

THE
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PROJECT

THE COSMIC PLOT OF DOCTOR HU



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Part One – Jack of all Trades

With the morning sun shining through her kitchen window, Tamara Scott sat at her marble-topped two-person bistro table with the cast-iron base, taking the occasional sip from her soy-milk Chai from time to time as she flipped through a magazine she had been dying to read all week. But with quitting her job and wrapping up her case files and an extremely thorough debriefing, Tamara had had little time to read her e-mail, let alone reading for pleasure. Tamara subscribed to several magazines, but this was the only one that was printed on paper and delivered to her door. She saw an advertisement for an outfit that she thought might suit her, and she was about to pull up the web-site when the computer chimed. There was someone at the door.

She swiveled towards the giant flat-screen monitor that dominated the far wall of her living room.

"View," she said to the computer, which knew from the context that she wanted to see the feed from the camera in the front lobby. Tamara's apartment was at the rear of her building, which didn't give her the luxury of looking out onto the street when someone came calling.

"Ms. Scott," queried the man whose face appeared on the screen. He was a tall Chinese man with his shiny black hair combed to one side.

"Yes," said Tamara.

"I am your driver." He stepped to the side and allowed the camera to take in the limousine that was parked in the street. "Dr. Hu sent me. It's regarding the invitation."

Tamara had received an invitation to Dr. Hu's party in a rather unorthodox way earlier in the week. At the time she had thought she'd be working today, but as it turned out...

"Your boss has an interesting method of delivering invitations," Tamara said accusingly.

"I'm just a driver, Ms. Scott. I have been instructed to wait until midnight tonight. If you decide to come, I will be sitting in the limousine." He turned and walked back to the car and got in.

Tamara watched him for a few more moments and then told the computer to close the image.

Tamara went to her closet and searched for the black outfit she had worn the night she had been given the invitation. She located the suit and found the invitation stuffed into one of the suits many pockets. She read it again:

*You are cordially invited
to the estate of
Dr. Winston Hu
On Friday, the Eighth day of January, Twenty Hundred and Forty Nine.*

*To take part in the festivities of
Dr. Hu's Garden Party.
Food and drink will be provide
Fun and games are guaranteed.*

She looked at the back of the card. There was a brief outline of expected events. Dinner. Dancing. Sports. Accommodation would be provided. This was some party. She would have to pack a number of different outfits. It looked like this thing might last more than a day. Well, she had nothing else to do, and she had a few choice words for the Doctor.

She took her time packing, locked up as if she were going out of town, which for all she knew, she might be, and then waited until the driver had had enough time to think she wasn't coming at all.

As she opened the door to her building, the driver got out of the limousine, came around to the rear passenger side and opened the door for her. She handed him her bag and slid onto the leather seats. The door closed silently and moments later they were on their way.

Years of being a secret agent had instilled certain instincts into Tamara, and she immediately realized that they were being followed as they turned off of Tamara's street. A pale-green sports-car which had been idling on a side-street pulled in behind them.

"We're being followed," said Tamara.

"Yes," said the driver.

"Do we want to lose them," asked Tamara.

"Where's the fun in that," asked the driver.

Tamara smiled and settled back in the comfortable seats. She let the vibration of the road lull her into a sort of half-sleep. Before she realized it she was snoring.

* * * * *

Tamara awoke groggily. She suspected she had been drugged. Gas, probably. The limousine was in a dark tunnel. She looked out the back window. There were headlights in the distance. This tunnel was extremely long.

"Where are we," she asked. She chided herself for not being able to stay awake. She could be anywhere. She could have been flown half-way around the world while she was unconscious.

"We're almost there," said the driver.

She looked at her watch. Apparently only forty minutes had passed, but they could have set her watch back. Days could have gone by.

The tunnel began to rise gently and Tamara could see daylight up ahead. As the limousine emerged from the tunnel, Tamara blinked from the bright sunlight. The driver stopped only a few

dozen meters after leaving the tunnel. He got out of the car and opened Tamara's door. She stepped out and looked around. For all intents and purposes they were in the middle of a vast desert. Sand as far as the eye could see. Except it was a strange colour. A little pink, she thought.

Aside from the gaping hole from which they had emerged, there was only one other landmark, to the right of the limousine: a hedge of thick green leaves, two meters tall, extending as far as the eye could see in both directions.

Directly in front of Tamara was a gap in the hedge, wide enough for a person to go through, but almost immediately, there was another wall of green.

"It's a hedge maze," said the driver. The Doctor's house is right in the middle. It's his answer to a moat. I've been in it. It's quite a lot of fun. You've got about two hours before you're expected to arrive."

Tamara examined his face. She couldn't think of anything to ask him. He had said it all.

"Do you need anything from your bag," he asked. "If so, you'd better get it now. It'll be in your room when you get to the house."

"So there is another way in," she said.

He smiled and winked at her, saying nothing.

"No," she said. She didn't want this Dr. Hu to have the satisfaction of having thrown her off-guard. "Thanks," she said over her shoulder as she walked through the gap in the maze. Without looking back, she turned right at the intersection and was lost from the driver's view. She stopped and listened. She heard the engine start up and then fade into the distance.

She waited for another moment and heard the sound of another car arriving. It stopped. Silence for a few minutes. Then the door opened and closed. She heard the sound of footsteps scrunching on the sand. Someone was entering the maze. Tamara decided that she didn't want the person to make it to the goal before her.

"Okay," she thought to herself. "What's the plan? Keep right. That's the technique for getting through a maze. She pulled out a pencil and a notepad and began to chart her progress as she kept always to the right.

She had walked for about twenty minutes without seeing anyone when she entered a large square space. She walked all around it. There was only one way out: the way she had come in. She added the square to her map and was about to go back out when the air was filled with an unearthly noise. A cacophony of screeches and shudders and just plain eerie noise. And on top of that, a blue police box appeared out of thin air.

"If this is part of the show," she said aloud, "you're off to a good start."

The door to the police box opened and out stepped a man of about thirty-five, wearing a black shirt with a white star pattern on it, black trousers, really sexy boots, and the coolest sunglasses this side of Italy.

"Pretty cute," thought Tamara. Short hair, goatee. "Bit of a klutz, though," she thought as he fell two meters to the ground.

The TARDIS had landed on top of the hedge maze, and the Doctor had stepped out into thin air.

She went to him and helped him up.

"Nothing broken," he said, dusting himself off. "Thanks."

"You're not going to get grass stains out by doing that," she said.

"Right," he said, stopping the dusting off process. "Thanks."

She stepped back a half step and extended her hand. "Tamara Scott."

He took her hand. "I'm the Doctor."

"Doctor Hu?"

He stopped for a second and looked at her face. "What are you asking exactly?"

"Are you Doctor Hu?"

"Are you saying 'Who'," he asked? "Or..."

"H, U," she spelled. "Hu."

"Oh," he said, grinning. "No, that is definitely not my name."

"And so your name would be...," she asked.

"Everyone just calls me Doctor," he said and looked around at his surroundings. "Where am I?"

"Hedge maze," she said. She fully intended to ask him about the materialization, but she was in no hurry.

"Oh, wonderful," he said. "What planet is this?"

"I would say it's probably Earth," said Tamara.

"Oh, very good. It is quite Earthly. Seems a little off, but I'll take your word for it."

"Here's what I've got so far," said Tamara, showing him the map.

"Oh, wonderful. Here's where we are now, I take it," he said, pointing at the square.

"Yes, there's meant to be a house right in the middle of it."

"Which is where we're headed, I take it."

"That's what I was told. You're a guest too, I assume."

"I assume," said the Doctor.

"You weren't picked up by a car," she asked.

"No, I usually like to provide my own transportation."

Tamara started walking. "I'm keeping to the right."

"Good idea," said the Doctor, starting to follow her.

"Are you, in fact, a Doctor," she asked.

"Ah," said the Doctor. "Funny you should ask that."

"I mean, since you don't have a name and you didn't come right out and say you WERE a Doctor..."

"Yes, I can see how your suspicions might have been raised..."

* * * * *

"We've filled in all the detail on the outside of the maze," said the Doctor after thirty minutes of walking and drawing. "The inside of the maze isn't connected to the outside."

"That's what I was afraid of," said Tamara. "We'll have to start breaking the right hand rule."

"At least we've got a drawing," said the Doctor. "Shall we just try and bore our way right into the middle?"

"That sounded like me," said the voice of the Doctor.

"That sounded like me," said the Doctor. As Tamara and the Doctor rounded a corner, they ran smack into Tamara and the Doctor.

"It was me," said the second Eighth Doctor.

"It's us," said Tamara. "Is this another trick?"

"It's real," said the second Tamara in astonishment. "It's not a trick."

"How long," said the Doctor."

The second Eighth Doctor looked at his watch. "Forty minutes. But it won't help you. I didn't remember any of this until just now."

Tamara looked at the two eighth Doctors, completely identical except for the waistcoat. Her Doctor's waistcoat seemed to have a random pattern of small white dots, while the other Doctor's had a checkerboard pattern. Tamara turned her attention to her own doppelganger, who was just as amazed by the whole thing as she was.

"We'd better leave first," said her eighth Doctor, finally.

The second Eighth Doctor nodded. The Doctor took Tamara's hand and dragged her around a corner as she looked back to see her other self staring at her in the same way.

"What was that," she asked after they were gone.

"Our future selves," answered the Doctor. "From forty..."

"From Forty," asked Tamara. "What do you mean."

"Excuse me," asked the Doctor.

"What does From Forty mean," asked Tamara.

"Is this a riddle," asked the Doctor.

"No," answered Tamara. "You said From Forty."

"Did I," asked the Doctor, stumped. "Why would I say something like that?"

"I have no idea," answered Tamara.

* * * * *

The Doctor and Tamara walked through the maze, encountering the odd person now and then. There seemed to be lots of people invited, and most of them seemed to think the whole idea of the maze was quite jolly.

* * * * *

After some time, forty minutes had passed.

* * * * *

"Shall we just try and bore our way right into the middle?"

"That sounded like me," said the Doctor.

"That sounded like me," said the voice of the Doctor. Tamara and the Doctor were quite surprised when an earlier version of Tamara and the Doctor rounded the corner and ran smack into them.

"It was me," said the current Eighth Doctor.

"It's us," said the earlier Tamara. "Is this another trick?"

"It's real," said the current Tamara in astonishment as she started to remember meeting herself forty minutes ago. "It's not a trick."

"How long," said the earlier Doctor."

The current Eighth Doctor looked at his watch. "Forty minutes. But it won't help you. I didn't remember any of this until just now."

"We'd better leave first," said the earlier Eighth Doctor.

The current Doctor nodded. The current Tamara stared dumbfounded as the earlier Doctor took the earlier Tamara's hand and dragged her around a corner.

"How come I couldn't remember that until now," asked Tamara?

"Blinovitch Limitation Effect," answered the Doctor. "And I think we've got a problem."

"Yes," said Tamara. "Somewhere we've made a mistake on the map."

She pointed to their current location: "This is where we are now," she said, "But this is where we were when we met our future selves forty minutes ago." She pointed to a spot on the opposite side of the map. "We must have made a mistake somewhere."

"Or," said the Doctor. "When we traveled back through time, we were teleported to a different position in the maze," said the Doctor.

"Come on," he said, grabbing Tamara's hand. "We've got to follow them and find out where the Time portal is."

They caught up with their past selves rather quickly and stayed behind a careful distance. All of a sudden, their past selves vanished. The Doctor moved carefully to the spot. He looked around at the sides of the hedges. "There," he pointed. Tamara looked and saw a tall thin metal pole running up the side of the hedge. There was one on the opposite side of the path also.

"So once we passed through this point," said Tamara, "we got transported to the other side of the maze. So while we thought we were mapping new territory,"

"We were re-treading old ground," finished the Doctor. "Only from a different angle. How long since we ran into them," asked the Doctor.

"About ten minutes."

The Doctor took the map and traced over the section between where they had met their previous selves and their current location. Then he took the second sheet and spun it around so that the meeting place still matched, but the map was inverted. "There's where we really were," said the Doctor. "Get on my shoulders and see if you can see my Police Box." Tamara did just that. They noted the location of it on the map. The direction matched with their drawing. Then, the two of them walked between the two poles.

"Now get on my shoulders." She did.

"That Box is on the opposite side now," said Tamara. "We've flipped around 180 degrees."

"Excellent," said the Doctor. "Now if the good Dr. wants us to keep away from that side of the maze," said the Doctor, "then that must be where we want to go. We just have to find a way around the time tunnel."

The two of them stepped back through the posts. Tamara leaped onto the Doctor's shoulders yet again and found that they had not, in fact, changed positions.

"It's only one-way," lamented the Doctor. "Looks like we'll have to walk."

"I hope there's only one of these things," said Tamara. "We should watch out for those metal poles."

"Agreed," said the Doctor. "Managing to avoid running into their four other selves, the duo traversed the maze back to their original position and worked their way around the trap. One hour later, they stumbled into a clearing. Or rather a lawn. And sitting in the middle of the lawn was a house. Or rather a mansion.

It appeared to be two or three stories high, perhaps four, with a surface that could only be described as white marble. Could it be possible to construct such a huge structure out of such an expensive stone? The front of the house stretched the length of four or five normal houses, and the side stretched back as far as the eye could see. There were people on the roof, some having drinks some apparently playing tennis or badminton, and the grounds were swarming with people eating and drinking and chatting. Some were playing games on the lawn: lawn bowling, cricket, checkers. Everywhere they looked, people were having fun.

"That is the biggest house I've ever seen," said Tamara with astonishment.

"I'd have to say the same," said the Doctor.

The two of them approached the house. People were milling about all over the place. One man, however stood out among all others. He had come out of the house as the Doctor and Tamara approached. He descended the staircase slowly, followed by two servants. His long Chinese robes flowed elegantly with the movement of his body. He reached the bottom at the same time as the Doctor and Tamara.

"Lay Ho Ma," said the Doctor to the Chinese man.

"Nie Hau Ma," corrected the man.

"Dr. Hu, I presume," said the Doctor.

The man standing behind Dr. Hu, touched his hand to his ear, as if getting a message through an earpiece. "There is someone here without an invitation," he announced.

The Doctor took a step back. Dr. Hu turned toward away from him and toward his employee. "Check anyone who comes through the maze. At sundown, search the maze."

The servant bowed and walked away. Hu turned back to the Doctor and Tamara.

"Welcome, both of you. I am very pleased that you could join me. I hope my maze was both challenging and amusing."

"It certainly was," said the Doctor, regaining his composure. "Although, I must admit it's harder than it looks. I'm the Doctor," he held out his hand to be shaken.

"Doctor," said the Dr. shaking the Doctor's hand. "Pleased to make your acquaintance. And you are Ms. Scott if I'm not mistaken."

"Yes," said Tamara. "How do you know me?"

Dr. Hu smiled. "Why don't you go to your rooms and change into something more comfortable. We can have a drink together before dinner and I'll explain everything.."

Dr. Hu moved his head imperceptibly and the other servant that had been standing behind him came rushing forward.

"Show Ms. Scott and the Doctor their rooms."

* * * * *

The servant found the Doctor a room. He didn't seem to question the fact that the Doctor had not invitation and no assigned room. The Doctor found some clothes hanging in his room. He

tried them on. They all fit. He chose a pair of linen trousers and a comfortable yet elegant pair of canvas shoes, which he knew were quite acceptable in the mid twenty-first century. He also exchanged his shirt for a solid black silk one. No collars. He didn't feel like wearing a tie. He slipped on a beige linen jacket as well. He took off his sunglasses.

No. He felt naked without them. He made an adjustment to the small lever on the side and the glass became almost transparent, with just a hint of shading to them. He put them back on. Better. Meanwhile, Tamara had put on an elegant, powder blue evening dress with matching pumps. She did not carry a handbag. She had everything she needed secreted in hidden compartments hidden in her clothing. The dress was even bulletproof to some extent, although seeing as how the back was almost non-existent, it wasn't considered standard issue when dealing with snipers. She put her hair up with a couple of well-placed bobby pins and stepped into the hallway.

The door to the Doctor's room, which adjoined hers, opened at the same time and he stepped out. He held his arm out and she took it. Together they descended the long curved staircase down to the main floor. With the large number of guests here, they seemed to have been extremely lucky to have rooms on the second floor. They quickly spotted Hu sitting at a table playing backgammon. They joined him on the long couch and ordered some drinks from a waiter.

"You'll have to forgive me, Doctor," began Hu, "but I can't quite place you."

"Pardon," asked the Doctor, playing for time.

"I don't remember where I met you. I mean, if I invited you here, then I must have met you, but I can't for the life of me remember where."

The Doctor didn't know what to say without confessing that he had crashed the party. Luckily Tamara interrupted.

"I don't think we've ever met either," she said to Dr. Hu.

"Ah, but we have," said Hu. "About three years ago, I was in a coffee shop in London and you came in and ordered Chai."

"That's it," asked Tamara. "You'll have to be a bit more specific than that."

"Oh, that's it. As you can see," he gestured around the large well-decorated room, "I am extremely wealthy. I was so bored living in this big house all by myself that I started inviting friends to visit. Well, one only has so many friends, and the house is so big, so I started inviting people that I've met over the years. Still, that's not very many people and I love to be surrounded by people. So now, whenever I see someone who's interesting, I just point, which is what I did with you in the coffee shop, and one of my servants follows you, finds out who you are and where you live, and then, when there's a free room available, I send an invitation."

"How very odd," said Tamara. "I don't remember you at all."

"Ah, but I remember you. I could tell that you were a very special woman. Hence my rather unorthodox method of delivering your invitation."

She turned to the Doctor and said, "He had four martial arts experts attack me in the middle of the night while I was returning to my car."

"From a special espionage mission, I think," said Dr. Hu, smirking.

"I couldn't possibly comment. I've sworn an oath of secrecy."

"Anyway," continued Hu. "I wanted to make sure that you were aware of the spirit of the party."

"Meaning," asked Tamara.

"Meaning that I have invited people here with expertise in all areas of sports, games, physical competition. The world's finest race car drivers, tennis players, video game experts, and yes, martial arts masters. No matter what you like to do for fun, I'm sure that you will find an excellent opponent among my six hundred or so guests."

"That's quite impressive," said the Doctor.

"And what do you do for fun, Doctor" asked Dr. Hu.

"Oh, I meddle mostly," said the Doctor. "But I do like a good game of cricket now and then. And I play the recorder. A bit of Karate. Nuclear physics. Olympic cooking, Calligraphy, engineering, short story writing, international diplomacy, ice skating, mountaineering, needlepoint, watching the sun rise and set over an alien horizon, pumpkin carving, formula one racing, amateur dentistry, running with the bulls." The Doctor took a deep breath. "A little of everything, really."

"Jack of all trades," laughed Dr. Hu. "Master of none?"

"Oh, I've mastered quite a few," said the Doctor, a little bit defensively.

"Oh Doctor," said Dr. Hu. "I didn't mean anything by it. You should meet my Number One, Dot. She's quite the Jill of all trades, if there is such an expression. She should be around somewhere." He craned his head to try and spot his protégé.

Tamara thought she saw a movement out of the corner of her eye. She looked and thought for the briefest of seconds that the eyes of a painting on the wall had moved. Could there really have been someone watching them through the eyes of a painting like some bad horror movie. She laughed to herself and returned her attention to the two Doctors.

"What's going on over there," asked the Doctor, pointing to a group of people dressed in nineteenth century English costume.

"Oh," said Dr. Hu. "I believe that's the murder mystery group. You know, one of those games where everyone is assigned a role and someone is murdered and they have to figure out which one of their number is the killer. Great fun. Usually I play along, but I was quite interested in meeting the both of you. Do watch out for them, though. They'll try and involve you in their game if you don't watch out.

The Doctor smiled. "You have a lot of games here."

"Oh, didn't I tell you," said Dr. Hu. "That's where all the money came from. Games, toys, carnival rides, video games, pinball machines. I inherited one of the largest games manufacturing companies in the world. My family's been involved with games of one sort or another for centuries."

"What's the name of the company," asked the Doctor.

"International Toys and Games. You must have heard of it."

"Well," said the Doctor uncertainly. "I suppose."

Dr. Hu sighed. "No one ever reads the little print on the bottom of the box." He smiled. I think dinner is ready. Will the two of you sit at my table? They agreed and joined Dr. Hu in the massive dining room. All six hundred guests seemed to be there, sitting at tables of ten or more. The dinner was a traditional Chinese banquet and took more than two hours. Course after course was put onto the rotating circle in the middle of the table. The one thing the Doctor found

annoying at Chinese banquets, and he had always meant to say something about it, was that they served the rice at the very end.

Of course this was so that the guests wouldn't think you were trying to fill them up with the cheap stuff so they could skimp on the lobster, but the Doctor just liked to have a bit of rice with his barbecued pork. Was that too much to ask?

Dr. Hu spent the entire dinner talking with Tamara, asking her everything about her life, her work, her hobbies. The Doctor was beginning to think that this party was really some kind of giant dating service for Dr. Hu. He smiled to himself at the thought. He had already taken a companion-like view of Tamara.

"Hey," he thought to himself. "I'm treating Tamara just like a companion. Can my long dry spell be over? Could she be the one? No wonder he felt so paternalistic toward her. He suddenly felt very happy and had one glass of wine more than he normally would have. He began to chat with the interesting woman to his left. She was involved in the murder mystery game, it turned out. The Doctor said wittily that he hoped no one would keel over during dinner. The woman laughed.

"I hope I see you again," the woman said to the Doctor. "Are you coming to the dance tonight?"

"Oh, I should think so," said the Doctor as he got up and pulled the woman's chair out for her.

"Thank you. Oh, you've forgotten your chocolate mint." She handed him the small brown square with a layer of green sandwiched in the middle.

"Thank you," said the Doctor, popping it into his mouth and letting it melt on his tongue. "Mm. Delicious."

"I'll see you later then," said the woman as she walked away.

"Shall we," asked Tamara as she slipped her arm through the Doctor's.

* * * * *

The Doctor had changed back into his original clothes, which he found had been washed during dinner. He had wanted to put his hair into a ponytail, but forgot that he had shaved it off completely a while back and it hadn't grown back long enough for that yet.

The goatee had grown back, though. Hmm. He did look a bit like the Master now that he thought about it.

* * * * *

"I do believe I must be drunk," he said to Tamara as they entered the dance hall.

"You didn't have that much, did you?"

"No, but it's hitting me all of a sudden. I feel all tingly."

"Can you dance while you're all tingly," she asked.

"Madam, I assure you, I can dance splendidly, even in this condition. Allow me to escort you to the dancing floor."

Tamara took the Doctor's arm and they danced up a storm as the live band played a series of swing numbers for their first set.

"I'm going to the ladies room," said Tamara.

"Fine," said the Doctor drunkenly. "I'll be here when I get back."

"You're getting worse," she said laughing.

The Doctor escorted Tamara to the edge of the dance floor. He stood there unsteadily for a few seconds and watched her leave, and then he felt a tap on his shoulder. "Would you like to dance," asked a woman. The Doctor bobbed his head up and down and they got onto the floor. The room was spinning now and the Doctor's head was trying desperately to keep up with it.

"I don't know you," said the Doctor.

"Margaret," said the woman.

"Yes," said the Doctor.

"May I cut in," said another woman. Before the Doctor knew what was happening he was dancing with someone else. He looked at the woman's face. It was so familiar. Barbara? She looked so old. The music had started to blur in his mind now too. Barbara said something but it was just a blob of sound. Had he blacked out? Now he was dancing with someone else. Vicki? No, Katarina. She was young, just like when he had last seen her. Now it was Sara. Old. Old. Just bones. This was how she looked just seconds before her death. So had Katarina. He was dancing with all his old companions just seconds before their deaths!

As Tamara came out of the ladies room, she thought she recognized the back of someone's head. Tamara tried to follow the person's through the crowd, but eventually she lost her quarry. Eventually she gave up and turned to go back to the dance floor. She stopped suddenly. There, in front of her, stood Frankenstein.

Polly. Victoria. Zoe. Liz. Jo. Sarah. All very old. Their faces blurred together as the Doctor stumbled around the dance floor. His head felt like it was going to explode. The spinning was going to make him sick. The colours of the room were spinning at a different rate than the room.

Leela. Nyssa. She looked so young, but so sickly. Tegan. Mel. "Stop. I'm not feeling well." It felt like his mouth was full of oatmeal. He didn't know whether she had heard him. "Mel!" No, not Mel. Ace. "What happened to you," he tried to say. His limbs were numb and tingling and limp. He looked into Ace's eyes. She was too young to die.

Suddenly the Doctor couldn't see at all. He may have stopped moving, he wasn't sure. Everything was still spinning. He knew he was falling over, that he'd lost his balance. He knew that a blow on the head could be dangerous. He felt the back of his head hit the wooden dance floor. And then everything went silent.

Part Two - Dancing Queen

"Jenny Frankenstein," said Tamara.

"Tamara Scott," responded the other woman.

"That was you following me this morning, wasn't it," asked Tamara.

"That would be telling," answered Jenny Frankenstein.

Jenny Frankenstein, born of a German father and a Taiwanese mother, was known to Tamara's old employer. She was a hit woman for hire, and she was good at her job. She was well-versed in numerous martial arts and an expert with more weapons than anyone Tamara had ever known. They had encountered one another once before, but that time they were both working on the same side. Jenny Frankenstein had been hired surreptitiously by the CIA as a backup for Tamara on a particularly tricky mission in Korea. Tamara hadn't needed her help, and the two women had nearly succeeded in knocking each other unconscious before they realized they were both on the same side.

"What brings you to...wherever this is," asked Tamara.

"I've been hired to follow you," answered Jenny Frankenstein.

"And kill me," asked Tamara.

Frankenstein smiled. "That would be telling."

"Who hired you? Them or us?"

Frankenstein smiled again. "I'd tell you, but then I'd have to kill you."

"So you're our uninvited guest," said Doctor Hu, who had sidled up to the pair unseen.

Jenny smiled as if greeting an old friend. "Doctor Hu, I've heard so much about you. I do hope I won't be asked to leave, I'm having a wonderful time, and I haven't seen my friend Tamara in ever so long."

Doctor Hu smiled back, a smile that implied that he knew everything there was to know about Jenny Frankenstein and that he was just humoring her at a whim. "Of course you're welcome to join the party. A room will be prepared for you within the hour."

He smiled at the women and then raised his head to indicate a point behind them. "Have you met my second in command?"

Jenny and Tamara turned to see a woman, shorter than them, wearing black and blue combat fatigues and, the most striking feature of all, a dark blue helmet with a face mask. The eyes of the helmet were jet black, and they could only assume that they were polarized so that she

could see through them. "This is Dot," introduced Dr. Hu. He indicated the other two woman in turn. "Jenny Frankenstein and Tamara Scott."

"Pleased to meet you," said Dot. When the woman spoke, her voice was muffled by the mask and reverberated inside the headgear.

"Dot likes to be prepared," said Doctor Hu, as if this explained Dot's clothing and mask. He sensed the skepticism in Tamara and Jenny and added, "Dot's my chief of security. One can never be too careful."

"Have you been threatened in some way," asked Tamara.

"Oh, no," answered Hu, "but with so many people on the grounds, many of whom I've only met once before, well, Dot does a background check on all of my guests, but one never knows, does one?"

"Yes," answered Tamara. "I must get back to the Doctor."

"Oh," said Dot. "He's no longer on the dance floor. They've moved his body into the library."

"His body," exclaimed Tamara with alarm. Dot was already leading the way. While Tamara and Dr. Hu followed, Jenny Frankenstein took the opportunity to slip away.

"Doctor," shouted Tamara when she saw his body lying on the long oak table. The crowd of people parted to make way for her. She picked up his wrist and checked for a pulse. There was none.

"Did you know the man," asked a gentleman in a top hat and tails standing next to her.

"I," she began. "We just met today, but I feel like he's been a friend for ages."

"And where were you when he met his untimely demise," asked the same man, lifting a pipe to his lips and taking a long drag.

"What do you mean," asked Tamara defensively.

The man let the smoke slip leisurely through his nostrils. "I mean," said the man accusingly, "that you are the only one among us who does not have an alibi."

"I was in the ladies room, if you must know," said Tamara.

"Can anyone vouch for your whereabouts," asked a woman dressed like a caricature of a Contessa.

"I suppose a number of people saw me," said Tamara.

"But you were also the last person to speak to the victim before his collapse," said the man with the pipe. "It was then that you could have slipped him the poison."

Tamara looked at Dr. Hu and Dot. "I can't believe this," she said.

"I warned the Doctor not to get mixed up with the wrong people," said Dr. Hu with a smirk. "Now look at him."

"I think it was Professor Plum in the conservatory with the candlestick," said the Doctor's corpse shortly before it opened its eyes.

The Doctor sat bolt upright.

"Ow, that gives me quite a headache. I should stop doing that."

"Doctor, you're alive," said Tamara ecstatically.

"Well that ruins everything," said the Contessa.

"He was supposed to be out for another hour," complained the pipe smoking man.

"I gave him the normal dosage," said the Contessa. The Doctor looked at her. It was the woman that had given him the chocolate mint after dinner.

"Alien metabolism," he said to her. "Not your fault." He patted the Contessa on the shoulder and got off of the table. He stumbled for a second and grabbed onto Tamara for support.

"Doctor, this is Dot, my number two," said Dr. Hu. "Dot, the Doctor."

"Hello," said Dot, extending her hand. The Doctor took it and bent over to kiss it but thought better of it as another wave of nausea swept over him.

"Banderian," the Doctor whispered to Tamara. "Methane breathers."

"You need some fresh air," said Dot. "Follow me."

Dot led them out onto what at first appeared to be a terrace but turned out to be a large forest that had been built, somehow, on the second floor of the house. There was not ceiling, the evening sky visible above, but there were four walls enclosing the massive room.

A group of people wearing red and blue overalls were just leaving the forest. They were carrying paintball rifles and were covered with paint: the red overalls with blue and vice versa.

The Doctor and Tamara were handed red masks and red overalls.

They put them on and were handed red guns.

"I don't believe in guns," said the Doctor, giving his back.

"It's just paint," said Dot. She handed the pair a bag of red paint balls.

"Two against one," said Tamara. "That doesn't seem fair."

"I'm quite the expert," said Dot.

"I'll play," came a voice from the doorway. It was Jenny Frankenstein.

"What are the rules," asked Tamara.

"You or anything you're wearing gets hit by paint, you're dead," said Dot.

"Good Luck," said the Doctor, smiling.

"I've never lost," said Dot, probably smiling.

* * * * *

Five minutes later, the Doctor and Tamara were crouching behind a bush. The Doctor's mask was already fogged up so badly that he could only see straight ahead. He had to turn his whole head in order to see Tamara.

"You cover me," said Tamara. "I'll go around this way," she said, pointing around the left side of the room, "and try to get Dot from behind. Then I'll keep going until I approach Frankenstein from the side. If they move forward, then I'll actually end up behind them."

Before the Doctor could answer, Tamara was starting to make her move. She broke from cover and took three huge strides until she was behind a tree that was big enough to protect her. Dot and Frankenstein were obviously still planning their strategy, because neither of them had fired a shot at Tamara.

From his vantage point the Doctor could see the barrel of one of the guns slipping through the crack between the two rocks behind which their two blue-clad opponents were hiding. The Doctor aimed his gun at the barrel and pulled the trigger. A sharp release of air was followed by a splatting sound at the base of the rock. He raised the gun higher to compensate and hit the rock right next to the gun. He kept firing and Tamara ran for the lower ground along which she would

travel to get around behind their opponents. The enemy gun barrel swiveled towards her and started firing. The Doctor had seen some movement behind the gun and changed his aim to try to hit whoever was firing the rifle. Suddenly the rifle disappeared and the Doctor took the opportunity to glance in Tamara's direction. She was nowhere to be seen.

Splat. A blue paint pellet splattered against the small tree right next to the Doctor's head. He flattened himself on the ground as a hail of pellets hit the tree and the bush in front of him. He crawled backwards a bit and looked around for a clear path to cover. He saw a movement to his right. He couldn't tell who it was. If it was Tamara, he couldn't shoot at her, but if it was an opponent, he was in danger. "I can see how this friendly fire business works," he thought to himself with great sadness.

The figure moved into view. It was Jenny Frankenstein. She was behind a tree, hidden from Tamara's view, no doubt, but just visible to him. He raised his gun and aimed at the ground beside her feet. He pulled the trigger and the pellet bounced in the dirt.

Jenny jumped at the sound and quickly retreated back the way she had come. However, this was the instant when Tamara had made her move, and Tamara sprayed the gap between the two trees that Jenny Frankenstein was trying to cover. Two pellets hit Jenny Frankenstein in the stomach and immediately a spotlight fell on her and she was officially 'dead' for this round. She walked out of the forest with the spotlight following her.

"Now for the other one," thought Tamara. She could see no one where she expected Dot to be. "She must have gone further around, towards the Doctor," thought Tamara. She inched around, keeping behind one tree or another. She couldn't see anyone. Eventually she was facing the shrub behind which she had left the Doctor. Where could Dot be?

Splat. Splat. Splat. Three pellets hit Tamara squarely in the back. She turned as the spotlight came on her. Dot was already disappearing behind a tree. How had she managed to do that, wondered Tamara. Tamara Scott had played paintball hundreds of times during training exercises and had never been tricked so easily before. She walked off the field. Jenny Frankenstein was nowhere to be seen.

Tamara sat on a bench to watch the showdown between the Doctor and Dot.

At one point, the Doctor's helmet and gun were plainly visible behind a large log that lay near the back of the forest. Surely he couldn't hit Dot from that distance. Tamara could see Dot now, inching closer to the Doctor, nearly flat on the ground, moving on her elbows like a commando in a film. The Doctor didn't even move. Dot was coming around beside him. Suddenly she broke cover and ran across the clearing behind the log firing at the Doctor, pumping pellet after pellet at the spot behind the log where the Doctor should have been. She had nearly made it to the safety of a tree when the Doctor, not wearing a mask, and with the barrel of his gun missing, stepped directly into her path and fired a single shot at close range straight at the centre of Dot's chest. Dot stopped dead. For a second Dot stood stock-still as the red paint ran down the front of her dark blue outfit. She still hadn't quite figured out what had happened. In the darkness, she still hadn't realized that the Doctor was not behind the log.

"I'm terribly sorry," said the Doctor, walking in front of her. "I've never lost either."

* * * * *

"With all of these costume changes and all this shooting, I feel more like James Bond than, well, myself." He and Tamara were climbing out of their overalls in the small changing area. Dot and Jenny Frankenstein had disappeared.

"Welcome to the world of the secret agent," said Tamara.

"You're a secret agent," asked the Doctor.

"I was up until last week," she said.

"What happened last week," asked the Doctor.

Tamara took her finger and put it to her lips and gave the Doctor a knowing look.

"Ah," said the Doctor. "So is this where we're supposed to order a martini?"

"That's precisely where this is," said Tamara, crooking her arm. The Doctor slipped his arm through hers and they set off to find a bartender.

* * * * *

"I don't like this olive," complained the Doctor, taking a sip from his drink.

"Well you shouldn't have asked for one in your milkshake," deadpanned Tamara. "Here, try this martini."

"No thank you," said the Doctor. "I've had quite enough intoxicants for one night, thank you."

"I'm ready for bed, Doctor," said Tamara.

"Already," he asked, but secretly he was grateful. A good night's sleep would help him get over the after effects of being drugged. The Doctor walked Tamara to her room, said goodnight, went next door to his room, stripped off his clothes, leaving them lying where they fell and slipped head first into the bed.

"I'll get up in a minute to brush my teeth," he said out loud and promptly fell asleep.

* * * * *

The next morning, Tamara and the Doctor met up outside her door at the pre-arranged time and went to find some breakfast.

"Uh, Doctor," said Tamara when they got to the head of the staircase. "Wasn't there a staircase here yesterday?"

Where the staircase had been the night before, there was just a banister and a drop to the first floor.

"Perhaps they've moved it," suggested the Doctor.

Tamara looked at him and said nothing.

"There's always the elevator," said the Doctor. He and Tamara walked to the elevator and got in. The doors closed.

"There aren't any buttons," said Tamara.

"Hmm," said the Doctor. He felt around the walls of the elevator's round interior.

"Maybe it's voice activated," said Tamara. "Elevator, take us to the first floor."

The elevator did not move, but suddenly the doors opened and a young woman walked in. "Go to floor 8" said the woman. The elevator moved upwards and the woman disembarked on her floor.

When the doors had shut again, the Doctor and Tamara said simultaneously, "Go to floor one."

The elevator moved downwards.

"Excellent," said the Doctor. The elevator continued to move downwards. Fifteen seconds passed and the elevator seemed to accelerate in its downward journey.

"Uh," said the Doctor. "I'd've thought we'd be there by now."

"Elevator, stop," said Tamara. Nothing changed. The elevator plunged downwards for over a minute and then suddenly stopped. The doors slid open.

"We're here," said Tamara in surprise. She and the Doctor stepped out and the doors slid shut behind them. They stepped into the entry-way of the mansion, the front door to their left and the main room to their right. No one was around.

"Let's see if there's anything going on in the banquet hall," suggested the Doctor. "Perhaps there's a breakfast set up in there." He took a step forward and slammed into the wall on which had been painted the image of the main room.

"It's a wall," said Tamara. She stepped towards the front door and found that it too was a painting. The two of them felt along the wall and found that the entire room was only a five meter circle painted to look like the main floor of the house, with the elevator in the middle.

"Well, that's an interesting joke," said the Doctor, rubbing his nose where he had bumped it against the wall. No wonder we went down so far. This must be the first floor all right. Several dozen floors below the earth."

"Then we'll just have to keep trying until we get back to the main floor," said Tamara turning back towards the elevator. There was no call button. She walked all around the cylindrical elevator shaft.

"Elevator," said the Doctor. "Come back and get us."

Nothing happened.

"Elevator," said Tamara. "Go to floor one."

Nothing.

"Elevator," said Tamara. "Come to floor one."

Nothing.

The Doctor pulled his sonic screwdriver from his pocket and turned it on, waving it around in front of the doors. Nothing happened. He tried a number of different settings. All without effect.

Over the course of the next hour, they tried prying open the doors, looking for hidden panels and brute force. Eventually they slumped next to one another on the floor and rested, eventually getting into a vivid discussion when they found they had one thing in common.

"So we made it into the shaft," said the Doctor, "and then used the heat from the generator to fill old parachute and lift us straight out of the complex."

"Wow," said Tamara that's a good one.

The pair traded a few more stories of their most amazing escapes until they were interrupted when the elevator doors slid open and a young French couple stepped

out. The Doctor scrambled to his feet and threw himself into the elevator shouting, "Don't get out. It's a trap."

Tamara followed, ushering the couple back into the elevator and offering a hurried explanation.

"Let's try this," said the Doctor. "Go to the roof."

The elevator rose for several minutes and the doors opened onto a sandy desert. The Doctor stepped out and was re-assured by the call button next to the elevator. Tamara got out as well and the other couple stayed inside to try their luck. The doors closed and the doors as well as the entire elevator shaft disappeared into the sand.

"Oh," said the Doctor.

"Great," said Tamara. She looked around. "This can't be the roof. We're in the middle of a desert."

"Very strange," agreed the Doctor. All around them, the desert seemed to stretch forever. Beside them ran a railroad track, which started somewhere past the horizon, and headed towards the one landmark that was visible: an amusement park. The couple followed the tracks towards the park, which looked to be deserted and rather dilapidated. The Ferris wheel tilted to one side, and several of the carriages were hanging by only one hinge. The roller coaster looked so rusty that they feared it would fall apart as they passed it. Suddenly, though, a train roared out of the ground and up the long rising track of the roller coaster. They watched in astonishment as the train traversed the entire length of the coaster without collapsing anything. Stranger still, however was the fact that the train was packed with people, whose screams indicated that they were quite obviously having the time of their lives.

They walked onwards and entered the low tent that seemed to be an entrance to the entire fenced off grounds. Just inside the entrance, the tent was filled with video games, from the oldest games like Pac Man and even pong, to games that Tamara hadn't even heard of.

"Race," asked a voice from the side wall. The Doctor and Tamara looked to see a young man in his early twenties, wearing blue jeans and a jean jacket, his scruffy beard and hair seeming to indicate that he lived in this place. He was standing next to a pair of motorcycles, each of which was hooked up to a large video screen. He was looking at the Doctor. "Do you want to race," he asked again.

"Sure," said the Doctor. "It's been quite some time since I've been on a motorcycle, however."

He climbed on to one of the bikes and the young man climbed onto another.

"Andy Taylor," said the young man.

"You can just call me Doctor," said the Doctor. The young man looked uncomfortable for a moment and then said. "The winner gets a token."

"What are these tokens," asked the Doctor.

"Whenever you win a game, you get a token. If you lose a game, you lose a token. Once you get 1000 tokens... You... you win."

"Win what?"

"A prize."

"Such as?"

"The thing you want more than anything in the world," answered Andy.

"And how many tokens have you got," asked the Doctor.

"Nine hundred and ninety-nine," said Andy, with an almost embarrassed look. "One more game and I'm leaving."

"That's a lot of games," said Tamara from her place behind the pair.

"Yeah," said Andy. "Once you start, though, you just can't stop."

"Addictive," said the Doctor matter-of-factly.

"Yeah," said Andy. "Have you met Dot?"

"Yes," said the Doctor.

"She's addicted. She's got tens of thousands of tokens. She's just stays and stays because she likes to play the games."

"There are certainly a lot of games to choose from," observed Tamara.

Andy did not answer, and then said, "Shall we begin?"

The game started and the Doctor found himself racing along a virtual road, the image of his opponent, who was already ahead of him, projected on the screen in front of him. The Doctor got the hang of the bike rapidly, his third persona having been quite an aficionado of motorized vehicles, and he overtook Andy in a sharp turn. The pair alternated between being in the lead, and as they came into the home stretch, the Doctor had a slight edge. The two of them both had the throttle to the floor, with the Doctor having a slight edge. "1000 tokens," thought the Doctor. "I think he really wants to quit playing. I could hear it in his voice and see it in his posture. He's tired. He's a slave to his addiction." And with that, the Doctor steered slightly to the left, his front wheel coming into contact with the computerized gravel at the side of the road. Andy's bike overtook his and crossed the finish line in first place.

"Congratulations," said the Doctor. "Thanks," said Andy. The look on his face revealed everything. He looked as if a massive weight had been lifted from his shoulders. He shook the Doctor and Tamara's hands and turned to go. "I've got to call Dr. Hu," he said. The Doctor and Tamara saw him going to a telephone attached to a pole in the centre of the tent. He lifted the receiver and spoke into it.

"Want to try the roller coaster," asked a voice. The pair turned to discover a carnival worker in oily overalls beckoning them towards the train. "Two seats left," he said, smiling to reveal his two top front teeth were missing. The Doctor looked at Tamara. She shrugged her shoulders and the pair let the carnival worker strap them into the last car of the train.

* * * * *

As the Roller Coaster began to move forward, Dr. Hu entered the games area. Andy went to the Dr. and triumphantly handed over the 1000 credits.

"What," shouted the Dr. He seemed to be livid. "How can this be," he roared.

"I beat the Doctor," said Andy, beaming. He pointed at the Roller Coaster. The rage left the Dr.'s face as if he had been shot by a tranquilizer dart. His face softened and a smile formed on his lips. He began to laugh.

"There's something I've forgotten," the Doctor told Tamara.

The Roller Coaster began to ascend the long track.

"I think it's about Dodo and Peri," he continued. The Roller Coaster left the gaming area. Dr. Hu was no longer visible or audible as the roller coaster clacked its way up the steep incline.

"I think there was a reason I didn't see Dodo and Peri and Romana and Susan," said the Doctor. "I think that the women I was dancing with were my actual companions. And those four were missing because they knew something about Dr. Hu. If they were here they could have told me something. Something the Dr. didn't want me to know."

As the Roller Coaster approached the top of the incline, the face of Dr. Hu appeared: gigantic and hovering in the air above the coaster.

"You played against young Andrew, Doctor," boomed the giant image of the man who had been masquerading as Dr. Hu. "And you lost!"

The image started to laugh again. Maniacally, which the Doctor didn't think was all that reassuring. The roller coaster reached the top of the incline and started to go over.

"Don't you know what that means, Doctor," said Dr. Hu, as his false face began to melt, not unlike the way the Doctor's own face changed during a regeneration, to reveal the true face of the enemy.

"Oh no," said the Doctor, gripping the bar in front of him. "Now I remember."

"That means that you get to stay here," said the Toymaker. "FOREVER!"

As the Roller Coaster plunged down into the abyss, the Doctor heard screaming and thought it might be his own. The Celestial Toymaker's laughter echoed in his pounding skull.

Part Three - King of the World

"The Toymaker," thought the Doctor as the roller coaster plunged into darkness. "I haven't encountered him since I was wearing my sixth persona. Of course! Why didn't I realize it sooner? The companions I was dancing with last night. Susan, Dodo, Romana and Peri were missing. Dodo and Peri were with me when I encountered the Toymaker, and Susan and Romana are Time Lords. They would have been able to warn me. Which gives me the horrible feeling that the companions I danced with really had been taken out of time moments before their deaths."

The roller coaster barreled out of the tunnel and instead of climbing up the next part of the roller coaster, it kept on going, into the desert, along the train tracks that the Doctor and Tamara had walked along earlier. He turned to Tamara and found, to his surprise, that she wasn't there. In fact, the entire train was now empty. He tried to raise the steel bar that held him firmly in place, but it wouldn't budge. The roller coaster raced through the desert for several dozen minutes, the Doctor's sunglasses protecting him from the gust-borne dust and sand that howled across the desert. The amusement park eventually disappeared in the distance and the landscape was flat as far as the eye could see. Finally, the scenery changed, and the Doctor saw a mine shaft rise out of the ground. Was it just an optical illusion? Who knew?

The Toymaker was an immensely powerful being, who ruled this universe with complete omnipotence. His only bounds were that he had to play by the rules, and that as the only thing that the Doctor had to use to his advantage. Once you lost a game in the Toymaker's universe, he was entitled to keep you there forever. If you lost a game to the Toymaker himself, your life could be forfeit. If, however, you beat the Toymaker, his entire universe would cease to exist. It would collapse in on itself like a singularity resulting from a White Dwarf's collapse. Of course, this would kill all of the people in the Toymaker's universe, and at this time, he appeared to have five or six hundred 'guests'. The Doctor had tricked the Toymaker three times before, and each time, the Toymaker added more rules to his games to make sure the Doctor did not defeat him. Luckily, the Toymaker added as few rules as possible, because he delighted in using loopholes against his opponents. Once again, the Doctor's only hope was to find his own loopholes and exploit them.

The roller coaster plunged into the dark mine far more quickly than the Doctor would have recommended. He was once again in pitch darkness, hearing only the thunder of the wheels on the tracks and feeling the wind rushing past his face. Suddenly, the cars slowed and he found himself not on a roller coaster, but in a floating boat, like they have at Disney Land. The entire

scene changed into that of an amusement park ride. Small scenes appeared on the walls, lit by dim green or blue lights.

As the boat rounded a curve, a spotlight revealed a hand hovering over the strings of a banjo. The beam of the spotlight was very tightly focused, and revealed nothing else about the player.

Da da dum dum dum dum dum dum.

The opening strains of the famous 'Dueling Banjos'.

Da da dum dum dum dum dum dum.

Another spotlight had come on to reveal a second pair of hands. The two 'opponents' played the banjo back and forth as the spotlights became larger and larger. Eventually the Doctor recognized the first player. It was the Second Doctor. "Well, that makes sense," thought the Doctor. "He was always very musical." But who could his opponent be. The Doctor sensed that it was another of his earlier selves. As the duel entered its manic state where both contestants were playing like madmen, the second spotlight revealed the Second Doctor's opponent: the Fifth Doctor. The Doctor laughed at the sight, before remembering the gravity of the situation.

The boat took him past the dueling Doctors and past another stage. This one literally had dueling Doctors. The Third and Fourth Doctors were dueling with swords, dancing their way around a stage that had been designed like an Errol Flynn movie set, with staircases and chandeliers and anything that might make for a flashy move from one or the other contestants. The Third Doctor was at home in this environment, backing up the stairs, slicing through candles. Not to be outdone, the Fourth Doctor made his way up the stairs to the walkway that ran along the back of the room. Pulling on a convenient rope, he tugged the chandelier nearer and performed a daring swing across the room, landing with a resounding clomp on the dining table on the other side.

The boat sailed past this display and the next one showed the Seventh and Sixth Doctor's playing racquetball. The Sixth Doctor was not winning.

"We've been waiting for you to arrive," said a voice to the Doctor's right. He turned to find the First Doctor sitting next to him.

"We're all here, you know," continued the First Doctor. "All fourteen of us. The Toymaker's been pairing us up. Making us play a ridiculous round robin of games and sports. He plans to kill the one who comes in last. We're trying to ensure that it's Number Fourteen, but he keeps changing the way he awards the points."

"I don't remember any of this happening," said the Doctor.

"Of course not, my boy. Blinovitch," said the First Doctor.

"But even then, there's always that little tickle in the back of my mind when I meet myself as the memories try to grab hold of my mind. This time: nothing. I think you are just a trick of the Toymaker."

"Hmmpf," said the First Doctor in disgust. "A trick of the Toymaker. We're here fighting for your lives, and you refuse to help us?"

"I will not play any of the Toymaker's games," said the Doctor. "I will not stay here forever."

"It's already too late. You've played against that young man Andy. And you lost."

"I threw the game," countered the Doctor.

"Then the Toymaker will have no choice but to bring that young man back here. Is that what you want?"

"He wants me more than he wants that boy," said the Doctor, certain now that this was not real First Doctor who then changed inexplicably into the Sixth Doctor.

"He won't stop until you play a game. You've got to eat. To sleep. He can keep you here forever."

"I simply won't play. I'd rather die of starvation than play the Toymaker's game."

"You have two choices," said the Third Doctor. "Either win nine hundred and ninety nine more games against the other players, or win one game against the Toymaker."

"If I win, this universe is destroyed. Everyone dies. There's no point."

The Third Doctor disappeared. The Doctor looked around in the darkness until the boat approached another scene. It was the First and Seventh Doctors playing chess.

"He might be willing to make a trade," said the Seventh Doctor without turning his attention away from the chess board.

"I agree," said the First Doctor. "If you win, he's willing to make an exchange."

"If you place a counter-bet, against yourself, then, in effect, you lose while you win," said the Seventh.

"The universe does not get destroyed, but you get to leave because you've bested the Toymaker," finished the First Doctor.

"And what does he want me to put up as collateral," asked the Doctor.

"Why the TARDIS, of course," said the First Doctor, turning to look down at him.

* * * * *

The boat was once again in darkness and the Doctor sensed that he was once again alone in the boat. The boat traveled along in darkness for quite some time, and eventually the Doctor fell asleep. When he awoke, he was lying face down with the hot sun pounding on his back. He opened his eyes and saw that he was lying on a plank of wood. He turned onto his back and sat up. He was lying on a boat dock. He looked to either side. The dock disappeared in both directions. He couldn't see land on either end. It was as if a dock had been extended across an ocean. He crawled back to the edge of the dock and leaned against the railing. The hot sun was directly overhead and the heat was quite unbearable. He would have to walk. But which direction. He had to pick one at random. But that was the game, wasn't it. The Doctor would have to pick. One way lay the land, the other lay, who knew what. Perhaps an infinitely long trek across the ocean. But he refused to play the game. So he sat there in the sun with his waistcoat on his head, staring at the calm blue ocean. An hour went by. Then two. Finally the Toymaker had had enough.

"Choose, Doctor!" The Toymaker had appeared in front of the Doctor. "Left or right?"

"I told you before," croaked the Doctor, "I'm not playing."

"One way leads to the shore, the other ends in the sea. If you stay here you'll starve to death."

"Fine," said the Doctor.

"All right," said the Toymaker. "I will set the end of the dock on fire. If you wait until you see the flames or the smoke, it will be too late. The flames will overtake you and you will burn. Or, you can jump into the ocean and drown."

With that, the Toymaker disappeared again.

The Doctor sat for a moment and thought about his predicament. As long as he didn't choose, he wasn't playing the Toymaker's game. He came to a decision and leaped to his feet. He turned and examined the banister against which he had been leaning. It was made of wood and nails. He began to kick at the railing. Again and again until the nails came loose and he was able to get a long length of wood loose. He then used this as a lever to pry up the boards that made up the dock. He pried up about five meters of the dock, enough so that the fire couldn't jump the gap, but short enough so that he could lay the longest of the pried up planks over the gap so he could run across. He checked for smoke or flames but neither was visible yet. He began to dislodge the railings that ran alongside the gap he had made. He didn't want the fire to run along the sides. Running back and forth along his makeshift bridge, he was able to disconnect the sides of the dock and watched them fall into the sea. Then he walked to the centre of his precarious bridge and waited for the flames.

Twenty minutes later, smoke started to become visible several miles away to the Doctor's right. He quickly got up, walked the plank to the left side and removed the plank. He hoped that the five meters would be enough to keep the fire from jumping to the other half of the dock. Then he ran. He ran and never looked back. He ran, he estimated, an entire marathon before he arrived at a sandy beach. He looked back. There was no sign of the flames. The Doctor scanned the beach and spotted a single sandy path. He trudged up it and when he arrived at the top of the cliffs he saw the Toymaker's mansion

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As Tamara came out of the tunnel, she found that she was no longer in the roller coaster car with the Doctor. Instead, she was behind the wheel of a race car, painted British Racing Green with a large number eight in a white circle on the bonnet.

* * * * *

As Tamara took in her surroundings she saw that the car was idling underneath the starting banner of a race track, and to her left was a similar car, painted red with a seven on the bonnet. The driver was Jenny Frankenstein.

The figure of Dr. Hu appeared out of thin air in front of the two cars. "I am the Toymaker," said the man. "You are no longer on the Earth that you are familiar with. You are in another reality. One controlled entirely by me. Here are my rules: each game that you win is worth a credit. In order to leave here, you must earn 1000 credits. How entertain me," He raised a checkered flag and shouted, "Go!"

The Toymaker disappeared before Tamara could ask any questions. His command of, "Go," was mirrored by the green light on the starting that came on.

Jenny Frankenstein stepped on the accelerator and sped off. A half second later Tamara did likewise. She hadn't yet decided what to make of the Toymaker's revelation, but he certainly was powerful enough to have appeared and disappeared. Whether it was a trick or not, he was obviously serious about his crazy rules.

The race track was similar to one that Tamara had trained on during her time at the Academy. She easily overtook Jenny Frankenstein after several turns. One lap around the track, however, and Tamara wondered how long the Toymaker expected them to keep racing. There was no indication of how many laps they were meant to do.

Suddenly, from out of nowhere, came a little white car. And then another. And another. About a dozen or so of the cars began to weave in between Tamara and Jenny's cars. At first, they simply darted around and caused confusion. Then, they started to ram the sides of Jenny and Tamara's vehicles. Tamara realized that the only way to get rid of them was to ram them back, so she picked one that was close by and rammed it against a wall. It crushed against the wall as if it were paper. Tamara ran another over the edge of a cliff. She could see Jenny doing the same. Eventually they had destroyed the little white cars.

Tamara came around a corner and found herself in the middle of an old west ghost town. As she roared through the middle of the town, her car suddenly ran out of petrol. She saw that Jenny Frankenstein too had run out of petrol. The two women exited their cars simultaneously and Tamara found that a gun had magically appeared in her hand. She looked up to see Jenny Frankenstein aiming at her. She ducked and the bullet sprang off the roof of her car.

Tamara took cover behind some bale of hay. This was just like the paintball game, only this time the bullets were real. Tamara hated guns, but found she could not let go of the pistol in her hand. It was as if it were glued to her skin.

She took a cautious look around the square, and concocted a plan. She started to move between bales of hay and barrels of water, causing Jenny Frankenstein to change her position too to keep up with her. When she had Jenny right where she wanted her, Tamara let loose with a volley of shots. Her bullets hit the chains holding up the sign of Ye Olde Shoemaker. The chains broke and the sign landed flat on Jenny Frankenstein's head.

Tamara took the opportunity to run into the saloon and found herself in a completely different surrounding than she had expected. She was at the bottom of a huge shaft, the top of which was twenty or thirty meters overhead. The shaft was square and painted bright yellow.

Tamara realized that she was standing on a ledge attached to the wall of the shaft. She looked down and realized that the shaft continued down, possibly forever.

Jenny Frankenstein came through an invisible door on the other side of the shaft. She raised her gun but it disappeared. So did Tamara's. And then the pieces started to fall.

First, a long red stick fell from the sky and landed next to Tamara. Then a giant purple L fell near Jenny. "It's TETRIS," said Jenny. A couple more pieces fell and Tamara realized and completed a row across the floor. With a bleep, the pieces disappeared, along with the pieces of the ledge that they were connected to. Jenny and Tamara started to position the pieces as they fell, angling them into place to make places for themselves to stand, but trying to get their opponent to fall by completing rows that the other was standing on.

After a while it looked like the two of them would never make it to the top of the game. Each row that disappeared would sink the entire game down another length. Finally, Tamara said, "I think we need to work together if we ever want to get out of here alive."

Jenny nodded and the two of them set about positioning the pieces without a word. They formed a makeshift flight of stairs all the way to the top of the shaft, and climbed out into the sunlight. They were in the Toymaker's back yard.

"I think we should work together against the Toymaker," said Jenny. Tamara nodded.

"First chance I get," said Jenny. "I'm going to kill him."

The two women trudged up to the main house, and into the main hall, only to find the Doctor arriving through the front door simultaneously. The Doctor's blue box was standing in the middle of the room.

"Tamara," said the Doctor, giving her a big hug. "I'm glad you're all right."

"The Toymaker's had us playing games all day," said Tamara. "This is Jenny Frankenstein."

"Nice to make your acquaintance," said the Doctor, taking her hand. "I assume you two know each other."

"We used to work together," said Jenny.

The Toymaker and Dot entered the room.

"Jenny. I'm very disappointed with you," said the Toymaker. "You're no fun at all. I'm going to send you home for spoiling my fun." He waved his hand and she disappeared.

"So," he said, clapping his hands together as if nothing had happened. "Who's up for a game of cards?" As he clapped his hands a card table and four chairs had appeared between them.

The four of them sat and the Toymaker started to deal.

"Aren't you hot in that mask," the Doctor asked Dot.

She shook her head.

"Why don't you take it off," he asked. He was getting a little nervous now. He had been wrong earlier about Dot being a Banderian. He was quite sure she was human. And something felt very strange. He smiled at her.

Dot stood, pushing her chair back.

She grabbed hold of each side of her helmet and pulled it off slowly, as if relishing the moment. Her long brown hair fell out in a bundle and swept down over her back and shoulders. She put the helmet on the table, put her hands on her hips and stared hard into the Doctor's eyes.

He looked, dumbstruck, at her beautiful face, ten years older than when he had last seen it. His voice cracked as he spoke.

"Ace."

Part Four - Ace!

“Remember, Doctor,” said the Toymaker, and with a wave of his hand, the Doctor’s memories started to flood back.

“Ten years ago,” narrated the Toymaker. “Your seventh incarnation had arrived with a young and exuberant companion.” As he spoke, the images solidified in the Doctor’s mind.

“I discovered that your seventh persona was different. I tricked you and Ace into playing a number of little games, and as I watched you play, to gauge your strengths and weaknesses, I came to the realization that the well-being of your companion was not your highest priority. In this way, you differed from your previous incarnations. At first I thought it was a strength that I would have to work around, but then I realized I could use it against you. I would make you play against your own companion. You or her. I wanted to see how far your new persona would go in risking the life of a companion, so I made you an offer.”

The Doctor remembered his seventh self standing at the top of what appeared to be a giant funnel. Ace stood beside him, dressed in her familiar black jacket with the word Ace emblazoned on the back. It all seemed rather childish to the Doctor now, but then again, Ace had been a child back then. As the image resolved itself in his mind, the Doctor saw/remembered that the funnel was in actuality a gigantic 3-D game of Chutes and Ladders, which is also known as Snakes and Ladders. He looked down into his hand, the seventh Doctor’s hand, and saw a pair of dice. Then he’d heard the Toymaker’s voice.

The game is simple, Doctor. You are playing against your young companion. The rules are also simple. The two of you alternatively roll the dice. On each turn you must move the number of squares indicated by the dice. If you end up in a cube that has a ladder, you must climb the ladder. If you land in a cube that has a chute, you must slide down the chute.

“Is that it,” asked the seventh Doctor. The Toymaker thought for a moment. Was there a loophole that he had forgotten? Was the seventh Doctor planning something? It didn’t matter. Even if the Doctor cheated, only one of them would win.

Down at the bottom of the funnel the Doctor could see the TARDIS. “The first one who makes it to the last cube, gets to enter the TARDIS and leave. The other player stays with me. Forever!” The Toymaker looked at Ace and smiled.

“The Doctor would never leave me here,” shouted Ace. “He’ll find a way to defeat you.”

"Ace," said the Doctor soothingly, laying his hand on her shoulder. "The Toymaker is extremely powerful. Extremely."

She looked into his eyes. "I have faith in you, Doctor."

The Doctor looked away uncomfortably.

"Begin," boomed the Toymaker.

The Doctor nodded to Ace who squatted on the floor of the starting cube and rolled her dice. Seven. She started around the outer rim of the funnel. "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven." She counted as she entered each cube. The cube she ended up in had a chute. It was an aluminum slide that curved gently around the funnel wall like a snake. She sat at the top and pushed herself off. The ladder took her to a cube three rows down from the Doctor. The Doctor rolled a five and took his cube.

Within ten minutes the two of them were about half way down the height of the funnel. "Nine, Ten, Eleven," said the Doctor as he caught up to Ace, strolled through her cube and stopping in the next one. Ace smiled at him. "Have you got a plan," asked Ace. "No," said the Doctor. "The problem is I don't know how it's going to end."

"Makes a change," quipped Ace.

"If only I could see into the future."

"You mean you can't?"

"Very funny."

Ace crouched down to roll her dice, but the Doctor stopped her, "Wait."

"What, do you have an idea?"

"I think so. The rules said that we have to alternate rolling the dice, right."

"Right," said Ace loudly. Her adrenaline was flowing. This was the part where everything turned around. Where the Doctor's plan would fall into place.

"And we have to move the number of cubes indicated on our dice, right?"

"Right."

"But there's no reason we have to wait until each turn to roll our dice, is there?"

"I don't remember there being a rule like that."

"How are you at memorizing long sequences of numbers, Ace?"

"Uh, not good."

"Never mind, I'm quite good at it. Ask me what Pi is."

"Not right now, thanks."

"Okay, start rolling, Ace."

Ace rolled a twelve. Then the Doctor rolled a six. Then Ace rolled a six. The two of them continued rolling until they had both rolled twenty-five times.

"That should do it," said the Doctor. "Now let me study the board." The Doctor used one finger to point at the square that he would occupy and the other to point at the one Ace would occupy. "Twelve will put you there. Then six will put me there. Then six will put you there. Then seven will put me there..."

A couple of minutes later, the Doctor was finished. "There, that will work."

"What will work," asked Ace.

"Just do as I say. Now, move forward twelve spaces."

Ace followed the Doctor's instructions.

"Now I'll move forward six." The Doctor found himself in a cube with a ladder. He climbed halfway up the ladder and stepped into the cube."

"What are you doing, Doctor," asked the Toymaker.

"Following the rules," said the Doctor.

"You must climb all the way to the top of the ladder, Doctor."

"The rules say, and I quote, 'If you end up in a cube that has a ladder, you must climb the ladder.' I have fulfilled the rule. I have just climbed the ladder. You said nothing about climbing it all the way to the top."

"This is Chutes and Ladders, Doctor," said the Toymaker in a condescending voice. "In Chutes and Ladders you must slide all the way down the chutes and climb all the way up the ladders."

"Chutes and Ladders is played on a two dimensional board," countered the Doctor. "This is quite obviously a different game, to which the rules were clearly spelled out at the beginning. I am playing by those rules."

The Toymaker was silent. Suddenly the light disappeared. "You will play the remainder of the game in complete darkness," was all the Toymaker said.

"He's angry," said the Doctor. "Good." The Doctor smiled.

"Okay, Ace. Your next roll was a three, but be careful. There's a chute in the second cube. Don't fall in. I'd hate for the Toymaker to accuse us of cheating."

"No problem," said Ace, who was already stepping around the hole in the second cube. "Done."

The pair continued on in this way, relying on the Doctor's memory of the game board.

"The cubes are getting smaller and the circle is tighter," said Ace. "I think I'm near the end. I can hear the TARDIS humming!"

"We're very close, Ace," said the Doctor. His voice came from several levels above. "Now I'm about to move one."

The Toymaker's voice echoed suddenly through the air. "That will put you on a chute, Doctor. A chute straight to the end. Your companion has lost."

"Not yet," said the Doctor. He climbed onto the edge of the chute. "Okay, Ace. Time to make your last move. Move two cubes. Go!" As he shouted, "Go," he pushed off of the edge of the chute and began the slide down to the bottom.

"One," came Ace's voice from below.

"Slow down," shouted the Doctor. "We want to enter the last cube at the same time. Follow my voice." The Doctor let out a moan, which Ace could hear as the sound circled the funnel, but came ever closer. Ace felt around the edge of the cube. She found the end of the chute that the Doctor was sliding down. She lifted her foot as the sound of the Doctor's moaning approached. Then she felt his foot brushing against her hand as he slid by and as the Doctor landed on the floor of the cube, Ace put her foot down and stepped into the cube. The chamber was completely silent except for the humming of the TARDIS as the Doctor and Ace grabbed hold of each other. They felt for the TARDIS and the Doctor unlocked it and the pair fell in.

"We did it," laughed Ace. "We won. We beat the Toymaker."

"Yes we did, Ace," agreed the Doctor. He let go of her and went to the console. He started the dematerialization sequence. The familiar sound echoed through the TARDIS, but suddenly it shuddered unnaturally.

"What's wrong," asked Ace.

"He won't let us leave," said the Doctor. The Doctor switched on the exterior speaker. "Let my TARDIS go," commanded the Doctor.

"You can't leave until one of you wins the game, Doctor."

"We both won. You can't cheat just because I'm cleverer than you."

"One of you may leave. That was a rule right from the beginning, Doctor. You decide which one of you it will be."

The Toymaker waited. Five minutes. Ten minutes. An hour. He smiled. The Doctor would have to decide eventually. A day went by. Two. Five.

"You can stay in there forever, Doctor, I don't mind."

Another three days passed.

And then the doors to the TARDIS opened and Ace stepped out. She was crying. The TARDIS doors closed and the sound of dematerialization began.

The Toymaker appeared next to Ace. "Oh, my dear. That heartless man. You're better off without him. The Toymaker waved his hand at the TARDIS.

"What are you doing," asked Ace.

"One last gift from the Toymaker," he answered. "I've made him forget what happened here." The Toymaker put his arm around Ace's shoulder and laughed as the TARDIS disappeared.

The Doctor's memories flooded back to him. How could he have forgotten Ace. For all these years. He looked over at Ace. Dot. "I'm so sorry, Ace. The Toymaker made me forget you. That's why I didn't come back."

"But it doesn't explain why you left me here in the first place," said Ace.

"I had a plan," started the Doctor. He looked as if he was trying to remember something. "I must have had a plan." He looked around helplessly. "Didn't I?"

"Your seventh incarnation did not have a plan, it seems," said the Toymaker. "And so little Dorothy became the Toymaker's protégé, Doctor. She became MY companion."

The Doctor sat back down in his chair and put his hands on his face. "How can he have been so cruel," he wailed. "I'm never cruel. Never..." his voice became a whisper. "Unkind."

"So you are different than the old Doctor," asked the Toymaker.

"Of course," said the Eighth Doctor. "I'd do anything to save a companion."

"Anything?"

"What do you have in mind," asked the Doctor, grim-faced.

"Why don't we play a game, Doctor. You and Tamara against Dot and me. If you win, my world is destroyed, killing everyone. If Tamara wins, she gets to go free. If Ace wins, she can do whatever she pleases with you, Tamara and your TARDIS. And if I win: your TARDIS is mine and you and Tamara will stay here forever."

"What about Ace. If you win, can Ace go free," asked the Doctor.

"Why not," said the Toymaker graciously. "If I win, Ace can go free. If Tamara wins, she can go free. So you can either throw the game so that I win or Tamara wins. Choose your companion Doctor. You can only save one."

"Or I can let Ace win and she can send Tamara home."

Ace didn't say a word.

"Dot has been my protégé for ten years now, Doctor. She has grown to call this place home. She has beaten many opponents since she arrived. She has caused innumerable people to become trapped here. What makes you think she'll feel any differently toward your NEW companion?"

"I believe in Ace," answered the Doctor quietly.

"The way I once believed in you," spat Ace.

"The game is RISK," said the Toymaker. "Apropos, I think." He smiled and unfolded the game board while Dot put away the playing cards. The four players sat around the table and placed their players on the board. The object of the game was to place one's armies on a map of the world. When play began, the person who had set out their armies most strategically would have a definite advantage. The four players were each masters of strategy and their pieces were all well-placed.

The next phase involved attacking one's opponents' countries. Ace attacked this portion of the game with vigor, attacking the Doctor's, Tamara's and the Toymaker's countries with equal gusto.

Although the opponents seemed to be equally matched at first, it became clear after an hour that Tamara was losing ground. Eventually, she had lost all of her pieces and she retreated to the sidelines to watch the remainder of the game. Ace and the Doctor were fairly evenly matched, but the Toymaker was slightly ahead. As the game progressed, the Toymaker pulled ahead more as both he and Dot attacked the Doctor. The Doctor was trying not to attack Ace but she persisted.

Suddenly, the Doctor realized that Ace had wedged herself in between him and the Toymaker. While the Doctor recuperated and earned more pieces, Ace set about destroying as many of the Toymaker's opponents as she could. Ace and the Toymaker each lost a lot of pieces, but eventually she had lost completely. Now it was just the Doctor and the Toymaker. The Doctor had many more pieces than the Toymaker and he played hard. The ending was inevitable. Thanks to Ace's help, the Toymaker was about to be defeated. The Toymaker refused to look at Ace, but the Doctor could see that he was more than a little disappointed in her.

"I don't see the point, Doctor," said the Toymaker as he prepared to lose his last man. "My entire world will simply end."

"Fine," said the Doctor. "It's worth it to see you destroyed." The Doctor rolled his dice one last time and the Toymaker was defeated. The Toymaker leapt to his feet with rage. Fear showed on Tamara's face as she realized that she was about to die. A fierce wind started to build and the edges of the Toymaker's reality lost their definition. The universe began to fall apart.

Part Five – Joker

The Toymaker's universe collapsed, like a dwarf star turning into a black hole. The edges of the world rushed inward. The walls of the mansion disappeared and the group could see the dark pink of the dissipating energy. The six hundred guests of the Toymaker floated in space, immobile. And then the collapse stopped. The Toymaker looked stunned. The Doctor smiled. Ace smiled.

"It's over," said the Doctor.

"What's going on," asked the Toymaker, stunned for the first time in his life.

"I've set up a containment field around your mansion," said the Doctor. "I've got all kinds of equipment in my TARDIS, you know. The last time I was here I took some readings regarding the nature of your universe, it's makeup, energy and matter configurations, that sort of thing. I built a number of containment field generators which are now forming something of an energy cube around us, keeping your universe from collapsing."

"I've been watching you the whole time, Doctor," said the Toymaker. "When did you have time to do this?"

"I didn't," pronounced the Doctor, grinning.

"I did," said Ace.

"Dot," said the Toymaker. He sounded almost sad.

"When the Doctor and I were in the TARDIS for a week, we came up with the plan. If you hadn't erased his memory he's have been back a lot sooner."

"Sorry about that," said the Doctor.

"I still have my power, Doctor," said the Toymaker imperiously. "I can destroy your devices." He waved his hand. Nothing happened.

"Your power only exists within the confines of your universe, Toymaker," said the Doctor. "My devices are now outside your universe. And the power of one of your kind is not enough to reach out and touch them."

"Then you have given me the answer," said the Toymaker. "I will contact another of my kind to help me destroy your devices."

The Doctor smiled. "I think you will find that you are not able to make contact with anyone."

The Toymaker thought for a moment. "Then I shall take a page from your own book, Doctor," said the Toymaker. "I shall travel to the future in your TARDIS and bring back my own future self. The two of us will have double the power. And if we are not able to break out of your trap, then I shall bring back and third, and a fourth, and so on, until your devices are destroyed."

The Doctor frowned. "That might work, actually," said the Doctor quietly.

The Toymaker floated over to the Doctor's TARDIS. He waved his hands and the TARDIS doors opened. Tamara floated through the doors.

"Leave her here," commanded the Doctor.

"Insurance," said the Toymaker. "In case you have another trick in mind."

A glass jar appeared around the Doctor as the TARDIS doors closed and it dematerialized.

Tamara was as immobilized as the rest of the Toymaker's victims, but she took in the awesome sight of the TARDIS' interior. Her friend Greg had decided to go into the Special Circumstances Unit, and he'd told her about a couple of the odd things that normal people didn't get to hear about. Robots from space. Secret government agencies. Invasions. She hadn't really believed all of what she'd heard, and what she had heard hadn't really interested her. There was enough evil on the surface of the Earth that she figured she leave the alien monsters to others. Now she found herself staring an alien monster in the face. She just wished she could DO something about it.

"Now, let's see. Ten years should be enough," said the Toymaker. "I'm sure I'll have become quite powerful by then."

The Toymaker waved his hands and the controls of the TARDIS set themselves. The sound of materialization filled the console room and the doors opened. The Toymaker urged Tamara through the door ahead of him. She stepped onto the hard surface. The world had been remade during the ten years that had passed.

"I've been expecting you," said the voice of the second Toymaker. The Mandarin approached the TARDIS looking quite dignified in his robes.

The Doctor was still in his glass jar, ten years older with hair down to his knees and a beard to match.

"Has he been any trouble," asked the Toymaker.

"None at all," answered the second Toymaker.

"Excellent," said the first Toymaker. "Shall we go back in time?"

"There's no need," said the second Toymaker. "The world is whole again, and I have all of its powers."

"Yes," said the Toymaker. "But we need to go back in time now to destroy the Doctor's force field, or this reality will never have happened."

"Oh," said the second Toymaker, "that's where you're wrong. I was able to rebuild the world without your help."

"What do you mean," asked the Toymaker.

The second Toymaker smiled and his facial features blurred to reveal the face of Dorothy McShane: Ace.

"I mean that I am the new Toymaker," said Ace. "And this world now belongs to me. And so does the power of the Toymaker."

And with a wave of her hand the glass cylinder disappeared from around the Doctor and re-appeared around the old Toymaker. As they Toymaker battered against its sides, the Toymaker's prison started to shrink. He battled back to regain control of the universe, but Ace had become too powerful. The Doctor and Ace had spent the last ten years changing the very nature of this universe, and he found that he could not draw power from it and he was disconnected from his own world, ten years in the past. The Toymaker shrank and shrank until he was no longer visible.

"How did you do that," asked Tamara, having witnessed the Toymaker's power firsthand.

"We've been changing the nature of this universe over the last ten years," said Ace.

"By having Ace attune herself to the energies of the world, I was able to get a reading on the frequency and harmonics on which this dimension relies."

"Once I was attuned to it," said Ace, "the Doctor and I tried various things to alter the frequencies."

"And with each small change, Ace would have to re-attune herself to the new environment. We didn't know how much time we had, but we figured we had a few weeks at least."

"So you just kept at it for the whole ten years," asked Tamara.

"No," said the Doctor. "After a while Ace was able to do it all by herself, just by thinking."

"With each passing day," said Ace, "I became more adept at using this universe's energies to fulfill my wishes. I now have control over every erg of energy, some of which I have converted to the matter that you see all around you."

"Then we just played games for the rest of the time," said the Doctor.

"I even let him win from time to time," Ace said with a grin.

"Time to go, I suppose" said the Doctor. Tamara went to him, still numb from the whole experience.

"I think I'll stay here," said Ace. "I'm having rather a lot of fun being God."

The Doctor hesitated only for a second. He knew he owed her a lot. Perhaps a whole life.

"Okay," he said. He gave Ace a hug and whispered, "Now don't let it go to your head,"

He let go of Ace and looked into her eyes one last time.

"You can leave whenever you want to, you know."

"I know," she said warmly. "There are just some things I have to do, and I think this is the ideal place." She gestured at the pastoral landscape into which she had shaped the Toymaker's realm over the last ten years.

The Doctor took Tamara's hand and entered the TARDIS.

"Nice to have met you," said Tamara.

"Likewise," said Ace.

"What about all those other people," asked Tamara.

"We sent them home years ago," said Ace. She smiled at Tamara and waved. "Have fun."

"I'm sure I will," said Tamara, disappearing into the TARDIS. The Doctor's head still peered out.

"Hey Doctor," said Ace.

"Yes?"

“Get a haircut.”



**Tamara Scott has been invited to a party
- a strange party -
by a man she's never met.
He promises a weekend of fun, games and food.
It seems like a good idea at the time, but Tamara soon comes to
realize that the party's benefactor, the mysterious Dr. Hu,
may have some secrets that he wants to keep hidden.**

**This is another in a series of original fan authored
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