

Split Infinities

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“Who are you?”

“My name is Doctor Jonathan Smythe.”

“How did you get here?” inquired the reptilian interrogator.

“I don’t know.”

“Whom do you work for?”

“I don’t remember working for anybody,” came the exasperated reply. The metal disc pressed to his forehead glowed in response to his answer.

“What is your job?”

A pause. “I seem to recall stopping a number of alien incursions on various planets.”

A murmur ran through the other reptilians in the room. The interrogator nodded, pleased to get a positive answer. He returned to his task.

“Did you come here at the request of the Mortrexly government?”

“I can’t remember!” Smythe shouted in frustration. The disc glowed again, brighter this time.

“What *can* you remember?”

A sigh. “Far too little, it would seem.”

* * * * *

Doctor Jonathan Smythe stretched, enjoying the feel of the muscles under his skin as he did so. He threw back the covers of his bed and, placing his bare feet on the shiny, warm floor, he headed for the small bathroom in his living quarters.

He washed quickly, and then stood studying his reflection in the mirror over the washstand. He stroked his shaped black beard, looking deep into the clear green eyes that returned his level gaze from the mirror.

He had no recollection of how he’d come to be on this planet. There had been no wreckage found in the vicinity of where he was discovered. Had someone left him here? Had he ejected from a crashing ship, his fall broken by some revolutionary method he couldn’t remember or duplicate?

Smythe shook his head, his reflection repeating the gesture. His only clear memories were those of the last week, his first being that of the scaly face looking down at him. He had flinched, not expecting a reptilian. But then, whom had he been expecting to see?

The Mortrexly that had found him seemed more afraid of this strange being with smooth skin and hairy face than Smythe had been of it. Eventually overcoming its fear, his rescuer had brought him before the elders of its town.

When they had been just as baffled by his odd appearance, one of them had called a friend in the capital city over a video link. It was soon after that the Council of Seven had arrived.

The Council were advisors to the government of the Mortrexly and wanted to see first hand this stranger. After many questions, none of which Smythe could answer, one of them suggested that he could be the expert they had requested. This had piqued Smythe’s curiosity but he had kept quiet, wanting to know more about this race before saying anything.

One of the members of the Council had then produced what he called a ‘Determinator’. It was a flat metal disc that was applied to the forehead. If the wearer gave a true answer, the disc would glow. If an untruth were uttered, the disc would provide a *reminder* to answer truthfully, in the form of an electric shock.

Smythe agreed to undergo the Determinator, in the hope that it might jog a memory or two. The questioning had begun again, though it seemed to provide the Mortrexly with more information than it did him.

He had apparently passed the Determinator test. The Council declared him a friend of the Mortrexly race and brought him to the capital to meet with the highest-ranking members of the government. They in turn had briefed him on the Centox problem.

The Mortrexly shared the planet Epsilus with an insectoid race known as the Centox. Epsilus was divided fairly equally between them, but both sides wanted to expand their territory. The only problem was that both races also had similar levels of technology and neither wanted to commit to a full-scale conflict without some guarantee of success.

That was where Smythe came in. Basically the Mortrexly needed an edge, something that would tip the balance of power in their favour. So they had called upon the services of an off world expert. It seemed that Smythe was that expert.

And so the last week had passed, with Smythe giving the benefit of his advice and whatever experience he could remember to various government officials, military strategists and covert operations departments.

Smythe considered his reflection. Where was he from? Who did he call his friends? More important, probably: whom did he call his enemies?

A thought surfaced. Somebody had once told him, "You can judge a man by the quality of his enemies." Who was that? Where had they been when it was said?

It was no good, the faint wisp of memory was gone, like fog disappearing as sunshine breaks through it.

Smythe turned from the mirror and returned to his bedroom, where he dressed for his morning meeting.

* * * * *

As Smythe sat in the back seat of the hovercar, on his way to his office, he thought about the dream.

During the week he had been on Epsilus, he had dreamt every night. And the dreams were getting more and more vivid with each night that passed.

Last night it had been green men. Big green men with toughened hides and helmets. They carried weapons, guns that produced sonic disruptions. But Smythe found their weakness. The big green men were vulnerable to heat and he had been able to use that against them.

Only in the dream he wasn't himself. It was difficult to judge, but the dream Smythe seemed shorter, and possibly older. And he certainly didn't wear smart suits, unlike the real Smythe.

The night before, the dream had been about silver giants with blank faces who were afraid of gold. Only in that dream, he had curly hair and wore a ridiculous, trailing scarf.

Smythe shook his head. It didn't do to dwell on these dreams, despite the fact that part of his mind was telling him they were important. His top priority was helping the Mortrexly - they were paying for his services after all. A close second was recovering his memory.

"But what if the dreams *are* your memories?" said a small inner voice.

What a stupid thought Smythe decided as the hovercar drew up outside the building that housed his office.

* * * * *

Tamara Scott looked out through the transparent section of the dome, over the city of the Centox. The other dome-shaped hives of the insectoid race were painted vivid colours, making a patchwork as far as the eye could see. Well, the normal, human eye anyway.

While she looked out of the high window, her thoughts were elsewhere. Only it wasn't somewhere she could pin down. A fragment of memory, an incident from the past. A rare

occurrence in the past week, a week in which she had found that her memory in general was pretty much a blank slate.

Frowning at her reflection, her mind drifted back to the first memory she had about the planet Epsilus, a week ago.

* * * * *

She woke up on hard ground, blinking against the light of a strong sun overhead. Dragging herself to her feet, she realised quickly that she couldn't remember how she had got to where she was, why she was here or indeed where 'here' was.

A swift reconnaissance of the area showed she was on a pathway through the centre of a field network. Tall stalks of purple straw waved at almost head height. She could see a settlement in the distance, probably a farmstead, so she set out on foot towards it.

A strange creature greeted her knock on the doorway of the domed building. Looking like a giant skinny fly, but without wings, the creature chattered quickly in a strange language, bringing others of its kind to see the visitor. Giant insects soon surrounded Tamara, looming over her and talking fast.

Oddly, as they spoke more she began to understand their language. It was as if it was being instantaneously translated into English for her. So I'm English, a part of her mind concluded, despite the fact that there wasn't anything to tell her if being English was a good thing or a bad one.

The insect people decided that their visitor was suspicious - and so it was that she found herself locked in an outbuilding, with a nervous fly person guarding her. She went quietly, as she didn't want to cause a scene until she knew more about where she was and, if possible, why.

A night passed. The following day, after Tamara had been given a drink of sweet tasting water and some strange-looking food, which she hadn't eaten, she was brought from her prison and shown to a new member of the insect race. This one was taller than the farmers and had a painted body shell. It seemed obvious that this was some sort of official and Tamara decided it was time she had her say.

"Look, I've spent a night locked up, which I didn't mind too much, but can you tell me at least where I am?"

The official looked surprised, but quickly covered this. It spoke slowly, as if to a child.

"Can you understand me?"

Tamara actually smiled, for the first time she could remember. "Of course I can understand you. And I assume from the question that you can understand me too. So, where am I?"

"You are on a farm close to the border," the official told her. He paused, as if waiting for a reaction, but got none. He continued. "We are also close to the main city complex. Now, who are you and where did you come from? Are you a spy for the Mortrexly?"

"The who?" Tamara asked. "I'm not familiar with your race. Are you called Mortrexly?"

The official made a high pitched coughing sound that sounded almost like a snort of disgust. "You insult us with such a question. And if you know nothing of our race, how do you know our language? Explain yourself!"

Tamara sighed. The only thing for it was to tell the truth.

"I can't remember."

That coughing, snorting sound came again. "I find that hard to believe."

Tamara scowled. "It's the truth. I have no idea how I got here, where here is or why I'm here. I have very fragmented memories of my past, of who I am and where I come from. Take it or leave it, I'm not lying to you."

The official turned to their host. "Do you have a Truth Seeker present?"

The insect bobbed its head. "We do. I shall fetch her at once."

“Truth Seeker?” Tamara questioned.

“A Centox with the ability to sense truth and deception in others,” the official explained.

Moments later, another insect creature was brought forward. It was shorter and thinner than any other that Tamara had seen so far. It appeared to be nervous, if her reading of the body language was anything to go by.

The official spoke in deferential tones to the thin insect. “Truth Seeker, I respectfully request your opinion in a matter of possible deception.”

The Truth Seeker waved the slim leg towards Tamara. “Is this the subject?” The voice was higher pitched than any of the aliens Tamara had encountered.

“It is,” the official replied. “The being claims to have no recent memory. Can you confirm or deny this?”

“I shall do my best,” the Truth Seeker replied.

The alien shuffled toward Tamara, who held her ground. As the thin and spindly forelegs of the creature brushed gently against the dark skin of her face, she flinched slightly.

“Do not be afraid,” the alien said. “The process is not painful.”

Tamara relaxed and felt a slight tickling sensation at the back of her head. The feeling was almost pleasant and caused Tamara to smile.

The insect’s legs withdrew from her face and the tickling sensation went with them.

The Truth Seeker turned to the official. “This being, this human, speaks the truth. There is a natural block over the majority of her memories, through which a small amount of them are leaking. Eventually the block will break and the memories will flood in, but until then there is little that can be done. They must return naturally. In the meantime, she is no threat to our people. Indeed, she may be of help to us.”

The official bobbed its head. “Thank you for your time.” The Truth Seeker returned the gesture and withdrew into the farmstead.

Turning to Tamara, the official spoke. “I had to determine the truth of your statements, I hope you understand.”

Tamara nodded. “Of course. Now what happens?”

“I can take you to our capital city, where you will be given food and shelter until your memory returns enough for you to determine why you are here. Tell me, what do you remember?”

Making an effort, Tamara concentrated on what her mind would allow her to see. “Fragments of childhood. Some adult memories. Travelling to other worlds... though I’m not sure how or who with.” She frowned. “And working undercover.” Her face brightened again. “I’m some sort of espionage expert!”

“That is interesting,” the official said. “Our government recently employed an off world expert to assist in our struggle for supremacy on our world. That expert is due at any time. Maybe you are she.”

Tamara considered this. “Maybe I am.”

The official made a small bow towards her. “Then let me take you to our capital, not as a lost soul but as an honoured guest of the government.”

* * * * *

Tamara returned to the present. All that had happened a week ago. Since then she had been given the best guest quarters possible and had been consulting with the ministers of the Centox government on a daily basis about new ways to gather intelligence on their enemy across the border, the Mortrexly.

A door opening behind her interrupted her thoughts. She turned to see the distinctive painted carapace of Trenx, the Minister for Intelligence.

“We have the prototype ready,” the Centox told her.

“Excellent,” Tamara replied, crossing the room to join him. “I can’t wait to see it in action.”

* * * * *

Grey.

Everything was grey.

Swirling, vibrant nebulas were differing shades of grey. The sands of deserts, crops in fields and oceans beating against shorelines. All were grey.

Grey. Grey. Everything was grey.

GRAE!

She awoke with a start, almost as if someone had called her name. But looking around, she saw that she was alone.

Her next thought was to wonder why she was sleeping on the floor of the Cloister Room.

Sitting up, Grae ran her hand through her recently shorn red hair. It was still strange after wearing it long for such a time. But she liked it and would get used to it. As would the Doctor and Tamara.

A shiver ran up her spine at the thought of her two best friends. It resolved into a prickly feeling at the nape of her neck.

Standing, another thought crossed her mind. She could feel that the TARDIS was stopped, so why hadn’t either the Doctor or Tamara come looking for her?

Again she got the prickly feeling at the back of her neck. Deciding it was time for some answers, she set off for the Console Room.

* * * * *

Grae was surprised to find the Console Room empty when she arrived. It wasn’t like the Doctor and Tamara to go off exploring without her.

She glanced at the console and got another surprise. While the time rotor was indeed at rest, it wasn’t in the down position. That was the standard place for a time rotor when a TARDIS landed, down in the centre of the console. But the rotor was at the top of its motion, as if stopped suddenly rather than landing properly.

So something was wrong, as she had suspected. She approached the console with a little apprehension, carefully operating the scanner switch. At least the console itself wasn’t live. The shutters over the screen slid slowly apart.

Time for the third surprise. The swirling colours of the vortex greeted her. But again, something wasn’t quite right. She peered closer. Through the greens, blues and purples she could just make out a landscape, fields of crops blowing in a breeze. Then the scene subtly shifted, this time showing a small town.

Grae shook her head, closing the scanner shutters. She had no idea what the image meant, apart from that the TARDIS seemed to be stuck somewhere. But where? In the vortex? Or halfway between the vortex and a destination?

And what had become of the Doctor and Tamara? Grim faced, Grae set off to search the rooms nearest the Console Room, hoping to find either her friends or some clue to where they had gone.

* * * * *

Doctor Smythe scrolled through the information on the pad, reading far quicker than any of his Mortrexly hosts. In fact, somewhere at the back of his mind, he was sure that his reading speed

was faster than that of an average human being. He wasn't sure however if that should worry him or not.

He nodded, handing the pad back to Security Prime Exote. "Everything seems to be in order. I'm sure any Centox attacking that weapons facility will find a few surprises waiting for them."

Exote bowed slightly, his long tongue flickering between thin, scaly lips. "You are most generous in your praise, Doctor Smythe. It was you, after all, who recommended these incursion counter measures."

Smythe smiled, brushing an invisible speck of dust from his blue, star patterned waistcoat. "Credit where it's due, Security Prime. Your people have been quick to grasp my strategies. They deserve a measure of your praise as well."

Governor Prime Axane spoke up from his place at the head of the table. "While we of the Mortrexly Ruling Council appreciate the advice and assistance you have given to us over the past week, all of your help has been in the areas of defence against outside attack. Can you give us the same degree of help with attack strategies of our own?"

Smythe frowned from the other side of the conference table. "Well, as far as I can remember, I don't do battle plans. Not really in my nature, helping people to kill other people. I would rather be foiling invasions than helping them."

"That seems a strange attitude for an expert in warfare to take," commented Axane.

"I never claimed to be an expert in warfare," Smythe replied, holding up his hands.

"Then why are you here?" demanded the Governor Prime, anger rising in his voice.

"If I may intervene?" said another Mortrexly from further down the table. This was Yxani, representative of the Council of Seven, advisors to the Ruling Council. He was also the one who had given Smythe the initial Determinator test.

"If you must, Yxani," sighed Axane.

"Doctor Smythe never did claim to be expert in the ways of war," Yxani replied. "What he did claim was to know about alien invasions and how to prevent them. Therefore he does not have to know about offensive weaponry, merely defensive."

"I couldn't have put it better myself," Smythe said, favouring Yxani with a smile. The Mortrexly bowed slightly.

Axane didn't look happy, glaring first at Yxani, then at Smythe. But for now he didn't have any further comments. "Very well, this meeting is concluded. We shall return tomorrow to discuss the strengthening of the defensive screens along the north western boundary."

Chairs scraped noisily as seven Mortrexly and one non-Mortrexly got up from the conference table. Smythe shook hands briefly with Security Prime Exote, and then headed towards the door and the car waiting to return him to his rooms.

In the corridor, he felt a hand land firmly on his shoulder, ruffling the material of his crisp white dress shirt. Smythe turned smartly on his heel, catching the person behind slightly off balance.

It was Yxani, who seemed surprised by Smythe's speed of movement. The reptilian's face split into a grin.

"Remind me never to try and sneak up on you in a dark alley, Doctor Smythe."

"I shall," Smythe replied. "Can I help you, Councillor Prime?"

"I was just hoping that I did the right thing back there, defending you. I hope my words will not be used against me in future."

Smythe considered for a moment. "Did you believe what you said? Do you trust me?"

Yxani nodded without hesitation. "I was there when you took the Determinator test. I trust you to aid my people to the best of your abilities."

Again Smythe smiled at his ally. "Then you need never worry about your words being used against you, for they were spoken truly and honestly." He patted Yxani on the shoulder. "Goodnight, old chap."

“Goodnight, Doctor,” Yxani said, turning away.

For a moment Smythe froze, the slight echo of Yxani’s voice reverberating inside his mind. A memory flitted across his mind’s eye, a dark haired woman in a plain woollen cardigan and skirt, standing in a doorway. The door had a pattern of indented circles upon it.

“Goodnight, Doctor,” the woman in the memory was saying.

Then, as suddenly as it had arrived, the flash of memory dimmed again and Smythe was left, alone in a corridor of the Mortrexly Ruling Council building. Shaking his head he continued on his way, knowing that a long night of strange dreams lay ahead.

* * * * *

“It’s very impressive,” Tamara decided. She peered at the object on the palm of her hand. “I knew your technicians could manage it.”

“It was your idea, Tamara Scott,” replied Trenx, the Minister of Intelligence. “We simply put your plan into action.”

“I’m surprised you didn’t think of something like this before,” she said, smiling at Trenx.

The insectoid frowned, or at least arranged his features into what Tamara had come to think of as a frown. “So am I, considering we have been able to use miniaturised electronics for some years now. But we still do not know if it works.”

“Then I think we should give it a test drive.” She carefully moved the object of their scrutiny onto a nearby table.

“Agreed.” Trenx summoned another Centox, this one carrying a control box. Trenx moved to a communicator on the wall. “We are ready for the first test.”

There was no reply from the unit on the wall, but moments later a trio of Centox shuffled in from the next room. They were representatives of the government. Trenx turned to address them in person.

“You are here to observe a test that could revolutionise our spying techniques and give us valuable new intelligence on the hated Mortrexly.”

The trio rustled their legs together in a sign of approval. Trenx activated a wall-mounted screen and nodded to the technician with the control box.

He acknowledged by operating the joystick on the box. The artificial ‘fly’ on the table lifted slowly into the air. As the Centox operator became more confident, the synthetic insect flew straight and true.

As it settled back into its original position, there was another rustle of approval from the trio of official insectoids.

Trenx watched them leave the room again with satisfaction. He turned to Tamara.

“They were very impressed,” he told her.

Tamara grinned. “So how about we go to the next stage?”

“A more thorough test?” Trenx inquired.

“That was what I was thinking,” Tamara admitted. “It needs a proper road test.”

Trenx made a rasping sound that Tamara had come to know as laughter. “Sometimes I do not understand your references.”

“Don’t worry,” she replied. “Most of the time I don’t understand them either.”

* * * * *

Smythe dreamt.

He was walking through a battle-scarred landscape, trailing an extremely long scarf that was wrapped around his neck, through the mud. Pausing, he looked up, taking in a rising column of black smoke.

He knew that underneath the smoke were fires burning out of control; the destroyed remains of what had once been a city containing thousands of intelligent beings. And his two best friends, who he had sent to help, to warn of the impending attack. Too late. All too late now.

A noise came from behind him, a familiar low hum. Spotting a shell hole close by, he ducked down into it as an instrument of death swept by.

It was between five and six feet tall, cone shaped with the wider end at the bottom. There were three appendages attached to the body, a flexible arm, an eyestalk and an energy weapon. It was gliding just above the mud on a cushion of air, hence the humming noise. Behind it was another, similar creature.

Daleks, he thought. A part of his mind didn't seem to recognise the name, but the dream Smythe certainly knew it and what it meant. Death on a huge scale.

Given the circumstances, that he was alone and stranded on an alien world and that he had failed in his mission (what mission?) he briefly considered giving himself up to the two Daleks and letting them exterminate him. It would at least be quick.

But he wanted to live, to see these Daleks beaten, to prevent them from hurting and killing people. That was who he was and what he did. And he would never give it up on a whim.

Smythe woke covered in cold sweat, fragments of the strange dream still clinging to the corners of his mind. What did it all mean? How could it be a memory, when it clearly featured someone else?

* * * * *

Tamara turned restlessly in her sleep.

Inside her mind, she was in the middle of a group of tall, robed people with high, ornate collars. They seemed to be looking down their noses at her.

"Is she human?" asked one.

"I believe so," replied another. "An inferior species, from a backwater planet."

"I agree," said a third.

"They are a weak race," the first continued. "Morally and physically."

"Humans are stupid and inconsequential," remarked the second.

"They will never amount to anything in the universe, no matter how hard they try," added the third.

"Pathetic."

"Savage."

"Ignorant."

Tamara, not usually cowed by authority figures, was suddenly mute before the withering scorn of these beings. She was afraid, more by the fact they might be right than about her than by their physical presence.

Then their ranks parted to let through a man. Not especially tall, he had a narrow, aristocratic face, with collar length dark hair and a neatly trimmed beard and moustache. Hope surged in Tamara's heart when she saw him, though he wasn't someone she recognised.

But her hope quickly died when he too looked down at her with a sneer of contempt.

"This poor creature is not worthy of our time and effort," he told the robed figures. "Exterminate her."

"NO!" Tamara screamed, which served to wake her from the nightmare. Shivering at the brutality of it, she sat up in bed and hugged her knees.

What did the dream mean? Had it actually happened and she had managed to survive? Or was it somehow a deep-seated fear, working its way from her subconscious into her dreaming mind? And who was the man who had so cruelly condemned her?

Knowing she would get no answers laid awake for the rest of the night, Tamara climbed out of bed, intending to make an early start and try to forget the strange nightmare.

* * * * *

Grae frowned down at the console before her. Why was so little working? There had been power for the scanner, but the databank was ‘unavailable’ and the status monitors were blank.

There was something she realised that she hadn’t tried yet, something she had seen the Doctor use to good effect when the TARDIS was reluctant to co-operate. Screwing her right hand up onto a fist, she thumped it against the console. Hard.

All she got for her trouble was an aching hand and a faint chime from deep within the mushroom shaped structure. Rubbing the already forming bruise, she racked her brain for information on Type 40s.

There should be a Fault Locator somewhere, she knew. The Doctor had once mentioned that he had moved it, as he thought the cumbersome bank of instruments cluttered up the Console Room. Only he hadn’t told her where he had shifted it.

It must be somewhere close, she decided. Moving to the console once more, she tried the Internal Configuration Setting.

Sure enough, a quick search of the ICS brought up the current home of the Fault Locator. It was in a side corridor, between the Console Room and the nearest bedrooms.

Pleased that something was finally going right, Grae set off, hoping that her new found good fortune would extend to discovering exactly what had happened to the TARDIS and her friends.

* * * * *

Doctor Smythe had put the nightmare of the previous evening behind him and did Security Prime Exote present concentrating on the information to him.

“Yes. Yes, that all seems fine to me,” he decided, handing the electronic pad back to the Mortrexy. “How long will it take to implement?”

“All measures will be in place by the end of the week,” Exote promised.

“Excellent,” Smythe said, smiling. “Is that everything for now?”

“Not quite, Doctor Smythe,” said a new voice.

Smythe and Exote turned to see that Governor Prime Axane and Councillor Prime Yxani had entered the room. Axane had spoken, while Yxani looked uncomfortable.

“Can I help you, Governor Prime?” Smythe inquired, completely unruffled.

“I hope so,” the reptilian said smoothly. “You can assist us in working out some offensive strategies.”

“I’ve told you before, I’m not an offensive kind of person.”

“How do you know? You admit yourself, and the Council of Seven confirm, that you have lost your memory.” Axane cast a glance at Yxani as he mentioned the Council of Seven.

“Some things, whatever the state of one’s memory, are just obvious. Like breathing and walking. I know in my hearts that I do not approve of violence.”

“Whether you approve or not, we are paying you for your skills. That means we get to choose how you help us.”

“I would have thought under those circumstances that I would have the choice of whether or not to withdraw my support,” Smythe said, standing. While he wasn’t especially tall, he was a head above the Governor Prime, who now had to stretch his neck to look Smythe in the eye.

“He does have a point,” Yxani said quietly.

“Did I ask for your council?” snapped Axane.

Yxani shook his scaly head. “You did not, Governor Prime,” he confirmed.

“Then kindly keep it to yourself unless asked!”

“Yes, Governor Prime.”

Axane turned, to see Smythe smiling at him.

“Is our business concluded now?” the humanoid asked.

The reptilian uttered a low growl and stalked out of the room, Yxani trailing behind him. The Councillor Prime paused in the doorway and closed one eye slowly, in a gesture taught to him by Smythe.

Smythe smiled as the door closed. “Now, Security Prime, where were we?”

What neither of them noticed was that a small winged insect had entered the room as Axane and Yxani left.

* * * * *

Tamara and Trenx were watching the large wall screen carefully. Behind them were the three official Centox once more and the technician was again manipulating the control box.

The only one missing was the electronic fly they had been studying before. But that was why they were now watching the screen, which showed its progress into the heart of Mortrexly territory.

“That is the main Defence Council building,” Trenx told Tamara as the picture on the screen showed an impressive structure. The Centox Minister of Intelligence turned to the operator of the small camera device. “Try and find an open window.”

The operator bowed slightly, acknowledging the command. The picture on the screen tilted as the ‘fly’ changed direction, scanning for an opening.

Finally it swooped through a narrow slit and the brightness filters struggled to compensate for the change in lighting. As they did, the scene became clearer.

A door was sliding closed against the far wall, giving a brief view of a reptilian leaving the room. Another change in direction showed two figures engaged on conversation.

“Now, Security Prime, where were we?” said one of them.

Tamara’s blood turned cold in her veins. She knew that voice. But it couldn’t be. That had been a dream.

The camera fly closed in on the two figures. One was obviously a Mortrexly, with scaly green skin and wide, unblinking eyes. The other however was different. It appeared to be a human male, with dark, collar length hair and neatly trimmed facial hair to match.

A small sound must have alerted the latter figure, as it suddenly turned to face the camera fully. Tamara gasped aloud. It was the man from her dream, the one who had condemned her.

The man smiled grimly, looking straight into the camera. “I think you should get some fly paper put up, old chap,” he said, flicking out a casual hand.

The hand filled the screen momentarily, and then the picture lurched before dissolving into static.

A chitter of Centox voices was raised from further down the table. After a few seconds, one of them silenced the others, and then turned to Trenx.

“What happened, Minister?”

Trenx bobbed his head respectfully. “We have lost the transmission, Leader Stixx,” he said. “It could be that the humanoid damaged the camera, thinking it to be a normal insect.”

“Any chance of recovery?”

“Unknown at this time,” Trenx replied.

“And do you believe our little ‘spy’ was discovered?”

“Unlikely, in my view. An unfortunate accident.”

Leader Stixx considered this for a moment, then rose from his place at the table. His two companions followed.

“Keep us informed, Minister Trenx.”

“I will, my Leader.”

The trio of Centox glided from the room, leaving just Trenx, Tamara and the remote operator. Trenx turned to him.

“Try and get the remote camera back. Report to me in an hour, regardless.” The operator bobbed and left.

Tamara was staring at the screen, and had been since the loss of picture. Trenx placed one of his forelegs on her shoulder.

“What is wrong, Tamara Scott?”

She came slowly out of her reverie. She looked up at Trenx, blinking twice before getting him properly in focus. Then she let out a long sighing breath.

“That man with the Mortrexly. I know him.”

“Is he a friend of yours?” Trenx inquired.

Tamara thought back to her dream, to her humiliation at his dismissive tone.

“This poor creature is not worthy of our time and effort. Exterminate her.”

Her face set hard, she answered Trenx’s question.

“He is no friend of mine. He is an enemy, not only to me but also to all the Centox people. He must be destroyed!”

* * * * *

Grae understood now why the Doctor had decided to move the Fault Locator from the Console Room. It was indeed a cumbersome piece of equipment, taking up an entire wall of the room that had been set-aside for it.

She studied the readouts now, looking for anything that might explain her current problems. Unfortunately, there was rather a lot to take in.

It seemed that many of the major systems within the TARDIS were off-line. Those that were operating were doing so on reduced power. There were more red warning lights decorating the front of the Fault Locator than she had ever seen before.

“So where to start?” she wondered. And what could have caused such a massive temporal trauma to the sentient machine? More importantly, where were the Doctor and Tamara?

Deciding on a course of action, she traced the complex pattern before her until she discovered the main space/time element. As she had suspected, it had sustained damage, the main linkage had been severed. That was something she could fix quite easily and would give her limited control back.

She found the Doctor’s trusty tool kit in a storage locker next to the Fault Locator. Whistling a tune Tamara had taught her (‘Run to You’, by someone called Bryan Adams) she set off back to the Console Room.

* * * * *

Doctor Smythe and Security Prime Exote were examining the ‘fly’ Smythe had swatted.

“Hmm. A very sophisticated spy camera device,” Smythe said, straightening and popping his jeweller’s eyeglass onto the table beside the electronic fly.

“Sent by those Centox scum to try and discover what we are planning, no doubt!”

Smythe winced at his companion’s choice of words, but nodded anyway. “Quite probably. Well, two can play at that game.”

“I do not understand,” Exote told his companion.

Smiling, Smythe produced the rest of his jeweller’s kit, a set of very fine screwdrivers, and laid them out on the table.

“This little chap is about to be reprogrammed and sent back to his masters. But not before I change the transmission wavelength that his signals can be received on.”

The Security Prime caught on quickly. “So we can see the pictures of the Centox base?”

“Something like that,” Smythe replied, getting to work. “Now, be a good fellow and move a little to the left please. You’re blocking my light.”

* * * * *

“I got your message,” Tamara announced as she entered the room. Trenx could tell she had been running, but marvelled at the fact that the human wasn’t out of breath.

“The fly spy came back in range again a little while ago,” he told her as she crossed to join him at the screen. “But we are getting no picture as of yet.”

“Maybe the camera part was damaged,” she suggested. “Where is it now?”

“It crossed the city boundary almost the moment you arrived. It should be here shortly.”

They waited in silence, but not for long. A soft hum, as of wings beating the air at speed, heralded the arrival of their joint venture. The electronic fly swooped into the room and, after circling once, landed on the table.

Tamara and Trenx bent to study it. Strangely, it was looking right back at them, as if it were studying them in return. Tamara glanced back over her shoulder.

“Still no picture,” she reported. Carefully, she reached out to take the fly in her hand.

Almost as if startled, the fly took off, keeping just beyond their reach while all the time facing them.

A thought occurred to Tamara, one that rapidly became a full-blown suspicion. She turned to Trenx.

“Damn him, he’s turned the spy against us!”

“Who? The man we saw on the screen?”

“The same!” Tamara had removed her right shoe and now she threw it, aiming for the small fly. To Trenx’s surprise, she hit it, despite the fact that it had moved since she had aimed the shoe. The fly spun to the floor, while the shoe clattered to ground in a corner.

Tamara crossed quickly to the fly and used her left foot, the one with the shoe still in place, to grind the little device into the ground. Her face was a mask of fury.

“We must be careful - this man is a dangerous enemy,” Trenx decided.

“Careful!” snorted Tamara, retrieving her right shoe. “It’s time your people went on the offensive, because that ‘man’ is surely getting ready to lead a Mortrexly invasion!”

* * * * *

Silence followed the dissolution of the picture in the Mortrexly control centre. Smythe sat with his fingers steepled in front of him while Exote rewound the recording for playback.

The two of them watched again as the ‘fly’ landed, then took off as the human woman reached for it. Then they saw again the shoe hurtling towards them before the camera lurched and the picture dissolved.

“The Centox also have off world help,” Exote commented.

Smythe nodded, his eyes still on the screen despite the static now covering it.

Sensing a change in mood, Exote asked a question: “Do you know that human?”

Shaking his head, Smythe came out of his reverie. “Hmm? Oh, yes, I believe I do know the young lady in question.”

“Who is she?”

“I have absolutely no idea,” Smythe replied with a frown. “Though I do know two things. One, she is a very dangerous individual. And two, we are in a whole lot of trouble if she is helping the Centox.”

“What can we do?” Exote wanted to know.

“I’m not entirely sure,” Doctor Smythe said honestly. “But I’m beginning to think Governor Prime Axane might have been right. Maybe we should start taking the fight to the enemy!”

* * * * *

Grae consulted the watch pinned to her pale blue sweater. It had taken her just three hours, linear time, to repair the linkage to the space/time element, replace two of the lateral balance cones and realign the temporal limiter. Not bad, even if she did say so herself.

Deciding she had earned a break, she headed for the little galley located between her room and Tamara’s. Here, she spooned Earl Grey tea into the Doctor’s favourite pot while waiting for the kettle to boil.

He had been quite amused to find that Grae liked Earl Grey. She found herself smiling at the memory as she poured the boiling water into the pot and waited for it to brew.

Grae sighed. She missed interacting with her friends. She was a sociable young Time Lord and she enjoyed nothing more than talking over old adventures or new challenges with the Doctor and Tamara.

She was no nearer to solving the mystery of where they were, despite the progress she was making in repairing the systems. She estimated another half day and she would be ready to test out her work.

Then what? Where would she go? She had no idea where or when her friends were. How could she hope to find them in such a large universe?

Sighing, she poured a generous measure of steaming brown liquid into a mug. One challenge at a time, she told herself gently. Picking up her mug of sweet smelling tea, she headed back for the Console Room and a date with a faulty Renticular Vector Gauge.

* * * * *

Tamara paced up and down outside the Grand Meeting Hall, waiting impatiently for the verdict. Trenx had informed her that the full Ruling Cabinet of the Centox people would be debating her advice to strike first against the Mortrexly. The only trouble was it was a Centox only party - she wasn’t invited.

It was so frustrating, being left out of things. She felt sure that, in her previous life, she hadn’t felt like this often. She was obviously used to being in among it when it counted, making decisions and making a difference.

So it was that she let out an audible sigh of relief when she saw Trenx approaching, followed closely by Leader Stixx, despite the fact that she didn’t know the outcome of the meeting yet.

“You must be very confident in your outlook,” Stixx began as they reached her. “Not many can claim they have virtually forced the Ruling Cabinet into a war!”

“Then you’re going ahead with the attack?” Tamara asked, hope blossoming inside her.

“We are,” Stixx replied. “Minister Trenx argued well in your favour. We have decided that you are correct: this advisor to the Mortrexly is too great a threat to be ignored. We shall move our reserve troops into the border region this evening.” He fixed Tamara with a cold, compound gaze. “You had better be correct, or you shall have made an enemy of the entire Centox people.”

Without another word, Stixx left, his long rear legs moving swiftly over the ground until he was quickly out of sight.

Tamara turned to Trenx. “You must have given them the argument of your life!”

The Minister of Intelligence bobbed his head. "It was not difficult, Tamara Scott. All I had to do was convey your feelings and thoughts to the rulers of my world. Having known you for some time now, that made my job so much easier."

The human woman laughed. "Flattery will get you nowhere!"

Trenx looked puzzled. "You say the strangest things."

Tamara grinned. "Don't I just?"

* * * * *

Doctor Smythe frowned as he listened to Governor Prime Axane.

"The Centox are moving large numbers of ground troops into our northern border region. These troops are being assisted by military hardware on an unprecedented scale. It seems to the Ruling Council, and myself, that they are preparing for war. We must be prepared to match them in all this and more!"

The ministers and their deputies cheered their leader's speech. Smythe stood beside Yxani and the other members of the Council of Seven. They all looked troubled.

"Why would the Centox move against us at this time?" Yxani asked quietly as Axane continued with his rallying of the Mortrexly.

"It can only be that young woman they are employing," Smythe suggested. "She must have influenced them somehow."

Oxene, another member of the Seven, snorted. "The Ruling Cabinet of the Centox is notoriously difficult to influence. Especially by an offworlder!"

"I think this particular young woman is the very persuasive kind," Smythe replied.

They watched in silence as Axane finished his speech, to resounding cheers from the faithful. The Mortrexly were going to war!

* * * * *

Grae stood before the console and flexed her fingers, as she had seen the Doctor do on more than one occasion. Carefully, she moved those fingers over the buttons, switches and levers.

A grinding, roaring noise filled the room, assaulting Grae's ears. She flinched, but held her ground as the time rotor slowly dropped from its previous position.

As it reached the bottom of its arc, the rotor froze once more and the painful noise died away, much to Grae's relief.

But it did mean that had failed. She had repaired many of the critically damaged systems and bypassed those she didn't have time to repair. It should have worked, but it hadn't. Why?

Grae frowned. Something must be more seriously wrong than she had originally thought. All she had to do now was find out what.

* * * * *

"On Earth, some generals became known for leading their troops from the front."

"You do not talk about your home often, Tamara Scott," Trenx said as the two of them watched the Centox military machine massing along the border with the Mortrexly.

"That could be because I still don't remember that much about it," the human admitted. "The small flashes of memory I have are like the tips of icebergs. I know there is so much more unseen, underneath."

"I will assume your analogy is correct, as I do not know what an iceberg is. As for Stixx and us other Ministers leading from the front, this is a symbolic gesture. We are the first to cross into enemy territory, and then we let the trained soldiers take over. Most of the Ruling Cabinet would be useless in battle."

“I wouldn’t mind betting that you could hold your own on the battlefield,” Tamara complimented her companion.

Trenx bobbed his head in the now familiar fashion. “I believe I could kill many Mortrexly before giving my life for my people.”

A rustle of voices from the front ranks of the troops interrupted their conversation. Trenx held up a distance scope to one of his compound eyes.

“The Mortrexly are massing on the other side of the border,” he told Tamara.

“Can I borrow that?” she asked. She wasn’t sure if the scope would work with her human eye, but she was willing to give it a try.

Trenx handed it over and Tamara quickly found that it worked perfectly for her. She scanned the border area, the fields of recently harvested crops, the narrow road leading to a kind of Checkpoint Charlie (where had that name come from?). She focused on the front ranks of the enemy reptiles and let out a gasp of surprise.

“What do you see?” Trenx wanted to know.

“The Mortrexly advisor, large as life,” she replied, lowering the scope. Her face clouded with fury, she started pushing her way to the front line.

“Where are you going?”

She glanced back at Trenx. “To finish him once and for all,” she replied coldly.

* * * * *

Doctor Smythe held a collapsible telescope to his right eye. “I see no ships,” he said quietly. But not quietly enough.

“What was that?” asked Yxani from beside him.

Smythe sighed, lowering the telescope. “A quote from a great military leader of Earth,” he replied.

“Is that where you come from?”

For a moment, Smythe considered the question. “I’m not sure. Sometimes, probably.”

Yxani shook his scaly head, unable to decide whether his friend was joking or not. He settled for asking a different question.

“What did you see?”

“Centox, and plenty of them,” Smythe told him. He raised the scope again. “And one very annoyed looking human female.”

“Their advisor?”

“The same,” Smythe said, moving forward through the crowd of Mortrexly soldiers.

“Where are you going?” Yxani wanted to know.

“To see what the young woman wants,” he called back over his shoulder.

* * * * *

“Of course! Why didn’t I think of that before?”

Grae was standing in front of the console; almost ready to start hitting it again in the hope it might make a difference. But then she had had the brainwave that caused her outburst.

It was so obvious. Perhaps too obvious, which was probably why she hadn’t thought of it earlier.

She just hoped that she could finally get some answers now.

Moving purposefully round the console, she paused before a particular panel. Taking a deep breath, she reached out towards the smooth metallic plates of the TARDIS telepathic circuits...

* * * * *

Tamara was surprised, but not intimidated, by the sight of her nemesis striding through the crowded Mortrexy troops towards the border, much as she was doing through the Centox lines. In fact, it only darkened her mood further.

By the time the two of them had forced their ways through the various soldiers to the front of the lines, Tamara's anger had reached boiling point.

Smythe stood with his hands behind his back, regarding the woman standing before him. She was indeed familiar, but he couldn't put a name to her. He decided to initiate contact.

"Hello," he said mildly.

"Don't you 'hello' me!" she raged. "I'm going to stop your little game with the Mortrexy. I'm going to ensure that the Centox win this conflict and I'm going to take great pleasure in killing you myself!"

Smythe frowned down at the woman before him. "Well, you are a very angry young lady, aren't you?"

"Angry? I'm positively furious! I will not be belittled by you and your robed colleagues ever again!"

"'Robed colleagues?' " Smythe raised an enquiring eyebrow. "Are you sure you're not mistaking me for somebody else?"

"Don't come that with me. I know you well enough to know how evil you are. But I'm going to end that evil."

Tamara produced a Centox pistol from inside her coat and aimed it squarely at Doctor Smythe's head.

* * * * *

Grae closed her eyes as her hands made contact with the telepathic circuits...

* * * * *

Pain exploded behind Tamara's eyes. A flood of images, far too many for her reeling mind to cope with.

Dropping the gun, she clutched her hands to her shattering temples.

* * * * *

Smythe's face creased with pain as the force of an antimatter explosion seemed to burst through his head. Sounds and pictures flashed in front of his mind's eye at a rate he could possibly have comprehended, if it hadn't been for the sledgehammer banging against his brain.

* * * * *

Grae cried out, her eyes still tightly shut and her hands still pressed to the console. The pain was intense, but she wasn't about to give up now, as the small part of her mind that was still able to function told her she was close to an answer.

Faces flashed before her inner eye, pausing briefly before vanishing again.

A man (Ryan?) beaming at her over a video link. "Good news little Sis, I've been accepted for the Space Programme!"

A young woman (Victoria?) looking vaguely embarrassed. "Well...if you are 450 years old, you need a great deal of sleep."

An older woman (Mother?) smiling. "You're a bright girl Tam, you'll go far."

A younger man (Harry?) with an earnest expression. "I say, you could sell that thing, Doctor."

An old man with white hair and a full beard (Controller?) with a satisfied expression. "Excellent job Agent Scott. Absolutely first rate!"

Another young woman carrying a rocket launcher (Ace?) who looked overjoyed. "Wicked hardware, Professor!"

Finally, two people, one male one female, smiling (Doctor? Tamara?) "Thank you, Grae."

Then the world turned white and Grae slid into unconsciousness.

* * * * *

When Tamara's head finally cleared, she found she was on her knees. There was a gun a few feet from her and she sensed many eyes turned towards her.

Looking up, she saw a familiar figure shaking his head, as if to clear it. The two of them made eye contact.

"Doctor?" she croaked.

"Tamara?" he replied, his voice equally hoarse.

Slowly Tamara got to her feet. The two of them approached each other, stopping less than two feet apart.

"I was about to kill you," she admitted, tears prickling at the back of her eyes.

"I had noticed," he said with false bravado.

"I'm sorry," she whispered. "I don't know what came over me."

"Well, if you've experienced a few days like I have, than I assume memory loss and bad dreams came over you. Am I right?"

Tamara nodded. "That's it exactly. You were in my dreams. You and a bunch of Time Lords, sneering at the whole human race, and me in particular. You said I should be exterminated!"

"But it was only a dream," he told her.

"I know that now! But I didn't know then if it was a memory or not!"

"What is going on here?" demanded an imperious voice from behind the Doctor. It was Governor Prime Axane.

"My friend and I were having a private discussion," the Doctor told him pointedly.

"Friend? This woman has been advising the Centox!"

"What of it?" the Doctor wanted to know.

"In case you have not been paying attention, the Centox are our enemy! If this woman is your friend then you too are our enemy, Doctor Smythe."

The reptilian reached for his gun. Before he could turn it on the Doctor, Tamara had leapt into action.

Spinning on her left heel she brought her right leg up quickly, connecting firmly with Axane's gun hand. The Mortrexly let out a howl of rage, which turned into a screech of pain as she followed up by punching him firmly on the end of his snout.

Before the Doctor could stop her, she had punched him again on the side of the temple, rendering the Mortrexly leader unconscious.

"Well done, Tamara Scott," said a new voice. "You have rendered our enemy senseless and paved the way for our victory."

Tamara turned quickly. "Shut up Stixx, unless you want a dose of what he just had," she said, indicating the insensate Axane.

The leader of the Centox flinched from her words. "Trenx, she threatened me. Kill her."

Trenx took a breath, and then shook his head slightly. "I have too much respect for her to obey such a stupid order," he told his leader. "She brought us here - all you did was agree to her idea. Surely she has the right to conduct this business as she sees fit."

Stixx glowered at his Minister of Intelligence. "You will not live to see the end of this day, Trenx."

"That is a chance I shall take, for the good of my people."

"Erm, excuse me," said the Doctor, who had been observing quietly for long enough, in his opinion. "I think we should all start again from the beginning."

A hush fell across both sides of the border. The Centox and the Mortrexly waited for him to continue.

"What is it that has brought you here today?" the Doctor asked the crowd around him. "What has brought your two races to the brink of bloody conflict? Why is it that neither side can contemplate living in peace with the other?"

"We need to expand our borders," replied Security Prime Exote, from the Mortrexly side of the lines. "Therefore, we need to invade the territory of the Centox."

"Why do you need to expand your borders?" the Doctor inquired. "I've studied the geography of Epsilus and there is plenty of room, on both sides of the border, for expansion of both races. There is no need for either side to try and take land from the other."

"But eventually we will run out of space," Stixx protested. "Then we will need to expand."

The Doctor smiled slightly. "Both the Mortrexly and the Centox have been experimenting with space travel. You both have the ability to contact other worlds. By the time your races have grown enough to strain your borders you will be out among the stars. There are two uninhabited planets in this very solar system capable of supporting you, so you don't even have to go far from home. So I ask again, why are you here, ready to fight?"

This time Yxani answered him, first with a shrug. "Because we always have."

"And we always will!" Stixx added.

The Doctor grinned this time. "See, you have found something to agree about!"

Stixx glared at him but Yxani looked more thoughtful.

"Are there any more grounds for conflict between your two species?" the Doctor asked.

Faint mutters and the shuffling of feet greeted him. When no answer was forthcoming, he provided his own.

"I thought not. Mutual distrust and loathing of the other side has become so ingrained in the collective psyches of your races that the real reasons for any conflict have been lost in the mists of time. I see no real reason that both the Mortrexly and the Centox cannot live side by side, kept within their boundaries, without the need for bloodshed. Indeed, with a little understanding on both sides, you may even be able to take those steps to the stars I mentioned together."

"What do you suggest we do now?" asked a thoughtful looking Yxani.

"Go home," urged the Doctor. "Think about what I have said. Look into your hearts and try to build bridges of peace with your neighbours. Above all, question what you know, what has always been the way in the past. The race that cannot learn from the mistakes of the past is forever condemned to repeat them. I was asked to advise and I will. I advise peace, for both your sakes."

"I agree."

The voice had come from the Centox lines. Heads turned, trying to find who had spoken up in consent with the Doctor.

Trenx stepped forward. "I agree," he repeated. "My contact with Tamara Scott has allowed me to see new ideas, new ways of thinking. It would be a crime to use these gifts for war and conflict, when they could just as easily be used for peace and co-operation."

"I have warned you once..." began Stixx, but there was a growing murmur of agreement from the crowd behind Trenx. The Minister of Intelligence looked to his leader.

“We need to move forward, not remain stuck in the past. If you will not lead us into the future, then the people will choose someone who will.”

Trenx’s words were greeted now with cheering from the Centox ranks. Slowly the noise abated, for the ensuing silence to be broken by a voice from within the Mortrexly lines.

“I too agree with Doctor Smythe and Minister Trenx.”

This time the speaker made himself plain quickly, stepping up beside the Doctor and placing a hand on the Time Lord’s shoulder.

“We can all learn from this man,” Yxani continued. “He has taught me that there are other ways apart from war. Vigilance and violence do not go hand in hand. You can be wary without being ready to attack at the first sign of provocation. If the Centox are prepared to embrace the future with peace, then so are the Mortrexly.”

“You do not speak for our people,” growled Axane, who had recovered at last from Tamara’s punch. He stood shakily on his feet behind Yxani. “I am Governor Prime of the Mortrexly and I say whether we go to war or not!”

His speech was greeted with a chorus of boos and jeers from the Mortrexly lines. Startled, Axane turned to his troops.

“Do you wish to make peace with these...insects?”

“You shouldn’t judge an enemy, or a friend for that matter, by the way they look,” the Doctor advised him.

“That’s right,” Tamara said, taking a step toward the Mortrexly leader, who quickly backed away from her.

“I no longer believe you can speak for your people,” the Doctor told Axane. “I think Yxani is doing a much better job.”

A ragged cheer went up from the Mortrexly lines at the Doctor’s words and Yxani looked like he was about to burst with pride.

The Doctor addressed the crowd one last time. “I do think it’s now time we all went back home, before it gets too dark for any of us to see. Thank you all for listening.”

More cheers accompanied the sound of feet marching away from the border as the soldiers of both sides took the Doctor’s suggestion to heart.

Soon there were just four people standing on the road beside the border post that had almost become a battlefield. As Trenx and Yxani watched, Tamara turned to the Doctor and asked the questions that had been bugging her since she had got her memory back.

“Doctor, where’s the TARDIS? And what happened to Grae?”

* * * * *

Grae had come to the realisation that the floor was not the best place for sleeping. As she climbed stiffly to her feet however, she saw that her latest enforced nap had been worth it.

The TARDIS appeared to be back to normal. The steady background hum that she had missed so much filled her ears and the lights were back to full strength. The console itself looked alive, with no signs of warnings flashing for her attention.

Her mind caught up with her and she remembered experiencing memories that were not her own. If she had to guess, she would have concluded that they belonged to the Doctor and Tamara. Now it seemed her only problem was how to locate her two friends.

Maybe it was time for one last stab at instinct. Bracing herself, she reached again for the telepathic circuits.

This time there was no jolt of mental energy, just a warm glow passing through her body. With a soft sigh, the time rotor began to fall and rise rhythmically.

* * * * *

As if summoned by Tamara's question, a raucous grinding, roaring noise rose around the four friends. Slowly but surely, a faint blue box began to solidify on the edge of a harvested field.

"What is it?" Trenx asked, fear tingeing his voice for the first time that day.

"Don't worry," Tamara said, placing a hand on his shoulder. "It's our transport."

"So your memory has returned?" Trenx replied, turning to her.

She nodded. "And so has the Doctor's."

Yxani turned to his friend. "I thought there was something different about you."

The TARDIS door creaked open and a young woman with short red hair exited. Her face creased into a huge smile as she saw the Doctor and Tamara.

"There you are!" she exclaimed, rushing towards them and throwing herself into a three way hug. "I've been so worried about the two of you."

"There was no need, really," the Doctor said, disengaging himself from her. He decided to make the introductions. "Grae, this is Councillor Prime Yxani of the Mortrexly and Minister of Intelligence Trenx of the Centox. They have just agreed to share their planet in peace."

"We have agreed to think about it," Trenx corrected.

"Carefully," added Yxani.

The Doctor shook Yxani firmly by the hand. "It's been a pleasure meeting you, old chap. I do hope everything goes well in the future. I might even pop back and see how you're getting on."

"You are not staying?"

The Doctor shook his head. "Places to go, civilisations to save. You know how it is." He nodded to Trenx. "Good luck."

Tamara hugged the Minister of Intelligence, who seemed surprised. "Look after this place, won't you. I've come to quite like it."

"I will, Tamara Scott. Take care of yourself."

With a smile to Yxani, she put her arm around Grae's shoulder and steered her into the TARDIS after the Doctor.

The Centox and the Mortrexly watched in surprise as the blue box left Epsilus as noisily as it had arrived.

* * * * *

The Doctor fussed around the console as the TARDIS entered the space/time vortex. Tamara and Grae stood watching him.

"There's just one thing I don't understand," Tamara announced.

The Doctor looked up, raising an eyebrow. "Just one?"

Tamara nodded. "What, exactly, happened? To us I mean. How did we end up on either side of a planetary conflict with no memories of our pasts?"

Frowning, the Doctor looked back down at the console. "I'm not entirely sure. Something caused the TARDIS to split in two, dump each of us either side of the border on Epsilus, and then return to the vortex, where it stalled. Until Grae did such an excellent job of the repairs."

The young Time Lord flushed with pride at his remark.

"Well, just so long as it doesn't happen again," Tamara said, looking uncertainly around the Console Room. "We were lucky out there. We might not be so another time."

"Indeed," the Doctor replied, still studying readouts. "I'm going to give the old girl a thorough overhaul the first chance I get."

Grae couldn't contain her question any longer. "So, what happened to the two of you?"

The Doctor looked up at Tamara and a smile passed between them.

"You know what?" the Time Lord replied. "I can't really remember."

Grae looked confused as her two friends dissolved into fits of laughter.

Epilogue:***Planet Epsilus, the Centox/Mortrexly Border – Three Years Later***

The reptilian reached across the table and shook the clawed hand of his insectoid opposite number. “This is a historic moment, for both our peoples, Leader Trenx.”

Trenx bobbed his head slightly. “It is indeed, Governor Prime Yxani. A non-aggression pact between our two races. Who would ever have dreamt it was possible?”

Yxani inclined his head. “I can think of one person who might have.” A toothy smile crept across his heavy jaw.

The Centox Leader gave a rattling laugh. “Yes, I can think of someone too.”

For a few moments, the two leaders lapsed into thoughtful silence, which the Mortrexly eventually broke.

“Do you think we will ever see them again?”

Trenx gave the matter some consideration. “If there is trouble, then yes, I think they will return. But so long as we are at peace, then they will be elsewhere, sorting out some other silly conflict and helping those too weak or stupid to help themselves.”

Yxani nodded, then sighed. “Then I suppose we had better keep this peace then.”

“Yes, I suppose we better had,” Trenx agreed.