking about them. No one could put their finger on anything, but gradually they all accepted that something was definitely amiss.
‘The more I think about this, the more convinced I am that we’re overlooking something,’ Dieter said.
The Doctor crossed to one of the slabs bearing the body of a Dymovan. What do you make of this?’ he asked her.
Dieter began inspecting the body and after a couple of moments she gasped.
‘What is it?’ Oakwood hurried to her side.
‘You suspected, didn’t you?’ Dieter was looking at the Doctor.
He nodded.
‘But this might be something to do with what you’re feeling, Doctor,’ she said. ‘Maybe we knew this last night but have forgotten it with the passage of time. The drugs might have made us forget we’d already discovered this.’
‘What!’ Oakwood looked at the two scientists. ‘Would one of you mind telling me...’
Dieter sighed. ‘This Dymovan is not, as we assumed last night, dead. In fact he’s very much alive - there’s a faint pulse, he’s breathing once every three minutes and is giving out a minute amount of body heat. But it’s like he’s asleep.’
‘Or comatose,’ chipped in the Doctor. ‘And look at his eyes.’
Dieter did so, pulling the lids back. The Dymovan’s eyes were rolling, the only movement he seemed to be making.
‘He’s dreaming. Deep asleep he may be, but his REM count is perfectly normal - which is, of course, completely abnormal for someone in his condition.’
‘Abnormal for us, maybe,’ said the Doctor. ‘But I wonder if this is his natural state.’
‘You mean, they never wake up, Doctor? That’s ridiculous.’
‘Oh really, Commander? Why?’ asked Dieter. ‘Dymok seems to lack any real signs of industrial revolution, no cities, no wildlife, no changeable weather. The only thing this planet offers is this pyramid and a race of people who are in a coma, but dreaming. Who knows what their mental powers may be? Advanced telepaths are not uncommon, Commander, even this far out in space. This could be how they live their lives. They are

born, nurtured somewhere, brought out here and dream.'

The Doctor stared down at the dreaming Dymovan. '

—Dream a little dream of mell,' he quoted. 'Perhaps we are the dream.'

'You what?' Oakwood was getting irritable again, a sure sign he didn't understand what was going on.

'There's a philosophy, Commander,' the Doctor said quietly,

'that suggests that we are all nothing but someone's dream.'

He smiled. 'Of course there are similar philosophies... that the universe is one man's fish-tank, for example, or that we are just biogenic algorithms in a vast organic computer, or that to some greater force the universe only exists for the blink of an eye.'

'Cheers, Doc,' muttered Desorgher. 'I needed to lower my self-esteem.'

The Doctor knelt down beside the Dymovan again. 'Never fear, Mr Desorgher. There's always someone worse off than you.'

He looked over at the young telemetrist. 'Would you nip out and see if Nyssa's back yet?'

Desorgher turned to the giant doorway, then looked back, frowning.

'Sorry, Doctor. Who?'

'Nyssa.'

Dieter joined in. 'Who or what is a Nyssa?'

The Doctor stood slowly. Oakwood seemed to be staring at his compatriots oddly. 'Nyssa, the Doctor's friend. What are you talking about, woman?'

CPO Townsend reached out to touch Oakwood's arm.

'Commander? What are you talking about?'

Oakwood turned to look at the Doctor, who just shrugged at the others' loss of memory and said 'How very interesting.'

Little Boy II had suddenly become a very scary place.

Adric had awoken in the cabin that Lieutenant Paladopous had assigned to him, feeling refreshed but oddly anxious.

One of the things he had learnt during his time with Tegan and Nyssa was the different ways people slept. The two girls often talked about their dreams. Adric didn't talk about his.

He couldn't, simply because he didn't dream. Or, if he did, he never remembered. The Doctor suggested it was something to do with the healing factor in his Alzarian genetic make-up -

the slightest injury, and Adric's body healed within about an hour, completely. A bone break mended within about two.

Therefore, if dreams were how the human mind and subconscious relaxed, or whatever human minds needed to do, Adric's didn't seem to require this relaxation. Instead, he slept soundly every night, and woke rested and always instantly bright and cheerful. This was yet another thing the Doctor and the girls said they found annoying - though Adric never knew why. After all, better to be happy and bouncing first thing than wandering around moping and saying 'I'd like to wake up first, if you don't mind,' as they did.

The old Doctor was never tired or irritable in the morning.

So, feeling enthusiastic and energetic, Adric made his way back to the bridge, to see if there had been any word from the away team.

He was a little surprised to see so few people around, however. Surely, even at this early hour Paladopous had some crew working. But apart from a couple of technicians who said 'Hi' and explained they were now on their way to bed after a long night shift, he saw no one.

He was even more surprised as he jauntily sauntered on to the bridge, one hand in his pocket and the other holding an apple he was noisily munching that he'd... purloined… on his travels, to discover a virtually empty command area.

Three technicians were at their posts, and Lieutenant Paladopous was sitting in Commander Oakwood's chair.

'Hello,' Adric said, grinning. 'Trying it out for size?'

Everyone stopped to look at him. Slowly Paladopous swivelled round, staring intently

Adric instinctively took a step back, and stopped eating.

'Niki? What's wrong?'

Paladopous stood up, glancing quickly at the others, then, leaning his head slightly forward, gave him the same look the Doctor always gave him when he suspected Adric had broken something, reset something or not put the TARDIS toilet seat down.

The lieutenant scratched the side of his head and then spoke, slowly and clearly, as if addressing an imbecile.

'Who the hell are you?'

She’s Leaving

Nyssa felt the warmth of the sun on her cheeks and rolled on to her back, distractedly waving her arm across her face. As if brushing away cobwebs. Outside, the birds were singing and a slight and pleasant breeze washed over her, entering from the tiny window above the bed-head.

She opened her tired eyes, feeling the softness of the grey silk nightdress she wore. At the foot of the chintz bedspread sat a row of her stuffed toys, guarding her during the night, as always. She smiled down at Big Bear, top guardian and leader of her pack.

‘Morning, BeeBee,’ she said. ‘Thank you for another safe night. I think today I shall go and visit Melkur again. My mother-to-be takes her role as its guardian as seriously as you take the way you guard me - I can do no more than that.’

Nyssa climbed out of bed, washed and dressed, adjusted her hair and, with a final look at her toys, left her room.

She took the yellow-stone staircase down to the ground floor, surprised not to see at least a couple of fosters or one of the proctors taking a message or delivery of some sort to the consuls. Indeed, the whole court seemed to be empty. She crossed the garden where Melkur stood, moss growing among its carved joints, brushwood and a few dead flowers at its feet, and hurried into the consul chamber.

Yesterday, Melkur had been garnished with brand-new blueshells and yellow cupbells. So why this morning did it look as if the garden had not been attended for some months? Where were the fosters?

Tentatively, fearing she might interrupt a meeting, Nyssa eased open the doors to the consul chamber.

It was empty, both of consuls and the Keeper. Although the absence of the latter was not in itself unusual, to find no one at all was unheard of. Someone should have been there, administering the Union, giving the fosters orders or even checking on the Source, the bioelectronic system that powered the harmonious Traken civilisation.

‘Nyssa? Daughter, save me?’

‘Father?’ Nyssa looked to see where her father’s voice came from. He sounded so... lost, so frightened. She hurried out of the chamber and began combing the citadel, hoping to catch a glimpse of Tremas.

Behind her she heard another sound. A dark chuckle that seemed to gloat at her confusion, relishing her distress.

She pushed open a door that she knew should have led back to the garden but which instead revealed a vast whiteness, with no perceptible top or sides. It stretched on and on and...

‘What is this horrendous place?’ she called out. ‘Father, are you there?’

Again, just the chuckle.

She opted to return to the consul chamber but behind her the doorway had become tiny, part of a model of the Traken building, garden and nearby towns. Resting on the other side of the model, grinning insanely, was the face she hated more than anything in the universe.

‘The Master! I should have known you were behind all this.’

The Master chuckled and said nothing. Then his face shimmered, as if caught in a heat mirage, and reassembled as the face of her father with long greying hair and twinkling eyes. For the first time Nyssa could see how similar the Master and her father really were. The figure stood, still dressed in the Master’s velvet suit, but with her kind, compassionate and darling father’s head.

‘Oh Nyssa, it was preordained thus. You must have known that.’

‘No. What do you mean... preordained?’

Tremas’s eyes watered as he tried to smile at her. ‘I’m so sorry I had to leave you, my dear. But it was always going to happen. Two would become one. Even my name is a distortion of his. It was destiny that brought him to Traken, destiny that took you away before he could destroy everything. Destiny that you would find the one man who could separate us, return us to our former selves.’

‘Who?’

Tremas coughed, as if the battle to keep his face was more than he could take. ‘The Doctor, of course. He knows how to do it.’

‘No! No, I asked him. Many times. He said you were dead...

that the Master had destroyed you completely when he used your body to regenerate his own!’

The Master’s face solidified again, blotting Tremas out.

‘Nonsense, girl. The Doctor knows how. He just cannot be bothered. Better to let your father wither away and die than help me, his nemesis. His oldest foe. He simply cannot be bothered.’

And with a final chuckle of malevolence, the Master faded away, leaving Nyssa alone in the sterile realm of nothingness.

She stepped back as the model of Traken suddenly ignited and disintegrated into ashes, which themselves faded away.

Nyssa’s feet touched something and she looked down. It was her toy bear, Big Bear or BeeBee. As she bent over to pick him up, seek comfort in something from home, something familiar and loved and missed, BeeBee seemed to begin growing until he was sitting, life-sized, beside her. Slowly his head turned to face her, his cotton-thread mouth turning upwards in a smile.

‘Hello, Miss Nyssa,’ he said in a booming voice, exactly as she imagined a teddy bear would sound. ‘I’m here to help you through the maze.’

‘What maze?’ she stammered, too astonished to think clearly about how a stuffed toy could grow, move and talk. Yet hadn’t he done that once before? In a dream, perhaps...? ‘That one.’

Nyssa looked to her left and saw that a vast array of multicoloured plastic’ blocks had appeared. They reached up about three times her height, forming a wall with three openings. Through each one she could see blocks receding into the distance.

‘Oh. I see.’ And Nyssa looked back to where her father/the Master had been.

‘The secret you seek, Miss Nyssa,’ said BeeBee, ‘the truth about your father, the Master and the Doctor, is at the centre of the maze. If you want to learn more, I suggest we go. But fear not. I shall lead you for there may be many traps and dangers along the way.’

‘And no doubt even more when I get there,’ Nyssa said. don’t think I like this place, BeeBee. But I don’t imagine I have a great deal of choice, do I?’

‘No, Miss Nyssa. As you know, we have a saying on Traken

- a darleel, —the trap that must be sprung!.’

Nyssa marched ahead of the bear to the right-hand opening in the wall. ‘To be honest, Big Bear, I’m rather fed up with Traken at the moment.’

And she marched through the gap. BeeBee, despite his proposition, walked behind her, to guard her rear.

Tegan woke to find herself lying flat on a cold slab of what looked like solid marble. It was polished and smooth-edged, as if to prevent anyone getting nasty scratches or bumps if they walked into it.

She eased herself up, pulled her knees in close until she was sitting upright, and looked around. She was in another part of the cathedral structure, that was certain. And of the Observer, there was no sign. She had no recollection of exactly how she came to be here, but doubted that the absence of the Doctor, Nyssa and the crew from *Little Boy II* boded particularly well.

Realising that no one seemed anxious to visit her, she got off her slab and decided to explore. Except there wasn't too much to see. The chamber she was in was lit by flaming torches, like the part of the building she had already seen (which meant there was a fresh air supply somewhere - a possible escape route?), and she was surrounded by row upon row of dead bodies on slabs like hers. They were all grey-looking, like the Observer.

She tried to think of the things she had learnt since travelling to alien planets. First up: don't panic. Secondly, observe and learn without saying too much (yeah, right, Dad used to call her a mouth on legs and rarely had he said anything so true). And thirdly, if in doubt, blame Adric.

The Doctor? Where was he? The Observer had given her a vision, something that made her doubt the Doctor. Yes, and just for one moment she had succumbed - exactly as the old man had wanted.

One thing about me, Tegan thought, is that I'm bloody stubborn. Adric and Nyssa might be vulnerable targets when it came to brainwashing, but Tegan Jovanka was made of sterner stuff. The Observer had made a big mistake.

'Not at all,' he hissed in her ear.

She turned, to give him a bit of a tongue lashing, but stopped herself.

The Observer had his finger on his lips, the traditional sign to be quiet. He was indicating the slabs. And the fact that one by one, the 'dead' bodies were stirring.

He was mouthing at her. 'No more words. Not yet.' She frowned but complied.

'Awaken, brethren,' the Observer suddenly bellowed.

'Awaken for She is here!'

As one, the bodies rose up, saw Tegan and gasped, clearly in awe of her. They all bowed and started chanting.

'But they were dead...' she started to say. Again the Observer waved her to silence.

'Welcome her, brethren,' he commanded, and the chanting got louder. And louder. After a moment or two Tegan began to wince - the voices were really very loud.

She couldn't concentrate.

'Exactly,' the Observer whispered. 'Your mind is unable to focus and therefore your thoughts cannot be read at the moment. Do not try to speak, allow me to explain. There can be questions later.'

He turned again to the chanters. 'Louder, my brethren, the Chosen One cannot hear your gratitude, cannot hear your love!'

'I can hear it very well, thank you.' Tegan gritted her teeth to keep her mind off the noise level.

'They have slept for many decades, Tegan Melissa Jovanka.

They believe their god has abandoned them. They believe their god to be sick. I was left to await the coming of the Chosen One, the one they believed would lead them to their god, save him from his sickness and return him to them.'

'And that's me, is it? I'm your Chosen One?'

The Observer smiled. 'Of course you're not. But they believe you are. And, more importantly, their god will believe they believe you are. Which will distract him long enough for the Doctor to do his job here.'

Tegan stared, open-mouthed. Of all the things the Observer could have said, this was not what she expected to hear. All she could say was 'Why me?'

The old man took a step closer. 'Because of what you have already surmised. Nyssa of Traken and the boy Adric do not possess the strength to fight back, to overcome the brainwashing. He uses me. He treats me with contempt. He believes that I can't control this rabble. He also believes that he is not sick. In truth, he is very sick.'

'Who? Their god?'

'Indeed. The Doctor will believe he can save him - and you are the distraction that will enable me to stop the Doctor performing the task that he thinks he must perform, that he believes he has been summoned for. That will allow me to show him an alternative path to walk.'

'I don't understand. Why must they make so much noise?'

'Because their god can read minds, particularly mine. This noise distracts, disrupts the alpha waves along which he can communicate with me. By chanting in perfect unison, they are unwittingly creating a barrier between their god and my mind.'

Tegan frowned. 'The strain on you must be...'

He nodded. 'But it is worth it.'

'But the images you put in my mind earlier. My father...'

The Observer shrugged. 'They are images you put there yourself. I do not know if your father is alive or dead, any more than you do. But you suspect he is dead and feel guilty for not being with your family. I am ashamed to say that it was very easy for me to... violate your subconscious, bring those unpleasant possibilities to a plane of reality for you.'

'You were testing me, weren't you. That's what you meant about Nyssa and Adric!'

The Observer nodded. 'The god is playing with their minds at the moment. And even the Doctor's, although I can read enough to know he is not fooled. The Doctor is a clever foe -

he already understands the Game. I cannot help him further -

I have already done my bit for him. But you ... you withstood the brainwashing. I was instructed to give you. Tegan, I need your help. Allow me to show you the universal truth. So you will understand.'

* * *

The Doctor took a step back as the first of the sleepers awoke and rose up, breaking into a chant. Around them, all the other previously comatose bodies left their slabs and started chanting.

'Some coma, Doctors!' Oakwood said waspishly.

Dieter shrugged, but the Doctor was furious. 'Of course, he's manipulated our minds.'

'Who has?' asked Desorgher.

‘Where’s Townsend?’ the Doctor asked quietly.

‘Who?’ Oakwood looked around. ‘Is she the person you think has manipulated our minds?’

But the Doctor ignored him and, roughly pushing one of the chanters aside, clambered on to its slab and looked around. ‘Townsend! Braune! Talk to me. Now!’

Dieter tugged at his trouser leg. ‘Are you all right, Doctor?’

‘Yes, I am. But you’re not. Who travelled with us to this planet?’

Dieter shrugged. ‘You and the commander.’

‘Don’t you see?’ He looked at her, then Oakwood.

‘Desorgher? Where’s Desorgher?’ As Dieter was about to speak, the Doctor waved her quiet. ‘Yes, yes, I know what you’re going to say - —Who?‖ They’re your comrades, Dieter. I should have spotted it earlier - Braune was the first to disappear from our memories! He looked up and around, clambering from slab to slab, yelling out their names.

‘Desorgher? Braune? Townsend?’

He stopped as he saw Braune. The security man was standing, chanting with the others, but he was shadowy.

Almost as if he wasn’t quite there.

‘It’s a dream. I’m still dreaming this.’ He looked around.

‘Where does it start, hmmm?’ he yelled up to the ceiling. ‘Am I by the door, still drugged? Or perhaps I’m still on the surface of Dymok. Or...’ No, surely not that! ‘Or am I still in the TARDIS? Has none of this really happened?’

But nothing changed. He looked around - he’d lost Braune again and could see neither Dieter nor Oakwood any longer.

‘All right, Toymaker, I’ll play it your way - round one to you.

Checkmate. Snap. Rummy. Whatever you want, but move things along or I can’t help you!’

And the world dissolved around him.

Nyssa stared at the TARDIS - it was on some kind of pedestal, probably at the heart of the maze. It was also rather small. Or a long way ahead.

‘I presume that’s my target, BeeBee.’

Around them the many-coloured wooden blocks formed a massive wall - she could see only ahead - which rather confirmed that the TARDIS was indeed a very long way in front of her and very high up.

‘Who is controlling all this, BeeBee?’

‘I have no idea, Miss Nyssa.’

Nyssa looked at his unreadable furry face. ‘Oh nonsense, BeeBee. You are my toy, from home. You no longer exist - you were destroyed when my world, my bed and everything on it vanished. I’m not exactly the naive young Traken noblewoman I was back then - I’ve seen and learnt quite a bit.’

She tapped BeeBee’s chest. ‘People are always underestimating me, but just because I don’t yell my head off like Tegan or sulk like Adric it doesn’t mean I don’t absorb, notice and learn things. Someone has taken you out of my memories and brought you to life. Or I’m dreaming and someone is manipulating my subconscious on a biometric level. Either way, I am aware, I can reason and I can see that whatever is going on, someone is trying to trap me.’

She turned away from BeeBee and carried on walking. ‘And whoever it is, is using a giant rather talkative version of you to convince me otherwise!’

She called back over her shoulder. ‘Oh, and BeeBee, I suspect that my mysterious benefactor wants the Doctor, not me. After all, he recognised the pyramid for what it was - a trap.’

BeeBee did not respond - and when Nyssa turned to see why, he had vanished. ‘What a surprise,’ she sighed. Mind you, for all Tegan’s vocalising of her complaints, the human did have a point fairly frequently. Things did seem to go wrong.

‘That was quite a speech, Nyssa,’ said a voice behind her.

‘One rarely hears you say so much.’

‘I rarely do. Out loud,’ she retorted without looking back. She realised that it was the Master again, with that voice - a silky, pretend-softer version of her own father’s. ‘Doesn’t mean I don’t think it. Why don’t you show me your true self instead of my toy bear, my father or the Master?’

And the Celestial Toymaker materialised before her, arms wide in apology.

‘That’s better,’ she said. ‘I don’t know you, so I’ll assume you are the one behind this ridiculously childish attempt to confuse me.’

‘I’ll speed things up for you, shall I?’ he replied. ‘Go to the centre of the maze.’ He addressed his command to the air.

Nyssa heard a slight mechanical whirring and clicking noise and around her the blocks started moving up and down of their own accord, reassembling in a different order. Some formed a tall column with a long ladder painted on it. Nyssa looked up and could just make out the TARDIS atop the column.

‘So,’ she said, ‘did the blocks move, did I move or is none of this remotely real?’

‘I underestimated you, Nyssa of Traken! The Toymaker clicked his fingers and all the blocks vanished. They were back in the white void Nyssa had seen when she first emerged from the citadel.

‘There is more to you than even the Doctor believes.’ The Toymaker smiled at her, but it didn’t make her feel safe. ‘I see that my games and tricks aren’t amusing you just yet. I feel I might have to up the ante. In the meantime, I think a reunion is in order.’ He seemed to look through her, and she shivered. ‘A reunion on so many levels.’

The Doctor was standing in the Toymaker’s realm, surrounded by silence and whiteness. He staggered under the sudden change in circumstances as the loss of the deafening chanting momentarily threw him.

‘You’ve grown stronger over the years, Doctor,’ said the Toymaker, solidifying in front of him amid a swirl of coloured mist. ‘Once upon a time, you’d have stayed in there for an eternity, locked within your own dreamscape.’

‘Well,’ the Doctor was calmer now, his strength and perspective returning, ‘I’m older now. Wiser even. What do you want?’

‘Is that any way to greet an old friend?’ The Toymaker smiled, but his eyes were dark and ringed, like those of a man who had lacked a good night’s sleep for some time.

‘We are not friends,’ the Doctor said simply.

‘But I believe this young lady is,’ said the Toymaker, and from behind him stepped Nyssa. ‘Well, for now, at least.’

Ignoring him, the Doctor held his hand out to Nyssa.

She walked slowly towards him. ‘Are you all right, Doctor?’

‘Fine. You?’

‘Yes, thank you. I’m afraid I don’t like your friend very much.’

‘Has he hurt you?’

Nyssa shook her head. ‘I could do without the constant visits to Traken, however.’

The Doctor saw her pain, and looked across at the Toymaker in fury. ‘What do you hope to achieve by tormenting my friends?’

The Toymaker smirked. ‘You’ll see. Very soon in fact!’

Nyssa, too, looked at him. ‘I don’t suppose you’d consider letting us go home now? Back to the TARDIS, wherever it is.’

The Doctor opened his mouth to speak, but the Toymaker held his hand up. ‘Oh, sorry, Doctor. Did I forget to mention that?’

He clicked his fingers and the TARDIS appeared in the distance.

The Doctor did not have to ask if it was the real TARDIS or one of the Toymaker’s twisted creations. He knew it was real - he hadn’t travelled throughout time and space in the same craft for most of his adult life without knowing instinctively when his TARDIS was nearby.

‘Of course,’ the Toymaker laughed, ‘getting to it is probably harder than it initially seems. I’d hate you to think I’d lost my touch.’

‘Just let us go!’ Nyssa cried, subconsciously trying the Tegan approach.

‘Don’t bother trying to appeal to his better nature, Nyssa.

He doesn’t have one.’

‘Oh Doctor,’ cried the Toymaker, ‘you wound me with your churlish, dismissive statements. Surely you should be encouraging your young friend here to see the universe with open eyes, not a closed mind. How can she judge me fairly when one such as yourself - one so beyond reproach, so beyond anything other than wholesome goodness and charity - casts such aspersions upon me?’

‘Nyssa doesn’t need to know you to see that your amorality is an anathema to everything she... we... believe in.’

‘Is that so?’ The Toymaker turned and smiled directly at Nyssa. ‘Is that so, Nyssa of Traken? Is the Doctor now your all-new, all-shiny-bright father-figure? Are your hopes and dreams that fickle?’

Nyssa opened her mouth to speak, but stopped. Instead she looked at the Doctor. Of course she trusted him. He was her friend. He was a wonder. He was life itself - she had seen that first-hand - life born from death. The ultimate in good.

The one nothing and no one could truly conquer. They had a name for such as he on Traken: Serkur - one who is truly free of the sins.

So why did she hesitate? Why was she suddenly more intent on listening to this Toymaker? Clearly he was a foe of the Doctor’s - a foe to be defeated. Banished from this universe.

But there had been another foe of the Doctor’s which she had feared. Which she had loathed. And yet could she bear to see the Master banished from this place? Lose him, and with him all hope of rescuing her father, for ever?

‘Doctor…’

‘You see!’ the Toymaker bellowed, triumphantly. ‘You see, Doctor. She wants to know the truth. Not your truth, Doctor.

Nor even mine, for both are by definition subjective. No, she needs the universal truth. Why are we here Doctor?’

The Doctor smiled at the Toymaker. ‘Oh, do you mean practically or philosophically?’

Nyssa saw the Toymaker smile back. And realised in that smile a sign of victory - somehow he had determined that he had the upper hand in whatever battle of wits was occurring before her.

‘Oh, Doctor... let us talk about practicality. Let us discuss purposeful meetings. Let us question your motives.’

Suddenly the Toymaker threw back his head and shouted something indecipherable. The world went dark - the sky blackened, the ground seemed to coat itself in shadow and even the colours in his mandarin costume seemed to dull to a matt finish.

‘Why are you here, Doctor?’

The Doctor was looking defiant, but somehow Nyssa sensed it was just that - a look. Behind his eyes there was something else... something weaker? Something scared?

‘I am here because…’

‘Because I asked you here, Doctor,’ thundered the Toymaker, suddenly aggressive. ‘Because I demanded it! And because you, with your oh-so-imperfect past, your oh-so-cloying self-doubt and guilt had to come here and set right your conscience.’ He pointed at the Doctor’s chest. ‘You made me, Doctor! You caused all this. You caused me!’

‘Doctor?’

‘Be quiet, Nyssa,’ the Doctor hissed, but the Toymaker laughed.

‘No, Doctor, let her ask. Let her question you. Let her see you for what you really are!’ He clicked his fingers and, as if from nowhere, the bulky toy robot started walking towards them, hydraulic limbs hissing with each step.

Nyssa saw its chest monitor sparkle into life, swirling mists giving way to a dim, flickering monochrome image. As she watched, the screen seemed to enlarge, swallowing the robot, swallowing the Toymaker’s darkened realm. Swallowing the Toymaker, the Doctor and ultimately Nyssa herself.

It was as if she had become part of the monitor - as if the images coalescing upon it were actually around her - as if she were a weightless, invisible field of energy, whose sole purpose was to observe.

‘Watch and learn, Nyssa of Traken. And prepare to challenge your preconceptions…’

All around her, Nyssa could see a room. A room with a wooden floor covered in hundreds of rag dolls, wooden toy soldiers and metal robots, all motionless.

And lying amid them was a puppet, wooden, with rosy painted-on cheeks, strung lifelessly from the ceiling. It wore a burgundy robe.

‘Millennia,’ breathed the Doctor. ‘Then this is about...’

They were back in the realm. The Toymaker was back to his colourful self again.

‘The past. And the lack of future.’

That voice! It was...

‘Particularly my future.’

At first the Doctor thought Rallon had walked out from behind the Toymaker, as Nyssa had done, but he quickly realised that he had emerged from deep within him.

Immediately, the Toymaker looked weaker.

‘Rallon? What is going on here?’

Rallon looked displeased to see the Doctor. He was frowning at him.

Or concentrating on something perhaps?

'Hello, old friend.' The way Rallon said 'friend' implied he felt directly the opposite. 'I'm glad you remember me. I assumed that, as you never sought to rescue me or Millennia, we had been forgotten. Or ignored. Just an embarrassing expedition from your past that you'd rather sweep under the carpet? No doubt Cardinal Borusa rewrote the history books to erase us from the records, the APC Net containing no acknowledgement of our exist-'

'If you've brought me here to spout rubbish, Rallon, don't bother.' The Doctor was tart, to say the least. 'I'd really rather not have to listen. You told me earlier you wanted my help.

Why?'

'Because,' Rallon continued, 'it was you that got me... us...

into this mess.'

'I was a discorporeal entity, Doctor,' the Toymaker said quietly. 'Oh, I could assume forms for brief periods as it suited me, but not for ever. My natural form is -'

'A collective consciousness, possessing neither form nor substance,' the Doctor said. 'I've studied things, you see.

You, like the other Great Old Ones, exist between the dimensions, creating universes, planes... whatever... to suit yourselves. I know all that. I have encountered a few of you, you know.'

'And you know of the Guardians of the Universe?'

'The upper echelons of the Great Old Ones. In effect a pantheon within a pantheon. The Guardian of Chaos, the Guardian of Light, both using the Key to Time to balance all things.'

The Toymaker nodded, although he seemed to find the movement a strain. 'You collected the key, I understand. Six segments, Doctor. Not an arbitrary number.'

'Indeed. According to the legends, there are six guardians.'

'Six gods,' added Rallon.

'I have yet to be convinced of the other four.' The Doctor smiled suddenly. 'So, if the history lesson is over, I'd like to collect my companions, leave Dymok or wherever we are, and go back to my TARDIS.'

'All sentient races perceive something greater than themselves, Doctor,' said Rallon. 'It's a factor that keeps them progressing, reaching out. Take your favourite planet, Doctor. Earth. Sol 3. Whatever you want to call it. Each civilisation throughout its history had its own pantheon.

Greeks, Romans, Norse, Christian, Hindu... Who knows whether they existed? Probably somewhere along the line, they did. Or do. A binding force that brings people together, gives them a reason to exist, to strive. They form their morality, their culture around these gods. Dymok is the same.'

'I found the people on Dymok hundreds of years ago, Doctor,' said the Toymaker. 'Aimless, they needed a god. And, as a telepathic race with no material needs, they saw me as their god. I never claimed to be one - I am a guardian, Doctor. All races dream, aspire and hope. As there must be a Guardian of Light and a Guardian of Chaos, so there must be a Guardian of Dreams. That is why I am in this universe, Doctor. Throughout the multiverse, everyone has dreams. I shape them. That is my part.'

Nyssa spoke up. 'And the games you play? The torments you inflict?'

'The Guardian of Chaos creates wars to justify his existence. The Guardian of Justice creates conflict to justify his. I create my mental games to justify mine, my dear.

Without me, without what I do, dreams would become stale, the need to learn, to advance, would desert so many species overnight. They would stagnate, wither and die. Without the peoples of the universe, I cannot survive. Without me, they cannot survive.'

The Doctor laughed hollowly. 'So you're saying that sentient life is just a parasitic symbiosis, that both feed off each other, is that right?' The Toymaker nodded. 'All right.

Light, Chaos, Justice and Dreams - that's four guardians. Who are the other two?'

The Toymaker smiled. 'One day, Doctor, you shall meet them.'

'But for now, you are here to solve a problem,' said Rallon.

'If you accept that the Toymaker has a role to play in the balance of the universe, you must acknowledge that it is imperative he be able to continue his role.'

'Go on.' said the Doctor, noncommittally.

'The Toymaker, the Guardian of Dreams, is unwell, Doctor.

You brought me here, you deliberately or otherwise enabled him to use me as a template for a physical form. However, guardians, and indeed the Great Old Ones, don't need permanent physical form.'

'I have been unable to rid myself of Rallon,' the Toymaker said. 'I had no idea of this, of course. Over the aeons we had effectively become one, I was unaware that he even existed. But it has taken its toll upon me. The tides of time are catching up with me - having even the essence of Rallon within me is causing me traumas. We cannot separate - I am locked in a physical state that, unknown to me, began to degenerate over the years.'

'Like a virus,' the Doctor said. 'Your existential self has tried to expunge the disease, but can't.' He folded his arms. 'I see your problem.'

The Toymaker nodded. 'As a result, not only am I in danger of... well, dying - which I need not remind you would be catastrophic for the balance of the universe - but our minds are fragmenting.'

'A schizoid god.' The Doctor thought about this. 'I don't see where I come in?'

Rallon reached out to him, but the Doctor stepped away.

'You, Doctor, must find a way to separate us. You brought us together - it is your place in the universal balance to separate us.'

'And if I can't?'

'Can't, or won't,' the Toymaker smiled, 'then the very least I can do is take you down with me. Observe.'

From nowhere, his robot appeared, its chest monitor showing a picture of Tegan and the Observer surrounded by the chanting Dymova. Finally it showed Adric, in a cell on *Little Boy II.*

'Oh, and one last thing.' The Toymaker clicked his fingers and they were inside the TARDIS. But the walls shuddered and began warping outwards, stretching and distorting, the interior dimensions fluctuating.

'Everything has a breaking point, Doctor. Even your TARDIS.'

And they were back in the realm. But the TARDIS was now beside Rallon, its exterior shell also fluctuating, as if it were being sucked into a vortex at the centre of the craft, every so often resuming its normal shape before being warped again.

'You, your TARDIS and your friends. As I said - all have a breaking point but, as you know, I have certain powers.

Imagine, Doctor, if I stretched each of you to whatever point it takes to completely destroy you, but kept you on the very edge of oblivion, then brought you back to start again.'

The Toymaker's face twisted into a snarl. 'And I will do that, Doctor. Believe me. Unless you release me from this physical prison of a body, get Rallon out of my system, you will know suffering beyond that which even you could imagine.

And remember, as the Guardian of Dreams I know exactly how powerful imagination can be.'

Rallon nodded. 'It might be an idea to think on what we have said, Doctor. You have thirty minutes!'

'And if I can find a way of separating you?'

'Then you have our eternal gratitude.' The Toymaker put his head on one side. 'Of course, others may ask you why, if you can help your old friends, you can't help theirs.'

The Doctor frowned, then took in what the Toymaker had said. He looked at his companion.

'Nyssa, it's not...'

But she was staring at him, in horror. 'You told me... you told me it would be impossible to help my father. That he was lost for ever with the Master.'

'That's different...'

'Oh, but of course it is,' taunted the Toymaker. 'After all, Rallon has only been trapped within me for centuries, while poor Nyssa's papa has been caught in his little prison for oh, it must be what... weeks now? Maybe a couple of months? That's a world of difference.'

He turned to look at Nyssa, but she couldn't take her gaze off the Doctor. 'Think on that, Nyssa, and reconsider questions of amorality, good natures and, above all, loyalties and see if you can work out where the Doctor truly stands on such universal concepts.'

And the Doctor found himself back on Dymok, in the great chamber with all the others from *Little Boy II.*

'Where have you been?' Oakwood asked.

'I might ask you the same thing,' the Doctor replied slowly, looking around. 'I take it you all remember each other now?'

He could see from their blank faces that they had no idea what he was talking about.

Around them, the Dymova were comatose again.

'How long have we been awake?' the Doctor asked.

A couple of minutes,' Desorgher said. 'Nyssa wandered off, you said to look for her and then you vanished for a few seconds.'

The Doctor breathed out deeply. 'Ahh... yes, Nyssa...'

She walked back into the chamber at that precise moment, ignoring the others, and went straight up to the Doctor. 'You pig,' she said as forcefully as she could.

And then she slapped him hard around the face.

'Nyssa?'

'No more games, Doctor. Not now. Not ever.'

The Doctor took a deep breath. 'Look, Nyssa, whatever the Toymaker implied -'

'You will try to dismiss. Yes, Doctor, I've seen you in action before. Tell me, can you separate Rallon and the Toymaker? Do you even want to?'

The others watched this curious exchange with some trepidation. Something had clearly occurred of which they knew nothing. Something that had upset the normally placid and introverted young Nyssa.

'I… I honestly don't know.'

'Do you want to?'

'Yes. Yes, I do. He was my friend...'

Nyssa stepped back, almost as if the Doctor had hit her like she had hit him. Her eyes filled with tears. 'You… you'll try to find a way, won't you. Knowing you, you'll do everything you can to help separate him.'

The Doctor clearly didn't know what to say to mollify her.

He opted for what probably seemed to him to be the best route - the truth.

'Yes I will. And then, maybe I can use that skill to try and help your father...'

Nyssa waved her hands uselessly around, tears trickling down her face, her eyes confused. She didn't know what to say, couldn't form a sentence. 'Maybe...? *Maybe?* You told me it was impossible! You told me to think of him as dead and now, because a friend of yours is in trouble, you think *maybe* you might do something later on if you can be bothered and there isn't an alien race to save or a super-villain to lock away that day!'

She backed away, gripping the door jamb for support. 'I *trusted* you, Doctor. I believed in what you said. But it was all lies, wasn't it? Hollow stories, because the truth is you simply weren't interested in saving my father. You'd rather have the Master out there justifying your oh-so-heroic place in life than actually doing some real good and rescuing Father!'

With a choking sob, she turned away and ran back into the darkness.

The Doctor made to follow her, but Dieter held him back.

'Let her go, Doctor. I don't hope to understand what that was about, but I know enough to see that you are the last person she needs right now. Let me go after her.' She patted his arm and headed off after the young girl.

The Doctor turned to the others - he simply didn't know what to say.

And then he gasped. 'The Dymova! Where've they gone?'

The slabs were empty. Nothing, it seemed, was going very well.

It should have been dark in the corridor, but Dieter could see reasonably clearly, albeit everything had a dull green glow.

Some kind of phosphorus perhaps? But if it was, why hadn't she seen it when the Observer had led them to the chamber? Come to think of it, none of this looked at all familiar.

'Nyssa?'

Dieter could make out a figure ahead sitting...

No! That was impossible!

She was sitting on an old-fashioned wooden stile, and beyond was a field, with a tree and a sunny sky and...

'Nyssa?'

The figure turned, beckoning her, and as Dieter got closer to the impossibility she realised the figure wasn't Nyssa at all. 'She's gone home,' said the figure in a male American drawl. 'Very tired and emotional.'

Dieter half wanted to run away, back to Commander Oakwood and the others, but her curiosity got the better of her.

'Who on earth are you?'

The man jumped off the gate, and now stood on the other side. He was oddly dressed - old-fashioned. Even his moustache seemed anachronistic and vaguely silly.

'Ma'am, my name is LeFevre, Gaylord LeFevre, resident of Louisiana, although much of my time is spent upon the waters, travelling between Minnesota and St Louis. Heck, ma'am, I've even taken a trip down to Mexico, but that's a strange and primitive place and I don't care to go there again in a hurry. May I?'

By now, Dieter had reached the gate, and LeFevre held his hand out to offer assistance over the stile. Although her instinct was to refuse, she found herself saying 'Why thank you, Monsieur LeFevre, that's very kind of you.' For some reason, she was not the least bit surprised to find that she was wearing eighteenth-century dress.

'Ma'am,' he said once she was over, and as he tucked her arm under his, 'it's a pleasure, a mighty real pleasure to have your company on a day as fine as this. Is home like this?' And Dieter suddenly thought of home - her tiny apartment on the twelfth floor of a thirty-storey block in Dusseldorf. Two rooms with grey, featureless walls and furniture, the sky blackened by the emissions from the *kraftwerks* and the windows failing to keep out the roar of the autobahns and *flugplatz.*

'No,' she said quietly. 'No, monsieur, this is a paradise.'

'I think, ma'am, you would like to stay a while then, enjoy our hospitality. A game to while away the hours?'

'Hours...? No, I... I...'

'Yes, ma'am?'

Dieter knew something was wrong. She glanced back to the fence, but beyond it were fields and trees. Surely something was missing? She didn't remember fields and trees.

Something about darkness? Green light? A girl she was following?

'Why, sir, I am daydreaming. Where are my manners? Of course, I'd love to watch you play at your sports.'

'Watch? Why, ma'am, the challenge is in the playing. You must assist me.'

'Me?' Dieter flushed with embarrassment. 'Why, sir, it's not comely for a lady to play at sports.'

LeFevre laughed. 'This is not the Middle Ages, ma'am. The Toymaker would be very disappointed if you didn't join in the festivities over yonder.'

Toymaker? Why did that name ring a bell?

'What game are we playing, good sir?'

'Why, Ms Dieter... may I call you Ms Claudia?'

Claudia. There was a name she'd not heard for a while. She'd been 'Oh, Nurse Dieter...' or 'Lieutenant-Commander Dieter... '

or 'Dieter, do you think you could...' for years now. The last person to call her Claudia was Merten back home in... in...

Nurse Dieter? Why on Earth did she think she was a medic? And where, if she was, did she practise? She had some bizarre whimsy that last night she had dreamt about outer space, being out among the stars.

What rot.

No, here she was, a lady of leisure, enjoying a fine summer's day in the Black Forest with this fine American gentleman.

'Where's the picnic, Monsieur LeFevre?'

LeFevre smiled at her, as a father might smile at a child who finally understands a problem. Why was he doing that? Ah well, no matter - before them was a fine picnic being enjoyed by life-sized *pűppchen.* As one, they turned their china or wooden heads, with their painted faces and gay clothes, to say hello.

In her head she heard them calling to her and, smiling gleefully, she settled down with them.

'Will you not join us, Monsieur?'

But LeFevre shook his head. 'I have to ready this afternoon's entertainment, ma'am, but I'm sure I shall rejoin you soon.' He turned to leave, then stopped. 'Oh, Ms Claudia, I don't think you have been introduced to the gentleman who has prepared today's events. Allow me to present my lord, the Toymaker!'

'Enchanted,' she said to the tall, elegantly dressed gentleman who was suddenly sitting amid the *pűppchen.*

The Toymaker bowed slightly. 'Oh, you will be, Nurse Dieter. Tell me, dear lady, do you perhaps play the game of *schachspiel?'*

Adric decided he'd really had as much as he was going to take of all this.

It was bad enough that Niki Paladopous and the others on the bridge clearly had no recollection of him, but while they were dragging him to a storeroom that they decided would make a good cell, word had come in that one of the station's crew had been murdered - stabbed in the back.

Adric's protestations that he had neither a knife, nor blood on his hands or clothes - or any reason to kill the unfortunate man - had no effect. The lieutenant - or Commander Paladopous as he now called himself - just locked him in the cell, suggesting that Earth Security would question him when they were ready.

'Of course, it might take them a week or three to get here, so you'll have plenty of time to think on what you've done!

Adric thought about this for a few moments after Paladopous's footsteps had faded away. Obviously something was askew - Adric had faced anger alongside the Doctor(s) often enough to see that. Personality transplant aside, Niki was acting completely irrationally for a

'commander'. Therefore, he was influenced by something. And that something had not only wiped Adric's origins from the lieutenant's mind, but had also blotted out his memory of the crew who had gone to Dymok along with the Doctor, Tegan and Nyssa.

Ah well, there was nothing Adric could do about it right now

- better to wait for a chance to make his escape when they brought him some food. Starving a prisoner to death was unlikely to be Earth Security's preferred method of getting a confession, so he was reasonably confident that a window of opportunity would present itself soon.

With a sigh - cells were so boring - he closed his eyes and settled back on the hard floor to wait.

The door opened, but Adric kept his eyes shut, waiting to see who spoke.

‘Adric?’
‘Is that you?’
He sat upright, suddenly cold.
Morell? Tanisa?
‘Mother? Father?’ Adric stared up at his parents. The three of them were inside a cave overlooking the Starliner on Alzarius.
Adric’s heart sank. ‘Oh. It’s not really you, then. Another trick, like last time.’
His mother frowned and his father crouched down in front of his son. ‘See. You had the dream again?’
‘Dream? What dream?’
‘The same one you have had for the last couple of nights, my love. The one about travelling between the stars, with your faithful robot dog and his friends the wizard and the ice maiden.’ Tanisa had joined her husband by Adric’s feet. ‘Oh I am so sorry. We really did think that the solitude and the altitude of the cave would solve the problem!

‘I think, son, it would be best if you came back down with us. With Varsh gone, your mother needs both of us to help around the home.’
Adric looked from one to another. ‘Look, I really don’t know what you are talk-’ He stopped, putting his hand to his throat.
His voice sounded odd. Alien, really. Certainly very different. He tried again.
‘All right, I’ll try it your way. What is the true origin of Mistfall?’
Adric thought that if he queried his phantom parents on this subject - to which he knew the answer but they didn’t -
and they answered correctly, he would know this was a trick of the Toymaker.
His voice still sounded strange. Smaller, Weedy. A different pitch... oh no...
He touched his throat harder. No thyroid cartilage. His hands were smaller, thinner. He checked the other relevant parts of his body but he was right.
‘No... I’m young again...’
Morell smiled. ‘Of course you are, Adric. You don’t reach eleven until the next season.’
Adric shook his head. ‘But I’m... I’m fifteen years old!’
His mother laughed. A lovely laugh he hadn’t heard properly in years. ‘Oh, my sweetheart, you are funny. Come, back to the home. I’ve your favourite stew cooking and Jiana is anxious to see you. I think she may have her eye on you, my little one.’
Adric scrambled to his feet, trying to back away, but his parents seemed so big. Which they would to a ten-year-old.
‘No. I am Adric. This is the space station *Little Boy II* not Alzarius. I am in N-Space not E-Space. You are dead, as is Varsh and... and...’
His protests stopped as his voice faded, and the world seemed to move around him, almost swamping him.
His mother and father seemed giants now, looming over him, pointing and smiling.

‘Itchy kitchy koo,’ his mother said. ‘Do you want yum-yums?’ She was holding out a plate of mushed river-fruit.
‘Your favourite.’
Adric had always loathed river-fruit. He tried to say so, but nothing happened.
Then the images blurred. His mother and father twisted, darkened and mutated into two other forms. Gradually recognition dawned - they were Tegan and Nyssa. The girls were poking at him, laughing spitefully, jeering at his attempts to push them away.
‘Oh look, Nyssa,’ said Tegan. ‘It’s Adric being Adric. If he can’t get what he wants he lies on his back, kicking and screaming like a baby.’
‘Well, Tegan,’ said Nyssa, ‘that’s our Adric. A big spoilt brat who thinks he’s all grown up when he’s nothing more than a pathetic child. Oochy koochy coo!’
In the distance Adric heard a long shrill cry, like that of an irritating baby that demands attention.
He realised the sound was both in his head and coming from his mouth, the mouth of a six-month-old Adric.
And he screamed even louder.

Tegan could remember her dream now. Brisbane. The robot. The Toymaker and the other man, the one who had been trying to warn her against something. Was she supposed to be wary of the Observer? Well, frankly, after what had happened to her during her travels in time alongside the Doctor, she wasn’t ready to trust anyone.
The sleepers had all awoken by now. They were all before her, three or four sitting, regimented, on each slab, all just staring at her.
‘Their god has deserted them,’ the Observer said. ‘You are the Chosen, the one they need to lead them now.’
‘Why me?’
‘Because you are pragmatic, straightforward and say what you think. Adric and Nyssa are too caught up in their own little worlds to be of any help.’

Tegan thought about this. ‘Hang on,’ she said slowly. If I’m the ―Chosen One‖, how do you know about Nyssa and Adric?
And the Doctor for that matter? Surely you could have chosen anyone in the universe who is ―pragmatic‖ and the rest of it.
Why me?’
She faced the Observer and dared him to come up with a glib response. ‘It’s not me at all, is it? I’m just a convenient way of getting at the Doctor!’
The Observer smiled. ‘You do yourself an injustice, Tegan. The Doctor has a part to play certainly, but no, it is you I... we needed. You are our ―Chosen One‖ because of who *you* are, not who you travel with.’
‘With whom you travel,’ Tegan corrected him automatically. She glanced back at the masses who faced her, imploring looks on their faces.
‘They need someone to lead them, Tegan.’
‘Lead them into what exactly?’
‘Battle. A battle of the mind. They have slept for years. Let me explain.’ And once again the Observer touched Tegan’s temple, and the world fell away around her...

All That Glitters

Imagine space.

Imagine the dust and clouds coalescing together, forming a planet - a blend of hard physics, chemistry, biology and an amazing amount of luck. Why should this one planet form here, in this insignificant speck of space, 150 million kilometres from the nearest sun?

And why, within a few million years, should the Dymova emerge from their evolution, wasted physically but with an enormous mental range that could have elevated them to godhood among lesser races?

Those are the quirks of fate that created Dymok, Tegan Jovanka.

And the reason you must help is easy. Instead of becoming gods these poor, pitiful creatures opened their minds to invasion by another, who claimed to be *their* god. He promised them an eternity of pleasure, of happiness.

And what was his price?

To give him their dreams - to sleep and let their subconscious imaginations power his own dreamscapes. His own malevolent plans for universal domination.

He did this, this Great Old One from another universe. This Guardian of Dreams who said he would be there to protect them.

Oh, indeed, he has protected them - he allowed me to survive, to ward off unwelcome visitors in case they disturbed the sleepers. He gave me powers beyond those even the sleepers possessed - I could obliterate planets with but a thought. I could unpick your air-hostess uniform, one stitch at a time, over a week until it fell apart - from a million light years away.

But it did not alter my loneliness - my abandonment.

Can you imagine what it is like to be suddenly cut off from your friends? To accept an offer on a whim without thinking about what the consequences might be? And then suddenly it is over - your god betrays you, gives you promises but in fact abandons you for ever, leaving you to go through the motions, performing tasks against your will because there is nothing else to do in the vast vacuum of boredom?

My mission, Tegan Jovanka, has been to protect my... the sleepers. To watch over them and ensure that while our god, our false, wicked and sly god, picks their mental powers bare to support his own fantasy realms, they remain alive in the hope that one day someone will come amongst us, help us find a new future. A new direction.

A fresh start - that is what the 'Chosen One' offers. I hope.

They will listen to you - you are different from them, different from the cruel god.

You are their saviour.

Oh, you don't want to be their saviour?

Then let me show you what will occur if you, our last best hope, abandon us now.

You see, the sleepers have awoken - and this has severely depleted the god's powers. Oh, he has a reservoir of their dream-spinning for now, but it cannot last much longer. He uses it too quickly, too eagerly for although it is not his to take so blithely, he does.

Observe. You see Dymok - do you see the building collapse - the black pyramid shatter and sink? Do you see the Dymova, unable to escape as their world crashes down upon them and strikes them dead?

And so, you ask, why do we not escape - flee this terrible god who has so mistreated us?

Because we are dependent upon him. If we abandon him, we die. If he abandons us, we die. It is a truly parasitic relationship.

But with a new 'Chosen One' to defend us, to talk with the god, to offer up a new menu of dreams, less stale and abstract than the ones sleepers offer now, we will be free.

But, you must ask, what of you? Will you not become a prisoner of your dreams as we have?

No, of course not. In a moment I shall reveal a secret to you, and you will understand everything.

But what of the Doctor? Your companion, your saviour?

Your planet's history is littered with martyrs, saints and saviours. You have your heroes, your legends and your gods. To you, the Doctor is all of these things rolled into one enigmatic package. You question how he flies through the vortex, unravaged by the passage of time, protecting you along the way. He shows you the wonders of the universe - and the dangers as well. And despite all I have explained to you, all I have demonstrated, I see within you the desire to continue with him.

You marvel at his craft. His technology. His ability to change and repair his body when it is damaged.

Is he not a god to you? Is this not what gods can do?

No, he is flawed, and that is why you admire him. He cannot be a god because he makes mistakes - and that is how you can deal with him, how you and he can co-exist in his god-like world.

The Doctor is here to make another error, create another flaw. He is here to repair the damage he did to a lost soul a long time ago. And thus betray you and your friends.

Allow me to illustrate my point by selecting one of your memories...

Hello?

Hello where am I?

Oh, it's the TARDIS... hey, I recognise this. Yes, that's me and Nyssa and Adric and the Doctor in the TARDIS and we've just taken off from that fake place, Castrovalva.

If. If I hadn't been trying to operate the TARDIS data bank by looking up 'If', we wouldn't have found the file IF for Information File, and if we hadn't gone there we wouldn't have needed to look up the Information File and thus I wouldn't have needed to think about 'if' and... circular logic gives me a headache. Circular logic got us there, to a world of circular logic that bizarrely made no sense.

On the way back, we were discussing the Doctor's enemy the Master; who had created the circular logic city as a trap but was caught in it himself as it collapsed back into the pure mathematics which had created it.

Or so Adric said.

The Master had been dying, the Doctor said. Time Lords can only regenerate, change their bodies, twelve times -

thirteen lives. If a Time Lord tries to trigger a thirteenth regeneration it usually kills him. But the Master had attempted it anyway and, rather than dying, he ravaged his own body, becoming little more than a walking cadaver

On Traken, before I joined the TARDIS crew, Nyssa's father Tremas had demonstrated the power of the Source, a massive energy capsule that powered the planet The Master used the power of the Source to extend his own life o n c e a g a i n ,

tr i g g e r i n g

t h a t

f a t e f u l

th ir t e e n t h

regeneration, but he needed extra material, a whole ne w body which he could merge with, absorb and take on.

Nyssa's dad was the unlucky one and the Master ended up looking like a younger; rejuvenated version of Tremas. I re me mber, as we lef t the M as ter to h is f ate in Castrovalva Nyssa asked the Doctor if that was it. Was her father lost for ever or was there some way he could separate the two men?

We had just seen the Doctor die and become reborn in a new body.

We had seen an intermediary version of him, the Watcher operating independently while it waited to trigger the regenerative process that turned one Doctor into another.

And she had seen her father become young again, playing host to a new soul, if you like.

Was it any wonder that Nyssa wanted to believe the Doctor could perform more magic and bring her father back -

reverse whatever the Master had achieved?

But the Doctor said it wasn't possible. That separating two individuals who have become molecularly bonded - I think that's how he put it - was unheard of.

Not even the Time Lords could do that.

And so poor Nyssa, who had lost her father her stepmother her friends, her home and her entire planet to the evil of the Master had now lost that one final thing she had clung to, her reason for seeking out the Doctor in the first place.

She had lost her hope.

And as I watched a little piece of her die that moment, I think a little piece of the Doctor died as well.

You remember that feeling, Tegan Jovanka. Remember those emotions, that incident and everything associated with it.

Why?

Because the Doctor lied. He's about to perform that kind of separation on someone else - not the father of his travelling companion, but someone he hasn't considered rescuing in centuries.

And I'm afraid we must stop him, because if our god loses his power Dymok will be destroyed.

Why?

Chant, my brethren, chant! Louder than ever!

And Tegan? Here's that little secret I promised you...

Never Turn Away

‘Where the hell have they got to?’ Oakwood threw a look at the Doctor, suggesting it was all his fault.

Which, upon reflection, it probably was.

‘To be quite fair, Commander, I didn’t ask Dieter to go after Nyssa.’

‘I could go and look for them,’ Desorgher suggested, but Braune put a hand on his shoulder, restraining his enthusiasm as well as his moving. ‘No, lad. Two missing is enough in this place.’

The Doctor looked hard at Braune. Did the security man also blame him? And if he did, well, why not? He had brought them here - even if the psychic call of the Toymaker/Rallon was the reason he did so.

The dream he’d had in the TARDIS came back to him. Had the Toymaker or Rallon mentally trapped him? Placed co-ordinates in his mind so instead of actually getting to Heathrow for Tegan, he took them all to *Little Boy II.*

‘Oh, finally it falls into place,’ said the Toymaker from the arched doorway. ‘I see my faithful have all gone - no doubt to listen to the treacherous words of the Observer. He amused me for a while, as did all the Dymova, but perhaps it is time to cleanse this planet of vermin. I grow weary of their demands.’

He raised his hand as if to perform a spell.

‘No! Wait,’ the Doctor stepped forward. ‘It’s me you want, no one else. Leave the Dymova. Leave these people and face me.

Alone.’

Oakwood stepped forward too, but the Doctor turned to him.

‘Er, Commander. I rather think this is best left to me, if you don’t mind.’

‘Oh really?’ Oakwood looked less than impressed.

‘Begone,’ muttered the Toymaker, and the *Little Boy II* party were, indeed, no longer there. ‘You are wrong, Doctor. They do have a part to play. Oh, and take that look off your face. They are perfectly safe. Some of my associates from the toyshop are finding something interesting for them to do.’

‘That’s what worries me,’ confessed the Doctor, and the Toymaker laughed.

‘Come, Doctor. Old friends such as you and I have much to discuss. Time has passed and I have readied a new challenge for you.’

‘No more trilogic games?’ In a previous battle with the Toymaker, the Doctor had barely escaped the realm. The Toymaker had used a game based around building three pyramids without letting a smaller triangular block rest atop a larger one and the Doctor had resorted to trickery to escape.

‘Cheating, I called it,’ the Toymaker interrupted, disturbing his reverie. ‘You spotted my clue above?’

The Toymaker raised a finger and pointed upwards, towards the surface of the planet.

‘Of course. The black pyramid, the indentations and the two stumps on either side. A giant trilogic game - that’s what gave it away.’

The Toymaker smiled. ‘You gain a few bonus points for that deduction, Doctor.’

‘Like what?’

‘Like I shall not destroy the Dymova nor, by association, your wilful friend Tegan.’ He gestured expansively. ‘Not yet, leastways!’

And the Doctor was back in the realm.

There was no sign of Rallon. Instead a grubby-looking man was standing on one side of the Toymaker He looked the epitome of malicious intent.

Presumably he was one of the Toymaker’s previous victims, allowed to serve his master as a human rather than a toy.

‘Say hello to the Doctor, Stefan.’

Stefan did no such thing.

‘Poor Stefan has endured my stories of you for many... well, for rather a long time.’

‘And you do go on so.’

The Toymaker chuckled. It has been said, Doctor, it has indeed been said. Now, of course you remember my Magic Robot, I’m sure. A product of the planet Kapekkca. I use it and thus Kapekkca still exists. Toys that amuse me survive, as do their homeworlds. Some toys bore me. Some of those no longer have a homeworld. Your three friends amuse me.

Tegan Jovanka and those from that space station orbiting dear Dymok are from Earth - a planet whose inhabitants I delve into frequently as the sheer scope of imagination there is a never-ending well of excitement. Nyssa is from Traken. It no longer exists, so I have no need to see whether she amuses me.

Similarly, Adric. His adopted world of Terradon, or his true home Alzarius, are in Exo space and are frankly too much bother for too little reward. So none of them intrigue me greatly. I could just erase them, but I feel that would upset you, so I won’t.’

‘Thank you.’

The Toymaker laughed. ‘Oh you are so charming, Doctor.

So... beguiling to have around. Observe my memory mirror - it shows us an image that I’m sure you’ll agree is quite entertaining.’

The Doctor stared at the sculptured glass mirror, oval and man-sized, that hung effortlessly in the air. Beside it stood another man - eighteenth-century dress, probably some small-time con artist from the American mid-West. Paddle-steamers and all that.

‘Allow me to present Monsieur LeFevre. Sleight of hand is his speciality.’

LeFevre nodded to the Doctor, who responded in kind, albeit with an exaggeration that bordered on irony.

In the mirror, or maybe through it, the Doctor could see green fields. As his viewpoint shifted away and up, he realised the fields were in fact squares on a vast chess board.

‘Behind you Doctor, dear Stefan is showing you a blank frame.’

Indeed, Stefan was. He held a tin out to the Doctor.

‘Humbug, Doctor?’

‘Are you?’ the Doctor retorted, refusing the tin.

‘Oh very droll,’ snapped the Toymaker. ‘Just take the tin, Doctor, my patience is not absolute.’

The Doctor took the tin but turned again to regard the Toymaker. The transformation was quite remarkable - he was scowling and his whole demeanour, indeed his physical look, had darkened.

Keeping Rallon’s essence inside him active was causing these schizoid moments.

The Toymaker’s face was gone. In its place was Rallon’s, grimacing with the effort of taking momentary control. ‘If you separate us - maybe he’ll finally die. And I certainly will.

That’s why I called you here. To kill me. Us. To finish what you started.’

‘I can’t,’ the Doctor shouted desperately. ‘Don’t you understand, I don’t know how. I don’t think it’s even possible.

I can only give you the same answer I gave Nyssa when she asked about her father and the Master. It cannot be done.’

The Toymaker was back in control, although he staggered slightly with the effort. ‘I do want to be rid of Rallon, Doctor.

That’s the reason I summoned you. He wants to kill me but I’m too strong for that. A guardian cannot die. But I need a replacement body, Doctor, and you will be that replacement.’

The Doctor shook his head. ‘Why should I give in so easily?’

The Toymaker had regained his original demeanour now, all smiles and gestures. ‘Oh, it’ll be a battle, Doctor. A two-pronged assault. You and all your friends are free to go if, and it’s a big if I have to say, your white team beats my red team at chess *and* you complete the jigsaw puzzle within the humbug tin.’

The tin burst open and four thousand jigsaw pieces flew up and positioned themselves in an empty frame floating in the air.

‘There, I’ve made it a bit easier for you.’

The Doctor looked at the jigsaw - the picture was clearly of him. It was also on the reverse, but upside down and back to front.

‘I said —easierll, Doctor. Not easy.’

‘Oh, thank you very much.’

‘But you must complete the puzzle at exactly the same moment as your chess team wins or you become mine.

Complete it a moment before or a moment after and all this disappears.’

The Doctor nodded. ‘But I, of course, stay behind and build a new realm as your new... co-host, yes?’

‘Precisely. I grow bored of white, Doctor. Next time, I might go for a more rustic look - wooden beams, a coal fire. Something that would fire your imagination. Rallon’s has got weary, Doctor.

A white void is the best he can do. Pitiful, really.’

‘Why not bond with one of your pets here - Stefan for instance?’

‘He’s human, Doctor. Most of the creatures I beat at my games are ephemeral. They could not survive the replacement process. That’s why I took Rallon from you in the first place. A Time Lord. Such possibilities, such promises... ‘The Toymaker stopped suddenly and gazed into the monitor on the Robot’s chest. ‘Oh look, the last dregs of ‘

your team are arriving!’

Adric was still running. Why he was no longer on the space station, but in a meadow complete with cows and daisies ‘

(weren’t cows black and white rather than green and yellow and wearing bowler hats?) he didn’t know. Or care. Nor did he ponder the fact that he was adult again.

All he knew was that he was running from... something.

He looked again at the cows.

‘Morning,’ said one in a feminine voice, raising a bizarrely well-jointed leg to doff its hat at him.

‘Good morning...’ he began to reply. ‘This is silly. Cows don’t talk.’

‘Maybe not on your world, little pink creature, but we do.

How rude of you to criticise us for it.’

Adric apologised. ‘This is rather surreal,’ he added after a moment.

‘Life’s like that here,’ said the cow, spitting a half-eaten jam doughnut on to the grass.

‘0i,’ squeaked a daisy, using its petals to wipe spittle and sugar off itself.

‘Your psyche must be spectacularly fractured to create all this,’ said the cow. ‘I mean, most people that come through here just run away, screaming about going mad. The fact you’ve struck up a conversation with me suggests that not much surprises you.’

‘I suppose not.’

‘Well, that’s not right, is it?’ The cow wandered towards him.

‘I mean, if we all went around accepting any old tosh offered to us, where would it end? You must be particularly damaged.’

‘Oh, thanks. Actually we Alzarians heal quicker than most.

Which probably means you’ll disappear as soon as my right mind reasserts itself.’

‘Unless it’s already too late,’ squeaked the daisy. ‘If the damage is deep, it’ll be no good. You’ll be talking to cows and daisies for ever.’

Adric shrugged. ‘Surrealism works that way.’

‘Oh yes it does,’ agreed the cow. ‘But surrealism has a basis in interpretative art. Usually dreams. So, are you dreaming this, or are we created from your dreams... or is this real? Either you had too much cheese on your pizza last night or, as I said, you are damaged mentally.’

‘What’s pizza?’

The cow and daisy laughed. ‘Now we know he’s mad,’ and they turned away from him. The cow bent down, snatched the talkative flower out of the ground and ate it.

‘I need to know what pizza is. You’re talking about things I don’t understand. Just like Tegan and Nyssa always... always do...’

The cow ignored him, so he started walking forward again.

‘Life’s like a big picnic. In one corner is a small saltcellar, containing the action. Then there’s a slightly larger butter dish

- that’s the characters you meet. The rest is a vast chintz tablecloth covered with dreams and hopes and imaginings, none of which are remotely

real.'

Adric decided not to be surprised that the speaker was a tiny wooden string puppet hanging from the branch of a tree, its burgundy cloak flapping in the wind. Being surprised might start up another ridiculous conversation. 'Why are you running?' asked the puppet. 'I mean, neither Tegan nor Nyssa are here to persecute you. And the Doctor, well, he's abandoned you. You might as well settle down here and enjoy the unpredictability of it all. It is unpredictability you seek, isn't it, Adric?'

'I don't really know,' Adric said. 'Oh why doesn't someone explain what's going on? Could you tell me, please?'

'Tsk tsk tsk,' cautioned the puppet. 'You're whining again.

Grow out of it, Adric. Learn that it doesn't get you what you want and I guarantee the girls will look at you in a new light.

The longer you act like a ten-year-old, the less acceptance you'll receive.'

'I don't want acceptance,' he shouted.

'Nonsense, Adric. We all want acceptance. You want to be accepted by the others. The Doctor wants to be accepted by you. Tegan and Nyssa want to accept you. But it's your fault none of these things are happening. You want the old Doctor back, but he represents the old you. When you stowed away on the TARDIS you were childlike, emotionally stunted and easily led. You thought it was all an exciting adventure. But as the Doctor transformed, so did you. You took on the responsibility of saving the TARDIS, of helping Nyssa grieve over Traken's destruction. The only person who still thinks you *are* the spoilt brat you once were is you. The moment you let yourself realise you've changed, the others will too. Your destiny lies out in the stars, Adric. One day, you're going to make a big impression somewhere, change the course of history or something. But until you do, bide your time and enjoy your friends rather than resisting them. Take them for what they are and they'll do the same to you.'

Adric thought about this, but when he prepared to reply to the puppet it was gone.

In its place, a man and a woman stood before him, holding out a pink slip of paper.

'Your Majesty,' they said, albeit in less than reverential tones. 'Your invitation to join the tournament.'

Nyssa felt the warmth of the sun on her cheeks and rolled on to her back, distractedly waving her arm across her face. As if brushing away cobwebs. Outside, the birds were singing and a slight and pleasant breeze washed over her, entering from the tiny window above the bed-head.

She opened her tired eyes, feeling the softness of the grey silk nightdress she wore. At the foot of the chintz bedspread sat a row of her stuffed toys, guarding her during the night, as always. She looked down at Big Bear, top guardian and leader of her pack.

'Back to normal, I see,' she said. 'I suppose I should thank you for another safe night.' She stared up at the ceiling. 'I think I have got the idea of this, Toymaker. Can we try something new?'

Nyssa climbed out of her bed, went through the motions of washing, dressing and adjusting her hair and then, with a final look at her toys, took a deep resigned breath and left her room.

'Why *haven't you come to find me!'* screamed Tremas, pushing her back into the room. She fell on to the bed and the toys scattered.

Tremas was on the floor, tears pouring down his face, screeching hysterically.

'Why did you betray me, daughter? I thought you loved me!'

Nyssa stared at him. 'Father...?' she said eventually.

He looked up, his face red, shaking with pent-up fury and despair. brought you up to honour me, Nyssa. To honour Traken. Is this how you repay me? By abandoning me?

Abandoning me to him?'

The Master walked swiftly into the room and stood arms folded, head slightly to one side.

'Hello, Nyssa my dear.'

'Go away,' she replied. 'Both of you. You are phantoms, created by the Toymaker to make me doubt myself. And the Doctor.' She breathed in deeply. 'But I deny this reality, Toymaker. I deny this dreamscape. And above all, I deny you!'

And once again, Nyssa was back in the Toymaker's realm.

* * *

The Toymaker stood in front of the TARDIS, the robot, Stefan and Gaylord LeFevre beside him.

'Very good, Nyssa. Your loyalty to the man who has betrayed you is very commendable. However, it still won't give you the TARDIS back, nor will it save the Doctor. You have, however, earned enough points to move on to the next level of the game!'

And Nyssa was outside, in a field, breathing fresh air.

Letters spelling out the words 'good luck' hung in front of her on a series of banners that flapped in the breeze. 'Doctor?

Doctor, where are you?'

There was no reply, so she walked forward, under the banners and towards a stile in a hedgerow.

She clambered over the stile unhesitatingly - she was determined to go on. However twisted the Toymaker was, he worked on a bizarre level of logic. If she was here it was for a reason, however obscure. Therefore, to stay still was pointless. If he wanted her to go on to the 'next level of the game', she would.

If nothing else it might reunite her with the Doctor, who could answer some of her questions.

Exactly what the game was became blatantly clear. She had tried playing chess with both the Doctor and Adric more than once. She was hopeless at it and, in exasperation, Adric had tried to teach her something played on the same board -

draughts. 'Even you might grasp that,' he had said in his usual brusque way. Nyssa hadn't. She simply wasn't a games-type person.

'Good morning,' said a man behind her, in a voice which suggested it was anything but.

Nyssa whirled round to be greeted by two grey-suited figures, a man and a woman. Neither of them smiled.

The dour couple introduced themselves as George and Margaret, the judges for the 'great chess tournament, upon which the fate of thousands rests'.

'Why is that?'

The woman frowned and dug a piece of paper out of her pocket. 'Because it says so. Here.'

She passed Nyssa the pink slip - an invitation to the tournament. Nyssa scanned down it, noting that it did indeed proclaim that the fate of thousands rested upon its outcome.

Representing the Red Team are Sir Henry Rugglesthorpe And Family (And Friends).

Whoever they were. Nyssa had a suspicion they weren't playing by choice. The White Team were:

The Outer Space Rocket People Who Are Still Awaiting Their Queen.

Nyssa passed the paper back to George and Margaret but they ignored it.

'Keep it. It's your invitation.'

'I don't want an invitation.'

'Oh dear. What a shame. Never mind. It's still your invitation.'

Nyssa sighed at the couple's unreasonable attitude. She looked at the invitation again, intending to see when the tournament would begin. It now read:

When you're ready, 0 Queen of the White Team

'But I'm not the white queen,' Nyssa exclaimed.

George finally cracked a smile. 'You are now.'

And everything went mad.

Very Close to Far Away

The Doctor stared at the jigsaw - it was almost impossible to do. The pieces were double-sided, so each was effectively two pieces which would go on different sides of the puzzle.

Oh, and there was one other thing the Toymaker had omitted to mention - every time the Doctor put a wrong piece in place, it fell out, bringing with it half a dozen more.

'I wish you'd chosen something more appealing,' he moaned, hoping to bait the Toymaker into using up a bit more energy. Whatever was occurring between him and Rallon, the Toymaker's grip on reality - both inside and outside his mind - was lessening. The Doctor saw Stefan and LeFevre shoot the odd look in their master's direction, confirming that the Toymaker was occasionally lapsing into his internal struggle.

Excellent.

'Oh, look at the memory mirror, Doctor.'

The Doctor turned as the Toymaker waved an ornate ring in front of the mirror. An aerial view of the chess board materialised. The viewpoint was rarely still, however, and the Doctor began to feel nauseous trying to stay focused. The Toymaker was shaking his head.'

'I fear, dear Gaylord, that our pilot may not be all she was cracked up to be.'

'I fear not, Lord,' LeFevre admitted.

'Dreadful at cribbage, too, Doctor. Bit of a time-waster I feel. Ah well. Let's change the camera.'

The Doctor watched. The chess board could now be seen from the point of view of one of the players.

I'm using the red king's perspective, Doctor, as I wish you to see how your team, the white ones naturally, do.'

'White representing the force for good. A guardian thing, I suppose.'

The Toymaker shrugged. 'That hadn't crossed my mind, old friend. No, I chose white because I thought of the little flag they wave on Earth to signal surrender.' He gazed back at the screen. 'Oh, this is very tedious, all very traditional.' He cleared his throat. 'Go to move queen's rook four.'

Suddenly the picture blurred. When it refocused, the pieces had moved, some quite significantly.

'Oh dear, I appear to have lost a couple of pawns and a rook. And why, Doctor, how delightful for you. You've lost no one.

Yet. Oh, let me introduce your team.' He tapped on the mirror with his ring, against the image of a pawn. Carved into its front was Braune's face.

To the Doctor's horror, it blinked.

The ring touched the king's rook. Etched into that was Townsend's face, twisted into a scream of fear. The bishop was Dieter and the knight was young Desorgher.

'Oh, who might your queen be? I wonder if it's... oh yes, so it is. Tell me, Doctor, do they play chess on Traken?'

'Are they... are they dead?'

'Oh no. Well, not yet. But if rooks, knights or bishops fall, then yes. Ditto the pawns - poor Mr Braune. Lots of chances but, like all good security men, he's in the front line. That's what he gets paid for. As for Nyssa and your king, as there is only one of them... yes, they get zapped more quickly.'

'Adric?'

Is the king, yes. And that's probably why your team are doing so well. He's instinctively good at playing. His mathematical skills make him an ideal strategist, organising his players. He's far better than my man, dear old Sir Henry.'

The Toymaker shot the Doctor a quick grin. 'Doctor, would you mind awfully if I hung on to Adric when the game is over? He could be very useful around here.'

'I'd like him back, please.'

'Oh look, Doctor! Adric has sacrificed a bishop to get a pawn to put Sir Henry in check. Oh, that's so clever. King moves to king's bishop one I think, Sir Henry.' The camera moved, suggesting the move was being made. 'Of course, Doctor, that was a bluff on our part. Dear Queen Nyssa is now exposed to my rook. Eliza I think she's called.'

The Doctor watched in mute horror, impotent to do anything but stare as Adric tried to configure a way to save Nyssa.

He did so by moving his remaining bishop directly in front of the queen. The rook would have to take it, and, in turn, the queen could take the rook without placing herself in further danger.

But the Doctor realised that Adric was in a quandary. He was down a bishop Arcady - when he lost this one, Dieter would be gone too.

The bishop moved into position.

'Adric…'

'Oh, sorry, another thing I forgot.' The Toymaker was enthralled by the game. 'The players don't actually know the fate that befalls the lost players. Whoops - there goes Nurse Dieter *and* Eliza the maid in one fell swoop.'

Nyssa had indeed taken the rook.

Then a red pawn came forward. The white pawn that had put the red king in check moved forward on to the first line of the red team's side of the board.

'Oh, well done, Adric,' the Doctor whispered. 'I think we get a man back for that, Toymaker!'

The Toymaker looked dark again but slowly smiled. 'If you say so, Doctor. Anything to spice this up. I take it you'd like a new bishop?'

'Yes, please.'

'Done. Oh, but one thing, Doctor. Observe.'

On the memory mirror, the new white bishop swivelled round and the Doctor could see its face. It wasn't Dieter. It was Oakwood.

'Bored yet, Doctor?'

'No,' he replied and glanced back at the jigsaw. He had done rather well until recently - he might finish the puzzle, but he had to time it for when the chess match ended.

Assuming Adric won.

‘Lord!’ There was a sharp cry from LeFevre, which caught everyone’s attention.
The chess match was interrupted by a sudden flash.

Nyssa sat up as the world went even crazier around her. She was no longer inside a chess piece, or attached to it, or melded to it, or...
Instead, she was sitting next to Adric as the dreamscape around them wobbled and fluctuated, bits breaking away into mist then re-forming, but as other things. Parts of a cathedral.
‘We’re on Dymok!’
Tegan was there - standing next to that old man, the Observer, and behind them were loads of the Dymova she had last seen asleep. They were now wide awake, linking hands and staring forward, chanting.
‘I say, this is not on!’ George and Margaret stepped forward. ‘You have interfered with the lord’s game! You cannot -’ As one, the Dymova turned and stared at the couple.
And they were gone - replaced by a book. Nyssa reached over to it and saw a picture inside - a drawing of two figures, a man and a woman in undergarments. Ranged around the double-page spread was a series of possible costumes for them, with dotted lines to cut and little tabs to fold over the bodies.
Her attention was next caught by the drone of a model aeroplane diving towards them. Another glance from the Dymova stopped that in midair and it dropped like a stone to the ground, bouncing away before breaking in half.
Adric picked the bits up. It was made of balsawood and there was no sign of the little pilot figurine.
Tegan turned to the Observer.
‘Are you sure about this?’
‘Yes,’ he said quietly, then called out ‘Now, brethren. It is time!

Back in the realm, the Doctor was frantically putting the jigsaw together. ‘You’re running out of time, Toymaker. With the chess game abandoned, your own rules of fair play mean we have to go free.’
‘Only when that jigsaw is complete, Doctor. And you know what happened last time. Remember the trilogic game?’
And the Doctor did. That earlier encounter. By winning, he would have actually lost. Yes, his then companions, Steven and Dodo, would have escaped in the TARDIS but he would have been sacrificed, would have had to stay behind as the Toymaker’s plaything.
That fate faced him again, unless he could play for time.
On the memory mirror, the image of the countryside dreamscape had gone and was replaced by the sight of Dymok hanging in space, *Little Boy II* far above it.
And Dymok was juddering.

In the celestial toyshop, the clocks still ticked but no one was present to listen.
The area by the arched doorway where George and Margaret usually stood was vacant, although a book lay closed on the floor.
And beside an overturned pine table was a chess board, a set of red pieces scattered around the floor. Of the white pieces the only sign was two bishops, both snapped in half.
And hanging from the rafters was the shattered tail of a balsawood aeroplane.
Directly below it, lying on a black lacquered Chinese chair was the fuselage, a tiny toy pilot twisted and broken in the wreckage.
And sitting amid a mah-jong set on another table was a string puppet, dressed in burgundy robes. Its normally expressionless painted face seemed to be smiling...

In the realm the Toymaker held up a hand to stop LeFevre and Stefan moving forward.
Facing them across the room were Tegan, the Observer and the Dymova.

‘Now,’ hissed the Observer, and the Dymova turned on their god - the Doctor could see blue crackles of mental energy pouring out of them. They used the Observer as a focus to group it into one single blast.
As the energy hit the Toymaker, he returned it and a battle began.
‘Tegan...’
‘No, Doctor,’ she yelled. ‘Stay back. I know what I’m doing.
Trust me!’
‘I do trust you! But are you sure?’
Tegan shot him a look. A look that needed no verbal back-up.
‘All right,’ he said quietly. ‘You *are* sure.’
But, unseen by anyone, he crossed his fingers.
The Toymaker suddenly seemed to take command of the battle, drawing the Dymova’s mental energy into himself. ‘You created them,’ Tegan yelled. ‘Can you take what they dish out?’
‘I created...? I... created nothing...’ He staggered slightly, then regained his concentration.
The Doctor saw Tegan smile. What was she up to? The Toymaker was winning... Why was that good?
But he had to trust her.
She was the backbone of his team - ‘the co-ordinator’, he had once dubbed her. He had to trust in her because this time the upper hand had slid away from him.
He turned back to the jigsaw, frantically trying to complete it
- to get to the stage where it only needed one last piece. And then he would -
‘Victory!’ screamed the Toymaker and the Doctor looked on aghast.
The Observer had dropped to his knees, and in the memory mirror, Dymok shuddered violently and then simply ceased to exist.
A wave of pure mental energy seemed to emanate from the nothingness that replaced the planet, washing over *Little Boy II* before dissipating.
The Dymova vanished soundlessly, obliterated.

The Toymaker turned to face the Doctor. His face was replaced by the panorama of stars, but his delight was evident in his voice as it boomed

throughout the realm.

‘I have won!’

Love and Hate You

‘Victory is mine, Doctor. At long last, you face destruction!’

With Stefan to one side, LeFevre to the other, the Toymaker, his face slowly returning, was staring maniacally at the Doctor as he stood beside the jigsaw. ‘Look, I’ll even return your pawns!

They can share your misery!’

From behind him stepped Nyssa and Adric. Tegan still stood alongside the Observer, who fixed the Doctor with a hard stare.

Was he trying to tell him something? The Doctor glanced at the faces of his companions. His friends. What had the Toymaker done to them?

Stefan roughly shoved Adric forward.

‘Look at this specimen, Doctor. The most travelled of your current crop of hangers-on,’ the Toymaker intoned. He was quieter now, but harder. Indeed, his whole persona seemed to have lost its *joie de vivre.* He was currently just an enigmatic extra-dimensional being, filled with hate and loathing, all of it aimed at the Doctor - his oldest foe.

The Doctor suddenly understood the change. This was the real Toymaker - the side he had never seen before. In all their previous encounters the Toymaker had been partly Rallon, the Doctor’s friend and colleague from the Prydon Academy. But Rallon was gone now, his temperament, his life energies and his morality apparently erased from existence.

This was the Toymaker triumphant. His face was already fading again - in its place, the images of stars and planets -

and he was losing any semblance of humanity. The Toymaker was nothing more than an empty shell, a physical vessel for the powers at his command.

The Doctor’s consciousness rose up a plane - he was no longer in the Toymaker’s white realm, no longer constrained by his body. He felt his lives stripped away from him until he stood amid the galaxies, immune to the vacuum, ethereal and insubstantial, but wearing the body he had when he first encountered the Toymaker.

Beside him stood Rallon, unchanged, and as innocent as he had been before the Toymaker absorbed him centuries earlier.

‘The clues are around you, Doctor.’ Rallon didn’t catch the Doctor’s eye. ‘You’ve become lazy recently, expecting others to pick up the slack when you’ve allowed the sands of truth to slip through your fingers. If you are to survive this and the traumas to come, you must adapt. Harden. Change. But not as I... *we* did. The Toymaker cannot be completely contained but I can weaken him enough for you to escape him again. It won’t be a victory - but it will be survival.’

‘You’re still in there, aren’t you, old friend?’

‘Just Doctor. Thete. Snail. Just hanging on. I’ve always been there for you. Before. Helping you defeat him, getting him to make mistakes,’ Rallon tried to touch the Doctor’s astral form. ‘I didn’t call for you consciously but I think the bit of him that is me realised I was dying and requested help.

That’s why Dymok was created - and all those sleepers, dreaming of him, making him their god. He needed them to replace the bits of me that have died. I tried to give you hints.

You spotted the trilogic game on the surface of Dymok? I thought that would be as good a clue as I could give, without alerting the Toymaker to what I was doing.’

‘He knew,’ the Doctor said, and then paused. ‘But he thought *he* did it.’

Rallon smiled the smile a condemned man gives when he knows his time is up. ‘Ah, my last stratagem. Tell me, did you become a Time Lord, Doctor?’

The Doctor nodded, ‘I’m on my fifth body now.’

Rallon grasped his shoulders. ‘You did? Well done! Oh Doctor, I’ve so many questions and no time to find out the answers. I can’t keep him at bay for much longer. I’ve missed you, my friend.’

‘And I you. Rarely a day has gone by without me thinking of you *and* what I... I did. You were already a Time Lord and I effectively stole from you all the experiences which were due to you.’

Rallon gasped. ‘Guilt? Oh Doctor, no. Please don’t. It was an accident. Millennia and I chose to accompany you, so you have nothing to feel guilty about. Besides, no matter how evil the Toymaker is, I can’t say I haven’t seen a few things. Learned a few things that would put Delox into apoplexy! How are the others by the way? I know of a few... Koschei for instance. And we had a run-in with Mortimus once. I think the Toymaker quite liked him - they’re two of a kind and... What is it, my friend?’

‘Rallon, I’m sorry, but I need to know how to stop the Toymaker.’

‘Why?’

‘I’m sorry?’

‘Why stop him? He’s a universal force, Doctor. He’s one of the guardians! You can’t stop him. You can’t defeat him. You must just win this round.’

And how do I do that?’ The Doctor shrugged. ‘I’m fresh out of ideas.’

‘You don’t have to stop him, Doctor. That’s the whole point

- I needed you here to distract him. The answer is staring you in the face, Doctor. That’s all I can say.’

And the Doctor was back in the realm, the Observer touching his cheek. ‘He is awake, Lord,’ the old man rasped.

Adric, Nyssa and Tegan were still with the Toymaker. The Doctor shook his head, to clear it of his extra-dimensional experience. Had that been Rallon, finding the dying energy to say goodbye?

The Toymaker was still talking about Adric. ‘You promised him a full life, Doctor. Adventure and excitement, but you sideline him. You ignore his potential to lead for fear he will usurp your own authority. Adric is like me, Doctor. From another universe, bearing gifts unique in yours. And how do you treat him? Like one of those young human creatures you are so fond of. You ignore him. He deserves better.

‘And Nyssa of Traken. You promised to help her find her father. Well, you have done - buried deep within Kos... deep within the Master.’

Rallon *was* still in there. The Toymaker would never have slipped in the Master's real name unless Rallon was holding on. His sheer force of will was amazing. But why? What was he planning to do?

'However,' the Toymaker continued, 'although you believed you could save your friend Rallon, and attempted to, have you ever tried to rescue Tremas? To fulfil your promise to this poor waif? Of course not - you could have done it, but it suited you to have the Master out there, roaming the cosmos, destroying and scheming, because it made *you* look better. More heroic. There is a selfishness within you, Doctor, which one day will manifest itself.'

He turned his attention to Tegan. 'And this poor girl -

unable to return home, return to the mother who needs her in her time of distress. You could have brought her to Heathrow, on 28th February 1981, whenever you chose. But you chose not to - you need these people around you because they are flawed, Doctor.'

The Toymaker's face was restored by now but there was a wilder look in his eyes, a suggestion, the Doctor mused, that he was not in as much control as he would like.

'They are orphaned, cut off, neutered almost,' the Toymaker continued. 'They are emotionally fractured and dependent, yet angry and bitter. Surrounding yourself with such as these makes you feel better about yourself. Look at yourself, Doctor. You are in your fifth incarnation, yet you look barely older than them.'

The Toymaker was suddenly standing at the Doctor's side, resting his elbow on the floating jigsaw frame. 'With people such as these, as opposed to the Romanas, Zoes, Susans and Liz Shaws you are used to, you don't feel quite so insecure. Quite so alarmed by your outward youthful exterior which no one other than them would take seriously. You are pathetic, Doctor, and you have lost this round of the games. I can give each of these people what they want, Doctor.' The Toymaker had moved again - now he was back among the Doctor's companions.

'I can put Adric back on Terradon, where his experiences would enable hint to rise through the primitive class structure of his people.' He placed a hand on Nyssa's head. 'I can separate the Master and Tremas, Doctor. Nyssa can forge a new life on a planet of her choosing, her father once more at her side.' He placed an arm around Tegan's shoulders.

'Forget Heathrow, Doctor, I can put Tegan back on the Jovanka plot.' He addressed Tegan directly. 'I could even give you your father back, in full health. No one would ever know.' He smiled at the Doctor. 'All you have to do is stay with me, Doctor. For ever.'

With a click of his fingers, the Toymaker brought into existence the Magic Robot. With it came Commander Oakwood and Braune, Desorgher and Townsend. They took the scene in quickly and the Doctor was pleased to see they were in apparently good health.

The Toymaker raised a finger to quell the Doctor's next question. 'Oh yes,' he anticipated, 'they too shall return to their ridiculous little space station. Their minds are not worth exploiting. You, Doctor, you are my prize, my jackpot.'

The Doctor took the last jigsaw piece from his pocket and held it up in front of the puzzle, as if checking that it would fit the one remaining space. 'If I put this last bit in place, Toymaker, this realm is finished.'

'Of course, its time is over - this game, like so many before it, will have been played out.'

'My friends go home, you begin again and I become a new toy.'

The Doctor pointed at LeFevre and Stefan. 'Such as them?'

The Toymaker turned to his memory mirror. 'No, Doctor, but you will join your other friend.'

For the first time since his original visit to the toyshop, lifetimes ago, the Doctor saw a small string puppet with a wooden painted head and wooden limbs with ball and socket joints. It was wearing a burgundy Prydon Academy cloak and sitting on the lacquered Chinese table.

'Funny how you never asked after her before, Doctor.' The Toymaker turned to Tegan and the others. 'You see how he treats his companions? She has been here for centuries, and not once has the Doctor spared a single thought for her.' He turned back to the Doctor and waved his ringed finger in front of the mirror, turning it opaque once more. 'The game is over, Doctor. To free your friends, you have to place that last piece in the puzzle.'

The Doctor made to do so and, as one, his three companions screamed at him to stop.

'I know my father is dead,' cried Nyssa. 'He's lying!'

'And I don't want to go back into E-Space, Doctor. I like it here. With you!' Adric looked imploringly at the Doctor.

But was it a trick? Was the Toymaker manipulating them one final tune?

'Tegan?'

Tegan stared at him. 'I would like to see home, Doctor. But not at the cost of your life. From what little I've seen, the universe needs you more than Brisbane needs me right now.'

The Doctor grinned. 'Charade over, Toymaker. Checkmate, square number one hundred and final tiddlywink to me.' He deliberately dropped the jigsaw piece to the floor.

The Toymaker let out a great shriek of agony and dropped to his knees, his features once more blurring into the starscape.

Confused, both Gaylord LeFevre and Stefan took a step away from him. And Braune took the opportunity. He pushed past the robot and dived at LeFevre - which was a mistake. LeFevre, not being a man of combat, was easily overcome. The security man pushed him to the floor with his knee, gripped his head in both arms and swivelled it violently.

The crack that followed was louder than anyone would have imagined possible and Braune rolled away, ready to take on the one he should have attended to first. The few seconds it took to kill LeFevre had bought Stefan the time he needed.

'Braune!'

But Oakwood's warning was too late - Stefan's dagger flashed across Braune's throat and the big man fell to the white floor, dying as silently as he usually lived. Stefan held his dagger ready, but the robot had already grabbed Townsend and Oakwood. It looked at Desorgher, goading the young technician.

Desorgher looked at the two dead bodies - Braune's white uniform was turning pink as it soaked up his blood - and stepped back, surrendering.

'Good lad.' Oakwood said quietly. 'No sense in losing you as well.'

The Doctor's party, meanwhile, was engrossed with the Toymaker, who was staggering from side to side, ready to topple. He slumped further, then fell to the ground.

But part of him seemed to remain kneeling up. It was a body twisted and mutilated beyond recognition, hairless and white, gaunt to the point of being little more than a thin layer of skin on bones.

The eyes were gone, the nose and mouth little more than small holes.

'I did it,' a hollow voice said from within the feeble chest which wheezed painfully in and out, breathing properly for the first time in aeons. 'I regenerated twelve times at once -

disrupted him completely.'

'Rallon?' The Doctor was at his old friend's side in a second, hugging him, but terrified in case he broke.

'Did we get there, Thete? Did we find the Toymaker?' For a moment the Doctor was confused, then he realised that Rallon's mind was retreating, that the memories of his initial capture were resurfacing.

'Are you there, Thete? I can't see...' His voice faltered and he coughed, a terrible hacking sound. The Doctor felt sure he heard his friend's ribs breaking with the effort.

'Millennia? Millennia, my love... I'll miss you most of all.

Are you there?'

The Doctor was about to say no when Nyssa dropped down beside them both. She took Rallon's brittle hands gently. 'I'm here, my love,' she said. 'I'll always be with you.' Rallon sighed. 'I... love you...' And with a last breath, the Doctor's oldest friend expired.

'Thank you,' the Doctor said to Nyssa. 'That was... good of you.'

Nyssa stared at him, her face clouded with different emotions. He dared not hope which one would win.

Eventually she laid down Rallon's hands. 'I want a break, Doctor,' she said. 'We all do. No monsters, no danger, and just time to be ourselves.'

The Doctor nodded. 'It's been a bit of a roller coaster since my regeneration, hasn't it? I think I can see the sense in what you are saying.'

He looked at the Toymaker, still lying beside them. 'Is he dead,' Tegan asked.

'Oh no, but he's going to be very weak for a while.' The Doctor slipped the Toymaker's ring off his finger and waved it before the memory mirror.

Instead of their reflections, he and Nyssa saw Rallon and Millennia, healthy and smiling, walking hand in hand through a rose garden, verdant and pleasant. The Doctor momentarily closed his eyes and smiled.

'Happy days,' he said. 'And may they have many more.'

Then, with all his strength, he threw the ring at the mirror, shattering the glass into tiny fragments. Of the ring, there was no sign.

The whole realm began to shudder, accompanied by very loud thunder that caused everyone to raise their voices to be heard.

The Doctor took in the devastation behind them.

'Stefan,' he said darkly. 'Your lord is in need of help - maybe a new body to support him. Will you take up the challenge?' But Stefan snarled at him and backed away, waving his dagger around wildly so that no one could jump him. Then he turned and ran until he couldn't be seen any longer.

'That is my job,' said another, old, voice.

'The Observer!' Adric cried. 'He's going to bring the Toymaker back to life!'

The Observer turned and looked straight at the Doctor. And smiled.

For just one second he wore a different face. Olive-coloured skin, dark hair, smiling eyes.

'Rallon?' the Doctor yelled above the noise of thunder. And then he understood. 'Dymok. It wasn't created by the Toymaker, it wasn't his illusion, it was Rallon's! And when it was destroyed it wasn't used to power the Toymaker - it boosted Rallon, he bled all his own energy back into himself using the Toymaker as a medium. A focus! Of course, that gave him the last bit of energy he needed to do all this!'

'I know,' Tegan shouted back at him. 'The Observer told me his plan, his secret. That's why we disrupted the dreamscape

- to confuse the Toymaker, give the Observer time to do what he needed to do! And stop that chess game, of course. That was my addition to the plan.'

'Well, thanks,' said Adric. 'For once, I'm very grateful to you.'

The Doctor agreed. 'I'm sorry I doubted you, Tegan.

Sometimes you're worth your weight in gold!'

'Only sometimes?' she smiled. Then she pointed behind him. 'Doctor, look!'

The Observer seemed to melt into the Toymaker.

'Tegan, Nyssa, we have to get everyone away from here.

Adric, get the Commander and the others.'

'But the robot... '

'Deactivated, I imagine, by now.'

Sure enough, the robot was lying on its back, shattered beyond repair, its chest monitor imploded and oils and grease oozing from its joints. Townsend and Oakwood were prised free of its grip by Desorgher and as all three hurried over, he kicked the robot's head away from its body, just to make sure.

Oakwood stooped to check Braune's body but then rose, shaking his head.

'Um sorry, Commander,' the Doctor said, but Oakwood waved his apology away.

'We can grieve for him, and Dieter, later. What's the hurry now? The Toymaker's defeated, and Stefan has run away.'

'Oh no,' said the Doctor. 'Don't you understand? The Toymaker is far from defeated. Rallon knew he had to keep the Toymaker in check but over the unimaginable time he's been trapped with him, he could feel himself dying. That's why Rallon called me here - not to separate him from the Toymaker, but to release him so that another could take over.'

'But no one would willingly do that, surely?' asked Adric.

Tegan brightened. 'The Observer would.'

The Doctor nodded urgently. 'Of course - yes, and that's the point. Remember, Dymok was an illusion, Rallon's illusion.

Or, more literally, a powerful mental reality, a realm like this one.'

He was talking faster now, becoming breathless. 'Even the Toymaker fell for it - he believed the Dymova existed, worshipped him as a god. But it was all a trap, set up from within. Rallon certainly learnt a trick or two from the Toymaker, but at heart he was still a Time Lord. He told me the answer was staring me in the face and of course he was right.

I thought he meant the puzzle, but no, he was being literal.'

Nyssa gasped as understanding hit her. 'Observer! It's another word for...'

'Yes, well done, Nyssa, I'm glad you got it,' exclaimed the Doctor. 'Another word for watcher.'

Adric almost stepped back in surprise. 'You mean the Observer was ...?'

'A projection, a shayde - something Time Lords can do -

project a new or alternative version of themselves prior to regeneration. And that's what Rallon did - only the Toymaker didn't realise it. There's no real substance to a shayde but it contains an essence of what was and what will be.

The Observer was thirteen shaydes in one - enough substance to keep the Toymaker going for a while at least, but still on Rallon's terms if you

like.' The others, particularly the humans from *Little Boy II,* looked blank.

The Doctor sighed. 'Oh… it's as if the Toymaker himself has regenerated. He'll look the same, probably want the same things, but there'll be subtle differences like there always are after someone regenerates.'

'Let's just hope he's taken a turn for the better...' Nyssa started. Then the thunder stopped and the instant silence seemed almost as deafening. She was looking down and became aware of a huge shadow looming over her. She looked up, as did the others.

Towering above them, thirty or forty feet tall, was the Toymaker.

'New toys,' he boomed.

'I think Rallon's plan failed,' Tegan muttered.

'I think you're right,' said the Doctor.

'The only way out of this realm, Doctor, is to complete that puzzle, right?' Desorgher asked.

The Doctor was lost for words. 'Yes,' he said eventually.

'Yes, that's what I must do. Maybe now the Toymaker has Rallon's newest personality, I can find a way to manipulate him afterwards, escape somehow. But in the meantime, it's the only way to get you all home.' He looked at his companions.

'Tegan, you're the co-ordinator, remember? Take charge. Get Nyssa and Adric back into the TARDIS. She'll get you all home.'

'But Doctor, I...'

And he gripped her shoulders, fixing her with *that* stare.

'Brave heart, Tegan...' he started to say, but stopped as Desorgher scooped the jigsaw piece off the floor and jammed it into place.

The Doctor tried to reach out for him, as did Oakwood, but a maelstrom whipped up, pushing them away. The Toymaker's laughter could be heard as his realm began breaking up - itself resembling a jigsaw, the pieces dropping away one by one.

Of Desorgher, they could see little - he too appeared to have become part of the puzzle, his tortured face replacing the image of the Doctor as the pieces exploded outwards. The Doctor's vision blurred and he cried out in pain as the Toymaker and his realm disappeared in a cacophony of wind.

* * *

They were in the TARDIS, huddled on the floor, all six of them.

The Doctor was the first to get up, activating the scanner which showed *Little Boy II's* cargo bay.

Oakwood was at his side in an instant. 'This is your ship, is it?'

The Doctor nodded, as he helped Tegan up. Adric eased Townsend and then Nyssa off the floor.

'How did we end up here?' asked Tegan.

Nyssa touched one of the walls, stroking it. 'It came to us, didn't it, Doctor. The TARDIS saved us - it knew we needed to be safe.'

'Somewhere the Toymaker's influence couldn't get into.' The Doctor smiled. 'Possibly, Nyssa. Quite possibly.'

Townsend looked at the TARDIS scanner which showed just space, and *Little Boy II* in the top left-hand corner. 'Matt Desorgher?' she asked, already knowing the answer.

The Doctor shook his head. 'His bravery saved all of us.

Maybe one day I can retrieve him from the Toymaker's celestial toyshop.'

Tegan stared at him. After all they'd been through, after everything that final battle had demonstrated about the Toymaker's power and the Doctor's role in it, he still wanted to look on the bright side. She didn't know whether to hug him or thump him.

Oakwood looked at Townsend. 'We've got work to do, Sarah.

The crew probably think we're dead.'

'If they even remember who you are,' Adric added.

'Oh, I think their minds will have cleared, Adric. Thank you for sharing your thoughts, though.' The Doctor offered a hand to Oakwood, but the commander shook his head.

'I'm sorry, Doctor, I can't just shake and say forget it. Too much has happened.'

'I understand, Commander. May I at least offer my thanks and sorrows?'

'Yes, Doctor, thank you.'

Without waiting to be asked, Nyssa activated the TARDIS

doors and Oakwood marched out, followed by Townsend who turned at the last minute and mouthed 'goodbye' to them.

'Can we get away from here, please?' Nyssa asked.

The Doctor activated the TARDIS console in silence and within seconds they were back within the space-time vortex.

'It was the Toymaker's doing,' he said simply. 'He took all our innermost subconscious thoughts and gave them a voice we would never have given them ourselves.'

Tegan considered this. It was probably true - she certainly didn't hold it against him that she was here while her father possibly died elsewhere. What was the point?

Recriminations got you nowhere, Aunt Vanessa had always said. Maybe she was right. Forget Heathrow. Forget Air Australia. Time to write off your losses, Tegan Jovanka, and move on. If the TARDIS was to be home for a while, and these people her family, it was time to stop fighting them.

She looked at Adric. And for the first time noticed that he wasn't really such a little boy after all. Yes, he would no doubt still have his strops and his whinges, but beneath it all there was a young man developing who, one day, would no doubt strike out on his own and forge a future. He'd be all right.

And Nyssa. Whatever did or didn't happen between her and the Doctor regarding Tremas and the Master, it was dealt with. Nyssa clearly wasn't happy but she would adapt. She was strong like that. An inner strength. Tegan wished she could be more like that.

And the Doctor?

He stared at them - impossibly old eyes for ever locked inside a young body, reflecting the wisdom and experience of hundreds of battles, explorations and experiences.

'I think we need a good holiday,' Tegan said quietly.

'Somewhere peaceful and idyllic, without monsters, super-villains or cosmic disasters.'

'Heathrow, 1981?' he suggested, and Tegan surprised herself with the assuredness of her answer.

'No. Not now.' She looked at Adric and Nyssa. 'But while the Doctor sorts that out, I think we all need a rest.'

The Doctor stared at the scanner.

One by one, his companions silently left the console room, going to their bedrooms. Tegan had taken charge - assumed the role he always believed she would. Co-ordinator of his over-staffed TARDIS.

The scanner showed the space-time vortex, a myriad of possibilities.

He thought of Rallon and the possibilities denied him all those years ago. And his final sacrifice.

He himself hadn't lost as such, but he hadn't won either.

However, against a foe as powerful as the Guardian of Dreams, a tie was better than he had the right to hope for.

He glanced over to the inner door, through which the others had traipsed.

Time would heal them.

He wondered if it would heal him as easily.

Round Four

Annex

All Wrapped Up

As he walked on to the command bridge of *Little Boy II* Commander Kristan Oakwood again ran a finger around the inside of his high-collared uniform, aware that no matter how much he wished for it, his neckline was unlikely to get slimmer.

'Knew there was something I should have asked the Doctor to get the Toymaker to sort out,' he muttered. 'That's not funny,' said Sarah Townsend at her station, quietly enough for only him to hear.

Oakwood shrugged. 'Guess not.' He glanced at the telemetry station, wondering if he could remember the name of the young red-haired girl who had replaced Matt Desorgher.

She looked too young to have left college, let alone work on his bridge.

'Things change, Sarah. And I have reports to fill out.

Numero Uno, how do I explain that Dymok has gone?'

'Was never there, even,' suggested Niki Paladopous as he stood beside the commander.

Oakwood chewed on his lip. 'No, something was there, Niki.

Something that claimed three of our crew. I haven't had to file MIA forms since I was a junior officer in the last war. I did not expect to have to do so again - least of all out here.'

Sarah Townsend rested a hand on his shoulder and squeezed. 'We don't even have bodies to take back. What are we going to tell their families, Kris?'

Oakwood shook his head and sighed. 'I honestly don't know, Sarah. I think I've changed - hell, I think we've all changed because of this. I'm not sure if it's for the better. All I want to do is get a transport ship out here, get all of us off and blow this place apart. That's not healthy, is it?'

Paladopous shook his head. 'Maybe not, bossman, but it's understandable. The crew want to go home, too. The sooner the better, I think.'

Oakwood nodded and punched his communicator system on.

'Commander K. J. Oakwood reporting. Urgent message to Earth Central, priority code red. Dymok is gone. Station *Little Boy II* has served its purpose. Request immediate transferral for entire crew as soon as possible. Command crew will make full reports on return to Earth Administration.

Oakwood out.' He punched the send button. 'Well, that ought to get 'em stirred up a bit, at least.' He looked down at the communicator and smiled, tightly. ' ——Now I have become Death. The Destroyer of worlds.‖ Great, thanks, Doctor.'

'I'm sorry, bossman?'

'Nothing, Niki. Something the Doctor told me about this station as we flew to Dymok. Something that had never occurred to me before.' He looked to his two officers. 'We must learn to ask questions in future. Without questions, we become followers, sheep. Like those poor buggers on Dymok, slaves to their Master. As long as we ask questions, our masters will always have to give answers.' He laughed briefly.

'And they won't like that one bit.' He hit the communicator again, this time activating the station-wide systems. 'Attention all crew. We're going home - our tour of duty is over. In just under two weeks, a ship should be here to get us safely home.

Begin disembarkation procedures - I want this place gutted of all essentials and personal belongings by the time we leave. I know I'll have the chance to say this to each of you before we go our separate ways, but anyway, thank you. Everyone has done sterling work here under bizarre circumstances. I'm proud of you all. Oakwood out.' He thumbed the communicator off.

'OK, kids, time we started looking for new jobs.'

Victory Waltz

The Celestial Toymaker stood among the ruins of his celestial toyshop, the only part of his realm that for ever existed outside the universe. Linked to him, an extension of his will, it could not be destroyed unless he was. But his recent traumas had been reflected in his abode - toys were scattered everywhere, a number of them broken, some repairable, some not. Above, the shattered pyramidic ceiling let in pale light from somewhere, casting weird semi-shadows on the miniature bodies that littered the floor. Motes of dust hovered in the air, enjoying their new freedom to be moved by the draughts that had entered his previously untouched domain.

Rallon was gone. Without him, the Toymaker was temporarily injured but, due to Rallon's manipulations, it was not a long-term predicament. He told Stefan, who was bustling around pampering his lord, this. Anything to quieten him down.

'It is an irony, Stefan, is it not, that the three minds I wanted to explore offered very little, even the Doctor's. And Rallon surprised me - I had no idea he was such a good little schemer. How sad that the version of him I had grown accustomed to has gone - I should have enjoyed knowing him better. Perhaps, Stefan, that is my lesson. And the shayde of him that I have absorbed may promise some... interesting diversions

... while we rebuild the realm.'

'It is not gone for ever?'

The Toymaker laughed. 'Oh poor, deluded Stefan, of course not. The human... what was his name? Oh yes, Desorgher. His sacrifice was futile - a delaying tactic. I cannot be defeated. I am exactly what those ridiculous Dymova believed. A god. I am one of the Doctor's Great Old Ones. I am a guardian, Stefan, the Guardian of Dreams. I exist as a counterbalance to the other guardians. The Guardian of Light. The Guardian of Chaos. The Guardian of Justice. And the twin guardians of...

well, anyway... we observe the ephemerals and their pathetically short spans. We observe the eternals, who so clearly aren't ... or won't be ... with their humdrum existence, pretending to be more than they are. Time. Death. Pain. Light.

What pitiful creatures they really are.'

The Toymaker clicked his fingers and, in the palm of his hand, a new toy appeared. Dressed in white, it carried a space helmet and outer-space blaster gun. If Stefan could have bothered to give it a closer inspection, he might have recognised Desorgher's face etched into its lifeless plastic mouldings.

'Time to leave things to rebuild themselves,' the Toymaker sighed, placing his new toy on the Chinese lacquered table where the Millennia doll had once sat. If he noticed it was missing, he didn't comment. Or particularly care.

'Toyshop, reassemble,' he barked. 'Time to leave,' he added for Stefan's benefit.

'What now, Lord?' Stefan asked.

'While the realm repairs itself, loyal Stefan, we must seek new amusements.'

Stefan regarded him carefully. With Rallon within him, his lord had a sense of morality, of good and evil. But this new Toymaker was cold and harsh. His momentary condemnation of his fellow guardians and of the eternals and, especially, the ephemerals - of which group, after all, Stefan belonged - was uncharacteristic. Perhaps it was akin to Rallon and the Doctor and their Time Lords regenerating at will, adopting a new persona, a whole new outlook. The Toymaker looked the same but he wasn't. Not at this precise moment, anyway.

'I have examined the minds that Rallon... the Observer himself... oh, whatever... examined,' the Toymaker said. 'The planet Earth holds a fascination for the Doctor - the girl Tegan Jovanka was from there, from a time zone I am unfamiliar with as yet. She knew of places called amusement parks. They have an appealing ring, do you not agree?' He smiled at Stefan.

'Yes, Lord. Will you take us somewhere where we can rebuild your empire? Have command over the weak and feeble?'

The Toymaker searched through the Observer's memory and thus everything he had gleaned of Tegan's homeworld. Then he smiled down at Stefan. 'All right,' he said. 'I take you to Blackpool!'

Best Years of Our Lives

Drax fled Gallifrey and ended up on Earth where his preoccupation with all things technological eventually got him into trouble with the authorities. After a spell in Brixton Prison, London, he was made an offer by the Shadow, an agent of the Guardian of Chaos, to build a war computer called Mentalis. This he did. After all, money is money... Ushas also departed Gallifrey. Feeling that she was never forgiven for that one, itsy-bitsy tiny incident with the genetically augmented mouse and the President's cat, she opted out of Time Lord society and settled on the planet Miasamoria Goria. She still rules there today as their Rani, albeit a rather tenuous patronage. She has a degree of enmity for most of her old Academy chums, particularly the Doctor and...

Koschei who, after leaving Gallifrey to seek his fortune, came upon the DarkHeart, a malevolent force that was to imbue him with a new sense of direction. He was obsessed with universal domination and the Doctor became his ultimate nemesis. The two fought many times, across many times, places and dimensions, Koschei always trying to be the Doctor's Master...

Mortimus also left Gallifrey, but more from boredom than anything else. Never really malevolent, he became fascinated with the planet Earth and headed there, intending to have fun playing around with time. Giving the Normans atomic bazookas in the eleventh century, putting money in a bank and nipping forward a few thousand years to claim millions in compound interest, that sort of thing. Harmless really. He made the mistake of allying himself with Daleks, Ice Warriors and other undesirables. Particularly stupid was his liaison with Artemis the Chronovore, whom he made very unhappy. So she hijacked his TARDIS with him inside and he hasn't been heard of since...

Unlike Magnus, the only one of the Deca to leave Gallifrey and face a rather ignoble end. Obsessed with the Aliens and their war games, he fled his homeworld and joined them, offering his services to build TARDISes for them. He claimed that he deliberately built in defects so that the Alien War Lord would always need his services. The War Lord, however, was not as foolish as he seemed, although he was prone to bouts of extreme paranoia. And it was in one of these moods that he had Magnus executed when the final war game scheme fell apart and the Time Lords finally carried out their threat of erasure...

Vansell, being the toady that he was, abandoned his fake Academy life and worked as a 'highly respected' (barely tolerated) co-ordinator between the High Council and the Celestial Intervention Agency. Not a nice job, but then Vansell's not a nice Time Lord.

Jelpax, on the other hand, was probably Cardinal Borusa's proudest achievement - the only one of the Deca to stay the course, graduate and eventually join one of the major recorders, keeping an eye on matters arising in four or five minor galaxies. It was his team who foresaw a future where the Daleks had achieved domination over all other species, and who helped prepare the plan to stop, or at least significantly alter, the past in order to affect the Daleks' future. Jelpax maintained his interest in all things from the Dark Times and this led him to a later role as a co-ordinator for the APC Net. His loyalty to Borusa and Gallifrey never wavered, and he was one of the main proponents in the cardinal's campaign to become Lord President of the Council. Few could avoid noting the irony when what Borusa got up to later involved a number of items from the Dark Times that he only knew about because of his friendship with Jelpax. As a result, Jelpax was removed from his posting at the APC Net and wound up on monitoring duty - a glorified traffic controller, raising and lowering the transduction barriers now and again. Not the most fulfilling of tasks for someone who had once been dubbed one of the 'proud purveyors of the next wave of Time Lord history'. And Rallon and Millennia? Well, both their names are erased from Time Lord history. The Time Lords are really rather good at that sort of thing - positive propaganda being good for the soul and all that.

As for the Doctor? Well, he's still out there, righting wrongs, lighting the dark and saving the oppressed.

He's also probably the most content of them all...

Afterword

Well, there you have it, yet another Gary Russell book featuring something else from the past...

It wasn't meant to be like that at all - no, I was planning both a Colin Baker and a Paul McGann one first, but, hey, that's the way things go.

So, why the Toymaker? I just love the concepts of big, powerful hard-to-defeat villains, and Michael Gough's portrayal of the Toymaker on television back in the Sixties is so special I just wanted to dabble a bit. On top of that, there are numerous hints in the original story that the Doctor had met the Toymaker before, and I wanted to discover how, when and why.

During my researches for various parts of this book (thanks, as always, to various rec.arts.drwho punters, particularly Mark Phippen, for input) a couple of people asked whether it was going to disregard the out-of-print novelisation of *The Nightmare Fair,* based on an unmade television script by Graham Williams. This was due to be transmitted during Colin Baker's reign as the Doctor but, for a variety of reasons, it never happened. Not wanting to spoil the

'canon' (if there is such a thing), I thought I'd do my best to avoid doing so and on re-reading *The Nightmare Fair,* I discovered one marvellous extra ingredient for this story - the Toymaker of that book seems to me to be lacking a lot of the mystery, charm and elegance of the televised character from the Sixties, so I thought 'Hmmm, I wonder why..?'

This story also slightly fed my adoration of all things Gallifreyan by offering the opportunity to feature a lengthy cameo (isn't that a contradiction in terms?) of the First Doctor when still at school. A very large thanks to Marc Platt for letting me play with some of his concepts here. Thanks and applause are also due to John Peel and Alan Barnes, both of whom expertly manipulated the Toymaker in comic-strip form

- and both of whose efforts are noted (and probably highly abused) herein.

One of the best things to come out of the various *Doctor Who* novels over the years has been the explanation of the extra-powerful adversaries

the universe has faced, known colloquially as the Great Old Ones. I'm indebted, as we all are, to Andy Lane, Craig Hinton and David A. McIntee for establishing their credentials and, particularly, to Lance Parkin for penning the sadly-out-of-print-but-worth-finding-second-hand-if-you-can *Doctor Who: A History of the Universe* in which all the references are brought together for easy consumption/exploitation/ripping-off by myself. Doing this novel was a fairly exhausting task and please allow me to indulge myself in some very deserved thanks to those who helped me relax afterwards: the CONvergence gang in Minneapolis - particularly the delightful Windy Merrill and her mom, and the lovely Chris, fab Tim, wonderful TJ, crazy Cat and wholly insane Jeremy. Extra special thanks to my

'gang' for the weekend - Greg Bakun, Mike Lee, Kathy Sullivan, Robert Franks, Trey Korte, Shaun Lyon. Although not there in body, certainly there in spirit was Chad Jones. Oh, and a very big hug to 'Chelle and the Freak Girl for Saturday night's bop!

Finally, raise a toast to the wonderful, and eternally patient, Rachel Brown, new editor extraordinaire at BBC Books who has had a real baptism of fire with this range of novels. My inability to meet deadlines hasn't helped her task one jot.

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  - 3 The Beginning and the End
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  - 5 Mysterreality
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  - 7 Pretending to See the Future
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- Afterword