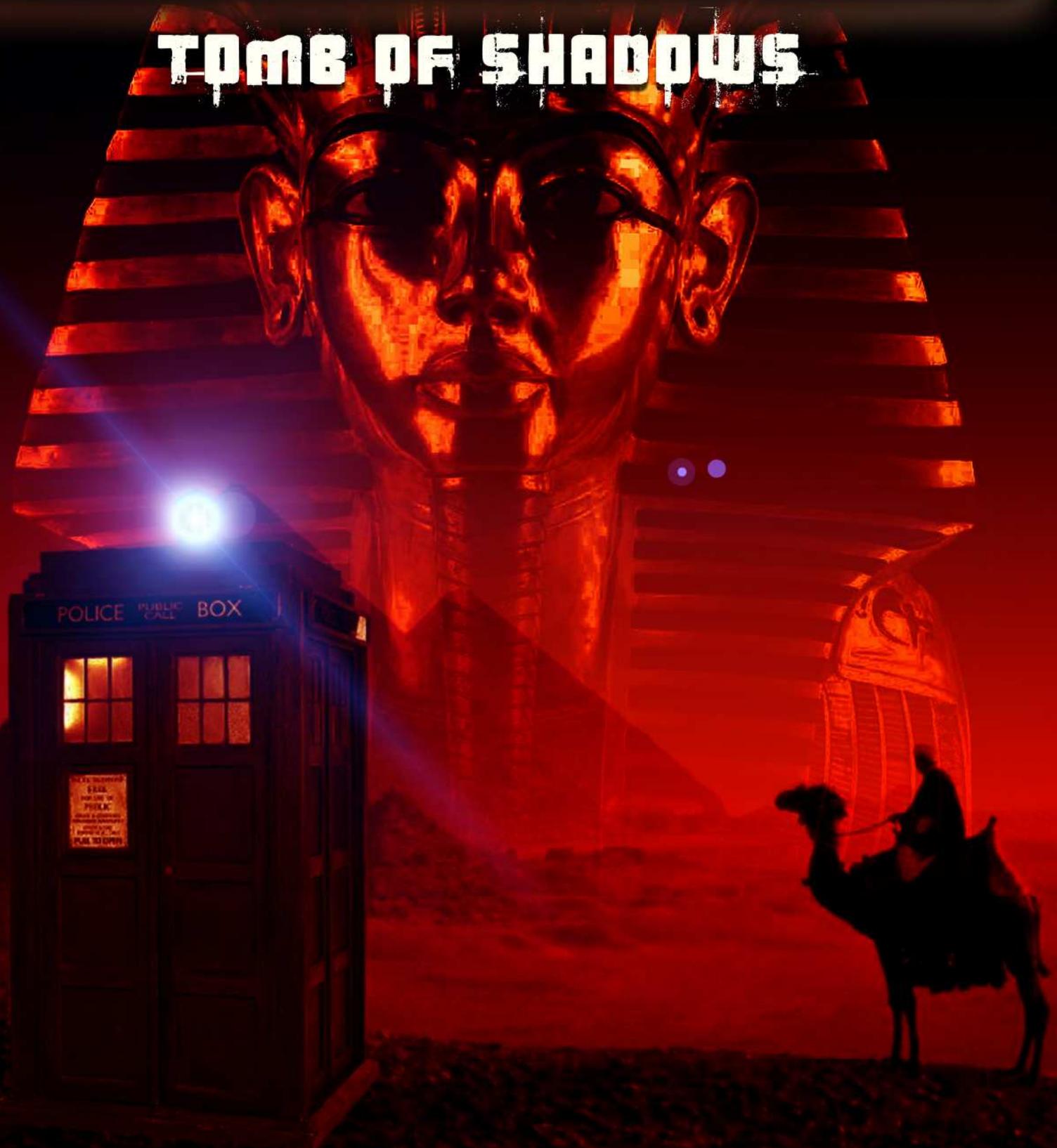


THE
DOCTOR WHO
PROJECT

TOMB OF SHADOWS



John-Gordon Swogger

Published by Jigsaw Publications/The Doctor Who Project
Vancouver, BC, Canada

First Printing February 2002
Second Printing June 2006
Third Printing December 2010

Tomb of Shadows
© 2002 by John Gordon Swogger
The moral right of the author has been asserted.

Doctor Who © 1963, 2010 by BBC Worldwide
The Doctor Who Project © & ™ 1999, 2010 by Jigsaw Publications

A TDWP/Jigsaw Publications E-Book

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced
by any means without the prior written permission of the publisher.

All characters in this publication is fictitious and any resemblance
to real persons, living or dead, is purely co-incidental.

Typeset in Palatino Linotype

Logo © 2005 by Jack Drewell/The Doctor Who Project
Cover © 2010 Kevin Mullen

Thebes, Egypt 1922

The bells of Thebes' Coptic churches echoed a far-away midnight peal. An ancient tradition, said to frighten away the vengeful spirits of the dead that ghosted the pale white hours. Thebes: the ageless necropolis. The tolls seemed distant and meaningless in the hot, dry dusty night air. Lord Porchester strode up the steps to the Continental Hotel two at a time, desert sand blown in from the far side of the city whirling in little eddies around his boots. Matching grey dust covered his khaki uniform, a veil that had crept in through even the closed doors on the train from Alexandria. He had arrived there earlier that evening, wasting no time in disembarking from the merchant vessel that had brought him from India and making haste towards Thebes. As Porchester entered the hotel, he felt the eyes of Thebes itself – its million dead eyes - following him inside and up to his father's room.

Three solemn figures awaited him there. The Hotel Manager - a thickset Egyptian Armenian, the Hotel's doctor - a thin, carefully groomed Arab in a dark fez - and a pale elderly woman with a flat, Russian forehead greeted him with a mixture of concern, sympathy and relief etched on their dark faces.

"He is worse - much worse," the thin doctor said quietly. "The fever has not abated since we sent you the telegram." "It cannot be long now," he finished.

"Praise Abraham and the prophets that you are here at last," the Manager said under his breath, ushering Lord Porchester towards the double doors to the suite. The elderly woman in the black dress, heavy with lace, stepped in his way.

"Lord Porchester, I must reiterate the concern I voiced in my telegram to you -"

The Hotel Manager cursed in gutter Arabic. Porchester stopped in his tracks and regarded the elderly woman darkly. She had a broad, flat, Slavic face: leathery, brown and networked with wrinkles like a dried fig. Her black dress hung like a funerary

shroud over her narrow bird-like body, heavy with draped black cobwebs of lace. In the clasp of her hands rested a curious collection of amulets and charms, tied on a long leather cord that hung from her thin neck.

Madame Anastasia. She had attached herself to Lord Porchester's father in the course of the past year – one of a numberless cloud of charlatans, con artists and counterfeits that his antiquarian connections attracted. Porchester narrowed his eyes – he had no time for self-professed occultists or predatory fakirs. He had seen enough of them in India.

"Madame –" he started, attempting to bypass her as politely as possible.

The old woman held up a warning hand. "I ask for nothing, noble Lord – I must simply again speak my warning: if you do not acknowledge the power that has been unleashed, your father will die."

The Hotel Manager puffed up in anger. "You dare to threaten –"

"It is not I who threaten," the Madame snapped. "The threat was made thousands of years ago: Death shall come on swift wings to him who would disturb the Pharaoh's rest. The Curse of the Pharaohs, Lord Porchester," she said, turning her dark eyes on the young military man. "Give the order for the belongings of Pharaoh to be returned and the tomb sealed, and the curse will be lifted, noble Lord."

Porchester stiffened. The Curse. Even the Times had spoke of such a thing – nonsense. Insulting nonsense. He stepped smartly around the woman, saying nothing, and threw open the double doors, closing them behind him in the face of the trio outside.

The bedroom was silent and still. The bed at the far end, draped with muslin to keep away flies and dust, was a pale shadow under the drifting fingers of moonlight that crept in through the room's large windows. Lord Porchester approached slowly, laying his hat and stick on a small side-table. He parted the muslin curtains and looked down at his father lying on the bed. He was thinner than Porchester remembered him, gaunt even. The fever had robbed him of his strength, and his breathing was laboured and hesitant. A mosquito bite, the doctors had said – an infected mosquito bite. A curse, rag-end journalists and their ilk had said – the Curse of the Pharaohs, written above the doorway to the tomb of the young king that his father and his archaeological protégé~, Howard Carter, had violated. Death shall come on swift wings to him who would disturb the Pharaoh's rest.

Porchester sat carefully on the edge of the bed and gently took his father's hand in his own. It was light and felt chilled, even though the room was warm. He stroked the hand softly; unsure what else he could do in his father's last hours. His father's sunken eyes flickered suddenly and opened, and Lord Carnarvon stared blankly up from the pillow of his death's-bed. His mouth twitched, moved – whispered words trickling from it.

"Father?" Porchester leaned closer, his eyes searching his father's for any glimpse of recognition. There was none - Carnarvon's eyes were open but unseeing. His lips continued to move, forming silent words. Porchester bent even further over the bed, straining to catch something intelligible. Words came to him - manic, fever-haunted words.

"He is coming... hands on our future... His will is to be done... Release, seeking release..."

Porchester frowned. "Father? What are you trying to say?" But Carnarvon's head slumped back into the pillows, his eyelids dropping slowly in time with his laboured breathing.

His son sighed and placed his father's hand back on the crisp linen. As the doctor said, it could not be –

Carnarvon shrieked, sitting bolt upright in bed. From his mouth poured a terrifying, soul-wrenching sound of abject horror. The door to the bedroom flew open and the doctor, the old woman and the Manager burst in. Carnarvon's hands twisted, pointed -

Something formed in the air beyond the bed, in the dark shadows at the back of the room. It writhed and twisted - a cacophony of ghostly, insubstantial tendrils and tentacles that erupted from a bloated, reptilian core. Eyes roved and mouths smacked, wet with rot and mucus, silently spitting and mewling. It drifted on oleaginous things that might have been wings, and flapped against nothingness. The abomination was encrusted with ancient artifacts: gleaming crown, crook and flail sceptre, jeweled collar - the regalia of an Egyptian Pharaoh.

Carnarvon's wordless shriek moulded into a single phrase that faded on his lips as he collapsed backwards into the bedding, life hissing from him in his final breath.

"Death on swift wings!"

Wordless horror and rage filled Porchester, and he pulled his revolver from his belt and unleashed bullet after bullet at the unspeakable manifestation. The room resounded with the explosive percussion of the shots. Screams, cries. There was a sucking, roaring sound, as if the very fabric of reality were being shredded. The apparition shifted - changed; from deep within the thing, a globe, pulsing with unearthly dark light rushed forward, lance-straight beams of energy striking out from the dark heart of the globe. The lights in the hallway flickered and went out, energy draining into the monstrous spectre. Then, the entire apparition folded in upon itself, disappearing within a second, leaving the room empty, silent and still.

Porchester reeled backwards to the bed and clutched at his father's hands. They were cold and lifeless.

Lord Carnarvon was dead.

"Your use of the word 'landing' is rather generous," Tamara commented wryly as she shook the mud and dead, wet leaves from her boots. In the dim late afternoon light behind her, the Doctor said nothing, preferring to maintain a dignified silence. They stood at the edge of a large pond, its edges softened and obscured by strands of rushes and mats of dull green duckweed. Generations of village sheep and cattle had rubbed the rough edges of the pool down to nothing more than a large, muddy puddle surrounded by scrubby trees and unkempt grass. The herds now gone, the village pond was guarded only by a few suspicious-looking ducks who watched the intruders warily from the dark shadows behind the reeds.

In the middle of the pond stood the TARDIS - barely. The angle of its landing was almost more than forty-five degrees, its base buried in soft, sanguineous mud. Through its open front door, dull pond water gurgled quietly into its dark and hidden interior. Indeed, 'landing' would have been an overly generous if not also optimistic phrase to use to describe the ship's arrival. As the TARDIS' engines had groaned to a halt, the Doctor had confidently announced their imminent arrival at the Biban el-Moluk, the Valley of the Kings, November 25th, 1922.

Instead, the TARDIS had crashed (Tamara's description of events, preferred to the anodyne 'landing') in the middle of a muddy pond at the edge of the English village of Dunnhale, on the afternoon of October the eighth, 1944. Even the Doctor couldn't pass this one off as a 'near miss'. And of course, to make matters worse, after Tamara had struggled through the slimy, muddy, weed-choked water to the soggy shore, she turned around to discover that the Doctor had somehow made the trip from TARDIS-threshold to pond-bank without so much as a drop of water on his immaculate shoes.

"Infuriating," she muttered. Even the pale frockcoat he had adopted was completely clean. The perfect late-Edwardian gentleman: unsullied by the troubles of the world.

The Doctor frowned. "Hmm. Well," he said, glancing back at the blue shadow mournfully listing in the grey water behind them. "Perhaps we should let her cool down a bit before we try and find out what went wrong." He glanced down at the soaked, mud-sticky state of Tamara's trousers and boots. "Perhaps also we should try and find the village pub, curl up in front of its fire and grab ourselves a drink."

"That might be some recompense, yes," Tamara admitted her eyes still dark and mock-angry.

The Doctor grinned. "Right then: the Dunnhale Arms - here we come!"

There was a delicious anachronism and incongruity about the pair as they made their way through the brush and tall grass in the direction of the village - a half-mile-distant dark huddle of shadow in the gloaming beyond the knots of ivy-throttled oaks that surrounded the pond. Tamara wore an explorers' combo of khaki leather combats

and a dark denim coat over a green top that the Doctor had assured her wouldn't raise too many eyebrows in 1922. She halted before a stile. The Doctor leaped over ahead of her and dropped lightly down into a rutted country lane. She stepped over the soft, moss-encrusted wood to stand beside him. In front of them was a signpost, its sharpened end arrowed down the dark lane. A blank signpost. Tamara stared at it curiously.

"Where are we, then? The town with no name?"

The Doctor smiled. "War precautions, Tamara. In case of invasion by the Germans, all signposts, notices - anything that could help the enemy find its way around - were removed or replaced with misleading ones. A rather quaint - and, if I may say so, a rather British - response to the threat of impending attack."

"It doesn't sound a very convincing defence policy," Tamara muttered.

"Oh, there were other, more robust defences: the Home Guard; pillarboxes and anti-landing craft barriers along the coasts; barrage balloons; anti-aircraft emplacements..."

As if on cue, the sky was suddenly lit up by twin blades of bright white light, arcing from the horizon into the darkness.

"With searchlights!" pointed the Doctor.

The lights waved back and forth, crossing to find their target. From out of the twilight shadows came the droning rhythmic hum of distant engines, growing louder. The sound of an airplane - a bomber. The light blades suddenly met over a black speck, scissored apart and then came back to find the speck again. Their crossing was filled with the dark spectre of a long, low-slung plane, its broad thin wings supporting a cigar-shaped torso filled with clustered Armageddon.

"Will it drop its bombs here?" asked Tamara. She felt like they should run for cover - but out here in the fields and the hedgerows there seemed very little point. The Doctor shook his head. "No. It'll be heading for a city, a port - somewhere it can do some real damage." He frowned. "It's odd, though, because its shape is -"

Suddenly, a second dark shadow burst into the pool of light where the searchlights met - a second plane. This one swooped out of the night darkness like a hawk, streaking in an attacking arc down on its prey. A rattle of high-pitched, hissing gunfire and purple flares of light flashed from the hawk's wingtips. Phosphor streaks leapt towards the bomber and smashed against it in blood-red clouds. The second plane banked sharply and roared away into the blackness, leaving the spotlight stage filled with the chrysanthemum blossom of explosions as the bomber's lethal payload erupted, ripping the massive vessel apart. The victorious hawk sped away into the darkness, its mission accomplished. Behind, the sabre-blades of light followed the darkening skeleton of the bomber to the ground.

"Wow..." breathed Tamara, impressed despite herself.

The Doctor shook his head. "No - something's wrong somehow."

"Wrong? In what way?"

"I don't know - I don't know. Just a feeling..." He looked away to the horizon, where the distant flare of flame marked the bomber's final landing. "Just a feeling... but I can't put my finger on it exactly."

They watched as the last of the fiery glow faded from the darkening sky. The Doctor shook his head. "Come on, Tamara - let's find the pub."

The candles flickered and sputtered into life under the match held in the old woman's ancient fingers. The old man watched them as they were lit one by one: thirteen candles, eleven glowing with tiny flames and two left unlit. Two unlit. One for him, and one for Madame Anastasia. Two left alive. The old man sat in his large, wooden-backed chair by the crackling fire, staring deep into its weave of flames. Madame Anastasia watched him, her dark eyes reflecting the amber points of candlelight in front of her.

"It is time," she said simply. On the table beneath the candles lay a flat wooden ouija board surrounded by a selection of Egyptian artifacts: a small clay mummiform ushabti, a fragment of painted papyrus, and a small, finely polished gold ring set with a green, semiprecious scarab. Standing behind the table, in front of the fire, was something tall and dark, shrouded with a cloth heavy with dust and time.

The old man turned his face from the fire. He was pale and frail-looking. Old beyond his sixty-odd years. Care was riven into every corner of his face, a face that was shaded by the drifting spectre of death. Howard Carter had known for twenty-two years that this day would come – deep down in his heart, although he denied it with every fibre of his intellect, he knew. He stood up from his chair.

"I am ready."

Anastasia shook her head. "Only if you believe you are ready, Howard Carter."

Carter shook his head sadly. "I do - I should have done it many years ago, but I refused to believe. Now my choice is made for me." He stared into the old woman's eyes, silver as they shone with the light of the crackling wood fire. "I owe it to all those who have died at least, to see that this thing is ended. Finally, once and for all." He spoke half to Anastasia, half to the shrouded thing in front of the fire. "I once thought my life had reached its final triumph. But that triumph has turned sour, tainted by something I only vaguely understand. If there is any way - any way at all to banish that something - I must do it."

Madame Anastasia spoke softly from behind the table. "A demon follows us - all of us who were present when the tomb of the Ancient King was opened. Since that day, our lives have been forfeit: Lord Carnarvon, Mustapha the foreman, Michaelson, Peters - we too have our souls held in balance by Death. Death comes on swift wings!" She shook her head. "To ignore this and try to stumble blindly forward is to pick our way

into blackness and despair. We must confront this that has blighted our past if we are to hold any light at all to our future!"

Carter nodded to Madame Anastasia. She held out one ancient, claw-like palm over the ouija board and clutched the motley collection of amulets and charms that hung on a leather thong around her neck with the other. She turned to face the shrouded form, raised her head and closed her eyes, her thin throat moving as she began to chant.

"User-maat-re, meht-meht djet-usii, tep re hret-dk, Tut-Ankh-Amun!!"

A slight wind sifted across the table. The temperature in the room dropped, and Carter could see Anastasia's breath form small wisps of white in front of her desiccated lips.

From between the table and the fireplace, from behind the veil of reality, the ether trembled as spectral wings beat against nothingness...

Dunnhale crouched in amongst the trees and hedgerows, silent and still. Small thatched and tile-roofed structures, bent and sagging with age and neglect, hunkered around a rutted square dominated by a Victorian sandstone market cross.

Tamara and the Doctor rounded a narrow lane between a dark-windowed house and a lifeless stone church. They paused by the church's blank noticeboards. Tamara shivered. No name on the noticeboard. There was something definitely creepy about all this 'wartime precautions' stuff - places shouldn't be deprived of their identity like this. It seemed unaccountably wrong, somehow.

The village was absolutely silent. Not even a covert whisper broke the unsullied darkness that gripped it. The blackout was complete.

"Not exactly rock 'n' roll central," Tamara said, sarcastically. "Do you really think the pub'll be much fun?"

"We'll see when we get there, I suppose," replied the Doctor quietly.

"If we get there, you mean," Tamara said. "Not easy to find places when they're all dark." The pair looked around the gloomy square. "Where do you suppose it is?"

The Doctor pointed. "There. That's it."

Tamara narrowed her eyes to squint through the darkness. The far side of the square was dominated by a large half-timbered house with a jettied upper storey. A signboard hung over a narrow front door. They trotted past the be-wreathed market cross towards the building. "The Sun and Rooster", the sign said. The door below it was shut, but as the Doctor pushed on it, it swung inwards into velvet darkness. The Doctor raised his eyebrows questioningly and Tamara shrugged. It had taken them a long and cold hour to walk from the village pond to the village itself. She was freezing and wet and if the pub didn't have a fireplace she was going back to the TARDIS.

But she was pleasantly surprised. Beyond the heavy oak door was a small entrance hall with a thick black curtain at the far end. As the Doctor slid that to one side, they were welcomed by the cosy amber glow of a snapping, popping coal fire. The Doctor grinned and led the way into the room. Tamara made a beeline for the fireplace. Although the fire blazed merrily in the small cast-iron grate, filling the room with heat and light, the pub was empty. The Doctor looked around and then down at the tables. Here and there, half-drunk pints in well-worn glass mugs sat unattended and neglected. Here an open box of matches and a smouldering pipe; there a Racing Mirror folded back and marked; there an interrupted game of cribbage; here a stack of dominoes.

The Doctor frowned. Tamara caught his worried look and stopped shaking drying mud from her trousers into the fire.

"What? What is it?" The Doctor pointed at the abandoned tables. Tamara shrugged. "I expect they heard the bomber and all went off to a shelter - they had them in those days, didn't they? Dugouts in their gardens or something?" Tamara's grasp of history, even of the military kind, was not extensive.

The Doctor shook his head. "No - that was almost an hour ago -"

"You don't have to remind me," Tamara muttered. Her legs ached - you could cover a lot of ground in an hour.

The Doctor picked up the smouldering pipe. "And this couldn't have been abandoned more than a few minutes ago."

"Well, perhaps they heard us coming and thought we were German spies," Tamara suggested, slightly exasperated. Why did the Doctor have to turn everything into a mystery? The village was creepy enough without playing Marie Celeste with it. "I expect a lynch mob headed by the local bobble will turn up in no time."

The Doctor refused to be drawn into her flippancy. "Perhaps..." He sounded less than convinced. He put the pipe down and went behind the bar.

"Grab me a whisky while you're there," Tamara joked. The Doctor ignored her and pushed open the small door behind the bar that led - presumably - to the rest of the house.

Tamara sighed and scraped the last of the mud off her boots on the firedogs. There was no arguing with the Doctor when he was in this kind of mood; he was convinced something was wrong - he always was. She, however, wasn't. Not yet. Well, not entirely. She looked around the pub - perhaps he was on to something. There was definitely something... odd about this whole set-up. Maybe it was just the whole wartime atmosphere and its strange pockets of surrealism. Maybe it was something else - after all, the TARDIS didn't usually crash-land unless there was something to crash into...

Beyond the door lay a narrow staircase and a corridor that led off into darkness to the right. She almost bumped into the Doctor's pale back. He held up a finger.

"Up, I think. Matches and candles - on the shelf behind the bar." Tamara ducked back into the bar and grabbed lights. Under their flickering glow they climbed the uneven stairs. Another corridor, this one larger, hung with gloomy family portraits between large panelled doors and lined with a Persian runner. The Doctor held up his hand again - "Listen..." he hissed. Tamara listened.

Distant sound - a distant wind rhythmically rising and falling - seemed to whisper down the blackness of the corridor towards them. Almost singsong. Like chanting. The Doctor motioned Tamara towards one of the doors. She put her ear to it - not here, but in another room beyond, perhaps. Together they slowly pushed the door open.

The shadow-rimed room beyond seemed half library and half museum. Shelves lined the walls, protected by narrow-barred, locked doors. A thick, scholarly must pervaded the room. In the middle was a double line of tall display cases: wooden below, with wood framed glass boxes above. Inside each one rested a collection of dusty artefacts that - even in the dim light of the pair's candles - gleamed with the unmistakable lustre of gold. They approached the first case. Gold and semi-precious stones fought for their attention, wrapped in exquisite composition to form a necklace of some kind. The loops of gold and beads ended in a scene formed of jewels and stones - a large green beetle winged with gold and lapis lazuli holding aloft a boat in which sat two cobras and a gleaming eye crowned with a blue moon containing three tiny gold deities. It was a piece without parallel.

"It's Egyptian, isn't it?" whispered Tamara. The Doctor's jaw set.

"Yes, it is - but it shouldn't be here at all."

"Why not?"

But the Doctor ignored her question, moving on to the next case. Another fabulous piece of jewellery: matched bracelets in gold, amber and green stones. The next case: a tall figure of an Egyptian pharaoh striding on the back of a glossy black leopard. In the next, a tiny gold mummiform coffin; in the next, a stela of pure white limestone. Each case contained an archaeological treasure, a historical marvel. The Doctor pressed his face up against each one in turn, his eyes dancing - his face hard and cold.

Tamara stared at the objects. They seemed... familiar, somehow. She cocked her head. "Wait a minute - these things are famous, right? I mean: I've seen some of this stuff, I know I have," she whispered quietly in the Doctor's ear.

The Doctor nodded grimly. "You have seen some of these things, Tamara - even in your own century they were famous. They're from the greatest collection of Egyptian treasure ever unearthed. All this came from the tomb of Tutankhamun."

Tamara frowned. "King Tut's stuff? Should it be here?"

"No," the Doctor replied simply, "it should not. Something is wrong, very..." His voice trailed off as he looked into a final case. Tamara came over and stood by him. The

object in the case was an obelisk-shape of some hard dark grey stone - granite, possibly. Its pyramid-like top was capped with gold, and it was carved on each of its four sides with lines of angular hieroglyphics surmounted by pairs of Egyptian-styled figures wearing elaborate crowns - gods or kings, Tamara guessed.

"What is it?" she asked the Doctor, who had been frozen in place by the sight of the object. "Can you read the hieroglyphics?"

"They're not hieroglyphics," the Doctor replied, his voice even more grim than before. He stood up straight and looked around at the assembled artefacts. "And that's the problem."

"Problem? What -"

But the Doctor interrupted her.

"Something is very, very wrong here, Tamara – very wrong."

A sudden imposition of sound broke the stillness of the display room - the sound they had first heard in the corridor rose in pitch and intensity. It came from a set of double doors at the end of the room. The Doctor silently motioned Tamara to follow him.

The doors parted easily, and in the darkness the small crack the Doctor opened gently went unnoticed by the occupants of the room beyond. The room Tamara and the Doctor looked into was not entirely dark: a fire crackled away in the fireplace at the far end of the room, and on a table in the centre of the room a large knot of candles shed a pool of flickering yellow light. Beside the candles were heaped a small pile of artefacts: amulets and figurines that glinted gold in the firelight; underneath them, a weathered ouija board. Behind the table, halfway to the door Tamara and the Doctor were looking through, stood a mismatched pair, their features heavy bas-relief in the firelight. One, an oldish man in a very English, very country tweed jacket and plus fours; the other, an elderly woman, bent and thin beneath her austere black dress. Her arms were held up in the air, supplicating, calling, praying. Contorted, twisted words dripped from her withered lips, sounds redolent with ancient darkness.

But it was beyond the table where their eyes were inexorably dragged - in the space between the table and the fireplace. It stood upright, pale under the enshrouding dust of ages. Even from the doorway, Tamara could taste the scent of sand, myrrh, mouldering linen and bitumen that seeped from it. Vaguely anthropoid, standing supported by a single brass pole, the bandage-wrapped mummy gazed out across the assembled trio with deep, sightless sockets.

Tamara jerked at the Doctor's sleeve. "It's not – is it?"

He nodded curtly and angrily. "It is. It's Tutankhamun's mummy."

"What the hell are they doing with it?" Tamara hissed.

"I have no idea," the Doctor whispered back.

The air grew cold. Tamara squinted - surely not... Yes. Something was appearing - a halo around the upright mummiform on its brass stand. A halo of seething

blackness, a rippling apparition that began to coalesce and gather strength as she watched. The old woman's chanting never ceased, never stopped, but something, some growing power somehow began to swamp it - drown it out.

Around the mummy, something writhed and twisted - a cacophony of ghostly, insubstantial tendrils and tentacles that erupted from a bloated, reptilian core. Eyes roved and mouths smacked, wet with rot and mucus, silently spitting and mewling. It drifted on oleaginous things that might have been wings, and flapped against nothingness. The abomination was encrusted with ancient artefacts: gleaming crown, crook and flail sceptre, jewelled collar - the regalia of an Egyptian Pharaoh.

There was a sucking, roaring sound, as if the very fabric of reality were being shredded. The apparition shifted - changed; from deep within the thing, a globe, pulsing with unearthly dark light rushed forward, lance-straight beams of energy striking out from the dark heart of the globe. The candles and the fire in the fireplace flickered and went out, energy draining into the monstrous spectre. The old woman's chanting vanished too, absorbed by the unholy phantom crawling in semi-shadow in front of the group.

Suddenly, she shrieked. It was a shriek of revelation - of the moment of true realisation that precedes death.

Carter stumbled backwards. In front of him, Anastasia's body was gripped by an invisible hand and dragged, shrieking and screaming, into the air above the table. The energy beams from the black light globe played over her body, lifting, spinning, tearing. Anastasia screamed in agony. A cold, bitter wind blasted the room, flying outwards from the apparition. Darkness engulfed the room; space folded in on itself. A crash.

Silence.

In the emptiness, the Doctor produced light. The scrape of a match and clear yellow light streaked through the room. He lit a candle. The long shadows leapt backwards, and the brightness pooled into a soft globe.

The table had broken under the impact of Anastasia's falling body. It lay in the midst of the wreckage, tumbled among the amulets, statuettes and splintered wood. The Doctor rushed to her side and felt for a pulse at her dry throat. As he touched her neck, her eyes flickered and snapped open. A word hissed from her pale lips; the Doctor bent quickly to catch it. Her fingers clawed the air and found the Doctor's hands. They clasped them in a sharp, final grasp. Breath stopped.

She was dead. The Doctor sighed - a small sad sound to mark her passing. He folded her limp hands over her hollow chest and looked up and around the room. The royal mummy still stood there, dusty and lifeless, untouched by the chaos. He regarded it curiously.

Howard Carter stood up slowly.

"Is she..." he whispered. The Doctor nodded in reply.

His face was ashen. "Who - who are you?" he stuttered.

The Doctor held out his hands placating. "Don't worry, Professor Carter - we're here as friends. We came a long way to see you. I'm the Doctor and this is Tamara Scott."

Tamara came slowly into the room, smiling hopefully at the old man. Carter blinked, still wary. "Doctor? Do I know you?" The Doctor shook his head. "No - we've never met, but your reputation precedes you. I've often hoped we might bump into one another." The Doctor indicated Anastasia's fallen body. "And this?" he asked.

Carter looked down sadly. "Madame Anastasia Romanov - one of Lord Carnarvon's acquaintances. I had not seen her for decades. I was trying to lay to rest an ancient curse..."

"Curse?" murmured Tamara with curiosity. She glanced over at the Doctor, but he was watching Carter.

"But instead we appear to have created nothing but tragedy," the old man finished sadly.

The Doctor frowned. "I'm not sure I understand, Professor Carter - what do you mean by a curse?"

Carter shook his head.

"I had no choice - I still have no choice. It has followed us - followed us all. From the tomb... There are demons from my past that I must still confront..."

"Indeed, Herr Carter," came a loud voice from the far side of the room. A dark figure stood silhouetted in the doorway. "And it is about those very demons that I wish to talk with you."

Tamara watched, unable to quite connect everything she was seeing together. The figure strode into the room, and into the small shadow of restored candlelight. He wore a long grey leather overcoat over a grey military uniform and slick black boots. His was young, his blond hair scraped back smartly from his forehead, his face pale and smooth. On his head rested a peaked military cap, emblazoned on the front with an iron eagle. Tamara stared at the sleeve of his overcoat - there was something wrong. On his left sleeve was wrapped a blood red armband emblazoned with a bent black cross on a white, circular background: the swastika of Nazi Germany. A Nazi; a German officer. In England.

Even Tamara could work out that something was wrong here. She glanced over at the Doctor. He stood by the window, frowning curiously at the tall dark figure. Tamara looked past him out the window. There was a heavily armoured truck outside - a troop transport. A dozen soldiers were slowly descending from its canvas-topped back, their movements slow and mechanical under the weight of the large backpacks each wore. They began to cross to the front door of the pub.

The officer smiled an arrogant smile and slipped his black leather gloves from his hands, folding them carefully and laying them neatly on the table in front of him. He turned to regard the Doctor and Tamara.

"It seems my curfew orders have not been fully observed," he said with the curious tone of someone used to having his every order obeyed. "Your names?" he inquired sharply, his voice rich with a clipped Germanic superiority.

"Mind your own bloody business," snapped Tamara. The officer blinked in surprise, his fingers dropping almost unconsciously to the holster at his belt.

"The Doctor and Ms. Scott have nothing to do with this - I have never seen them before this evening," Carter spoke up, his voice brave and strong.

The officer smiled. "Of course not, Herr Professor. After all, what would you be doing in the company of an intellectual collaborator and a..." He stared at Tamara, searching for an appropriate term. "Colonial terrorist." He turned to look at the body of Anastasia on the floor by the table, and poked it nonchalantly with the toe of his boot. "Both clearly murderers as well as spies and enemy agents." He smiled back at the Doctor and Tamara and gave them a sarcastic shrug. "There is no need to identify yourselves - I can construct any life-history for you I wish."

The Doctor shook his head with an incredulous and bemused look on his face. "And who are you?" he asked, clearly not entirely sure why a Nazi officer was wandering around the English countryside quite so freely.

"SS Lieutenant Anton Droessler, Herr Doktor," the officer replied with a formal courtesy, giving a slight bow. "District Commander for the South-western Zone, Lowentenland."

"Lowentenland?" the Doctor repeated. "Lion-land? You mean England?"

Droessler gave a sharp bark of laughter. "Your manner betrays the accuracy of my estimation of you, Doctor! Certainly I mean England: the newest European addition to the glorious Third Reich!"

"Fascinating..." the Doctor murmured his eyes wide with surprise and curiosity. "By Rassilon himself - fascinating..." He turned to Tamara. "That explains the Bomber: an American B-class."

Droessler smirked. "The last gasps of a dying nation of corrupt degenerates, Doctor. Put not your faith in the broken reed. The final remnants of the so-called United States of America lie bleeding on the altar of German conquest: the siege of the temporary capitol in Las Vegas will be concluded by winter."

There was sound and motion at the doorway of the museum room. Four Nazi troopers filed into the room. The appearance of Droessler had been a surprise, but nothing could have prepared Tamara for the creatures that suddenly approached.

They were human - or, at least, had once been. Nazi stormtroopers, in their characteristic flared helmets, long coats and bright red armbands, but with a difference. Their faces were hidden from view by gasmasks, and from behind the glass bubble over each eye gazed a mechanical red pinpoint of light. They moved like machines - too much in unison, too much in concert to be truly human. Each one had strapped to its back a large humming metal box, from which thick twisted wires looped and twisted

like snakes into the shoulders and hips. A battery of some description? At the edges of their masks, where the black rubber and metal met flesh, the skin was as cold and sallow as death itself, etched with crudely sealed scars.

Tamara flexed her muscles uncertainly - she sensed something about them: they felt wrong. Too many years spent anticipating the next moves of countless human opponents gave her that innate hunter's instinct that now told her something about these troopers wasn't right.

They filed into a thick line, unmoving, guns raised at the ready.

Droessler smirked and holstered his pistol.

"My Death's Head Troopers - the unyielding, ever-living backbone of the Reich," he said smugly.

Unyielding? Ever-living? Her instincts had not betrayed her - Tamara now knew there was something definitely odd about this crowd. She shot the Doctor a look - one of those looks that said they were in for even more trouble than it seemed. Worryingly, he shot her back one as well. She noticed him slip a discreet hand into his back pocket - he had a plan. She braced herself, ready to spring at a moment's notice.

"Crude force of arms never won Empires, you know," the Doctor said, mildly.

Droessler barked a quick, short laugh. "You are an entertaining fellow, Doctor - your antiquated sentiment suits you, I feel. Perhaps we shall arrange for you to perform on the stage when you reach Berlin."

"Berlin?" Carter repeated, nervously.

Droessler turned to him. "*Ja* - Berlin. You are to accompany the treasures on the next ship to the Motherland. There you will aid our research staff in unlocking the secrets you have concealed within them." He snapped his fingers and the Death's Head troopers stepped forward. "The Reich has been patient with you, Herr Carter, but the time for... closer service to the Reich is now at hand."

At some unseen signal, the Troopers continued their advance, splitting into two pairs. One pair made for Carter and the Doctor, the other for Tamara.

Tamara glanced at the Doctor and began moving as soon as she saw the first flicker of movement from his hands. There was a flash and a shrill whooping, percussive smack as the Doctor threw something down on the floor. Droessler shouted something in guttural German and fell back as a sulphurous yellow smoke belched out into the room. There was a confused buzzing from the Troopers.

Tamara didn't need to think twice - she grabbed at an overturned chair, tumbling it behind her as she leapt towards the door to the strange museum. She vaguely heard the Doctor shouting to Carter, and then she was out of the museum and into the corridor.

She raced down the stairs and skidded around the corner into the pub. Two Death's Head troopers stood motionless by the doorway. They raised their machineguns as the woman burst into the room. Tamara yelped and ducked behind the

bar. One trooper opened fire, bullets ripping through the thick oak front. Beer splashed over the walls and floor as bottles were blown into clouds of glass fragments and foam.

Tamara picked up a wooden stool and hurled it at the shooting trooper. The stool clattered against its sub-machinegun. The trooper continued firing, even as the weapon was slammed to the side. The new line of fire cut across the second trooper. It jerked unnaturally with the impacts. Sparks flew as the bullets pierced the steel cables and drilled into the battery on the trooper's back. Acid bubbled and dribbled from the pack, eating away the back of the trooper's head. It stumbled forward.

Tamara picked up another stool and threw it. It connected with the stumbling second trooper, toppling it into the corner of the bar. Its face crunched beneath the mask, and it collapsed into a twitching heap in the corner of the room. The first trooper swung its machine-gun towards

Tamara, sighting her as she threw herself across the room, between the trooper's legs and into the doorway that led outside.

The Doctor slid down the banister and leapt over the finial at the end. Behind him, Howard Carter followed just as quickly - but more traditionally - down the stairs. The Doctor looked around the entrance hall. He opened up the main door but didn't go through it. Outside? No - he wanted to hide for now, then sneak back upstairs to the library. He heard machinegun fire in the front of the house and hoped Tamara was looking after herself - she should have stayed with him, he said to himself. His cursed his breaking of that oft-ignored rule for companions: Never split up!

"Carter - we need somewhere to hide!" the Doctor said, hissing in his present companion's ear.

Carter pointed to a small door under the stairs. "The cellars, Doctor - they're big enough to hide an army in."

"Perfect - lead the way," the Doctor whispered. He followed as Carter passed through the small door and crept quietly down the pitch-dark stairs beyond. As they reached the level of the cellars, Carter lit a candle.

"No electricity down here, Doctor. Some of these cellars haven't been touched since the house was built. Even I haven't been in them all, I don't think."

The Doctor nodded sagely. "Rooms you don't go in from one lifetime to the next - yes, I know the feeling."

Carter flicked a curious raised eyebrow at the Doctor, but said nothing. They both suddenly looked up at the sound of voices overhead - Droessler barking orders to his undead troopers.

"Quickly! We must hide!" the Doctor hissed.

The barrel-vaulted cellars stretched on for what seemed like miles in all directions. Cobwebs hung in damp curtains down mildew-stained brick walls. Junk was piled up against pillars and sagged in crumbling piles underfoot. In the yellow pool of Carter's thin-flamed candle, each bump and unidentified hillock of piled refuse became a leering black ghost dancing in the corners of ones eyes. Boxes, tall clocks, piles of wooden poles, iron bed-frames, forgotten stacks of mouldering magazines - the rotting and unwanted detritus of generations of country gentry filled the wandering brick passages. Doors came and went - dark things crawling with patches of glistening mould that seemed mobile under the wavering candlelight. Spiders crept like small skulking dogs out of sight as the pair passed from one damp room to the next.

Carter moved on ahead. Something stopped the Doctor under one mildewed arch. He looked through it - there should have been a room beyond, but instead, there was nothing. The Doctor blinked, frowned, and rubbed his chin. Not 'nothing' - *nothing*. It was almost like looking into a painting - the four normal dimensions were strangely compressed into far fewer than there should have been. The end result was rather like staring at a tromp l'oeil painting, except one that could only be seen out of the corner of ones eye. There was something sinisterly Escher-like about the effect.

The Doctor looked at the distorted archway, then at Carter's retreating tweed back, then again at the archway. Some sort of recursion? A temporal split - a spatial fold?

Booted footsteps behind him - Droessler and his zombified Nazis, no doubt. The Doctor took one more look into the distortion and then hurried after the archaeologist. Regardless of what was wrong here, it paid to stay focused on local reality - however warped it might be. Spatial folds and compressed dimensions he could deal with later; Nazi zombies armed with machineguns had to be dealt with now.

He caught up with Carter. Their way was suddenly blocked by the face of a pharaoh. It loomed up in front of them in the darkness, dark-lined eyes powdery with encrusted mildew and golden headdress sagging at the corners with invading moss.

"More treasures, Carter?" the Doctor asked, suspiciously.

Carter held up the candle. Beyond the painted pharonic mask loomed other half-hidden faces - gods and goddesses, animal and human, crowded and crumbling together in the small room. Heavily lidded eyes in dark paint glared balefully from the shadows. Carter smiled.

"I'd forgotten about all this junk, Doctor," he said, regarding the assembled pantheon with sad fondness.

"Forgotten?" the Doctor repeated incredulously. "It's rather important junk to simply forget, don't you think?" He tried to edge past, looking for a way through the tumble of antiquities.

Carter opened his eyes wide in surprise. "It's not real, Doctor - although it's a very good copy. It's scenery."

"Scenery?"

The archaeologist picked at a god's shoulder, paint flaking away to reveal plaster, wire, wood and crumpled newspaper. "For a village production of *The Mikado* - but set in Ancient Egypt."

The Doctor blinked. It seemed slightly surreal to be discussing amateur dramatics, given their current situation.

"Rather a clever production, I thought - that was ten or so years ago. I played the Poo-Bah character - Tut-Tut, we called him. Better days, eh, Doctor?" he murmured sadly.

The Doctor frowned and shook his head to clear the vision of Howard Carter and Egyptian-ised Gilbert and Sullivan.

"Enough reminiscing, Carter - we've got killers on our tails, and we'll need something more elaborate than a firecracker to evade them this time around." He pushed against the plaster Pharaoh, trying to see if he could squeeze past. "We need to be paying attention to what's going on now, not idling over past theatrical triumphs."

"How right you are, Doctor!" came a loud voice behind them. The Doctor and Carter turned slowly.

Lieutenant Droessler stood in the doorway, a Mauser trained on the pair. At his back were crowded his Death's Head's troopers. The Doctor very slowly raised his hands. Carter followed suit, his shoulders slumping in defeat.

"Your little trick with the grenade was good - but not good enough, Doctor," he said, his eyes on the Doctor's hands.

"Grenade? Oh, that - just a little souvenir from my G8 summit protest days, I'm afraid."

Droessler's eyes narrowed.

"My assessment of you was correct: a protester, a terrorist..." he hissed.

The Doctor shrugged. "I've been called worse by better," he muttered.

"But those days are over now - they end here and now." Droessler looked around the room condescendingly.

"How very English," he said, smirking scornfully. "Trapped like rats on a sinking ship - still finding time to discuss village plays. Who was it said the English were a nation of shopkeepers?"

"Someone German, no doubt," butted in the Doctor sarcastically.

Droessler narrowed his eyes. "Your talent for being endlessly amusing will not serve you well where you are going, Doctor. The Third Reich has places for people like you: traitors, sedition-breeders, intellectuals," he spat.

"Oh, I'm sure you do," snapped the Doctor. "But you can't break people like me with a lifetime of slavery - worse maniacs than you have tried."

Droessler laughed. "Pathetic sentiment, Herr Doctor - and ridiculously outmoded. A lifetime of slavery? Why should we stop there? The Reich has at its

disposal the ability to enslave in perpetuity every man, woman and child on the globe." With a wave of his hand he indicated the Death's Head troopers filing into the small room behind him, their silent mechanical movements indicative of something worse than military precision - something unnatural. "If the term 'slavery' offends you, Doctor, what about 'immortality'? Is that a better name for your fate - or more terrifying?" He laughed. His eyes dismissed the Doctor and he turned to Carter.

"I tried to be reasonable with you, Herr Carter, out of respect for your deserved reputation. However, your siding with this traitor means that you, too, will have to share his fate. Perhaps you would have better served the Eternal Reich if you had excavated coal in Siberia." He smirked. "And the order from Berlin to collect in one place the treasures of Tutankhamun for proper study will be fulfilled, regardless of your meaningless display of resistance."

Something caught the Doctor's eye. He blinked and looked again at the plaster statue behind him.

Something flickered. Something twisted.

Droessler raised his Mauser. Carter squeezed his eyes shut.

"Goodbye, Herr Carter - Doctor. May you serve the glorious Thousand Year Reich better in death than you have in life."

The staccato chatter of gunfire echoed throughout the cellars.

Tamara ran out of the pub into the cold night outside. From inside she heard the sound of more Death's Head troopers coming down the narrow staircase. Outside, Droessler's armoured car stood next to the pub's main door. Tamara resisted the urge to get in and drive the thing off.

Instead she raced for the dark sandstone shadow of the church. She passed the village cross as the troopers threw open the pub's front door. The whipcrack of machinegun fire followed her as she sped across the muddy road and rounded the corner of the church. Ricochets whined around them as the bullets struck with match-strike snaps against the stone wall.

Tamara left a trail of bald curses as she tore through an empty, sagging graveyard choked with ivy and mist, and scrambled through a bald patch in a hedge into rough, nettled undergrowth beyond. The ground rose. Above her, sliced by faint moonlight, Tamara could see the webbed chaos of tangled and ancient hilltop woodland.

Behind her, the troopers struggled with remorseless persistence. Incapable of swiftness, they made up for it with single-minded doggedness. Pausing by a twisted alder, Tamara squeezed the trigger and pumped round after round into the two leading troopers. The bullets tore through the first trooper's torso, exploding his battery pack

and spraying the second with a splashing acid fog. The lead trooper collapsed, limbs flailing wildly as electrical failure ate away at its control systems. The second, its mask sliding corroded from its face, stomped on, rotting skull laced with thick wires grinning terrifyingly in the moonlight.

"Shooting undead Nazi zombies - I don't bloody believe it," she muttered to herself through gritted teeth. "Thanks for showing me the thrills and spills of the Universe, Doctor," she finished sarcastically, spitting dirt and dead leaves.

She turned and hauled herself up over the last eroded lip of wet earth to the top of the bank. Thickly entwined knots of tree branches seemed to block their progress. She pushed her way through a thick twist of thorny branches, her feet finding a sort of hollow track in the undergrowth - a long-ago overgrown path.

Mist curled amongst the thickly piled dry leaves under foot, rising and swirling around them as they pushed on into the forest. The moon became draped in a grey cobweb of fog overhead, trickling faintly down through the tangle of dead, angled branches overhead and their shroud of ivy and mistletoe. Behind, the troopers began to thrash their way into the brush, tearing limbs from trees with inhuman resolve. Ahead, picked out by the gathering of reflected moonlight, squatted something that was not a tree.

Tamara burst from the surrounding forest into a clearing at the edge of long, wide lake that trailed off into the mist. Between the forest edge and the lapping lake water was a monument, draped in ivy but still gleaming white and pale under the fog-shrouded moonlight.

It was a pyramid - a replica of a pyramid - in bone- white limestone. In front of it, on a limestone pedestal in the shape of an Egyptian column, was the weather-beaten bronze bust of a stern but handsome man with a broad moustache. Insistent fingers of ivy clawed at the pyramid and the bust, making the monument sag slightly as entropy's green embrace threatened to drag it back into the primal forest. Clearly visible, though, through the emerald clutches, was the inscription across the face of the pyramid behind the bust: to the memory of Carnarvon.

Despite the thrashing of the undeterred troopers becoming louder behind her, Tamara's eyes were locked on the pyramid. There was something about it... She touched its surface. Call it an instinct, call it a feeling - but there was something there that cried out to her. Something that drew her eyes - drew her mind.

The surface of the pyramid cracked - puckered. As if space were suddenly plastic and were twisted and plucked by an invisible poking finger. The pyramid's surface rippled insubstantially, as if reality itself were cracking and breaking apart. Tamara jumped back a pace.

"Whoa!"

She reached down, grabbed a rotten length of branch and tossed it towards the ripple. It bent impossibly, twisted in on itself, and vanished.

The crashing in the forest was very close. Tamara closed her eyes, then opened them again, staring hard at the ripple. "Do I trust my own judgement?"

Bullets tore from the woods as the Troopers neared the clearing.

"I'll take that as a yes!" shouted Tamara. With a whooping war cry that was half terror and half courage, Tamara leapt forward, tumbling into the flaw. There was a twisting - and she was gone.

The troopers erupted into the clearing. But there was nothing there, save the stark silent monument. No trace of their quarry. A machinegun lay on the crushed ivy in front of the pyramid. The lead skull-faced trooper bent down and picked up the weapon, turning it over in its hands and studying it with gleaming artificial eyes. It looked from the weapon to the rain-washed, pitted limestone face of the pyramid in front of it - the face into which seconds earlier, Tamara had leaped. The trooper traced a mortar line gently with one dead fingertip, its skull face cocked in a desperate attempt at curiosity. But its rotting brain knew only orders - not questions, not vanished quarries. Primitive programming reasserted itself, and the troopers turned as one and began to retrace their steps back to the house.

Two figures surveyed the wreckage in the museum room. In the moonlight that fluttered bright and cold through the lead-latticed window, the skull of the first figure gleamed icy and smooth. Wires ran in a network of shadows close against the skin - skin stretched tight and dead over a steel and ceramic skull. The face was hidden in the darkness, but twin points of red light gleamed from its eye sockets as sophisticated imaging hardware sifted through the broken glass, shredded cartonnage, and dismembered antiquities. The figure's dark leather overcoat swirled as it turned to face the second figure at the far end of the room.

"You have the key?"

The second figure emerged slowly from the shadows. A tall, lithe, blonde young woman wearing a diaphanous linen robe and golden jewellery. In her outstretched hand she held a thin gold and greenstone ankh amulet etched with rolling incised arcs and strange, unfamiliar hieroglyphs. Flakes of dried black bitumen still clung to its alien outline.

"It was inside the panther," the woman said, indicating the smashed statue on the floor beside her.

The overcoated figure laughed a short, artificial-sounding laugh. "Cunning. But not cunning enough." He stepped forward to stand next to the woman, his officer's uniform, strung with Nazi decoration, sparkling iron and gold. "We have the key - let us play this game to its end."

"The Shadow is ready," the cold-faced woman replied.

They each raised their left hands, and their fingertips touched. Space-time flickered, and they shimmered, twisted and vanished.

Droessler watched the pair wink out of existence from his vantagepoint by the library door. He frowned. Had they found what they were looking for? He looked around at the shattered cases and splintered artefacts. They must have - their search was thorough.

He smiled. Did they find the key? It would not remain a mystery forever. One day, he would know the answer to that. One day...

The Doctor stumbled, blinked, looked around him. "Like an inertia corridor," he muttered to no one in particular. "Not my favourite way to travel."

He blinked again. Everything was very bright. Everything was very hot. At his side stood Howard Carter, his eyes squeezed shut. The Doctor elbowed him in the ribs somewhat unceremoniously. Carter coughed and half-opened one eye.

"Are we...?" he murmured uncertainly. "Are we dead?"

The Doctor started to reply, then raised his eyebrows uncertainly. Were they? He couldn't quite answer that. There was a sound at his elbow - a choking, surprised kind of sound. "Good - God... Where in the name of heaven are we?" Carter asked.

The Doctor sighed. "I'm afraid I don't really know, Carter. The other end of a time-rift? The far side of a dimensional portal? Nowhere near Dunnhale, 1944, I'll bet."

He peered into the bright surroundings. They didn't seem to be dead. Sand underfoot stretched away into the distance to merge with golden sandstone cliffs dark with shadows at their base. A cry of a hawk split the hot, dry air far overhead. He had a vague impression in the back of his mind of a force - an energy presence of some kind. The Doctor shaded his eyes and searched for the hawk. It wheeled above, a spirit of place... and of time.

The Doctor frowned. "Unless I'm very much mistaken..." He was interrupted by a tug on his sleeve. He turned around and looked at what Carter was looking at.

"Oh dear, I'm very much afraid I'm right," he finished.

Behind where they were standing, the complex of buildings gleamed like a bright beacon in the hot sunlight. It shimmered like liquid honey as the heat rippled up from the baking sand, a solid monument rendered dream-like and insubstantial. But real it was. Twin pylons reached to the sky, tall poles hung with coloured streamers erected in front of them. Each stone pylon was decorated with vivid scenes in bright paint - striding figures raising their hands in adoration, lines of pictographic inscriptions clustering around them. An Egyptian temple.

Carter stood, open mouthed, unable to properly absorb the sight in front of him. He felt locked in some kind of dream. "I don't understand, Doctor," he mumbled

through his astonishment. "How is this possible? I thought Droessler shot us. Where on Earth are we?"

The Doctor shook his head. "Without wishing to sound patronising," he said, sounding exactly that, "all my current ideas on that particular question would be more or less meaningless to you." He gazed around at the temple and the surrounding desert. "Let me instead ask you a question - where do *you* think we are?"

Carter frowned, peering through the glare at the temple in front of them. His eyes roved across the tall painted pylons, taking in the enormous representations of the gods and the pharaoh that stood in front of them. His lips moved as he read out the hieroglyphics, picked out in gold and silver against the paint. "Nebkephrure, Lord of Karnak - Doctor!" he exclaimed. "This appears to be his funerary temple!"

"His?"

"The Living Horus, Lord of the Two Lands -"

"-Tutankhamun," the Doctor finished. "Yes, I rather thought you might say that."

Carter was lost in his own train of thought. "The plan is familiar, yes - the twin pylons, the short avenue, the sacred ponds outside the main walls." He turned to the Doctor. "Exactly as we suspected it should be." He pointed to a small stone building next to the gleaming mirrors of the ponds. "Good Lord - it's a mammisi! I wonder..."

This time it was the Doctor's turn to tug at Carter's sleeve, interrupting the archaeologist's passionate monologue. Carter broke off and followed the Doctor's gaze. From out of the sands of the dunes, three dark figures had emerged. They were dressed in armoured tunics of bronze plate-mail and long, swirling kilts. Their faces were masked by long-snouted bronze helmets shaped and painted to resemble the heads of desert jackals. And in their hands they carried gleaming shields and iron-tipped spears with blades whose sharpness caught the sunlight on a razor edge. The guardians of the realm of the dead, the servants of Anubis: the Priest-Guardians of the Necropolis. From behind their metal masks, gleaming eyes stared at the Doctor and Howard Carter.

"Oh dear," Carter muttered in a worried tone. "You do know that the Necropolis priests tended to behave rather harshly towards suspected tomb-robbers, don't you?" he asked, his mind full of sadistic details of eighteenth-dynasty court papyri.

The Doctor nodded. "I'm trying not to remember, actually." Overhead, vultures had begun to gather.

The Guardians lowered their spears and closed in on the pair.

It was clear from the onset of the interview that the Chief Priest of the mortuary temple didn't quite know what to make of his unexpected visitors. Ha-tep-sa-geb was not old, but he had acquired the mannerisms of an elderly man through too much seclusion in the service of his gods. Three and a half decades in the priesthood wandering through

the dusty and neglected halls of Karnak had made him stooped, shortsighted and forgetful. His mind was trapped in endless recitations of sacred scripts and was not used to solving the problems of the real world.

"It is my opinion," he repeated testily to the assembled priests, "that they are Libyans. Desert-dwellers separated from their trading convoy." He poked a thin, pale finger at Carter's tweed coat. "Certainly the coarseness of their clothing fabric if nothing else confirms that they are Libyans."

"Why?" spluttered Mes-maat, Ha-tep's far younger and more energetically minded attendant.

"Because," Ha-tep said patronisingly, with the assumed patience of wisdom, "everyone knows that Libyans cannot weave properly - that their cloth is coarse and useless for clothing."

"And from the cut of this one's robe alone," Mes-maat said indignantly, flicking Carter's coat with a disdainful finger, "you deduce that they are Libyans."

"Indeed," Ha-tep replied, with an air of finality. He settled himself back in his chair and wrapped his thin linen shawl around his shoulders against the sun. "They should be given food and water and sent on their way."

The argument between Ha-tep and Mes-maat descended into bickering. The Doctor and Carter sat patiently on a pile of unused building stone in the shade of one long wall of the main courtyard, almost ignored by the squabbling priests.

"It's funny," Carter said, leaning towards the Doctor, rubbing his hands in scholarly glee, "but I always imagined mortuary temples to be more like churches or chapels - not like this at all. Look at it," he whispered excitedly to the Doctor. "It's amazing - it's so alive. I had no idea it could be this vibrant."

The Doctor sighed. "As much as I share your enthusiasm for this spot of temporal tourism, Carter, we do have much more important issues we should be focusing on. Such as how we got here, for starters."

Carter waved his hand dismissively. "Oh, why bother? Surely we should just appreciate this miraculous opportunity while we can - after all, you don't know, we could be whisked back to 1944 at a moment's notice."

The Doctor laughed. "Your optimistic fatality is refreshing, Carter - but unrealistic. Our travelling from AD 1944 to 1344 BC was certainly not a miracle."

"Then what was it?" He suddenly went very pale and drawn. "Was it anything to do with that... that apparition?"

The Doctor pursed his lips. "I'm not exactly sure. Space-time is flexible, but not this flexible. Your 1944 is severely at odds with what 1944 should be like - implying that we have a temporal digression of some sort. But of what sort?"

Carter got the distinct impression that the Doctor was mostly talking for his own benefit - not his. He turned most of his attention back to the activity in the courtyard, writing notes in his head. The Doctor continued to rattle on.

"Behind us - as Droessler was about to shoot us, did you notice? A fracture. A flaw. A fissure. A fissure in the fabric of space-time - a kind of puckering of reality. A hole between now and then. And then there's the spatial fiddling-about in your cellars - a sort of dimensional limiting. And the apparition - some kind of psychic trace: a resonance, humming backwards and forwards..." The Doctor's hands zipped past each other at arm's length. "Along the fractures. Hmmph." The Doctor paused, chin in his hands, deep in thought. He tapped his fingers together, trying to sort out his logic. "Let's assume for a moment that the spatial distortion, the phenomenon of the fissure, the apparition and the temporal divergence of your 1944 are linked. Four odd things, four errors in space-time - where does that leave us?"

It's still a miraculous opportunity, thought Carter, regardless of how you phrase it. What archaeologist could think of it as otherwise?

"Ah-ha!" The Doctor snapped his fingers, his face breaking into a grin, as if he'd solved a particularly difficult crossword clue. "If they're linked, then the fissure is a naturally occurring phenomenon in this region of space-time - a six-dimensional space-time contraction, leading to a linking of two distinct points of the local meta-universe. And of course," he rattled on, pointing at Carter, "the reason you and Droessler didn't notice it is because you're no longer native to the prime universe, but to this local one."

"Local universe?" mumbled Carter, frowning. "What on earth does that mean?"

"Calabai-Yau," exclaimed the Doctor, snapping his fingers as a sudden thought occurred to him.

"Excuse me?"

"Calabai-Yau space - a Calabai-Yau Nexus, that's what this is - must be. A space-time bubble detached from normal space, where both time and space are folded in on themselves, creating fissures in local space-time, and limits - hence the dimensional compression in your cellar."

"What's a Calabai-Yau?"

"Calabai and Yau: mathematicians, circa 1984, or thereabouts," the Doctor replied, vaguely. "Calabai-Yau space is a theoretical glitch in the normal fabric of space and time. Flawed in that it is folded in on itself. We travelled over one of those folds from Dunnhale, AD 1944 to Thebes, 1344 BC."

"Fascinating," murmured Carter, not understanding a word the Doctor had said. "Where did this come from, then?"

"Where indeed? Where indeed?" the Doctor muttered, distractedly. "Where indeed? There must be a core - a nexal point around which the bubble developed. Is that where the apparition fits in? Could be. The problem is: if this core is strong enough to maintain the space-time nexus, then it's doubtful it could be easily weakened. You'd need a massive counteractive force to disperse the bubble."

"Disperse?" That didn't sound terribly encouraging.

"Hmm, yes - well. We'll cross that bridge when we come to it, eh? First things first..." The Doctor peered across the courtyard to the continuing argument between Mes-maat and his Superior. "Do you think they'll ever feed us?"

Dawn. The great golden orb of Horus climbed above the hazy dust of the western desert. The Doctor watched it from the mud-brick window of the small room he and Carter had been allocated. Three days now since their arrival – three golden Egyptian dawns.

It had been Pa-Nub, the cynical-faced Nubian necropolis guard, who rescued them from Mes-Maat and Ha-tep's arguments. Indeed, the two squabbling priests seemed far more interested in their bickering than in actually resolving the question of who the Doctor and Carter were and why they were there. In the three days since, he had shown an unexpected kindness towards the two strangers - showing them around the complex, ensuring they had a room to themselves, making sure the temple slaves brought them enough to eat and drink. Carter had spent the past three days in a state of half-hypnosis as the reality of his situation gradually sank in. He had shed decades with every minute of their stay, his mind retuning to the glorious unexpectedness of an impossible sojourn in a living place and time he had previously only glimpsed fuzzily through the dark glass of archaeology.

The Doctor, meanwhile, had spent the past three days deep in thought. Hours passed while he sat in the courtyard, his mind turning thoughts over in his head like a small child with a puzzling new toy. Occasionally he would jump up and pace quickly in the direction of the gates, staring through them into the bright sunlit world outside the thick mud-brick walls, looking for something. Searching for something - searching for a *somewhen*.

"A node - a single continuum event," he muttered to Carter over their supper one night. Carter sipped the thick, yeasty-tasting sweet brew that archaeology had unimaginatively labelled 'beer', and frowned.

"An event?" he asked. His mind was about as far removed from the problems the Doctor was wrestling with as it could be. He was not inclined to question too closely the mechanics of what was for him the most impossible – and most dreamed-of - opportunity any lifetime could throw at him.

"Something happened here, Carter- something important. The fissures in the Nexus can't be random – they flow like a network. Each conjunction of fissures leads to and from a significant event in the local space-time continuum."

Carter shrugged and took another bite of the bittersweet onion dripping with honey. "If you say so, Doctor."

The Doctor ignored his lack of interest and ploughed on. "Something important in the history the Nexus happened in Dunnhale in 1944, and something important happens here - Thebes, 1344 BC. But what?" He turned suddenly to Carter, his eyes flashing. "You know, don't you - what important event happened in this year?"

Carter blinked, caught off-guard by the sudden change of tack. "Erm - let me see now," he mumbled, embarrassed not to have the information at the tip of his mind. He stuttered suddenly. "His death!" he gasped, choking on the bite of onion in his mouth. He wiped his lips with a linen napkin. "His death!" he whispered again, but the Doctor wasn't listening. His eyes were fixed on the gates of the temple complex, which were slowly being pulled open by temple slaves.

In the sunlit desert beyond, something jumped and flickered through the heat haze. A solitary rider on a panting, pounding horse.

The Doctor stood up. "Of course - the death of the boy-king Tutankhamun and the sealing of his tomb - the tomb you were to find more than two millennia later..."

The rider reached the gates. Mes-maat and Ha-neb were running to meet it.

The Doctor tapped Carter on the shoulder. "Leave the rest of your breakfast and take your hat off, Carter - I think this is it." They watched as the rider fell flat on his face on the ground, watched as he repeated his message into the dust, and then watched as Mes-maat and Ha-neb followed suit, throwing themselves in ritual mourning into the sand, rending their robes and smearing their faces with dust as they worshipped their ascended God.

The message was clear: the King was no more; Tutankhamun was dead.

Something tickled the back of the Doctor's mind. There was a ripple at the corners of his perception as behind him, space-time puckered, folded and opened.

A black tide of shapes rushed out from nowhere and filled the courtyard. Thick-limbed, masked, helmeted armoured fragments of shadow: Death's-Head Troopers. Some held standards - iron crosses with the black-cross and bloodstain flag of the Reich flapping like a flayed skin. The Troopers filed into the courtyard in obedience to some invisible, intangible command programmed into their undead skulls, weapons cocked and ready. Without even disturbing the rustling ancient sand, the temple complex was secured by the living dead shock troops of the Eternal Reich.

There was a chuckle, and the Doctor turned to face it. Droessler. Older, more mechanically-augmented in a bid to secure immortality - but identifiably Anton Droessler. A long black overcoat topped with the silver pelt of a wolf swung over his disproportionately large body as he clumped towards the middle of the courtyard.

"Herr Doctor: what an unexpected pleasure!" He smiled, his lips stretching thin, blue and lifeless over ceramic-perfect teeth. "Now then," he said, his eyes dancing over the mud-brick walls and the knot of slaves, guards and priests the Troopers had herded together. "What shall we do for an encore?"

Clouds of pain scudded across Tamara's mind. Slivers of lightning shot through her vision. She felt herself shake her head and winced as the pain bumped from one side of her skull to the other. Her eyes cleared, and she looked around. Gone was the glowing twist of light; gone was the warped forest and the crawling mist. Gone were the ivy-encrusted pyramid and the bust of the long-dead Carnarvon. Gone too were her unnatural pursuers. All gone. Instead - instead, there was...

Tamara looked around her. It didn't seem possible, but she wasn't where she had been. Instead of the twisted forest and the clinging night of Dunnhale, there was only the enclosing solidity of dark riveted steel. Far away, deep in some iron bowels somewhere, an engine throbbed heavily and rhythmically. She had travelled - she had been taken somewhere. In the back of her mind was the image of something black, pulsing with dark energy - almost alive. But the memory was fading.

Tamara was on her hands and knees. She dropped and sat on her haunches, rubbing the scratches on her forehead and taking a better look around her.

She was in a room. A dark, shadowy room made of thick panels of bolted steel soft with many layers of deep grey paint and rusty grime. Heavy pipes ran the length of the walls, dripping slightly with water and condensation. A thin light shone down from a solitary fixture in the ceiling. The floor was warm and slightly oily to the touch, and conveyed the churning of some great distant engine through its frame. In one wall was a bulkhead door with a large lever handle.

There were crates in the room - old, forgotten crates stamped with the now-familiar bent-cross swastika. Words in harsh-angled gothic German script were also stamped over the sides of the boxes, words unreadable to Tamara. The whole room smelled musty and unused, with the faint ozone tang of electricity and the rubber smell of fuel oil. A battleship, Tamara reckoned. A bell began ringing in the distance beyond the room - a clanging ship's bell. A faint motion feel rolled underneath, and Tamara guessed the ship was under steam.

She wasn't quite sure what to make of the phenomenon she'd encountered. A flaw? A fissure? Some kind of break in the fabric of space-time, that was for sure. A hole. The Doctor would know - the Doctor. Where was he? How on Earth was she going to get back to him?

"Now what, though?"

Tamara put her ear up against the door, but it was too thick to hear anything through save the low drumbeat of the distant engine. She leaned back, shrugged and began muttering to herself.

"I dunno - out of here and find out where exactly I am, I guess - then figure out what's going on with this world, track down the Doctor and sort it all out. Not a tall order or anything," she finished sarcastically.

Carter peered around the corner of the mud-brick wall, breathing heavily. The Death's Head Troopers were everywhere, unceremoniously rounding up priests, mortuary workers and craftsmen. They were breaking down doors to find the last, hiding occupants of the complex and herding them into the central courtyard. He saw the Doctor there, too. For some reason Droessler hadn't noticed Carter's absence, and the archaeologists had managed to slip out of the courtyard in the initial confusion.

He drew back behind the wall and looked around the small mud-brick room. It was part of the Priests' living quarters: simple, square chambers he recognised from his own excavations. A low wooden bed with a headrest; a hearth; several niches in the walls containing personal belongings: a plain building. Nothing here that could help - nothing here that could help him either rescue the Doctor or fight the Death's Head Troopers. He was trapped, caught like a rodent in a box, waiting for the cat to pounce. Any moment now, the undead Nazi soldiers would reach this building and drag him off to the courtyard - and Carter had no illusions about what unfinished business Droessler would then conclude.

He suddenly glanced into the small backroom of the building - a lavatory. The houses were all nestled in a small hive located at the eastern side of the main courtyard. The small lavatories were connected to the outside refuse mound by a small opening big enough to sluice waste out of. Through this hole Carter could see the harsh rocky landscape of the necropolis grounds beyond. The Plains of the Dead - home to the Ka's of the departed, the hawks, scorpions and jackals.

Jackals!

Not the animals: the Necropolis guards! Carter snapped his fingers - an idea forming in his mind. Outside he heard screams and cries of despair as the Troopers moved closer to his hiding place, dragging men, women and children out of their houses and off to the courtyard. He took another look into the bathroom and sized up the sluice-hole.

The corridor beyond the small storage room was misty with escaping steam and dark save for pools of orange sodium light at regular intervals down its length. The clanging ship's bell could still be heard echoing from somewhere. Nearer, a tannoy barked the crew orders in rapid German. She crept left down the corridor, her face green-shadowed under the orange lights. A junction - another left, and another corridor.

Cantering footsteps. She retreated into a maintenance alcove, back up against a large fuse-box. A cohort of grey-uniformed Nazi troopers trotted past in double-file

ranks. Red armbands flashed above their elbows, their faces obscured by shadows cast by their boxy flat caps. Perfect soldiers of the Reich: almost too precise, too mechanical, too cold. Tamara shuddered. By her day, stories of the Second World War and its combatant sides were fading from history into ancient history. But even in her time there was a mythic quality to the evil of the Third Reich. That black twisted crucifer, like intertwined snakes, carried with it a palpable taint that touched even her.

Another junction. This time, there was pale blue light from the open area to the right. She peered around the corner of the wall. A ten-foot square alcove, lined with frosted windows on three sides that brought fluorescent light flooding through the dull panes from the chamber beyond into the dark, enclosed corridor. The windows framed a door. Tamara quickly opened the door and ducked inside, praying there was somewhere beyond to hide. Instinct rolled Tamara to the left, behind the shadow of a slab of machinery. The footsteps passed by in the corridor, and Tamara breathed out quietly. She peered around the corner of the machine and looked out into the large chamber.

The space beyond was big - the size of a small aircraft hanger. It was laid out like a factory floor, with a long, unrolled silver tongue of an assembly line that crawled through the room. It was a strange mix of factory and operating theatre. Everywhere there were men and women in pale green coats, masks and hats, wielding scalpels and retractors, yet they were handling not pieces of flesh and cotton swabs, but lumps of intricate machinery. Sparks and metal shavings flashed through the air, not blood and bits of bone. Passing along the assembly line, though, were bodies - human bodies. Dead human bodies ripped and torn by the violence of war. Here, torsos peppered with bullet holes; there, heads blown into pieces by grenades. Burns, lacerations, dislocations, splits, guts, gore - the fragmentary and disassociated lumps of macabre lego of a field mortuary. Tamara looked closer: that was just it - mortuary, not hospital. These were not the wounded being operated on, but the dead. This was an assembly line of the dead - not of the near living. Suddenly, Tamara realised what she was looking at.

"Death's Head troopers..." she whispered. This was where the Third Reich made the dead live again - if you could call it living.

She nipped back out the door into the corridor and continued following it as it wound around the medical chamber. Then the signs led her away and towards a spiral staircase. She hid from passing groups of soldiers - alive? Undead? It was impossible to tell, from behind corners or in maintenance coves. White sunlight streamed down from the spiral staircase.

The deck was empty. It curved away to either side, matching the bowed side of the Sudentenland. Broad transparent panels ran the entire length of the far wall, light streaming through them. But there was nothing outside. Whiteness, foggy and translucent with the sun, obscured her view.

"It's foggy out," murmured Tamara. Suspicion tingled at the back of her mind. "Very foggy."

Even up close, she could see nothing through them but luminous white.

But then the fog parted, and she realised what she was looking at.

She was not at sea - she was in the air.

The RFS Sudentenland broke through the cloud, descending from the upper atmosphere into the enclosing grey of late afternoon below. The Reichsluftschiff roared through the air, cutting through the clinging remains of the cloud layer as it headed towards the earth. Beside them, other airships hugged the Sudentenland in formation: huge, half-mile wide triangular ships, gleaming with purple engine glow from open ports below, glinting with lights from windows along their flanks. Streamlined conning towers dotted the central apex of the craft. Smaller vessels - fighter-craft and cutters - nipped between the larger airships, docking and undocking from the central towers. At the front of each ship was displayed the crooked badge of evil, black and white on a blood red background.

"In the sky..." Tamara murmured to herself. "Flying..."

The cloud parted; the ground could be seen roaring past, tens of thousands of feet below. Lights winked from cities and towns. Running lines of yellow and green that may have been trains raced from one clump of lights to the next. Other aircraft - broad planes of grey and white blinking with signal lights of their own - shuttered below them. In the distance, a small cluster of lights flared brighter and denser than the rest. As the land below them peeled away behind, the distant colony grew brighter and bigger. A massive grid system of an enormous city, covering many, many square tens of miles, gradually resolved out of the gathering darkness. It was a metropolis to rival any Tamara had ever seen before. In its centre, a vast and deadly black pyramid dominated the sprawl below. Devoid of illumination, it stood out as a gargantuan negative zone amongst the sprites that danced around it at its feet. As the airship came closer, details jumped out of the mass of lighted buildings at her. Statues, columns, vast arenas, huge neo-classical halls and parades, boulevards lined with flags. And around the city, like a vast and weeping cancer, an industrial belt of smog, flame and steel that stretched for miles into the surrounding countryside.

"Berlin," a voice said reverently behind them. Tamara turned around slowly. Droessler.

He was older - recognisable, but older. Older instead of dead. There was only one way he could still be standing in front of them now, and Tamara looked for signs of the abominable science in him. His face had acquired a smoothness and a stretched paleness to it that belied his years. Veins pulsed slowly and quiescently underneath his translucent skin. His dead, iris-less eyes were artificially perfect. His hair had vanished, replaced with a network of micro-thin wires that ran along one side of his skull, close to the bone. His grey uniform was rich with blood-red brocade and iron decoration; a

wolf-fur cape hung over his shoulders, sitting heavily over the charcoal leather trenchcoat that wrapped his too-large body. It seemed to Tamara that underneath all the trappings of his regalia, he was almost entirely machine - perhaps, in truth, he was.

Reichsleutenant Anton Droessler, aged two hundred and nine, stood behind her. At his side were masked and helmeted Death's Head troopers, large-barrelled pulse-rifles at their sides. Their immortal eyes stared dead and blank from behind the smoky panes of their masks, machine-guided reactions ready to spring and strike.

"Greetings, Fraulein Scott." Droessler's dead face smiled. "It has been a long time, now, hasn't it?"

Tamara jumped, then felt herself wrenched – and the scene whirled, fragmented and vanished...

He lined up the occupants of the temple against one long courtyard wall, emptying every room, every workshop, every stable boy's hut. Facing the line, the Troopers covered them with their machine-guns.

Droessler stalked up and down the line, smiling unpleasantly. He stopped in front of the Doctor and stepped up to him, his pale face inches from the Doctor's own.

"Soon, Doctor - soon we shall begin to move our manipulation of our past into a new phase - intensify it to a new level. And you shall watch our triumph - a fitting last vision before I have you executed."

The Doctor snorted. "You tried that once before, Droessler."

The Reichsleutenant inclined his head in agreement. "So I did, Doctor - so I did. But now I know you better. Thanks to our researches, and information obtained from a... shall we say, 'privileged informant', I know better than to treat you as an ordinary terrorist and dissident. You are dangerous, more dangerous than I once realised – and you will be treated with all the caution such a danger represents."

He suddenly lashed out with a gloved hand and smacked the Doctor hard across the jaw. The Doctor jerked and slumped forward in the dust.

"Pathetic," sneered Droessler.

The Doctor coughed dust and the taste of blood. "I don't make enemies easily, Herr Droessler, but you're beginning to behave like a perfect candidate for my list."

Droessler laughed. At an unseen and unheard signal, two Troopers stepped forward from the line and grabbed the Doctor's arms, hauling him painfully upright.

"Enough of this - you are marked for death, Doctor. When you have seen what we bring to pass here, in this time, you will die - die knowing that you are powerless to stop what we intend." He suddenly paused, attentive to some inner signal.

"It is time!" he roared.

The sky trembled. The Doctor felt it deep within his bones - a tearing of the continuum, a splintering of space-time that echoed through him like a warning bell. The clouds overhead darkened and roared, piling up in blackening billows, circling above like vultures. The line of captured Egyptians fell almost as one to their knees. Carter looked around him, unable to locate the source of the disturbance.

Then - it appeared. Space split - time tore - and a gash splintered the net of reality in the centre of the courtyard. Something materialised. A rush of dust and sand, and something appeared in the middle of the tear. A geometric solid - a fifteen-foot high pyramid - dark and mottled, with its surface scrolled with deeply incised hieroglyphics, rolling coils of Egyptian-esque motifs that curled around tall humanoid figures clad in flowing robes that fell from animal heads surmounted by elaborate and alien crowns.

Droessler threw up his arms in ecstasy. It had arrived. He stalked forwards as the dust settled and placed his palms on the surface of the pyramid. He had seen it arrive - finally, after all these centuries, he had seen it arrive. The Troopers holding the Doctor dragged him forward to stand with Droessler by the materialised shape.

"Do you know what this is, Doctor?" he whispered with great reverence.

"A Police Box?" the Doctor muttered under his breath. Droessler ignored him.

"Destiny, Doctor- destiny. *My* destiny, *our* destiny, the *World's* destiny - the Universe's destiny," he hissed.

"That's an awful lot of destiny for one pyramid," the Doctor mumbled sarcastically.

Droessler looked at him with dreamy eyes, his fingers tracing the designs on one of the pyramid's faces. In its centre, a giant Egyptian eye: an Eye of Horus. Within the rounded deep relief of the orb, a looped cross ankh in bright green stone a hand-span from top to base.

"Originally it was buried here - under the courtyard of the mortuary temple - but we will bury it in the tomb of the King himself, ensuring ourselves a head-start of decades on our technological revolution in the Twentieth century," Droessler boasted.

The Doctor snorted. "Still thinking like a lunatic, eh Droessler?" he mocked. "Still enslaved to your excuse for a Reich?"

Droessler snarled, grabbed the Doctor by the back collar of his white frock coat and threw him up against the surface of the pyramid.

"Enough of your snide comments, Doctor - enough of your cheap attempts at humour." He reached at his belt and drew out a powerful looking automatic pistol. He flicked a switch at the side and placed the end of the barrel against the Doctor's skull. "That all ends here and now, at the moment of true destiny for the Reich."

The Doctor closed his eyes - and then snapped them open at the sudden crunch and bellow of pain that roared in his ears. The first thing he saw was Droessler's arm drenched in a well of pale ichor flat against the stone surface of the pyramid. The

second thing he saw was a bronze hafted spear pinning it there. The gun lay on the sand at the Doctor's feet. He spun around.

The third thing he saw was a tide of armoured figures charging into the courtyard. Some were on foot, others on horseback. The Jackals! The Necropolis guards! Their animal helmets flashed in the sun, their scythe-like swords swung and crunched into the backs and heads of the undead Nazi troopers, who fell in soft explosions of battery acid and flailing limbs. With a sudden cry, the imprisoned line of priests and temple workers rushed forwards to join their unexpected liberators.

Droessler shouted, a wordless command to destroy the intruders, jerking his injured arm free of the pyramid, the spear still dangling from it and dragging in the sand. With his other hand he pulled out a long-bladed knife and raised it above his head, preparing to throw himself with all his weight at the Doctor.

The Doctor ran - ran through the confusion towards the temple workshops. Something reared up in front of him and he skidded to a halt.

"Doctor!" came a cry. The Doctor looked up into the snorting armoured face of a horse. On its back were two figures: a black-armoured one with a helmet moulded into the masque of a grinning jackal, and the second a slightly rotund, tweed-wearing one with an expression like a naughty schoolboy on his face.

"Carter!" the Doctor shouted, grinning. "Is this your doing?"

Carter grinned back. "I didn't think it was archaeologically correct to allow a bunch of twentieth century Nazis to run riot through a mortuary temple, Doctor!"

"That's the spirit!" the Doctor laughed. "Come on, Carter - I think it's time -"

The Jackal on horseback yelled and whipped up a back-bent bow and loosed three arrows in quick succession over the Doctor's head. There was a faint choking scream behind and the Doctor turned around to see Droessler tumble backwards into the sand, the arrows deep in his chest and throat.

The Jackal removed his helmet- Pa-Nub.

"Ka-ter tells me you have the power to destroy these vermin forever, Healer," he said, frowning, "but that you must travel far into the Tomorrows-to-Come in order to do it."

"Er, well - yes, that's about it," the Doctor replied, somewhat surprised. "But we'll need to find a fissure to travel through first."

"I saw one as we rode in, Doctor - just beyond the Temple walls," Carter said, hurriedly.

"Then we should go - as soon as possible," the Doctor said. He held up something in his hands - a green ankh symbol that glowed with its own inner light.

"What's that?" Carter asked.

The Doctor frowned at it, then looked around the courtyard at the confusion around him. "A piece of the puzzle, Carter - the energy key to the thing that just arrived. I have to deal with it. In the meantime, Pa-Nub, can I ask a favour of you?"

"Anything, Healer."

Just a hunch, thought the Doctor, as he ran out of the workshop, skirted the edge of the courtyard and followed the retreating temple staff into the desert. Behind them, the Nazis were regrouping - reinforcements would certainly follow, the Doctor thought. Perhaps he could play them at their own game and set up some pieces of his own.

Outside the temple walls, a portion of the sculpted relief rippled with a life of its own - a strange folding and unfolding that only the Doctor and Carter could see. The Doctor and Carter raised their hands to Pa-Nub, who stood there watching them, curiously -

- and then stepped backwards into nothing.

"Harold Simpson, John Smith - the Times," Howard Carter heard, filtering through the fog of sparks that cloth-muffled his ears.

He heard himself mumble something incoherent. Something elbow-liked jabbed him in the ribs.

"You'll have to excuse Mr. Simpson - it's been a very long, hot journey."

More distant mumbling, and some laughs. The cloud began to clear and a crisp voice rang through the confusion.

"More of the Times lot, eh?" The voice sounded intimately familiar to Carter, but he couldn't for the life of him place it. "Only one rule here, gentlemen: keep out of the way and don't interfere. You can have all the story you want, but don't get under our feet or I'll personally send you packing."

"Understood, sir," came another familiar voice at Carter's side. The clouds resolved to darkness, and Carter realised he was standing on cold desert sand. A faint wind coiled around him. Were they still in Egypt?

"You and the rest of the newspaper chaps have accommodation arranged at the cook's house at the mouth of the valley. Cars have been laid on in the morning to bring you up to the excavation site," the familiar voice went on. Carter blinked. A fuzzy man-shaped blob began to unfold in the darkness in front of him.

The other voice interrupted with a question. "Is that where you and the rest of the expedition are staying, Sir?"

A harrumph. "Most certainly, young man - where else do you think we would be. Thick of the action, dear boy, thick of the action."

Carter's vision cleared with a sort of 'pop', and he suddenly realised where he was.

"Carnarvon!" he blurted out in surprise.

The fuzzy shape that had resolved itself into a tall man in a tweed suit turned to face Carter, a look of enquiry on his face. It was a face Carter had not seen for decades - the face of Lord Carnarvon as he remembered it: strong, imperious, still scarred from the motorcar accident that had cost him his health.

"You have a question, Mr. - Simpson?" Carnarvon asked.

Carter felt his arm being taken and a pulling urging him back into the darkness. He glanced around - it was the Doctor, ushering him away from his old friend's presence.

"No further questions, Sir - our thanks for your time. We'll bid you goodnight, Sir," the Doctor said hurriedly.

Carter found himself being marched off into the darkness towards a cluster of bright lights somewhere up ahead in the blackness.

"Doctor!" Carter hissed. "That was Carnarvon - I must speak to him!"

The archaeologist sensed rather than saw the Doctor shake his head. "No you mustn't. He won't recognise you, and he certainly won't believe that you're Howard Carter."

"Eh? Why on Earth not?"

"We passed through another fissure, Carter - can you guess where we are?"

Carter blinked. Of course - it seemed obvious. He spoke without knowing how he'd arrived at the answer, a note of resignation in his voice. "The Valley of the Kings - 1922." The fug of the travel through the fissure cleared away, and the peculiar logic of the past few days reasserted itself.

"What about Pa-Nub? What about the Priests at the Mortuary temple?"

The Doctor frowned, tapping his thumbs against his lapels. "If I'm right, Droessler is using the fissures to travel back in time and alter the past. He may even have an artificial means of controlling those fissures and directing them as he requires. Originally, that craft or vessel or whatever it was materialised at the mortuary temple and was buried there to be discovered at some later date. Droessler mentioned giving himself several decades 'head start' - presumably meaning...

"Ah ha!" He snapped his fingers. "He moves the pyramid from the mortuary temple to the tomb of Tutankhamun in 1344 and then has clear access to it in 1922, several decades earlier than when it was originally discovered. Moving the date of that discovery back in time several decades moves their technological revolution - stealing scientific advancement from the contents of the vessel, perhaps - forward. Hmmm. Doesn't say much for the state of causality in this neck of the woods, does it?"

Carter wasn't fully listening to the Doctor. He was looking around at the desert, the rocks, the guesthouse in the distance, a curious expression on his face. "I'm here, aren't I?" he asked the Doctor finally. "I mean the younger me - the me who found the tomb."

"You are," replied the Doctor. "And under any normal circumstances that would be dangerous - here, I'm not so sure."

"Dangerous?"

"Calabai-Yau, again," the Doctor said. "The normal rules of space-time simply don't apply here. Not only can we flit about through space and time with very little effort, I suspect that one can fiddle around with the course of both with relative impunity."

Carter's eyes gleamed. "We could warn myself and Carnarvon - get them to change the course of history!" he whispered, his voice eager and agitated.

The Doctor shook his head sadly. In the thin warm light coming from down the path in front of him, he looked older and wiser beyond his apparent youth. "If you did, don't you think Droessler would come back and change history back? I think that's what they've been doing for decades - slipping back into the past and reinventing it to further their own ends in the future."

"Can one do that?" Carter asked in astonishment. "Is history that malleable?"

"Ordinarily, no - but things inside this bubble universe, this Calabai-Yau Nexus, are very different from ordinary." The Doctor paused, his face creasing into dark shadows of concentration. "But it hinges here - of that I'm sure. Something happened here and now on which the whole future and past of this Nexus hangs."

"How can you tell?"

The Doctor shrugged. "Oh, call it intuition - a certain feel for the flow of space and time, if you will. But it's clearer than that: you, your collection, the funerary temple, and now here. A Calabai-Yau Nexus has a skeleton like a dried-out dandelion head. Every node in the bubble's space-time surface is linked back to a single central point - a single causative space-time event. That's why time is so flexible, because the usual framework of cause and effect does not exist. Instead of events being linked to each other in sequence, or in a network, they are all dependent upon the same one event."

Carter rolled his eyes. "You realise of course that I haven't a clue what you are talking about." Listening to these monologues of the Doctor's was a little like wrestling with an eel - there was sound and motion, but the details of what was where and when were constantly slipping through one's fingers.

There was a crackling, sucking sound -

"Don't worry, Carter - you're not the only one," came a slightly battered voice.

"Tamara?" the Doctor barked, spinning around to catch sight of her.

The Doctor grabbed her with a crunching and uncharacteristic bear hug. "I thought I'd lost you."

Tamara smiled weakly. "You'll have to fill in some of the gaps, but basically, I'm still here - or there, or - what has been going on?"

"*Oh, don't ask him, Ms. Scott - you'll only get something incomprehensible spouted at you,*" muttered Carter.

The Doctor grinned. "Never mind, Carter - just keep this in mind: all roads lead to Rome, metaphorically speaking, of course. It's no coincidence that we've all ended up here - here, the Valley of the Kings, 1922, is where it all begins -"

"- And ends?" Carter had begun to understand the Doctor's idiosyncratic trains of thought. In his own mind, he thought of the curse - the curse that would kill Carnarvon, would kill others - would kill him?

"Hmmm." There was something in the notion of endings that bothered the Doctor.

"But why here - why now?" asked Carter, puzzled. "Surely that - that vessel, that craft landing at the funerary temple - was the most momentous event one could think off"

"Oh you'd be surprised how much cosmic flotsam and jetsam the Earth manages to attract," the Doctor murmured. "No, the landing of the vessel isn't, in itself, anything remarkable. But it was buried - and it's stayed buried until now - the new time of its discovery. So this is the now that makes the difference."

"So some when around here is the pivotal event on which all the changes in history hang?" asked Tamara.

"In essence - yes. If possible we'll have to locate that causal node and..." He trailed off.

"And what?"

"How should I know?" the Doctor snapped. "I can't think of everything all the time," he grumbled in an irritated glower.

But Carter thought he could hear the lie in his voice.

Suddenly, their way was blocked by a figure.

He was young, but the face was the same. Its cold cruelty was already honed to blade-sharp perfection, whetted by conviction in its innate and pre-destined superiority. Like a damned angel, his perfectly chiselled features glowed with a deep, raw evil. He glided through the crowd, parting it gently with the force of his presence. Even so young, Anton Droessler was clearly a force to be reckoned with.

He wore an anonymous black coat, between the lapels of which gleamed a perfectly white shirt collar and a finely knotted tie; his closely-cropped blond hair was tucked carefully underneath a broad-brimmed hat. On one of the coat lapels, the Doctor caught a worrying glint of iron – a party badge.

Droessler slid through the crowd of journalists and hangers-on like a shark indifferently parting waves, making straight for the Doctor.

There was no preamble.

"You cannot stop us, Doctor."

The Doctor raised an eyebrow. "I don't think you should know me," he said with faint, tried amusement. "After all, we haven't been properly introduced yet."

Droessler's young eyes narrowed humourlessly. "I know you, Doctor - we know you. We all know you now. We have anticipated your every move - tracking you here from 1322 BC was an easy trick - after all, we already knew where and when you would be going."

The Doctor's face hardened. "You can't just cut and paste the past like that, Droessler - you must realise the potential danger..."

"There is no danger, Doctor - that statement alone simply shows how little you understand of the power we have now harnessed. Our ability to alter - improve- the past is unlimited."

"Oh, there are limits to everything, even in an infinite universe."

Droessler smiled, his lips a thin red gash against his pale face. "You think so?"

The Doctor shook his head and looked hard at Droessler. "You're putting immense strain on the bubble, Droessler - there's only so much abuse it can take before it begins to unravel like a badly knitted jumper. Once that happens, causality will become the stuff of Wonderland - you'll end up having to start your car by polishing your boots."

"The past - even when it is my current present - is disposable, Doctor. Only the future matters. That future will propel us to power undreamed of."

"Whatever you try - I will try and stop you," the Doctor insisted.

"Futile," Droessler replied smugly. "A futile gesture - since gesture and is all that it could be. Lord Carnarvon and I have now agreed to split the funding for the excavation - thus ensuring that the Berlin Order of the Thule has an equal interest in the artefacts that will no doubt be uncovered."

"More meddling?" asked the Doctor, scornfully.

Droessler shrugged. "Perhaps it once was - now it's part of established history. The cooperation between the Thule Order and the Ministry of Antiquities leads to the immersion of key agents within the Egyptian Sultanate before the onset of war. At the declaration of hostilities, Egypt sides with the Reich, and its treasures become our own."

"Why all this skulking in the shadows - why not a big, dramatic altering of history? Why not take your Reich back to the dawn of humanity and give yourself an extra three and half million years head start?"

Droessler chuckled. "All in good time, my dear Doctor - after all, we have a problem to contend with at present, don't we?"

The Doctor glowered. "I'm the biggest problem you'll ever have, Droessler."

"Believe me, Doctor - I know that. We know that. This is why we are expending so much time and effort on your behalf. But once you have been solved," Droessler said, his face an masque of dark anticipation, "I shall take your suggestion of a three million year head start under advisement."

"I do so hate waiting, don't you, Doctor?" he asked. He waved his hands, and time jumped. "Twenty-four or so hours later - we are ready to watch the opening of the tomb itself. Thanks to the Shadow, time is a meaningless irrelevance to us now."

Carter looked around him. They were suddenly by the diggings. Gathered around the trench were the familiar faces of younger days: Carnarvon, the Times reporters, officials from the Ministry of Antiquities, white-uniformed guards, grinning workmen - all awaiting the opening of the tomb. In the centre of the group, a man in a pale suit brushed sand from his jacket as the reporters gathered around him with their cameras. In the flare of phosphor flashes, Carter saw himself - a reflection in time's mirror: younger, firmer of jaw, the glint of confidence reflected in his own eyes. He remembered this day - remembered this time and this moment. He knew even then that he was on the verge of something important, something that would ring down through the centuries - and still would, despite all he now knew.

He took a step forward, but a ceramic-faced figure suddenly blocked his way. The undead trooper from the future, wearing the uniform of an Egyptian soldier, summoned through time by Droessler, raised a warning hand.

"Not too close, my dear Sir," Droessler said, mockingly.

Then he gestured to the trench. "A moment to remember, Gentlemen - the opening of the tomb of Tutankhamun."

"Only now, it contains an alien time vessel - a vessel that your future self buried in the tomb."

"Correct, Doctor. Originally, that vessel was buried beneath Tutankhamun's mortuary temple, outside the valley. It took almost fifty years of searching to recover it, but when we did, there was nothing to stop us. I escaped the dogs from the Hague Court and I escaped my past - only to rebuild it in my own image."

"No one escapes the past," the Doctor warned.

"Perhaps not, but now the past is my own creation - there to serve me."

Suddenly, the Doctor whipped something out of his pocket and pointed it in the direction of one of the undead guards. There was a hiss, and a yellow mucous substance flew from the end of the object to land in a sticky blob on the face of the Egyptian guard - only now it wore a visored helmet and the blob dribbled down the visor and into the sand.

Droessler grinned. "You see? You act, and we react."

The Doctor smiled back, shaking the can of spray cheese at Droessler. "You react, yes - you can change your actions, but you can't change my actions." Droessler's smile faltered.

"Now why is that?" the Doctor asked out loud. Behind him, the Arabic foreman descended into the trench behind them down the sets of steps, pickaxe at the ready. The moment was soon - any second now, and the tomb would be opened.

The Doctor's smile continued, draining Droessler's away to blankness. "I'll tell you why, shall? It's because I am not of this continuum. I do not, in any causal sense, exist in this universe. The same with Tamara - and the same, for some reason, with Mr. Carter, here." He waved a hand at the archaeologist next to him.

Droessler's returning smile was thin-lipped. "Perhaps, but we have managed to work around you, to neutralise your effectiveness."

"Perhaps, perhaps - but I'm not the only one, am I?" he said, something becoming clear to him. "There's another - someone or something else that evades your control in the same way, something that makes you skulk around in history's shadows, something that you can't simply nip back two hundred years and change to suit yourselves." He paused, looking sharply at Droessler. "What is it, Droessler? Who's your other enemy?"

The young man stared icily at the Doctor. "It matters little, Doctor. That adversary will shortly be no more. Soon, very soon, we will be rid of it and there will be nothing left to stand in our way."

A sudden crunching sound - the sound of a metal pick hitting mud-brick. The three of them stepped involuntarily closer to the trench, the guards around them lowering their rifles and hemming them in. They saw Mustafa, the foreman, raise his pick a second time. His blow fell near the first pockmark into the mud-brick. Then again he raised his pick, and again the metal edge cleaved into the brick. And again. Again. Slowly the ancient brick crumbled and gave way, collapsing to reveal darkness beyond. The moment was stretched by still, trembling excitement. The crowd hardly dared to breathe. Tamara felt her heart catch in her throat - this was it.

Time stood still, balanced across the ages from past to present. The air of twenty centuries ago sighed softly out through the new hole in the mud-brick, sweet with incense burned in the sun of a different world. Mustafa put down his pick; other workmen came forward with electric lights on support arms. The younger Carter came with them, removing his hat and coat as he trotted hurriedly down the steps. He knelt down at the hole, his face shining with reverence and the thrill of discovery. Around him the workman bustled the lights into position - it was not enough. Carter solemnly held up a lit oil lamp, warm hot light spilling from its open shutter into the darkness beyond the mud-brick wall. The assembled crowd was absolutely still, utterly silent. In the warm oil light, Carter gazed into the gap. He made no sound, his eyes reflecting something ancient beyond.

Above the trench, Carnarvon bent low and asked quietly, "Can you see anything?"

"Yes," Carter replied softly. "Wonderful - terrible things." He drew back, his eyes widening. There was a sound, a rumbling of something beyond this world. The crowd flinched backwards, instinct herding them closer to each other as the sound increased. With a roar, the mud-bricks blew apart, showering Mustafa, the younger Carter and the workmen with a cloud of dust.

Something writhed and twisted through the dust cloud: a cacophony of ghostly, insubstantial tendrils and tentacles that erupted from a bloated, reptilian core. Eyes roved and mouths smacked, wet with rot and mucus, silently spitting and mewling. It drifted on oleaginous things that might have been wings, and flapped against nothingness. The abomination was encrusted with ancient artefacts: gleaming crown, crook and flail sceptre, jewelled collar – the regalia of an Egyptian Pharaoh.

Behind it, revealed by the fallen mud-brick wall, a gleaming black and green pyramid, etched with the hieroglyphics of a lost world. An Egyptian eye glared out at the assembled crowd, dark and ancient. The vessel. The vessel that had materialised in Tutankhamun's mortuary temple thousands of years before. But now - here, in his tomb.

There was a sucking, roaring sound, as if the very fabric of reality were being shredded. The apparition shifted - changed; from deep within the thing, a globe, pulsing with unearthly dark light, rushed forward, lance-straight beams of energy striking out from the dark heart. The electric lights exploded, showering the huddle of shouting workmen in shards of glass. The oil light, thrown to one side and burning in a pool of spilled oil, flickered and went out, energy draining into the monstrous spectre. All sound, all the screams and cries of the crowd and the workmen, was absorbed by the unholy phantom crawling in semi-shadow in front of the group.

Carter stumbled backwards - the shock of seeing the apparition a second time. The Doctor reached out to steady him - but they tumbled forward and slid down the sand into the engulfing black mass of the shadowy entity. Tamara leaped and rolled to follow them. Above them, Droessler shrieked something wordless and the soldiers at his side started firing randomly at the monstrous thing. The energy beams from the black globe played over the sand, the trench, lifting, spinning, tearing. Chaos ensued, a whirlwind of grit. A cold, bitter wind blasted the crowd, flying outwards from the apparition. Darkness engulfed everything.

In the heart of the blackness and the furious rush of sand, the Doctor and Carter crouched by the base of the pyramid, spitting sand from their tumble into the trench. Carter groaned. In front of them, the younger Carter, Mustafa the foreman and the workers lay still and unmoving. The older Carter tried not to look at them - tried not to think about what had just happened. The Doctor hauled him up to his feet, shouting through the chaos.

"This is it, Carter - this is what it all hangs on: they moved the pyramid here!"

"What?"

"The vessel - Droessler moved it here in 1344! He finds it now, not later - he has his head start! But an advantage - we need an advantage!" He slammed his palms against the side of the pyramid; then his eyes opened wide. "Of course, of course!" He turned to Carter. "That explains everything - the apparition, the 'curse' - our ally! Of course!"

"Of course!" repeated Tamara sarcastically, coughing on the dust.

The chaos swirled and collapsed, fading in on itself. Then it was gone.

The scene shifted, and Droessler appeared in front of them - the Droessler from the future: tall, mechanical- looking, his face pale and unliving. Weapons clicked behind him from the ranks of Death's Head Troopers on the steps. Droessler smiled.

"Despite everything, Doctor, we still triumph," he said. He looked at the pyramid. "It is ours now, ours." His voice broke as his gaze scanned the wall. Something wasn't right.

Droessler swung his lifeless eyes on them, his face livid with fury.

"The key!" he bellowed. "The key is missing."

The Doctor looked puzzled. "What?" he shrugged. "I've no idea what you're talking about." He looked at Carter and Tamara. "Do you?"

Both looked genuinely confused. "Key? Key to what?"

Droessler howled and raised his beamer. The Doctor, Tamara and Carter took a step backwards against the solid face of the pyramid -

- and vanished into a dark place, facing a dimly- illuminated set of double doors that slowly swung shut in front of them with a satisfyingly solid thud, leaving the trio enveloped in a pale green twilight.

The Doctor grinned in the darkness at the doors. He looked at Carter and winked. "Pretty neat, eh? Temporally aspective doors sealed with an energy key - as effective as a smokescreen to people such as you and me, with my disjointed chronons."

Tamara shook her head and ran her hands over the door. "You're outdoing yourself, Doctor - I have even less idea what you're talking about than usual. Disjointed what?"

"Chronons, chronons - tiny particles of time; in this case in the form of quantum moments electrostatically present in the bio-harmonic field of my body, to be precise. And in our case - yours and mine, Tamara - disjointed because we're not from this particular universe - therefore the temporally aspective partition - the door - doesn't recognise you or me and doesn't bar us from passing through it. And when either of us transfer those moments by extending our bio-fields thus -" He grabbed Carter's arm. "You too aren't recognised and can pass through. Hah! Clever, eh?"

Carter frowned, holding onto the only part of the Doctor's explanation that made any sense. "A door? Where to? Where are we?"

The Doctor tapped the doors. "Inside the pyramid, of course. Droessler can't get in because I removed the key and Pa-Nub hid it back in 1344 BC. In fact..." He quickly strode off into the shadows behind her, his voice echoing ghostly from somewhere in the dark. "I'm beginning to understand what's going on. We are trapped inside a pocket universe where time means about as much as Beatnik poetry. In a universe this malleable, you can make anything happen: even time-travelling Nazi Zombies." There was a pause, then -

- lights swelled up, filling the darkness with oleaginous green illumination.
"Bingo," whispered the Doctor.

It was half Egyptian temple, half nuclear power station, Tamara thought. Towering Egyptian pillars heavily incised with deep hieroglyphics rubbed shoulders with power conduits and humming electrostatic coils inside a vast pyramidal space that glowed softly with a hidden green light. Computer control panels and holographic display units crouched underneath the outstretched wings of glowing-eyed hawks. Padded command chairs nestled between guardian lions and bejewelled scarabs, facing banks of teleform readout displays encircled with cartouches and watched over by snake-headed deities. At the back of the chamber, a tall blue crystalline pod lurked between two anthropoid statues with insectoid heads and outstretched wings. In the centre of the space was a low dais, ringed by crawling hieroglyphs and surmounted by a polyhedral block of dark green-veined stone like some kind of altar. At each of its many corners stood a dark and menacing statuette of some animal-headed deity. The block's top pulsed with a pale liquid light that rippled from the luminescent surface of the stone.

"If the ancient Egyptians had built spaceships, this is what they would have looked like," the Doctor said, somewhat blithely. "But, of course, it was sort of the other way around."

"Other way around?" gasped Carter. "What do you mean by that?"

The Doctor flopped down in a chair loomed over by a beetle-god with silver eyes, flipped his hair back, kicked his boots up onto a control panel and launched into a lecture.

"Millennia ago, Carter, an escaped Osirian criminal known as Set fled the justice of the Osirians and rampaged across the universe, spreading death and destruction wherever he touched. His brother, Horus, and his followers tracked him down and defeated him in a titanic battle that took place in the little-known deserts of northeast Africa, approximately five thousand years before your present. The events so scarred the fledgling civilisations of that little corner of the globe that the very face and structure of their culture was moulded into a mirror of that event: Horus, Set and the other three-hundred-and-thirty followers were even raised by them to the status of gods. That culture was the Nilotic Egyptian civilisation you spent your entire professional career unearthing the remains of - a distorted reflection of the cultural patterns and mores of the Osirians."

"And this is an Osirian ship?" Tamara asked.

"Correct. The Osirians were an ancient race – not the oldest around, but not far off. They conquered the secrets not just of space travel but time travel as well when the Universe was still adolescent. This is an Osirian time- vessel."

Tamara thought for a second, then looked at the Doctor with a half-grin. "But you had an idea something like this was around - this vessel, I mean," she said. "In Carter's house - the hieroglyphics that were not hieroglyphics."

"Indeed. Objects that weren't Egyptian - but were something else altogether: Osirian, unearthed from the Mortuary while you," the Doctor said, swinging around to face the disturbed-looking Carter, "were excavating the Pharaoh's tomb. Tell me, Carter - what first strikes your archaeologist's eye here?"

Carter looked around, battling to take in the constant barrage of surprises the Doctor kept throwing at him. Bleak thoughts flared in the back-corners of his mind: Ancient Egypt created in the model of an alien civilisation? He shook his head and tried to concentrate on the Doctor's question.

The pod. He pointed to it.

"That - that thing, there," he said. "It doesn't fit with the rest of the architectural style."

The Doctor grinned. "Absolutely right - it's not Osirian at all." He jumped up and crossed the chamber to stand in front of the pod.

Tamara looked again at the crystalline pod. Carter was right - it didn't fit in with anything else in the chamber - it was even the wrong colour. "What is it, Doctor?"

The Doctor tapped at its surface. "Hard to say..." he muttered. "But it's clearly been shoehorned into the original Osirian design. Some kind of biogenic device, perhaps?" He stared into its winking depths and waved his hands back at his companions. "There may be more things that don't fit - like this. Have a look around - see what you can find."

Tamara scowled. "What exactly are we looking for?" she asked.

The Doctor shrugged. "You'll know it when you find it," he said, unhelpfully.

An hour later, they had a small pile of items. A metal locker set in a niche had yielded fragments of electrical components of some unknown origin: two large gun-like artefacts carved from a similar crystalline material as the pod and veined with thick silver metal rods and conduits; and several objects like surfboards made out of the same silver metal and inlaid with central lines of a heavy amethyst-like crystal.

There was also a white linen suit jacket belonging to a man - clearly very twenty-first century and very human in origin and manufacture.

The Doctor considered the jacket on the floor in front of them with a curious and worried frown.

Tamara sighed. "Well, clearly, someone was here before us."

Carter nodded. "A German man, employed as a cultural attaché to the German Embassy in Cairo in the year 1999," he said confidently.

"How on Earth can you tell?" Tamara asked, flabbergasted. "Have you gone some arcane archaeological way of telling what kind of a person someone is by the clothes they wear?"

Carter held up two small maroon booklets. "His identity papers were in his jacket pocket," he said dryly.

They flipped through them slowly. They were work-permit ID books for foreign nationals employed in Egypt. Their front covers were stamped with the imposing seal of the Embassy of the Republic of Germany Cultural Office.

Anton Droessler, born 1901, Gelghachten, Germany. No photographs, but the name could not be a coincidence.

"Droessler? No way!" said Tamara. "How can his identity card from 1999 be here in 1927? 1999 hasn't happened yet!"

The Doctor smiled grimly. "But this isn't normal space-time, Tamara - it's a mathematical pimple on the face of the Universe - a place where causality is a matter of negotiation. In this universe, the 1999 where Droessler discovered this vessel simply doesn't exist anymore - he's altered time so that he discovers the vessel in the 1920s instead. Inside this ship is the one place where that vanished 1999 still, in some small way, exists - hence the coats left behind after an original discovery that will now never take place." He shook his head. "Even I find this causal soup a tad difficult to unravel."

"But if Droessler originally discovered this ship in 1999 - he was almost a hundred," Tamara said. "What the hell was he doing skulking around in the desert at that age?"

The Doctor shrugged. "Perhaps it was just one of those things - serendipity."

Tamara snorted. "I don't believe in that kind of coincidence, and neither do you," she said dismissively.

Carter frowned. "So then he must have used the ship to somehow alter history?"

The Doctor nodded. "It looks that way - but he clearly didn't move the Osirian ship itself, so I wonder how -"

"The Black Pyramid!" Tamara hissed.

"What?"

"The Shadow, they call it. I saw it in Berlin in 2109 - Droessler said it was made of dark matter and that it was what they used for time travel."

The Doctor 'humphed' in consideration. "The Shadow. Yes, Droessler mentioned that. It's possible - a quantum fusion reaction generated from a black matter core held in gravitic suspension..."

Tamara shrugged. "That kind of sounds like what he said it was," she said uncertainly - and, she felt, somewhat uselessly; the Doctor was obviously off on one of his explanations that only he really understood.

The Doctor continued muttering, mostly to himself. "But with a temporal field generator of that size, he would be able to manipulate time at an absolute level - turn the clock back, forwards, sideways as he saw fit. Why this temporal cat-and-mouse game?" He paused, his eyebrows shooting up in a question. "Unless - unless the generator is flawed somehow, limiting its effectiveness. Hence the random time

disturbances - the flickering between the now and the then, hiccups along the time-tracks. Yes - yes, of course. An unstable generator, made unstable by... by... Hmmm. But where did he learn how to make a generator like that?"

The Doctor paused, looking curiously around the vast shadowy space, and frowned. "He must have got the information from here, somewhere..." He snapped his fingers. "Of course!" he exclaimed. "Not from the Osirian ship itself, but from whoever was responsible for this additional technology!"

He scooped the handful of electronic components up from the pile and studied them carefully. "Yes, yes," he muttered. "Transtelethic molybdenum - psychonic controls!"

"Psyk - what?" asked Tamara.

"Psychonic, psychonic - this alien technology is based on the conduct of alpha resonance from a humanoid mind. It runs on brainpower, Tamara. Similar enough to Osirian technology to effect an interface, but certainly distinctly different from it." The Doctor dropped the components and rubbed his beard. "Of course - that would explain it: direct mental interface between Droessler and... and..." He stopped and looked at Tamara and Carter. "And who?"

"Who?" asked Carter, lost in the Doctor's rapid-fire changing of the subject.

"Who, who?" the Doctor repeated insistently. "Who was piloting this craft to Earth? Who was it that Droessler met in here when he discovered the craft in 1999?"

Tamara looked around. "Whoever it was, they don't seem to have hung around."

"But more - but more," the Doctor insisted. "How did you end up right by the door control? How did we find the fissures? How did we end up jumping the time tracks and landing in Dunnhale? And the apparitions - the apparitions..." He tapped his fingertips together. "Someone behind the scenes: another player, making moves that are far smaller, far more subtle - far weaker, perhaps. A friend, a confidante - an ally. Someone on our side, for a change..."

The Doctor looked thoughtful - and closed his eyes gently. He seemed to slip into a brief state of standing unconsciousness, dead on his feet, silent and absolutely still.

Tamara looked at him, somewhat startled by the sudden quiet. "Doctor?" There was no response. "Doctor - what are you -"

There was a sudden hiss of escaping air, of releasing pressure. Behind them, the crystalline surface of the pod began to mist over with condensing air. The cloudy matrix of the crystal itself started to clear - and something began to take shape trapped within it.

The Doctor opened his eyes. "Ask and ye shall receive," he said calmly. "Psychonic technology," he offered by way of explanation. "I simply requested the location of the craft's navigator from the alien onboard computer. The pod is a biogenic stasis module - he's in deep-sleep with only his psychonic field activated." His eyes danced suddenly, flickering at the appearance of something only he could see.

"What is it?" Tamara asked.

"I'm still psychonically connected - the computer. Data files - memory," the Doctor said, his eyes unfocused, concentrating on some inner dialogue. "Flight log..."

"Answers," said Carter, grimly.

"And how..." the Doctor agreed.

"By Rassilon's Beard..." he whispered.

By the time the stellar cartographers of the Earth Empire discovered and named the faint and distant star in the constellation of Seloranis Major, it had already shrunk to a brown dwarf, the system abandoned by its native intelligent life. Xenoarchaeologists studied the material remains of the civilisation that had dominated the system's sixth planet, but found little substantive evidence to suggest the final fate of its inhabitants.

They had called their world X'ychaad - Home. Home had never been a warm world - never had the seas and the forests and the great rolling plains of other planets. Instead it was a place of ice and frozen volcanoes, of dark crystals that developed all the characteristics of life by generating their own internal energy sources through piezoelectric basic functions of the cells of larger organisms - humans for manipulation of crystalline lattices.

The X'ychaad were forms of cohesive electricity contained within a crystalline shell. Their technology was based around the manipulation of electromagnetic energy, which they used to shape towering buildings, write literature and poetry, build computers and create a culture. After millennia of evolution, the scholars of X'ychaad looked out through their crystal telescopes from their glass towers and began to measure the universe beyond their own cold world. Centuries of astronomical observations, probe flights and manned exploration gradually revealed to them a terrible truth. Their sun was dying, and dying exponentially. The gravitic collapse that had sucked the life from their parent star was progressing at an ever-increasing pace. Soon - ten thousand years or so hence - their world would die a final death, gripped by a lifeless cold hostile even to the electricity-based X'ychaad.

Panic gripped X'ychaad. The organisational Collective debated the issue and resolved itself: for the sake of future generations, X'ychaad would have to be abandoned - a new Home must be found. All efforts were turned to the construction of exploratory vessels, to the mastery of hyperdimensional engineering and trans-spatial physics. Within three local centuries, the first manned hyperspatial interstellar probes were launched - and within days, almost all those manned crews were dead.

In their haste to escape their dying sun, and in their obsessive focus on hyperspatial physics, the X'ychaad had failed to research fully the consequences of their own proximity to their sun. What they discovered after the launch of those probes was

that their crystalline bodies could not withstand prolonged loss of contact with their sun's halo of escaping x-rays and other exotic energy waves. Simply put, outside their home system, their bodies crumbled and cracked to dust within hours. They possessed the will to escape their dying sun, but their flesh was weak.

But one pioneering spirit, whose name now echoes down the roll of X'ychaad honour, in one hour both grabbed sweet success from the sour jaws of defeat as well as initiating the X'ychaad's first ever contact with an alien species. As his probe crash-landed into the cruise-ship Divinotas, the X'ychaad pilot realised with horror that his crystal body was beginning to decay and dissolve. Abandoning his probe in panic, the X'ychaad pilot came across the dead bodies of the passengers aboard the Divinotas. Something happened, and whether by accident or design, the pilot's electromagnetic consciousness slipped through the crumbling crystalline bonds of his dying body and entered the organic cellular matrix of the dead cruise passenger.

"They're necro-parasites," the Doctor said, rubbing his temples. "Once an organic structure has died, the electrical impulses that guide its nervous system are gone. The electrical consciousness of the X'ychaad can step into that gap, becoming the animating force within the organic structure - squatting in its brainstem, so to speak. A secondary electrical power source is needed to maintain the example."

"Droessler's undead soldiers," murmured Carter.

"Absolutely - basic cell function maintained by a constant current of finely-tuned electrical pulses. Droessler obviously got the technology here. But without the animating force of the X'ychaad, however, the body is simply -"

"A Zombie Nazi," Tamara butted in, shaking her head at the ludicrousness of it all.

"With basic programming a part of the electrical pulses, yes," the Doctor finished. "In the case of Droessler, I suspect that 'programming' is actually his own mental pattern which has been digitally reproduced."

"So, he's a cyber-zombie squatting in his own corpse," Tamara said with a shudder.

"In a manner of speaking, yes - or you could think of it as simply having a hand-me-down body."

"Ughh," spat Tamara. "It's just absolutely disgusting."

The Doctor shrugged. "It has a certain clinical logic and practicality to it, I suppose. And you can't deny that it gives rise to an interesting 'take' on organic biology. For the X'ychaad, organic structures are like machines: their cars, their trucks, their load-lifters. Using fairly basic surgical techniques, they can mix and match from a variety of dead organic bodies and then animate the whole as they see fit. Need a third arm? Just sew one on. Want a pair of wings, or a tail, or a few more fingers on your left hand? Chop, chop - stitch, stitch, and there you have it."

"Doctor." Tamara frowned. "Don't. It's disturbing enough, you know?"

Carter looked up and into the cleared blue crystal pod crouching in the green shadows between the two Osirian statues. "And so that's what this chap is, eh?"

The Doctor nodded. "A X'ychaad: a sort of real-life Mr. Potato Head - equipped with everything an explorer could need."

The shape in the pod was vast and fortunately mostly indistinct. It was vaguely humanoid - or had perhaps once been so. Now it was a grotesque amalgam of arms, legs, tails, mouths, eyes, tentacles and feelers. A giant pair of horns protruded from a garbled collection of sensory apparatus that might kindly be called a face. A myriad of grasping, cutting, grabbing and entwining limbs clustered around its torso - a kind of biological Swiss army knife. From its back arched a pair of heavy leathery wings, from its stomach a bubbling mess of multi-angled claws. It looked rotten: pus and mucus clung to every crusty, reptilian surface. An Egyptian-looking headdress, sceptre and crook were clutched in its grasping appendages - Osirian control harnesses and communicators.

It looked like an avenging angel. It looked like the very emissary of Death. It was the ship's Navigator.

"The apparition!" Carter and Tamara both said at once.

"Yes - the apparition," the Doctor echoed. "Perhaps this is all beginning to make sense..." he said quietly.

"Sense?" said Carter, weakly. "This is the thing that killed Carnarvon - his son saw it on his death-bed! This is the same thing that plagued my dreams for twenty years; that drove Michaelson and Peters to madness; the same thing that killed Anastasia - this is the curse, Doctor! Death on Swift Wings! This is the thing summoned up by the priests of Tutankhamun to guard his tomb!"

The Doctor shook his head, and looked up at the Navigator. "I'll agree - a face only a mother could love. But not a demon of death summoned up by ancient Egyptian priests."

"Then why follow Carter and the others present at the tomb opening around for their whole lives?" asked Tamara. "If it's not a demon bent on wreaking revenge, what is it? It's certainly got the persistency of a double-glazing salesman."

The Doctor frowned. "What about a psychonic trace - a kind of telepathic cry for help?"

"Help?" repeated Carter.

"Yes," the Doctor replied, excitement tingeing his voice. "What if the Navigator wasn't plaguing you lot to drive you to death and madness, but trying desperately to communicate - but your primitive brains -" Carter blinked.

"No insult intended, Carter," the Doctor hurriedly interjected. "Your brains meant that you were all unable to reciprocate."

"Help for what reason?" asked Tamara. "'To fix the ship?'"

"Mmmm, I don't think so, not quite," the Doctor replied. "I got a series of impressions from the data-core, a slide-show of scenes and snapshots. The X'ychaad have been exiles from Home for tens of thousands of years now. Perhaps unsurprisingly, they're inveterate explorers. This was a test-flight gone wrong - a test-flight of an alien time-vessel they'd discovered."

"And it went wrong," Carter finished.

The Doctor shrugged. "It was a test-flight, after all. It seems the vessel developed a fault: its temporal engines are badly damaged - as is the Navigator." "It's injured?"

"Worse than that," replied the Doctor, his voice full of concern. "It's dying."

Carter looked up into the face of the Navigator with a new expression of wonder and concern. "You mean it was looking desperately for someone to - heal it? Save it?"

"It must have been desperate, though - unable to think of any other way to get help. Surely it knew no one on this planet in this time could get it the help it needed," said Tamara.

"Hmmm." The Doctor stroked his beard thoughtfully. "'Then if the apparition was a psychonic trace or psychic projection travelling along the fractured time harmonics of this bubble universe - in some respects you might say we saw its ghost."

Carter sat on the edge of the central dais and looked over towards his two new companions in this surreal tragicomedy. The young black woman was fiddling with the bits and pieces of alien technology they had found lurking behind the statues and desks. She had identified a kind of weapon – an electrostatic beam device, the Doctor had called it. She had also managed to activate one of the long fiat boards – the crystal now glowed and the device hovered by some unfathomable science three feet above the ground – a paragravitic sled, used - so the Doctor had informed them - for transport, although Carter couldn't possibly conceive how.

The Doctor was leaning on the central dais, deep in thought. Carter stood up and went to stand next to him. Although it was difficult to judge this peculiar man and his moods accurately, Carter thought he sensed that something was wrong.

"Doctor - what is it?"

The Doctor continued staring into the swirling depths of the surface of the polygonal central block. He shook his head.

"I can't do it," he whispered.

"Can't do what?" asked Tamara, overhearing the tone in his voice.

The Doctor thumped the stone surface gently with his fist.

"I can't unlock the Nexus. I can't unravel it - it's too far gone."

"Wait, what do you mean?" Tamara asked, shooting up to the Doctor's side. "Ten minutes ago you said if you shut down the Osirian vessel's engines, the bubble would disperse and everything would go back to normal."

"*But that's just it,*" the Doctor said, a kind of pleading creeping into his voice - the sound of someone unused to failure. "*The engines can't be shut down – they're already shut down. The bubble is only being generated from here in a causal sense - the real source of its power now is further ahead in the local time-stream.*"

"You mean in Berlin? The Shadow?"

"Yes." The Doctor sighed. "The fissures are a by-product of the temporal divergences being created when the future Nazis ship themselves back in time to alter their own history. The presence of this vessel creates the *raison d'etre* for the bubble, but it's the temporal engineering behind this Shadow that's keeping the whole bubble afloat. Switch off the Shadow, and the fissures simply expand until the bubble is destroyed - not absorbed back into real-space and real-time, but destroyed."

"But that isn't a problem, is it? I mean, this place is all messed up - there's no reason to keep it, is there?"

"When I say destroyed, I mean destroyed, Tamara. This universe will not simply cease to be, it will explode in a horrific space-time convulsion lasting several millennia of local time. Not only will the pain and suffering it will cause will be without parallel..."

There was a pause.

"But?" Tamara said, rolling her hands to get the Doctor to continue.

The Doctor sighed. "But it will consume the relevant timelines in real-space."

"Huh." Tamara scowled. Even she could see what that meant. "And so the real Earth would end up just as corrupted as this one."

"Exactly."

"And we just can't let that happen, can we?" Tamara asked, quietly.

"But we can leave, right?" she insisted. "We can get out of here, can't we?"

The Doctor shook his head again. "Using the TARDIS to pierce the bubble now would be as bad as switching off the Shadow. Puncture the space-time envelope around the Nexus and..." His voice trailed off.

Silence fell across the trio like a shroud, each immersed in silent thoughts of his or her own.

A hiss - a sharp footfall.

The Doctor looked up in alarm. "No - the door!" he gulped.

A dark shadow fell into the room. A familiar chuckle floated in with it.

"And so the quarry is finally brought to ground," came a cruel, languid voice, clipped with a mechanical edge. Droessler. He strode into the room alone.

"This was *always* to be the way you were to be captured, Doctor," he said. "*Not by brute force - which, as you once instructed me long, long ago, was not the way to build an Empire - but by patience and careful consideration of the prey's weakness.*"

He walked slowly up to the centre of the room, his eyes glittering and triumphant. "You have a weakness, do you not, Doctor? It is your sense of compassion. I reasoned that if you could make it here - to the time-vessel - you would soon realise that you can do nothing to stop us, and that this realisation would paralyse you." He smiled, cocking his head slightly. "And I was right."

He stroked the shining surface of the block with a gloved palm. "When I discovered this vessel, it travelled from 1999 to 2109 - a short gift from its dying engines. What I saw there made me realise that I had a destiny to fulfill. There was my dream: the Reich triumphant, supreme, dominating the earth, the seas and the skies. As the ship's engines died and it slipped back to 1999, I knew what the remaining days of my life would be filled with - working towards that goal."

"You saw the future that you would create," said the Doctor, grimly.

Droessler tapped the shining block. "In here - I saw it in here and I built it," he said, swinging his arms out to encompass the pyramidal chamber, "here. The first task was to rebuild my own aging and dying body - and with the X'ychaad's biogenic technology, I did just that. Renewed in both flesh and mind, I created the gravitic seed that would become the Shadow and smuggled it out of Egypt and to Berlin. There, using my contacts in various organisations, I managed to procure funding, technicians and equipment, and the real work began."

"You used the power of the Shadow to slip back in time and make your job easier," filled in the Doctor.

Droessler nodded slowly.

"And each time we used it, the more powerful it became. Soon our trips became less haphazard and more defined. We travelled to key points in Twentieth century history and interrupted the course of events, reshaping them to our purpose. Slowly but surely, we began to shape the future that I had foreseen. Decades of research, billions of marks, tens of thousands of lives; what price a world, Doctor?"

"You created something abhorrent," the Doctor croaked, hoarsely.

"We made ourselves Gods!" Droessler thundered. "We assumed our rightful place as the supreme beings of this universe! We exterminated those who dared oppose us! We ruled as the strong should rule! We moulded the world by sheer force of will into the very stuff of our true destiny!"

The Doctor shook his head. "You have no idea how derivative you sound, Droessler. If I've learned anything in my long life, it's that there's always one of you in every universe."

Droessler hissed, leaning sharply across the shining viewing block to stare directly into the silver shadows of the Doctor's eyes.

"There has only been one true obstacle to our ascendancy Doctor – *you*. Even now I cannot determine exactly where and when you came from, but it does not matter now. Your interference will end here, now and forever."

A hydraulic whine - and Droessler's hand whipped up, a compact phase-laser beamer gripped in his fist. Two more whines, and two more arms shot out from the front of his thick coat, aiming similar weapons at Tamara and Carter.

"Don't even think it, young lady," Droessler warned Tamara. "Nor you, old man. My augmented reaction-times will have me pressing the trigger before the thoughts even reach your limbs." He sneered at the trio, caught behind the points of his beamers and retreating into a knot. The Doctor put an arm around both Tamara and Carter's shoulders.

"If you're going to kill us, then kill us now, Droessler - don't play games to satisfy your ego."

Droessler raised a thin eyebrow. "Kill you, Doctor? I think not. You see, you have something which we rather need."

"You won't get it!" shouted Tamara, feeling rather foolish and childish for doing so.

Droessler's cruel smile widened. "Oh, but I think we will. Allow me the small luxury of a brief explanation: you see, we realised early on that there was some psychic connection between the members of the original Tutankhamun expedition and the Navigator. Try as we might, we could never alter them or their behaviour. Our researchers theorised that they were as much an intrinsic part of the prime causal node as the Navigator itself was."

"And possibly therefore, a threat."

"We realised that the Navigator would not want to remain trapped in the bubble universe it had unwittingly created and that it might seek to escape - or try to somehow summon help to undermine or thwart our plans."

The Doctor paused - then blinked. "Me?"

Droessler grinned, an unpleasant split across his face. "Our researchers tracked your arrival from outside the bubble and surmised then that your arrival had not been coincidental. They then delved deep into the Osirian data-core and discovered obscure references to a race of time-travellers from the planet Rassilon who made it their duty to maintain temporal balance within the universe."

"Dear me," murmured the Doctor evenly. "It sounds like the Osirians need someone to update their files."

"You were the threat we had been anticipating – not Carter. The Navigator was connected to Carter, yes, but only because it was waiting for a much more important contact."

The Doctor cleared his throat. "Yes, well, all this is extremely flattering, no doubt, but -"

The beamer in Droessler's hand jumped slightly, keeping its focus on the Doctor's head. He froze.

Droessler touched a control at his belt and the entranceway to the vessel became suddenly crowded. Fifty black-uniformed Nazi scientists stalked into the chamber, their pale, immortal faces half-shrouded behind smoked visors, their thin bodies clad in sleek, protective black suits; on their arms the cruel bent cross. Heavy cables snaked from a central power unit on their chests to contact points at shoulders, elbows, hips and ankles. They moved with an automated regularity - a mechanic precision that seemed obscene when matched with their humanoid shapes.

Droessler continued. "The Navigator's data core contained much information about the universe, Doctor, and your interferences show up across much of it like the grubby fingerprints of a small boy. Bit by bit, piece by piece, over hundreds of years of analysis, we reconstructed who and what you are. Eventually we connected your identification as extracted from the Navigator's data to the species data on your people contained in the memory core of the Osirian ship. We had you. For centuries we tracked you, waiting for you to emerge. I knew where you might most possibly go, and hid myself in Egypt's sandy embrace, waiting for you. When you arrived at the mortuary temple, I sent word, and - well, and the rest you know."

"And this somewhat fresher body of yours? I understand you had a bit of a sore encounter with a Shadow."

"It is a shell - something behind which we hide." Droessler smiled. "We serve the Eternal Reich far better when the process is complete - as will you."

"Ah - here we go, the reason for all this time and effort spent following me around your strange little bubble universe."

Droessler's smile faded. "We want out, Doctor - out into the real universe. Yes, I know as you must that this is simply a pale imitation of reality. A shadow of truth. You will surrender your time vessel - the TARDIS - to us and pilot it as we direct, out of the bubble, puncturing it and freeing the Shadow."

"And you expect me to help you?"

"You will have no choice - help us or we will destroy your companions. I believe your capacity for compassion has been a weakness in the past. It will be so again."

"You know, you lot really don't ever change, do you?" He frowned.

"You will do it, Doctor - or I will kill Ms. Scott and Herr Carter -" Droessler paused.

"No," he said slowly, a high-note trace of triumph, of satisfaction. "If you don't do this - I will convert your companions."

"You can't..." the Doctor murmured. "You can't..." He seemed at a loss for words. Suddenly, Carter elbowed his way past Tamara.

"If that's the sacrifice that's needed, then I'm not afraid of it," he said suddenly, his voice having discovered a new strength.

"Carter!" the Doctor barked. "Don't be a fool – you have no idea what you're saying."

Droessler turned his undead gaze on the man.

"I do, Doctor," Carter said, even more firmly. "It's a simple thing - the Earth and the Universe as we know it, or the Earth and the Universe overrun by these... things. There is no choice - none whatsoever. No price I can pay would be too great - and I am ready to pay that price."

Tamara looked at Carter with surprise. With his white hair, sun-wrinkled face and rumpled tweeds, he seemed an unlikely hero. But there was no doubting the courage of his convictions.

Tamara squared her shoulders. "In that case, you can count me with you, Carter."

"Tamara!" the Doctor shouted. "Don't be an idiot!"

She shrugged, a little half-smile on her face. "We save the Universe on such a regular basis, Doctor, it's sometimes hard to remember that it sometimes requires a dose of self-sacrifice to keep it going. You once asked me if there was anything greater than myself that I believed in - perhaps this is it: right, justice, the Universe as it should be. If I'm going to lay down my life for anything, I'd rather it was this. Besides, it's not as if I haven't had a good innings."

They stood there, their lives forfeit for the future.

"You see?" the Doctor whispered. "There's no accounting for the human spirit."

Droessler chuckled and cocked his head. "Their actions are logical - and expected. However, Doctor, you forget that we are not concerned with their response to this present situation." He raised the beamer in his hand. A flick of a cold finger and a lancing dart of white-hot light shot out, drilling a burnt hole through the muscle of Tamara's left thigh. There was a smell of roasting flesh, of burnt leather, and she collapsed onto the floor with a thin scream.

Droessler lowered his beamer and looked back at the Doctor, his eyes glowing in barely suppressed triumph. "I am only concerned with yours."

The Doctor and Carter rushed to Tamara's side, tearing strips off the Doctor's coat to bandage her leg. The beamer had cauterised the wound, so there was little blood - but the hole was ragged and oozed ichor and pain. Tamara's face was pale and sweaty - her eyes flickered. As the Doctor leant closer, she grabbed his waistcoat. The stars shifted underneath her grasp.

"Don't... don't do it, Doctor - I'm not worth it..."

The Doctor closed his eyes. Perhaps he had played through this scene too often, perhaps he was tired of death - too tired of the death of companions to risk it again. He shook his head and removed Tamara's clutching hands from his shirt. He stood up to face the dark pair

"I'll do it," he said quietly. "On the condition that you allow us free passage in the TARDIS away from here once the bubble has been breached."

"Accepted," Droessler said, his voice edged with a breathless excitement.

"No!" Tamara coughed.

"You can't, Doctor!" cried Carter.

"We have no choice," the Doctor said, turning to them both, his eyes dark and hollow. "Their victory is complete. We have to think of ourselves now."

Droessler raised one black and silver hand. Four cyber-Nazis stepped forward.

"Convey the Doctor's companions. We depart for the Timelord's TARDIS."

A whirl of places and times, each one melding into the next with a fluid amalgamation of space and time. They were led through the ragged net of the Nexus' causal web. Forests, mountains, rivers, cities, slums, seas, winter, summer, spring they passed through them all. Through a haze of pain, borne between two grinding Nazis, Tamara imagined the world and the universe she knew pass by her gaze for the last time. The Doctor walked ahead of her, unable to meet her gaze it seemed - crushed and beaten by the ruthless emotionless efficiency of the dark undead horror.

Dunnhale, 1944. The village pond had been drained. The TARDIS stood mired in dark, drying mud.

Droessler turned to the Doctor. "Open your craft, Doctor." His beamer waved slightly in the direction of Carter and the limp Tamara. "It is time."

Tamara gasped, her voice a thin, pain-choked whisper. "Doctor - don't!"

The Doctor reached down and grasped her hand gently in hers, his eyes never leaving Droessler.

"Sometimes there are sacrifices that need to be made in order to survive," he said, but he seemed not to be talking to her. He dropped her hand carefully. "I'm ready."

The TARDIS console room seemed cold and unnaturally still as they entered. The Doctor moved to the console itself and began preparing the vessel for takeoff, as Droessler and a detachment of Nazis filed into the vessel. Tamara was laid down on the Roman dining couch in the far corner of the room; Carter squatted next to her, unsure what else to do.

The Doctor looked up from the console, checked that all were aboard, and sealed the doors. They closed on the world outside. He flicked a few more switches and then looked up at the Lieutenant, his face blank and resigned.

"We're ready."

"Then activate the departure sequence," Droessler hissed, one hand bailing into a crushing fist. "And let the conquest begin."

"No..." came Tamara's near-silent protest from the couch. If the Doctor heard, he ignored it, and pulled the dematerialisation lever. Artron engines fired into life, and with a chorus of groaning and wheezing, the blue police box faded away into the vortex.

Aboard, the sound of the engines muted into the background as the all-pervasive hum of travel swelled and took its place. The Doctor opened the viewing port and a vision of the endless swirling passage of the vortex filled its screen. The passage was bent and twisted in on itself, folded over into the local space-time region of the Nexus. Through the folds, a boundary could be seen: a wall of mathematics that defined the six-dimensional parameters of the Calabai-Yau anomaly. Towards its centre, there was a black knot of continual inrushing - a constant implosion: the Shadow, lurking at the very heart of the bubble, locked in a perpetual embrace with the core of the Osirian space-time vessel.

"We are approaching the limits of the Nexus bubble," the Doctor reported. "Impact in thirty seconds."

Droessler glanced at the screen. "We are near the moment of absolute victory," he said, a tremble of excitement and anticipation marring his whisper.

The Doctor regarded them with blank eyes and then looked back up at the screen.

"Ten seconds."

The wall of swirling colour loomed larger and larger in the view-port, swamping everything else.

"Five."

"No..." Tamara whispered again, tears welling up in her eyes. The Doctor had betrayed them - betrayed untold billions of lives; betrayed her. Carter looked up at the Nazi beamers trained on him and clenched his impotent and useless fists. The enormity of what was about to happen was so overwhelming he could barely conceive it.

"Three."

The corps of Nazi troopers turned their heads slowly as one unit towards the view-port, drawn inexorably towards the climactic vision of the death of two universes.

"One."

The TARDIS shuddered, shook. On the screen, the rotating wall spun and then dissipated as they hit it. Fragments of space-time sheared off in indistinct directions. The Calabai-Yau bubble was pierced. The TARDIS continued to rumble, absorbing shockwaves from the impact.

"We have exited the Nexus," the Doctor reported quietly and calmly. He spun a small control and the view on the screen in front of them moved. There was the Nexus, an impossible bubble blooming inwards into itself, being absorbed by the growing and fading black mass of the Shadow.

"The bubble has collapsed?" Droessler asked.

"Is collapsing, yes," replied the Doctor evenly. The shuddering grew. "Local space-time is folding in on itself, and the Shadow is absorbing it, translating reality here to real space-time. The effect will take several more seconds."

"Excellent, Doctor! Excellent!" Droessler boomed. "The Universe is ours - and your part in this has ended." He raised his beamer. The file of Nazi's behind him raised their weapons. Tamara could hear the whine as they powered up.

The Doctor took half a step backwards. "You promised us our lives, Droessler!" he shouted.

Droessler's voice was heavy with gleeful cruelty. "Ah - promises..." He shrugged. "Not worth the paper they're written on, I believe the saying is." He raised his black metal fist.

"Destroy them!"

Something roared. A shape boiled and bubbled in the air above the central console. A halo of seething blackness, a rippling apparition that began to coalesce and gather strength within the space of a second. Something writhed and twisted - a cacophony of ghostly, insubstantial tendrils and tentacles that erupted from a bloated, reptilian core. Eyes roved and mouths smacked, wet with rot and mucus, silently spitting and mewling. It drifted on oleaginous things that might have been wings, and flapped against nothingness. The abomination was encrusted with ancient artefacts: gleaming crown, crook and flail sceptre, jewelled collar - the regalia of an Egyptian Pharaoh. The Navigator.

There was a sucking, roaring sound, as if the very fabric of reality were being shredded. The apparition shifted - changed; from deep within the thing, a globe, pulsing with unearthly dark light seemed to rush forward, lance-straight beams of energy striking out from its dark, insubstantial heart. Scintillating blackness bloomed and blossomed - raw energy channelled through the psychonic apparition. The file of Death's Head troopers twisted and exploded into shards of rotten black nothingness.

The TARDIS jolted. Bellowing wordlessly, Tamara leapt from the couch, Carter right behind her. Together they landed on one of the Troopers, jerking it to a half-crouch. It swung one powerful arm and belted Tamara across the face, throwing her skidding across the now-sloping TARDIS floor. Carter shouted something and beat at the pale face with his fists. It crumbled, exposing the raw, skeletal frame sagging with dry white flesh and snaked wires. The Trooper shrieked a metal tear of a cry, firing its beamer and dropping it at the same time. The lancing shot from the weapon slammed into Droessler's chest, who staggered back towards the TARDIS console, smoke erupting from his damaged torso.

Carter rolled to the floor and scrabbled for the weapon. The Trooper stumbled backwards into the blackness of the Navigator's apparition, clutching at its crushed face. Carter squeezed the beamer, hardly knowing what he was doing. A white flash leapt from the device and hammered into the Trooper. It erupted in a shower of sparks

and disintegrating flesh. Overload shunted massive electrical discharges along the power-cables that entwined Tamara's limbs. Joint-nodes flared and blew apart; small hot fires ran like worms along her arms, legs and chest. Somewhere in the explosions, a scream erupted from the remains of the human inside as the battery in the skull melted down, shattering the head from within like a rotten egg. Biological and chemical detritus ran like molten wax from the remains of the helmet as the body slumped to its knees and fell facedown on the floor.

Shaking, Carter turned on the floor and pointed the beamer at the wounded Lieutenant. The Doctor came and stood by him, slowly taking the weapon in his own hands.

"This is meaningless, Doctor," Droessler said carefully, his voice rattling with damage. "There is nothing you can do now to restore the Nexus - you cannot defeat us. This defiance is pointless." He brought his beamer up slowly, leaning against the TARDIS console and pushing himself up on his feet. "We are both armed - we will both fire our weapons and both be destroyed. Such a sacrifice would still be in vain: I will simply be replaced and the conquest will go on. You, however, will be dead."

The Doctor shook his head. "You still don't understand, do you?" he said quietly. "This isn't about us. There are no sacrifices we could make that would do any good. But there is still one sacrifice to be made..."

He fired the beamer.

The TARDIS console exploded, the rotor shattering in an eruption of glass and brilliant energy that engulfed and incinerated Droessler.

The Nexus collapsed, the Shadow blossomed, and the Calabai-Yau anomaly merged with the surrounding space-time network.

Darkness. In the darkness, two solid forms faded into existence - one a dark green pyramid, carved with alien hieroglyphs, the second a much-battered blue Police Box, its flashing light the only source of illumination in the absolute nothingness that surrounded it.

The Doctor led the way out of the TARDIS. Tamara limped out, one arm around Carter's shoulder.

"Where are we?" she whispered.

The Doctor rubbed a hand across his tired eyes. He still couldn't quite believe what he had just had to do.

"A Calabai-Yau anomaly," he said.

"But I thought you said that it would be destroyed - merged with the real universe?" Carter asked.

"It was - that is to say, it merged with what was outside it. But it wasn't the real universe." He placed one tender and apologetic hand on the Police Box facade. He sighed. "The damage I inflicted on the TARDIS caused it to malfunction in exactly the same way as the Osirian vessel - creating a new Calabai-Yau envelope outside the original one. When that original Nexus dissolved, its causal network merged with this one - but since there wasn't anything in this new Nexus..." his voice trailed off, weary and empty.

"It was destroyed?" Tamara asked, hardly bearing the wait for the answer.

"In effect: yes. Deleted as an unsustainable paradox." He looked at Carter.

"You're now the only thing that survived from that universe."

"Me and the Osirian vessel," Carter said, nodding towards the green pyramid.

The Doctor stroked his beard. "The original piece of time-space flotsam that started this whole thing off."

He led the way into the craft. It was heavily damaged within - the voyage through the Shadow had left its mark. Columns were cracked and toppled; computer screens fizzled with static, lights pulsed and flickered unsteadily. In the blue pod, the body of the Navigator slumped listlessly. As the trio came into the centre of the damaged chamber, the viewing block flashed into life and the image of a fuzzy blue ball of fading light materialised. A voice drifted painfully through the air, impressing itself on the trio's minds rather than coming across as sound.

"Welcome - although this is more a farewell than a greeting."

"The X'ychaad," the Doctor whispered to Tamara and Carter.

"I can no longer sustain my electromagnetic functions, Doctor - my dissipation is imminent. I believe this is what biological entities such as yourself refer to as death."

"Isn't there anything we can do, Doctor?" asked Carter.

The X'ychaad replied. "I feel no despair - only relief that this situation has been somehow resolved, and the anomaly dispersed without damaging the continuum. You showed immense courage Doctor - and you, Howard Carter and Tamara Scott."

The Doctor cleared his throat, somewhat embarrassed. "I wish we could have met under different circumstances, Navigator."

"Yes - I feel we must be kindred spirits, Doctor. I too am both a scientist and explorer. When our own cultural scientists - archaeologists, I believe you call them? - discovered this craft, I was instantly determined to be the one to lead our explorations of the past. There was a thrill..." The voice faded and then returned, slipping closer to dissolution. "A thrill unlike anything I had ever experienced before. A chance to explore where none of my kind had ever been. To push the boundaries of our knowledge further than we had ever thought possible." The voice faded.

"Navigator?" the Doctor called. "Navigator?"

It returned, faint and tired. "I knew I must call for help, and so I did."

"A psychonic inducer of some kind."

"A component of the survival pod. I tried as best I could to contact the members of the archaeological team - the only people I felt I could trust. It did little good. By then the human creatures were replicating my technology and I realised that their ultimate goal must be raw conquest."

"So you delayed them?"

"I tried. I tried but my strength was failing me. So I deleted the operational routines of the data-core, making the Osirian vessel useless to anyone save an Osirian. It was suicide - I knew I could never escape the anomaly now. But then... I found you, Doctor." There was an aching pause, and then the voice returned, fainter and softer than before. "I feel that the end is upon me, Doctor. Forgive my errors, and receive my thanks for your aid."

"Navigator, I -"

"Farewell." It was a whisper on the ether, a gentle sigh of a breeze. "There is no more time. Farewell..."



A trip to visit the opening of Tutankhamen's tomb is disrupted when the TARDIS crash-lands in what appears to be England during the air raids of the Second World War.

But strange planes criss-cross the skies, and in a mysteriously deserted English village, the Doctor and Tamara find a terrified Howard Carter surrounded by Egyptian relics and haunted by the terrifying apparition summoned from the distant past.

When the village is stormed by dead Nazi troops, the time-travellers begin to uncover a dark parallel universe on the verge of unravelling into our own.

A crashed time ship and the blindness of all-too human dark ambition force the Doctor to make the ultimate sacrifice in order to destroy the horrors of the Tomb of Shadows.

This story was originally featured in the Season 30 Omnibus

This is another in a series of original fan authored Doctor Who fiction published by The Doctor Who Project featuring the eighth Doctor as played by Jeremy Banks-Walker

ISBN 0-918894-28-X

