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THE FINAL SUNSET



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The Final Sunset
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One: Arrival

"Come on, Williams, let's go."

Private Connor Williams took one last look around the campfire and shouldered his light pack. The slim plastic housing of the assault rifle slapped quickly into his palm as the pack swung into place on his back. He had only been out here three weeks and already the maneuver was as routine as breathing. Williams stood still in the darkness and let his gaze drift carefully across the place he and the Sergeant had spent most of the night. They had removed all traces of their camp - in any case they had only been there six hours. Now, at 03:00, the small hollow between four large pines was undisturbed as any other place in the vast living bloom of ancient trees known as British Columbia. The moon peered down at Williams and Sergeant Holmes, its soft blue-white light filtering down like a trickle of dust through the puffs of breath from the Private's mouth and into the silence of the slumbering green darkness below.

Sergeant Wilkey Holmes stopped in his climb out of the hollow and looked back at Williams. "Private?"

Williams half looked around, then scrambled up the side of the dell to join the Sergeant.

"What is it, Williams? Holmes asked.

"I'm not sure, Sarge. I thought - " Williams stopped.

"Thought what?"

Private Williams hesitated before continuing; he didn't want the Sarge to think he was going crazy. And yet...

"Thought what, Williams?"

"I thought - I thought I felt something, Sarge.

Sergeant Holmes peered through the moonglow at the young Private. The woods sometimes did this to people. He had been stationed here for six years, with a regular changeover of men under him. Sometimes they were okay, sometimes not. Sometimes the woods... well got to people. They were spooky, this forest, the way they just went on and on without every ending or changing. Some greenhorns couldn't take it. Some of them started to see things, to hear things - to feel things.

"What sort of something, Private?" Holmes asked carefully.

Williams gave a semi-shrug, his right-hand twitching around his gunstick. "I'm not sure Sarge. Sort of like... Sort of like something was going to happen -"

* * * *

"Shit!"

"What the hell was that?"

"All radar dead, sir."

"Central electric's negative - backups nil response."

"Corp - I've got feedback coming through!"

"Computer is down, repeat down!"

"Satellite link not responding - all wave communication broken."

"The phones - get on the phones!!"

"Generator three fused."

"Radar still dead!"

"Feedback is overloading -"

"Sarge, reports of fires in Generator complex, level three!"

"Computer is still down. Memory checks nil."

"Sound general alert! Call Major West!"

"The phones are still down, sir!"

"Check all radio frequencies - get onto staff HQ!"

"Radio jammed solid, sir, all frequencies!"

"Sergeant, what the hell !"

"Generator five coming back, sir."

"Major West, sir, we've got a Situation, here - some sort of -"

"Radar signal coming in!"

"Shunt all power into radar, Corporal!"

" - electrical failure; total, massive - no sir, we don't know ' "

"GEO-112 signal being received on automatic transponder, sir."

"Radio still complete static!"

" - explosion, possibly atomic, but we're not equipped for -"

"Radar on-line, sir!"

"What was it? What's out there?"

"Nothing, sir - no radar signal at all. Whatever it was, it's not airborne, or we'd still be picking it up."

"Some sort of massive VHF EM pulse burst, Major. It's the only answer."

Major West looked a trifle confused.

"Sort of like a television signal, Major, only much, much bigger," continued the Sergeant helpfully.

Major West grunted and turned his attention back to the window.

* * * *

The helicopter gunship carved a straight streak through the cold winter air. The Western Canadian monsoon was soaking up all the moisture at the moment, sucking the snow out of the north, but it was still bitterly cold. The harsh winter air whined through the cracks in the door and ripped bare flesh raw. Behind his fur-framed hood, Major West's face was scrunched up as if in an attempt to force the cold away from his skin by sheer effort of will.

In the seat behind, Sergeant Lee rattled on, his glasses sitting cock-eyed on his scrawny face.

"A huge burst of electromagnetic energy, big enough to wipe out the whole electrical set-up at the listening post, but yet concentrated within a fifty-mile radius; no one beyond us detected anything. In fact, if it weren't for the satellite records, no one would probably believe us."

The major turned around in his chair, cutting across Lee's scientific monologue. "All I want to know, soldier, is if it was man-made. Was it a bomb, or wasn't it?"

"Uh, well sir, we don't know that the Central Chinese Union have been working on Dunstows for some time - "

"Dunstows? Speak English, Sergeant!"

"Uh, yes sir - that's DNSTWS: Directed Nuclear/Specific Target Wave-emitting Systems - basically, a weapon capable of delivering a pulse of directed energy, electrical in nature, from a highly focused nuclear explosion."

"Shit. And do you think that's what it was"

"Um, no sir, not really - it was far too small and far too tight of an area of effect for it to have been nuclear in origin. And in any case, Dunstows are designed to be satellite-deployed; radar would have picked it up."

"Huh. Speaking of which, Sergeant Moore, when does GEO-112 makes its next pass over this area?"

"Not for another thirty-six hours, sir", replied another heavy-coated form behind Lee.

"Which means if we're going to find out anything about this at all within the next thirty-six hours, we'll have to do it without the help of our fancy satellite?"

The voice of the pilot cut across their radios. "Major West, sir - you'd better have a look at this!"

The Major turned back to the window. "Holy Mary...", he breathed.

It was if the Canadian forest was a huge tub of ice cream, and someone had taken a scoop out of it ten miles across. A huge crater poked the forest, digging down into soil and bedrock to a depth of several hundred feet. But to call it a crater was

misleading. A crater implies an explosion, or an impact. It implies a ground zero, a cloud of debris, a ring of destruction radiating outwards from some central point. But here, in defiance of all the known laws of the material world, there was nothing, literally nothing. There was a crater, but no debris. There was a hole gouged out of the trees, the dirt and rock, but no outward spray of the blast whatsoever. A portion of the forest ten miles across, and a chunk of everything underneath it to a depth of two hundred feet had simply been removed. Not blasted away, not blown into a Chinese dunster, or whatever Lee had called it. This was the work of something vastly different.

* * * *

Several miles away, off the eastern coast of Vancouver Island, deep below the ocean surface, the ocean floor began to tremble. A low, quiet rumble at first, which quickly began to build to a deafening crescendo. The ocean bed began to move causing a ripple effect that cascaded up to the ocean surface. As the ground shook more, the seas above became all the more turbulent. The ground began to cave in upon itself, almost as if it were being sucked beneath the surface by some gigantic vacuum. By now, the force below had caused enormous waves to break the surface. It seemed as if all hell had broken loose. But, as sudden as the tremor began, all became quiet once more. The water's surface calmed. The ground ceased to tremble. It was as if nothing had ever happened. But, several miles below the ocean bed in a deep, dark cavern, something had happened. Something had been awoken.

* * * *

No radiation. No atmospheric debris. no appreciable temperature difference. The gunship circled the hole taking readings for almost an hour before the Major decided it was probably safe to land at the bottom of the hole.

As the helicopter whined to a standstill, the Major turned to Lee.

"Well, Sergeant, it's your show. Get your samples and measurements before 13:00 so that we can get them back to the station before dark. Gunner, Falkland - you're with the Sergeant."

"Yes sir." Lee gathered his equipment and his two men headed off down to the centre of the hole.

Major West and Sergeant Moore stood beside the helicopter in the cold whistle of the wind, staring out at the surreal landscape around them. They stood on stone, clean cut and smooth by whatever had carved the hole. Twenty hours previously, this had been bedrock, buried under two hundred feet of rock and soil. Now it was open to the air, exposed by some unknown and unimaginable force.

Moore turned to his superior, "Have you any idea what might have caused this, sir?"

Major West shook his head slowly, the edge of the fur-trimmed hood around his face flapping in the wind. "Not an idea in the world, Sergeant. For all we know, it might have been UFO's and little green men."

Sergeant Moore flicked a quick look at the Major, but behind the fur hood it was impossible to tell whether Major West was joking or not.

* * * *

Deep within the caverns was a series of smaller caverns. Each was approximately the size of a medium sized room. Within one of these small caverns, a row of computer-like equipment was lined up against one wall. There were six units in total and on each, a few lights flashed in random sequence. Each unit whirred quietly in the dark, sounding like a small animal. Attached to each unit was a hose like attachment, which snaked off into the darkened distance. The hoses came to a junction and split off into two further hoses, which further along were connected, to twelve coffin-like metal boxes. At the top of each box was a small sliding glass panel section, which had, been coated over by frost, and if one looked closely enough below the glass and frost, there appeared to be bodies.

Bodies? This deep below the ocean bed? There couldn't be. But there was.

A mysterious figure walked from the darkened cavern entrance into the room and surveyed the twelve units. A smile crept across the mysterious figures face. The figure turned towards the computer units and began to flick a series of switches in sequence. Suddenly there was a hiss of air escaping from the boxes, and the cavern became brighter as if lit by a series of low-intensity lighting. The equipment roared to life as the temperature in the cavern began to increase.

The figure moved across the room as it headed towards one of the coffin boxes. This one was set off to the side of the others and was slightly more ornate in style than the other eleven. It even had its own computer unit. The mysterious stranger repeated the same sequence again of flicking switches on the terminal. There was an escape of air from the box like the others, and soon the frost that covered the coffin's glass panel had melted away.

The mysterious stranger bent over the box and peered beneath the glass. There like the other boxes lay a figure. The stranger did not seem surprised by the figure that lay beneath the glass. It was almost as if the stranger knew what the box would contain.

Across the room, the figures in the other boxes began to stir. The glass panels of each unit began to lift up slightly and slide downwards along the length of each box. The stranger turned to watch as eleven figures began to rise from each unit.

One figure had already risen steadily to its feet and was heading towards the stranger. The stranger stared at the approaching figure. There in front of the stranger stood a tall, reptilian like being that was covered in green scales. It turned to the stranger and spoke. "You! Ape creature. What are you doing here?"

The mysterious stranger spoke. "Ah, noble survivors of the Silurian race; I am here to help you reclaim what is rightfully yours."

The creature did not respond; instead its third eye atop its head began to glow.

The stranger leapt out of the way, as a low chuckle emanated from his throat. "Now, Ryga, is that any way to treat your lord and savior?"

If it were possible for the creature to express surprise he would have. "Ape creature, how do you know of us? How do you know me?"

The stranger chuckled once more. "Ah Ryga, much is known to me. I know you are the only surviving colony of a once proud and noble race known as the Silurians, and that you were forced to retreat underground when a small planet was approaching the Earth. For years you lived in hibernation, awaiting the day when you and your Silurian brothers could reclaim the planet, but sadly, Ryga, that day never came. Instead, you overslept, and the world changed in many ways. The most profound of all was that the ape creatures you hated so much, have developed, and are masters of this world now."

By now, the other Silurians had all been revived and had gathered behind Ryga as they listened to the stranger tell what had happened to their world. Ryga, and the others, could not believe what they were being told. The ape creatures were like pets to them in their time. They were disease-carrying nothings. They were only worth being hunted as sport. "You cannot tell the truth!" shouted Ryga.

"Yes I do", the stranger calmly replied.

Ryga appeared crestfallen. What had happened to allow the ape creatures to develop and take over 'his' world. This could not be allowed to progress any further. The ape creatures had to be eliminated and the Silurians allowed to reclaim the Earth as their home. Ryga shouted, "Then the ape creatures must be killed. All of them." The other Silurians took up the chorus.

The stranger raised a hand to quiet the reptiles. "And so shall it be", replied the stranger.

"And how do you plan to do this?" queried Ryga.

The stranger chuckled once more. "Ah...." was all he said, as the vilest smile crept across his face.

Ryga was beginning to like this ape creature. He was not like the others. He was different. Ryga approached the stranger. "And, do you have a name ape creature?" he asked.

"Yes. You may call me Angelus."

Ryga slapped the Angelus on the back. "Very good. I think you will be of great service to us, Angelus."

The Angelus smiled.

"We must make plans on how you can help us," requested Ryga. "But first, we must revive our leader, Syreux. He will be extremely interested to hear your ideas." Ryga motioned for the Angelus to follow him to their leader's survival unit.

The Angelus did not reply, but merely followed Ryga. He smiled and chuckled low once more. A chuckle that seemed to reverberate around the entire cavern system.

* * * *

The pilot of the helicopter came around from the other side of the craft, the radio set around his neck crackling with static.

"Major West, sir?"

"What is it?"

"It's the station. Apparently there's a big storm closing in our position, moving fast. We need to get out of here pretty soon if we're to outrun it. I wouldn't like to be caught in it so far from base, sir."

"Gotcha, soldier. Moore! Call Lee - tell him to get his ass up here right away!"

Major West pulled a pair of binoculars up to his eyes. He scanned the bottom of the crater. There the Sergeant was, about a mile away.

A burst of static sounded at the Major's back.

"Say again, Lee!" Sergeant Moore shouted into his radio.

The Major caught only the tail end of Lee's message, his eyes still on the little dots in the distance. Suddenly, he saw the three of them start to run across the smooth stone. "What the hell?"

"Lee said something about an explosion, sir - something about steam and lava..."

Major West was still watching Lee and the others when the explosion caught them. A bright flash of light followed by a shower of steam and a hail of razor-sharp fragments of hot rock engulfed the three running figures. The ground shook with the shock of the explosion. Major West stumbled on his feet and felt something whirl past his face. He was half aware as he tumbled to the ground of the high-pitched sound of a human shout or scream behind him and the sound of breaking glass.

Major West rolled back onto his feet as the rumbling subsided and the earth stopped moving. As he had fallen, a shower of stones from the explosion a mile away had plummeted like grapeshot onto the helicopter behind him. Most of the cockpit windows were smashed, shards of glass strewn around the dented shell of the vessel. The pilot was leaning against the side, his left shoulder clutched in his right hand. Sergeant Moore was lying prone on the stony ground, a warm pool of blood around his head.

"Sir! We've got to go!" shouted the pilot.

Major West waved him into the 'copter and swung into motion, grabbing Moore under the neck and head, and grabbing him by the belt and shoving him into the open side door of the gunship. The Major knelt down and collected his binoculars. Behind him, he heard the sound of the helicopters rotors beginning to spin. The Major swept his magnified gaze down the bowl of the crater towards the point of the explosion, searching for Lee and the others.

The Pilot shouted at him through the broken glass to get into the helicopter. "Get down there and pick them up!" he shouted. The pilot opened his mouth to protest, blood from his shoulder streaming down onto the controls in front of him.

"Move, soldier!" the Major shouted.

The helicopter rose up from the stone floor of the crater and crept down towards the centre of the crater, keeping twenty feet above the trembling ground.

Lee watched the helicopter move with agonizing slowness to where he and Falkland crouched. He couldn't see Gunner anywhere - perhaps the helicopter could. The scalding jet of superheated steam at Lee's back spat drops of fire onto the shredded remains of his winter coat. His glasses were still on his face, their lenses shattered and the frames slick with blood. Lee felt pain everywhere. He felt hot and cold at the same time. His head pounded, and his ears screamed incessantly, swamping the thumping drone of the helicopter's engines.

The metal craft descended like a dragonfly.

There was a second flash of light that seared Lee's eyes. His first thought was that there had been a second eruption, and that he had died. Then, achingly cold water sluiced down onto him, whipping against his raw burnt skin. Another flash. Another. These flashes silhouetted the slowly dropping helicopter like a halo of Saint Elmo's fire. Overhead, above the helicopter, the enraged ferocity of an arctic storm had fallen upon them, lashing the crater with thunder, lightning, and icy sleet.

The helicopter descended - but did not stop. With a hollow metal crunch that Lee could feel through the rock beneath him, a fist of wind slammed it down into the broken stone thirty feet in front of the Sergeant. There was no explosion, but a wave of heat suddenly engulfed the world. Lee turned to look behind him, where great icebergs of stone were slowly vanishing into a brilliant haze of fiery orange. Even without his glasses, Lee could see the gushing spurts of molten rock, advancing towards himself, Falkland, and the stricken helicopter.

This is hell, Lee thought.

And then, as everything grew dim around him, the curtains of lava seemed to part, and Hell's grotesque and reptilian doorman appeared to Lee to carry him down into the fiery eternity.

Two: Experiment

Rosin Doherty stood with her palm to her forehead, shading her crystal blue eyes from the glare of the Canadian sun. The heat from overhead cooked her red hair and freckled face even through the awning of her Panama hat. Seasons of field work had burnt her once-fair skin to a warm reddish brown that seemed to forever be halfway between a burn and a tan. The sun cream that was supposed to offer her at least some protection seemed to be crisping off in a useless powder. Rosin sighed. It was only January, and already the temperatures were soaring well above 100. Global warming had made field work even more difficult these days. New Year's day had been the hottest on record. Meteorologists were already calling the storms that had battered Canada over that first fortnight the start of the 'Western North American monsoon season'. It had delayed the arrival of the satellite connection servers - Jack Burt was still busy hooking them up. From her vantage point on the ramparts overlooking the valley, Rosin could see the levees against the rivers, and the miles of flooded fields off in the distance. If she had been in the office in the keep, she would have been able to see the mudslide that blocked most of the road down from Williams Lake. If there weren't enough problems with this season, that alone would be enough; it would be a maximum of three weeks before the road was dug out providing, of course, that there weren't more rains and more mudslides.

Rosin sighed again. The dig was her baby, and all these problems weighed heavily on her mind. After Dr. Vasceaux died, it seemed like nothing short of a miracle could keep the excavation going. She had had her miracle back then when the UN decided to adopt the project into UNESCO financing. Now she wondered if she would need another just to keep the whole thing from grinding slowly to a heavy, hot halt.

Dr. Doherty climbed carefully off the top of the white wall and walked across the open yard towards the excavation site. A large plastic and canvass tent stretched over a portion of the eastern courtyard, covering the half-demolished remains of the old

condominium project. Abandoned L-shaped sections of concrete walls crouched in the bright sun, slowly melting into the thick shift of sand and dust that covered the courtyard area. Many of the remaining walls were covered in crude graffiti obviously the work of some bored youths.

There, behind the remaining walls, was what Rosin considered the most important archaeological find ever made at Williams Lake. The tent covering the site was crudely air-conditioned. Large solar-powered heat baffles kept the interior of the Canvas Construction at a bearable 84 Fahrenheit; not cool, but enough at least to enable the archaeologists inside to continue working. Rosin slid the Perspex door aside and went underneath the canvas. The change in temperature hit her like wash of cold water. It was like stepping underneath a waterfall compared to the boiling heat outside. For a second she shivered, almost feeling a chill.

The dig site was situated in and around the remains of the condo site. The floors had been dug up, and three meters of chalk removed. Underneath, ancient sandstone and limestone, and the dark gray chinks in which they were imbedded were revealed - geological layers that hid fragments of mankind's earliest history. The site resembled a quarry. Steps were cut into the soft rock, leading down from the fragments of the twentieth century above down into the past. Ropes and stairs marked the routes down into the excavated pits, a clambering path that was matched by the snaking of cables and hoses. A soft clamber of voices and the muted sound of machinery filled the site. From the plastic windows in the canvas roof, soft ladders of bright yellow light filtered into the darkness, their tracery picked out in motes of slowly billowing dust. Down near the bottom, points of artificial light flashed and flickered among the general movement of the diggers.

Rosin walked across the pit to a collection of tables on the other side of the diggings. A tall, hairy man wearing only a pair of denim shorts and a dust mask waved back to her. Rosin crossed the far side edging the pit, stepping over lengths of cables and gridlines. The tall man grinned at her through his mask as she approached and slipped it down around his neck to speak to her when she reached the tables.

"Alors... you have found time to join us?" he said with a smile. Henri Rive was Rosin's head supervisor. He oversaw the day-to-day digging in the pit, while Rosin concentrated on the direction of the entire project. When Dr. Vasceaux had been alive and Director of the Williams Lake project, Rosin had been in Henri's shoes, dealing with the archaeology. Now Vasceaux had passed the project on to her, she seemed to spend most of her time dealing with logistics and planning, and less with the archaeology she so loved. She remembered how Vasceaux had grumbled as his administrative work ate away more and more of his time; how much she sympathized with her mentor now.

Rosin smiled back at Henri; they had been lovers once, and there was tenderness in their relationship, which flourished despite the separation of their ways. That had been some years ago now, but they still retained the trust and friendship of their former

closeness. Henri was a great barrel of a man - tall and broad with a thick beard, ponytail and a dense mat of body hair that sparkled now with sweat. His powerful frame belied a delicacy of touch and a sensitivity that made him one of the best diggers - and lovers- Rosin knew.

"How is everything going?" she asked. The large man shrugged with typical Gaelic ambiguity.

"We are ready for the Monitor - all the cables are secure, the computer has been connected to the local software, and the testing areas are cleared."

"Has Jack finished with the satellite connection yet?" Communication with NetFrame in Seattle was vital - they wanted to be able to correspond their scanning readings with the Institute's main database in order to obtain the pinpoint accuracy they needed.

"Je n'sais pas," Henri frowned. "Lisa said earlier that he had said something to her about les signales being difficult to obtain. I could not say whether or not he will be ready by the time the Monitor arrives."

An insistent beeping plucked the air. Rosin grabbed a walkie-talkie from her belt. "Yes?" Rosin asked. An English voice replied.

"Rosin? It's Mercator - the 'copter's been sighted: the Monitor will be here within minutes." Stephen Mercator was in the keep, where Jack was working on the satellite link.

"Stephen, do you know if Jack has had any luck with the link?"

"Not yet. Apparently one of the main boards was cracked in transit. He's been trying to repair it - wire it together by hand, but its slow work."

Behind her, Rosin heard Henri whistle several slow French curses.

"Never mind. Tell him not to worry - we'll try storing the data and transmitting it later, perhaps sending it back on disc to the institute. As for the helicopter, get in touch and tell them to land in the courtyard - then you and Amy meet me there, Stephen. We've got to put on a little reception for our visitor."

Rosin clipped her walkie-talkie back onto her belt. She looked up and met Henri's frown.

"Merde", he said succinctly. "I thought that this whole Monitor business would actually give us some good data - some solid dates."

"Don't sulk, Henri", Rosin reprimanded him. "Even without the linkup, we can still get the dates; they won't be as accurate as they might be with the access to the database, but they'll still be able to confirm or refute our theories about the date of Homo Pacificus."

Henri barked with dissatisfaction.

Rosin smiled at him. "I'll see you in half an hour -and I'll be bringing the professor, giving him a guided tour, don't forget."

Henri muttered another mouthful of curses.

* * * *

Outside the tent, the heat was terrible. Rosin's thin top and shorts were damp with sweat and clung uncomfortable and sticky to her chest and legs. Beside her stood Stephen Mercator and Amy Perez. Stephen was Rosin's number two when it came to organizing the project. He had the cunning of a fox, and a little something of the sly, canine features to go with it. He was responsible for getting things done, for getting people moving, and for generally making sure everything Rosin wanted happened. He was short and stocky, although given to a lankiness in the arms and legs that made him look like a homemade doll. He had thin blond hair that flopped around uncontrollably, a looseness matched by his baggy shorts that reached to the knees and loose silk shirt that billowed in the hot air. Stephen was an academic - born and bred in hallowed halls of Dalhousie University. It was his research and study that had complimented Vasceaux's primal enthusiasm in the early days of the Vancouver Island dig. Now he guided the project under Rosin, marrying his book-learned theories with a practical experience born of two decades in the field. Amy Perez was the child of the project. She was American; an eager and competent student who had shown considerable promise under Vasceaux. She was now their eolith specialist, sifting through the multitude of minute extracted fragments those early, elusive stone tools used by 'Pacificus' man. Amy was silent and shy; never opening her mouth except when prompted. She was a dark young woman, of vaguely Hispanic origins, with large brown features and a tall, solid build. Her long dark hair was carefully tied back from her face, hidden under a scarf that served partly to shield her eyes from the bright light. Her thin pale shift was knotted precisely around her waist with another bright scarf and served as a holder for her ever-present notebooks and pens.

Overhead, the dark oval of a black helicopter spiraled down towards the courtyard, its bulbous form a blot of eclipse against the hot, bright sun. The twin rotors fluttered with a muted roar, their dance battering the sand and dust with a downdraft that sent miniature dust devils racing across the open area. Rosin's hair snapped against her face, and she clung to her hat to stop it joining the whirlwinds of sand. With a slow bounce, the helicopter landed, and the rotors whined their way to a quick halt before clicking into a locked position.

Stephen Mercator shouted something to the five-camp staff standing waiting beside the far wall, and they loped up to the helicopter to begin the unloading of the boxes of equipment from its rear. Rosin walked through the still-swirling sand towards the front of the helicopter. Inside the cockpit, Rosin saw a single passenger removing their helmet.

This must be Professor Cornelius Angelus, she thought; Vice-Chairman of the Thascales Institute, and in every true sense of the word, her boss. Oh certainly, the

United Nations through UNESCO had overall jurisdiction over the project, but the Thascales Institute held all the real reins. For the institutes power was simple: it was the organization which funded and owned the rights to the most advanced archaeological equipment ever invented. Their Monitor - strictly speaking ISTM, the Interstitial Subatomic Telegenic Monitor - had revolutionized the science of archaeological dating. With the aid of the Monitor, it was possible for the first time, to directly date archaeological material by analyzing the quantum-chronometric subatomic particles within the artifact itself. No longer was dating dependent upon the context in which an object was found; with the Monitor it was possible to reconstruct the entire life-cycle of the individual molecules which made up the object, and thus obtain true and accurate dates from that object.

Without ISTEM, the Williams Lake project had virtually no significance. Without the Monitor it was impossible to prove or justify the incredible theories that Bernard Vasceaux had created to explain the finds of human material within the rock. And without the Thascales Institute, there was no access to the Monitor. And for Rosin, this meant that without an agreeable meeting now with Professor Angelus, the whole house of cards upon which the project was stacked would fall apart.

Docherty had never met Professor Angelus, but a reputation had proceeded him. He was said to be brilliant - the inheritor of the legacy of the genius Professor Thascales himself. Rosin wiped the palms of her hands against the sides of her shorts. She was nervous. She hated these kinds of encounters; hated the fact that so much rode on her behavior to someone she had nothing in common with.

The passenger door to the helicopter swung open, and the Professor descended from the vessel. He was as he had been described - a tall man, with dark hair and beard, and a sharply featured face. Even at a distance, the man's ability to dominate could be felt. His face was a map of strength and power. He stretched from the helicopter like some giant cat, his hand like some lethally taloned paw resting like a warning against the co-pilot's outstretched arm. He was tall; tall and imposing. Astonishingly, he was dressed in a heavy black suit and theatrical cloak. His eyes were hidden behind black wrap-around glasses, and his hands covered by elegant leather gloves. Under the sweltering weight of all those clothes, Rosin half expected him to collapse instantaneously from the oppressive heat, but he did not. His apparent lack of concern about the heat made Rosin in her minimal outfit feel weak and unworthy.

The Professor strode from the helicopter to meet her, carrying a small black leather case. As he approached, he slipped the leather glove from his right hand, shaking Rosin's hand without a word - a tight grip and a cutting gaze crowding around her.

"My dear Ms. Docherty, I am so pleased to meet with you", he spoke finally, his voice smooth and warm.

"Professor - likewise", Rosin replied, not feeling courageous to correct him on her title. She glanced around the dark figure at the helicopter and the scenes of lading being enacted. "I take it you had no problems with your journey?"

"Journey?" The Professor raised an eyebrow above the rim of his glasses. "Ah - I see", he chuckled curiously. "The transport of the Monitor from the Institute: no, no trouble at all. Indeed, the journey was most pleasant. I had forgotten entirely about the floods - they lend a picturesque touch to the region, do they not?"

Rosin was a little startled - she would have hardly described the surrounding devastation with its accompanying suffering and hardship for the local population as 'picturesque'. Before she could reply, the Professor continued.

"But of course, I was forgetting the appalling impact of the flooding on the native inhabitants. Most distressing, " he smiled reassuringly. "And you - has your project suffered much?"

"Err, no - apart from the mudslide over the road, we've been pretty much unaffected. We're cut off for the moment from the towns and so on around, but we have food and water enough for several months up here if the worst comes to the worst."

"How convenient," the Professor murmured. Rosin couldn't quite work out what he meant.

Rosin took a step back and indicated Perez, "Professor, might I introduce Amy Perez." The Professor extended a delicate hand to the silent student. "Amy is a student working with early stone tools."

"Indeed", purred Angelus. "Most intriguing."

Stephen loped over, and Rosin turned to included him in her introduction, "And, Stephen Mercator, the Project's general manager and researcher."

Professor Angelus turned his gaze on the man, shaking his hand slowly and carefully.

"Um, well, how would you like to proceed, Professor? Would you care to see the site?" Rosin indicated the tent behind her.

"Indeed, yes - very much. Perhaps a quick tour of the excavation and then I will see to the installation of the Monitor for you", the Professor smiled a quick, dark smile. "I am sure that this visit will prove to be most productive - for both of us." He gestured with an outstretched palm, again, moving with an elegant feline grace. "Please, do lead the way."

* * * *

The tour was uneventful, and the installation quick and easy. The Professor glided through events with an odd placidity that seemed almost unreal. Not once did he break out into a sweat, as if he had not even noticed the heat. His black presence carried with

it a pall of silence that swirled around him and settled wherever he was. Even Henri kept himself locked into muted obeisance while the Professor toured the bottom of the pit. By the end of the afternoon, the whole operation was over, and once again Rosin and Professor Angelus stood beside the Thascales Institute helicopter.

"I am sorry that this has been such a brief visit, Ms. Docherty," the Professor purred. Even now, Rosin didn't really feel like bothering to correct him on her title. The Professor made her uncomfortable reminding her of all the reasons why she disliked being Director of this project and longed for a chance to get away from the administration and the pressing-of-the-flesh and back to the digging she loved.

"As I am, Professor," she replied awkwardly. "And thank you for your advice on the data analysis."

"Not at all, not at all - to be truthful, you don't really need the satellite link through the NetFrame at all; the direct link I have installed between the Monitor and the Thascales Institute should provide you with all the database access you need."

Behind them, the helicopter began to warm its engines. Professor Angelus looked around.

"I must be on my way, Ms. Docherty, I was a great admirer of your late mentor's work. Please believe me when I say you are a worthy successor to his ambitions and achievements. I wish you all the best in your endeavors."

Rosin stopped in her tracks. A rush of emotions threw themselves over her. She stood still, transfixed by the Professor's words. It was as if, with those quick, quiet syllables, the Professor had uncorked a great wellspring of longing in her heart. Those words were words she had longed to hear for so many difficult months. All during the time after Vasceaux's funeral, while the project limped from hope to uncertainty and back again, she wished someone would stop and tell her that she was doing the right thing. She had prayed that she was not merely imitating his work, but truly carrying it on in the way that he would have intended.

And now to hear those words of praise from this strange, foreboding man, whose alien presence had so disturbed her little world - it was almost more than she could take. The world seemed a buzz in her ears, and Angelus' face filled her vision. In her sudden confusion she saw him take on the familiar features of Bernard Vasceaux and watched that deeply loved face break into sudden smile and repeat Angelus' words: I wish you all the best....

She vaguely became aware that the Professor was still talking to her, "...but I do not think we shall meet again."

Rosin could say nothing, but only nodded in acknowledgment.

The Professor stepped away from her and crossed the courtyard to board the helicopter. The wide twin rotors snapped open, whirled up to speed, and lifted the 'copter up out of the cloud of dust and into the dimming sky.

The billowing sand roared around her and Rosin's mood was broken. She watched the dark 'copter hover for an instant above the dig and then tilted off into the setting sun. The image of Vasceaux swirled into nothingness, and Rosin now felt tired and empty.

She jumped as she became aware of Stephen appearing behind her.

"Well, what did you make of our mystery visitor?"

Rosin scowled, confused by her farewell with Angelus. "I can't honestly say I totally enjoyed the experience."

"Mm. Certainly, an odd piece of work; the eccentricities of a brilliant scientist, perhaps? Did you notice he appeared to have lost his briefcase by the time he left?"

Rosin yawned and stretched her back, strange shivers running up and down her hot spine. "I really hadn't noticed - I'm not even sure I care. I think all I care about at the moment is getting that Monitor up and running and getting some results in."

"Well, regardless of how you feel about the Professor, old Jack Burt was certainly impressed by him. According to Jack, the satellite address the Professor gave him has enabled him to hook up directly to the Institute's database. Apparently we'll be all set to get our readings the moment the scans are finished."

Rosin smiled for the first time in several hours, "And with the readings come the dates!" She looked around the courtyard. The Professor, her strange mood, and her tired emptiness was vanishing into the dusk. In its place settled the cool certainty of herself and her work. "Come on, Stephen - let's get to work."

* * * *

Henri tuned the knobs on the legs of the tall black cone so that it tilted into its final position over the grid. The conical probe stood as tall as Henri, the lighted buttons of its control panel casting flickering red and green shadows across his arms and chest as he finished the adjustments.

Stephen watched him, shifting the cables connected to it so that they draped carefully above the exposed levels of chalk. The cone was the probe, and underneath it was the target. Half exposed in the chalky soil was a fragment of the upper jaw, cheek, and orbital ridge of a portion of skull - the most complete piece of Homo Pacificus yet discovered. Henri's radio crackled.

"Henri?"

"Allo."

"It's Rosin. Are we in position?"

"Oui. The probe is in place, and the settings finalized."

"Right then, out you two come."

"We will be out directly, Rosin, do not worry. I want to be up there in the keep watching the results as much as you do."

Henri stuck the radio back onto his belt and picked up a plastic toolbox. Stephen swung his torch around, checking the positions of the cables. His flashing light caught the shadow of a small black object set by the edge of the pit.

"Wait a minute, Henri. What's that?" Stephen stepped across the cables for a closer look.

"What's what, Mercator?" questioned Henri.

"It's the Professor's bag."

"Huh. Not much you can say about a man who can't even keep track of his belongings," Henri snorted.

Stephen brushed at the bag. "Curious. It's covered in spider's web, or some sort of mold."

"Well bring it along then. Either that or leave it here to rot," Henri said, climbing out of the pit and up the ladders towards the surface.

Stephen stuck the bag under his arm and followed the taller man. "I did wonder what he'd done with it."

"Who cares? Let the Professor forget his bags - who cares? We have his machine; the strange man can rot like bag for all I care."

The two men reached the top of the pit, and Stephen put the bag down by the tables, dusting his hands of the fine white threads that covered it. Henri checked the screen of the computer and barked quickly into his radio.

"All ready here Rosin - Stephen and I are on our way now."

They left the tent.

Outside, the heat of the day was quickly draining into the damp cold of the night. Far to the west, the sun had dipped below the horizon leaving an explosive sunset of golds and pinks. Overhead, the first bright stars were winking a pale white against the deep blue of the sky.

Stephen looked up.

"Doesn't it take your breath away, Henri? To see that sunset, to see that sky - to know that it's the same sky and the same sun that Homo Pacificus looked at all those millennia ago?"

"So you are a philosopher now as well as a lost and found man?" Henri growled.

"Come, my friend, I want to see the Scan - the sky can wait, and there will be other sunsets."

* * * *

The sudden shrill of the dig's telephone broke the building excitement of its human workers. Rosin ran from the inside of the Winnebago and dashed across to the tent that contained the phone.

"Hello", she spoke.

"Doctor Docherty?" a strange accented voiced asked.

"Yes?" questioned Rosin.

"Doctor Rosin Docherty?" the voice asked stressing Rosin's given name.

"Yes, speaking", replied Rosin. "Who is this?"

"Yes, Dr. Docherty, this is Milo Clancey, of the department of Mines and Industry, of the Provincial government of British Columbia. I need to speak to you on an urgent matter regarding your archaeological dig. It seems you did not file the necessary papers with the provincial government to conduct your survey."

"What?" queried Rosin. This was all she needed at a time like this - some silly Canadian governmental official poking his nose into they're work. "Can't this wait, Mister..."

"Mr. Clancey", replied the voice. "And no, it can't Dr. Docherty. I must see you before 4 o'clock today, or else the government will have to close down the dig."

"What! Look Mr. Clancey, we filed all the appropriate papers with both the provincial and federal governments before we began this project. I can't see why I need to rush into town all of a sudden. We're about to uncover an important find and can't this wait till later in the week?"

"I'm sorry Dr. Docherty. I 'must' see you today. I will meet with you at the provincial government offices in Williams Lake." And with that, the line went dead.

"Damn!!" was all Rosin could manage as she slammed down the receiver. This was the last thing she needed right now. She headed towards the Winnebago and called out for Stephen's name, "Stephen..."

"Hmm", wall all he managed.

"I've got to go into town and deal with some problems with the papers we filed with the provincial government. I shouldn't be more than an hour or two."

"No problem", replied Stephen. "We'll get everything set up here and hold off till you get back."

"You're a doll", replied Rosin as she grabbed the set of keys for the jeep and jumped into the driver's seat. "See you in a bit", and Rosin was off in a flash.

* * * *

While Rosin drove herself into town, Henri helped Jack Burt set up ISTEM inside the Winnebago.

"How's it going?" asked Henri as he entered the Winnebago. He leaned over the back of Jack's chair, his hands coming into contact with Jack's neck, which was already starting to show signs of contagion. A wispy white webbing was beginning to form on his skin.

"Hey, what's this?" asked Henri. He brushed some of the spidery threads off of Jack.

"I don't know", said Jack.

Jack got up and fell back into his chair. "Whew", he said. "I just got a bit dizzy there. I need some water." He picked up his coffee mug and got up carefully and went to the sink. He downed a mug of water and a couple of aspirins to be on the safe side.

"I'm not feeling too well either", said Henri. "It feels like I've got a fever. And my head is starting to pound." He too took an aspirin.

"Maybe you two ought to lie down" suggested Stephen. "I'll finish up here."

"Okay," said Jack, stumbling to one of the two small beds in the back, as did Henri.

A few moments later, Amy Perez entered the Winnebago. Stephen looked engrossed in his work, so she didn't disturb him. She went to the sink, rinsed out the mug that Jack had used and poured herself a cup of coffee.

Three hours later, the four of them were dead.

Three: Assignment

Major Hargrove stood at the head of the oval table and surveyed the six men and women who sat around it. The team had been brought to Geneva from all over the world.

"Well, it looks like we're all here", said the Major. "Why don't we all introduce ourselves. I'm Major Hargrove, UNIT. I'm based in London."

He looked to the woman to his left.

"Liz Shaw" she said. "Physics professor, Cambridge, retired. Former scientific advisor to UNIT." She turned to the man at her left.

"Professor Jacob Gale," he announced. Liz noted he had a Canadian accent. Professor Gale was a small, pudgy man who looked to be in his mid-fifties. His head was extremely bald, with only a ridge of graying hair around the back. "My field of expertise is tectonics. I've been studying the plates around the Pacific coast for nearly twenty years. I've also got quite a good background in vulcanology, although this is the first time I've had to use that knowledge in the Vancouver area."

"Captain Mike Ward. UNIT Canada." The man was handsome. Late twenties thought Liz. He reminded her somewhat of Sergeant Benton.

"Doctor Rosin Docherty", began the woman seated next to Captain Ward. "French" though Liz. "I'm an archaeologist. I was working with the team that was killed in Canada." The woman was in her mid-thirties. Liz had heard somewhere that Doctor Docherty was an ex-model. She could see why that might be true.

"Andrew Poulton, Sergeant. United States Marine Corps. Seconded to UNIT two years ago. As a marine, I am an expert in quite a lot of things."

"Oh, God," thought Liz. "There's always one complete prick on every team."

"All right," began Major Hargrove. "As Dr. Docherty mentioned, for those of you who don't know, a team of archaeologists died last Thursday of a mysterious ailment. Most likely a virus. The team were digging in area quite near the big meteor crater

that's been in all the papers. Your job, quite simply, will be to go there and find out what killed those people."

"I'm not quite sure what I'm doing here?" said Liz.

"The virus has almost the exact same symptoms as the one released during the Silurian incident that you were involved in while you were at UNIT. You'll be the team's scientific advisor," explained Major Hargrove.

"Oh", said Liz. She remembered what had happened the last time UNIT had hired her on as a scientific advisor. She hadn't been on the job two days before the Doctor had taken over her job and turned her into his assistant.

"Okay, let's go," said the Major. "Your transports ready."

Liz liked Major Hargrove. He was direct and to the point. This was by far the shortest briefing meeting she had ever attended.

* * * *

Two hours later Liz sat on a plane to Canada, reading through the papers in the envelopes that Hargrove had passed out before bringing the briefing to an end. She read the files regarding the Silurians attempt to kill humanity with a virus. Some of the files were in her own handwriting. The rest had been written or typed by the Brigadier. Oddly enough, there some parts of the report blacked out. At first Liz thought there might be something they didn't want her to know; but then she realized that it had nothing to do with her or the case in Canada. UNIT had censored all references to the Doctor.

Four: Disappearance

The six containment-suited figures moved carefully into the sealed off area. Captain Ward motioned for the team to check out the trailer first. They found nothing out of the ordinary. From there, they moved on throughout the camp.

"Look at this," said Dr. Docherty, indicating some footprints in the soft dirt. "It's not from any animal I recognize." She looked up at the local expert, Professor Gale.

He shook his head. "I've never seen anything like it either."

"I've seen them before," said Liz. "They're Silurian."

The team had read the reports. Sergeant Poulton made a derogatory noise. Liz hadn't taken to him. He was rude while on the plane and seemed to think he was above them all. She hated to think of herself as prejudicial, but before she could stop herself she had concluded that it was because he was an American. "You have something to contribute?" asked Liz a little more snidely than she had intended.

"I'm not buying this Silurian nonsense," he said.

"Didn't you read the same reports that we did?" asked Professor Gale.

"I've read 'Alice In Wonderland' too, but I believe that about as much as I believe those briefing notes."

"Sergeant Poulton", barked Captain Ward. "You have a job to do. I don't know how they do things in the U.S. Marines, but around here, we don't question our assignments. Got that!" Ward shouted the last two words.

"Yes, Captain," said Poulton. His inflection when he said Captain caused Ward's nostrils to flare.

"I can assure all of you of the accuracy of those papers," said Liz. "I've seen Silurians."

The ground began to shake, and the team's attention was quickly diverted by the sudden eruption of a geyser on the other side of the dig site. A jet stream shot at least thirty meters into the air.

"This region has had a couple of mild earthquakes over the last two days," said Professor Gale. "Subterranean gases must have been released by that last one."

"There's another!" shouted Dr. Doherty. The group turned to see another geyser near the trailer. As they watched the trailer was suddenly torn apart by a third geyser that had formed directly underneath it. Then all hell broke loose. Geysers began bursting from the parched soil all over the camp.

"Where can we go that's safe?" Liz asked Professor Gale.

"I don't think anywhere's safe", he answered.

"Everyone back to the jeep!" shouted Captain Ward.

The team ran back to the UNIT jeep and climbed aboard. The driver's seat was conspicuously empty. Sergeant Poulton was not in the jeep. Captain Ward looked back at the mist-shrouded dig site. There was no sign of Sergeant Poulton.

"Where the Hell is Poulton?" shouted Ward. He jumped out of the jeep and headed back towards the camp. "You stay here", he shouted back at them. He walked into the mist. A minute passed. Then two. Suddenly, they heard Captain Ward's scream echoing through their helmets.

The group got out of the jeep and ran into the mist. The geysers were beginning to reduce their output. As the three got their bearings in the swirl of airborne water, Liz saw Captain Ward stumbling towards them.

"I saw one. A Silurian. I found the keys lying on the ground. When I bent over to pick them up, it tried to grab me," gasped Captain Ward. "They must have got Poulton".

Liz and Professor Gale helped Captain Ward keep his balance.

"I wonder", began Professor Gale. "If the earthquakes are opening up fissures in the ground? Perhaps they've opened up a tunnel down into the earth. If these creatures live under the earth, as the ones in England did, then maybe they've found a route to the surface?"

"We'd better warn UNIT HQ", said Captain Ward as he was beginning to calm down. "Let's get back to the jeep. Where's Dr. Docherty?"

"She was right behind us," said Liz. The three remaining team members made their way back to the jeep through the rapidly muddying dirt. "I think these are her footprints," said Liz. In the mud they could see the three sets of footprints coming from the jeep, one of them veering off from the other two. They followed the trail and suddenly found a set of Silurian tracks intersecting those of Dr. Docherty's.

"I think we're at a disadvantage here," announced Ward. "We've got to get back to the jeep and get some re-enforcement. That's our top priority."

Liz and Professor Gale begrudgingly agreed. As they began to head back to the jeep, two Silurians suddenly blocked their path. "Oh my God!" exclaimed Professor Gale. "They're bigger than I imagined."

The two Silurians advanced.

"You've got to make it back to the jeep, Captain", shouted Liz. She launched herself at the Silurian closest to Captain Ward. Captain Ward began to make a dash for the jeep while the entangled bodies of Liz and the Silurian rolled around in the mud. The other Silurian had turned towards the departing Ward. Professor Gale could see the third eye on its forehead starting to glow. Without thinking he dashed, jumped into the air, and threw his body crashing into the Silurian's side. He didn't know what to do next so he took a handful of mud and threw it into the Silurian's eyes, not knowing if it could see out of the third eye. He threw another handful at the glowing eye in the middle of its forehead.

Professor Gale heard the sound of the jeep starting up and as he looked up, he saw that Liz had lost her battle with the other Silurian. Its third eye was glowing, and Liz was doubled over in pain. A second later a wave of nausea swept through Professor Gale and he fell to his knees, unable to move. He was glad to notice that he was losing consciousness a few seconds later. He twisted his body so that he would not land face first in the mud and break his glasses.

Five: Investigation

A blue object whizzed through the time vortex, heading towards nowhere in particular. Upon closer inspection this particular blue object resembled a metropolitan Police Telephone Box that was once used in a place called England on a planet known as Earth. Unless you were told, this particular Police box was actually a time machine that could take its occupants anywhere in time and space. But that still didn't explain what a police box was doing in space. Actually, this particular craft was known as the TARDIS and it belonged to a man known merely as The Doctor. You see many years ago, this time machine had visited Earth, England to be exact, in 1963, and the ships chameleon circuit - a device that enabled the ship to blend in to its surroundings - had stuck in this particular shape and its owner had never got around to repairing the faulty circuit. Well, he had tried once, but the ship ended up reverting back to its familiar blue police box shape, and the Doctor had decided to leave things well enough alone.

The inside of the TARDIS was huge to say the least. You see, the TARDIS was actually bigger on the inside than on the out. This was possible as the inside sort of existed in another dimension while the ships outside existed in another. The TARDIS' creators had intended it to be that way. However, if you were to enter the door to the TARDIS, you would stumble into the first of many rooms inside. This first room was the gleaming white control room, which was the very nerve centre of the craft. From here, the ships occupant could control the entire ship.

The control room was fairly sparse. The walls were a gleaming white, each divided into sections with small roundels inset within the walls. Off to one corner was a hat stand, with a few items of clothing on it. To the side of the hat stand was a large beige armchair that looked as if it was a recent addition to the room. The chair appeared to be the type that was soft and comfortable and one that if you sat in it, you could easily curl up and fall asleep.

In front of the chair, in the centre of the room was the control console. This console was hexagonal in shape and each section contained numerous dials, switches and buttons that controlled the ships navigation, guidance, environment and more. In the centre of the console, was a clear transparent glass-like cylinder known as the time rotor. This would rise and fall when the ship was in flight, which it was doing exactly at the moment.

To the bottom of the rotor, and below the main console, controls, a small panel was slightly ajar. Numerous wires and circuits were scattered about the bottom of the panel. A small man in checked trousers, brown shoes, white shirt, and question mark pullover lay on his back with his head stuck inside the open panel. This was the ship's owner, the Doctor - a Time Lord who was now in his seventh persona.

The Doctor reached across the floor with his hand and grabbed a strange object that looked like a screwdriver with two heads. With the other hand he picked up the loose circuits and fitted them in place with the screwdriver. There was a snap sound, then a small flash. The Doctor jumped slightly and quickly slid from out of the panel.

"Ah ha" he responded to no one in particular. "Perfect. That's that fixed" He closed the panel door and picked up the screwdriver and put it inside a brown leather case that sat beside the console.

"Ace, I've finally fixed that faulty external door circuit. Isn't that great?" No reply was forthcoming. "Ace? Ace! Oh, Ace."

The Doctor was a bit puzzled by the lack of response when he suddenly remembered, Ace wasn't here anymore. Up until recently, Ace had been the Doctor's most recent travelling companion. He had originally met her on Iceworld were they battled the evil Kane, and over the years they had travelled the galaxy fighting all sorts of evils and injustice. But Ace, had gone her way many months ago. Odd but the Doctor missed her. They had parted as friends, or at least the Doctor thought so. It was weird not having her around anymore. The Doctor sighed. He didn't really like travelling alone. But since Ace's departure, he hadn't really met anyone that he felt like inviting along in his travels.

"Ah well", he sighed. "I think this situation calls for a cup of tea and curl up with a good book." The Doctor got up, closed the brown leather case, and picked it up, heading towards the second set of doors that led to the other rooms in the TARDIS. Things had definitely changed since Ace left.

* * * *

Captain Ward kept the jeep going at top speed as he raced down the logging road towards the makeshift base that had been thrown together in the nearest little town. He had already radioed ahead about what had happen. He had made arrangements to have tanks at the ready. He wanted helicopters too, but there was going to be a delay

before they could be flown it. As he planned out his strategy, he nearly overlooked the man who stumbled onto the road. He slammed on the brakes and kicked up a large cloud of dust. The man looked disheveled and crazed. The man saw the UNIT logo on the side of the jeep and stumbled over to the driver's door. He looked dumbly at the Captain, saluted and gasped, "Captain - Lee - sir." Before collapsing.

Lee? That was the chap who had gone missing, thought Ward. He dragged the soldier into the passenger seat and then continued down the hill at top speed.

* * * *

Liz awoke with a headache. She had been under anesthesia once and waking up after being assaulted by the Silurians' third eye was not unlike waking up from anesthesia. She felt slight nauseous, and so waited until it passed before opening her eyes. She was lying on the floor of a makeshift cell. There was straw on the floor. She thought for a second, in her groggy condition, that perhaps they were being kept as pets.

As Liz came to her senses she could see the others lying in the cell as well. She sat up slowly and looked around the room. Their cell was on one side of a room that had been cut into the caves. There was an entrance to the cave next to the cell as well as on the opposite wall. The room was empty.

"Is everybody alive?" asked Professor Gale.

Liz turned to him, "I am," she said.

"Me too," said Rosin. Poulton groaned. His head was bleeding. It looked like the Silurians had used more than their mental powers on him.

Liz got to her feet and tried the door. Although the cage had been lashed together out of pieces of metal and wood, what appeared to be string tying the bars together was actually some kind of strange polymer that Liz couldn't budge.

"You won't escape as easily as Captain Lee," hissed a voice from across the room. Liz looked up to see an old Silurian enter, "I am Syreux."

"I'm Liz Shaw," began Liz.

"We will find out everything that we need to," hissed Syreux. He went to Liz and his third eye began to glow. Liz could feel him inside her mind, sifting through her memories. Her body began to go numb and she felt like she was lying on a hot beach, her senses becoming dulled by the heat. When she snapped out of it, she realized that Syreux had long since finished with her and had worked his way through the rest of the group. He was just finishing with Poulton, who stood there, dazed, even as Syreux turned and left the room without another word to them.

* * * *

Meanwhile, back at the makeshift UNIT headquarters, Lee was telling of his adventures below the surface of the planet. The Silurians too had taken him, and they had kept him prisoner in a primitive cell. They had questioned him relentlessly, and then all of a sudden they had stopped caring about him. They didn't talk to him and they didn't feed him. After two days without food, he had figured that he had better escape, or he would die. So over the course of a few days, he managed to spread apart a couple of the bars in the cell and slip through.

"Could you find the entrance to the cave system again," asked Captain Ward.

"Yes, I could, I left some markings so that we could find the place again."

"Well then," began Captain Ward, " Let's get in those tanks and find those missing people."

Six: Distress Call

Liz and the other prisoners found themselves comfortable spots to sleep in. Liz turned her back to the guard. Her body shielded her hands. She slowly worked her way up to the neckline of her sweater and pulled on the chain that hung around her neck. Eventually she held the small cylinder in her hand. It looked like a small AA battery. It even had a small button on one end.

This cylinder was the culmination of eight years of work. It had taken her four years just to take it apart and then another year to figure out what each of the parts did. And, of course, once she had put it together, she could not test it. Otherwise he would have come and take it away from her. She had found it, all those years ago, lying on his bench. He had been working on one of the little circuits as usual, and she had asked him what each of the small items on the bench were.

She thought he had made most of the names up, not because he was crazy or didn't know what they were, but because he like to do that. He was always telling stories of planets with names like Aridus. An arid planet with the name Aridus? A water planet named Marinius. Who did he think he was fooling with names. He just made them up. Perhaps he thought it was funny. Or perhaps he thought that it made sense to tell the little humans something that they would find familiar.

Anyway, he had said it was a temporal beacon. He had said that it could transmit information backwards and forwards in time. He then went on about how the TARDIS controls would sometimes send course corrections backward in time to itself so it could avoid obstacles and other nonsense.

So she took it. She spent years examining it, testing the components, and trying to find compatible power sources for it. She had long since given up trying to learn its secrets. It was just too far complex for that. But, she was fairly certain that what she had cobbled together in the end amounted to a temporal dog whistle.

She pushed the button. Now, if only the Doctor was listening.

* * * *

Captain Ward walked in front of the row of tanks. Everything looked good. He gave the order and the tanks were underway. He, himself boarded a jeep, which hurtled alongside the massive tanks as they wheeled their way towards the cave entrance that Lee had identified.

* * * *

The Doctor was sitting in an armchair in the middle of the great white console room of the TARDIS. He sipped at a cup of Earl Grey he had made a few minutes ago. He took a sip and pursed his lips. The tea was cold and bitter. It was quite obviously several weeks old. He took a look at the cup, sniffed the tea, and then put the cup and saucer down on the little table next to the armchair. He sighed and looked around the bleak, white walls of the TARDIS. "Maybe I should redecorate," he said aloud. He waited for someone to comment. Nothing.

"No? All right then."

He got up and was about to head for the library when the TARDIS console began to let out a high-pitched squeal. "Dolphins," explained the Doctor spinning around on his heels and striding purposely back to the console.

He began flicking switches and spinning dials and basically moving all of the little knobs and levers on the console in what might appear to the casual observer to be a random manner, driven only by the need to create a flurry of motion. Finally the Doctor looked up at the output of a ticker tape dispenser that had appeared unexpectedly near the centre of the console. "That's odd," he said. "It's coming from Earth. Well sounds like as good a place as any to go. He reset the co-ordinates from their old destination to those of Earth. It is interesting to note, that the old co-ordinates had been set to "Earth" also.

* * * *

The Silurian guard pitched forward. Liz heard the sound of the body hitting the ground and spun around. The guard appeared to be unconscious. She wondered if that was from hitting the floor, or if the high-pitched squealing sound that was coming from her distress call was having a more serious effect on the Silurians than on the humans, who were simply covering their ears in extreme discomfort.

Liz reached through the bars and pulled on the guard's leg. She managed to get the keys that hung on his belt. A moment later she had freed herself and the other prisoners.

Liz, Professor Gale, Rosin and Poulton ran from the cell and down through the nearest passageway. They ran for what seemed like forever when Liz asked if anyone remembered the way they came in, "I do," replied Rosin.

"This is the way they brought me," said Rosin, pointing up a darkened passageway. The others had been unconscious when they had been brought in. The four of them raced quickly and as quietly as possible up the darkened passageway. Suddenly an alarm began to ring. Shortly, they could hear the sounds of pursuit. They soon saw daylight up ahead, and as they raced towards the exit the air was filled with a wheezing, groaning sound that echoed throughout the cave. As they approached the mouth of the cave a blue box began to appear in the opening. They raced around it and looked around desperately for some kind of cover. They were in fairly large clearing.

The door to the police box opened. The Doctor stepped out. He saw Liz and grinned.

"Hello Liz."

Liz had seen photos of the second Doctor in the UNIT files and had heard about the fourth Doctor from Sarah Jane Smith, so she knew about regeneration and automatically decided to accept that this was the Doctor. No time to get caught up in that whole thing now though, "We've got Silurians after us," she yelled.

"Silurians," said the Doctor. "They should be quite friendly."

"Look," said Professor Gale. "Are you going to let us in there or not?"

"Why don't we talk to these Silurians," said the Doctor, pulling the door shut behind him.

"They're trying to kill us," said Rosin.

"Look," shouted Sergeant Poulton, pointing off into the distance. The UNIT tanks could be seen in the distance, rolling towards the crater. "We just need to get in there for a couple of minutes until they get here."

The Doctor looked at the approaching UNIT army then the two Silurian guards coming out of the mouth of the cave, and then to the four escapees.

Poulton wrapped his arm around the Doctor's neck in a chokehold and snarled, "Give me the key."

The Doctor took his left elbow and pushed it into Poulton's ribs. At first, Poulton felt only a slight pressure, but after a second it felt like his entire chest was going to cave in. He tried to shift his body but that just made it worse. He found himself having to loosen his grip on the Doctor's neck.

The Doctor slipped out of the Marine's grasp and ran straight at the two Silurians. "Scatter," he shouted. Gale, Poulton and Docherty each took off in a different direction, while the Doctor ran straight between the two Silurians and into the cave. The two guards looked at each other uncertainly.

"I have a bomb" shouted the Doctor over his shoulder. The two Silurians turned and raced back into the cave after the Doctor. Liz sighed and started running back into the cave.

Liz could hear the footsteps up ahead in the dark cave. There were occasional torches set into the walls, but there were sections when it seemed to Liz that she was in almost complete darkness. At one-point Liz could no longer hear the footsteps on ahead. She wondered if they had stopped or if they had got too far ahead of her. She stopped running and walked cautiously forward. She rounded a corner slowly and saw only two torches up ahead. Then she felt a hand on her shoulder. She stopped and turned to see the Doctor with his fingers to his lips.

Liz wondered how she had got past the Silurian guards without them seeing her, or vice versa. The Doctor pointed deeper into the caves to indicate that the Silurians had somehow passed him by. The Doctor motioned for her to follow him deeper into the caves. Eventually, the pair of them came out into the cell room where Liz and the others had been held. It was deserted.

"That's where they kept us," said Liz, indicating the cell.

"Hmm" said the Doctor. "It looks very familiar."

"And that is where you shall return," hissed the Silurian, who was suddenly standing right behind them. The second guard came forward out of the shadows as well.

The Doctor put up his hands. "Take me to your leader," he said. The first Silurian grabbed his arms while the second one grabbed Liz.

"Oh please be careful with Liz", said the Doctor. "She's the only one I've got." The Silurians were not amused.

The Doctor motioned with his head towards the open door of Liz's former cell.

"Liz is a scientist you know," said the Doctor. He smiled. The two Silurians said nothing.

Seconds later another Silurian came through the door followed by an entourage. He looked like he was in charge.

"So you have caught two of them, Good" said the new arrival.

The Doctor bowed. "I'm the Doctor, and this is my friend Liz."

"I am Syreux," hissed the leader of the Silurians.

"Hello, I hear you are having some problems with some humans. Perhaps you could fill me in on the situation and I can play my usual role as peacekeeper between the races.

"The humans have attacked us with a weapon of mass destruction," said Syreux.

"What that hole I saw out there," asked the Doctor. "It looks like a meteor crater. Nothing to do with the humans, I assure you. There, is that all?"

"Angelus has told us the truth about the humans. He has helped us to recover a secret plague that we can use against the humans.

"No," said the Doctor. "Your Angelus is wrong or lying. The Humans will listen to reason." The Doctor started to feel panicky. It was happening all over again. This time had to stop it.

A young Silurian rushed in "Syreux," he began, "The Angelus has asked to see the prisoners."

Seven: Confrontation

The Doctor stumbled as the two Silurians pushed him forward in to the centre of the cavern. A flickering scarlet glow filled the chamber, etching black and burgundy shadows into the distant rock walls. The glow was accompanied by heat - sharp, searing heat that cut the moisture from the air and sucked it from one's lungs. The chamber was big - larger than the Doctor first realized. The entrance Syreux had led the party through was just one tiny crack in the granite, a tiny crack that disappeared into the thickening shadows as the Doctor was led further into the cave. The hellish glow spilled like molten blood across the smoothed floor - a vast expanse of leveled stone that radiated out from the far centre of the cavern like a portrait of the Sun. The Doctor, and the accompanying Silurians, walked now along one of the stone rays towards the central area. In the gaps between these rays magma rolled and hissed several feet below like a caged animal.

Tall shadows leapt out of the bloody light towards the Doctor, long raking shadows that feel from a construction in the centre of the cavern. A tumble of stones, carved in spirals and concentric circles, a hedge of massive granite boulders like a ruined temple. And in its centre, casting a shadow darker than all the rest, a standing stone so dark it was virtually black, squatting unevenly in the middle of the hedge structure.

Syreux turned his scrolled head towards the Doctor and gestured, "The Domain of the Angelus, Doctor - our ally who desires the mammal race destroyed in favor of Earth's true masters."

The Doctor groaned and shook his head. "Syreux , listen to me - whoever, whatever you ally is, he isn't telling you the truth. Humanity can be reasoned with. It is possible for you to have harmony. Don't reject the teachings of your ancestors just because someone tells you to!. Listen to your instincts, Syreux - if you start a war with mankind you will lose!"

No reaction played across the surface of the Silurian's face, no expression, and no emotion. It was impossible to tell what was going on inside that reptilian brain. Syreux blinked slowly, "Come", he said at last. "The Angelus would meet with you."

The Silurians at his back pushed him forward with their rods. The Doctor stumbled forward again, the heat burning his lungs and pressing in on him like a clenched fist. The hedge loomed closer; a tangle of piled stones scratched with arcane carvings that spoke of a time before the coming of man.

The single black stone in the centre of the tumble of monoliths sat now before the party. It was black and glossy, warped and smoothed like an obsidian bubble suddenly trapped in time. The convolutions of its surface were spattered with the shimmering red light from the magma, making shapes and designs jump out suddenly and then just as quickly be sucked back into the infinitely dark mirrored surface. It was stone that radiated evil - and more. The Doctor could feel the clouds and lines of energy that swarmed around it and cloaked it like a shroud. Whatever it was, it was more than just a stone.

Syreux moved to stand in front of it, raising his webbed and taloned hands slightly as if supplicating the stone. His third eye glowed, and the familiar jangling of released psychic energy plucked at the edge of the Doctor's perception.

The stone shimmered. The glossy surface, warped by swirls of undulating stone, shifted, and moved. Bumps and edges flowed into each other, tumbling across one another as if suddenly liquescent. Then, an image appeared, extruding itself from the glassy stone like a piece of bas-relief. It was a face, a humanoid face. A vaguely disturbing image of a face elongated and distorted by the length of the stone. Eyes like gashes slit above the flat cheeks, a thin mouth framed by broad streaks and lines that tumbled away to be lost in the random bubbles and pocks of the rest of the stone. The slitted eyes glowed with an inner scarlet fire, and the mouth moved, puppet-like, to speak in a low, hoarse voice.

The Doctor recognized it instantly. There could be only one voice like that in the entire universe, only one voice that so encapsulated an insane lust for power and desire for destruction. It was the voice that had destroyed Traken, the voice that had tormented the exiled Doctor, the voice that had killed a Lord-President of Gallifrey, the voice that had killed and tortured millions, the voice that was unmistakable, unbearable voice of Evil incarnate.

It was the voice of the Master.

"So, Doctor - as ever, we meet at last," the low voice purred.

The Doctor looked up with flashing silver eyes, "You escaped the Cheetah Planet...". It was a statement, rather than a question.

The obsidian mask chuckled, a dark growling sound, "Indeed - and with my TARDIS more or less intact; I have you to thank for that."

The Doctor shook his head slowly. "How? You were trapped, infected by the Cheetah People's own sense of home - you had nowhere to escape to, nowhere else you could call home!"

"Tut, tut Doctor - you sound almost as if you truly wished me to have died on that barren and desolate world. Where's your sense of forgiveness. Where's that bleeding heart we all know and love?"

The Doctor hissed, "Your crimes are beginning to outweigh my ability to forgive..."

The mask laughed, roaring through stone lips, "Oh, my dear Doctor - it pains me to hear you condemn me so. Are you not even in the slightest bit curious as to my part in these proceedings? Will you try, judge, and execute me in your mind before you have even heard the reasons for my actions?"

The Doctor cocked a suspicious eye at the stone, "And if I am curious?"

"Why then," said the stone mask mockingly, "We shall sit down and discuss it over tea..."

"You're certainly not here to help the Silurians," demanded the Doctor. "What are your real intentions?"

"Ah Doctor, do you think I would be so willing to tell you why. You always were a fool Doctor" retorted the Master.

The Doctor turned towards Syreux and the group of Silurians, "Syreux would you trust a man who so easily committed genocide against an entire planet. He's using you for his own evil purposes."

By now, Ryga and his guards had joined the circle.

"Doctor," began Syreux, "the Angelus has helped us enormously. He has been a friend to the Silurians."

"He's done this before. He used your Sea Devil cousins in one of his schemes, and they all ended up dead!"

"Don't listen to him", intoned the Master. "I am your Master."

"You are not our Master", shouted Syreux.

The Doctor was desperate to convince Syreux that the Master was not their friend. "Syreux, listen to me. The Master, or the Angelus as you call him is the vilest being in the universe. He has killed hundreds, enslaved millions, you're nothing to him, except a means to an end to destroy the humans."

Syreux had never truly trusted the Master all along, and the Doctor's words rang true. Perhaps this Doctor person was right. The Master was not someone who could be trusted or believed. Somehow, Syreux felt he could trust this Doctor person. Doctor, I think you speak the truth. I believe you."

The Master was furious. The Doctor was getting in his way again. Frustrated, he let out a baleful howl. "Ryga, you see how Syreux is weak. Perhaps, you should be in charge of the Silurians."

By now, other Silurians had heard the commotion and had entered the chamber. They began to take sides as the argument between Syreux and Ryga escalated. The Silurians began to divide into two opposing camps - one with Ryga at the Master's side, the other with Syreux and the Doctor.

A Silurian entered the chamber, bowed, and walked up to Syreux. "Leader, the humans are approaching the base. They intend to attack."

"Syreux you must talk with them", pleaded the Doctor.

"Yes, Doctor, you are correct. I will go and speak with them."

"Syreux take Liz with you," said the Doctor. "She will take you to the human's leader. You must talk to them. You must get them to avert the bloodshed."

Syreux left the chamber.

"So Doctor, you might have won this battle, but you have not won the war," chided the Master. "Ryga, attack the traitors!"

Eight: Salvation

Ryga and his followers stormed the other group of Silurians. Brother against brother fought, some with fists, some with the power of the third eye. The Master sprang and grabbed the Doctor around the throat. The Doctor was able to use the Master's momentum and flipped him over onto his back, causing him to lose his grip. The Doctor scrambled to scrambled to his feet, but the Master lashed out with one leg, tripping the Doctor. The Master grabbed a piece of rock and twisted his body to bring the rock smashing down onto the Doctor's head. The Doctor rolled out of the way and looked around frantically for something to use as a weapon, or a shield. He found nothing. It was moments like these that he wished Ace were still around with her trusty Nitro-9. The Master got to his knees and pulled his arms back in order to deliver another blow.

Suddenly, the entire cave seemed to rock back and forth. The Master lost his balance, and the Doctor placed both hands on the cave floor to steady himself. The trembling got worse and the Silurians stopped fighting. It was another earthquake, but unlike the ones that had occurred over the last few days, this one did not last only a few seconds. It just continued as rocks fell from the ceiling some of them hitting Silurians. After about a minute, the shaking finally stopped, but the room full of beings could still hear a rumbling sound. With a mighty crash, an entire wall of the chamber collapsed inward revealing, to the horror of all, a river of molten lava, which changed direction and now began flowing directly into the chamber.

"You see," shouted the Doctor at the speechless Silurians. "The Master's plans have weakened this entire cave system. It won't take long for the lava to break through into all of the inhabited areas."

"He lies," shouted the Master.

"I'm not so sure," said Ryga. "Tell me how you plan to stop the lava from destroying our habitation."

"With this," said the Master, reaching inside his tunic and pulling out a small remote-control device. "I have planted a bomb which will cause an opening to divert the lava away from the Silurian encampment."

"His lies get more and more absurd," said the Doctor. "Why would he have planted a bomb in your caves without telling you. Because he planned all along to destroy you."

"No," roared the Master.

"I think the Doctor's right," said Ryga.

"Then so be it," said the Master. "If I press this button the entire caves will be flooded with lava in less than five minutes."

Ryga knew now that the Master was not on his side. The Silurians turned toward the Master, their third eyes beginning to glow.

The Master depressed the red button on the detonator. An explosion rocked the entire cave system, causing a number of the Silurians to lose their balance. The Master raced out of the chamber and down a corridor, with several dozen Silurians on his heels. The Doctor started to follow, but the chamber began to cave in. He backed out of the cave and suddenly found himself buried under a ton of dirt and rock. The Doctor lost consciousness briefly, and when he came to he found Ryga standing over him. The Doctor looked up at Ryga to see what his intentions were. Ryga bent down and began to dig the Doctor out of the rock. After a few moments, the Doctor's hands were free, and he began to help dig. It wasn't until the Doctor was standing free in the corridor that he realized the Ryga's lower body was crushed under a large chunk of rock. The Doctor rushed over to try and lift the rock.

"Leave me," said Ryga. "I'm not going to make it."

"I can't leave you," said the Doctor.

"The lava is coming into the corridor, Doctor. There's little time" Ryga raised his head slightly and then he gave a gasp and his head fell into the dirt, eyes staring unseeing into space.

The Doctor hesitated for another second and then began to run up the corridor. When he was sure, the Doctor was gone, Ryga raised his head. "Good Luck Doctor," he rasped, and then waited for death.

* * * *

Meanwhile, back on the surface, Syreux and Liz had been talking with UNIT soldiers about the best way to overcome the Master when they felt the explosion. Moments later, the Doctor came running out of the mouth of the cave, followed by a flood of lava.

"Run," shouted the Doctor. The group quickly piled into the UNIT jeeps and raced away from the flood of lava. The Doctor saw that someone had seen to it that his TARDIS had been lifted onto the back of a UNIT truck.

The Doctor looked at Syreux, sitting next to him in the speeding UNIT jeep. "I'm sorry, Syreux. I don't think any of your people are left alive."

"I think you're right, Doctor," answered Syreux. He put his head down and wept silently for the rest of the journey. The Doctor looked back through the rear window of the jeep, back at the destroyed Silurian base still billowing smoke into the air. His mind jumped back to the scene at Wenley Moor all those years ago. The same scene. Only this time the Doctor had succeed in getting the Silurians and the Humans to talk. But it had still ended the same way.

* * * *

Later, back at UNIT HQ, the Doctor looked across the room towards Liz, Syreux, and Captain Ward. After the events of the past few days, he was pleased to Silurian and Humans together. Liz turned and looked towards the Doctor. "Have you ever wondered why I left UNIT?"

"Hmm," replied the Doctor. "Not really."



Silurians...

An archaeological team dies from a mysterious virus.
A second team, headed by Dr. Elizabeth "Liz" Shaw,
goes to investigate but goes missing.

An earthquake awakens a lost Silurian colony
off the coast of British Columbia;
and then, UNIT Canada is called in to investigate.

Meanwhile the Doctor meets up with an enemy from his past.

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