

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS



THE MISSHAPEN PLANET



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Somewhere and Somewhen

Somewhere at a certain location in space and time a stream of light burst through a darkened chamber. Through the light a small figure was flung to the ground. The small figure scrambled to right himself and watched with fear as a towering shape of smooth darkness stood close. The small figure's nervous voice stammered.

"Oh, it's you. You don't have to treat me this way, you know! I'm giving you what you want, free and without price! All I ask is to receive what I need and I shall hedge your way no longer."

The tower of smooth darkness answered with a cold voice of stone.

"You may be supplying what we want but you shall receive nothing until we have *who* we want. You shall bring him to us now."

The small figure leapt to stand and clasped his hands together to plead.

"No, I won't do it! I can't! You don't know what will happen if I do!"

The cold voice answered.

"It was believed that you would want him captured as much as we desire it."

"Yes, of course, but I trust my judgement, not yours! You might cause him more harm than is his due."

The cold voice returned a dark utterance.

"Obey our command or suffer a needless death."

The small figure scowled and reached into the folds of his dark clothing.

"Look, if it's a specimen you need then take what's in this black bag! It's got some of the best material in the universe! I can install it right now."

"Discard the bag. We will not yield in our decision."

The small figure sighed and dropped the black bag, which rolled out of sight.

"Are you so determined to bring him along? I mean, he always scares me whenever he shows up. He'll make you rue the day you made me make the call."

The tower of smooth darkness edged a step closer and its cold voice hissed with menace.

"Send the signal or face our blades."

The small figure's nervous voice quavered but gave a deflated consent. A button was pressed. A signal surged, a signal that was meant for only one listener in all of space and time...

The Silent Signal

There was no time out there, and yet time was everything and everywhere. There were all types of time: as slow and thick as molasses, or as fast and light as a hummingbird chasing a hurricane. The flights of time raced or crawled in all directions: forward, backward, sideways, even looped. In all its fixed courses time was fluid and complete, but there were some gaps in which to manoeuvre, to explore, to hide, or simply to wander aimlessly.

Between splits of seconds and snapshots of eternity, a shining box of blue riddled with echoes of history and seeped in foreshadows of possibility twisted across the unwritten tablets of time. Inside the blue box, there was a hidden dimension of bright lights and secret rooms where three beings resided, their impossible coexistence derived from three intrinsically distinct points of existence. Often the lives of these three travellers were chaotic and frightening, with some terrors bleeding together forming chilling nightmares; but they were always thrilling. When the new danger began, two of the beings were standing in the hidden interior's control chamber, a vast room of white, roundelled walls and clean light.

One being was older than the other – infinitely so. It was he who stood before the primary device controlling the box's flight. The old man, who called himself the Doctor, wore clothing which proclaimed his aged, elegant appearance and ancient heart: mirror-polished black shoes topped with grey spats; crème-hued tartan trousers etched with black, thin-lined checks; a silver waistcoat over a crisp, white shirt with a winged collar under-circled by a black silk cravat; and a sharp-edged, pristine, black frock coat. On the ring finger of the Doctor's right hand there was a large, royal-blue stone almost alive with midnight radiance. At the top of his head a full, back-curling mane of thick, white hair framed the old man's sharp-boned, chocolate-eyed, rigid-skinned face, a chiselled visage of unwavering character and confidence.

And yet, for all that boundless self-security, troubled clouds darkened the old man's face as he stared fixatedly at the white console device. His piercing eyes narrowed and his bony fingers clutched his mouth and chin. It was a stance the Doctor adopted during many different emotional states; but most particularly when he was either happily excited or strongly incensed. He was currently undecided on his resultant mood, but his interest was unquestionable.

The Doctor leaned forward and peered hard at what was attracting his full attention. Then he finally spoke.

“This is peculiar, quite peculiar.”

The Doctor stepped back from the TARDIS console and pointed his ringed finger towards a domed bulb protruding from one of the control panels. The bulb's flashing, mauve-coloured light threw the Doctor's dark shadow against the white, roundelled wall behind him. The Doctor's sharp eyes narrowed with interest and he half-turned to his left.

“Tell me what you make of that, my dear boy.”

The ‘dear boy’ – in fact a grown man who disliked being called a boy as much as the Doctor abhorred being addressed as ‘Doc’ – was Steven Taylor, a tall, broad-shouldered space pilot from Earth, and one of the old man’s two travelling companions currently aboard the TARDIS.

“What am I supposed to make of it? I see nothing wrong; it’s just a flashing light, Doctor.”

“Of course, it’s a flashing light, young man! But it’s also a very special sort of bulb, a detector, and one that’s detecting certain signals.”

“What kind of signals?”

“Why, signals of distress, of course!”

“Distress? But what’s so peculiar about a call for help?”

The Doctor raised his eyebrows and patted Steven’s shoulder.

“Nothing! The peculiarity is that the light is flashing! The device only activates under certain conditions. Now if I can only remember what they are...”

Steven watched as the Doctor bent over the hexagonal control device and began adjusting its instruments. He had been on board the TARDIS long enough to recognize the old man’s pattern of activity: he was curious, and when the Doctor was curious he always went exploring. *And that brings trouble, but then, when haven’t I been in trouble?*

Steven dropped his gaze as his mind drifted over his recent travels with the Doctor. When they had first met, the Doctor’s arrival had been like a mercy from a heaven Steven had never acknowledged, having endured two, solitary years on a harsh planet as a prisoner to the soulless Mechanoids. Although the Doctor’s blue box had seemed an unlikely spaceship, it had been inviting enough to chance a stowaway’s escape. Thankfully the Doctor and his friend Vicki had welcomed him aboard that amazing box and together the three travellers soon enjoyed many incredible, if at times rather dangerous, adventures together.

Steven smiled at the brighter memories of his past. After a lonely boyhood and youth growing up in a Hiveblock on an Earth still dragging itself out of the grave dug by the Daleks’ occupation, and then enduring an austere adulthood of military service in Earth’s space fleet, Steven had serendipitously met the Doctor and his travelling friends Vicki, Barbara, and Ian. After that encounter and then joining the Doctor in his further travels, for the first-time Steven had felt that life was worth the experience of being while enjoying inspiring adventures with his new friends, almost his new family. But then, almost in one moment, that special life darkened to a cloying nightmare of death.

Steven looked up to the dark screen of the scanner placed high upon the far wall of the console room. Upon the black surface, he saw his face held still in dark reflection and dimmed spirit. He remembered when his new life aboard the TARDIS had turned dark and horrific, after Vicki’s departure during a visit to ancient Greece’s Trojan War. Of that time his memories were a haze, only the wound from a Trojan warrior and the kind nursing of the Greek maiden Katarina surfaced with any clarity. But he would never forget the horrors that had happened afterwards, the horrors of Mavic Chen, the Daleks and the Time Destructor.

The nightmare had lasted a year; a full, interminable year consumed in the flight from the Daleks to thwart their ultimate invasion of the cosmos. It was a year of hiding and running, of self-discovery and spirit-numbing fear. Of course, not every moment during that period had involved the Daleks, there were ordinary moments visiting the Earth and other worlds and extraordinary adventures with alien time travelers from the far future and a cloned warrior race locked in an eternal war with a shape-shifter species.

But eventually their paths had returned them to the face the Daleks in a final, climactic battle that when complete had claimed the lives of so many friends: Katarina, lost in the cold crush of space; Bret Vyon, shot down by unflinching obedience; and Sara Kingdom, torn to dust across the surface of a wasted world. And yet, even after the final destruction of the Daleks on Kembel, Steven then learned a further truth about monsters and friends: even if you destroy the monster that kills

your friend there is always another monster to kill another friend, even someone as kind as Anne Chaplet –

Steven turned away from the scanner and stared at the back of the Doctor bent over the console. Did the old man know how sickened Steven had been to leave the frightened French girl to the mercy of history and its massacres? The loathing Steven had felt against the Doctor – and especially himself – for passively allowing events to take their predetermined course had almost driven him from the TARDIS forever. Only the arrival of a young English teenager from 1965 London, a girl who shared Anne’s last name, had halted Steven from leaving the Doctor, who had cheerfully believed that the girl, Dodo, was Anne’s descendant.

But was Dodo a continuation of Anne’s life, a sign from the cosmos that hope sprung eternal from time’s correct courses? And was there any hope in simple survival and existence? Steven considered some of the places the Doctor had taken him and Dodo to visit since she had joined them: New York, Refusis, the Toyroom, the O.K. Corral, all places of interest and yet tainted with a pestilential quality of death.

And yet, the memory that most impressed upon Steven’s mind was the very recent visit to a world seeped in the heartless savagery of warfare. The experiences Steven had witnessed there had marked his heart with a growing determination to find a place – any place, and sooner than later – where he could make a lasting difference with his own skills and strengths. But what monsters would be waiting for him there?

Thunderous sounds of whistling bombs and pounding hooves drowning the horrified wails of the dead and dying rumbled in Steven’s mind. There were so many memories to forget. As if to brush the unwanted recollections from his mind – like removing the stale stick of cobwebs – Steven ran a hand through his thick, waving dark hair and peered at the illuminated instrument.

“We’re in for another run-around, aren’t we, Doctor?”

The Doctor lifted his white-haired head and glanced at his friend, a bright twinkle in his dark eyes.

“Come now, Steven, if adventure lies on the edge of our horizons then why not reach out and catch it, hmmm?”

“Maybe because every time we chase after adventure it seems trouble’s about to catch us.”

“Oh, nonsense, nonsense! We are much too quick to catch!”

Steven shifted his shoulders to release a weary but accepting shrug as the Doctor returned his attention to tracking the distress signal.

* * * * *

While the Doctor and Steven were tracking the signal with the TARDIS’s equipment, a young, dark-mop-haired girl from 1965 London named Dorothea Chaplet – Dodo to her friends – was inside her room and seated upon the top sheet of her four-poster bed. She was finishing a sketch of herself. She livened the feminine shape on the canvas with bright red, brown and white strokes of coloured chalk, which were some of the art supplies she had found buried within the TARDIS’s wardrobe room.

Dodo made the last application of dark chalk to the girl’s drawn head, a sign of long, womanly hair. She then held the sketch before her and face and felt a swell of pride in her workmanship.

“Even though it’s a little late, welcome to the TARDIS, Dodo, have a fab time while you’re here,” Dodo whispered. During her time, on board the TARDIS she had visited many places and seen many worlds and eras, but the more she travelled in the TARDIS, the more she realized how important those visits and places, and the people she met there, were changing her as a person. To sketch herself was her way of remembering the who she was before coming on board the TARDIS and imagining who she might become thanks to having met the Doctor and Steven.

Dodo thought a moment of Steven and the Doctor, the two men she considered her closest friends. She turned to a small table at the side of her bed and browsed a pile of other sketches she had drawn before pulling out two canvases: one with Steven's image and the other with the Doctor's. She studied their pictures and thought of the happy, amazing times they were sharing together. Dodo thought of her own family back on Earth, but as an only child with a mother dead from a car accident, a father permanently brain-dead after a mental breakdown and great-aunts who all seemed to despise her, she had no real family to call her own.

Nevertheless, rather than feel lonely or bitter about her situation, Dodo felt fortunate, even blessed to have the life she was living, a life no one else could possibly enjoy, especially with the company she had with her now. In fact, Dodo considered Steven, a man from another time, and the Doctor, an alien without a home, to be more of a family than anything she might have left behind in 1965. *Yeah, Dodo thought to herself, my life might be fast and loony, but it's so much better than I could have ever hoped. I love it here.*

Dodo smiled and placed the sketches back upon the bedside table. Then she turned to the other side of her bed and her eyes settled upon to a wide, wooden bookcase set in the corner of her room. The case's dark frame was carved with the life-like shapes of leaves, birds, and foxes. Inside the case were scores of books of all colours, shapes, and thicknesses. One volume caught Dodo's attention. She stood from the bed, stepped over to the shelves and removed the book from the rest. She held the leather-wrapped book in her hands and studied the title: *The 100 Year Diary*. Dodo opened the diary's cover and saw the words inscribed upon the page: *My Grandfather is the Doctor. He calls me Susan.*

Dodo inhaled and shut the book. She held it close to her chest. The first time she had met the Doctor he had told Steven that she looked like his granddaughter, a girl she had never known. She had wanted to ask Steven about her but Steven had never met her either, apparently. But now there was a diary in her hands, a diary from that mysterious other girl who had once been part of the Doctor's life. Dodo replaced the diary upon the shelf. One day she would get to know Susan, but not quite yet. Right now, she had a neat idea for a new outfit she wanted to try, and she just had to show her friends what she had in mind.

* * * * *

A few minutes later Dodo skipped into the control chamber. She was wearing the outfit she had imagined and was very grateful to the TARDIS wardrobe room for, as if by magic, supplying all the desired articles of clothing she could ever wish to wear. The explosively-colourful ensemble consisted of a horizontal-striped light- and dark-blue long-sleeved shirt, a plaid light-grey and lavender knee-length skirt, and zig-zag-patterned lime-green stockings underscored with ruby-red slippers. The small, skinny teenager smiled a wide, bright grin and threw open her arms.

"What do you think, Steven? Do I look ready to break out of Kansas and follow the yellow brick road in style?"

Steven, who wore a simple, era-generic button-down salmon shirt tucked into black trousers and dark suede shoes, privately thought his friend held the oddest sense of style he had ever seen; but he chose not to be so brusque in his reply.

"Kansas doesn't have any yellow-bricked roads in my time, Dodo."

Dodo heaved a surprised giggle; once more she had forgotten that Steven came from her future and a place with little need for fantasy. *Oh, well, the Doctor can be my Wizard any day. Let's see what he thinks of the outfit.*

"Well, Doctor? What do you think of the clothes?"

The Doctor, still bent over the console, stiffened.

"This is terrible! Absolutely intolerable!"

Dodo clamped her hands on her hips.

"Oi! I think they're fab; but if that's how you feel..."

The Doctor glanced at his affronted companion.

“What? Oh, no, no, my dear child, your attire is merely mildly eccentric. But this -” the Doctor jabbed his ring-looped finger at the blinking instrument, which had piqued his curiosity - “this is unacceptable!”

“What’s making you so riled, Doctor?” Steven asked. He had rarely seen the old man so agitated. The Doctor pointed a stabbing glare towards him.

“The distress call, Steven! I now know why the signal made the instrument brighten - the call is not simply being broadcast across space, but through time as well!”

“Through time? Wait. Could it be...them?”

The Doctor quickly waved his hand in curt dismissal and then placed it gently over Steven’s shoulder. The Doctor knew that their recent experiences on Kembel were continuing their slicing trajectory through Steven’s memories.

“I think I can safely assure you we should be spared their horror on this occasion. Nevertheless, we must root out the source of this transmission and silence it at once!”

“But if this is a call for help,” Dodo interjected, “then why treat it like a threat?” She was very curious over her friends’ unspoken concern.

“Because, my dear child, once someone begins listening to the sounds of time there are often grave consequences. So now we must make sure whoever is seeking help has not done themselves more harm than good!”

The Doctor leaned across the console and swept his hand over the engine lever. The complex crystal lattice within the central column flashed and the casing rose and fell in time to the throb of the ship’s powerful engines as the TARDIS slipped into the currents of time.

Sometime -or whatever approximated time in the TARDIS - passed and the columnar time rotor in the centre of the console slowed to a halt. The Doctor, who had been checking the Ship’s Fault Locator with Steven and Dodo’s help, hurried over to the console and scanned its instruments.

“Wonderful! We’ve arrived. Well, it seems the TARDIS is not so uncontrollable after all, hmm?”

“Maybe,” Steven muttered, “if it has something to follow.”

“Oh, shush, my boy! I’m making consistent navigational progress. Now, let’s see where we are. Dodo, my child, please be so kind as to open the scanner.”

“Opening quick, Doctor,” Dodo said with a smile. She felt a small surge of anticipatory pride as she realized the Doctor trusted her to operate his machine, if only a small part. She pulled the switch and the scanner’s dark screen blinked and an image brightened to life. Dodo’s eyes widened with wonder. She had ever seen anything like it, not in all her journeys with the Doctor.

“Oh, Steven, just look at it! It’s...it’s beautiful!”

And it was, thought Steven, on both counts. He crossed his burly arms over his chest and studied the sight the scanner revealed: a massive emerald planet streaked with sparkling bands of silver, cyan and violet.

“It’s definitely one of the most colourful looking planets I’ve ever seen.”

The Doctor adjusted the scanner’s view and off in the inky, star-flecked darkness of space a bright blue star came into view. Steven peered at the stellar body.

“With a star like that I wonder what conditions are like on the planet?”

“Ah, an apt question.” the Doctor said, his voice softening as he gripped his chin with his thumb and forefinger. “For a star to appear so blue it must be quite young, and quite hot: 30,000 degrees Celsius, I should think.”

“Wow! I bet it’s boiling the planet then!” Dodo exclaimed.

“Not necessarily, my dear. The star is also a notably greater distance from this planet than the one giving light and life to your precious Earth. So, even with such a powerfully radiant star as this blue representative, that sheer distance should mean the planet’s surface temperature is roughly comparable to that of your home.”

The Doctor gripped his lapels and peered hard at the rotating iridescent planet.

“Still, I’m sure I’ve seen this planet before and I wonder if I’m neglecting something important about it.”

“Something important?” Steven echoed. “You mean something historical? When are we anyway?”

“Long before your own time, my boy, and yours as well, my Dodo.”

“How can you so sure?” the teenager inquired. “Why the past but the not present or the future?”

“Oh, by the stars, my sweet child. I have plotted their course for so long I remember where they’ve travelled and where they must yet go. Besides, I recognize the lights of your time too well: I once spent quite some time there.”

“Home, sweet home, then. I wonder if anyone’s caught a glimpse of this place yet.”

“Oh, I doubt it, very much so. The telescopes of your era were historically impressive but far too primitive to penetrate this deep into space. Earth’s keenest observers won’t discover this region of the cosmos until the earliest years of the twenty-first century, and even then, they won’t understand a fraction of the wonders opening before their eyes.”

A buzz from the console attracted the Doctor’s attention. He nodded.

“Ah, but the TARDIS appears to have seen our next destination: somewhere along the planet’s equatorial axis.”

“So, are we going to land?” Dodo asked.

The Doctor glanced over at Dodo and grinned.

“Of course, we are! To have come this far without satisfying our curiosity would be most distressing!”

The Doctor tugged the motivator lever and the TARDIS descended. Steven and Dodo had just turned away to leave the Doctor to his piloting when he moaned and slumped over the console. Steven hurried over to the old man’s aid.

“Are you ill? Dodo, pull a chair over to him!”

“N-no! No, thank you, Steven. I appreciate your concern but it’s quite unnecessary. I must have stumbled against the corner of the console, that’s all. But I assure you, all is now perfectly well. Now I must fetch my cloak.”

The Doctor straightened and smoothed his long, silver hair and the front of his black frock coat. He seemed to mumble softly to himself.

“I must keep the TARDIS close in case of crisis.”

Then the Doctor stepped over to the large oak chair placed along one wall in the room. Over the chair was draped his black felt cloak. This he lifted from the seat and threw around his shoulders. For a moment, Dodo thought even that exertion made the Doctor pale slightly. The Doctor blinked once and shook his head, as if to rouse himself. He then turned to his companions and once more seemed in complete control of his faculties.

“Well, we’ve landed safely and the environmental monitors confirm my theory: the planet is perfectly safe to explore. Now, come along!”

The Doctor pressed the door control and the large double interior doors swung open with a strong, buzzing drone. The trio crossed the Ship’s threshold and emerged into a vast, multi-levelled metal chamber of imposing size. Dodo shivered in the chilly, sterile air while Steven gazed about their foreboding surroundings. All the surfaces were a uniform black, even the support columns and girders, which jutted and extended from the walls and footpaths in obtuse and strange circular patterns. The Doctor leaned in close to one of the girders and studied its construction.

“This metal,” he mumbled to himself, “I’m sure I’ve seen the likes of it before. But where?”

Thin panel strips along the walls behind them generated a harsh, white light. The light rays poured over the floors, the overhead, and the walls of the enclosure. The only discrepancy in the oppressive black-white dichotomy was the dark-blue exterior of the TARDIS, which had landed on a

platform about midway between the highest and lowest levels of the chamber. The Doctor stepped forward to the edge of the platform and gazed out across the massive expanse. He then pointed and swung his cane in a wide arc.

"You see, my friends? Off in the distance this entire cavern tapers to fine points at both ends."

Dodo and Steven watched the Doctor's tracking cane to follow his observation. The Doctor continued his lecture.

"Now, you've both seen many alien crafts in your travels with me. Let's see what you make of this one, hmmm?"

Steven was the first to hazard a guess.

"Well, I've been a pilot long enough to recognize a basic aircraft shape when I see one, but this one has some odd construction choices. These girders for instance," – Steven gestured towards the thick, black support beams lining the wall section directly behind them – "they're much too thick and probably too heavy for conventional aerial transit."

"Then maybe this is a submarine," Dodo opined. "I've seen a few films and programmes on the War on the telly and in the cinema, and this really looks like the inside of one of those."

The Doctor rested his thumb upon his chin once more and pondered.

"Yes, yes, I'm inclined to agree with both of you. What we have here is a large ship designed for flight but at the same time is best suited for an underwater environment. Hmmm- perhaps birds and fish have learned to love one another."

"What do you mean, Doctor?" Steven asked.

"Oh, proverbs, my boy, proverbs! Don't they have such things in your century? Of course, it may be one of my own."

The Doctor continued his investigation along the metal walkway, lightly chuckling to himself. Dodo and Steven glanced to one another. Dodo beamed a wide smile and Steven grinned before they followed the old man.

* * * * *

Somewhere dark and cold a small monitor watched the progress of the Doctor, Dodo, and Steven through the enclosure. The personage observing the monitor pressed a button and spoke into an intercom.

"Our prey has arrived and is approaching. Activate the local signal."

The personage released the button and returned its view to the monitor. Soon, the enemy would be enslaved. Very soon...

* * * * *

Suddenly the Doctor inhaled sharply and stood still and alert. His eyes widened and his head tilted back, as if he were sniffing the air although the interior of the vessel carried no detectable scent. Then the old man spoke.

"I hear something. Do you hear it as well?"

"What are we supposed to be hearing?" asked Dodo, who marvelled at the Doctor's keen ears. He gave a prompt response.

"Some kind of scratching – no – tapping. Something is tapping the wall behind us!"

"You mean someone's trapped in the wall of the ship?" Steven's muscles had already tensed; he was ready for action.

"Maybe, Steven, but I rather prefer the notion that someone may be trapped *behind* the wall, perhaps..."

The Doctor paused, then hurried forward and began feeling along the dark material of the wall with the tips of his fingers. He looked back to his companions.

"Don't just stand there gazing, you two! There must be a locking mechanism here along this wall; help me to find it!"

Dodo and Steven looked at each other and then joined the Doctor's search. After a few moments, Dodo crouched close to the ground to feel for locking switches, just as Steven discovered what he thought the Doctor was hoping to find: a small rod with a circle affixed to one end, poking out of the wall.

He called out his find to the Doctor, who told him to try and operate the control. Steven studied the rod and guessed the attached circle held an important function. He gave it a quick turn and heard a sharp click. There was a deep throbbing drone and a panel in the wall pulled inwards slightly and then slowly slid upwards. Once the slab had risen high enough, the Doctor strode into the shadows beyond, his companions close behind. They found themselves within a small alcove void of any furniture, decoration, or light source. Dodo looked around and shrugged her shoulders.

"It looks like an empty room to me, Doctor. Are you sure you heard something?"

"Of course, I am, child. I can still hear it now -"

Something caught the Doctor's eye. He paused and looked down. In the centre of the room lying upon the floor was a small, thin hexagonal, dull grey metal object no larger than a saucepan. The Doctor stood near and knelt over the object to inspect it.

"Very curious. I believe this is the device which sent the distress signal the TARDIS detected. But why leave it in here?"

He picked up the machine and held it close before his face to study its every detail. Then the Doctor noticed a small grill affixed to the device's top surface, from which the sound of tapping emitted, a sound keyed to a frequency only his ears could detect...

Still clutching the object, The Doctor scrambled to his feet, wincing as his knees creaked.

"Out, both of you! It's a trap!"

Before any could move the door slid to the ground as fast and sharp as a guillotine. Darkness consumed the cell. Immediately afterwards a second panel along the opposite wall slid upwards to admit a blinding patch of light. Inside the light a figure approached, its outline blurred in the brilliance. The being stood within the doorway: it was a tall, thin humanoid encased entirely in a featureless black one-piece jumpsuit. The gloves covering its hands and feet were webbed. In the harsh levels of light, the Doctor gazed upon the creature and his mind scintillated with the knowledge that he had seen its kind before. His thoughts raced to place the memory. And then he saw the creature's face: it was a sharp-angled mask shaped like a dark skull stripped of all flesh. Two large concave carvings were its empty eyes. A pair of massive hooped horns was its ears. A prominent, glowing crystalline dome sprouted from the creature's forehead, which rooted the Doctor's memory and named the creature's race.

"The Voord!"

"Who?" Dodo asked. Her voice was half-fearful, half-amazed at the Voord's elegantly imposing appearance. While Steven took a slow step away from his friends, the Doctor answered Dodo's question.

"Voord, my child. They are an amphibious warrior race from the planet Marinus, or at least that's where I first encountered them some time ago. On that occasion, I thwarted them from conquering that planet and they've since taken to the stars to build a new base to settle and restore their forces. I should have recognized this craft as one of their stellar submersibles!"

"But what do they want with us now?"

"This is something we must know at once."

The Doctor stood firm and brandished his cane towards the Voord.

"You, sir! Are you a Voord Speaker? Or perhaps even, judging by the cranial appendage you brandish, an Overlord?"

The Voord in the doorway stood still and said nothing. The Doctor drew himself up with indignation. "I have asked you a question and I require an answer!"

The Voord entered the cell. Just then Steven pounced to tackle the alien but the being's lean body revealed stunning speed as it turned upon him and in that split instant the dome upon the Voord's head flared a deep, pulsating red and green hue. A harsh, humming vibration crackled the air. Steven clamped his hands to the sides of his head and howled in pain as his knees buckled and his body crashed to the ground like a boxer broken with a single, shattering blow. There he writhed and twisted under the merciless, relentless assault. Dodo lunged forward to push the Voord back but the Doctor's hand shot to her shoulder and held her firm.

"No, child! This won't be settled with brazen force."

The old man addressed the Voord with imperious dignity.

"Stop! There's no need for further violence. We shan't attack you again."

The Voord's head-crystal dulled in brightness and smoothed to a single, pearl colour. Steven relaxed and panted weakly. While he turned slowly to balance upon his elbow, Dodo glanced at the Doctor, who (keeping his eyes fixed upon their captor) nodded and released her shoulder. Dodo then bent down to help her friend to his feet. The young man swayed unsteadily and held his head in his hands. No sooner had Steven stood did the Voord speak.

"I am Pardok, Overlord of the Voord Wanderers. You are all summoned to attend our advisor."

"Advisor? Who is this person?"

"His name is unimportant; he has summoned you."

"A moment. You say your advisor has summoned us; is he the one who devised this audible snare?" Pardok said nothing and the Doctor smiled sharply.

"Your silence gives away far more than a complete confession, sir. Your advisor must be the one who designed this device to make sounds only my ears can hear and sent the signal that drew my attention to this world. I know I am right, and I demand to know the truth!"

Pardok turned towards the doorway, extended its arm, and drew it back quickly. Then three more Voord, identical in appearance in every detail save that attached to their foreheads were what appeared to be long antennae instead of crystals, passed through the doorway and swarmed around the travellers. Each Voord carried a long-bladed knife in each hand. The tips of the blades were poised near the Doctor, Steven, and Dodo's throats. With the threat of death obviously positioned, Pardok spoke again.

"Our advisor will see you now."

Contained, but not cowed, the Doctor held his head in high defiance.

"Very well, if you must perform such a macabre ceremony. Take us to your advisor."

Pardok lifted a hand and the others withdrew a pace. Their sharpened blades still gleamed in their hands. Pardok then pointed towards the doorway through which it had come – it was clear the company was to pass through the opening. Followed closely by Steven and Dodo, the Doctor threw back his head with imperious dignity and marched through the aperture, even as he cursed himself for falling into the Voord trap and not knowing at all who or what awaited him next...

The Untrustworthy Advisor

The Voord contingent kennelled the Doctor, Steven, and Dodo as they led them through a series of chilly-aired, close-quartered, dimly-lit metal corridors. As they marched, Steven occasionally rubbed his head. Dodo watched him with concern.

“Are you feeling any better?” she whispered.

“I think so,” Steven responded. His voice was a little slow and tired. “I wonder what that Voord used to attack me.”

“Telepathy, Steven,” the Doctor answered without taking his eyes from the Voord walking in front of him. “The Voord are capable of verbal speech but their natural method of communication is through the mind. To that end, they have also developed potent mental offensives, channelled through their forehead antennae. Hmmm – one could say they had a practical design in mind!”

Pardok halted and the captives stopped themselves from walking into its backside. The Doctor peered over the Voord’s shoulder; they had reached the end of the corridor and come to a sealed doorway. Facing this doorway, Pardok spoke.

“This is our advisor’s laboratory. Do not move until the passage opens completely.”

The alien touched a small control to the door panel – a small rod with an attached circle identical in shape to the prison door control Steven had discovered earlier – and the thick, black metal panel slowly slid upwards. Beyond the opening there was a bright light and the Doctor thought he heard a familiar sound: a soft, warbling hum. His mouth shaped a tight smile as he began to realize what and who was within the chamber on the other side. Once the door was fully open Pardok stood aside and beckoned the captive trio to cross the threshold. The Doctor glanced back to his friends and smiled.

“Come along, you two! Best not keep the advisor waiting.”

With Steven and Dodo close behind, the Doctor led the way through the portal. Upon entry in the space beyond he stood still and surveyed his surroundings. The Doctor gave himself a confirming nod. Steven and Dodo joined him a moment later. They looked about their surroundings in wonder and Dodo exclaimed:

“It’s the TARDIS!”

So very true, the Doctor mused as he gazed upon dimensionally transcendental chamber. *But not quite correct.*

“Are you so certain, my dear?” said the Doctor as pointed his cane towards the console unit in the centre of the room. Dodo followed his direction and noticed the device was raised upon a platform lifted several centimetres from ground level. Some of the instruments and controls upon the console were changed as well, with slight variances and alterations in location, shape, and colour.

Dodo blinked as she noticed the differences apparent upon the console. That realization opened her eyes to other subtle changes to the architecture of the room: the room was a light grey colour and the roundels in the walls shone with stark, silver light instead of the cool, white hue Dodo had expected; and where there should have been a wall of computer interfaces there was instead a large entryway into another room. Dodo shook her head and turned to Steven.

"Oi! It isn't the same!"

"Yes, you're right," said Steven. He took a step nearer the raised device and rubbed his chin. "It almost looks like...oh, no."

Steven closed his eyes and sighed, as if he were preparing himself for something imminent. Dodo knew she was missing something both her friends knew.

"What's going on, Doctor? If this isn't our TARDIS, then whose, is it?"

"Who indeed, young Dodo? That is the prime question to pose. And I know there's only one person to ask to discover the answer."

The Doctor paused as he heard a sound: a low, muffled grunt of annoyance, like the petulant moan of frustrated child. The Doctor smiled at his companions and put a silencing finger to his lips. Then he approached the console and circled around the platform to its far side. Kneeling at the edge of the platform with his head and hands buried deep within an opened section of the console's base was a small, stocky-built man wearing a dark skull cap and a black, hooded habit with a thin, white rope tied at the waist. The habited man was mumbling something about "the cruelty of it all – no justice in the cosmos, none!"

The Doctor stood behind the crouched man, extended his cane, and prodded him in the rear. The habited man yelped, jumped, and banged his head on the console base's inner housing. Upon impact, the skull-cap shook free from the man's head and fell to the ground. Dodo quickly stooped and picked up the cap. Then, rubbing his crown, the man scrambled backwards and to his feet to reveal his head of dark hair and a heavy, pugnacious face. At the sight of the Doctor the man's small, close-set, sea-green eyes beamed and his square head almost seemed to stretch sideways with a broad, cheerful smile.

"Doctor? Doctor! And my dear friend Steven Taylor! Oh, my goodness, how blessed it is to see familiar and friendly faces here in this uncharitable place!"

The Doctor set his face into a mask of annoyed resignation.

"Familiar I may be, sir, but friendly I refuse to admit."

Dodo was surprised at the Doctor's icy reception of the stranger, but when she turned to Steven she caught sight of the similarly unwelcome expression on his face, as if he were witnessing the arrival of an unexpected and unwanted relative at a family reunion. Whatever the source of her friends' discontent, there was a history here only she failed to grasp and she needed to know it.

"Ok, put me in the loop," she spoke to everyone. "Who's the priest?"

"Monk, my dear," the Doctor corrected. "And that is exactly who he is. That is how you like to call yourself these days, I believe?"

The Monk chuckled.

"I'm glad you take the trouble to remember me so well."

"I am never glad to think of you at all, except when I'm forced to tolerate you."

The Monk's mouth fell into a petulant frown.

"Oh, Doctor, can't we forget any past misunderstandings?"

"Misunderstandings?!" Steven stepped forward, his face and eyes hard as stone. "Whenever we run into you, you bring us nothing but trouble! And the last time we met, you were perfectly happy to sell us out to Mavic Chen!"

"Oh, oh, my friend" – the Monk raised placating hands – "it was all just a joke, a simple practical joke all done in good fun!"

"If that was joke it was entirely lacking in humour," the Doctor spat.

"Well...it was all such a long time ago. Best to put it all behind us. I have, I can assure you – life is far too important to waste on such petty trifles. Besides, despite those villains and their plans – which threatened my life just as much as yours, I might add – I did you no lasting harm. You're here now, aren't you?"

"Maybe, but it wasn't that long ago for us. I certainly haven't forgotten!" Steven spat.

"No? Well, it certainly feels like an eternity for me," the Monk mumbled, but then he glanced at Dodo and brightened. "Which reminds me, where are my manners?" He turned to her and warmly held one of her hands while his other plucked his cap from her fingers and replaced it upon his head.

"Greetings, my daughter. It's a pleasure. I assume you're the Doctor's most recent addition to his TARDIS?"

Dodo smiled at the Monk's cordial introduction. He seemed such a kindly person; she failed to grasp why the Doctor and Steven were so unhappy to see him.

"Yes, I am. I'm Dorothea, Dorothea Chaplet. But my friends call me Dodo."

"Oh, now that's such a rare name! I hope such bright humour never becomes extinct among humans. And your surname, French, yes? I say, they have some very cosy abbeys in that country. But I hope I may call you Dodo?"

"Sure, why not? Nice to meet you, too. Are you really a monk?"

"I find the lifestyle agreeable and the attire comfortable, so, yes, I suppose that's the best way to address me. I am a committed monk!"

"Committed?" the Doctor scoffed. "Your only commitment is to meddling in the matters of time! Moreover, you rather enjoy yourself."

The Monk scowled and shook his head.

"Now, Doctor, just because my TARDIS is a more advanced model -"

"Wait a sec," Dodo exclaimed, "how is it you have a TARDIS?"

"Unfortunately, I have an answer to that question," the Doctor said. His mouth grimaced as he admitted the fact. "The Monk and I share the same home planet, although there our association ends."

The Monk blinked and Dodo thought she saw genuine sadness in his eyes.

"I thought we might have once been sociable, Doctor."

"Thankfully I've never thought the same. But now, more to the point: What are you doing here and how are you the advisor to the Voord? As I recall your Ship was lacking a directional control unit after our previous encounter."

"Yes, and a sneaky bit of thievery that was! I mean, really, such uncharitable vandalism was uncalled for! If you wanted to go somewhere so badly, all you had to do was ask me for the circuit. You've no idea how long I slaved to design a replacement!"

"Not long enough," Steven sneered. "Now answer the Doctor's question!"

"All right, all right! Such a prickly pear you are, young man. You ought to take a relaxing holiday and seek some solace to your soul. But the answer is simple: after the Doctor stole my directional unit I was forced to replicate the circuit. There I was, stuck on a desolate planet of ice – quite capable of leaving, mind you, but far too weary to chance my poor, injured TARDIS wandering into even more inhospitable territories – before I managed to connect my coordinate vector controls into the navigational command system to act as a partly-worthy substitute; but I found that solution proved less reliable than I had hoped."

"Why wasn't it helpful?" Dodo asked with fixed attention. She found the Monk's storytelling very engaging.

The Monk lay his hand upon Dodo's shoulder and drew her close. Then he answered with a forlorn tone:

"Because, my daughter, I soon found that my poor machine could now only travel to places she had visited before. All other wonders of the cosmos were barred before me!"

The Monk pressed his hands together as if in fervent prayer, while Steven crossed his arms in annoyance and the Doctor gripped his lapels and set his face into an expression of unmoved steel. The Monk bemoaned:

“Oh, considerate Dodo, you can’t imagine how it felt to be one such as I: a journeyman whose travels were confined solely to the lands he had inhabited in prior days. I considered myself much like your world’s legend of *The Flying Dutchman*, forever unable to find a new land to call home!”

“That’s not how the story of *The Flying Dutchman* goes,” Steven said, “and now you’re just rambling.”

“Spoken like a pilot who only flies metal rockets,” the Monk muttered. “You’ve not a romantic bone in your body, young man! But my tragedy, I hope, will soon have a comedic conclusion, thanks in large part to my inspired preparation!”

“What kind of preparation?” Dodo wondered, laying a compassionate hand upon the Monk’s arm, which the Monk patted with grateful affection.

“Well, I resolved finally to repair the damage done to my TARDIS,” (the Monk threw a sharp, momentary glare towards the Doctor) “but I found myself a bit short on proper supplies. Then, I remembered! I had once deposited secrets caches of my technology on some of the various worlds I had visited in my earlier travels just in case I should return to those planets for further improvements to their history -”

“You mean more of your time meddling!” the Doctor interrupted. His voice was hot with sharp criticism.

“Oh, Doctor, we’ve been over this many times,” the Monk replied. “You call it meddling, I call it improving; and I like to do it when and where I can! But no matter how we judge my activities, I knew I needed to locate the right cache that contained sufficient raw materials for long-term repairs to my TARDIS. And so, I thought long and hard about which cache was which and I knew I could rule out planets like Earth, Xeros and Avalon before I remembered my days as a scientific consultant to Yartek -”

“Yartek? Who’s that?” Dodo interrupted. The Doctor testily replied:

“Oh, just the Voord leader I opposed on Marinus, child. I also imagine our current captor, Pardok, is his equally-intractable sibling.”

The Doctor stood nose-to-nose with the Monk.

“So, it seems I must congratulate you once again on another successful repair to your ship, although I cannot apologize for causing the damage. Nor do I imagine you shall ask forgiveness for the continuing fact that you’ve shared secret information with more than just the peoples of Earth. Hmmm- yes, it’s clear you’ve kept not only primitive but dangerous company. Furthermore, you somehow considered the Voord as good candidates to help you restore your TARDIS’s navigation, hmmm?”

The Monk raised a knowing finger and wiggled it before the Doctor’s nose.

“Oh, hardly, Doctor. The Voord are mariners only in this dimension.”

Then the Monk turned to the doorway where Pardok still stood.

“Oh, my dear fellow! You’re still standing there. I hope you’ve come to deliver something special?”

“We are deploying the device upon the surface,” Pardok droned. “We must descend immediately.”

“We have to go down there? Oh, all right. Well, Doctor, since we must relocate I suggest we use the lift just down the corridor you came through. We can ride together! You will come, won’t you?”

“If I am to be your prisoner I must remind you my friends are of no concern to you and must be treated fairly!”

“Oh-ho-ho, Doctor, please, be easy! Your friends are my friends – although whether young Steven accepts that I’m not so sure – but I’ll never allow any harm come to him or the delightful Dodo.”

“And yet you ally yourself with such aggressors as the Voord.”

“Ah, yes, well, shall we discuss the particulars during our transit? It’ll put your mind at ease.”

The Doctor set his face and assumed an air of impregnable dignity as he marched forward through the Voord phalanx and out of the Monk’s Console Room. The Monk himself glanced at Steven and Dodo and threw them a quick farewell wave before he turned to follow his fellow time-traveller. As soon as the Monk exited the Voord guard marched from the Console Room and the double-doorway slid shut. Left alone, Steven hurried to the sealed doorway and tugged at its edges. After several unsuccessful attempts to pry open the doors, Steven exhaled in frustration before he turned to Dodo.

“We’ve got to find a way out of this room. Help me find the door control on the console.”

The two friends scoured the white machine surfaces for several minutes in search of the mechanism, but to no success. Dodo pushed back from the console and clamped her hands upon her hips.

“Ah, it’s no good, Steven! I don’t think I’d recognize the switch even in our TARDIS.”

“Blast it, you’re right. This TARDIS model has more differences to the Doctor’s machine than I expected. We’ll never find it this way.”

“Well, we can’t just stand here.”

“Yes, especially with the Doctor at the mercy of the Voord, not to mention the Monk.”

Dodo frowned.

“The Voord I understand, but I don’t get why you think the Monk’s a problem. He seems so nice and sweet, like he really wants to be friends.”

Steven shook his head as he stood from examining the console.

“Trust me, Dodo, you can’t trust the Monk. I mean, yes, he seems nice and fatherly, but the Doctor and I have met him twice before-”

“Where, and when?”

“Does it really matter? All right, it was on Earth in 1066. The first time we met the Monk he was trying to change the outcome of the Battle of Hastings using future technology and the Doctor stopped him by shrinking the inside of the Monk’s TARDIS so he couldn’t get back inside; but the Monk somehow fixed his ship and eventually came looking for us to have revenge. And that’s just what he did when he caught up with us on the planet Tigus a while later.”

“What did he do?” asked Dodo, expecting something terrible to explain Steven’s disgust with the other time traveller.

“He locked us out of the TARDIS.”

Dodo stared at Steven for a moment. Then she released a loud round of laughter.

“And just what’s so funny?” Steven demanded.

“Oh-oh-I-I’m-sorry! Ha-ha-ha-ha! I just was thinking he tried to kill you or something!”

“Well, he might as well have! Tigus is a volcanic planet, you know! There could have been an eruption at any moment that could have killed me, the Doctor and our friend Sara.”

Still Dodo seemed unworried by Steven’s account.

“Oh, really, Steven! The Doctor’s much too clever for a little lava, and besides, it only sounds like the Monk wanted a sort of payback, not revenge. I mean, haven’t you ever been pranked and wanted to get back at the person?”

“It was more than a little prank, you know! And the Monk is more relentless than you think. Right after we escaped Tigus he followed us to ancient Egypt to settle his score again and the Doctor had to wrap him up like a mummy...”

Steven halted his account and watched Dodo. She was squeezing her mouth closed and desperately trying to squelch another bellow of laughter. And then, without quite understanding why, Steven started laughing, too.

A few moments later after both had enjoyed a good laugh Steven wiped his eyes and said:

"Well, I'll admit the Monk doesn't seem the most dangerous of problems, but I still say he is trouble and if he's working with the Voord then the Doctor's got real problems."

"If you ask me I think they're both in danger – the Monk seemed just as worried about the Voord as we are. So, no matter what we think about him and his style, we've got to get out of here and help the Doctor fast."

"You're right, but I just can't figure out where we go from here."

Steven sat upon the console platform and rubbed his temples. Then he lifted his head. A light of possibility shone in his eye.

"Unless..."

"Unless what?"

Steven stood and gestured that Dodo should follow him. They crossed to the far side of the room. Where the large opening led into another, massive room filled with many trinkets, treasures, and trophies pilfered from thousands of far-flung planets native to countless eras and areas of creation. Steven turned to Dodo to explain his motivation.

"The last time I was inside here was on Earth in 1066 and my friend Vicki and I found this room. I guess it's the Monk's memorabilia collection. But I was sure I glimpsed a matter transmitter somewhere around this mess."

"Matter transmitter? You mean something like what *Professor X* used?"

Steven threw the teenager a puzzled look, but decided not to waste time questioning her references.

"If you say so. But there's a lot more stuff in here now than there was then, *and* it looks like the Monk's jumbled it all together. We've got a long search ahead of us..."

* * * * *

The ride in the lift had lasted a few minutes, during which time the Monk had made several attempts to engage the Doctor in free conversation; but whether it was the looming presence of the Voord guards in close quarters or the Doctor's sudden aversion to loquacity, the flow of words had quickly dried to an uneasy silence. To the Monk's relief the awkward pause had barely started to weigh heavy when the lift's downward drop slowed to a halt and the dark metal door slid open. Through the breach a plume of humid air poured into the compartment. There was a scent of warm cinnamon in the wind. The Monk sniffed the air and smiled.

"My goodness, this smell takes me back. Almost feels like home. Do you remember, Doctor?"

"I have very few good memories of my beginnings anymore, but why should I share them with you as if this were an afternoon stroll? I'm your prisoner, after all!"

Even as he spoke, the Voord guards had already begun nudging the Doctor forward. Out of the corner of his eye he noticed one guard place a directing hand upon the Monk's shoulder as well. The Doctor filed the intriguing observation for near-future reference as the time-wanderers exited the lift and emerged at the edge of a meter-wide metal platform, which jutted out several inches from the outer hull of the Voord craft and then downward at a forty-five-degree angle into the scorched earth of the planet.

The Doctor stepped to edge of the platform, poked his cane into the smoking, trampled mud and stared out upon the new world before him. It was a quiet, empty world devoid of active life; nevertheless to his eyes he was a witness to an ever-widening expanse of beauty and untamed wonder: Rose-ridged mist levitated over deep-cut rills overflowing with sapphire liquid winding shining wrinkles through a dew-glistened purple soil plain from whose fertility sprouted groves of

vermillion-leaved trees running as far as the icy-capped golden mountain horizon nestled beneath the chartreuse bubble of a moist sky fogged with silver clouds. The Doctor breathed deep the new air hovering about him; it was night-cooled and seeded with the sweet perfume of budding flowers. The scent was familiar; the sights were a memory...

Before the Doctor could place the recollection, Overlord Pardok lifted its knife and stood close behind him and the Monk.

"Remain silent and exit the vessel. Monk, we have deployed the device ten marinacs ahead of our current position. You will both move towards the location now."

"That means it's only about a few hundred meters north of us, Doctor," the Monk whispered, hoping to be act as a useful translator. "I know how much you like to think of things in human terms."

"Thank you, but I am aware of some extra-terrestrial units of measurement," the old man retorted. He and the Monk then walked down the platform and onto the surface.

After a few steps the Doctor glanced over his shoulder to see how close his Voord captors were in step behind him. He also caught a glimpse for the first time of the outer shape of their ship: it was an advanced, interstellar variation of the airboats the Voord had employed when he had thwarted their invasion of the planet Marinus. The Doctor's memory drifted back to that period and of his then-companions Barbara, Ian, and Susan. The Doctor remembered Susan with longing. Yes, he had left her on Earth for good reasons, but even the best of reasons could not ease the loss of his granddaughter, even now, so long since leaving her. And with Ian and Barbara also long since departed from his travels, as well as Vicki and all the others, the Doctor considered that the time might soon come when he would truly travel alone. And what would happen then? Would he finally lose himself?

A shaft of chilly air rustled through the Doctor's hair; it dragged his memory back to his present concern. The Doctor realized that although his tussle with the Voord at Marinus had been relatively recent for him, the amount of engineering advancement needed to yield the Voord's current level metallurgical prowess equalled at the least several millennia of history, a history of unrepentant aggression.

"Daleks," the Doctor muttered.

"Daleks?! Where?" exclaimed the Monk with a yelp of fear. He spun around and swung his head from side to side like a crash-destined deer. The Doctor chuckled darkly at the display.

"Have no fear, my childish friend; the Daleks are not here. I can sense that much. No, what I mean is they're much like the Daleks are the Voord. Even when they're expelled from their home worlds, out amongst other races or simply wandering the cosmos, the way of the Voord is the custom of violence and hostility."

The Doctor shot a blazing look of concept at the Monk.

"And you are aiding them!"

"Doctor, you misunderstand! I'm as much a prisoner as you are!"

As if noticing his captive march for the first time, the Monk stepped closer to the Doctor and began to whisper.

"You know how I said I decided to visit Marinus to find the spare parts I needed to repair my directional unit?"

"Yes, and I'm frankly surprised you found these rascallions on Marinus at all, considering how the Conscience so effectively expelled them from that planet.

"Well, I never actually made it to Marinus, Doctor. Thanks to your horrid vandalism I could only coax a clear directional vector from my TARDIS by homing onto similar technology, like the machinery I'd...well...bequeathed my associates."

"Ah, so I thought. You not only meddle in established history but in the technological development of other races! And you also mentioned eliminating other worlds from your technological search – how many others?"

"Well, since you're so insistent, there were fourteen, a number I chose from the legends of the Yssgaroth. I thought it would be easy to remember such a number since it's only one more than-

"Enough of your fanciful prattling! I will know the exact circumstances of your being here, Monk!"

"Oh, really, please let me tell my story! I like telling stories."

The Monk pouted for a moment before continuing.

"Anyway, I managed to make a technological signal connection, but lo and behold, I found myself not on Marinus but within that imposing spaceship! The Voord had taken to wandering the stars and carried everything they valued with them, including my spare parts! I'd hoped a simple transaction of new materials from my trophies would complete my intent, but my former associates weren't exactly gracious company. Still, after some careful negotiations, I managed to inform them of my great need and they -"

"I think I can carry the narrative from here. You pleaded with the Voord to release the spare parts you desired but they refused. However, I can clearly imagine a cunning race would never dispense with such a desperate and willing asset so quickly, and therefore *they* bargained with *you*, didn't they?"

The Monk bowed a sheepish head, looking for a moment like a true penitent confessing his sins.

"To regain my complete freedom in time and space, I'm forced to perform a very special service."

The Doctor came forward and brought his hawkish face profile to the Monk's.

"And just what are the terms of this service? What are you really doing here?"

The Monk furrowed his brow and pulled back. Then he glanced back at the advancing Voord guard. The Monk turned back to the Doctor. He half-shrugged and raised a pointed finger.

"You'll find your answer just over that ridge, Doctor."

The Doctor walked forward a few paces to an edge of soil, which sloped downwards several meters into a deep depression – perhaps the remains of a dried riverbed. At the bottom of the bed was a large machine approximately the shape and colour of a ball barring studded with many panels, knobs, and pipes, and possessing a volume of about fifteen cubic meters. Lights flashed upon the sphere's surface and a slow, thicker illumination shifted through and upon its hull. A lumbering, heavy droning vibrated in time to the machine's inner light. Upon witnessing the device, the Doctor's eyes widened in imperious horror. He rounded upon the Monk.

"Is that...is that -"

The old man spun away and with surprising agility leapt from the ridge and sprang down the river side into the small ravine. The Monk called after him. The Doctor raced up to the machine and stopped mere inches from its hull. With careful movements, as if not to disturb a sleeping predator, the Doctor reached out his hands and brushed his fingertips along the machine's metal plating. The harmony of the instruments was unmistakable; it was exactly what he feared, and his fears were the worst he could have imagined.

The Doctor nudged back from the sphere and turned to face the Monk, who was still standing upon the ridge and now flanked close by the half-dozen Voord soldiers. The Doctor shook with rage and pointed his cane to the Monk like a furious wizard cursing a failed novice.

"You feckless rule! You keddling mretin! This is a Shaper! This is from our home!"

"Doctor, please, this wasn't my idea!" The Monk raised his hands. He seemed truly pleading.

"Not to let it enter possession of the Voord, perhaps, but you took it from our world nonetheless, and neglected it to these barbarians!"

The Doctor seethed in anger and for a moment he was grateful Dodo and Steven were locked away in the Monk's TARDIS; for he had no wish to show them the depths of his fury. But furious he was, and for good reason. The Shaper devices were an ancient and dangerous tool from a

bygone era of his people, used during a time when his ancestors sought not only to colonize the cosmos but reform select worlds into more suitable environments for their presence. In the legends of home there were many stories of countless worlds whose time progression had been twisted and tampered and accelerated towards a new structural existence.

Not all the worlds had been without inhabitants. So many native creatures were lost to the cold and merciless faux-celestial hands. Eventually reforms had been enacted and the Shapers' use outlawed. Surviving models were relegated to museums, simulations, and nonexistence. None had been allowed for individual use, but what were such rules to a careless interloper such as the Monk, or worse, to bloodthirsty warriors such as the Voord? The Doctor shook his head in cold dismay and addressed the Monk once more, but with no more hints of time-travelled cordiality.

"Explain yourself, Monk. I will know this scheme of yours."

It was Pardok who answered.

"It is simple, Doctor. In our advisor's absence, we long ago learned of the multitude of powerful secrets locked within the tools he left behind. After the Arbitans expelled us from Marinus we sought to unlock those secrets and reclaim our worlds, but we lacked the knowledge necessary to achieve this. Our fortunes improved when the Monk returned to us in need of our courtesy. And imagine our delight when we discovered that you, the architect of our wandering, and the Monk are of the same species."

The Monk interjected.

"I've rarely met a people so gripped in hatred of one person, Doctor. They really could rival the Daleks in their obsession against you."

The Doctor tucked his thumbs into his lapels and threw back his head in defiance.

"And so, you saw fit to aid the Voord's vendetta by luring me here. Am I here to believe there truly is honour among thieves, hmm?"

The Monk looked about at the blank, black-masked faces surrounding him. He suddenly felt like a lone man nestled between unfeeling gargoyles perched upon the edge of creation and ready to swoop down and consume it. Was the Doctor perhaps right for once? Had he been unwise in aiding these creatures?

"Well...it only seemed fair, Doctor. I've experienced your heavy-handed morality first-hand, you know. You've always been so inflexible. I thought you needed a good wrist-slap, if only to humble you a bit."

"Of course, first revenge on Tigus and then in Egypt with Mavic Chen and the Daleks and now forced repentance with the Voord. How pious of you!"

"Doctor, you're not blameless, you know! You took away the Voord's world, made them homeless and lost. No one should endure such shame, and so I promised I'd make sure you helped them get their planet back."

"By helping them re-conquer and subjugate Marinus with this infernal machine? Never!"

"No, Doctor, no! You've got our plan all wrong! The Voord are tired of wandering, weary of navigating the stars in endless solitude. They merely wish to find an empty world absent of life, have us operate the Shaper, and make their own version of Marinus. That way everybody's happy!"

The Doctor narrowed his eyes in suspicion: the 'plan' seemed too simple, too benign. He needed more information.

"Acceleration of a planet's local time curve is one activity, tailoring that world to another's specifications is a rather more complex procedure, and infinitely more dangerous: Exposure to the compressed matter and time would cause any lifeform to conform to the newly forming energy field. What if the Voord turned into Marinusians? Hmm?"

"I've thought of that already, so I've altered this Shaper to operate with an organic platform."

"An organic platform? What kind of gobbledegook is that?"

"Oh, it's so simple. Here!"

The Monk pulled a small black box from his tunic and pressed a button. The Shaper bleeped and a thin seam appeared upon its metal surface. Bright, white light lanced through the exterior crack. Two metal segments then pulled inwards and then apart to reveal an upright, hollow cylinder at the centre of the machine. Cables of sizes, textures, thickness, and colours connected the cylinder to the interior of the Shaper. The Monk gesticulated towards the machine's interior.

"I can now control the time crunch to form a specific planetary meme through the insertion of a sample of that world's native organic material: specifically, a living host organism. Pardok has kindly volunteered to form the Marinus template."

The Doctor directed his glare to the masked leader. A sardonic smile slashed across his face.

"I should take care with your matter template, Pardok. These Shapers are temperamental at times. It may read you wrong and reconstruct you as a true Marinusian. Hmmm! You might all end up looking like Arbitan. You'd hardly like that outcome, I'm sure, to become literally your most hated enemy!"

Pardok stiffened and then spoke in a cold, coarse rasp.

"The long deceased Arbitan is no longer our most hated enemy, Doctor. You are. And your living husk will serve us at last."

For the first time the Voord, who had until that moment been standing stone-still, began to move. As one they stepped from the earthen ledge and descended into the drained riverbed. They were advancing upon the Doctor. The Monk scrambled after them.

"You've gone and done it now, Doctor. I warned you your haughtiness would catch you one day."

The Doctor brandished his cane and tried to route the Voord approach but the creatures moved with incredible speed. They brandished their knives. Their cranial antennae started to glow red, waiting to burst forth raw energy. The Doctor swung his cane from side to side to swat away the aliens but they were too many. One of the Voord caught the old man's cane and wrenched the implement from his hand. The Doctor stumbled forward. Another Voord grabbed his shoulder and neck. Yet another lunged forward and encircled its arms about the Doctor's torso. The old man struggled, thrashed, writhed to break free but the Voord horde swarmed over him. They drew their daggers. The blades poised to strike his chest and neck...

The Infernal Machine

The Monk shouted in horror.

“Stop! Please, stop! I brought the Doctor to you so he could help you. You need him alive!”

The Monk’s pleas were falling unheeded. But then, moments before the daggers could pierce and slit the Doctor’s flesh, Pardok cried out.

“Stay! The Monk is correct. The Doctor must live. Our success depends upon this.”

The remaining Voord obeyed and withdrew their weapons; but they kept close to their prisoner. The Doctor staggered forward and fell to his hands and knees, panting and wheezing. The Doctor groaned and lamented the indignity of his predicament, to be brought down to the mud so easily. His mind was awl with disbelief at his sudden weakness, knowing that once not very ago he had could best a dozen Roman centurions single-handedly. And yet, here he was, feeble and frail, a fatigue he had felt lingering within him since the intrigue with the Toymaker – no, even before then, since Kembel and the Time Destructor. But the Doctor refused to accept his weakness and stood to face his foes -

Vision blurred. Darkness filled it. Hearing softened. Silence deafened it. Body fell. Something lifted it...

The Doctor snapped back to consciousness. He could feel hands grabbing hold under his arms and lifting him to his feet. The Doctor coughed weakly and opened his eyes to see the Monk cradling and supporting him. True concern sharpened the other time traveller’s eyes as he studied the old man’s face. Pardok stood behind the two men.

“There will be no further delays. Compel the Doctor to assist us now.”

The Monk turned to his ally and cast him a dark frown.

“Hush now, you impatient fiend! Something’s wrong with him!”

“The Doctor’s comfort is beneath our concern.”

“At least let me see if he’s well enough to be of any use!”

Without waiting for Pardok’s agreement, the Monk returned his attention to the Doctor. He spoke softly, almost caringly to the weakened man.

“Doctor, are you all right? You look...you look so ill. It’s so unlike you.”

When the Doctor replied, his voice was slow and thick.

“What do you know of me, really? Nothing! Nothing that’s truly sincere.”

“But if you’re hurt, or sick, I certainly care about that.”

“Oh, so you’re now an intrepid healer? Shall you inquire after my spiritual welfare next?”

The Doctor’s voice was quickening, gaining strength.

“No, my health is none of your concern, Monk. Besides, why should it bother you if your allies attack me?”

"Oh, my old friend, you may be incorrigible, you may be absolutely infuriating, but I don't want you hurt and I certainly don't want you dead. I just hoped bringing you here might have taught you a little sense. Really, I wish you nothing worse."

The Doctor rubbed his temples and eased himself from the Monk's supporting hold.

"You can facilitate my belief in your sincerity by telling me exactly how the Voord expect my help."

"It's nothing alarming, Doctor: all you need to do is help the Voord prepare the machine to re-create Marinus and then help me operate the Shaper when all is ready! It really is that simple."

The Doctor steadied himself with his cane and glared at the Monk.

"And I am secure in the assumption that if I refuse my assistance the Voord will eliminate me?"

It was Pardok who answered.

"Fail to help us, Doctor, and both you and our increasingly useless advisor will pay that ultimate price. Consider if both your lives are enough motivation to serve us."

The Monk grinned sadly and shrugged his shoulders.

"They may be allies but they're certainly not very friendly. I'd take their intentions seriously if I were you."

The Doctor scowled and swept the dust from his lapels.

"Very well, I shall help you, Monk. Just don't expect me to whistle while I work!"

* * * * *

"How about this?" Dodo asked, pointing to a large, silver box. Steven shook his head.

"No, that's some sort of radiation detector."

"And this?" Dodo lifted one of two thick-handled black objects shaped like a four-leaf clover drenched in motor oil. Steven waved away the discovery.

"No, those are just anti-gravity clamps."

"I've no idea what that means but I'll take your word for it. Oh, look at this!"

The teenager grabbed a stout black rocket from a crate resting upon a high table. Steven caught her movement and with a cry of terror hurried to grab her arm.

"Careful, you silly girl! Don't you know what this is?"

"Of course, I don't, you pig-headed boy!"

The 'silly' remark had wounded Steven deeper than he had intended and he quickly softened his tone.

"Well, since there's no harm done I can tell you this is a small neutron bomb. One wrong twist of this and we'd both be atoms."

Dodo paled and mouthed a stunned 'wow.'

"Best to be careful then -"

"Wait a moment!" Steven said. His eyes were bright and alert. He crouched down beneath the table and pushed the radiation detector to one side. Behind that device was a translucent white disk about a foot in diameter around and an inch thick. A tight-woven mesh covered the disk, like a sort of external macro-circuitry. Steven lifted the disk in the air with a joyful laugh.

"This is it, Dodo! This is our escape ticket."

"So, this is the transmat? It's a lot simpler than I thought it would be."

"Well, most things are; it's easier to use if it is. There's just one problem, though."

"What's that?"

"We need an energy source to power the disk."

"I thought you said this would be simple," Dodo whined.

"The transmat *is* simple to use; but it requires a good amount of power."

"Doesn't it come with batteries?"

"This isn't a torch, Dodo. But I suppose in a way you're right; usually these things come with a mounted power unit..."

Steven tailed off as he looked out of the Monk's trophy room and back to his control chamber.

"Of course, Dodo, we can use the Monk's TARDIS to power the transmat!"

"Really? Wait, you're right! It must take a lot of energy to move these things through space and time."

"Exactly! If my engineering classes were right, a trip through time would be more than enough power. And look! We've got a good stroke of luck!"

Steven pointed to the base of the Monk's console where he had been working when the Voord had brought them to the Ship. The removed panel still lay upon the platform; the inner machinery of the console's base was exposed. Shifting patterns of multi-coloured light rays poured from the breached base.

"See? If we can link the transmat to a power conduit inside that machine's base, we'll be able to draw some energy from this ship and transfer it into the disk. We can be out of here in no time!"

"So, our trap will be our escape, too! Fab!" Dodo giggled. Steven could not resist a smile, but quickly focused back to their prime task.

"All we need now is something to connect the two, some type of cable or wire..."

"Hey, will this work?" Dodo had spied a long, thin, turquoise-blue-coated cable stuffed a small box. Thick iron-grey adjustable clamps jutted from both ends of the cable. She took the line from the box and held it before Steven. He smiled and nodded.

"Come on, we'd better move fast if we want to help the Doctor."

"You're right," Dodo muttered, before adding: "Steven, I hope you don't think... what I said earlier, about my finding the Monk nice...I hope you don't think I don't believe what you and the Doctor say about him. If you don't think he can be trusted then I, I guess I just won't talk to him again."

Steven looked at Dodo's face and saw the conflict unsettling her. He could understand her problem: she had only met the Monk once, and briefly even then. The Monk had been friendly, charming, and quite sociable to her. Dodo was trusting by nature and friendly to anyone she met. Her unconditional, even naïve, trust of others may have gotten into trouble on more occasions than Steven cared to recall during their travels together, but that same openness had also made her a very pleasant and positive influence upon life on the TARDIS.

Steven shrugged and replied:

"Look. Dodo, I may not always understand you, or even agree with you in how you see others and the world around you, but I would never want to change you. How you see others and talk to them, well, sometimes I wish I were a little more like that, a little more trusting. I can even appreciate the way you are with someone like the Monk, someone I don't trust, someone I won't admit to liking much at all. But you like him, and that's what matters. Maybe you can see something in him that I can't see, something not even the Doctor sees. Who knows? Maybe in the end the Monk is just someone who needs a friend to understand him."

Dodo smiled and nodded.

"We all need someone like that, a ready, friendly face."

"Maybe so, yes. My point is, if you feel like being nice to the Monk, then don't let me stop you. I can't say I'll be enjoying his company much anytime soon, though."

Dodo laughed and threw an arm around Steven's waist.

"Well, then, like chalk and cheese, the world's big enough for the two of us. This TARDIS sure is, too, but we've got to get out of this one, so we've got a job to finish!"

With disk and cable in hand, the two friends hurried back to the control chamber.

* * * * *

At the bottom of the ravine, a short distance from the rounded mass of the Shaper, Overlord Pardok stood watching the two aliens conduct their diagnostics upon the machine. Through the interface of its telepathic cranial dome, Pardok directed the assignments of the surface contingent of Voord as well as the soldiers stationed within the stellar submersible. Despite the neurological taxation required, Pardok took great care to exercise as much direct control over its subordinates' thought patterns as was mentally possible so that there would never be chances of mutiny or an upstart usurpation of power. No, the Voord legions of Pardok would know no friends, no comrades, save for other Voord, the true brotherhood of uniformity and unity.

And yet, even with the requisite concentration to focus upon the Voord telepathic network, Pardok's attention continuously shifted towards the presence of the Doctor. Pardok felt its emotions heat and sharpen at the sight of the old man, the wanderer who had thwarted the Voord race from achieving its destined glory and dominion. But it was more than racial frustration that serrated the core of Pardok's hatred against the Doctor – it was personal and familial loathing. Pardok thought of its many brother Voord murdered by the withered, feeble creature only an arm's length away. Pardok's hand caressed the blade clasped to its waist holster. *If not for your necessity to our triumph, old man, I would have dismembered you at first sight. But the purpose you shall serve to the Voord will more than compensate my tolerance of your continuing existence.*

Pardok focused its thoughts upon a new directive, which it transmitted to all the Voord beneath its command.

My Voord brethren, your Overlord summons your thinking attention. Our time and triumph is almost at hand. The units upon the surface of this world will keep constant vigil and watch upon our enemy, the Doctor, as well as our advisor, the Monk. The units within the submersible shall complete their current duties and then join me in the ravine. All Voord shall witness our blessed deliverance. Until then, keep watch upon the aliens among us. They must not leave this place before their work is complete. This is the directive of your Overlord, Pardok.

Pardok retracted its mind from the mental communion with its fellow Voord and returned the front edge of its attention to the Doctor. The sight of the monster only a short distance away shredded the fibres of Pardok's being, but the hopeful image of a final, imminent glory enabled by that monster calmed Pardok just enough to keep calm and keep watch. *But not for much longer,* Pardok promised itself. It gripped the blade hilted at its waist in anticipation.

Meanwhile, inside the Shaper the Doctor and the Monk knelt around the base of the matter receptor alcove. They had been toiling within the machine for the past several minutes. Then, like a bolt of lightning on a clear, spring day, the Doctor felt a swift thought communicate to him. It was the Monk.

Hello, Doctor! This is a much more pleasant way to communicate, what with those Voord villains so close, don't you, well, think?

The Doctor tightened his jaw and returned a curt, irritated reply.

Silence, you sibilating miscreant! These Voord are telepathic by nature. Besides, I've no wish to engage you in a meaningful conversation with any of my senses.

Doctor, come now, our captors may share our telepathic abilities in the simplest sense, but I can assure you, they can't detect our thoughts. We are both much too quick, after all!

Perhaps so, Monk, but that leaves my second objection unaffected: I have no desire to break thoughts with you.

The Monk scowled and shook his head rapidly.

Well, that's just terrible manners on your part, I tell you! I'm not trying to attack your mind or betray your confidences. I merely wish to know how you've been since we last met.

I am as I always have been, sir. No congratulations for yourself are in order.

I'll grant you that bereavement if you'll at least grant me the same courtesy. You truly have caused me so much trouble since the monastery in 1066. First, I couldn't get into my TARDIS and then I

couldn't go where I liked – that's very important to me, you know, my personal freedoms to go where I wish and help where I can.

The Doctor had to pretend to cough to stifle a scornful laugh at the Monk's opinion.

You, helping where you can? The cosmos and its people have no need of your brand of assistance, Monk! You interfere with the natural course of history only where it suits your own self-importance and your meddling never results in positive change.

And who's to blame for that, eh? Maybe it seems like my plans cause catastrophe only because you get involved and ruin them! It's always been that way between us, Doctor whether on Earth or...home. Haven't you ever thought that my way doesn't work for you because you're not the one thinking of it?

Not for a moment. My way is the way things must be, precisely because it is not mine, but what is.

The Monk frowned and sighed.

At least you always have friends to agree with you, Doctor, as opposed to my rather lonely, solitary life, in cloisters and corridors. Oh, that reminds me, your latest friend Dodo is such a charming girl and very sweet. You and your friend Steven may not be very much fun, Doctor, but your young ladies are always very nice.

Yes, my dear Monk, on that point we shall agree. Young Dodo is very lovely. She's brightened life aboard the TARDIS in more ways than she knows.

The mental conversation lapsed as the Doctor and the Monk concentrated on more delicate and intricate operations to the machine. In perfect, poised conjunction (except for the moments when the Monk would stop to glance at his notebook to remember his own Shaper operation instructions), the two men adjusted, prodded, and shifted delicate instruments into a complex and marvellous technological tapestry. For the Doctor, it was a surreal and oddly nostalgic experience to work on technology birthed, developed, and deployed from his home world; a place, apart from his TARDIS, from which he had never expected nor desired any reminders. For his part, the Monk was simply grateful that the Doctor was working with him and not sabotaging his well-intentioned projects.

Despite his earlier disavowal to enjoy himself during his joint-venture with the Monk, the Doctor had begun whistling; and after several minutes of amused listening, the Monk had joined him. The Doctor had soon noticed the impromptu duet and in a huff, had gone silent. The Monk, rebuffed with the Doctor's musical rejection, had likewise ceased musical activity. For several moments, both had worked in silence until the Monk, blissfully engaged in technical adjustments, had begun whistling again. Without any apparent recollection of why he had stopped humming in the first place, the Doctor soon had joined the Monk's manufactured music.

They were both carrying a converging melody when the Shaper's central array chimed and the intricate mechanism produced its own hum. The Doctor leaned back.

"Well, I think it's time to make our final pronouncements: Matter converter?" the Doctor asked.

"Functional," the Monk answered, and then asked: "Gravitational compensator?"

"Operational," the Doctor replied. He sniffed a darkly satisfied hum and stepped out of the Shaper chamber.

"There! It's finished. I can't say I approve of this machine's presence, Monk, but I must at least congratulate your engineering skill: you left me little to correct."

The Monk scowled and exited the Shaper alcove. No sooner had his feet touched the ground had Pardok quickly advanced to loom over him.

"The Shaper device, are you certain that it is fully prepared?"

The Monk cringed at the close-quarters with the Voord and stammered a reply.

"Oh! Oh, yes...yes, of course! The Doctor and I make a fine team it seems; but I can assure you this machine is now complete and ready for work. Although..."

The Monk hesitated. Pardok loomed closer.

"You have a concern? Share it."

The Doctor shared it.

"I think the detail my technically under-experienced associate wishes to omit is that the Shaper device may be operational but it still must be calibrated to fit your desired template. Now, since our friend the Monk has so ingeniously altered this device to operate from a host-organic-matter-sample and the only host-matter from Marinus available to us are you Voord, then it seems we have no options to proceed; unless of course you have a willing volunteer -"

Pardok's blank masked face turned sharply from the Doctor. Pardok motioned towards one of its kind. Without a word the soldier Voord marched forward, entered the Shaper chamber, and stood within the matter receptor. A deep, throbbing began to pulse from within the Shaper; mounting silver light streamed from the depths of the matter alcove, shrouding the dark-encased soldier Voord. The Doctor rushed forward to stop the soldier Pardok held him back by the shoulders. Struggling to free himself, the old man cried out:

"You precipitous fool! The machine is set to automatic reaction! With the inside chamber exposed we'll be caught up in the mass conversion!"

* * * * *

It had taken Steven only a few moments to carry the transmat disk into the Monk's console chamber and place the device at the far end of the console's platform. As he turned his attention from the disk to the console, Dodo spoke.

"Steven, even if you get this transmat thing running, how do we know where we'll end up after we use it?"

"If this disk is like most others I've used, once we get power into it we'll be able to access its direction and range controls – they're usually built into the pad itself. I'm more worried about if the transmat can even get us out of the Monk's TARDIS. But we've got to try."

Steven got to work on the connector cable Dodo had found. He hoped to find the most likely power receiver point on the disk's surface. After a few minutes' search, he felt he had found it. Moments later, one end of the tension cable was clamped to a ridged section of the edge of the clear-white disc. Then Steven turned and lay prone upon on his elbows and knees before the open section of the Monk's console base. He held the other end of the cable tight in his hand, ready to affix the second metal clamp to a suitable power source. Steven searched inside the base, and searched some more. There was the problem.

"Dodo? Do you – oh, where are you?" Steven twisted slightly and saw his friend sitting on the edge of the platform engrossed in a small paperback notebook with well-worn and fully scribbled pages. He recognized the scraggly volume as the Monk's journal, which Vicki had discovered during their first encounter with him in 1066 England. Dodo looked up from her reading.

"Oh, Steven. This stuff is so weird! It says here the Monk advised the Beatles to break up the band in 1970. That's just five years ahead of when I left Earth. He's lying, isn't he?"

"How should I know? I never listen to prehistoric tribal music."

"Prehistoric?!"

Steven sighed and shook his head. Somehow, he kept forgetting the sheer differences between the times he and Dodo came from. Nevertheless, time was something they both needed to use, and quickly.

"Look," he said, "we've got more important things to worry about. Do you know anything about electronics?"

Dodo turned around and matched Steven's position before the opened console base.

"I once took apart my aunt's telly for fun, although she didn't laugh after. But I thought you were the fighter pilot – don't you boys know all about machines?"

"You'd think so, but whatever this stuff is I've never seen the like. I haven't the faintest idea what the components are for!"

"Well, didn't you say the Doctor had done some damage to this TARDIS the last time you met the Monk? And the Monk was working on these controls when we got here. Maybe the best idea is just choosing something that looks like it's working, no matter what it does."

"That's probably the best we can hope for. So, something in an unknown alien machine that looks like it's working..."

Steven peered deep inside the console base for the likeliest candidate. His eyes caught upon a long, tight-wound coil of what looked to be clear plastic. Within the plastic particles of smoky light twisted and drifted, some briskly, others leisurely. It was as good a working part as any.

"Well, here's to blind luck."

* * * * *

Pardok cried out to its subordinate to exit the chamber, but the deep throbbing from the machine – rising, as if it hungrily sensed the approach of organic sustenance – drowned out any other sound. Pardok then focused its thoughts towards the mind of the other Voord but received no response.

"The insubordinate!" Pardok hissed. "The soldier will not reply to my commands."

"No doubt that it won't, because it can't!" The Doctor replied wrenching free from Pardok's grip. "The Shaper generates an intense bioelectric energy field – no amount of your so-called commands will penetrate its aura."

"Never mind the science lecture," the Monk cried. "I'll just go over there and shut the doors."

"It's too late!" the Doctor shouted. "The Shaper is awakening!"

Even as the Doctor, the Monk, and the Voord hurried to retreat, the light burst free and scorched the air.

* * * * *

Steven attached the clamp to the coil. The plastic component flashed; the clamp glared red-hot, white-hot, sightless-hot. A searing flood of pink and blue-white sparks belched from the base. Dodo jumped from the platform's edge. Steven rolled out the blaze's path. He spotted the Monk's memorabilia room and made his towards the entrance as smoke blinded the control chamber.

"Dodo, follow me!" Steven cried as he hurried out of the console room.

Dodo tried to cry out to Steven but the cloying, spice-rough mist covered the inside of her throat, suffocating her.

* * * * *

For ten seconds the purifying light blazing from the Shaper's interior mounted in power, increased in intensity, peaked in brilliance, and then released a small shockwave of force that blanketed the ravine with a rushing web of energy and plasma. The plasma churned the soil and air as it travelled, gripped the chains of molecules that held the surface of the planet together, punctured the structure of the atoms and delved deep into their sub-atoms, their quantum imprints - and then all at once their plasma dispersed and the light from the Shaper abruptly winked out.

Everything was quiet, devoid of sound and movement. The air was sterile without temperature; the night-sky was hollow to the sparkling stars sprinkled high above. Then, with great caution, the Doctor, and the Monk, followed immediately by Pardok, emerged from behind the top of the ridge where they had taken refuge a fraction-second before the Shaper had activated.

“My word. That was a fantastic display. Is it over?” the Monk quietly queried. He pressed his hands before his lips in quiet awe.

“We must descend and investigate,” Pardok said. “I will know if the soldier’s matter donation was successful.”

“Matter donation?” the Doctor cried. “You make it sound as if that poor fellow has made a charitable service! Look!”

The Doctor stabbed the air with cane towards the open Shaper. From within the machine, sharp curls of acrid smoke billowed from the matter receptor: they were the only remains of the soldier Voord. Pardok said: “We honour our brother’s sacrifice, and see that it was fulfilled. Observe!”

Pardok gestured towards the ravine in which his force had placed the Shaper: the previously barren soil was now submerged beneath a shallow layer of bubbling, sun fire-yellow liquid. Both the Doctor and the Monk recognized the fluid for what it was.

“Acid!” they cried at once. The Doctor glared at the Monk, whose face beamed with pride.

“It works! My alterations worked! The Shaper *is* functional!”

The Doctor huffed a grudging acknowledgement of the fact.

“So, there are some reluctant congratulations in order, hmm? It seems your machine is clearly capable of planetary reorganization. The topsoil in this area has been partially converted into Marinusian sea-acid!”

The Doctor watched the acid borne from the genetic memory of Marinus and thought of the Voord that had been consumed by the Shaper. Then he thought not of the Voord but of the creature beneath the insidious mask and body armour that the native Voord used to enslave the minds and wills of their victims harvested from the worlds they conquered. The being that the Shaper had ingested had been a Marinusian once. Now it was a boiling puddle of acid gnawing at the soil of an alien world, trying to take more than its due even in death.

The Doctor stood straight and glared at the Voord force surrounding him, each one stared back with a visage blanked by greed and cruel power-lust. He turned to Pardok and brandished the tip of his cane before its featureless mask.

“With the power of this machine you won’t be satisfied with only a memory. You want something more. What is it?”

Before Pardok could reply the Monk descended into the ravine with wondrous momentum. He knelt at the edge of the new liquid pool and spread his arms over the bristling acid in vibrant jubilation.

“Ha, ha! My design works! The Shaper can re-create new worlds!”

The Doctor followed the Monk into the acidized ravine and planted his cane at the edge of the shallow river.

“I hope you realize the potential consequences of your actions here, Monk.”

“Consequences? I prefer to think of my actions as yielding very generous benefits to the downtrodden and needy. These are very simple to see: I’ve given my friends the means to re-make their world and in return they shall provide me with the materials I need to regain true freedom in time and space!”

“Ah, so your generosity is best bequeathed when there is a guarantee of helpful reciprocation! How very selfless noble of you!” the Doctor replied.

The Monk grinned impishly. He stood and turned about but jumped slightly when he saw Pardok standing right behind him. The remaining Voord stood in close ranks immediately behind their speaker. Too ebullient with joyful pride to care about the sinister quality of his allies, the Monk spoke warmly to them.

“Well, now, my friends, I think we’ve come to the end of our bargain. With the Doctor’s help, I’ve demonstrated the successful capabilities of my device, and provided your race with the means

to recreate Marinus here. Now if you will kindly return to me my other circuits I'll be happily on my way."

Pardok held out its hand before the Monk.

"Our bargain is still incomplete."

"Incomplete? How do you mean incomplete? Oh, wait...you can't mean you expect *me* to reform this *entire* planet into Marinus, can you? That's not part of our bargain. That's not fair!"

"I don't think fair is part of the Voord's vocabulary, is it?" said the Doctor, addressing Pardok. The old man tucked one thumb into a lapel and stared hard at the blank-masked alien.

"Nevertheless, I must concur with my associate, but upon entirely different grounds. You yourself just now witnessed the amount of Voord matter required by the Shaper to transform a few square feet of this planet into a copy of Marinus. Even you will therefore realize the sheer volume of matter needed to restructure this entire world!"

Pardok stood resolute against the Doctor's charge of inadequacy.

"We have all the matter we need to achieve our purpose."

"Have you, indeed?" the Doctor retorted. "I think not. Why else would I have agreed to help you, hmm? I knew from first glance at the Monk's extra machinations to the Shaper that the power requirements required to complete your foolish design would require the sacrifice of your entire race. Is that you really want then, to destroy yourselves only to leave behind an empty, surrogate Marinus?"

"You mistake our genius, Doctor, as always. We have no intention of destroying ourselves to achieve our destiny; for the host matter we require is only that of one person."

The Doctor let his arm fall to his side and clenched his fist. He could feel his hair curling.

"And who is this one person?"

When Pardok answered, its smile spoke through its mask.

"You."

Pardok swung a commanding arm and in swift motion the entire Voord horde rushed the Doctor like a swarm of heat-seeking missiles, their head stalks discharging red bursts of fiery energy.

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Dodo coughed and sputtered against the soupy smoke flowing free from the Monk's console. The vapours were everywhere. With vigorous swipes of her arms she tried to drive away the smoke from before her, but the thick, cloying mists overpowered her. She fell to her knees. Her eyes streamed hot tears. She smelled fire, heard flames crackling. There was a sound, a strange wailing howl. It echoed all around and through her. A sickly, soupy light radiated through the haze and generated a harsh glare within the curls of smoke, as if Dodo were staring directly into the fiery surface of the sun. The illumination thickened the air, stirred the smoke with heat. Dodo's hands grasped at her throat as she fell to her knees. The room began to shudder, to shake, to spin, faster and faster and faster until with one final thrust Dodo felt her senses thrown out of her as the smoke, heat and light imploded into darkness.

And within the darkness there was something that had not been there before. The thing awakened and became aware of its surroundings, the heat, the haze, the room. And then it saw the young, dark-haired female sprawled upon the ground, unmoving and unconscious. The thing approached the female, its hands outstretched towards her -

* * * * *

Once again, the Doctor had tried to struggle but this time the Voord had used the combined energies of their psychic antennae to brutalize his aged body into submission. The attack had taken many agonizing minutes before the Voord had overpowered him sufficiently to batter the Doctor almost unconscious, at which point they had carried his beaten body over the acid patina and towards the Shaper. Now the Voord soldiers were loading the Doctor into the Shaper's matter receptor and all the while the Monk was screaming at them in furious terror.

"No! NO! Stop, please stop! What are you doing? Why are you doing it? The Doctor can't possibly help you, not this way! You never said you wanted him to help you this way!"

The Monk barrelled into the Voord mass and managed to dislodge a few from their grip on the Doctor before Pardok lunged forward and grabbed the hood of the little man's habit from behind and with savage energy threw the Monk in a heap of dark fabric and pale limbs. Dazed and frightened the Monk tried to gather himself but Pardok was already towering over his sprawled form. The alien leaned down and spoke, its voice hot and harsh.

"Know this, puppet: were you of no use to us I would eviscerate you where you lie, body and mind. But we still need you to operate the machine and enslave the Doctor's matter to our cause. Only then, when our new world is complete, will we deign to restore to you the machinery you so desperately begged us."

Sprawl upon the acidized soil, the Monk was almost weeping in shocked horror.

"But...but you'll make me kill the Doctor. I never wanted that. Even when I wanted my revenge against his bullying, I never, *ever* wanted that! Please, don't make me do it."

To anyone else the Monk's pitiful display, like that of a stricken child, may have moved one to feel some compassion. But Pardok was solid and steadfast.

"Do as you are commanded, or you shall die and we shall find a way to operate the Shaper ourselves."

"But none of this makes any sense! I thought you wanted to re-make Marinus, to go back home. The Doctor's not from your world; he can't make it for you!"

For one chilling moment, Pardok threw back its head and bellowed with laughter. Then he spoke the truth.

"You fool. We don't want to re-create *that* world. We want to copy *yours*."

The Monk's jaw dropped and he felt his blood slow cold as he realized the full weight of his terrible mistake. And then he realized the Voord would certainly kill him if he failed to make their wish a reality. He looked up upon the stricken, senseless body of the Doctor lying upright and listless in the Shaper's matter receptor and knew what was about to happen. But there was nothing he could do to stop it.

Cursing himself, the Monk rose to his feet, thoughtlessly straightened his skull-cap, and approached the Shaper. Like a macabre honour guard, the Voord parted to let him pass. The Monk laid his hands upon the machine controls and looked up at the Doctor's pale, blood-drained face. There was no choice but one.

"Forgive me, old friend," the Monk murmured.

He turned a black dial and with a heavy gnashing of metal teeth and sharpened gears the Shaper's solid metal shell sealed shut, flooding the Doctor with solid shadows. The door locked. The machine turned. The engine pumped. The heat raged. The pressure rose. Time revolved. The revolutions churned thick the enclosed time like milk into butter. The thickened time flowed free and began to fill the Shaper's receptacle chamber. Then the thickness superheated and ignited with an explosive detonation of ferocious distortion. The energy inferno whipped into a cyclonic frenzy and spun towards the centre of the chamber, rushing to cocoon the Doctor.

The Misshapen Planet

The Doctor tore open his eyes. All his senses activated. Hot. Bright. Sharp. Sour. Loud. Complex. Strange. His focus fixed fast upon the thundering cocoon of raw energy spiralling inwards towards him. Survivalist thoughts dissipated the pain clouding his mind. *I have only seconds to act; but what can I possibly use to deflect this energy? There's nothing...wait.* The Doctor patted the folds of his cloak. There in one of the pockets he felt a small metal shape, a hexagon. *Of course, the Monk's time signal beacon; I forgot I'd put it in my cloak. It has a temporal component. But will it counteract the time wave? I must try!*

His hand dipped into the fabric pocket, clutched the hexagon tightly and tugged it free. He studied the metal shape in his hand and felt for the control mechanisms. There was no time to make exact calculations, only brilliant guesses. The time-acceleration field spun ever closer; its light warmed his senses. He was almost cocooned, a restless insect in a premature chrysalis. *Only one marginal chance. Release!*

The Doctor activated the time beacon. He heard its silent sibilance echo in his sensitive ears as he held the device before the spinning time-energy. The Doctor watched in fixated hope. In a silent slap the time fields collided, interacted, divided. Then, to his delight, a small hole of darkness opened within the energy cocoon – *the dissonance of the different time signatures!* The energy breach widened, spread larger; he saw the Shaper's metal shell...*Now!*

The old man re-pocketed the beacon and with a gathered surge of strength pushed out of the matter receptor to leap through the breached cocoon just as it enveloped the inner chamber. There was no time to relax; he had purchased himself only a few extra moments. The Doctor hurried to the Shaper's inner shell and brushed his fingers over the smooth metal – *I must find the manual release – There, beneath that graviton!* The Doctor pursed his lips and blew a light blast of air upon the spot. The trigger twitched and sprang the locking mechanism. The shell's inner seam cracked open and slid wide and the old man jumped from the Shaper and out onto solid, slightly acidic soil. Directly at his side he heard an exclamation of surprise. It was the Monk.

"Doctor?! How -"

"I shall explain forthwith, Monk, but now we have more pressing concerns. This machine is about – back!"

The Doctor grabbed the Monk and pulled him by the habit at the exact same moment Pardok swung down its gleaming blade. The Monk cried out as the stroke's sharp path missed his nose by millimetres. With nothing to strike but empty air Pardok fell forward, slipped in the mud, and crashed to the ground. Its knife bounced loose upon impact; the Doctor kicked the weapon away from the Voord's reach. Pardok pushed back from the soil and stood ramrod straight. Rage thundered through its darkened mask.

"How have you escaped your death, Doctor?"

"I couldn't possibly tell you, Voord! It would spoil the mystery!"

"You shall mock our race no more, old one, but you will form the template of our new world!"

"*Your* world? Or rather mine? I heard your revelation to the Monk. While I exist, you shall never touch the secrets of time."

Pardok shifted its opaque glare upon the Monk.

"Then we shall use the Monk to fuel our quest!"

The Monk chuckled harshly and shook his head.

"Oh, no, my concealed friend, dying for another's madness is never my way!"

Pardok hissed hot fury.

"Then you will both die for the Voord where you stand, and then perhaps your carcasses will suffice!"

Pardok's head-crystal began to vibrate. The great transparent dome glowed deep red, then flashed dark arcs of energy building to a massive discharge. The Doctor glanced down, saw his walking stick discarded upon the ground – it was just within reach. He lunged forward, kicked the cane up to his hand and swung the stick to strike the dome just as the energy surged. The crystal exploded like a tiny supernova. Pardok howled in agony and sank to its knees and then fell backwards upon the earth. Its limbs flailed and swung in haphazard swipes. The Monk hurried to the Doctor's side and gave him a happy pat on the shoulder.

"Well done, Doctor! I never knew you had it in you."

The Doctor angrily shrugged off the Monk's hand.

"I most certainly I wish I hadn't. Violence is abhorrence to my nature."

"Yes, it is rather traumatic, even when necessary. But is the Voord dead?"

"No, merely stunned. Nevertheless, without its head appendage this Voord is senseless now and no longer a true threat."

"Then at last we're safe."

"From him, perhaps so. But what of his colleagues, I wonder?"

The Doctor and the Monk gazed up at the ravine's upper ridge, where the other Voord stood watching them. All their head stalks were surging with electricity, like a series of hyperactive generators. Then, to both men's surprise, each Voord's head appendage detonated and the aliens collapsed in a heap of writhing bodies. The Doctor clenched his fist in understanding.

"Of course, I understand now! The Voord are telepathic and their Overlord directed the thought energy of the other soldiers."

The Monk's face rose with a bright smile as he followed the Doctor's lead.

"Yes, and when his crystal blew it sent a massive feedback through their telepathic network! All the Voord here and on the ship, must have been affected – we're saved!"

"True, but now who will give you your coveted spare parts? The Voord are very stealthy."

The Monk's face fell at this new realization.

"Oh, bother! There's always something to spoil the victory."

Suddenly a high-pitched metallic squeal shattered the air. The Doctor and the Monk turned towards the sound. The Shaper was quivering and glowing with golden light. Thick arcs of dark energy flowed over the metal shell. Fiery smoke and silver-bright liquid poured from the machine's aperture. The Monk gaped in horror and the damaged machine.

"Doctor, I think now is good time to learn exactly how you made your escape."

"I used your beacon's time signal to interfere with the Shaper's temporal acceleration curvature and opened a passage in the cocoon. But why is it still damaging the Shaper; I have the beacon safely quiet in my cloak!"

The Monk clasped his hands together and squeezed his fingers.

"Oh, rats! I'm sorry, but I should have said: this Shaper has a fault in its core system."

"What sort of fault?" The Doctor's tone made it clear there was no room for prevarication.

“Simply...once it starts it can’t stop, at least if there’s no organic material present in the receptor.”

The Doctor gritted his teeth and brandished the head of cane towards the Monk’s face. The faux-clergyman winced and extended his self-protective arms.

“Now, Doctor, Doctor! Don’t do anything you wouldn’t do to yourself! Doctor? Doctor?!”

The Doctor’s eyes blazed as he advanced with menace upon the Monk, who was by now expecting a fierce beating, but the Doctor leveraged his cane ever-so-slightly to deliver only a sharp pat to the Monk’s shoulder.

“I should give you a good knocking for this,” the Doctor grumbled, “but I don’t think you’d gain any sense. Now, come along!”

“But where can we go?”

“To the TARDIS, of course!”

The Monk sighed in relief.

“Of course, your ship. We can escape with ease.”

“No! Not mine, yours! We shall fetch my young friends and then together you and I will stop this catastrophe from happening!”

“But, Doctor, what catastrophe? If the Shaper consumes this planet what’s the worry? Aside from a few disabled Voord there’s no one here.”

“Yes, but you said it yourself: if this Shaper can’t stop its reconstructive tendencies then imagine how far it will go before it’s satisfied!”

The Monk blinked and nodded.

“Lead me, overconfident physician!”

The Doctor tilted back his head and flashed a broad grin.

“Follow me, unverified spiritualist!”

Smirking with irony, both the Doctor and the Monk clambered out of the ravine and away from the quaking Shaper. The ground was beginning to dry and crack beneath their feet. Then the rumbling started. The Monk looked back at the ravine: it had widened and deepened by a thousand feet within under a minute. A spheroid of brilliant off-white light shimmered and spun within the crater like a frenzied, crashed star splitting the planet wide open. The Monk remembered the Earth tale of Lot’s wife he had learned in 1066 and tore his gaze away. He needed to take his mind from the fear chilling his bones. He called out to the surprisingly spry Doctor hurrying at his side.

“Doctor, if only they could see us now.”

The Doctor huffed a grim reply:

“I sincerely hope not.”

All at once there was deafening tremor and the ground sank like draining water as the two men stumbled and dropped towards the dust. Moments later there was another tremor, and then another - and another - each stronger than before. The Doctor was pitched forward by the shaking and rolled onto his back. Powdered earth clogged his nose and mouth; he coughed roughly; his breath was shallow. His head lolled from side to side; he thought he saw through patches of dark clouds the shimmering pathways of stars streaking across the boiling sky. Then he felt hands grabbing his coat. A voice called his name. It was the Monk.

“Come on, Doctor, come on! This planet is spinning out of time - we’ve got to keep moving or we’ll be blown to the winds!”

Winds. Dust. Death. The Doctor thought of Kembel, of Sara’s dried bones pulverized premature and scattered across the surface of forgotten memory. He saw himself in the dust, wasting away to the storm moment by moment, his eternity stretched to oblivion; he saw the edge of the darkness there; a new face approached through the unknown. *No! Not yet. Not here. I must rise!*

He rose. The Doctor pushed himself up with his cane and staggered forward. The Monk hurried by his side. They journeyed onwards against the quakes and the storms. Time deformed

around them. A patchwork of dry dust patterned the Doctor and the Monk's clothing. Stinging rain peppered their faces. They inched forward against heavy winds and sharpening tremors. Something heavy rumbled overhead. The Monk's head snapped upwards - tearing frighteningly low in the sky was a solid mass of black clouds ridged with green streaks of lightning, like a dry deluge vomited from a parched sky - the fall was almost upon them!

The Doctor grabbed the Monk's shoulder. Through the powdered gloom the old man pointed. Through slit-thin eyes the Monk followed the gesture and saw the cause: the Voord ship! The earth tremors had made the craft settle into the ground somewhat but the open exit hatch was still accessible. With the end goal in sight the two men made a last push against the torrent and passed through the hatch.

Inside and safe, the Monk gasped the clean air and leaned back against one wide wall girder for support. The Doctor, pale and shivering, smacked one hand against the opposite wall and leaned feebly against the dark metal hull. The Monk took one last deep breath and stood straight.

"Well, Doctor, we should get moving. If we're not inside my TARDIS soon the acceleration will tear us apart."

"Yes...yes...you're quite correct. I just...need a...moment to...recover."

The Doctor sagged against the wall as his voice trailed away. The Monk pushed away from the other wall and stood close to watch the Doctor. The old man's skin was sweat-beaded, clammy skin tone was less than pale; it was almost translucent, nearly shining. The Monk laid his hands upon the Doctor's shoulders and helped to balance him.

"Doctor, you're looking faint again. You don't think you're going to -"

"Absolutely not!" the Doctor shouted, almost bellowed. He pushed clear of the Monk's steadying hold and strode down the corridor towards the lift. The Monk watched him charge ahead with a solemn shake of his head.

"Oh, dear. Signs of denial. Classic symptoms before the first event. I hope that when my time comes I show a little more dignity than that!"

The Monk hurried after the Doctor. The two men continued their flight through the corridor and reached the lift, but the doors would not open. The Monk fished a silver oval from his habit and waved it over the lift doors. The machine chimed once and the Monk read the readings through its soft, liquid surface.

"Oh, poxes! The Shaper's energy is already affecting this vessel's power systems. We'll have to make the rest of the way on foot - there's an emergency ladder just down the corridor to our left; it should access every level. Are you up to climbing in your condition, Doctor?"

But the Doctor was already hurrying towards the indicated corridor. The Monk rolled his eyes and sighed before chasing after his one-time friend. They quickly reached the ladder and began climbing its metal rungs. The Doctor looked up the vertical length of the ladder: it ran for what seemed a physical eternity. *Well, if I walk in eternity then I ought to be able to climb it as well!*

They climbed, rung by rung. Minutes passed. Every few dozen meters there was a small distance between rungs for space to allow an access crawlspace onto a new deck. The Monk had set his power-detection device to alert him when his TARDIS was near. He knew it would be a long climb until the right deck. Through the vessel's hull the stormy rush of winds whistled high and hard; time itself was whipping at the craft's metal frame. The sound was worse than silence; the Monk covered it with his voice.

"If it's any consolation to you, Doctor, I tried to offer the Voord other organic materials to power the Shaper, if only to persuade them not to involve you in their plan."

"Such an interesting admission, Monk. Are you implying you were aware of their true objectives all along?"

"No! No, most assuredly not. I simply knew if you got involved then everything would become terribly difficult."

“Hmmm! Indeed. I like to consider myself the proverbial scanner thrown into the workings of villainy. But more to the point: what exactly was this other organic material you offered the Voord?”

“What? Oh, nothing specific, although I suppose the term ‘organic’ is too simple in this case.”

Suddenly, much sooner than expected, the Monk’s power detector began to hum beneath his habit. The Monk retrieved the oval machine and checked its indicator. A sly smile wedged across his face. The Monk threw a furtive upward glance at the Doctor; the old man had already passed the deck departure junction. If he moved quickly he could depart unnoticed. The Monk made a quick decision and slipped into the crawlspace. Above him, oblivious to the detour, the Doctor climbed.

* * * * *

It was all very quiet in the room. The once silver and bright illumination was dim and unsteady. Heavy smoke spiced the air. Every few moments the control hexagon emitted a slurred buzzing accompanied by small, sharp electric sparks which trailed across the few intact instrument panels.

Lying unconscious upon the ground, Dodo slowly stirred and ceased her brow in pain. There was a small, purpling bump across her forehead where her head had glanced against the console platform as she had fallen. Dodo opened her eyes; they stung from the smoky haze.

“Steven?” Her words were hoarse and weak. She had to get up and find her friend. Dodo tried to stand but her senses dulled and her sighted blurred. *Ok, I need to get up slowly.*

She pushed herself upright and leaned her back against the platform. Dodo rubbed her bruised head and breathed deep. Aside from the slight soreness of her forehead nothing hurt her, nothing seemed broken. But where was Steven? Wait. There was a sound behind her, small and scraping. Was it someone moving?

* * * * *

The Monk hurried along a corridor of the submersible, watching the output of his power scanner as he scrambled along the twisted and trembling metal walkway. He cried out as he nearly collided with a large object in his path – was it a Voord?

The Monk looked up and sighed with relief as he saw not a menacing Voord before him but the blue Police Box shape of the Doctor’s TARDIS. For a moment, the Monk grinned impishly and patted the disguised, wooden doors of the machine as he contemplated the ways he could sabotage the Doctor’s ship, but then he thought of the kind smile of Dodo and paused in his contemplations. Then a simultaneous tremor from the quaking planet and a further chime from his power scanner returned the Monk’s attention to his primary course and he continued his flight through the dying Voord ship.

* * * * *

“Steven? Is that you? Are you hurt?”

Dodo turned about and, still kneeling, leaned forward against the platform to peer across the darkened room. Through the web-like miasma of warm, curling smoke, she saw a figure: it was dark and lean; the head was large.

“Steven?” Dodo whispered. Without a word the figure darted forward, its hands outstretched to her throat.

* * * * *

“Monk? Monk?!”

The Doctor had been climbing for a few minutes before he realized he had not heard the Monk beneath him during that time. He looked down; of the Monk, there was no sign. *How could I have missed him for so long? My awareness is weakening.* The Doctor grimaced and continued his climb. After a few moments as he neared another deck departure point, he shouted again:

“Monk! Where are you?”

A head stuck out of the junction aperture.

“Hello, Doctor!”

The Monk leaned his head and shoulders out of the opening. His face smiled down upon his former friend. The Doctor, startled by the sudden re-appearance, sputtered:

“Where did you go? What are you doing up there? How did you get there?”

“Oh, so many questions! I found a working lift a few decks below us. I’ve been checking each deck until I could find you. Now come along, we can ride the rest of the way.”

The Monk motioned to the Doctor to follow and the old man, grumbling his discontent, climbed into the junction, and crawled through its length until he came to an exit onto a normal travel corridor. As promised, just a few feet down the corridor were the open doors of a moderately-lit lift. The Monk had been honest, for once. *Still, I wonder what made him go searching.*

They entered the lift and its doors jerked closed behind them. The Monk programmed the correct deck into the interface and the compartment lurched unsteadily upwards; there was barely enough power to move them. A few very unpleasant moments later the incredibly driven Doctor, following close after by the Monk, exited the lift and rushed to the camouflaged entrance of the Monk’s TARDIS. Impatient to enter, the old man, his taut facial skin stretched thin over the sharp skull bones beneath, curtly motioned to his associate to open the doorway. The Monk fumbled in the folds of his habit and drew out the key just before the Doctor’s patience corroded.

The key unbolted the lock and the doorway retracted. The two men entered the darkened interior chamber. Although curious about his Ship’s lack of illumination, the Monk sighed in relief at the familiar sight of his machine.

“There, Doctor, you see? We’ve made it to safety.”

“Always overestimating your self-security, Monk.”

In silhouette, the Doctor pointed towards the console. The Monk turned and looked. There was someone standing upon the platform – no, *something* –

“Lights, normal level!” the Monk cried, feeling intense self-gratitude for perfecting his craft’s voice-control, an elation that deflated as the lights augmented and revealed the intruder: a Voord soldier, its body-suit charred, mottled and smoking. From behind it clutched with one hand the throat of the Doctor’s young companion, Dodo. The soldier’s other hand had positioned its rusted blade over one of the teenager’s fear-filled eyes. The Doctor stepped forward and stood tall before the threatening creature.

“Voord! You will release the girl immediately!”

The Voord made no movement, no made no acknowledging sign. *Of course*, thought the Monk, *this Voord must be senseless like the rest.* The Monk tried to edge his way close to the console but the Voord reacted to his movement and shifted its body slightly in his direction. Through the side of his clenched teeth the Monk hissed to the Doctor:

“I thought you said without the Speaker all the soldiers were senseless!”

“Obviously, your TARDIS shielded its mind from the mental feedback. But more to the point: how did this Voord get inside your Ship?”

“I’ve no idea! I’d ask it but I don’t think speaking is its specialty!”

The Doctor turned back to the Voord and addressed it in his most imperious tone.

“You are defeated and alone. You have no companions and no directive. You will stand down and depart peacefully from this place. Do you understand? I will have your answer!”

The Voord tightened its grip on the blade handle. Its arm pulled away slight. The blade plummeted towards the eye – Dodo screamed – a hand slammed down on the Voord’s shoulder and spun it around. It was Steven, face black with soot and face hard with protective rage. He balled one fist and crunched a punch square in the alien’s face. The Voord staggered back from the blow. Its knife dropped. Dodo launched free and ran falling into the Doctor’s welcoming arms. Steven shook his hand in pain but balled the fingers to strike again. The Voord charged him and wrapped his arms around his torso. The alien’s lunge knocked both off the platform. They crashed to the floor half a foot below. The two tangled bodies struggled upon the ground. Steven pulled up with his back muscles. He swung his arms high over his head and bashed the bases of his palms against the Voord’s hoops. The alien convulsed and clutched the sides of its head. One of its feet shot out and caught Steven across his jaw. Steven yelped and slid backwards several inches. The Voord rolled onto its elbows and knees. It looked up and saw its knife nestled at the base of the Monk’s console. It crawled forward and began to mount the platform. On his back, Steven saw the alien’s intended target. He stretched his leg and kicked at the alien’s ankles. The Voord lost its footing, stumbled forward – its arm shot out to grab the console. An electric flash of bright blue light rose from the console and saturated the room. The energy covered the Voord, sank into its body-covering and disappeared beneath. Then the Voord immolated. The negative-blue balled flames ignited from underneath its rubber exo-skin and burst through the covering like the mushroom clouds of dozens of miniature atomic bombs. Then, as soon as they had appeared the multiplicity of infernos snuffed out as the TARDIS’s disturbed equilibrium reasserted and the ravaged alien fell back-first upon the console platform, twisted, stretched, stiffened, died. Not a single curl of smoke escaped the quiet, covered corpse.

Everyone – the Doctor with Dodo still in his arms, the Monk by their side, and Steven slowly rising to his feet at the opposite edge of the platform – approached the fallen Voord. Steven spoke first. He sounded subdued and shocked.

“I’d fallen and hit my head – blacked out. When I came to I saw the Voord about to kill Dodo and I...I didn’t mean to kill it.”

“It’s perfectly all right, my boy,” the Doctor interjected with an unusual dose of kindness. “You did what any friend would do to save another. Besides, you weren’t to know the console was so lethally charged with energy.”

“Yes,” the Monk said as he leaned close to the console without touching its surface. “But that needs explaining. What have you two rascals been doing to my TARDIS?!”

It was Dodo who answered.

“We were trying to get out of here to go and help the Doctor!”

“Do you really think I would have hurt him, my dear child?” the Monk asked.

“Well, maybe not you, but those Voord...” Dodo’s voice trailed off. She had been so close to death. The Doctor stroked her dark mop and addressed Steven.

“Young man, I see what I believe to be a transmat pad connected to the Monk’s console. Am I correct in assuming it was your intent to use that device to make your escape?”

“Yes, Doctor. I couldn’t find a power source for the disc so I thought I’d use the console. It was already open at the base.” The Monk’s eyes rounded with worry and he knelt before the breached base to examine its interior. Steven continued his recounting. “I connected the two with a cable Dodo found and everything went dark and the room started to shake. Then I fell and blacked out.”

“And that’s when it came, Doctor!” said Dodo, her fears somewhat abated. “I saw the Voord through the smoke -”

“Hmm! Hmm-Hmm!” The Doctor clenched his fist and smiled. Discovery lit his countenance.

“That must be how that soldier got into this Ship! Outside the Voord have a machine the Monk gave them, a device that can re-shape entire planets. One of them entered the machine to active its systems. We thought that soldier had been destroyed but I think you must have connected

the transmat disc at that exact same moment and the two energy fields briefly interacted to shift the Voord here. Did you notice, Monk, how the creature's suit was already charred from exposure to the Shaper? It must have made transition only just in time!"

The Monk, still head-buried inside the base, made no reply except for a huff of pained worry: many of his TARDIS's circuits had been scorched by the transmat. The Doctor seemed not to notice the Monk's activity and continued addressing his companions.

"But thanks to this momentary frightful encounter I think this Voord has given us an answer to our problem."

"What problem, Doctor? Did something bad happen out there?" asked Dodo.

A terrible screeching of metal cut through the control chamber. Steven and Dodo looked about, startled at the sound. Then the room lurched and shuddered, almost throwing the three friends onto the floor. The Doctor grabbed the console's nearest edge and glared at the Monk, who cowered beneath his console in frozen-faced fear.

"I rather think something bad is happening right here!"

The Doctor turned to the damaged console at his side and found its scanner switch. The control appeared functional and with a turn of the Doctor's finger the Monk's scanner activated. Dodo and Steven struggled against the shaking and gathered near their friend to see what the scanner revealed. They watched in horror.

On the screen was chaos realized. Waves of blistering energy fractured and twisted the planet's surface. Colossal monoliths of solid land rose high and shattered into raging tornadoes of clumpy dust, mountains burst open and vomited thick plumes of scarlet lava and valleys collapsed into bottomless trenches spewing noxious gaseous clouds and ferocious jets of flame. Electrified black clouds roared through the devastation, clogging, and cloying to the splintered surface. Their winds and stinging rain sliced through solid rocks and exposed molten tectonic plates. And hovering in the air at the eye of the unnatural storm was the blinding orb of the Shaper. Just beyond the dimensional plane of the spreading devastation, the Doctor pointed to the scanner.

"That terrible object there, my friends, is the cause of this devastation. The Voord tried to use this device to make this planet their new home, but it's all failed."

"How long do we have?" Dodo asked.

"Not long, I'm afraid, which is why we must put it right, and most quickly. And you must help us, Monk!"

The Monk's head bobbed up from beneath the console.

"You actually want *my* help?"

"Want, no. Require under the circumstances, yes."

The Monk stood and spread his arms with a helpless shrug.

"I really don't see how we can help ourselves either way."

"Nonsense. There's an obvious solution to our difficulty: You say the Shaper must feed upon organic material to deactivate, and we have the dead Voord available to assist us. All we must do is put its body inside the Shaper. Once that's consumed the machine will shut down."

The Monk's jaw dropped. He dismounted the console platform just as another powerful jolt struck, and, just barely keeping his footing upon landing, he stood with outstretched arms before the Doctor.

"Doctor, I think your lifestyle has made you numb to peril and calamity! We can't possibly make a return journey to the Shaper and survive."

"I'm not suggesting we carry this Voord on our backs like a sack of potatoes! We can use the transmat disc – it's how the Voord got here after all!"

"But the time distortion! It'll interfere with the transmat's range; reduce it to a fraction of its capability. To do what you're asking would mean landing my TARDIS directly over the Shaper, and after the damage you and your friends have done to the Ship I can't possibly manage that!"

"Can't, or won't?" Steven demanded. He approached the Monk and loomed over him. The little cleric wriggled away from the burly pilot and shook his head.

"I'm sorry, but really I am powerless to help. You should just leave this place, Doctor. You'll all be much safer."

"You already know full-well I can't and won't do that!"

The Monk shrugged and sat on his console platform.

"Then I don't know what more we can do."

The Monk paused and dipped his head. His hands came together, as if in prayer. The Doctor frowned and turned away. His fingers nestled beneath his chin and over his mouth.

"I shall use my TARDIS."

Steven walked over to the old man's side.

"Do you think there's a chance, Doctor? Will our TARDIS be able to make the journey?"

"It must do so, my dear boy. There's no other way open to us."

The Doctor turned back to the Monk.

"I'll require you to turn over the transmat. I think it's the least you can contribute to this enterprise."

"Oh, gladly, my friend, gladly. I'm always willing to assist the unwary well-doers of the cosmos, especially you. I'll just need a moment to disconnect the disc from my console. Steven, my friend, you'll need the Voord's body; would you kindly pick it up?"

"Why don't you bring it and help us in the Doctor's TARDIS?" Steven retorted.

"Really, young man, you must think forwardly!" the Monk replied with a shake of his head and finger. "If the Doctor's enterprise should fail then you'll all need a place of refuge and here shall I and my TARDIS be to receive you...should you need me."

Steven glared his distrust but found to his mild disgust that he could not fault the Monk's logic, so he said nothing more as he walked to the console platform and removed the Voord's carcass. As he hefted the body over his shoulders, the Monk climbed onto the dais and began disconnecting the transmat from the console. The Doctor moved forward to watch the procedure and leaned far over the console; his cloak dropped wide and covered much of the panels over which he stood. As the Monk worked, the Doctor smiled darkly. A few moments passed and the transmat was free; the Monk stood with the large white disc in balanced across his arms.

"May we never say the clergy don't offer alms to the poor and needy. I hope this gift benefits you, Doctor."

The Monk extended the disc to the Doctor; Dodo offered to carry the device and took it in her arms. Another earth-jolt shook the TARDIS so hard Dodo felt her teeth chatter. The Monk raced around the console and switched the door control. The large double doors whirred and swung open. Thin wafts of smoke and the twanging sounds of twisting metals from the dying Voord invader penetrated the room. The Monk walked to the Doctor's side and held out his hand.

"Well, this looks to be our next goodbye. I wonder if we can finalize this parting for once on friendly terms."

"Perhaps, if only you finally agree to cease your meddling ways."

"Oh-ho-ho-ho, we both know that's one term we define differently, Doctor."

"Then, Monk," the Doctor said, patting the Monk's shoulder – much like a parent to a wayward child – "I shall ever hope that you mend your way before we meet again. Goodbye!"

The Monk laughed, if a little reluctantly, and walked with the Doctor to the exit and waved him goodbye. Steven, carrying the Voord body, walked to the exit and peered out to the corridor to check for falling debris. The Monk watched Steven for a moment and then cleared his throat. Steven turned to face the Monk, who held out his hand.

"Can I at least hope I've gained a little of your trust as we part company, my dear young Steven?"

“My trust? I don’t think you’ll ever have that, Monk,” Steven replied. “But you have helped us, and for that...well, thanks.” Steven paused a moment before adding: “I will say, even after all you’ve done, I hope you get out of here safely.”

Then, to the Monk’s near-surprise, Steven extended his free hand and took the Monk’s hand in parting. Then Steven nodded to the little man a half-courteous farewell and he exited the TARDIS. Last to leave was Dodo. She moved to shake the Monk’s hand and then decided instead to give him a big hug. The Monk hooted with kind surprise as he returned the embrace. Then the two walked to the exit doors. As Dodo stood in the doorway, she gazed up at the Monk and smiled.

“Goodbye, then, Monk. It was nice to meet you. I hope we might have a better go next time around.”

The Monk smiled – genuine and warm – and tickled Dodo’s chin with his thumb.

“Thank you, my dear child and my rarest Dodo. I shall hope to meet you again. In fact-” the Monk removed his wristwatch and held it before Dodo’s face – “take this as a farewell gift to remember me. If you ever part company with the Doctor, be they good terms or not, and if you still wish to travel the stars, just set both watch hands to twelve.”

“What happens then?” Dodo asked as the Monk looped the watch around her wrist.

“Oh, just you wait and see, that’s the lovely surprise!” the Monk chuckled. “Now, go and run along quickly and help make sure the Doctor doesn’t hurt himself. He just is never too careful! Farewell, my good Dodo!”

Dodo flashed a final smile and departed through the doors. The Monk waved goodbye and returned to the console to close the passageway. Then he reached to the adjacent control panel and re-activated the scanner to watch the Doctor, Dodo and Steven navigate their way through the disintegrating corridors of the collapsing Voord craft. Even though he was safe and alone in his own ship, the Monk remained still while the Doctor was in sight. On the screen, the old man and his friends turned a corner and disappeared.

The Monk heaved a grateful sigh and turned off the image. Then he reached into the folds of his habit and scooped out a large, white paper bag. The Monk mounted the platform and poured the contents of the bag upon the top of the central column: several odd-shaped pieces of white plastic laced with thin and thick lines of gold, silver, platinum, and copper. The Monk eyed the objects with glee and rubbed his hands together before operating the main controls and setting his TARDIS to random flight through space-time – he had in fact slightly exaggerated the extent of the damage Steven and Dodo had inflicted upon his ship. Glad to be rid finally of the Voord and the Doctor, the Monk muttered to himself:

“Oh, I’m so sorry, Doctor, for my slight deception, but when my power detector discovered where the Voord had hidden my spare parts, well, how could I neglect my freedom?”

The Monk took two of the circuits and knelt before the opened section of the control’s base.

“Still, I sincerely hope you succeed in whatever you plan to do, even after all of your bullying. Now which way does that piece go?”

* * * * *

“Dodo, watch out!”

Steven lunged forward and pushed the teenager out of the way of a falling metal girder; she leapt out of the way just in time and somehow kept the transmat secure in her arms; he nearly dropped the Voord carcass as his shoulder struck a side wall; the metal buckled under his weight. There was a terrifying metallurgical howl as an entire section of the corridor behind them collapsed. Dodo coughed and wiped her skirt and shirt free of dust.

“We can’t go back that way now.”

“I wouldn’t want to anyway,” Steven said. He sounded tense and worried. He called out to the Doctor, who was scouting the corridor sections several yards ahead.

“Doctor, this ship is coming apart around us. We’ve got to find the TARDIS.”

“I know that, my dear boy! I know it must be near – yes! Yes, I see it! It’s just up ahead. Hurry, you two, hurry!”

The old man ploughed forward, heedless of the huge metal chunks and ceramic debris blitzing the air and pelting the ground all around him. With Dodo and Steven mere feet behind him, the Doctor almost crashed into the TARDIS’s Police Box doors, the door key already clenched in his hand. He thrust the key sharp into the lock and twisted the grooves a quarter-turn. The blue wood slats released and swung open; the old man exhaled relief and swung his arm towards his friends over and over, bidding them to enter. Dodo went first with Steven only a step behind. The Doctor entered last and slammed the doors behind him. Inside the Ship he was ablaze with energy.

“Now, Steven, place the Voord directly before the console. Dodo, I must have the transmat!” he ordered. While Steven complied, the Doctor took the disc and set it upon a marble pedestal near one wall of the room. With his fingers, he pried free the disc’s back panel and began scrounging through its thick tapestry of spaghetti-thin wires and lubricated tubes. Dodo’s jaw dropped at the apparent vandalism.

“Oi! Don’t we need that thing?”

“Certainly not, Dodo. This transmat is a defective model; I could see that from the beginning. How else could it cause such havoc to the Monk’s Ship?”

“Then why take it?” Steven asked, coming up to join them.

“Because it has a vital part I can salvage to integrate into my TARDIS and temporarily improve its navigational ability, which is the disc’s compass.”

“But couldn’t you just have asked the Monk for some spare parts?” Dodo said. Steven replied:

“We tried that before, Dodo. At least, the Doctor took something from the Monk’s TARDIS last time we saw him in Ancient Egypt, but the circuits nearly burnt out this TARDIS: they’re really not compatible.”

The Doctor huffed a breath of annoyance.

“Yes, that wretched Mark Four construction; the upgrades are quite overly efficient - Hmm! Yes, here it is. I have it!”

He dug his fingers deep into the centre of the disembowelled disc and tugged loose with a jerk of his hand a small, ruby-coloured sphere ridged around its diameter with small, domed forest-green lights and marked at its apex with a single, midnight-blue button. With the compass in hand, the Doctor hurried over to the console. He knelt at the base and pried loose one of its coverings when another shockwave slammed against the Ship. Steven felt his feet launch from the floor. He shot out his arms, caught the edge of the console. Dodo grabbed the pedestal but the marble column spun and toppled over - it was falling on top of her-; Dodo flung herself out of the way just in time. The solid marble struck the floor. The Doctor clutched the control base to keep from sliding along the smooth, white ground. *I must make the connection!* He buried his hand deep into the under-column, scoured for the right cable- *There!*

The Doctor pulled a thin cable loose from its connection and tugged the line outside; live energy poured from the broken connection. He raised the transmat compass to the torn, leaking wire. The flowing energy touched the dome’s central blue jewel. The jewel brightened, its ridge lights filled with light and flashed in alternating patterns. The wire break closed over the blue jewel and the free energy ceased to flow. The Doctor wiped his brow and placed the compass inside the base. Then he stood and began manipulating switches and pulling levers just as another, far more devastating quake rocked the TARDIS. The Ship began to tilt, farther, then farther –

“Now!”

The Doctor pulled the main switch and the central column surged upwards, dropped downwards, rose again. The TARDIS was in flight. The Doctor stepped back from the console and gripped his lapels.

“Excellent. Excellent! We’ve achieved local transference. And just in time as well: I think that last episode was the destruction of the Voord ship. It can only be worse on the planet’s surface by now.”

“So, is it over?” Steven asked. But even as he half-pulled his very sore body over to Dodo to help her stand, he could feel something was different; something was new.

“Doctor,” he said, “this doesn’t feel right. Are we travelling?”

“In a way, my boy, in a very particular way. Watch. I’m going to open the doors.”

“But you’ve said we should never do that while we’re moving!” Dodo exclaimed. The Doctor smiled.

“Only when moving through time, my child. Observe.”

The old man operated the door controls and the white, roundelled double doors swung open. The Ship’s motion, a slight steady shifting, remained constant and smooth. At the Doctor’s beckoning, Steven and Dodo walked to the edge of the doors and looked outside. Dark clouds flew past. Thunder rumbled in the distance. They looked down. Dodo cried out and pointed. Not far below and rushing past at speed was the broken, twisted surface of the planet. The planet was moving past – no, not the planet, the TARDIS. The TARDIS was flying.

Chuckling, the Doctor joined Dodo and Steven in the Ship’s doorway.

“I see you understand the difference of this flight now, my friends?”

“Yes, but...how? How did you do it?” Dodo asked, her eyes fixed upon the rocky, molten ground rolling beneath her.

“My dear Dodo if the TARDIS is capable of traversing the expanse of time surely it is also capable of simple flight. The only reason I don’t attempt this mode of travel more often is because of the Ship’s unreliable sense of direction.”

“So, that’s why you installed the transmat’s compass,” Steven surmised. “With its directional system, you can plot a course towards this device you mentioned.”

“Precisely! I knew your piloting experience would see the way eventually. Now I think we’re going the right way, and much smoother than I expected -”

The TARDIS shuddered and dropped towards the surface and then quickly rose, although higher than it had been before. Then their course began to drift to the left, to the right-

“No! The compass is failing. The TARDIS’s power is overwhelming it! Steven, you must pilot the Ship!”

The Doctor hurried back to the console. Steven followed close behind, more than a little surprised.

“You need *me* as the pilot?”

“Yes, of course! Aren’t you willing?”

“Well...I am. It’s just you’ve never let me operate the controls before.”

“True, and don’t expect this opportunity to come again! And just so you don’t start feeling too accomplished, you won’t be piloting the ship as I do. I shall provide much more human-friendly instruments to give you purely steering power. Now, I need you to guide us to the Shaper and hold the TARDIS steady while I lower the Voord carcass into that terrible machine. Only then will its appetite be satisfied.”

“But, Doctor, if all you need is to place the body in this machine then I can do that while you pilot the TARDIS.”

“Oh, have faith in yourself, Steven Taylor! We’ve been through enough together that I know I have faith in you! Besides, I’m the only one who can withstand the time distortion the Shaper is generating. Now, pay attention! Here are the relevant controls.”

Steven had no idea how the Doctor had managed it so quickly (for Steven had never noticed these controls before) but the Doctor had somehow installed into the console an entire flight control apparatus with controls very like those he used during his years as a space fighter-pilot.

While the Doctor explained to Steven the TARDIS's manual flight systems Dodo remained in the doorway. She gazed out upon the vast panoramic expanse of the world beneath her. Even deformed and twisted by savage time energies, the sight was beautiful, breath-taking, so much more than anything she remembered back at home. Dodo thought of home: of cold rain and climbing trees; of her dead parents and her uncaring aunt; of the strange circumstances that had led to enter what she had thought was a simple Police Box on Wimbledon Common. She knew now more than ever more much loved every moment of her new, incredible life.

A bright light shone in Dodo's eyes. She shielded her brow with her hands and peered off towards the horizon. There she saw it: the bright light ball affixed above the horizon, like a small sun burning a hole in the sky. The ball's energy radiated out to ever-widening concentric circles of multi-hued fire; the colours ran and mingled like melting sherbet. Thick rays of solid light lanced from the miniature sun, driving away the black and chartreuse clouds of charged moisture. Webs of lightning arched across the skyline, raced towards the TARDIS - the sight was almost overpowering. Dodo sat down and drank in the moment. Then, finding her voice, she called over her shoulder.

"It's almost here, Steven!"

"Thanks! Tell me if it's straight ahead."

"Yes, wait! Almost, just a little to the right. Good...down a little bit. Too much...up a little more...got it!"

"Perfect, thanks." Steven replied. "This is unbelievable. I feel like an ancient mariner behind his creaky wheel."

He was standing in front of the console panel opposite from the doorway. After a quick tutorial from the Doctor on how to steer the flying TARDIS, Steven felt his hands gradually growing accustomed to the ebb and flow of the machine's aerial movement. Every few moments he adjusted the array of handles, gauges, and throttles, all of which controlled the TARDIS's attitude, pitch, altitude, vectors, and every other element vital to the craft's flight.

Steven input a small course change into the Ship's directional interface and then looked over the rise and fall of the central column and out of the open doorway. Framed in the open doorway around Dodo's seated figure was the shining fireball of the approaching Shaper. The light from the machine threw Dodo's shadow long and dark behind her. Like his teenaged friend, Steven marvelled at the incredible image before him. *It's like we're flying straight into the sun!* A sharp beeping sound rose from the console; Steven glanced down at the proximity detector the Doctor had shown him.

"Doctor, we'll reach the target in about a minute!"

The Doctor, who had occupied the last few moments by loading the dead Voord into an old-Earth-style wheelchair, glanced up and peered out the doors towards the unyielding storm of the Shaper's false dawn. The terrible sight recalled an ancient Earth weather proverb to his mind:

Red sky in morning, sailors take warning.

"Well done!" the Doctor declared with a proud, clenched fist. He looked to Steven, who stood still and confident before the console. The Doctor such pride in Steven and knew that he had learned who he was and his true capabilities. The Doctor stared wistfully towards Steven and knew that the time was right for his future, but first they had to face the matter at hand.

The Doctor stood and turned to watch the scanner. On the screen was the glowing Shaper, its size slowly increasing. The old man pointed to the image and spoke.

"Now, Steven, you must execute our course very carefully; and when we come to within one hundred meters set the TARDIS doors directly level with the Shaper and then begin the final approach. Dodo, please make some room; we shall guide Steven together."

The Doctor crossed the room and joined Dodo at the doorway.

"Remember, my boy, check the scanner every few moments to verify our directions. We need to come to a stationary hold at no less than one foot from the machine!"

"O.K.! We're at three hundred meters..."

“Good luck, Steven!” Dodo cried. The Shaper’s flares warmed her face.

“Two hundred meters...”

“Steady, Steven, steady,” the Doctor warned. He felt time bulging toward the open doorway.

“One hundred meters! Adjusting altitude.”

Steven flicked two switches and pulled down a black-handled, double-columned lever. The TARDIS dropped towards. Steven glanced at the scanner and imagined the flaming ball’s horizontal line of symmetry. He heard the Doctor’s voice.

“Descend an additional ten meters...make one second correction to starboard...ascend one meter more...There! We’ve made it! Steven, lock this position!”

Steven slapped his palm against upon a large, red button. There was a heavy, metallic clank deep within, even beneath, the console and the Ship’s shifting halted. The TARDIS was still. The Doctor wasted no time.

“Now, both of you, hide behind the console: it will protect you from the time turbulence. Dodo, my dear, hurry! The next few moments will be quite perilous.”

Dodo hesitated for a moment. She wanted to help her friend, but she relented; but not before leaning close and throwing her arms around the Doctor. The old man returned the quick embrace.

“You are so much like her,” he whispered. “I was right to find you. Now, run along!”

The Doctor extracted himself and began to push the Voord in the wheelchair towards the threshold. Dodo turned and took a quick step towards the console before the ground sloped downwards and she crashed face-first to the ground. Steven pitched forward onto the console; he grabbed the central column for support. The Doctor crashed to the floor as did the wheelchair. The Voord body slid from the seat; its chest smacked against the width-edge of one of the doors; there it sagged like a broken puppet. Dodo slid backwards, like a falling lift; the control room filled her vision, shrank smaller, smaller – she reached out, caught one of the doors. She held tight. She heard the Doctor.

“Hold still, Dodo! Keep your eyes inside!”

Fuelled by the obedience of adrenaline, Dodo clamped both hands onto the wide side edge of the door. *I won’t look outside. I won’t look outside.* She heard something move outside.

Leaning against the other door, the Doctor wanted answers.

“Steven, what’s happening over there?”

“I’ll check!”

Steven’s hands hovered over the controls; his eyes scrutinized every reading. The coordinates were set and constant.

“This doesn’t make any sense! We’re right where we should be; the navigation hasn’t failed.”

“Then what’s gone wrong?”

Dodo screamed. The Doctor twisted around, looked outside, stood in horror, saw the large, formless black mass flapping and massing, and churning beneath the TARDIS, heard the snapping claws and horned heads wriggling and writhing and screeching, smelt the putrid waft of scorched flesh and dripping bile and acidic liquids, felt the howling pounding of violence and fury radiating from the beast – *no, beasts. Can it be?* The TARDIS shook and tipped further downwards. A web of thick, flesh-dripping tendrils was extending from the dark mass and latching onto the TARDIS’ Police Box exterior; they were dropping to the planet. Then the TARDIS began to tremble, shake, rattle, quake. The Ship was tearing itself apart. Dodo cried out.

“Doctor, what’s happening?”

“It’s the Shaper! It’s merging with the TARDIS’s time-field. It’ll make the Shaper’s destructive energy expand at an exponential rate.”

Heedless of the creature mere feet from him, the Doctor stuck his head out of the open doorway. The planet below was burning. The old man craned his neck upwards to gaze into the sky.

The clouds had cleared; the blue-white sun was expanding, darkening to blood. There was no more time. The Doctor pushed back inside the chamber and shouted.

"Dodo, take shelter behind your door! Steven, when I give the word place us directly above the sphere. Then get behind the console and don't move until I say so!"

"But, Doctor-"

"Do as I say, young man!"

Steven clenched his jaw but made no more arguments. The Doctor looked over at Dodo: she was secure behind the door. The Doctor inhaled, reached down, and hefted the Voord body from across the other exit door. The Doctor exhaled.

"Now!"

Steven executed the navigation. The TARDIS jolted against the clinging dark mass but rose higher, higher, shifted sideways, sideways – the Shaper's brightness centred below the doorway; the darkness above the light screamed out its murder. The Doctor lunged forward and flung the Voord body out into the air; the Doctor fell behind the body; the body struck the darkness; the darkness released the TARDIS and dropped towards the light; the light touched the darkness; the light cancelled the darkness; the brightness bleached all sight; all sounds fled to silence; all time bled out into eternity.

The explosion shattered everything.

The TARDIS flung upwards, pushed backwards, spun around and round, faster, faster, tumbled over and over, twisted into a blur. Dodo fell against the wall, into the roundels; Steven crashed to the floor, pressed against the ground. The Ship was out of control, racing upwards, blossoming fire streaming from its outer blue box. Steven tried to reach the controls; the motion forces paralyzed his arm, an impossible weight to overcome – there was a movement. Steven's sunken eyes shifted to the right; he saw the source: it was the Doctor, standing over the console, his hands flying over the machine, pulling the main switch, the central column rose...

And everything stopped. The control chamber was quiet and peaceful; the only sound was the constant, soft, and familiar background hum. The Doctor, standing over the console and smiling smartly, chuckled to himself. He gazed about and saw both Dodo and Steven, sprawled and dazed upon the chamber floor.

"Well, now, you two, get yourselves up. The danger is safely past us."

Steven groaned and pulled himself up from the ground. He grabbed one corner off the console and, grimacing, stood upon his feet. He took a moment to breathe and then walked over to Dodo's dazed body. He helped her to stand and, reached down to upright the mahogany chair, sat her in the seat. Only then Steven asked:

"Did it work, Doctor?"

"Oh, yes, my boy, it worked. Of course, it did! We succeeded in our endeavour."

"But what happened?" Dodo questioned as she rubbed her temples with both hands.

"Just what I intended, my dear child: I ejected the Voord carcass into the Shaper and upon contact with the machine's energy barrier it consumed the organic matter. Once done, the machine shut down, just as the Monk had foolishly programmed it to do."

"And that alien creature that grabbed the TARDIS? What was it?" Steven sounded so tired, and weary, the Doctor thought. *So very young and to have seen so much horror...*

"It was the Voord."

"That was the Voord?"

"Yes, I'm afraid so. All of them, in fact. I think what attacked us was an amalgamation of the Voord who held the Monk and I captive on the planet's surface. The Shaper's time acceleration must have mutated their bodies almost beyond recognition; but I could still hear their thoughts in my mind, their intense hatred towards us. Such a terrible waste of life."

"What about the planet?" Dodo asked. "Is anything left?"

“Why don’t we see?” the Doctor replied. “I managed to launch the TARDIS into orbit around the planet; otherwise we’d almost never find our way back.”

The old man operated the scanner control and the view screen brightened. Dodo gasped at what she saw. The once graceful, emerald sphere was now a massive, ruby oval streaked with turgid bands of gold, mustard and magenta. Sparkling trails of dusty, rust-coloured matter leeched from the planet’s scorched atmosphere and spiralled towards the gluttonous fires of the nearby, bloated, blood-red sun.

“The planet has changed, and the sun is much closer.” said Steven.

“Yes,” the Doctor said. His voice was soft and sombre. “The Shaper not only savaged the planet but its time wave affected its nearest star, aging both prematurely. With the star now so much older and larger, the planet’s orbit has shifted. It’s falling into the sun; and the gravity surge is stretching it out of shape.”

“It’s so sad,” Dodo said. “It was so beautiful, so...clean and young.”

“Yes, my dear, but in a different way the planet is still beautiful. And now that I think, it’s far more important to your people than ever before.”

“What do you mean?” asked Steven.

“Why, I’ve remembered what this planet is: Conellipsus, the Misshapen Planet!”

“That’s Conellipsus?!” Steven cried. Dodo looked at her friend with surprise: it was clear he understood the Doctor’s meaning. She gave her friends a puzzled stare until the Doctor explained.

“The Misshapen Planet, or WASP-12b as it will be first known, will be one of mankind’s most important historical discoveries. Earth’s astronomers will discover it in the year 2008 and by 2010 they will observe its star consuming it. Then when water is discovered in its atmosphere in the year 2013, this novel discovery of a star eating its own world will further inspire humanity to advance its research into deep-space exploration for habitable planets. Within a few hundred years Earth ships will leave the solar system to reach of those worlds, and Conellipsus will be one of first planets they attempt to visit, although they shall never find it.”

“Why not?” Dodo wondered.

“Oh, who can really say, my dear? Most likely the planet was bent too far out of shape long before any visitors could reach that part of the heavens. But the inspiration was there to humanity nonetheless. So, you see, out of a little tragedy comes great advancement.”

“Did you know this would happen: That our actions here would create the Misshapen Planet?” Steven asked with a tinge of suspicion in his words.

The Doctor recognized the source of his companion’s mistrust, his wariness – weariness, even – borne of meeting so many people throughout their travels – good, unforgettable lives worth remembering – whose terrible deaths time had already bound fast into the pages of history, epitaphs the Doctor had dutifully refused to erase. The Doctor stared at Steven and wondered what he was thinking. *Anne*. He looked upon Dodo and remembered her first, breathless arrival to the TARDIS. *Choice*. He gazed upon the Misshapen Planet and pondered its formation. *Purpose*.

“Knowing and not knowing the particulars of history is often not so simple in our lives, my friend. But knowing we have participated in that history to oppose evil – that is the greatest knowledge. And today we played our part well.”

“And that machine, Doctor? Where is it now?” Dodo asked.

“I have no real idea, my child. But I’m sure we’ll never find it now. Most likely it was flung out into space by the explosion we experienced.”

“But what if someone finds it? Won’t this happen all over again?”

“Oh, don’t trouble yourself with the matter. Short of an instructional manual no one could possibly understand how to control it. No, I’m quite convinced everything about this trying affair is now well and truly over.”

“But what about the Monk?” Steven said. “Do you think we’ll see him again?”

“Oh, who can say, Steven? It’s a vast cosmos and he has many opportunities to continue his meddling. He’s certainly long since departed from this place.”

“But wasn’t his TARDIS damaged, something about the steering?” Dodo interjected.

The Doctor nodded once.

“Yes, his directional unit. He tried to keep it from me but I strongly suspect the Monk took a brief detour on our journey through to the Voord invader to find the parts necessary to complete the needed repairs to that circuit.”

“So, he’s free to cause us trouble again,” Steven muttered as he placed his hands on his hips. The Doctor’s eyes twinkled.

“Perhaps, my boy. But I should think three humiliations ought to be enough deterrent even for the Monk. And I have certain assurances he won’t cross our paths anytime soon.”

“You’ve done something again, haven’t you?” Steven folded his arms and smiled. The Doctor smirked before reaching over and patting Steven’s cheeks.

“You’re catching on to my methods, my boy!”

The Doctor removed from his coat pocket a small, cuboid hunk of circuitry. He held the object up to gaze at its construction. Dodo stepped close beside him to study the circuit.

“What’s that thing?” she asked.

“That, my dear, is the design unit from the Monk’s TARDIS. It regulates the interior architecture of his ship.”

“You mean he can’t get inside his machine again?” asked Steven.

“Oh, no, he can certainly enter his TARDIS; this component has an entirely different functional track than the dimensional unit. Yes, he can enter, but after that... heh-heh-heh!”

“But when did you take it?” Dodo wondered.

“When our friend the Monk was handing us his transmat I took the liberty of mishandling his console. I am confident he’ll soon discover he has a new ship-wide difficulty to confront. Yes, we keep heaping upon him trials, but such is the price of cosmic immaturity.”

“It’s almost too bad,” Dodo commented, gazing up at the Doctor with a half-frown. “I thought he was a very nice person to know. He almost reminded me of you.”

For a moment, the Doctor seemed genuinely affronted.

“Oh, nonsense, my child, nonsense! I’m much more agreeable, and well-travelled. And I don’t need a Mark Four unit to get me anywhere or meddle in history to make my mark!”

The Doctor stood straight over the TARDIS console. He clutched his coat lapels and gazed upon the machine with pride. Then he sighed and tucked his head towards his chest: he was ready for new action.

“Now, my friends, if you’ll excuse me, I must see to removing that compass from the console, although I may wish keep the unit, plus I may wish to integrate the Monk’s – well, *my* – temporal beacon into the Ship’s directional systems. And I think this other, design circuit could be put to fine use in augmenting my ship’s architectural structure, or at least give some greater variety to our surroundings! Yes, with these vital new components as part of the TARDIS I think we can be safe in expecting that we may soon finally know just exactly where we are going.”

“And where will that be?” Dodo asked.

“Anywhere, my child, and everywhere. But wherever we roam the choice is ours to make. So, we shall make the best choice. Soon we shall see. Yes, soon we shall see! Hmm! Hmm-hmm! Now, run along!”

As Steven and Dodo journeyed into the TARDIS for some much-needed rest and relaxation, the Doctor chuckled as he considered the possibilities before him. Then he looked over his shoulder to see that his companions had completely left the console room. The Doctor nodded to himself and ducked underneath the console to pry loose one of the base’s protective covers. He next took a moment to integrate the several new devices into the TARDIS’ navigational and structural

networks, before replacing the panel and standing to manipulate the console's array of instruments and scan the misshapen planet nearby.

"It's just as I hypothesized," the Doctor self-declared. "The planet's distorted time signature is still expanding, even if ever so slowly. Unchecked, it could still destabilize the local time environment, as well as attract the worst sort of attention."

The Doctor stepped back from the console and considered his options. He gripped his coat lapels as he decided.

"No, I can't be traced, not when things are still imperfect. I must hide what happened here and do so at once! A little time travel should cure this ill..."

The Doctor hurried around the console, pulling levers, shifting dials, and pushing buttons at every corner turn. A witness to his earlier fatigues might have thought him unwise to exert himself so quickly, but the old man's determination had seemingly restored his vigour. And clear-minded strength was exactly what the Doctor required at that moment; for what he was performing was of such intricate complexity that he could not afford to remember his encroaching weakness; he had to act, quickly and correctly!

Another pass around the console and the maneuverer was ready to execute. The Doctor knew what he was about to do very risky, dangerous even, to fling a planet across time and space to a new location and era; but it was necessary all the same. The old man bent over the console's destination controls and input a coordinate set for the misshapen planet's arrival. Then he stood straight and gripped the trajectory control.

"Why did humanity never find Conellipsus, kind Dodo? Because we hid it."

The Doctor tugged the control. To his delight the TARDIS did not shudder or quake as it performed its task – perhaps the new additions were helping the ship to function properly after all! His wonder grew as he watched the scanner as Conellipsus disappeared into a shower of colour and light. It was done. Space and time were safe. He was safe.

The Doctor sighed with relief and was about to send his craft into the embrace of the Time Vortex once more but stopped himself. The coordinates of Conellipsus's intended arrival were still held in the navigation system's memory, and he had a new, working compass installed. The Doctor smiled with mischievous anticipation as he copied the coordinates into the main computer system and set the TARDIS along a parallel course.

The passage of those few minutes ended with the TARDIS emerging into normal space and its pilot checking the local conditions. The Doctor marvelled at the time scale: he had rarely travelled so far into the future, the time of incredible legends beyond history. The Doctor checked his instruments and confirmed the presence of a world below. He activated the scanner and beheld a sphere of simple beauty and charming colours: chartreuse, cerulean, and dandelion. The world was normal in every way, even its shape. Could it have been Conellipsus, restored to a measure of its former beauty under the pull of a normal sun's gravity and the natural passage of time? And what new crop of life had perhaps sprung from the temporal whirlwind he, the Monk and the Voord had sown? There was one way to find out.

The Doctor programmed the TARDIS to initiate a landing upon the planet's surface. As the ship performed its function, the old man retrieved a reacting vibrator, a small box-shaped scanning device that bore a vague resemblance to a mariner's compass, from a small cupboard placed in a rarely-used corner of the console room. As the Doctor fit the vibrator's strap around his shoulder, Steven and Dodo returned to the control chamber. Both had changed clothing: Dodo now wore a surprisingly conservative white coat-dress buttoned at the neck, while Steven, ever consistent in his wardrobe choices, wore a black shirt tucked into dark trousers. The Doctor greeted them with warmth.

"Ah, welcome back, you two. You're both just in time to witness a personal triumph!"

"And what's that?" Steven asked.

"Shall we look and see?" the Doctor replied as he activated the scanner and revealed a panoramic scene of yellow-green bushes set upon a crop of carved, grey stone. The Doctor smiled and turned from the scanner.

"Yes, I think I can say that I know just exactly where we are."

"Past, Present or Future?" Dodo asked.

"In the future, very much in the future," the Doctor replied with a stately-raised finger, as if he was a voyager describing curious lands to the untraveled. "We've now reached the distant horizon of an age, an age of peace and prosperity." The Doctor looked to Dodo and smiled. "Now, I'm going to be off!"

The old man activated the outer door control as he turned away with a light chuckle and exited the machine. With a happy shrug, Dodo followed the Doctor, with Steven close behind. As Steven neared the doors he could hear the Doctor's well-intentioned voice just outside:

"Now stay close to the TARDIS, you two! I shall return in five minutes' time."

Standing at the edge of the threshold, Steven turned back to view the vast, white dimension of the TARDIS. His gaze settled upon the incredible, hexagonal console and he listened to the ship's peaceful, almost living, interior hum. Somehow, he felt that he would not see the TARDIS again for a very long time...

And outside, around the far corner of the Police Box, a wild-haired young man holding a massive club edged near the strange ship, before hurrying off to warn his fellow savages...

* * * * *

The Monk chuckled as he made the final connection for his new directional unit. He replaced the base cover and stood to operate the Ship's controls. Finally, his TARDIS was fully operational and ready to travel correctly. But he preferred a confirmation.

"Now, I'll need a place to land. I know! I'll try the Earth! After all, why not? All my recent troubles with the Doctor started there, so it makes perfect sense to return for a fresh start!"

The Monk clasped his hands together in expectant triumph and set the coordinates.

"Let's consider...oh, yes, I know. Shrewsbury Abbey, Shropshire, England, Earth year 1083. I can be there in time to see Earl Roger place his gloves upon the altar of St. Peter and found the abbey! And then perhaps I can slip forward into that island's history and see how I can improve the warfare of the Anarchy! But first thing's first: to arrive!"

The Monk input the final coordinate and initiated transference. The central column rose and fell, and then after a few moments dropped still. He had arrived. The Monk savoured his expectations. Rubbing his hands together and skipping with glee, the Monk opened the chamber doors and exited onto a chilly, English countryside. His TARDIS had taken the shape of a bale of hay and a short distance away was a small, medieval village with a castle at its centre. The Monk leapt with joy and hooped hearty laughter.

"Success!" He raised his arms over his head and shouted to the morning sky. "SUCCESS!"

A large cow ranged close to the Monk and sniffed his habit. The Monk smiled and patted the animal's head. Then he glanced down at his dust-laden robes and chuckled.

"I may act the part of an apparent monk quite aptly but I rather think my habit needs a good reformation! I'll just have a quick look around my wardrobe, tour the local area and then be on my way!"

The Monk turned around and re-entered his TARDIS and stopped in surprise. Instead of the control chamber he found himself in the middle of a long corridor. The Monk hurriedly explored the space but could view nothing except the same grey, roundelled walls.

"This...this is nowhere near where I should be. Something must be wrong with the architectural configuration."

He spotted a nearby door with a small handle and a single, dark roundel near the top. He hurried to the door and opened it, but found himself inside another corridor, this time a long, straight space, which extended in both directions to dead ends. Again, there was only one door visible. The Monk opened that door: another corridor, this time a closed triangle. There was another door: and a square corridor beyond. Another door: a pentagonal corridor. Another: a hexagon. The Monk hurried through another geometrically-enclosed corridor, and another, and another, and on, and on, and on...until there was only a circular corridor. Sick and dizzy, the Monk clutched his hair and sputtered.

“The cow couldn’t have caused this! But what did?”

The Monk spotted another doorway and hurried to open it. He did so and upon crossing through found himself within the console room. He rushed over to the console and crouched low to peer within the base of the unit. Everything seemed intact and in its correct location – no! There was a space where no space should have been. And what should have been within that space was –

A moment later the Monk scrambled to stand and smacked his hands to the sides of his head.

“The Doctor! He’s done it again! Somehow, he’s removed my design unit! Now I have no control over the internal architecture of my ship!”

Frantic, the Monk twisted the main door switch and the double doors swung open to reveal – a solid grey wall. The Monk gaped in shock at the barrier and clutched his hands together.

“And I’m trapped within my own TARDIS!”

The Monk shook his fists in the air and shouted his voice towards the oppressive, grey ceiling.

“Doctor! I will pay you back for this one day! I promise you!”

Then the Monk pouted and sat on the floor beneath the console, glumly staring at the blank, grey wall before him.

* * * * *

Off in the uncharted wilderness of eternity, the Doctor’s TARDIS, rickety but functional, spun free amongst the vast, starry host of time and space towards the infinite possibilities of endless adventures.

Elsewhere and Elsewhen

"Deedrun, this is Maxilla. I'm down in the cargo bay. You know that sphere we just brought on board? I've looked inside and I'm telling you, the technology I found...it's like nothing we've ever seen."

"Then it's something worth keeping. Can you figure how to work it?"

"Normally, I wouldn't even guess how, but as luck has it, someone left an instruction manual inside. The handwriting's terrible but I'm sure this will help. Looks like there's an inner-chamber installed here with some residue traces inside...they look organic. The instructions say this machine runs on organic material and can re-form entire worlds!"

"A matter transformer machine powered by flesh...this is something new. Is there anything else inside the machine?"

"I can check. There's another handwritten list with the names of planets and their coordinates, fourteen in all...someplace called Marinus is the last."

"Well, why don't we go visit them? It could make for some interesting terra-forming development. We've got plenty of organic samples on board and there's nothing else happening here."

"I'm always game for a new experimental adventure. Wait a moment, there's something else...a black bag."

"A black bag? What's inside? Be careful, Maxilla!"

"Oh, don't wrap your arms; no one knows or cares about us, anyway: we're only junior-grade research scientists, for now at least. Still, there is something heavy inside...what... You're not going to believe this, Deedrun. There's a head in here, covered in silver cloth – no, the cloth is its skin! It's got some kind of a square, cybernetic headset attached."

"A cybernetic head inside a world shaper's organic receptor? We may want to save that item for last..."

Dramatis Personae

Doctor Who – William Hartnell
Steven – Peter Purves
Dodo – Jackie Lane
The Monk – Peter Butterworth
Pardok – Stephen Dartnell
Voords – Martin Cort
Peter Stenson
Gordon Wales
Andrew Dickens
Andrew Bone
Kirsty Besterman

The Monk's Fourteen Planets
Planet One – Avalon
Planet Two - Haddron
Planet Three - Kastopheria
Planet Four - Barclow
Planet Five - Akoshemon
Planet Six - Magnus
Planet Seven - Heaven
Planet Eight - Yquatine
Planet Nine - Toop
Planet Ten - Sunday
Planet Eleven - Hereafter
Planet Twelve – Bates' World
Planet Thirteen – Tyler's Folly
Planet Fourteen – Marinus

Appendix – The Monk’s Tale

Some fifty years after the Doctor’s escape from his home planet, the Monk departed from that world while on an unofficial assignment from the government’s clandestine intervention organization. Once free from that organization’s direct supervision, however, the Monk soon took advantage of his new-found freedom and indefinitely delayed his return.

Following his encounter with the Doctor in Northumbria, 1066, the Monk remained trapped on Sol III for several solar weeks while conducting bypass repairs to the dimensional control circuit removed by the Doctor before making a welcome departure from that planet roughly concurrent to the period when the Doctor and travelling companions Steven Taylor and Vicki Pallister battled the Drahvins.

An additional several months passed before the Monk could access the full dimensional capacity of his TARDIS, at which time he began seeking in earnest the Doctor to exact revenge for the humiliation of travelling inside a dimensionally-transcendental machine that had become for a time exactly as large on the inside as the outside.

After their subsequent encounter on the planets Tigus and Sol III during the era of Egyptian military dominance, the Monk endured another technical humiliation at the hands of the Doctor when the latter stole the former’s directional control circuit to pilot a secure course to the planet Kembel to thwart the Daleks’ deployment of the Time Destructor.

While the Doctor, Steven Taylor and Sara Kingdom endeavoured to defeat the Daleks and Mavic Chen, the Monk’s TARDIS wandered to an uncharted ice planet where the Monk discovered the second round of damage inflicted upon his Ship. The Monk remained on the ice planet while he conducted further repairs to his craft. Those restorations lasted while the Doctor travelled with his companions Steven Taylor and Oliver Harper.

Around the time that the Doctor and Steven Taylor visited Paris on the eve of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, the Monk felt secure enough in his Ship’s navigational capability to leave the ice planet and began his cosmic search for the spare circuitry required to affect complete repairs to the lost directional control.

From approximately the beginning of the Doctor’s travels with companions Steven Taylor and Dorothea Chaplet the Monk conducted visits to at least thirteen planets in search of the technology caches he had deposited during earlier visits to said planets. Incidentally, the Monk was present on Earth during the Doctor’s visit to Kiev, 1240, and their telepathic proximity prompted the Doctor to mention the Monk on multiple occasions during his captivity by the Mongols.

Shortly before the Monk’s third post-home planet encounter with the Doctor he attempted a visit to the planet Marinus, but instead discovered the technology which he had left upon that world had fallen into the hands of the Voord. This revelation eventually led to the events chronicled in the preceding account.

During the Doctor's visit to the planet of the Elders the Monk uncovered the theft of his Ship's design control circuit, and found himself trapped within the confines of his own TARDIS at Shrewsbury, England, 1083. There he remained for several weeks before he managed to regain full access to his Ship, which was generally coincident to the Doctor and Dodo's experiences with the Pageant and the alternative Paris.

However, even with his freedom to roam in space and time eventually restored, the Monk fulfilled the Doctor's prediction to Steven Taylor: three successive humiliations were indeed enough to convince the Monk to forego seeking the Doctor once again. Instead he decided to find new historical events to influence while straying as far from the Doctor's time paths as he could possibly travel. And while the Doctor continued his travels with Dorothea Chaplet, the Monk felt himself missing the brief friendship he had struck with the young Earth girl.

Dorothea parted company quite abruptly with the Doctor due to a devastating mental breakdown following her hypnotic encounter with the artificial intelligence WOTAN – a departure encouraged by a mental suggestion implanted by the Doctor himself, who felt it best to leave his friend in the safety of her own time and planet should his impending first change fail. Soon after, however, she found herself longing for the Doctor's company once again.

Without any means to contact her friend she feared that there was no recourse to reunite her with the ancient traveller, until she remembered the wristwatch the Monk had bestowed her. And so, on a warm, English country road in the final days of July, 1966, Dorothea moved both watch hands to twelve and found herself within the console room of the TARDIS. Just not the Doctor's TARDIS...

Dedicated to the memories of William Hartnell and Peter Butterworth



The TARDIS intercepts a distress signal traveling through time and the Doctor feels compelled to investigate. Tracing the call to a beautiful world, the Ship lands within a mysterious vessel; and soon the Doctor, Steven, and Dodo find themselves trapped in the sinister clutches of the Doctor's old enemies, the Voord. And to make matters worse, there is also another TARDIS on board the Voord ship, a TARDIS with a Monk at its helm.

With Dodo and Steven held hostage, the Doctor is forced to assist his fellow time traveller in completing a dangerous task. But why has the Monk allied himself with the Voord? What is their bold, new intention? What is the strange object that lies at the bottom of the Ravine? And what sudden, terrifying illness has afflicted the Doctor?

The answer to these questions leads the Doctor straight into a catastrophe, which hits closer to home than he ever thought possible...

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