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**THE TEARS OF RASSILON**



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## PROLOGUE

The young woman ran through the terminal of the Decema System spaceport, a backpack strapped tightly to her back. Long strawberry-blonde hair waved behind her like a bridal veil. Luckily, most spaceports were laid out nearly the same throughout the galaxy, so she was able to find her way with ease. The fact that she had committed the layout to memory some time ago helped as well.

The young woman had been sent to investigate an alleged meeting between the governor of the seventh planet and an unknown party of individuals. The meeting had taken place at a day earlier than planned, so her contact had trans-matted some pictures he was able to take of the event to the spaceport. Exchanging the pictures for fifty thousand Grotzits, the girl had stashed the pictures in a backpack. Then she'd slung the backpack on over her long grey overcoat.

"Flight 3725 for the Pleasure Dome on Decema 7 is now boarding in Gate 14F..."

The young woman glanced over the walls to find the location of the luggage claim area.

"And where do you think you're going, Red?" A large gloved hand came down on the young woman's arm and squeezed, causing her to wince in pain. She stopped in her tracks and swung around to view her assailant. Once she took the sight before her in, she immediately wished she hadn't turned around in the first place. Damn curiosity. He stood easily a foot and a half taller than she did, and his sickening smile twisted toothlessly across his face. Just above the right ear of the man's bald and pock-covered head was a small numbered tattoo. Even though she couldn't make out the actual number of the tattoo, she recognized the tattoo's position from the pictures: he was one of them. She turned to run; her wavy, waist length hair swished around as she turned, whipping the man in the face and causing him to release his grip.

"Actually," she stated calmly, "my name isn't 'Red,' it's Grae." With a quick reach into her pack she produced a small, black, rectangular taser and pushed it into the attacker's chest.

There was a hail of sparks and he collapsed to the ground, unconscious. Quickly, she blew the smoke from the end of the weapon and popped it back into her pack with another quick motion.

At once, the announcement blasted over the loudspeaker once again:

"Flight 3725 for the Pleasure Dome on Decema 7 is now boarding in Gate 14F..."

Grae looked up at the loudspeaker, twisted a dial on her watch and vanished, leaving her attacker to regain consciousness alone.

\* \* \* \* \*

Jeff Carson had come to enjoy his job, working in the control booth of the spaceport. Recent cutbacks, however, made it impossible to keep as sophisticated equipment as necessary, the type of which he had come to know and use over the three years he had been on the job. He had been moved to a new office, in a small control booth containing antique twenty-second century equipment. The bulkiness of his laptop system was laughable and slow by present standards, giving him not nearly as much room as he would have liked. To make it worse, they had given him a partner. Luckily, the partner was in the rest room at the time, otherwise there wouldn't have been room for what happened next.

While working for the Spaceport, he had seen many bizarre things in his time. The two-headed Oldarian moose-puppy was his personal favourite. Nothing in his book of rules and regs, however, could possibly have prepared him for the site of a small woman with incredibly long hair and the deepest green eyes he had ever seen materialize in the opposite corner of the booth.

Jeff Carson fell from his seat.

"Sorry 'bout that." She smiled a wide, attractive grin. "I'll just be going..."

Grae opened the door and walked out into the hallway. To her horror, the announcer's booth was only on the opposite side of the wall from where she had stood a moment before. The large man, chest heaving in anger, spun round and made eye contact with his target. She quickly ran back into the booth, locking the door behind her. In an instant, the door was riddled with staser pulses. Jeff Carson quickly scurried under his desk.

"I'm so sorry to trouble you," she began, "but could you turn off all the loud speakers except those in the luggage claim and make that announcement again?"

"What?"

"Please!" The girl looked at the announcer and he was instantly lost in her eyes. They were so green, like two emeralds penetrating into his soul, burning into his brain. He could hear her voice echoing strangely in his ears as the rest of the world drifted out of focus. "I need your help. Turn off all the loud speakers except those to the luggage claim and make that announcement again..."

Suddenly the eyes disappeared and the announcer snapped out of his stupor. The young woman was gone and the direct line from Spaceport control was flashing.

“Yes, Sir?” He spoke wearily, rubbing his eyes. Was that a dream? Was he seeing space sirens? She girl was certainly beautiful enough to be one...

“Are you daft, man?” the Controller yelled. “I hope you realize that your last announcement was only heard in the luggage claim!”

\* \* \* \* \*

In the main luggage claim area, Grae materialized and dropped behind a carrier. Her goal was so close! A large grey box approximately two and a half meters tall stood blocked by another large, bald thug. How many of this of these Enzani clones did they have?

She crept to the front of the luggage carrier and peaked into the control cabin. The hover controls were left running! Taking a deep breath, she stood and climbed into the cabin. Before she could close the door, another large fist grabbed her hair and yanked her from the machine. She hit the cement floor, knocking the air from her lungs and sending purple splotches dancing in front of her eyes.

Quickly, she shook off the disorientation and jumped to her feet, reaching for her staser. Another large fist connected with her cheekbone and she dropped to the floor again, unconscious.

\* \* \* \* \*

She awoke to find herself in an extremely enclosed space. She could tell that she was enclosed in a glass tube of some sort; she still had her overcoat, but the backpack, taser, and the pictures were gone. Damnation! After all that hard work, to fail now was unacceptable. She began to pound on the glass above her, but stopped for a moment when she felt the sensation of movement. Suddenly, whatever was beneath her gave way, but her fall was interrupted and the feeling of weightlessness came over her body.

In a matter of moments the following things happened: the glass on the inside of the compartment became covered in ice crystals with every breath she exhaled. She pulled the collar of her coat around her neck and bundled the bottom of it around her legs. The only way for a Time Lord to survive in the vacuum of space for any length of time was to completely shut down one’s system and hope for revival by another Time Lord that knew what he or she was doing. Quickly, she telepathically scanned the area and discovered that only one Time Lord was close enough to get to her in time. The thought pattern brought a smile to her face as she unhooked a small clock-pin from her lapel and clutched it in her fist. With her last bit of consciousness, she released a single pulse of mental energy, aiming at a small blue box tumbling through the vortex on the opposite side of the galaxy.

*Doctor, I need your help!*

## EPISODE ONE

“Do you see her yet?” Tamara paced nervously in front of the scanner screen, studying it, searching for any sign of the capsule, the soles of her knee-high black leather boots squeaking across the floor.

“We’re still tracking the signal. It was weak, but luckily the TARDIS heard it and was able to lock on.” The Doctor moved around the console adjusting various controls. At once, one of the monitors began to signal a high pitch tone. “Ah! We found it. Thank you old girl.” He patted the console monitor lovingly.

“Where is she?” Tamara rushed to the Doctor’s side.

“Let me blow section fifty-four up to the main scanner.” His hands flew over the scanner controls and a large block of ice appeared on the screen. “Oh my word...”

A tear began to form in Tamara’s right eye as she asked, “Is she still alive?”

“I hope so, my dear.” The Doctor shook his head. “I hope so.”

“You mean you can’t tell from here?”

“No, the ice has formed too thick a barrier. Hold onto something.”

Tamara grabbed hold of the console. She knew the Doctor well enough to know that when he told you to hold on, it didn’t really matter. She’d still be flung to the floor in a heap, but at least he was kind enough to warn her in advance.

The Doctor pounced onto the controls and the ship was wracked with convulsions. Tamara was flung to the floor in a heap. Just as quickly, the convulsions stopped. The Doctor turned and wrenched her to her feet.

"What happened?" she asked as she dusted down the black Dexy's Midnight Runners T-shirt she had found in the wardrobe under *Ace*. The Doctor had laughed the first time he had seen Tamara wearing it. He told her that he had bought it for his old companion who told him: "Yeah, I liked the band... when I was ten!"

"I had the TARDIS materialize around the ice block," the Doctor said as Tamara pulled him from the console room into the corridor. "If everything went well, our friend should be defrosting in the Zero Room."

\* \* \* \* \*

The high, cathedral-like doors of the Zero Room had swung open in anticipation of Tamara and the Doctor's arrival. By the time they reached it, the ice block had already begun to melt down, exposing the glass capsule - but ice crystals had formed on the inside as well, masking the frozen body inside. The Doctor walked over the soft, bouncy floor to the closet at the far end of the room and retrieved two pickaxes as the two huge doors banged shut.

"I can't believe that you just happen to store pickaxes in here." Tamara smirked at the Doctor as she took one of the tools from him.

"Let's just chalk that one up to good luck shall we?" He smirked back. "Be careful not to puncture the glass. Until I can communicate with her, we don't know if the interior is pressurized."

"Understood." Tamara raised the pickaxe above her head and brought it down onto a large section of ice, chipping it free from the capsule. The Doctor joined in.

Twenty minutes later, the capsule was free from the ice. Tamara threw the pickaxe to the side and dropped to her knees, peering through the foggy glass.

"Can you see her?" The Doctor dropped to Tamara's side.

"Doctor, she looks dead." The sorrow in her eyes was heartbreaking as she gazed over her frozen friend. "Come on Grae, be okay."

"We'll just have to see about that." The Doctor closed his eyes and held his hands over the capsule. In a matter of seconds, the capsule was brought up to room temperature. The Doctor punched a few controls on the end of the tube and the top slid open. Inside, the girl was breathing, but still unconscious and soaking wet. "Help me get her out."

Tamara reached under the girl's shoulders and lifted her out, with the Doctor supporting her feet. Setting her down perpendicular to the capsule, the young woman hovered about a foot and a half above the padded floor. The Doctor placed his palms on the young woman's temples. An instant later, her eyes snapped open and she dropped to the floor with a bounce.

"Doctor," the girl said as she smiled up at her generation's idol, "you heard me."

"Of course I did." He brushed some wet strands of hair from her face.

"You're all right!" Tamara crawled to the young woman's side.

The girl turned to see Tamara and they embraced heartily, not caring about the younger girl's very wet clothes.

"Tamara!" The girl could hold back the tears no longer. "Oh, it's so good to see you both again!"

"Grae," the Doctor said as he plopped down onto the soft floor, cross-legged, "we're glad to have you back."

\* \* \* \* \*

In a far corner of the vortex, a small silver craft cut through the time winds like a warm butter knife. Approaching an unremarkable looking planet perched on the edge of a black hole; the craft became motionless then quietly disappeared. The craft, however, was far from gone. Inside, three figures hovered in shadow. The black light from the three dimensional navi-comp barely cast a glare over the faces of the individuals. It did affect the shadows enough to emphasize a curve or two, betraying the fact that the smaller one standing in the centre was female. Her two male counterparts both nodded in agreement - then vanished.

Sitting down into a chair, the female pressed a control embedded in the armrest and the navi-comp's display flickered then faded. Pressing another control, a holographic figure flickered in black and white monochrome, casting a strange glow over the woman's eerily beautiful, soft features. Her skin was soft and pale, her eyes bluer than a summer's sky on Sol 3 in Mutter's Spiral. Her hair, shoulder length and dark. Her figure was just curvy enough that it would make most red-blooded humanoid males salivate uncontrollably. But the men that had previously been occupying the room had no interest in such things. They had more pressing issues on their minds.

"She has escaped," the hologram spoke over the transmitter, "and has been rescued by the Doctor."

"Damn it!" The woman jumped to her feet and moved around the desk to come face to face with the image. "That, One-Sixteen, is completely unacceptable."

"I'm sorry, Mistress." One-Sixteen shuffled from one foot to another nervously. "You didn't inform us of the strength of her connection with the Doctor."

"They're both Time Lords, moron, as you should be aware! They're all telepathic to an extent, but you are correct. Her symbiosis with the Doctor is quite strong." The woman took a deep breath and returned to her seat. "You have one last chance. Graekatziasa'asterus is a threat, whether or not she remembers anything at all. She is one of the Agency's best Operatives and she literally worships the ground on which the Doctor walks. She has a photographic memory, so you can be assured that the images are implanted in her mind, somewhere. She must be destroyed, preferably before she gets the Doctor involved. I warn you, One-Sixteen, if you and yours can't help me the plan is off."

"Listen, I think I can strike you up a deal. Those Enzani clones are just thugs. They're Ogrons who've got above themselves. I'll contact One-Ten and see if we can drum up the heavy artillery. I assure you that the invasion will happen on schedule."

"Oh, it will." The woman spun a small globe that hovered above a corner of her desk. "You leave that up to me. Gallifrey will fall with or without your help." With that, she flicked off the transmitter and the image faded away.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Though not approved by any medical organization," the Doctor said as he lifted a spoon to his mouth, "chicken noodle soup is known to have rudimentary medicinal values."

"This is the most phenomenally delicious thing I have ever eaten." Grae drank the soup directly from the bowl, dribbling some on the fuzzy blue robe she had borrowed from Tamara. Her long wet hair hung soggily down her back, nearly reaching her knees. "Can I have some more, please?"

"Certainly my dear." The Doctor took Grae's bowl and ladled in another helping of soup. "It's a side effect of your recent experience. Your body needs warmth and lots of sodium. Soup effectively kills two birds with one stone."

"What about birds? Did you kill the chickens yourself?" Grae looked up from her bowl. She had been eating so quickly, she didn't realize the yellow splotch of broth on her nose.

"It's just an expression." Tamara looked up at her friend and began to laugh.

"What?" Grae asked as her eyes shifted from the Doctor to Tamara uncertainly.

"Come here." Tamara took her napkin and wiped off Grae's nose. "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to laugh, but you reminded me of a child."

The redheaded young woman realized how silly she looked and a smile spread across her face.

"Well, if you're finished with this bowl," the Doctor began, "I think we really ought to discuss the events that lead up to us rescuing you."

"Of course, Doctor," Grae said as she batted her eyelashes at him. "As long as I can change first."

"No problem. I'll sweep the local system in the mean time. Tamara, take young Grae to the wardrobe and meet me in the console room in twenty minutes."

"Oh, Doctor?"

The Doctor stopped in his tracks. "Yes Grae?"

"You wouldn't have a pair of chopsticks in here, would you?"

"Whatever for?" The Doctor asked as he opened a draw and began to sift through its contents.

"Let's just say that my hair usually gets in the way while I'm on a mission." Grae brought a long strand of hair around to drape over her front as she continued. "If you haven't noticed, it's quite a bit longer than when we last met."

"Well, in that case... ah ha!" The Doctor pulled out a pair of intricately decorated porcelain chopsticks and handed them to the young woman. "Here, use these. Only the best for my friends."

"Doctor, they're beautiful." Grae traced the tiny red, green and black designs with her finger.

Tamara took a look at the chopsticks and had to know more. "Doctor. They *are* beautiful. Where did you get these?"

"My old friend Kublai Khan gave those to me last time I was in Cathay."

"Name dropper." Tamara smirked at the Doctor's blatant attempt to show off. "Your *old friend* Kublai Khan."

"When we met, he was a very kind old man." The Doctor looked crestfallen at Tamara's disbelief. "In fact most people would think that my incarnation at that time was much more cantankerous."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Do you have more shirts like the one you're in?" Grae asked about the collarless shirt under Tamara's open black leather jacket. "What is that, silk? The red really looks nice on you."

"I have a green one that would match your eyes perfectly, but it's in the wash," Tamara answered. "Feel free to borrow it later. The trick of picking an outfit is practicality first, style second." Tamara opened the door to the wardrobe and flipped on the light switch. "Don't let the shelves of platform shoes and heels in the section labelled *Jo Grant* fool you, the best thing you could pick would be a pair of hiking boots, some jeans and a T-shirt or for a little more style, something in leather. Leather's good because it's durable, but denim is more comfortable."

Before she could finish, Grae disappeared into the wardrobe. A moment later she appeared in a pair of black slacks, a blue frilly shirt and the most revolting multi-coloured overcoat she had ever had the misfortune to look upon.

"Grae, did you hear a word I said?"

"This coat is great!" Grae opened the coat and examined the lining.

"You have got to be joking!" Tamara shook her head. "It looks like a rainbow puked on it."

Grae couldn't keep the joke going any longer and she burst out laughing. It was a hearty laugh that was very infectious. Tamara heard it and began laughing herself.

"Of course I'm joking," Grae said as she wiped tears from her eyes. "This ugly coat might have been good enough for the Doctor after his fifth regeneration, but it certainly won't work for me."

"The Doctor actually wore this?" Tamara helped Grae out of the coat. "You've got to be joking! I mean, what could you possibly wear with this?"

"How 'bout yellow and black striped trousers, green shoes with orange spats and a blue and white spotted bow tie?"

"You're not serious."

"Watch." Grae pulled up her left sleeve and ran her finger over the surface of her wristcomm. A three-dimensional image of an old man with long white hair appeared. "Whoops! That's way too early. I need the sixth incarnation..."

Grae ran her finger over the wristcomm again and the image of the burly sixth incarnation of the Doctor formed as a hologram in front of them.

"Well," Tamara said as she looked the image over, "at least his sense of style has improved."

"At least he *has* a sense of style now." Grae laughed as the image vanished and she disappeared back into the wardrobe emerging a few moments later wearing a pair of blue jeans and a green velvety T-shirt style top. "How's this?"

"Perfect, you've got good taste! And it brings out the colour of your eyes."

"Would you hand me my coat, please?"

"Here you are." Tamara spun around in place and pulled Grae's overcoat down from a clothesline. To her surprise, it was completely dry. She helped her friend into the coat then watched her gather her long hair into an intricate bun, through which she stuck the Great Khan's chopsticks to hold everything in place.

Suddenly, a voice boomed through the communications system.

"Ladies," the Doctor called, "if you're quite finished, I'd like you to take a look at something."

"On our way." Tamara responded as she turned to Grae. "Ready?"

"Hold on." As Grae turned to leave, something caught her eye. Quickly, she turned around and saw the tail end of a white scarf sticking out from a section labelled *Romana*. Grabbing the end of it, she pulled. When it didn't come loose, she pulled again. Walking back over to the shelf, she managed to jimmy the scarf free from beneath a suitcase. She pulled again; some sixteen feet later, the scarf finally dislodged itself and she wrapped it around her neck, leaving the ends dragging far behind her. Quickly she met up with Tamara outside the wardrobe door. "Now I'm ready."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Decema 7," the Doctor said as he paced between the scanner and the console. "Does that name mean anything to you Tamara?"

"No, should it?" Tamara answered. She scratched her head as she searched for an answer to the Doctor's question.

"Yes, it should, actually." The Doctor stopped his pacing and pointed to a small purple ripple hovering in the space between Decema 7 and its moon.

"Wait a minute." A smile spread across Tamara's lips. "Grae, it was when we met you and the TARDIS was infected by that computer virus... I remember! Doctor, you were very angry when you discovered we were in the Decema system! That purple ripple, that's not us... is it?"

"It's a scar left by the TARDIS." The Doctor patted the console with love. "The poor old girl had some severe damage done to her and had to compensate by nibbling away at the very fabric of space, itself. Unfortunately, the bites she took were a little too big and left a slight scar." He turned to the other woman. "Grae, why were you sent here?"

"Well, Doctor," Grae began. "There have been rumours circulating through Gallifrey and the CIA about a large battle cruiser in the vicinity of the Decema system."

"A battle cruiser?" The Doctor was shocked. "The Decema system is a tourist trap, why would they have a battle cruiser?"

"That's the thing," Grae continued as she took a laser pointer out of a pocket of her coat and pointed it at the scanner illustrating her point. "The cruiser was last seen coming around on orbit, but when it reached halfway across the planet, it vanished."

"It blew up?" Tamara asked.

"No Tamara," Grae answered as she turned to her friend, "it just disappeared. I'm sorry, I had pictures, but they were taken from me."

"Fascinating." The Doctor stroked his beard, trying to make sense of the information. "Fancy a trip to Decema 7?"

"As long as the Enzani are gone, I don't mind," Grae said, brushing a strand of hair from her forehead.

"The Enzani? What are they?" Tamara crossed to the Doctor, who had already set the controls for their next destination.

"The Enzani are a race of scullions," the Doctor responded as he moved feverishly around the console, "that were genetically created to do manual labour. They were created by the Deci Science Faction to maintain the daily running of the amusement parks and kitchens. Despite the fact that the Time Lords tried to halt their creation on several occasions, the Enzani are pretty harmless as they were engineered without frontal lobes, so they have so aggressive tendencies whatso-"

"No aggressive tendencies?" Grae interrupted. "I was nearly shot by one and flattened to a pulp by another."

"That's strange," the Doctor said as he threw the dematerialization controls and crossed back to the scanner and Grae: "it's completely against their nature."

"Doctor, they shot me into space."

"I'm not saying that I don't believe you, Grae. It's just so unlike them. I wonder what made them change. Right, we've arrived."

"Whereabouts?" Tamara asked.

"Approximately one kilometre south of the main government buildings," Grae read from the display. "Why there?"

"Well, I thought we'd take a look around on the way in."

"Are you sure, Doctor?" Grae sent the monitor's image onto the scanner screen. "How about nearer the Quantum Fizzies shop? That's where I was going to meet my contact. I could sure use a drink as I nose around." Grae stopped when she heard Tamara chuckling behind her. "What?"

"Well, I think that we ought to go right to the source and snoop around the governor's office." The Doctor responded, his bruised ego showing plainly across his face.

"Well, as I never met my contact face to face, I could probably still track him down and question him." Grae stated, holding her own.

"Doctor," Tamara chimed in.

"Yes Tamara?" The Doctor turned to his companion. "Do you have another idea?"

"No, I agree with Grae." Tamara smirked at the young woman. "If her people took the time to set her up with a contact, we might as well use it."

"So that's decided then, is it?" The Doctor pouted as he reset the coordinates and rematerialized the ship around the corner from the soda shop.

"Thank you Doctor," Grae added.

"For what?"

"Trusting me."

The Doctor finally cracked a smile as he pulled the women into a big three-way hug. "I'm sorry. Sometimes I forget that not all of my companions need to be babysat. You know I always value your input. Can I buy you both a Quantum Fizzy in apology?"

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"I can't say no to a free Quantum Fizzy." Grae laughed. "They don't call them the best drink in the twelve galaxies for nothing."

"Can I recommend one thing to you, Grae?" The Doctor asked.

"Of course, Doctor."

"Let me show you how to wear a sixteen foot scarf correctly..."

\* \* \* \* \*

Through the cloisters of the Capitol on Gallifrey, Time Lords passed this day like all others. Between talking about how much better the old days were and publishing their memoirs (which, of course, were *much* more exciting than that terrible volume by Autmeog Grapnia) not much else happened. These esteemed gentlemen, most of whom had never been off-world, were the backbone of the most powerful civilization in the universe. The most excitement one would expect would be a position as a Cardinal of their chapter. If they were lucky, they'd be appointed to the High Council. Those of whom the Lord President found particularly trustworthy and knowledgeable were then appointed to the Inner Council. They were the Lord President's select group of internal advisors. To most Time Lords, however, the Inner Council was far beyond their aspirations.

Today, the Inner Council was calling a general assembly. General assemblies were usually reserved for elections and other less thrilling announcements. The Chancellor who handled all the responsibilities of the gathering usually called assemblies. This time, the new Lord President herself issued the call - an extremely rare occurrence.

"A general assembly of all ranking Time Lords to begin at six bells," a voice proclaimed through the loudspeaker, over the din of the crowd. "Please report to the Panoptican."

"A general assembly? I wonder if they're going to discuss the raids?" Nicalodgremsiot, a senior Prydonian Cardinal, wrapped his crimson robe about his feet.

"Who knows?" Autmeog Grapnia stated plainly. "Frankly, I don't care much either. As long as the rebels leave the Patraxians alone, I have no quarrel with them."

"Probably some more new restrictions, curfews, et cetera," the former Coordinator Engin said as he peeked over the top of the book he was reading. "The privilege of those in charge: to issue rules and regulations that succeeds in no way other than to make life more tiring for us seniors. I was in charge of plenty in my day. Back when I was younger, I spent some time off-world on the planet Tuskal. On Tuskal -"

"Damn fool idea if you ask me." Autmeog Grapnia interrupted; having been subject to tales of Engin's past exploits one too many times.

"No one was." Nicalodgremsiot chided him.

"How are *your* memoirs coming along, Nicalod?" Engin asked, making sure Autmeog could hear him.

"Better than you-know-who's..."

"All right, you moulting Drashig larvae, I've had enough!" Autmeog struggled for a few moments to rise from his chair, but decided it was too much of a hassle. Instead, he swatted Nicalod's shins with his walking stick.

"OW! Damn it!"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, please." Engin rose to his full, unimpressive height. "Calm down, will you? Thank you. Listen, you are far too old to be bickering like schoolchildren. Autmeog, just because your memoirs are less thrilling than being subjected to sub-aqueous torture on the planet Tuskal - "

"Damnation Engin!" Autmeog shouted as he swatted empty air with his walking stick. "If you mention the planet Tuskal once more, I'll crack your shins as well!"

A rhythmic marching broke through the tension as Engin and Nicalod rose from their chairs. Exchanging a quick glance, they reached down in unison and levered Autmeog to his feet.

The Chancellery Guard, led by Commander Missek marched in formal escort to the Inner Council. The Madame Lord President, Castellan and the Chancellor all passed, greeting the Time Lords that they saw on the way. The current Coordinator, however, was not among them.

Once they had passed, Autmeog turned to Engin and asked, "So where's your replacement's replacement, then?"

"I'm not really sure."

"That new Lord President," Nicalod asked, "Do you think she'll hold up during this crisis?"

"She'd better," Engin chimed in, "what with the likes of you two to contend with..."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Madame Lord President?"

"Yes, Andred?"

The Madame Lord President surveyed the high-arched ceiling of the Panoptican from the centre of the chamber. Their voices rebounded off the beams and girders.

"The assembly is awaiting the order." Andred extended his hand to the austere middle-aged woman who stood before him. She gratefully clasped his hand and pressed.

"Thank you Andred," the Lord President said as she smiled. "You and your wife have become my most well-trusted advisors during this difficult time. Your hard work has not gone unnoticed."

"Thank you, Lady Quella. I'm sorry, Madame Lord President..."

"Andred, you know that I only ask that you address me by my title when we're in public. Behind closed doors I'm still the same Quelladvortrelundar who would smack you upside the head when you'd sabotage my time experiments."

"Ah yes," Andred reminisced. "Back in the Academy, you and I were quite the troublemakers, weren't we?"

"We were. Back then who would have thought we'd be leading Gallifrey?"

"Not Cardinal Joalas, that's for sure!"

The Lord President's voice turned sad. "Who would guess that I'd be facing such a crisis within the first phase of my term?"

"Quella," Andred asked, "is that a bit of self-doubt I'm sensing?"

"I'd be lying to you if I said no," Quella answered. "I hope you don't think less of me."

"You're one of my oldest friends, I have every faith in you."

"Thank you."

A small, squat man entered bedecked in beautiful golden robes. He approached Quella and the Castellan with a smile. "Madame Lord President, the congregation has assembled and is awaiting your command."

"Thank you Gold Usher," she responded, touching his shoulder. "Please contact the Lady Leela and tell her that her presence is also requested."

"As you wish." With a swish of his golden vestments, Gold Usher turned on his heels.

Andred frowned. "You know many of the Assembly will disapprove of my wife's presence in the Panoptican."

"Let me deal with them. Leela and yourself are both dear, dear friends. And after all, this *was* her idea."

\* \* \* \* \*

Quantum Fizzies was the latest of chain attraction-restaurants that had infiltrated through the Terran colonies. Decked out in chintzy Earth 2150's décor, the reputation of the shop and the carbonated beverages sold there even reached Gallifrey, where young Time Lords in the Academy would dare each other to whip up a quick dozen Fizzies using homemade time bubbles. The opportunity to get to a shop in person brought a childish giggle to Grae. Her friends looked at her strangely as she threw the door to the shop open and strode in proudly. After taking some money from the Doctor, she took their orders and approached the counter.

"I'd like one large Sarsaparilla Fizzy, one large Ginger Fizzy and one large..." Grae stumbled over the name of Tamara's order from memory, "Loaded Cos-mo... polo-gy? Cosmopolology Fizzy, please."

"A Loaded Cosmopolitan Fizzy? That's not that hard to say, now is it? Sixteen units, please." The man behind the counter grabbed Grae's money then turned sharply into the back. Grae watched him disappear then stuck her tongue out in his general direction. Then she made her way through the crowd and rejoined her friends as they waited for their orders.

"Did you have enough money?" the Doctor asked.

"Exact change, actually" Grae answered. "The clerk had a bit of a problem with my inability to pronounce Cosmo... Cosmopolitan on my first attempt."

The Doctor turned to his friend. "You ordered a Cosmopolitan this early in the morning, Tamara?"

"Like you say, Doctor," Tamara said as she cracked a smile and winked, "time is relative."

"Touché."

A different waiter served the trio their drinks. Unseen by all, he gave Grae a good once over.

"What is a Cosmopolitan, Tamara?" Grae asked.

"Would you like a sip?"

"I don't think that would be a good..." the Doctor started.

"Sure," Grae interrupted as she took a sip from the straw. With one sip, she began coughing.

"...idea," the Doctor finished. He started to laugh. "I remember the first time I tasted alcohol, I had much the same reaction."

"What is in this?" Grae spat out.

"Cranberry juice, vodka and vermouth." Tamara took another sip.

"You could power a small rocket pack with it." Grae chortled in spite of herself. Even the Doctor found himself smirking at the sound of the young woman's laugh and her wit.

"Not your cup of tea then?" Tamara asked.

"Tea? No, I ordered a Ginger Fizzy."

"I mean, do you like it?"

"It's terrific! Can I have another sip?"

The Doctor cleared his throat. "Grae, you better not. Alcohol tends to work doubly quick on Time Lords, due to our dual cardiovascular system. You really ought to keep a clear head."

Suddenly Tamara tensed up. Slowly she turned in the direction of the Doctor.

"What's wrong?" He asked as he slurped down the rest of his drink.

"We're being watched." Tamara's right hand twitched. She positioned herself slowly to have easy access to the small staser she kept stashed in a shoulder holster. "There's a man over by the jukebox. Don't look!"

Despite Tamara's warning Grae turned and looked. The figure disappeared into the kitchen.

Tamara cursed under her breath.

"Oh Tamara, I'm sorry." Grae looked crestfallen.

"That's okay," Tamara said as she rose. "We'd best be after him."

"Right." The Doctor rose as well, wiping his goatee with a napkin. "Tamara, why don't you follow through the kitchen. Grae, you go out the front. I'll see if there's another door and try to cut him off. If you don't find anything, meet at the TARDIS in a half-hour. The first pair there can search for the one that remains!"

The Doctor tossed a spare TARDIS key to Grae, then the three time travellers scattered.

\* \* \* \* \*

Fifteen minutes later, Grae had reached the main roadway. It was relatively early by local time and the street was quite void of traffic. She could see up both sides of the street for miles.

"There's no other place he could have gone," Grae said under her breath. "If he doubled back, Solov Street is the quickest route back into the downtown area."

Suddenly, she felt two strong hands grab her shoulders and spin her around. She was face to face with Rikko, her contact, who dragged her into an alley.

## EPISODE TWO

“Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished colleagues, friends. A grave shadow has fallen upon Gallifrey.” The Madame Lord President spoke eloquently as she addressed the assembly from the centre dais of the Panopticon. “Recent events have brought a great deal of concern to us all. But the raids by the Outsider rebels have started to cost us dearly. During the last raid, we lost the first four casualties in this battle. Two dozen more of our brave Chancellery Guards were forced to regenerate in order to heal their wounds. Andred’s wife, Lady Leela, whom you know is not a Time Lord, was wounded in the battle, and is here today to say a few words. With your kind permission, Assembly, I will give the floor to her. Keep in mind, my decision on what you are about to hear has already been made.”

Andred appeared from the main entrance with his personal guard and his wife, whom he pushed in front of him in a wheel chair. After eight years on Gallifrey, Leela hadn’t changed much at all in the eyes of her audience. The traditional leather clothes that she’d first arrived in had long since been put away in exchange for the simple, lightweight, shirt and trousers that were worn by most non-ranking Time Lords. Her long brown hair had also since been cut to shoulder length, but she still was in excellent physical condition and looked ready to pounce from her chair, if it wasn’t for the plaster cast that covered the lower half of her left leg. Gently, Andred wheeled Leela onto the dais.

“Noble Lords of Time,” Leela began, “during the last mission, the Chancellery Guards did manage to capture one of the rebel Outsiders. Unfortunately, the rebel had a cyanide tablet and committed suicide. The rebel’s body was attached to the Matrix and it was discovered that the leader of the rebels was somehow able to override your equipment. The dead man’s mind

was inaccessible to the Network. Inaccessible except for one word, that is. That word is *Bramahl* - it is the name of the rebels' leader, and I'm afraid that she is known to many of you."

A gasp was heard among the people in the crowd. The Time Lords looked back and forth amongst each other. How could it be possible that Bramahl was the leader of the rebels? Everyone knew Bramahl. She had been a promising scientist in her second incarnation - or was it her third? She had been loyal for centuries - why would she turn? Why now? Many remembered her from their days in the Academy, many from daily life in the citadel, but not a one of them could comprehend why Bramahl would turn rebel.

"It is because many of us knew her," Leela continued, "that we have decided to take steps to ensure her capture and study. If such a well-regarded Time Lord can turn against her people and bring about such bloodshed, we need to know why. Castellan Andred has assigned Bramahl the classification of type three Renegade and has instructed his men to bring her in alive."

A voice shouted down from the upper balcony: "But how in Rassilon's name will the Chancellery guard be able to handle such a responsibility?"

"Yes, I was getting to that," Leela answered. "The Guard is really only a security force, not an army or a group of negotiators. The Madame Lord President, the Castellan, as well as the rest of the Inner Council and myself, have decided that there is only one person who has the ability to act as diplomat. The order to recall the Doctor's TARDIS should be taking effect in the next few moments. Even though many of you question the Doctor's chosen lifestyle and even his intelligence, the Madame Lord President, Castellan Andred and I all vouch for his abilities as peacekeeper."

The buzz of voices from the Assembly showed that that its opinions were decidedly mixed by Leela's announcement. Even though the Doctor had saved Gallifrey on several occasions, many of them still viewed him as an irresponsible troublemaker.

Lord President Quella approached Leela, quieting the congregation's disapproval. "Thank you Lady Leela. I appreciate all of your opinions, but as I have said, the matter has already been decided. The Doctor is being recalled. I will *not* suffer civil war during my term as Lord President."

\* \* \* \* \*

"You said you'd come alone," Rikko whispered ferociously as he shook Grae by the shoulders. "What the hell are you trying pull, you stupid girl?" With that, he laid a hard right hook across her cheekbone. The force of the blow spun Grae back around and she dropped to the ground, unconscious. The large olive-skinned man reached into the pocket of his black bomber jacket, pulled out a switchblade and dropped to his knees at Grae's side. "I knew you were a spy, and I hate spies..."

Suddenly a staser blast rang out and Rikko's shoulder erupted in a shower of blood and cartilage over the back of Grae's coat. The switchblade skittered across the asphalt as his body fell prone over the young girl, pushing all the air from her lungs.

"Grae, are you okay?" Tamara asked as she lifted Rikko's unconscious body off of her friend. She then ripped a shoelace from one of her leather boots and tied the man's hands

behind him. Taking a handkerchief from her pocket, she crumpled it and placed it in his mouth then, ripping her belt off, fastened a gag. Tossing the unconscious man aside, Tamara flicked a piece of hair out of her face with a flick of her head, then helped her friend into a sitting position.

"Oh, Tamara, thank you!" Grae embraced her friend tightly, then pulled away quickly. Grabbing the ends of her white scarf, Grae wiped her face clean.

"What's wrong?" Tamara asked.

"I'm not bleeding, am I?"

"No, of course not. All that blood belongs to the other guy." Tamara smiled at her friend and offered her hand. "Now come here and let me take a look at that eye of yours, dear." Grae grabbed the extended hand and allowed Tamara to pull her in close. She then took hold of Grae's chin and turned her head to the left. "Are you okay? He got you pretty good."

"I'm all right, but I have..." Grae paused for a moment, thinking of the right terminology, then continued, "a blackened eye?"

"A *black* eye," Tamara corrected. "Your jaw's pretty black and blue, too."

"Pardon?"

"Never mind. Who's your friend?" Tamara reached into the inside pocket of her jacket, pulled out a small ice compress and smacked it on the concrete. Massaging it, the compress cooled and Tamara pressed it against Grae's bruised right cheekbone. Suddenly, Tamara tensed. She drew her staser again and pressed a finger to her lips.

A figure burst around the corner.

"Freeze!" Tamara hesitated for a split second - and the next instant, admonished herself for it. A moment after that she saw the Doctor, his hands high above his head, eyes wide, in her sights. She took back the self-criticism and holstered her weapon.

"I'm glad to see that you hesitated." The Doctor dropped his hands, pulled a handkerchief from his waistcoat pocket and wiped the perspiration from his brow. "Otherwise I'd be one dead Doctor."

"Sorry," Tamara apologized as she rubbed her hand over the Doctor's right shoulder. "I'm sure you can see why I'm a bit jumpy."

The Doctor looked at Grae and dropped into a squat in front of her.

"Dear me, Grae." He pulled the ice pack away from her eye, then turned to the bound man on the ground. "Somebody hit you good. Was it this ruffian, here?"

"Yes."

"Who is he?"

"That's Rikko, my contact." Grae looked over at Rikko, who had rolled himself over onto his good shoulder, facing them. "When he saw the three of us in the café, he assumed I was a spy coming after him."

"Let's hear what Mr. Rikko has to say, shall we?" The Doctor moved to the man and removed the gag from his mouth. Then he tossed a roll of bandage to Tamara who had turned back to Grae. "Would you be so kind as to bind up that shoulder?"

Tamara caught the bandage roll without turning, her eyes transfixed to Grae's face. "Doctor, take a look."

"What is it?" Grae asked, blushing. The Doctor joined Tamara, gaping at her face.

"Your eye," the Doctor said as he scratched at his beard, "has completely healed."

"I've never seen anything like that before. Grae," Tamara said. "How did you do that?"

"Oi!" Rikko shouted, "How 'bout binding up my shoulder, missy?"

Tamara was on him in an instant, her face uncomfortably close to his. "Nobody manhandles my friends without having to answer to me. Call me 'missy' one more time! Go on, you thug, I dare you..."

"All right, all right," Rikko acquiesced as he raised his good arm in a gesture of compliance, "keep your shirt on."

Rikko waited as Tamara wrapped his shoulder and backed off. Once she was in the right position he kicked her in the chest, throwing her onto Grae. He leapt to his feet. "Right, bitch, you're both finished."

"I wouldn't do that again if I were you." Unseen by anyone, the Doctor had edged around behind Rikko and had Tamara's staser at his neck. "You know what this did to your shoulder from a distance. I can't imagine your medulla oblongata holding up any better, especially at point blank range. Even I can't miss this close."

"So sorry about that Grae, are you okay?" Tamara asked as she jumped to her feet.

"I'll probably be blue and black again later."

"I can take it from here, Doctor." Tamara said as she approached the men.

"Not necessary, Tamara. Even though I hate weapons, some people only understand when you speak their language. Any questions you'd like to ask him, ladies?"

"How did the Enzani find me so quickly?" Grae took the first question.

"Enzani, what are they?" Rikko answered, but felt the Doctor press the staser harder against his neck. "All right! I was paid to give your location."

"Who paid you?" Tamara asked.

"I don't know his name." Rikko again felt the Doctor pressing the staser in harder. "No really! This time I'm telling the truth."

"Fine," Grae chimed back in, "that's fine, really. Other than the fact that I was nearly asphyxiated, it's fine. At least my friends came to my rescue. Now, if you could kindly get me into the Governor's office as you were supposed to have done, I might see my way around to forgiving you completely, there's a good fellow."

"Well done," said the Doctor, who was smiling from ear to ear, clearly impressed with Grae's 'professional' tone.

"Thank you!" Grae smiled back, proudly.

"Listen," Rikko added, "I don't know what you have to be all excited over, they're all gone."

"Who?"

"The Governor, his staff and even a few of the servants. Two days ago they disappeared -" Rikko raised his good arm and blew through his fingers "- just like that."

"What do you mean by 'disappeared'?" the Doctor asked directly into Rikko's ear.

"What do I mean by 'disappeared'?" Rikko mocked the question. "How many different bloody meanings are there? One day they were there, the next they weren't"

"They went off-world?" Tamara asked the next logical question.

"Gordon Bennett, are you guys deaf? They dis-ap-peared!" Rikko spoke slowly, condescendingly.

"Who's Gordon Bennett?" Grae asked, timidly.

"Doctor, let me hit him once, please." Tamara asked out of frustration.

"Take a couple deep breaths, Tamara, take a few moments to..." The Doctor's voice trailed off.

"Hey, are you okay?"

A loud chime suddenly pierced through the quiet, still air.

"What the bloody hell was that?" Rikko yelled as the Doctor released his grip.

"Tamara, Grae, back to the TARDIS," the Doctor said as he let Rikko go and began to run in the direction of his ship, "quick, quick!"

"What about Rikko?" Tamara asked as she ran.

"Leave him, he'll live!" The Doctor shouted back to the two women who were trailing him by several meters.

Tamara, who was keeping pace with Grae, turned to her young friend and asked, "What the hell is going on?"

"The Doctor's received a summons to Gallifrey. As a Time Lord, he has to obey."

"Gallifrey, huh?" Tamara confirmed.

"Mm-hmm." Grae nodded.

"What if he refused a summons?"

"Well, he sort of can't."

"Why not?"

"All right, he could, but he'd be without his TARDIS." Grae stopped running as they rounded a corner and stepped into the Police Box. The doors slammed shut behind them and the ship faded into the vortex immediately. "You see, the TARDIS is going to Gallifrey. With or without us."

"That was a close shave," Tamara remarked as she slumped into an armchair. There was a strangeness to the ship's regular humming that grated at Tamara's temples. She scrunched up her nose. "What's that noise?"

Grae took Tamara's leather jacket and her own overcoat and scarf and hung them on the coat stand.

"I'm supposed to leave any non-Gallifreyan companions behind before answering the summons," the Doctor said as he crossed to Tamara and Grae. "What you hear is Gallifrey trying to tell you that you're not wanted."

"Gee, thanks," Tamara responded, her head starting to pound. "Remind me to show the next Time Lord that we meet on Earth that *they're* not wanted. No offence... Ow... to either of you. Ohhh!" She stopped as the pain increased, bringing tears to her eyes.

"Hold still Tamara." The Doctor tried to comfort her. "There's nobody I'd rather have with me in a scrape than the two of you."

Tamara forced a smile to her lips.

"That's my girl," the Doctor said as he gazed into his trembling companion's eyes. He laid a hand across her forehead and she fell instantly to sleep. "That's why I want you to... rest."

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"Is she going to be okay?" Grae asked as she took her coat down off the coat stand and placed it over Tamara as a makeshift blanket.

Quietly the Doctor nodded then crossed back to the console. Grae kissed Tamara on the forehead then joined the Doctor.

"You know, it *is* really good to see you again." He said as he slipped his arm around Grae's shoulder.

"How much time has passed for you?"

"Relatively speaking, in terms of..."

"Doctor," Grae interrupted. "How long would Tamara tell me?"

"About a year and a half."

"That long, huh? It was just a few months for me, if you don't count..."

"You've been to Dikartis recently, haven't you?" The Doctor pulled away from the young lady and cast his eyes to the ground. "You know, I'm not proud of what happened there. There was probably another way, but I was just too rushed to find it."

"No one blames you for anything, believe me," Grae responded, "that was a long time ago. The Time Lords have long since forgotten..."

"That's good to know." The Doctor nodded satisfactorily then placed his hands on the young woman's shoulders, turning her towards him. "You know Grae, before your 'accident' I believe that Tamara and I made an offer to you. It still stands, you know. We would love for you to stay with us for a while."

"What?" Grae questioned. She heard him perfectly well - but she wanted to hear him say it again.

"When we're finished with our business on Gallifrey, I want you to come with us and see the Universe." The Doctor smiled down at the petite redhead. In the run back to the TARDIS, her hair had loosened from the bun and now hung in irregular strands down her head and face. The Doctor lifted away a bang and was met by Grae's deep emerald gaze.

"I would be honoured."

"Good," the Doctor answered as he pulled the girl into a hearty embrace. "Welcome aboard then, Grae."

Unseen by the Doctor, Grae cast her eyes heavenward and mouthed a silent word of thanks.

\* \* \* \* \*

The TARDIS materialised in the docking bay where an armed escort awaited. The Doctor greeted Commander Missek with a smile.

"Doctor, Lady Graekatziasa'asterus," Missek stated, "we've been asked to escort you to your chambers. The Madame Lord President and the Castellan will meet you there."

"Ah, Commander, how very kind of you." The Doctor placed his arm around the Commander's shoulders. "Would you please have someone to attend to my friend inside. Have her brought along presently."

"As you wish, Sir." The Commander gestured and one of his guards entered the ship. Suddenly, the ground began to tremble slightly.

"What in Rassilon's name?" The Doctor looked down at the floor as it shook.

"It's just a tremor," Grae answered as the shaking stopped, "we've been having them lately."

"Really, how very bizarre..."

\* \* \* \* \*

"... and I assure you that she can be trusted;" Tamara heard the Doctor say as she slowly began to regain consciousness, "She's a trusted friend and her skills are second to none."

A man in bronze robes paced back and forth in front of the Doctor. As Tamara became more aware of her surroundings she noticed that the sterile roundels of the TARDIS had been replaced with a warm outdoorsy wood-panelled look. A fire crackled and popped in a fireplace at her feet. It reminded her of her brother Shawn's cabin in Wyoming. There was a tall wooden pedestal in one corner upon which sat a large pink conch shell. In another corner was an antique bubblegum machine filled with jelly babies.

"Very well," the bronze-clad man replied, "I'll take your word for it, Doctor. Even though I don't always approve of your methods, you've never given me any reason to distrust you."

A familiar face dropped into Tamara's line of vision, blocking the Doctor and the other man from view. The young woman knelt down and wiped Tamara's face with a warm towel

"Ah, Tamara," Grae said as she smiled, "welcome back."

"Wh- where am I?" Tamara spoke slowly.

"You're in the Doctor's office in the citadel on Gallifrey," Grae explained as she helped her friend into a sitting position. "Welcome to our home world."

"What happened?"

The Doctor caught sight of Tamara's stirring and rushed to her side. The Castellan followed.

"Get a good sleep, Tamara?" The Doctor asked.

"What did you do to me?"

"I just made you fall asleep," the Doctor answered, "that's all. How are you feeling?"

"Much better, thanks."

"Well, in that case, I'd like you to meet my good friend Andred, Castellan of Gallifrey." The Doctor gestured towards the bronze-clad man, then to Tamara. "Andred, meet Ms. Tamara Scott."

Tamara extended her hand, which Andred clasped firmly.

"Very nice to meet you, Castellan. Any friend of the Doctor's is a friend of mine."

"Likewise," Andred responded with a smile.

"What, exactly, does a Castellan do?"

"Well," Andred explained: "I'm in charge of security on the highest level. I'm in command of both the Chancellery Guard and the Inner Council's personal bodyguard. The Doctor says that you're a bit of an expert on security systems, yourself. Would you care for a tour?"

"Most definitely," Tamara said, "thank you."

A chime broke through the air and the three Time Lords rose to their feet. Grae turned back and saw that Tamara was still sitting.

"Quick." Grae grabbed Tamara's arms and yanked her from the lounge chair with surprising strength. "Stand up, the Madame Lord President's here."

The door to the office swished open. Tamara watched as a beautiful woman appeared, followed by six guards wearing identical crimson and white armour. The woman appeared to be approximately forty years old by Tamara's guess, but she remembered from her first meeting with Grae that appearance and age did not necessarily always go together among the Gallifreyan people. She wore a long white gown and a white skullcap over short black locks.

"Madame Inquisitor!" The Doctor was the first to speak. "What an honour to see you again! I'm happy to see that you took my advice to run for office."

"Hello, Doctor. Please call me Quella." The Madame Lord President pressed hands with the Doctor. "Would you believe I won by a landslide?"

"Of course, I never doubted you for a moment." The Doctor looked the woman over. "The Presidential robes suit you, they really do."

"Thank you, Doctor."

"My good friend Ms. Tamara Scott."

"A pleasure to meet you, Madame Lord President." Tamara bowed her head.

"My pleasure, Ms. Scott," Quella responded. "I apologize for any discomfort you may have had on the journey here. That system was installed quite a long time ago. Any off-worlder that the Doctor thinks to be as valuable as you is welcome anytime. Doctor, I trust you've been keeping a good eye on my young charge?"

"Yes, Ma'am, he has." Grae moved forward. Quella pulled Grae into a hug and then kissed her on the forehead. "If it wasn't for him, though..."

"I heard." Quella shook her head. "I'm glad you're unharmed, but Coordinator Jossa wants a word with you all the same."

"I was afraid of that." Grae took a deep breath. "Best sort that out first. Tamara would you care to join me?"

"Sure," she responded - "that is, if the Doctor doesn't need me."

The Doctor turned to smile at his long time companion. "No, Tamara that's okay. Considering some of the strange things that have occurred around Grae lately, I'd rather you stick with her."

"Right then, we're off." Grae sang as she grabbed Tamara by the hand and pulled her out of the office, scarf trailing behind. "I can't wait to show you around!"

Once the door had slid shut behind them, Andred motioned for them to sit.

"You must surely be wondering why we summoned you, Doctor."

"Of course I am," the Doctor began, "I was very nearly close to finding out some important information regarding Grae's last mission. I think she was targeted."

"By whom?" Quella asked.

"I'm not one hundred per cent sure, as I was summoned before my investigation could be concluded."

"Very well." Quella nodded. "We'll deal with that later. Young Graekatziasa'asterus is safe in the citadel."

"Doctor." Andred spoke, his voice serious. "We have become quite dependent on you and your abilities over the last few centuries. We know that and we're sorry."

"A small price to pay for the freedom that I'm continually allowed."

"We need to impose upon you once again."

"Why? What's happening? I thought I felt a slight tremor after I landed, did it have anything to do with that?"

"No," Andred responded, "that's nothing we can't handle."

"What's the problem, then?"

Quella leaned close, whispering, "Civil war, Doctor..."

\* \* \* \* \*

The journey to the Coordinator's office was relatively short. A quick look at the Doctor's watchpin hanging on Grae's lapel proved to Tamara that Grae was obviously procrastinating.

"Did I show you the Hanging Gardens?" Grae asked as they passed a sign directing them towards the spectacle.

"Twice, Grae." Tamara grabbed Grae by the shoulder.

The younger woman took a deep breath and said, "I'm sorry, Tamara, you must think me a fool."

"Why?" Tamara asked, "Because you're nervous about being reprimanded by your superior? I'm an old pro when it comes to *not* doing things by the book. Getting 'six of the best' now and again goes hand in hand with that."

"I know, but it really makes me look bad," Grae responded as she flopped onto a bench. "Being sponsored by the Lord President has a certain stigma attached to it. Add that to the fact that I'm thirty years younger than the next youngest Operative..."

"Grae, it's your differences and talents that got you into the Agency. Lord President Quella only needed to back you because of your age."

"I know," Grae said as she sniffed, "but there are a lot of Time Lords that would love to see a young girl like me fail."

"There are a lot of middle-aged men, especially middle-aged *white* men on Earth that would have loved to have seen *me* fail, too. It's the price we pay for being different and being infinitely more talented than the establishment would like to admit."

"Our civilizations aren't that different, are they?" Grae smiled.

"I suppose not."

"Right, then. On to my beating." Grae laughed as she rose from her seat. "How did *you* end up dealing with all the male chauvinists?"

"I resigned," Tamara answered quickly, "and went freelance. I said 'the hell with them, they'll be begging to have me back in a week.'"

"And were they?"

"I don't know," Tamara chuckled. "I met up with the Doctor before I found out."

\* \* \* \* \*

“Operative 71674.” Coordinator Jossa addressed Grae as she entered the office. “Please don’t sit. You will not be here long enough to get comfortable.”

“Yes, Sir.” Grae bowed slightly as she responded. Jossa was a tallish man who appeared to be roughly in his early thirties. He, however, had recently endured his tenth regeneration, so was actually well into his ninth century. This incarnation was notoriously unfriendly, but no one challenged his ability to head the CIA. His bald head reflected the ceiling lights into Grae’s eyes.

“News has reached me of the pathetic failure of your last mission.” Jossa rose as he addressed his agent, seeming to tower over her by at least two feet. Grae was certain that was only because she was feeling smaller than usual. “Due to the importance of our missions, the Agency does not tolerate failure. Do you have anything to say for yourself?”

“Yes, Sir, I do.” Grae looked Jossa in the eye as she spoke. Her voice became more and more angry as the words come out as she refused to go out without a fight. “My contact admitted to me that he was bribed to give the Enzani my location. You cannot hold me responsible for that. Nor can you hold me responsible for said Enzani using the information that was bought for them.”

“Don’t raise your voice to me, you impertinent child.” Jossa moved directly in front of Grae and spoke directly into her face. “I told the Lord President that there was no place in the Agency for an operative as young and inexperienced as you. Your unmitigated failure proves the fact that you are talent-less and have no constitution under pressure. This grouped with the cost to the medical facilities after your first mission, as well as your failing to report to Control and remaining off world after the Dikartis affair, I have no choice but to dismiss you from the Agency. Your Operative status and number are hereby revoked. You are to turn in your staser and uniform to Operations immediately, then report to Security and have the memories of your missions erased. Do I make myself clear?”

“Sir, how can you hold me responsible for being sold out by the contact the Agency set me up with?”

“Do I make myself clear?”

“Yes, Sir.” Grae answered, her mouth pinched with anger. She took a deep breath and tried to calm herself.

“Graekatziasa’asterus, I suggest you return to the Prydonian Academy and finish your terms there, as that’s where you apparently belong. Ops is waiting.”

“Sir...”

“Ops is waiting Grakatziasa’asterus. I have nothing more to say to you.”

“Sir, I - ”

“Listen,” Jossa feigned concern. “I know this is humiliating for you. Please don’t worsen it by making me call the Chancellery Guard to escort you out. After all, you are a civilian in a top secret area.”

Grae nodded, smirked, then looked up at the Coordinator and said, “Very well then, I’ll go. Don’t think for a minute that I’m going to stop trying to find who sold me out. I’ll bring that person to book, no matter who he is.” With that, she turned on her heels and left the office.

“Sure you will, young lady,” Jossa spoke to himself, “except for the small fact that you’ll be dead by nightfall.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Tamara rose as she saw her friend return to the reception area.

"Well, how did it go?"

"As good as to be expected," Grae said as she forced a smile to her face, "when the head of your organization is a condescending, chauvinistic bastard. I've been bagged."

"'Bagged'?" Tamara asked. "Oh, you mean *sacked*. He let you go? Figures. What are you supposed to do now?"

"I'm supposed to report to Ops and return all my gear, then I'm off to security for a date with the Mind Probe."

"The Mind Probe... That doesn't sound too good."

"It isn't." Grae chuckled despite herself. "But the knowledge of my missions is too valuable, so I'm supposed to have it erased."

"That's terrible!"

"Tell me about it."

"So are you going to go?" Tamara asked as she placed her arm around the young woman's shoulder.

"Like hell I am." Grae opened the door to the reception area. "The info in my head is obviously worth something. I want to make sure it's safe before anything else."

"Where to then?" Tamara asked.

"There's two people I need to see," Grae answered. "They've always been there for me when I needed them. Somebody sold me out and I want to see if these two may have any idea who it could be."

"Do *you* have any idea who our suspect is?"

"Let's just say," Grae whispered as she pulled Tamara close, "that the good Coordinator's haste to get me out of the way puts him at the top of a very short list."

"But what would he stand to gain from eliminating you?"

"I'm not sure... I wonder.."

\* \* \* \* \*

"You want me to *what*, exactly?"

The Doctor paced back in forth in front of Andred and Quella, replaying their words over and over in his head, trying to make sense of their request.

"We need you to act as our diplomat and travel to the outlands to meet with Bramahl," Quella repeated.

"I'm sorry, we have tried to negotiate before," Andred explained, "but she killed our men without a second thought."

"So I'm expendable now, am I?" The Doctor turned to face his old friend Andred. Had his being in power come to this. Their friendship put aside as easily as a child disregards a broken toy?

"No, Doctor," Andred said quietly. "You see, we couldn't tell the general public this, but Bramahl asked for you by name."

"She said that she'd only speak to you," Quella said as she frowned. "I'm sorry, Doctor. She said that you were old friends."

"She said that we were old friends? I'm sure I'd remember someone with a name like Bramahl." The Doctor scratched his head, trying to search the deepest reaches of his mind for any information he could dredge up on the mysterious Time Lady from his past. He had known so many throughout his long life and certainly couldn't have been expected to remember every last one of them. The name though (and he was good with names) didn't seem to resonate any chords in his psyche.

"Will you help us, Doctor?" Quella asked, hopeful.

"Well, of course I will. I'm intrigued to say the least." The Doctor smiled at long last. "Maybe senility is finally setting in."

"Oh, come now Doctor," Andred jested, "you can't be a day over eight-hundred."

"Unfortunately, I am, Andred," the Doctor responded with a wink. "But I look pretty good for my age. I do have one concern, though."

"What is that?" Quella leaned forward in her seat.

"That tremor I felt as I arrived, a slight earthquake. How long have those been going on?"

"Not long, why?"

"I'm just curious, that's all." The Doctor rose and plunged his hands into his pockets. "Since when has Gallifrey had earthquakes? What's causing them?"

"The shifting of the Estraal Plates, et cetera." Andred replied, "Same thing that causes them on any other planet in the universe. Why?"

"Oh, no reason." The Doctor looked back and forth between his friends. "Seen any good movies lately?"

\* \* \* \* \*

The young lady with chocolate coloured hair sat at her workbench, fiddling with bits of machinery and wire. Holding a pair of welding goggles to her eye, she lit a torch and began to weld two of the pieces together. Then she turned the torch off, lifted her mask and held the welded piece in a gloved hand looking it over.

"Almost perfect," she whispered to herself, "but good enough for me to go and get some lunch before Cardinal Hetara comes back."

Suddenly a deep female voice shouted at her from behind. "Student Kaihtaliamalasterus, get back to work! Time and tide waits for no one!"

"Cardinal Hetara, I'm sorry, but..." the young lady turned around to face her instructor, but instead was greeted by the grinning face of one Graekatziasa'asterus and a stranger. "Blessed Creation, Grae! I thought you were dead!"

"Kaihta!" Grae shouted as she rushed into an embrace with the other woman. Tamara, meanwhile, was left standing in the doorway to watch the spectacle. The young lady with the chocolate coloured hair, Kaihta, appeared remarkably similar to Grae as far as body size and

build was concerned, and there was a definite resemblance except for the hair. Their eyes were different as well: where as Grae's eyes were emerald green, Kaihta's shone in a dark brown. After the two girls pulled apart, Grae turned back to Tamara and motioned for her to join them. "Kaihta, this is Tamara Scott."

"Hello Tamara Scott," Kaihta replied, shaking hands with the human woman.

"Tamara," Grae continued, "this is Kaihta, my sister."

"Hello, Kaihta." Tamara smiled at the young lady. "Twins, huh?"

"Indeed," Kaihta responded. "There is one major difference, though that's not as obvious as our hair."

"What's that?"

"She's the smart one!"

"Oh, stop it!" Grae swatted her sister on the shoulder.

"Seriously, though," Kaihta continued, "Grae, here, has all these ideas about travelling and seeing the universe, just like the Doctor does. I don't know why any self-respecting Time Lord feels the need to go joyriding around the cosmos. You should have heard her when we were children: the Doctor did this, the Doctor did that. 'Is it true the Doctor actually lived on Earth for a long time?' and on and on and on."

"Kaihta, stop it - you're embarrassing me!" Grae pleaded.

"I used to think that she had a bit of a crush on the old guy."

Tamara began laughing and Grae blushed. "Grae, I'm sorry, I'm not laughing at you. I'm just glad that we left the Doctor back at the Lord President's office."

"The Doctor's here?" Kaihta asked. "That's right, I've been so busy with my studies and trying to fill your shoes, I completely forgot they summoned him."

"How else do you think we got here?" Grae raised her eyebrows, happy to shock her sister a bit.

"I'm sure he'll sort out the rebels, then."

"Rebels?" Tamara asked.

"Yeah, there've been hints of a civil war brewing," Kaihta explained, "between the establishment and rebel outsiders. The rebels are being lead by Cardinal Bramahl, of all people. You remember Cardinal Bramahl, don't you, Grae?"

"Not particularly," Grae answered. "Should I?"

"Yes, she was our Temporal Physics professor in intermediate," Kaihta responded. "Surely you remember her?"

"Temporal Physics in intermediate? Surely that was Cardinal Baronoval?"

"Cardinal Baronoval?" Kaihta thought for a moment then continued, "No, I'm sure it was Cardinal Bramahl."

"Kaihta," Grae corrected her sister, "I'm pretty sure it was Cardinal Baronoval."

"Listen," Kaihta said as she raised her eyes to the heavens, "just because you're the golden child of the Academy doesn't mean that you're infallible."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"It means that ever since the Madame Lord President took you on as a special charge, your ego has far surpassed your talent," Kaihta said smugly. "It's a rare thing, Ms. Scott, when a Lord President singles anyone out as a favourite. Many of dear Grae's former classmates are

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extremely jealous and more than a bit angry that she was allowed to graduate early. After all, her marks weren't that much better than others."

"Listen," Grae stepped between Tamara and Kaihta, "I've had a really bad last few days, and I'm certainly not going to take this from you. Tamara. Let's go." With that, Grae left the workshop, leaving Tamara behind, feeling very awkward.

"Well," Tamara began, "it was, um, nice meeting you Kaihta."

"My pleasure, Ms. Scott," said Kaihta, returning the complement.

Tamara turned to leave, but first felt the need to defend her friend. "You know," she began, "Grae isn't all that bad. She's actually gotten me out of a few tight places before. I trust her with my life."

"Well, don't let Miss Know-it-all fool you." Kaihta responded. "She may be smart, but she's immature. She'll go on these rants about the most insignificant things. She'll go on and on like she only has one life to live. We called them 'Grae-gushes' at the Academy."

"I find her perfectly charming," Tamara answered. "After all, it's the little things in life that make it worth living."

"Ugh, you sound like that hopeless romantic, the Doctor. You three must make a perfect team."

"Actually," Tamara said proudly, "we do."

\* \* \* \* \*

As the Great Door silently slid open, great warmth spread over the Doctor and Andred, who found themselves shielding their eyes from the onslaught of natural light that bombarded their pupils. Once their eyes got used to the light, they were able to take in the environment they were about to enter.

"Not very hospitable, is it?" Andred asked, rhetorically.

"Oh, I don't know," the Doctor answered, trying to lighten the mood. "No worse than Telos, Exxilon, Segonax, or any number of anonymous British quarries." The Doctor looked over to his friend, who was clearly not amused. "Look, Andred, I really appreciate you offering to come with me, but you don't have to."

"Look, I want to bring in this Bramahl woman as much as anyone."

"Right then," the Doctor said as he gestured forward. "After you."

"No Doctor, after you."

"Very well." The Doctor led Andred out of the Citadel and into the wastelands of outer Gallifrey.

As the door sealed shut behind them, a staser bolt rang out, hitting Andred in the shoulder. He collapsed to his knees, grasping at the wound.

"Andred!" The Doctor rushed to his friend's side. When he looked up again, they were surrounded by a dozen men and women. Their clothes were torn and faded and their faces dirty and unkempt.

A blond young man wearing the remains of the red student uniform of the Prydonian Academy moved forward. Methodically, he tossed a large rock up and down as he said, "Bramahl said to come alone!"

With that, he brought the rock down hard onto the Doctor's head.

## EPISODE THREE

Slowly, the world faded back into view before the Doctor's eyes. The tundra of Outer Gallifrey stretched as far as he could see. Taking stock of his person, he noticed that his hands and feet were unbound and a cloth had been wrapped around his head, absorbing blood from his wound. Removing the cloth, he noticed that it was a long shred of what used to be his star-covered waistcoat –now, the stars were brown and lifeless. Re-wrapping his head, he noticed that he was alone - Andred was nowhere in sight.

"Andred?" he asked timidly, hoping for an answer.

"The Castellan is in a safe place," a female voice rang out from behind him, "where he will remain until our discussions are concluded."

The Doctor swivelled around and came face to face with Bramahl and her followers. Her face danced in his head as memories flooded back to the surface...

"You!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Returning to the Doctor's office, Grae and Tamara were surprised to see that the Doctor and Andred were gone. The Madame Lord President stood in the centre of the room, watching the Great Door seal itself shut on a viewscreen.

"Where is everyone?" Grae asked, then she noticed the viewscreen's picture. "No, you can't have sent him outside!"

"We have no choice," Quella explained. "It was Bramahl's request that she'd only speak with the Doctor."

"You should have waited for us to return, then." Grae threw herself onto the couch and wound her hands up in her scarf.

"He did ask me to tell you not to worry and to enjoy yourselves in the recreational facilities."

"Yeah," Tamara said as she sat down next to Grae, "that sounds like him all right."

"Grae," Quella asked. "I notice you're still wearing your wristcomm. Weren't you supposed to have turned that in by now?"

"Yes, but..."

"I suppose you haven't visited Security either?"

"No, ma'am."

"Grae, my dear," Quella approached the couch and squatted down so she was able to look Grae in the eyes, "surely you realize the importance of confidentiality in the Agency's missions. Any leaks may cause catastrophic damage to the time lines."

"Yes ma'am." Grae answered sadly as a pout formed across her mouth.

"Allow me to have a transport brought around for you. It'll help get this whole unfortunate business concluded much faster."

"Ma'am," Grae said as she stood, "I believe that there is a problem. My contact on Decema 7 admitted to being paid by an unknown party to give up the location of my TARDIS capsule. I was sold out."

"By whom?"

"Grae, be careful," Tamara warned: "this is big, and you should be sure you can back it up."

"I believe," Grae began, ignoring Tamara's warning, "that Coordinator Jossa is responsible."

"Grae," Quella said as she took Grae by the shoulder, "I have always backed you and vouched for your talents and abilities where I could. However, if you wish to pursue this accusation without the proper proof, I'm afraid you will have to do it alone."

"But, Madame Lord President -" Grae pleaded.

"That's enough Grae," she interrupted; "let's forget you even mentioned it."

"But -"

"Grae," Quella interrupted again, "please. As the Lord President, I must show faith in the people I've appointed. Unfortunately, it must override even our relationship. However, if you can find some proof of your accusations, I'll gladly put on my Inquisitor headdress once again and try the culprit to the fullest extent of the law."

"Thank you, Ma'am." Grae bowed her head and curtsied.

"Now, my child, go get me some proof."

\* \* \* \* \*

*"Doctor," the young lady with the blonde hair asked as she climbed a small rocky incline, "where do you think we are?"*

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*"That's easy, Duchess," the cockney sailor replied, "this can't be anywhere but England, probably along the north-western coast nearest Liverpool."*

*"Don't be **too** sure of yourself, young man. Appearances can be deceiving," the Doctor snapped as he followed along behind. With every lean on his walking stick, he could feel his muscles aging. It wasn't always like this. He had only recently begun feeling his age. Ever since leaving Gallifrey, the strain he had placed upon this old body of his increased with the passing of time. As he reached the top of the rise, he took a deep breath and surveyed the surrounding area, his long white hair blowing in the wind. Perhaps he should give in to his body's desire for renewal?*

*"Doctor, Ben: look!" The young woman shouted as she gesture down the other side of the hill, where a motorcar buzzed by on a skinny, curvy strip of asphalt.*

*"Pol, I think the Doctor's got us home!" Ben shouted as he ran down the other side of the rise and tried to flag down the car.*

*"Ben!" the Doctor called after him. "This isn't right, dear me, this isn't right at all. Ben, my boy, wait!"*

*The car screeched to a halt and a small woman exited. She wore a tight pair of black slacks and a white blouse that hugged her body. The smudge of red lipstick across her lips was the only makeup she wore, her face beaming with a natural beauty the likes of which Ben had never seen. He particularly liked the spattering of freckles that spread across the bridge of her nose and the large curls of her sandy coloured hair. Then there was her body, which easily put Polly's to shame. Ben remarked to himself with a smirk that the curls of her hair were not the only things that gently bounced as she walked...*

*"Hello there, love," Ben said as the woman walked up to him. "What's a girl like you doing in a place like this?"*

*She looked him up and down and simply said, "No."*

*"Half a mo'!" But before he could say anymore, the woman's attention was turned upon Polly.*

*"Can I help?" Polly asked, as the woman looked her up and down.*

*"Definitely not," the woman replied arrogantly.*

*"Well, I never!" Polly said, and then stuck her tongue out at the woman.*

*"Ah, there you are," the woman said as she approached the Doctor, "I've come a long way looking for you."*

*"Have you indeed, young lady?" the Doctor responded, matching the woman's intense, grey-eyed stare. "And who might you be?"*

*"Well," the lady began, "why don't you step in my car and I'll tell you."*

*"Doctor, I don't trust her!" Polly warned as she ran to the Doctor's side.*

*"Nonsense, Polly," the Doctor said as he brushed off his young friend's concern. "This young lady has obviously come a long way to find me. I think we should hear her out, but not in her car..."*

*"As you wish," the strange woman answered as she removed her keys from her pocket. "I've prepared for this eventuality." Selecting a key from her key ring, she extended her arm and twisted the key in the air in front of her. The entire surrounding area flickered and faded. Replacing it: a slate grey room, covered in all-too-familiar roundels.*

*"They've found me! No!" The Doctor shouted as he rushed to where the TARDIS once stood. "What have you done with my ship?"*

*"It's in a safe place, Doctor." The woman smirked slyly. "But now that your travels are over, you won't need it."*

*"You're with the Agency, aren't you?" he asked, yelling directly into her face.*

*"Operative 926 at your service, but you may call me by my name."*

*"And what is that?"*

*"Bramahl."*

\* \* \* \* \*

Grae and Tamara had to avoid Security troops on the way to the hospital. Disobeying a direct order from Coordinator Jossa was not the best way to keep oneself out of the brig. Grae was becoming a walking security risk and a run in with the Chancellery Guard would definitely put a wrench in their plan to get to the bottom of a possible conspiracy involving the Coordinator himself.

"Who are we visiting, again?" Tamara asked as Grae pulled her out of sight, dodging a group of guards. "Come on. The coast is clear."

"She's an old friend of the Doctor's and a person that I confided in quite a lot. She's human too," Grae explained, "so you should get along with her quite well. Hang on, security checkpoint."

"What do I do?" Tamara looked at the small metallic pad and speaker.

"Don't worry, it doesn't give away your identity," Grae said as she pointed at the device, "it just screens your system for any contagions, bacteria, et cetera, that might be harmful to the patients within. Anything treatable pops up on the screen here and an antidote, if available, is dispensed below."

"How does it work?"

"You just place the palm of your hand on the pad and let the computer do the rest."

"Okay." Tamara placed her hand on the pad, then added under her breath, "I shouldn't have eaten that poppy seed bagel this morning..."

Tamara felt a tingle run over her hand, then in a moment the computer spoke:

**"TRACE OF INFLUENZA VIRUS,"** it began, **"ORIGINATING ON THE THIRD PLANET IN SOL SYSTEM. INFECTION HAS NOT REACHED CONTAGIOUS STAGE. ANTIDOTE PREPARED BELOW ISSUED AS A PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE. THE ANTIDOTE WILL CONQUER ALL KNOWN TELLURIAN STRAINS OF THE VIRUS AND 85% OF ALL POSSIBLE VIRUS MUTATIONS."**

"Thank you." Tamara patted the machine's speaker then grabbed the small pouch from a window in the machine's base. "Well, down the hatch." Tamara twisted the cap off the pouch and drank the contents down quickly. "Mmmm, I could get used to that on the rocks with a twist of lemon. Go on Grae, your turn. Hope yours tastes half as good as mine."

"You know, Tamara," Grae said as she patted her friend's arm, "Time Lord scans take a little longer due to our more complex biology. Why don't you go in and make sure there are no security troops and I'll follow along shortly."

"All right," Tamara answered as the hospital doors slid open silently. Once the doors had closed behind her friend, Grae placed her palm on the device.

"Come on, come on, make this quick and painless, okay? My levels *were* unusually low today..."

\* \* \* \* \*

The waiting area of the hospital, Tamara thought to herself, was not unlike many that she had been in on Earth. Instead of the outdated magazines, Time Lords that waited here were entertained by floating video monitors displaying the top news stories from the twelve galaxies. Everyone, including reception, was pre-occupied by his or her monitors, so Tamara was able to have a quick nose around in peace. Once she was satisfied as to the lack of security personnel, she took a look at her watch. What was taking Grae so long?

\* \* \* \* \*

As Tamara stepped back out through the hospital doors, she was shocked to see Grae with a sonic device in her mouth and the outer shell of the box in her hands. Upon closer inspection, Tamara noticed that several of the wires had been cut and the parts charred.

"What the hell is going on?" Tamara asked. "You wanted to keep undercover? This'll send security down here in a heartbeat. What happened?"

"Well, uh," Grae paused for a moment, "there was a short circuit and I thought I could fix it."

An alarm suddenly blasted from a box above their heads.

"Come on, Grae." Tamara grabbed the young woman by the arm.

"No, we have to see Lady Leela first." Grae pulled from Tamara's grip and passed through the hospital doors.

"Damn it, Grae!" Tamara yelled as she followed after her friend.

\* \* \* \* \*

*"Stop, you're making me giddy!"*

*Slowly, the spinning stopped and the Doctor came to rest on a cold, black, floor. Sitting up, he pulled a mirror from his pocket. An astonished face framed by an untidy mess of dark hair stared back at him. Nothing had happened. Had the Time Lords realized their pompous mistake? No...*

*"That's not their style at all." He said out loud.*

*"Please remain silent, Doctor." A female voice, a familiar one at that.*

*"Show yourself!" the Doctor demanded. "Interfering with Time Lord technology is a very stupid thing to do!"*

*"Not to us, it isn't." A small woman dressed in a black Time Lord gown appeared before him. Her beauty struck a chord within him. Something from his past...*

*"I know you, don't I?" The Doctor squinted as he looked her over, trying to place her face. Then it came to him in a blinding flash. "You're the Agency aren't you? You're Bramahl! We've met before; you threatened to turn me in while I was still in my first body."*

*"Your remembering me at this stage is quite flattering, Doctor," Bramahl approached, "Sometime later, you'll have every reason to – but not yet."*

*The Doctor rose to his feet and dusted down his large, shapeless black coat. He circled the woman suspiciously, trying to force his mind to work properly.*

*"I can't remember for the life of me how I got away from you last time." He ran his hand through his hair in frustration.*

*"You allowed me to regenerate you at your next destination in exchange for your freedom," Bramahl responded smugly, "and here we are again at the end of your new body and I have another proposition for you."*

*"Really," the Doctor coughed in disbelief. "I suppose you can't turn me in to the Time Lords - they already beat you to it."*

*"Doctor," Bramahl said as she moved nearer to him, "I'm here to offer you amnesty."*

*"You're pardoning me?" The Doctor chuckled to himself. "As much as I appreciate the notion, I don't think you have the authority."*

*"The Agency," Bramahl answered, "you'll find, has the authority to do almost anything."*

*"Those are quite big words, Bramahl, but as I'd like to keep this body for a little while longer, I'm prepared to hear you out." With that, the Doctor dropped into a cross-legged position on the floor and looked up at her like a schoolchild awaiting his lesson.*

*"I'm glad you're being cooperative," Bramahl explained, "because the Agency is not really giving you a choice in this matter."*

*"I figured as much."*

*"Good," she began. "You are now property of the Agency. You will perform whatever missions we see fit to send you on. In return for your cooperation, we are prepared for you to keep this body for as long as you remain in our service. We will give you the use of your TARDIS and the assistant of your choice to accompany you. I do suggest you pick one that is familiar with your present incarnation, otherwise it could get quite awkward."*

*"Sounds a little suspicious, if you ask me." The Doctor again rose to his feet. "Where's the catch?"*

*"Well, I'm glad you asked."*

*"I'm not sure I'm glad I asked now..."*

*"It's a simple exchange, really. As long as you continue to be of use to us, the terms of our agreement stand." Bramahl moved in close. "Disobey us once, Doctor and they are forfeit. Your companion will be returned with his or her memory erased and your regeneration and exile will continue as planned."*

*"Very well," the Doctor said as he shrugged and walked away from the young woman, "at least your terms are fair. I accept your offer."*

*"Which assistant do you choose?"*

*"Oh, that's easy, I pick Jamie." The Doctor turned back around and Bramahl was gone. "What, what's happening, where did you go?" Turning back around, he saw that he was in the console room of his TARDIS and a familiar voice answered him back.*

*"Doctor, I'm right here! Are you all right?"*

*"Jamie, my dear friend how wonderful it is to see you again!" The Doctor grabbed Jamie's hands and pumped them up and down excitedly. Then he gave his friend a tight hug.*

*"Oh, eh, Doctor." Jamie responded uncomfortably, "Doctor what are you doin'? I just saw you last night before I went to sleep."*

*"Oh, yes, yes of course."*

*"You know, I had the strangest dream last night," Jamie began - but then paused. Looking around the console room, he noticed the distinct lack of a feminine presence. "Where's Victoria gotten herself off to?"*

*"Victoria? We dropped her off with the Harris's. Don't you remember?"*

*"But she was just here last night." Jamie's brow furrowed. "We had just left the planet Dikartis and decided to go to sleep early."*

*"The planet Dikartis... but that was a long..." The Doctor turned around and offered his fist to the sky in frustration, out of the sight of his companion. "Bramahl, you neglected to say you'd be taking my companion out from an earlier part of my time stream!"*

*"Who are you talking to?" Jamie asked, turning the Doctor back around. "What were you saying about Dikartis?"*

*"Oh!" The Doctor looked smugly at the ceiling of the TARDIS and said, "The planet Dikartis was a long, hard struggle for all of us, but Victoria in particular. She felt the need to exercise her intellect and I dropped her off with the Harris's to learn... um... Graphology! Ha!"*

*Then under his breath he added, "If you're going to try to trip me up, Bramahl, you're going to have to do better than that!"*

\* \* \* \* \*

Leela sat on the end of her hospital bed, her bad leg elevated. A doctor split open her plaster cast with a laser and lowered her leg to the floor.

"You'll want to take your first steps on that leg a bit slow," he explained, "and please do feel free to come back if you feel the need for some physical therapy."

"Nonsense," Leela snapped. "In my day, I was a warrior! A simple injury like this shouldn't have kept me off my feet for as long as it did."

"It's standard medical procedures, my Lady."

"To hell with your standard medical procedures," she stated simply and, with a nod of her head, hopped off the table onto her leg - which gave out from under her.

"Allow us, Lady Leela," a lilting female voice said as Leela felt herself scooped off the ground. Once she was sitting again, she was able to look at the people who helped her.

"Grae!" Leela embraced the girl in a hearty hug and kissed her on the forehead. The doctor, seeing that he was no longer needed, left the room.

"Lady Leela, this is Ms. Tamara Scott of Earth."

"Hello, Leela," Tamara said as she extended a hand. "The Doctor's told me a lot about you."

"The Doctor's told me a lot about you, too," Leela responded with a smile.

"Really?"

"I was just like you at one point," Leela said as she stroked Tamara's shoulder. "You know, I thought that I'd travel with the Doctor forever."

"Why did you stop?"

"I fell in love," Leela answered, "with the handsome young Commander of the Chancellery Guard."

"Castellan Andred," Grae whispered, "It was the biggest wedding in Gallifrey's history. It was so romantic!"

"This is all well and good. But Grae, I don't think you'd come and see me unless there was some trouble."

"There is, Ma'am." Grae pulled a chair over and sat in front of the former warrior of the Sevateem. "I've been dismissed from the Agency and they want my equipment and my memory."

"I see," Leela said as she rubbed her formerly bandaged leg. "Although I can also sense that there is more to the story."

"There is." Grae paused, took a deep breath and continued: "I was sold out. Someone paid off my contact to give the location of my capsule away. I was attacked and shot into space. If it wasn't for the Doctor and Tamara, I'd be freeze-dried by now."

"Who do you think the traitor is?"

"I don't want to say just yet, but I need to keep my memories in order to find proof."

"I see." Leela slid to the edge of the bed and got, lightly, to her feet.

"Can we help you?" Tamara asked, concerned.

"Thank you," Leela answered, "but no thank you. I need to get my leg working properly again." Leela crossed the room and opened the closet, fetching a leather carryall. "Grae, what do you think they'll do with the memory disk once they've finished with you?"

"Wipe it, I imagine."

"Right. But I have a little trick that Andred taught me that may help you out." Leela pulled out a small memory disk from her bag. "This is a bit before your time Grae, but the Castellan before Andred was a ruthless tyrant. He insisted that I have my memory and all my warrior instincts wiped from my mind. So he took them out and put them on this disk. The thing about this disk is that it hides the information on it. So when it was showing that it was erased, the information was really safe. Andred was then able to put all the information back into me."

"Easy enough." Tamara took the disk from Leela and looked it over. "All we need to do is switch this disk with the one they plan on using, then retrieve it later on."

"Easy?" Grae responded nervously. "It's not *your* brain they're going to suck out."

"Really, Grae, when I was training, the simple bait and switch is the first thing they taught." Tamara turned to the older woman. "I'm going to need your help too, Leela."

"Of course, my friend. With women like you two travelling with the Doctor," Leela said with a smile, "I'll never worry about his well-being again."

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The Doctor snapped back to reality with a start. Could this really be the same Bramahl from all those years ago? The same CIA Agent that seemed to dog him throughout eternity? He let his mind wander a little. Where else had he seen her before? Surely it was she that warned him of the Master's arrival on Earth during his exile? She had also briefed him on the Skaro mission,

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where the CIA wanted him to subvert the creation of the Daleks, hadn't she? Wasn't she around, also, when he and Ace... She did all this? The Doctor slowly rose to his feet as the answer came to him and he was surprised at how long it took him to figure it out. As she stood before him in a combination of Gallifreyan robes and animal skins, her face caked in dirt, he realized that Bramahl *wasn't* all those people. He sorted the thoughts out in his mind: the events certainly happened, but not quite as they presented themselves to him. How did she fool him and how many others did she have under her spell? Not even the Master's hypnotic abilities were this powerful.

"Get out of my head!" the Doctor shouted as Bramahl walked over to him and laid her hand on his cheek. He recoiled from her touch. "What have you done to my memories?"

"I've only brought them to the surface," she said as she smirked. "It's been a long time Doctor, but I'm prepared to offer you one more proposition along the lines of which we've already made in the past."

"You've collaborated with this traitor in the past?" Andred shouted. Andred! He was hanging from his wrists, with his feet dangling a meter from the dusty ground. His clothing was torn and his back bloody with long thin fissures that only could have been made with a light-whip.

"Yes, Andred," the Doctor started. "I mean, I *think* I did. I mean I thought I did, but I didn't really. No, I didn't – Andred, you have to believe me. She's poisoned my memories somehow. She's probably poisoned yours too!"

"That's enough," Bramahl said as she smacked the Doctor hard across the face, then she grabbed and squeezed the Doctor's cheeks tightly. "Listen to me, Doctor. There is nothing that you can do to stop the events I've set in motion, so you'd best listen and listen good."

The Doctor put his hands in the air, submitting.

"That's better," Bramahl said, not letting go of the Doctor's face, "but I asked you to come alone. Since you couldn't even do that properly, the attack on the Citadel will go ahead as planned."

"No!" Andred shouted.

"Silence him!" Bramahl commanded and the follower with the light-whip ignited his weapon and lashed the Castellan across the back.

"As you will find, my supporters have already positioned themselves in strategic places within the Capitol," Bramahl explained, shaking the Doctor's head with each word in emphasis. "Gallifrey will fall to me and there's nothing you can do about it. Not that you would deny me the Coronet of Rassilon, would you Doctor? Not me, not Bramahl. I've always known how you felt about me. I've seen your eyes look me over on more than one occasion, and I know you like what you see." With that, she kissed the Doctor full on the lips.

Mustering his strength, he grabbed the woman by the shoulders and pushed her from him. Losing her balance, she toppled over backwards and landed flat on her back.

"I don't know who you are," the Doctor yelled angrily, as he wiped his lips with his arm, "or what you hope to achieve by conquering Gallifrey -"

"Well, Doctor," Bramahl interrupted, "I hope for nothing but a better life for my people. Not just for myself, as you did. You and I are of the same ilk, Doctor, in that we both desire

Gallifreyan reform. But I, unlike you, have actually made the Time Lords take notice of the plight of Gallifrey's underprivileged."

"Mindless slaughter, Bramahl," the Doctor responded - "that's what it is. The only statement made here is that you are a ruthless, vicious woman who has blinded her followers into believing that she'll rule them differently!"

Bramahl leapt to her feet. "Release them."

Her minions voiced their disapproval.

"Don't worry, my friends," she explained: "by the time they reach the Capitol, there will be no Capitol left."

The two dozen followers cheered as they cut the Castellan loose and helped the Doctor to his feet.

As Andred dropped to the ground, he yelled, "You'll never succeed, Bramahl,"

"I think that you'll have a nasty surprise waiting for you by the time you return, my dear Castellan." Bramahl raised her wrist and pressed the face of her wristcomm all the while chuckling a content chuckle. "Why don't you tell the Doctor what's been going on beneath the citadel."

"So help me, if you do anything..." Andred shouted as he ran at the rebel leader, who vanished with her followers. "What's going on? Where did they go?"

"Andred?" The Doctor asked, turning at his friend, "What is she talking about?"

"The Former Lord-President, before Quella, had sanctioned our engineering division to build a more efficient power core for the new Type 2000 TT Capsules," Andred explained. "Unfortunately, she requested they look into validium as a power source."

"That's feasible," the Doctor said; "but surely validium could only be used for a short time, since it's not able to hold up to the stresses that the TT Capsules would place on it?"

"Indeed," Andred continued. "Much validium was used in an attempt to substitute it as a primary power source; little did the engineers know that the by-product, in such quantities, was quite toxic."

"Please don't tell me that the former Lord-President also sanctioned for the waste to be stored in a bunker beneath the citadel."

"I'm afraid so, Doctor. The ground has become softer by the day, undoubtedly the cause of the tremors you felt."

Quietly, off in the distance, an explosion could be heard.

"The Citadel!" The Doctor shouted as the ground began to tremble.

\* \* \* \* \*

"I can't believe I'm actually crawling through a duct," Tamara said to herself, between humming phrases of the theme to *Brazil*, then she added under her breath: "'Harry Tuttle, heating engineer, at your service. I came into this game for the action, the excitement. Go anywhere; travel light. Get in; get out whenever there's trouble. A man alone...'"

Once she reached the vent above the Mind Probe room, she was able to look down on Grae, who was strapped to a chair. Wires were fixed to her temples and the technician could be heard leaving. As per Leela's description of the process, there should have been a three and a

half minute lag between the subject being attached to the machine and the machine building enough power to complete the process.

Tamara tapped on the vent and Grae looked up and smiled.

"The toast is clear," she whispered.

Silently, Tamara removed the screen and dropped through the opening.

"I'm getting a bit too old for this," she moaned as her knee popped. "And its *coast*, the *coast* is clear."

"What's a coast?" Grae asked.

"Later," Tamara answered as she removed the disk from her pocket. "Where does this go?"

"On the opposite side of the console, by my head."

Tamara walked around the table and popped open the disk compartment on the console. Quickly, she exchanged disks and popped the other one back into her pocket.

The machine whirred to life.

"That was a close one." Tamara completed the circuit around the table. She looked down at Grae and gave her a quick kiss on the forehead. "Good luck." As she eyed up her ventilation shaft escape route, Harry Tuttle from *Brazil* once again popped into her head. She turned to her young friend and said: "'Listen kid, we're all in this together.'" And with that, she disappeared up the ventilation shaft.

"What are you talking about, Tam..." Grae began, but her words trailed off as the machine began to perform its duty.

The technician entered the room, checked to see if Grae was unconscious, then jacked the machine up to maximum.

An explosion rang out in the distance.

A moment later, the shock wave hit and the room shook violently. Tamara tumbled from the duct back into the chamber, where she was tackled to the floor by the technician. With a quick twist, she was on top of him gripping him in a sleeper hold. Once his body went limp, Tamara rushed to the machine and checked over.

"Upload of ninety-eight point two percent of the subject's mind complete," she read aloud, with horror. "There's got to be a reverse switch on here."

Another explosion rang out, closer than before. And the machine short-circuited in a hail of sparks. Tamara quickly disconnected Grae, grabbed the disk from the machine and swept her friend up into her arms.

Another explosion. The ceiling began to collapse. Tamara tore from the room as the roof caved in behind her. The machine was destroyed and Grae's mind was wiped onto the disk in her pocket.

"What a day," Tamara said to herself as she ran off in search of help.

\* \* \* \* \*

The shockwaves from the first explosion caused the ground to tremble in a series of violent earthquakes. The explosive devices were strategically placed in the soft ground beneath the Citadel's support system. The roof of the recreation centre was one of the first to collapse,

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pinning several Time Lords beneath rubble. In several sections of the building, the floor began to open. Wide cracks and huge sinkholes swallowed structure and people alike, plunging them deep into the crust of the planet. Those who were lucky, simply fell to their deaths against rock, or were buried alive. Others who were swallowed by the earth were plunged into the waste store, their bodies eaten alive by the toxicity of the substance.

Autmeog Grapnia was returning to his quarters when the ceiling came down on top of him, bringing a rather undignified end to his uneventful life. Grae's sister, Kaihta was leaving the laboratory when the earthquake hit. As she ran for cover in the landing bays, a fissure opened in the ground before her. Losing her balance, she tumbled forward, smacking her forehead on the jagged edge flooring on the far side of the opening. She hit her head with such force she rebounded off backwards and fell unconscious into the earth. Luckily, a section of the opposite side had broken loose and caught her fall. While Kaihta lay there, her limp frame began to glow with a warm light...

Not a single Time Lord was prepared for this eventuality - in fact, most didn't understand what was happening. To make matters worse, those who survived the earthquake would have the wrath of Bramahl's followers waiting for them.

Tamara had Grae slung over her shoulder, and was able to swiftly avoid any falling debris. Seeing a young female medic driving a mini-moke ambulance, she flagged her down.

"My friend is wounded," Tamara shouted at the medic, "help me!"

The car drove over to her, but another tremor caused a beam to give way, blocking its path. It was too high to climb over with Grae in tow.

"Pass her to me," the medic instructed, "then climb over yourself."

Tamara followed the instructions and climbed over while the medic fastened Grae onto the small flatbed trailer. As Tamara climbed into the passenger seat, she caught a glimpse of another person's arm in the rubble. The medic saw the person as well and ran to check his life signs.

"He's dead," the medic said as she stood and began walking back to the car. "Let's get your friend to hospital."

Suddenly, another tremor began, more violent than the last. The medic screamed as Tamara felt the earth jolt beneath them. She looked up in enough time to see a large crack open in the floor. Tamara reached for the young medic, but she was too late. Another jolt came, sending the girl tumbling backwards into the fissure.

The crack widened and Tamara felt the car begin to slowly sink. Quickly, she shook off the shock of seeing the woman fall to her death and unfastened her seat belt. Climbing out onto the trailer, she removed the straps that secured Grae and rolled her body onto the floor then jumped free from the trailer as it sank into the ground.

After a quick check to see if Grae was unharmed, Tamara felt another tremor. She quickly rolled on top of Grae's body as the rest of the ceiling came down on top of them.

In other areas of the Citadel, Bramahl's followers entered among the ruins, firing their weapons indiscriminately. No Time Lord was safe from the attack. If they were in sight, they were a target. In the recorded history of Gallifrey, it would be noted that over two thousand Time Lord civilians: male, female and child were butchered in the massacre.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Doctor and Andred arrived back in time to see the main tower of the Citadel sink into the ground.

"The Transduction Barrier projector!" Andred swiped his key card and the Great Door swung open. "What is she hoping to achieve by making us vulnerable to outside attack in addition to everything else? Who'd want to invade a pre-ravaged planet?"

"Well, either she wants to keep us on our knees by having that threat hanging above our heads too or..." The Doctor paused as he and the Castellan entered the building. The Great Door slammed shut behind them.

"Or what?" Andred asked as he quickened his pace.

"Or she could be working for someone else..."

"Yes, I thought you were going to say that."

"Well that would explain her extraordinary mental powers." Quickly they turned the corner to the lift, which was not working. The Doctor punched the keypad with frustration. "Contact Quella. I have to find out if Tamara and Grae are okay."

Andred punched a few controls on his wristcomm and the sad face of the Lord President appeared.

"Yes Andred," Quella responded. "I take it your talks with Bramahl didn't go well?"

"No, not at all," the Doctor began. "I did learn that Bramahl is not a Time Lord, I repeat, Bramahl is not a Time Lord. She has managed, somehow, to manipulate the minds of everyone on Gallifrey."

"How could she have done such a thing?"

"It's easy when you have access to the Matrix," the Doctor explained. "You put the falsities in there, and eventually it will filter through as fact. I have more to tell you, but I'm more concerned about Tamara and Grae. Have you heard any word from them?"

"I took the liberty in sending my personal guard out to look for them."

"And?"

"And, they found them," Quella paused, took a deep breath then continued. "They were both unconscious, under a pile of rubble."

"What!"

"Don't worry, according to the guards, Miss Scott only suffered minor cuts and bruises. They were nowhere near where the radiation from the waste store seeped through."

"And Grae?"

"Grae's fine, I think. Miss Scott was one top of her, protecting her. Hold on, they're here now."

"Doctor," Tamara's bruised face appeared in Andred's wristcomm. She was bleeding from a cut above her left eye. "I'm okay, but the Agency wiped Grae's memory completely."

"Sabotage!" Andred shouted. "When an Agent is dismissed, they're only supposed to wipe memories pertaining to any missions the Agent performed."

"Is that proof enough for you, Lord President?" Tamara asked.

"Indeed, but how can we be certain that it was anyone connected with the Agency?"

"Damn it!" Tamara turned back to face the Doctor. "Lady Leela just arrived here."

"Leela, my old friend," the Doctor shouted, happily. "I trust you to take care of Grae and Tamara."

"Gladly, Doctor, it's good to see you again," Leela smiled at her old friend.

"And you."

"I gave Miss Scott a special non-erasable disk to replace for the procedure," Leela explained. "Do you still have it?"

"Yes, right here." Tamara removed the disk from her pocket and was shocked at what she saw. "It's scratched!"

Then all the lights went out.

"Doctor," the voice of Bramahl boomed over the loudspeaker system. "Your presence is required in the Panoptican."

"Leela," the Doctor said, ignoring Bramahl's order, "my present companions are in your hands."

"I will guard them with my life, Doctor."

"Thank you, my friend."

"Whatever you do, Leela," Andred ordered, "please stay in the shelter of the Lord President's office. The Doctor and I can handle this." Andred ended the transmission as they reached the grand outer doors of the Panoptican.

They opened from the inside.

"Thank you Andred, for standing with me."

"It's the least I could do for a friend."

"What took you so long?" Bramahl asked as she watched the men enter.

Lord President Quella followed a moment later, her escort protecting her on all sides.

"Doctor," she stated, "I too shall proudly stand by your side through this."

"Thank you both."

\* \* \* \* \*

Tamara set the unconscious Grae on the Lord President's bench as Leela wheeled in a second Mind Probe from Andred's office. Within moments, the young girl was attached once again.

"Are you sure this will work if the disk is scratched?" Tamara asked as she loaded it into the machine.

"It should," Leela answered as she started the machine up, "but hopefully none of her memory is damaged. As she stands now, all that's left is the memory needed to keep her body going."

"Keep your fingers crossed, then."

The machine let out a high-pitched tone.

"The disk's been read," Leela said. "It appears the scratch only affects a small area. Ninety-eight per cent of her memory can be returned successfully."

"The other machine said that ninety-eight *point two* per cent of her memory was wiped, what's going to be missing?"

The timer on the machine clicked to three and a half minutes and Grae's incomplete memory was downloaded back into her head.

"Hopefully nothing important," Leela answered as she switched the machine off.

Grae opened her eyes and saw the concerned face of Tamara smiling down at her. She smiled back and opened her mouth to speak. Nothing came out.

Grae's eyes began to shift back and forth nervously.

"Grae, what's wrong? Tell me!" Tamara grabbed her by the shoulders and lifted her into a sitting position.

Grae tried to form words, but nothing came out. Her eyes began to tear up. Tamara took Grae into her arms as the girl began to sob. Then she pulled away. Grae, like an infant, held her arms out to her friend, not wanting her to leave her side.

"I'm sorry, Grae," Tamara said as she kissed her friend on the forehead, "There's something I need to do."

As she walked to the door, Leela asked, "Where are you going?"

"I'm going to find who's responsible for this and kill them."

\* \* \* \* \*

Bramahl's followers cheered as the Lord President entered the Panoptican. Several rebels grabbed her and brought her to face Bramahl on the centre dais.

"So this is the grand Panoptican?" Bramahl asked as she surveyed the chamber. "Not quite as impressive as I was led to believe."

"Well that definitely proves you're not a Time Lord." The Doctor stated.

"Whatever made you think that I was?" Bramahl answered with a laugh.

Suddenly, Andred's wristcomm chirped to life.

"Castellan Andred," a voice sounded from the communications device, "this is Agent Kendal of the Space Security Service."

Bramahl nodded her head at Andred, who quickly responded.

"Andred here."

"We picked up a null reading on your Transduction Barriers. We tried to reach you through normal channels, but they were down."

"Yes," Andred explained, "we're having a bit of a problem."

"Well you best get those shields back up, Castellan," Kendal warned, "we just picked up a battle cruiser dematerialising nearby and it's heading your way."

"What have you done?" Quella shouted as she took a step toward Bramahl, whose followers automatically stepped forward to guard their leader. Quella's personal guard moved in as well as they drew their weapons. A staser blast was heard and Quella's guard opened fire upon the rebels.

The first line of rebel Gallifreyans fell to the floor as the Doctor dove over Quella and Andred, pushing them to safety among the dark columns surrounding the outer edge of the chamber. From where he was, he could see Bramahl holstering a smoking patrol staser, having fired that first shot. The rebels however, easily outnumbered the guards, who were quickly defeated.

"Are you both all right?" The Doctor asked.

“Yes, we’re unharmed,” Quella answered. Before she could say anymore, several figures materialized around the perimeter of the central platform. They were humanoid, but completely hairless. Their skin was pockmarked and unhealthy looking and they all wore similar lightweight black uniforms: Enzani clones. They turned outward to face Bramahl’s minions and opened fire.

The screams were terrifying as the Time Lords were cut to pieces by the staser bolts. The Doctor dropped to his knees, tears of anger streaming down his cheeks.

When the staser blasts were silenced, not one of Bramahl’s followers was left standing.

“Come out and meet your new masters, former Lord President Quella,” Bramahl shouted over the moans of the wounded as three more humanoids materialized next to her. They had a slightly blue tinge to their smooth skin, which stood out dramatically from their dark black hair.

The male in the centre stepped forward and proclaimed, “In the name of the Deci Underground, we claim this planet in the name of all Deci who have fallen under Tellurian rule. With Gallifrey ours, the Earth Empire will fall, and our people will be avenged!”

## EPISODE FOUR

“Bramahl,” the Doctor shouted, “you’re making a big mistake! If you allow these quakes to continue, there will be no Gallifrey left for them to rule.”

“I don’t think so, Doctor,” Bramahl chided him. “Those are big words from a person who hides while his own people are slaughtered. I never imagined that the great Doctor would ultimately be such a coward. Don’t make me send an Enzani to find you. Your young friend Grae found out that they’re not as friendly as you had been led to believe, didn’t she?”

“Very well, I’m coming out.”

“Doctor, no!” Quella whispered.

“One of us has to stop her,” the Doctor explained, “and you’re too important. Andred, you have a wife who loves you dearly. Turns out I’m expendable after all.”

With that, the Doctor stepped from behind the column and into the light. Two Enzani grabbed the Doctor by the arms and dragged him onto the centre dais.

“Enzani,” Bramahl commanded. “Fetch me the three Artefacts that I seek: the Rod, Sash and Coronet of Rassilon. Let nothing stop you. Destroy anything or *anyone* that gets in your way!” The two Enzani released their grip on the Doctor. Two more clones joined them to carry out Bramahl’s order.

“What do you need me for?” The Doctor asked.

“You’ll see.”

"The Deci Underground, huh?" The Doctor turned from the young woman to her blue-skinned accomplices. "I know you're against the Tellurian presence in the Decema system, but what do you hope to achieve from all this?"

"Revenge, Doctor," the leader of the Deci answered. "With Gallifreyan technology, we can eliminate the Tellurian presence in our system from the very beginning."

"But is it worth all this?" The Doctor motioned to the dead and wounded Gallifreyans on the floor.

"This is war, Doctor," Bramahl said coldly. "Get a backbone."

"This isn't war. This is something far more sinister, I can feel it."

Suddenly Bramahl's wristcomm chirped to life.

"Yes?" She answered.

"Lady Bramahl." It was the Enzani Leader. "We've found two people in hiding."

"And why haven't you killed them yet?"

"With apologies, my Lady," he answered, "I think they're important."

"I didn't hire you to think."

"Yes, my Lady."

"Who are they?"

"The Lady Leela and Graekatziasa'asterus." The Enzani leader pushed the woman into the camera view of his wristcomm.

"Where's Tamara?" The Doctor whispered to himself.

"Well, well, well," Bramahl said as she shook her head in disbelief. "Graekatziasa of the noble House of Asterus is blessed with good luck, so it seems. Bring Leela to me, but destroy that annoying red-haired scab of a girl with your bare hands." Out of the corner of her eye, she could see the Doctor tense. "Wait! Doctor, I believe you have feelings for this young woman."

"What do you know about feelings, Bramahl?" the Doctor asked, simply.

"Enough to know that if I exploit yours, I will *own* you."

"You," Bramahl shouted into the wristcomm, "bring both Leela and Graekatziasa'asterus to me. Find that holier-than-thou idiot of a Coordinator, Jossa, as well. If he isn't dead already, put a bullet in his head."

"Yes, my Lady." The transmission cut off.

Bramahl turned her attention back to the Doctor. Motioning to one of the thugs, she shouted, "Secure him, and bring the Lord President and Castellan to me."

\* \* \* \* \*

"In the name of Rassilon, I command you to halt!" the Commander of the Chancellery Guard shouted as he motioned his men to take defensive positions among the wreckage. The Enzani were getting closer and he had no intention of letting the Artefacts go without a fight. When the clones did not halt as ordered, he gave the command and the squadron opened fire.

"The staser blasts aren't having any effect on -" One of the guards shouted as he was blown off his feet by a blast from an Enzani's weapon. The Gallifreyan energy weapons were no match for the fire power of the four clones. The commander was helpless to watch his men blown away one by one.

The commander knew what he had to do. As he watched the clones march past him, he ran his hand over the belt of grenades around his waist.

“At least I can take one of you bastards out.”

He removed all the pins and jumped onto the back of the nearest clone.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Bramahl says you’re to come with me.” The Enzani leader grabbed Grae and Leela by their wrists and yanked them through the doorway as an explosion rang out nearby.

Grae screamed as she fell, the explosion knocking her off her feet. The clone, however, continued on as Grae’s legs refused to cooperate. After being dragged for a few moments, her right leg caught itself on a jagged piece of debris and was sliced open long the side of her calf. She struggled against his grip and was met with a hard smack across her jaw, knocking her unconscious. Blood began trickling from her wound.

The distraction was enough to give Leela a moment to free herself from his grip. She leapt on the thug, pulling a blade from her boot and burying it deep within his back. The Enzani leader dropped to the floor.

“Well, it’s been a long time since I did that,” Leela said as she extracted her knife and wiped it clean with the tail of her shirt.

She turned back to Grae and the young woman let out a yelp and drew back from her as quickly as she possibly could, all the time trembling uncontrollably.

“Grae, my dear,” Leela said, trying to comfort her: “when I was your age, I was a warrior, a hunter. I grew accustomed to the sight of blood and violence. I’m sorry to have frightened you.” Leela approached the young woman slowly, but Grae leapt to her feet and ran in the opposite direction. “Grae, no! That wound needs to be treated! Don’t run away!”

Leela turned around again and came face to face with the Enzani Leader who grabbed her arm and twisted behind her back. She responded by flipping the huge being over her shoulder, dislocating it in the process.

The clone hit the floor with a thud and Leela smacked her arm against the wall, popping her shoulder back into place with a crack.

Leela rolled her shoulder a few times to assure it had returned to its proper position, then noticed a shadow falling over her. The clone was standing again. He reached down, grabbed the back of her neck and lifted her off the ground. Leela reacted with a swift reverse kick to the creature’s groin, and he dropped her.

Then, a figure leapt from the shadows onto the clone’s back and forced a handkerchief over the creature’s mouth. Within seconds, the creature was asleep and Tamara rolled off him onto the floor.

“Tamara!” Leela shouted as they embraced.

“Where’s Grae?”

“She ran off,” Leela explained. “I don’t know where she is. She was bleeding pretty badly, so she must have gone to the medical unit.”

“Where is that?”

“Tamara, we must go to the Doctor.”

“What about Grae?”

“Grae’s a talented field agent, as you are. Don’t forget that.” Leela grabbed Tamara’s hand and pulled her in the direction of the Panoptican. “She’ll be fine. The Doctor’s in more immediate danger.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Grae rushed through the hallways of the citadel, trying to make her way to the landing bays. The loss of blood from her leg wound was worsening and her head was becoming lighter. She paused for a moment while nausea overcame her. Then she collapsed to the floor, unconscious.

A moment later, she awoke and turned to the side in enough time to vomit onto the floor. Wiping her mouth on her arm, she climbed unsteadily to her feet and continued. Looking behind her to make sure she hadn’t been followed, she noticed the trail of blood she had left.

Reaching the landing bay, she was pleased to see it relatively empty. The welcome sight of a blue Police Box greeted her. Fishing her key from around her neck, she opened the Doctor’s TARDIS. Collapsing onto the console, she felt blindly for the telepathic circuits. When they wouldn’t work, she let out a frustrated growl and kicked the machine, her grey overcoat and scarf slipping from her shoulders. The energy she had spent coupled with the blood loss was too much for her body to handle and she passed out.

\* \* \* \* \*

The TARDIS’s sleeping telepathic systems jumped to life. The machine watched as a young female Time Lord tried to connect with it, but collapsed before she could touch the controls. Luckily, said controls could be overridden in an emergency and the brain pattern of a Time Lord, especially one that the Doctor had often thought about, automatically sent the circuits buzzing.

Slowly, methodically, the machine picked through the young woman’s brain as it reached out weakly for the Doctor. There was not enough mental energy to link the two minds, as they were so far apart. Know what it had to do, the machine searched for the brain pattern of its owner.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the Panoptican, the three blue-skinned Deci ambassadors were pacing impatiently along the dais.

“Lady Bramahl,” the leader asked, “what is taking so long?”

“My friends,” she explained, “the Artefacts that we seek are quite precious and need to handle with the utmost care.”

“So you send those Enzani thugs after them?”

“An unfortunate but necessary action.”

The main door opened and Coordinator Jossa entered, escorted by one of the clones. Jossa’s blood began to pump into over drive at the site of Bramahl standing over the Lord President, Castellán and the Doctor who were gagged, bound, and kneeling before his master.

"Why have you brought him to me?" Bramahl asked of the clone. "I gave orders to kill this idiot on sight."

"Lady Bramahl," Jossa said, grovelling, "what a privilege to finally meet you in person."

"I gave you explicit orders."

"Ah yes, about that..."

Bramahl slowly walked around the Coordinator, eyeing him up. Even though he towered over her, the Doctor could see him trembling.

"I have no time for your pitiful excuses, One-Sixteen."

At that moment, three Enzani arrived. Each of them held in their hands one of the three Artefacts: the Rod, Sash and Coronet of Rassilon. The fourth had perished in Chancellery Guard's suicide mission, and bits of his crimson uniform hung precariously on the remaining Enzani's clothes, smeared with his blood and the blood of their fallen comrade.

"Thank you." Bramahl nodded to the clones as they handed her the Artefacts. She pressed the Sash up against her face. "You can feel the power coursing through it!"

"The Artefacts! You have no idea what you're doing!" Jossa shouted.

"Excuse me," Bramahl asked. "Did you say something?"

"No Ma'am, sorry."

"Secure him," Bramahl commanded the nearest clone. "I may have a use for him after all."

Unseen by his captor, the Doctor had untied his wrists and waved a quick wave at Andred and Quella from behind his back.

Bramahl, meanwhile, placed the Sash over her shoulders. After taking the Rod, the third clone put the Coronet upon her head.

"Gallifrey is mine!" She shouted with glee as she pulled a staser from the waistband of her trousers and shot the female Ambassador of the Deci Underground between the eyes.

"Bramahl? What is the meaning of this?" the leader of the Deci asked as he watched his supposed compatriot shoot his assistant in the chest.

"Let's just say that you shouldn't have been so quick to trust."

The Deci leader turned on his heels, jumped off the dais and ran for the door.

"Ambassador Ralei," Bramahl called after him, "have a little dignity, will you?" When he didn't stop, Bramahl holstered her armament and motioned for an Enzani to go after him. A few moments later, there was a sickening crunch and the clone returned to the Panopticon wiping blood from his hands.

Bramahl turned her attention back to her three captives. "Now, you four can watch the downfall of Gallifrey with your undivided attention." Turning, she jammed the Rod of Rassilon into its place. The floor before her opened and a large black obelisk rose into view.

The Doctor leapt to his feet and tackled the young woman to the ground.

"Oh, Doctor," Bramahl said sarcastically, "I thought you said you didn't like me this way." Then she smacked him hard in the jaw. The force of the blow belied her size, and the Doctor was thrown off. He rolled from the platform onto the floor.

Bramahl quickly turned to the computer system. "Initiate sequence fifteen forty-two oblique stroke two eight one." She turned to Jossa, who was perspiring profusely. "Aren't you glad you gave me access to the computer systems?"

She turned back to the obelisk and came face to face with the Doctor.

"Well, well, well Bramahl," the Doctor said as he stood his ground. "I have to say I am surprised that you had the constitution for a triple-double cross. I've fought against formidable foes before, and you're right up there at the top of the list. Who do you work for?"

A staser bolt rang out, catching Bramahl between her shoulder blades. With a scream, she fell from the centre dais and onto the floor.

Tamara leapt from the shadows, her gun trained on Bramahl's unconscious body. Leela followed with a hail of Janus thorns through the air. The thorns embedded themselves in the surrounding Enzani, who collapsed to the ground paralysed. Tamara rushed to the Doctor's side, embracing him.

"Thank you," the Doctor said as he kissed his companion on the cheek.

"Doctor!" Leela ran to the Doctor's side and embraced him as well.

"Never have I been happier to know you had those on you, Leela." He kissed his old companion on the cheek as well. "Thank you, my friend."

"I'm honoured to be fighting alongside you once again."

Before the Doctor could say anymore, Tamara and Leela set about untying the others.

"What do we do with this bastard?" Tamara brought Jossa to the Doctor, with a staser planted firmly in his back.

"Keep your eye on him," the Doctor said as he turned to the computers. "I've got work to do."

Andred rushed to the Doctor's side at the computer terminal. "What do you think?"

After a few moments of fiddling with the controls, the Doctor threw his hands in the air. "The computers are no longer under Gallifreyan control. Bramahl has the information relaying from the Deci Cruiser in orbit. As long as we can keep the obelisk from going critical, the Eye of Harmony will remain stabilized. But, I'm not sure why -"

Before the Doctor could finish, he was tackled to the ground. Bramahl was on him and they rolled off the dais onto the floor. When their momentum stopped, Bramahl was on top of the Doctor, pounding on him. Blow after blow rained down on his body.

"The Thirteen will not tolerate failure!" Bramahl shouted. A punch suddenly didn't connect and the woman temporarily lost her balance. The Doctor seized the opportunity and spasmed his body, throwing her off. Andred caught her and spun her towards Quella who laid her out with one punch.

"I never realized how satisfying that would feel." Quella said as she rubbed her stinging hand.

At that moment the obelisk began to smoke. All the Time Lords present knew that the obelisk controlled the Eye of Harmony. If it were to fail, the black hole it held at bay would devour the planet. The power source of the Time Lords' greatest achievements would become their ultimate downfall. The radiation monitors began to rise. That, however, would take some time. If the Eye were to go critical with Gallifrey in its present state, the consequences would be disastrous.

Then the Doctor, Leela and Tamara heard the noise that they were expecting the least. The sense of joy that the noise evoked in them was unimaginable. A tear trickled down Leela's cheek as the TARDIS materialized next to the centre platform.

"In! Everybody in!" The Doctor shouted as Tamara opened the door with her key.

"What about her?" Andred asked, the unconscious Bramahl in his arms.

"Take her; give me the Sash, and the Coronet."

"Why?"

"I have to try to stabilize the obelisk while you go to the Deci cruiser."

"No, Doctor," Andred said as he removed the Sash from Bramahl's neck, "I'm the Castellan and it's my duty to maintain the security of the people of Gallifrey. I'll stay."

"Very well." The Doctor took Bramahl and slung her over his shoulder. "Be careful, my friend."

"I will." Andred turned to Leela and kissed her hard on the lips. "I'll be all right, I promise."

"But Andred..." Leela said, not wanting to leave her husband's side.

"Listen, I'm a Time Lord and this Sash will be the only thing protecting me if we have any problems." Andred ran a hand through his wife's hair. "With your Tellurian biology, you couldn't survive! Now go!"

Leela nodded and entered the TARDIS.

"Thank you, Andred." The Doctor shook hands with his friend and entered his ship.

A moment later, the TARDIS was gone.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Doctor!" Tamara shouted at the sight of Grae lying on the floor in a small puddle of her blood.

The Doctor placed Bramahl on the lounge chair and rushed to the girl's side.

"Wait," Jossa shouted, "don't touch her!"

"Why ever not?" the Doctor asked.

"Just don't."

"I wouldn't advise it either, Doctor." Quella added.

"Why are you saying this?"

"Is it okay if I touch her," Tamara asked sarcastically, "or should I just stand here and watch her bleed to death, too?"

"Go on, Miss Scott." Quella instructed.

"We'll discuss this later," the Doctor snapped at his Lord President as Tamara attended to her friend's wounds.

"So, what are you going to do?" Leela asked.

"Well, I'm going to try to intercept the signal relaying between the Deci cruiser and Gallifrey," the Doctor explained, "then reverse it."

"You'll never succeed!" Bramahl shouted as she climbed to her feet. "Gallifrey's past, present and future are destroyed. Look."

The Doctor read the monitor and his jaw dropped. "The Eye has passed the safety mark. It will go critical within a few moments."

"Andred," Leela said, under her breath.

"The Thirteen were wrong to think you a worthy adversary." Bramahl said as she vanished.

"Oh, thank goodness she's gone." The Doctor said as he cast his eyes heavenward. "I can finally have a moment to think!"

"Who are the Thirteen?" Tamara asked as she helped Grae into a sitting position. There was a tear in her jeans where she sustained her injury, but the skin had healed leaving only a crimson smearing of blood.

"I don't know," the Doctor answered, "but I don't have time to worry about it now. Jossa?"

"Yes."

"I need you to be honourable for once in your miserable life."

"Your reputation's already ruined," Quella added. "If we live through this, you'll face the tribunal for perjury, treason, sabotage, and the attempted murder of an Agent under your command. At least end your career, and possibly you life, with dignity."

"Yes, Ma'am. What do you need me to do, Doctor?"

"We need to link with the Agency's TARDIS Cruiser's time drive to form a time shield around the Eye," the Doctor instructed.

"Very well." Jossa spoke into his wristcomm. "Deputy Coordinator Rosza?"

"Coordinator," a soft female voice responded. "Praise Rassilon, you're safe. How did all this happen?"

"I don't have time to explain now. Please lock the external controls of the Cruiser's time drive to the craft at my coordinates. The power generated between the cruiser and the Doctor's TARDIS should be enough to create a time shield around the Eye of Harmony."

"Yes, Sir!" Rosza responded and ended her transmission.

"There you go, Doctor." Jossa nodded as he stepped away from the console. "You should see the necessary power increase any moment now."

"Here it comes," the Doctor shouted. "Everyone brace yourselves!"

As the Doctor threw the dematerialization switch, the central column of the console exploded with a flash.

\* \* \* \* \*

Bramahl materialized on the bridge of the Deci Cruiser where two hooded figures met her.

"My dear Bramahl," the first hooded man said, "I hope you realize what this little exercise has cost the Section."

"You told me money was no object," Bramahl yelled, "and you gave me carte blanche. Besides, we all know money is no object. We've all been told that funds are irrelevant, as long as we obtain our goal."

"Be that as it may," the second man responded, "the Thirteen are not pleased."

"I'm their best employee; they'd be fools to -"

"Watch what you say," the first man warned, "you know as well as I do that the Thirteen have eyes and ears everywhere."

Bramahl turned her back on her colleagues. "Remember, if the Fetch didn't fail in the first place, we wouldn't have needed to enact this scenario."

"The Fetch was a show-off and his employer was a fool to underestimate the Doctor," the second man responded, "don't you make the same mistake. As you can see, in the time you wasted speaking with us, the Doctor has managed to create a time shield around the Obelisk, containing its destructive forces. It can now be used as it was before until it is repaired. It cost him his time drive, but he can still travel in space. I'm sure he'll be along shortly. Well done."

"Damn you both to hell!"

\* \* \* \* \*

In the Panopticon, the Doctor was frantically checking over all the computer displays, making sure that the system had returned to normal.

"I'm satisfied," the Doctor said upon completion. "Right, I'm off."

"Not without me, you're not." Tamara stepped into the Doctor's path.

"Listen, Bramahl obviously has it out for me," the Doctor explained. "I don't need risk anyone's lives but my own by going after her."

"All the more reasons to have me watch your back."

"Tamara -"

"I'm not giving you a choice, Doctor." Tamara stood her ground.

"Very well, Tamara, I appreciate this. Anyone else?"

Grae stood up, slowly and waved her hand.

"Grae, my dear, of course you're welcome to come." Grae walked to the Doctor's side and hugged him. "What's wrong? You haven't said a word since you regained consciousness."

"Someone ordered Grae's entire mind uploaded onto disk for erasure," Tamara answered, never breaking her gaze with Jossa, "but the disk was damaged in the attack and we weren't able to restore Grae's ability to speak."

"Quella," the Doctor asked. "Please prosecute Former Coordinator Jossa to the fullest extent of the law."

"Have no doubts about that, Doctor. Deputy-Coordinator Rosza has already been promoted to take his place."

The Doctor nodded then turned to enter the TARDIS.

Leela ran to his side and asked, "One more time, Doctor?"

"After you my dear."

One by one, the three women entered the TARDIS.

The Doctor turned to Andred and shook his hand. "Don't worry, dear friend, I promise she'll be safely returned home."

\* \* \* \* \*

The TARDIS materialized in the bridge of the Deci Cruiser and the Doctor double locked the doors behind him before any of his companions could follow him. Bramahl was waiting for him with two other shadowy figures. But then the Doctor blinked and saw that she was alone.

"Welcome Doctor," Bramahl said. "What took you so long?"

"Let's just say I needed a few moments to prepare myself mentally."

"Don't worry," Bramahl stood and shrugged off her cloak. "I won't dare try to manipulate your mind. Here, my gloves are off, so to speak."

"What do you want?"

"It has nothing to do with what I want, Doctor. You should have figured that out by now." Bramahl offered her opponent a seat.

"Who do you work for?" The Doctor checked the seat then sat. Bramahl followed suit.

"I am an agent of Section 13, and they are very interested in you."

"The Thirteen, you mentioned them before."

"No Doctor, Section 13. They've felt the need to test you and have been doing so for a considerable amount of time."

"Test me - why?"

"Doctor, I'm here to set up the scenario that is all."

"I accept that answer," the Doctor said as he cast his eyes around the bridge off the cruiser, "but were all the lives worth it? Not to mention how much this whole ordeal must have cost."

"Doctor, the Deci were necessary. I used the Deci's hatred of the Earth, a trumped up scheme of revenge and promised control over time travel to get them to build this cruiser for me. They had the income to do it, after all. "

"And the Enzani? You changed their disposition, didn't you?"

"Well, let's say that they were needed for simple brute force."

"And you're telling me that all this was for me?"

"Yes, Doctor."

"I'm not flattered. I suppose it was this Section 13 that altered the timelines of Earth as well?"

"Of course. Good came from our tampering, though." Bramahl paused for a moment, then continued, "Remember Jessica Benton?"

"Yes and I was forced to end her life! To choose, unknowingly, between her and Tamara."

"Would you have done things differently if you knew you had a choice? Would you have given up your precious Tamara Scott?"

"Well..." The Doctor paused for a moment, Jessica's freckles playing across his memory. For some reason he hadn't been able to shake off the sadness of this loss after all this time. There was something about her that still endeared her memory to him. He had known many people that he had grown to care for die, but the mention of Jessica Benton's name out loud filled him with an unspeakable sorrow. "I could have found a way to save both of them."

"There *was* no way to save them both." Bramahl sneered. "That was the whole point."

"You're deriving a sickening pleasure from watching me squirm, aren't you?"

"You have no idea." Bramahl rose and crossed to the Doctor, placing her hands on his shoulders. She gently pulled his body back until his head rested on her breasts. "Why don't you just submit and I'm sure my masters will let me work something out. Imagine what we could do if we pooled our resources."

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The Doctor pulled away from the young woman. "How dare you even think that I'd even entertain the slightest notion of collaborating with you? After watching you murder all your accomplices?"

Bramahl pushed the Doctor's head forward in anger, then walked back to her chair.

"What if I offered you the thing you want most?"

"And what, pray, is that?"

Bramahl waved her hand and a person appeared between them.

"Jessica!" The Doctor rose to his feet as the young woman hovered in the air between them. The former UNIT Captain from an alternate time line was exactly as the Doctor remembered her, except happier. Gone were the eye circles and the other ravages that her lifestyle had done her body. Living underground for the majority of her life, Jessica's skin was pale. But here, as she hung before him, her skin was as youthful and smooth as a healthy woman of thirty's skin should be. Her eyes were alive with energy and her smile was beaming. She reached out her arms to embrace the Doctor, but he held fast despite every fibre of his being telling him to dive into her arms.

After giving the Doctor sufficient time to take the image in, Bramahl spoke. "What if I told you that I could bring Jessica back? I know you have feelings for many people, but you've never quite recovered from her loss. Could it be that you have stronger feelings for her?"

"Bramahl." The Doctor tore his eyes away from Jessica's loving stare and spoke slowly and purposefully. "Jessica's dead. Jessica never existed. That's a fact that I brought on myself because I had to do so. Nothing can change that without causing even more damage to the time stream."

"Very well. Back into the painful nothingness of oblivion for Miss Benton, then." Bramahl waved her hand and Jessica disappeared. She laughed as she saw a tear trickle down her nemesis's cheek. "You weak, pathetic man."

"On the contrary, Bramahl." The Doctor wiped his eyes with his sleeve. "I survive because there is a greater good that needs to be fought for. My life comes second. Besides, I have my friends for support."

"Ah yes, speaking of your friends - "

"What about my friends?" the Doctor said as he rose to his feet. "If you harm any of them, so help me -"

"What would you do, smack my wrist?" She chuckled sinisterly. "Everyone knows that you're an avowed pacifist."

"Except when provoked."

"Oh, really." Bramahl rose from her seat and narrowed her eyes.

"My friends give me the strength I need to fight you, Bramahl. With them beside me, I'll always win."

"Yes, our studies have proven this. But that's not all."

"Really? Pray, tell."

"So many... Scattered throughout the cosmos, now, each one alone... How can you possibly protect them all?"

With that she vanished. The Doctor looked the place over quickly. What could Bramahl have meant? He reached out mentally to as many of his former companions as he could. He had

to find out whether or not they were okay. But they were scattered throughout time as well so he'd need the TARDIS to make sure. Turning toward his ship, his hearts simultaneously skipped a beat. The door to his ship was wide open. Suddenly, Grae burst out screaming and covered in blood. She collapsed into the Doctor's arms.

"Grae, what's happened?" the Doctor asked as he looked his young friend up and down. She was trembling uncontrollably and her eyes had rolled upwards into her head in a state of shock. When her legs gave out, the Doctor tossed the girl over his shoulders and burst into his ship.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Doctor ran into the TARDIS and stopped dead in his tracks. Tamara was semi-conscious on the ground, blood trickling from a wound on her head. Bramahl had Leela in a chokehold, and with a quick motion, Leela's body went limp.

The Doctor collapsed to his knees and clutched at his chest. Grae rolled off the Doctor's shoulder, unconscious as Bramahl tossed Leela's corpse to the floor. From the Doctor's position he could see that his former companion's neck was broken clean through.

"Remember me, Doctor," Bramahl said as she vanished.

The Doctor went limp as tears began to stream down his cheeks. Crawling over to Leela, he grabbed her lifeless hand in his own and collapsed, sobbing, on top of her.

"I'm such a fool," he mumbled under his breath.

Tamara shook off her disorientation and pulled the trembling young Time Lady to the Doctor's side.

"Doctor, I'm sorry," she said as the Time Lord took his friend into his arms. "There was nothing we could do. Bramahl just tossed us aside. I'm so sorry."

## EPILOGUE 1

A girl with short blonde hair lay in the hospital bed, fluid pumping intravenously into her body. She may have recently endured regeneration, but she was trapped with out food or water for such a length of time, her new body had suffered a great deal.

Grae entered the room quietly, looking over the young lady who lay in the bed.

"Kaihta?" she asked timidly.

"Grae is that you?" the blonde girl responded quietly.

"Y...yes, it's me."

"Thanks for coming to visit me." Kaihta sat up slowly, her short locks dropping to just below her chin. "How do you like my new body?"

"Very, f...f...fetching."

Kaihta looked Grae over with a strange look, then her brow unfurled. "That's right, I forgot. I had heard you had your ability to speak wiped."

"Yes."

"It sounds like you're coming along nicely, though." Kaihta scooted over to the opposite side of her bed and motioned for Grae to join her. "I'm just glad you're okay."

Grae hopped up onto her sister's bed and the girls embraced each other. "I'm glad...you're okay too."

"So what's going to happen to you now?" Kaihta put her arm around Grae's shoulders and lay back down with her sister.

"I'm leaving... Gallif...Gallifrey."

Kaihta's body tensed. "Not with the Doctor?"

"Yes, with the Doctor." Grae spoke slowly.

"Oh no, you can't go, you simply can't!"

"Why not?" Grae asked. "He's a good f... friend and he needs me."

"A friend!" Kaihta sat up again, shouting, "The Doctor let one of his supposed friends die – I couldn't bear the thought of losing you."

"I'll be f...fine, Kaihta," Grae said as she smiled up at her sister, "Trust me. I'll... come ba... back and see you, I promise."

## EPILOGUE 2

The face of the Doctor's fourth incarnation was carved right out of the very mountain itself. It watched over the funeral proceedings, expressionless. The Doctor couldn't bring himself to even look in its general direction. The primitive Sevateem people along with their brothers, the Tesh, had abandoned the planet years before, but he Doctor still remembered his way to the village and its graveyard, fulfilling a promise he made long ago. Leela's body was laid to rest next to those of her parents'; reunited once again with the mother who died in childbirth and the father that sacrificed his life in order to give his daughter a fighting chance. This sat heavily on the Doctor's shoulders under the weight of blame for the event that brought him and his late friend together in the first place.

"A careless mistake," he mumbled under his breath. "All of this is because of a careless, egotistical mistake I made centuries ago."

As the grave was covered, all was silent. To Grae, it was as if the entire galaxy had paused for a moment to pay tribute. Even the Doctor's TARDIS nearby seemed strangely silent. Leela may not have been a Time Lord, but despite the fact that she was never fully accepted by the Cardinals, the fighting spirit she had brought to Gallifrey helped them more than she could ever realise. She helped to inspire an entire generation, including Grae, to take part, to make a difference, and remember the goals for which Rassilon, himself, had strived. Even though Leela wasn't a Time Lord, Grae was certain that even Rassilon was weeping today.

Quella approached the Doctor slowly and took his hand in hers. "I assure you that Andred and I will not rest until we track down this Bramahl and bring her before the Tribunal."

"Thank you. How is Andred?"

"Well, needless to say, he's not up to talking to anyone right now."

"Thank him for having my time drive repaired so quickly."

"I will." Quella pointed at a young-looking woman who was talking to Grae. "Coordinator Rosza has already appointed a group of specially selected Agency Operatives to search the twelve galaxies. Bramahl has officially replaced the Master as our most wanted criminal."

"You won't find her."

"Pardon me, Doctor?"

"We shan't see her or her ship again - not until she wants us to."

"And when she does, we'll be waiting for her," Rosza said as she and Grae joined them.

"Thank you, Coordinator," the Doctor said as he took Grae under his arm, "I trust that the remainder of Grae's mind was returned intact."

"Indeed, Doctor," Rosza explained. "Just one more session of therapy with the Matrix's telepathic circuits should suffice."

"Th... thank you Coord...ina...tor," Grae spoke slowly, then smiled.

"I trust, Doctor," Quella asked, "that you are not going to sit and wait for Bramahl to show herself?"

"No, I have a personal stake in this now. I need to find out more about this Section 13."

"Strangely," Rosza stated, "there is no information about them in the Matrix."

"No, there wouldn't be."

Rosza continued. "We need someone with expert ability and exceptional knowledge of time theory. That's why I'd like Grae to head up my special task force."

Grae's grip on the Doctor tightened.

"Rosza," the Doctor asked, "if you don't mind, I think Grae would be much more useful with me. After all, she's been relieved of her Agency responsibilities."

"Doctor," Rosza said with a slight indignant tone, "Grae's Agency status has been reinstated as a Level 3 Operative and I'd like her to lead my special task force."

"Well I'd like to take her with me."

"Doctor, as Coordinator, I'm ordering you to release Grae."

"Rosza," Quella interrupted, "this is not the time or place for this nonsense. Grae is a grown woman, let her decide." Quella turned to Grae as Tamara moved to her young friend's side. "Well, Grae? A Level 3 Operative *is* quite a promotion."

"It..." Grae struggled for the right words. "Thank you for the... off... offer, Cordina...tor Rosza, but I'd rather go with the Doctor." She removed her arm from the Doctor's waist and shook the Coordinator's hand. Tamara grabbed the girl and pulled her into a tight hug.

As the Coordinator stomped away, Quella excused herself leaving the trio alone to stare up at the stars.

"Tamara, Grae," the Doctor said as he took his companions by the shoulders, "I promise here and now to protect you both to the best of my abilities."

"And... we you, Doctor." Grae whispered as she reached in her pocket. A tear trickled from her eye as she handed the Doctor the cracked remains of the porcelain chopsticks she had

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worn in her hair. "I'm so sorry a... about these, Doctor. They were... so beaut... beautif... they were so pretty." Grae began to sob and the Doctor took her into his arms.

"They're meaningless when compared to you two." He smiled at his companions, then kissed Grae on the top of her head. "They're replaceable; you're not."

"How long did Leela travel with you?" Tamara asked.

"Not even as long as you have Tamara, but she was a very, very good friend." The Doctor said as he sniffed. "She's gone and it's my fault." A tear spilt down his cheek as he finally caught the disapproving glance of his fourth face towering down from the mountain.

"Grae, let's leave the Doctor alone for a little while." Tamara and Grae walked back to the TARDIS arm in arm. As Tamara opened the TARDIS door, she said, "Let's get you hooked up to the telepathic circuits right away, then we'll take a dip in the pool! I don't know about you, but I sure could use it."

\* \* \* \* \*

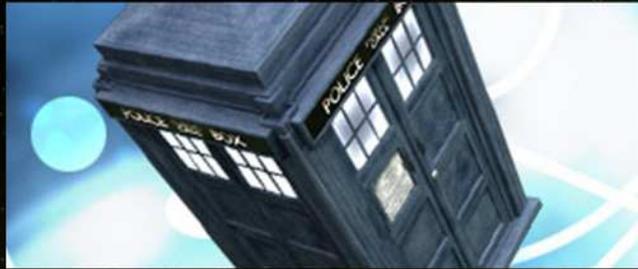
The attendees of the funeral had all dispersed back to their own times and a place of residence, and the jungle was quiet. The Doctor knelt before the fresh grave and placed three objects upon it. Leela's knife in its sheath was first. The Doctor recalled Leela as he first met her, a talented hunter and warrior of the noble Sevateem tribe, and smiled. She had come so far.

The second item was Leela's Janus thorn pouch. The Doctor smirked at the thought of how many times those tiny terrible things, which he insisted she not carry on their travels, saved his life. Even in the end.

The final item was a small white paper bag. Opening it, the Doctor removed a yellow jelly baby and ate it, then placed the bag onto the grave. He recalled how he tricked the treacherous Calib and his Sevateem lackeys with a "deadly" jelly baby and how Leela enjoyed sneaking them out of his pocket when he wasn't looking. He remembered her face when she decided to stay behind with Andred. He couldn't believe it then; it seemed so sudden. But now he couldn't imagine it any other way. He recalled her saying that she'd miss him. The condescending response he had given her, played across his lips now as he touched his left temple, the left side of his neck and the left side of his waist with his right hand: the Sevateem salute.

"I'll miss you too, savage."





With Gallifrey collapsing into civil unrest, the Lord-President has no choice but to recall the Doctor home once again. There, the Doctor and Tamara, along with their old friend Grae uncover a conspiracy that will drive the planet Gallifrey into ruin. No one is safe from the wrath of the mysterious rebel known as Bramahl and the stakes for the Doctor are about to get personal.

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