

THE
DOCTOR WHO
PROJECT

THE ATEF CROWN



Lesleigh Force

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

First Published 2006

The Atef Crown © 2006 by Lesleigh Force
The moral right of the author has been asserted

Doctor Who © 1963, 2006 by BBC Worldwide
The Doctor Who Project © & ™ 1999, 2006 by Jigsaw Publications

TDWP Logo © 2005 by Jack Drewell/The Doctor Who Project
Cover © 2006 by Brian Taylor/The Doctor Who Project

Typeset in Century Schoolbook

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.

This E-Book is a work of fiction.
All characters, names, places and incidences in this publication are a product
of the authors imagination or used fictitiously. Any resemblance
to real persons, living or dead, is purely co-incidental.

He wanted *something* to occupy his mind. Anything, really, anything that would displace the disquiet brought on by this latest turn of solitude. He was after all a centuries-old Time Lord and not some brooding adolescent trying to navigate life's ups and downs.

"A diversion," he mumbled, activating the TARDIS's databanks.

But, what kind?

"Perhaps a holiday."

He let the destinations data scroll. Kanyer, a planet of breathtaking oceans, caught his attention and he slowed the information feed. The image of a peaceful beach formed in his mind's eye. It was the perfect place to rest and contemplate the scenery... He shook his head--his body wasn't tired, only his mind. So, what did his mind need?

He stared at the far wall and chewed his lower lip.

"Doctor," he said, "you need a challenge."

The fingers of one hand drummed against the console. "Something to pit yourself against."

He returned to the databanks.

"A puzzle... a quintessential enigma."

The data stream flowed and he leaned closer to the readout.

"Artron energy – hmm..."

"E-space – well I've been there."

"Farosee..."

"Great Intelligence..."

"Mandragora Helix – meeting it once was enough."

"Origin of the universe..."

"Osirians..."

He stopped the flow.

"The Fate of the Osirians."

He straightened.

"Well, Doctor, you did intend to return to Mars..."

His hand twisted a dial.

"...and with Horus's Eye destroyed..."

He paced left pressing console buttons as he went.

"...it should be possible to search the pyramids..."

The TARDIS's view screen activated showing a blank room with white angular walls.

"...for whatever clues the Osirians left behind."

As the TARDIS door opened the Doctor removed sunglasses from his waistcoat pocket.

It was too dim for the sunglasses. The walls glowed faintly illuminating the corridor. The Doctor paused and ran his hand over the glowing surface. It felt like sand under his fingertips and he suspected each grain was a perfectly faceted crystal designed to refract, focus and intensify the light.

"Marvellous engineering."

The corridor opened onto a larger chamber and the Doctor's eye was drawn to a black monstrosity of unbalanced angles and a top heaviness that threatened to topple it

over. It did not belong amid the aesthetic designs of the Osirians and it took him but a moment to identify it as a lamp on a tripod, functional but ugly, all too human. There was more equipment stacked in a corner.

“Of course, the Mars expeditions.”

He’d miscalculated, come too late to have the pyramids all to himself. Yet it was easily fixed, just return to the TARDIS and materialise a few decades earlier... but he liked the company of humans. They were vibrant, passionate, and their exuberance was infectious, it made him feel alive.

Undecided, he stood just within the chamber when a man came running in from the other direction. He saw the Doctor, and halted, skidding to a stop on the polished floor. His eyes widened and his mouth fell slightly open.

“Who the dickens are you?” His voice was soft almost hushed.

“I’m the Doctor, and you?”

The man took a step back, raised an arm and levelled his finger at the Doctor. “You shouldn’t be here. You’re not part of the expedition.” Colour drained from the man’s face. “My god, what did you do with Professor Hindley?”

Reacting to the man’s agitation, the Doctor lifted his hands to waist height in a half-surrendering gesture. “I assure you, I’ve done nothing to anyone. I’ve only just arrived.”

The man was glancing over his shoulder, back the way he’d come. He swivelled his head and peered briefly at the Doctor.

Flee or yell, the Doctor wondered, it all depends on how close your companions are.

“An intruder!” screamed the man. “There’s an intruder in here.”

Nearby, concluded the Doctor. He watched the entrance, heard human voices and the heavy tattoo of boot soles upon stone.

The Doctor’s attention flicked to the man’s feet noting soft-soled shoes. Reduced risk of damaging what he walks over, probably a scientist, thought the Doctor. And the heavy foot ware... He looked back to the entrance.

They appeared in black - black boots, black jumpsuits, black peak caps and carried black laser rifles. They entered in a V-formation with the front three soldiers training their rifles on the Doctor, while the two officers on point slowly swept the room with their gun barrels. Behind the soldiers came two more civilians wearing soft-soled shoes.

“Patrick, what’s going on?” asked a silver-haired civilian.

The Doctor watched Patrick edge behind the line of soldiers and join the other civilians.

“He’s a stranger, Professor Wainwright. Not part of the expedition.”

Professor Wainwright frowned. “He’s not one of the replacement techs?”

Patrick shook his head. “No, I’m familiar with most of them and anyhow look at how he’s dressed.”

The Doctor was aware of a soft glow radiating from his chest but couldn’t take his attention off the armed group in front of him to see what his waistcoat was up to. The lead soldier had stopped six feet away and glanced up from the Doctor’s chest into his eyes. The soldier’s brows were pulled down into a knot and his mouth had flattened into a scowl.

“Who are you?”

The voice was powerful and unfriendly.

“I’m the Doctor.”

“A doctor of *what* exactly?” The question came from Patrick and the Doctor wondered at the surly tone. Perhaps he’d overestimated the man – not a scientist but a

scientist's assistant judging by the way he interacted with the professor. He was a little old to be an assistant.

The Doctor shrugged. "A number of different things."

Patrick scoffed.

"Would xeno-archaeology be one of those things, Doctor?"

The question came from Wainwright and the Doctor focussed his attention on the mild-mannered professor.

"I won't deny a passing interest in it."

Wainwright smiled. "You're from a rival expedition. Where's your crew set up?"

"There's no-one else, just me."

The lead soldier sighted along his rifle at the Doctor's head. "Would a rival team be prepared to abduct people and sabotage equipment, Professor?"

Wainwright sighed. "The illegal trade in antiquities on Earth is a lucrative and ruthless business and the supply has to come from inside the archaeological community, so yes, there could be such a team operating."

"And for this team to be here without the WCA's knowledge or approval?"

"Commander Cohen, the WCA doesn't control all of Earth," said Professor Wainwright. "Other governments also have an interest in Mars and may send their own teams *without* notifying the WCA authorities."

"Still, a one-man archaeological team to Mars seems a little unbelievable even to me." Cohen smiled at the Doctor, a smile that never reached his eyes. "But a one-man saboteur, I can fully understand."

The Doctor sighed. "I am not a saboteur, Commander Cohen."

Cohen waved his gun to the right. "We'll just see what the databanks have to say about that."

The Doctor paced slowly to his left.

"Turn around Doctor, hands where I can see them at all times," ordered Cohen.

The Doctor did as he was told.

The Commander was thorough. The Doctor sat through a retina scan, fingerprinting and a DNA scrape from inside his cheek.

Cohen lent against a desk waiting for the results to come back. He stared down at the Doctor, scrutinizing the Time Lord from head to foot. The palm-book in his hand beeped and he read the findings

"No match. So, you're not a CWA citizen."

I'm not even human, thought the Doctor, but your search won't reveal that.

"You're not a known subversive or terrorist."

"I told you I wasn't."

"Well, if you're as good as I think you are, Doctor, you wouldn't be known, but you're in the database now."

"Are you planning to charge me with something?"

"Not at the moment."

"I assume there's a law against holding me indefinitely without being charged."

"Seventy-two hours."

The Doctor dipped his head and rubbed his neck. “Three days of your charming hospitality.”

“Why, Doctor, is there somewhere pressing you needed to be?”

“No, but I was hoping to spend my time viewing the pyramids, not the inside of some cell.”

“Two of the walls making up the stockade belong to the pyramid, so you can study those if you like.”

The Doctor grimaced. “It’s not what I had in mind.”

“Just as I’m sure Professor Hindley didn’t have it in mind to be abducted. Will he survive your absence for three days, Doctor? That’s providing he’s still alive. Are you an assassin as well as a saboteur, Doctor?”

“I’m not a saboteur, or an assassin, and I haven’t seen or met Professor Hindley.” The Doctor frowned. “Why do you think Professor Hindley was abducted?”

Cohen crossed his arms over his chest. “Because he’s missing.”

“Accident?”

Cohen shook his head. “We’d have found some evidence. There’s no shafts, holes, or broken bits of material in the region he was working. No blood either.”

“Maybe he wandered off and got lost.”

“He’d be unlikely to leave without his communicator, water bottle and tools. No, his disappearance is suspicious and coupled with the sabotaged equipment, it looks like he was kidnapped.”

“Were there signs of a struggle?”

“The table he rests his tools on had been overturned and the tools were scattered on the floor.”

The Doctor massaged the knuckles of his left hand. “You mentioned the equipment, how was it sabotaged?”

“You tell me.”

The Doctor closed his eyes and let his breath escape in a sigh. “Humour me, Commander, you’re about to lock me up for three days to stare at the walls, at least give me something to think about.”

“All right. The mechanisms were fused.”

“Could it have been done on Earth when the equipment was packed?”

“When the ship was locked-down prior to take-off, the crew re-checked the equipment. It was fine. And, anyway, some of that equipment was used here and has since been sabotaged.”

“One of the crew then?”

“All the evidence points that way and it’s why the military were called in. But I doubt that person was working alone, Doctor. I always suspected there’d be others involved.”

“So you and your team didn’t arrive with the expedition?”

“No, but you know that. Professor Wainwright was against a military presence and managed to get his way until the trouble started.”

“Was there opposition to the expedition?”

Cohen raised his eyebrows. “Now you’re really carrying this play acting a little too far, Doctor, everyone on Earth knows there was opposition to the expedition. It saturated the media for over a year. The Professor thought he’d be totally out of it when he arrived on Mars, that he’d be able to pursue his science in peace, but he was wrong.”

“And the sabotage continued even after you arrived?”

“Yes, Doctor, and the stakes have now escalated to abduction with the Professor’s disappearance being the only contingency delaying our return to Earth.”

“The expedition’s been cancelled?”

Cohen raised an eyebrow. “Yes and I think I’ve given you enough to occupy your time, Doctor.” Cohen waved one of his guards over.

“Come quick,” a white faced technician wheezed from the door. “Its Stanton – I think she’s dead.”

“You think she’s dead. Where is she?” said Cohen.

The technician was leaning forward, hands on his knees, trying to catch his breath. “The communications room. She was lying on the floor. There was blood and her eyes were open, unblinking.”

“Miller and Liebster with me,” said Cohen as he ran towards the exit. “Hadaway, get the medic to the communications room right away.” Cohen grabbed the technician by the arm and steered him toward the door. “You checked for a pulse, right.”

“I... I... didn’t go in. I came here instead.”

Cohen shoved the technician against the wall. “Idiot, you could have called for help and stayed with her.”

As the Doctor ran past he heard the technician mumble, “I didn’t think of that” and the man crumpled to the floor.

The Commander collected people as he ran. Wainwright and Patrick also joined his flock.

The leading soldier slapped the door panel and the flock entered the communication’s room. In the rear, the Doctor entered the room passing by Patrick who had stopped in the doorway. The door whirred as it tried to shut and was prevented by the research assistant’s body. The man’s face showed horror as he stared at the body on the floor.

Cohen knelt beside the body and felt for a pulse but the Doctor could see the girl was dead. She had a bullet wound in her chest, the torn material of her shirt curling away from the wound signifying an exit wound. The Doctor guessed she’d probably been standing when she was shot. The impact spun her upper body so that her legs crossed over each other as she fell. The Doctor scanned the walls and furniture for a sign of the bullet and saw that the cover of the door panel was shattered and sported the remains of a scorched semi-circular hole. The Doctor did a quick head count.

“You did this, you murderer,” said Patrick. “You killed Hindley, now her, who’s next on your hit list, Doctor?”

“Patrick,” called Wainwright.

“Don’t you see? He turns up and now Stanton’s dead. He probably did it just before I found him in the outer chamber.”

The Doctor felt all eyes upon him. Cohen activated his communicator, “Hadaway, get down here fast and bring a recording device.”

“On my way.”

Cohen turned to Miller and Leibster. “Take the Doctor outside and make sure he doesn’t go anywhere, everyone else stay put until Hadaway gets here and records the scene.”

Cohen joined the Doctor in the corridor. “Patrick, step into the room, I want it sealed.”

“Inside,” said Patrick, “what, with the body?”

“It can’t hurt you Patrick and there are at least half a dozen people in there.”

Patrick grumbled but entered the room. The door hissed shut.

“Take the Doctor to the medical ward and lock him in the isolation cell. Make up your own password, Miller, and tell no-one what it is.”

Miller nodded and took the Doctor by the arm.

Thumping was heard from the closed communications door.

“Now what,” mumbled Cohen.

“They can’t open the door,” replied the Doctor. “The palm panel on the inside was disabled by the bullet that shot Stanton.”

“Oh,” said Cohen, moving toward the door.

Miller tugged on the Doctor’s arm. “You’ll notice it’s a self-closing door, Commander, and it would be impossible to hit the interior panel with a bullet fired from the open doorway” said the Doctor.

Cohen turned wide eyes on the Doctor.

Miller was leading him away, but the Doctor glanced back over his shoulder. “Thirteen people including Patrick entered that room, Commander.”

Cohen was staring at the door. Slowly he reached for the opening panel.

The Doctor finally gave into Miller’s persistent pulling and let himself be led away.

The Doctor sat cross-legged on the narrow examination table surrounded by an impenetrable bubble of reinforced plastic. He had a visitor. Cohen thumbed the intercom.

“Doctor.”

“Commander.”

“You look a little bored.”

“It has been three hours.”

“Sorry but my investigation took time. However, I did manage to come up with one person that no-one remembered seeing in front of them as they entered the communications room.”

Cohen pressed a photograph against the plastic.

The Doctor crawled off the table to see the photo better. It was a group shot of the military and the expedition team.

“Is one of these Hindley?” asked the Doctor.

“Standing next to Wainwright. But that’s not why I’m showing it to you. Which one is the killer, Doctor?”

“Second from the left, with the dark hair and moustache.”

Cohen turned the photo around to stare at it. “Cristof Teff.”

“One of your men.”

“Yes, Doctor, one of my men.”

“You’ve been played for a fool, Cohen.”

“So it would appear.” Cohen discarded the photo. “Well I hope you’ve had a nice rest, Doctor, because I’m afraid I need your cell. I’ll have to put Teff somewhere secure

where the others won't tear him apart." The Commander turned to Miller. "Release the Doctor."

Teff offered no resistance. He sat quietly answering and asking questions.

"You're accusing me of Stanton's murder?"

"The bullet that killed Stanton also disabled the door mechanism," said Cohen. "There was no way for the killer to leave the room before the rest of us arrived. And no-one recalls seeing you enter the room, Teff."

"It was a chaotic moment, Commander. There were a lot of people there and my entry could have easily been missed." Teff's eyes found the Doctor. "And what of him, is he still a suspect?"

"The Doctor was last to enter the room."

"That time, but perhaps he entered earlier, before Patrick stumbled across him and that was when he killed Sergeant Stanton."

"Then how did he get out of the room?"

"I don't know but he may have found a way."

"Christof, that is your first name isn't it," said the Doctor. "It's an interesting name."

"What of it," grumbled Teff.

"Nothing really, it just means 'of Christ'. Did the name mean something to your parents?"

"My parents didn't name me, and anyway, I insist on being called Teff."

"You don't like Christof?"

"Not particularly."

"Someone liked it enough to call you by that name, who?"

"I don't see how this is relevant."

"Why didn't your parents name you?"

"I don't know. I never met them to ask."

Cohen studied his palm-book. "Your personnel record shows you were raised in an orphanage."

"So, what of it?"

"Did it belong to a religious order?" asked the Doctor.

"Why is this of any relevance?"

"Just answer the question, Teff," said Cohen.

"It's no surprise, over 99% of the orphanages were run by religious orders. So yes, it belonged to a religious order."

The Doctor leaned back in his chair. His left hand played with a paper cup on the table. "Who do you think built the pyramids on Mars, Teff?"

"Humans."

"You don't subscribe to the alien theory?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I just don't believe it."

"Surely you must have a reason," said Cohen.

"The intelligence of man is sacred," said the Doctor, "gifted by god."

Teff's eyes widened. "You understand."

"Enough to know what this expedition threatens."

"It could not be allowed to proceed," said Teff. "Just the conjecture is damaging."

"So you sabotaged the equipment?"

Teff nodded.

"And the girl?" asked the Doctor.

Teff studied his hands. "It was not meant to happen. She just came into the room at the wrong time. I couldn't afford to be exposed, there was too much at stake and I didn't know they'd sent another. I did what I thought was necessary."

"So you shot her?" said the Doctor. He crushed the paper cup in his fist.

"Yes."

"And Professor Hindley?" asked Cohen.

Teff smiled. "I thought it was the providence of god, signifying the justness of our cause." His watery eyes settled on the Doctor. "But now I know different."

"You had no part in Hindley's disappearance then?" said Cohen.

"No, but I suspect it was pivotal in getting the expedition recalled. I saw the orders in the communications room. We may face arrest on our return to Earth, but the sacredness of our divine intelligence is intact."

The Doctor's chair scraped loudly against the floor as he stood up.

"Doctor?" said Cohen.

The Doctor looked directly at Cohen. "If Teff had no hand in Hindley's disappearance then the Professor may still be alive."

"But we've found nothing," said Cohen.

"What was Professor Hindley working on when he disappeared?"

"He was in the treasure room. He was very excited about something called the Atef Crown."

The Doctor's mouth fell open. "Osirus's crown is here?"

Cohen shrugged. "I'm not an archaeologist Doctor, I may have the wrong name. It's some kind of crown."

"Wait a minute," said Teff staring up at the Doctor. "What's going on here? Who are you?"

Cohen witnessed the Doctor's eyes harden as he turned to the saboteur. "You don't realise it yet, Teff, but I'm probably your worst nightmare."

The Doctor turned back to Cohen. "How do I get to the treasure room?"

"I'll have Hadaway take you."

Cohen called over Miller and Liebster. "Lock Teff up in the bubble, and if he gives any trouble sedate him."

Hadaway led the Doctor through a small antechamber. Crystal-like shards littered the floor and in the centre of the room stood an empty pedestal.

The Doctor stopped and picked up a piece of the broken material.

"The scientists haven't been able to identify what that is or what the intact structure looked like," said Hadaway.

"It's pulsar crystal, virtually indestructible. This was Horus's eye."

"So you are a xeno-archaeologist, Doctor."

The Doctor pocketed the crystal. "I have some interest in the field, yes."

"The treasure room is just through here."

Hadaway indicated an adjacent doorway. The inside room was circular and rimmed by a curving wall of polished brass. The Atef crown with its two tails of blue peacock feathers rested on a golden pillar behind a transparent shield of what looked like glass, but the Doctor suspected was pulsar crystal. Professor Wainwright and Patrick were in the room.

"What are you doing here?" said Patrick. His attention switched to Hadaway. "Is the military letting their prisoners wander around now?"

The Doctor moved closer to the pedestal holding the crown. "Christof Teff admitted to the sabotage and the murder of Sergeant Stanton."

Wainwright frowned. "But the sabotage was occurring before Christof arrived."

"Long range transmitters hidden inside the equipment," said the Doctor.

"But we searched," said Patrick. "And only found short range transmitters."

"And they were easy to find weren't they? No attempt to conceal them, obvious as soon as you removed the covers." The Doctor glanced at Patrick. "Did you think to look further?"

"But why?" muttered Patrick.

"To throws us off the scent and have us mistrusting each other at the same time," said Wainwright.

"Precisely." The Doctor put his palm against the crystal barrier. "This really is Osiris's crown?"

"So, you are a kindred spirit, Doctor," said Wainwright. "The appearance matches the descriptions given in the ancient Egyptian texts."

"But it's Osiris's mark of kingship, why would he abandon it here?"

"You can't be serious, Doctor," said Patrick. "An Egyptian god, here, it is pure myth."

"And your explanation is what, Patrick?"

"That homo-sapiens originated on Mars, fleeing to Earth when a catastrophe befell the planet. These pyramids are the remains of a lost, highly advanced human civilization."

Wainwright rolled his eyes.

The Doctor paced around the barrier. "Did Professor Hindley purport that theory?"

"The theory is mine, Doctor," said Patrick.

The Doctor glanced up at the venom in Patrick's voice.

"Did Hindley support your theory?"

"No, he vehemently rejected it to the extent that he would not recommend my thesis for submission."

"Then why stay with him?"

"Because, it brought me here." Patrick spread his hands indicating the small treasure room. "What better place to prove my theory than here at the source. If there's proof it will be found here."

"The isotope signatures in the metals of the crown would let us know where it was or wasn't manufactured," said Wainwright. "That is, if we could touch it. The barrier appears to be the same shattered material found in the antechamber, so there must be some way to break it."

The Doctor flicked a fingernail against the crystal barrier. "You'd need Sutekh's immense power to penetrate this-"

The Doctor slapped his forehead. “Of course. That’s why Osiris left his crown behind – irresistible bait.”

“Bait?” said Wainwright. “What, for us?”

“No, Sutekh.”

Patrick laughed. “The Egyptian God of destruction? I think I prefer Hindley’s theory of aliens over this mystic mumbo-jumbo.”

The Doctor crossed to the polished wall. “But the trap didn’t catch Sutekh, it caught Professor Hindley instead.”

“Well I don’t see any traps,” said Wainwright. “Apart from the crown there is nothing else in this room.”

“Look at the walls,” said the Doctor. “They’re bronze, polished bronze.”

Wainwright gazed at their reflections. “Like a mirror.”

“Hathor’s mirror,” said the Doctor.

“Oh come on,” said Patrick. “You think Hindley somehow ended up fighting his own reflection. Then where’s his body. Shouldn’t it still be here?”

The Doctor moved along the wall. “The problem with legends is they change over time. The factual seed of this particular legend is the ‘projection of the spirit’, or the ability to project the form-body into one side of the mirror and out the other.”

“Ah.” The Doctor squatted before a dull patch in bronze. “The mirror’s a portal, the trigger’s the crown, but the actual transfer circuit is right here and it should be possible to...”

The polished surface wavered like a ripple through water. The Doctor stood staring at the effect.

“That’s odd, I thought it would...Agh”

The Doctor collapsed to his knees. Wainwright felt a pull on his body from the mirror’s surface and noticed that the Doctor was straining to lean away from it.

“Booby trapped,” the Doctor mumbled. “A gravity field.” He tried to brace his feet against the floor and not touch the shimmering surface. “Damn Horus and his tricks.”

Wainwright struggled against the increasing drag on his body. He saw a look of surprise register on the Doctor’s face just before the man padded down his waistcoat. Any notion Wainwright had of aiding the Doctor vanished as the professor fell and slid toward the wall. He saw the blur of the Doctor’s arm as the man threw something into the wall. The gravity sucking at his body disappeared and Wainwright watched the Doctor topple to the floor.

Cohen entered the medical ward and crossed to the examination bay holding the Doctor’s inert body.

“What happened?”

“A booby-trap in the treasure room,” said Wainwright. “But the medic and I thought you should see these.”

The medic activated a view screen on the examination bay.

“A superficial examination of the patient showed an irregular heartbeat, so I did an ultrasound.”

Cohen frowned. “What am I looking at?”

The medic traced a mass with his finger. "This is a heart." The finger moved to another mass. "And this is a second heart."

Cohen looked at the Doctor. "He has two hearts?"

"And that's not all," said Wainwright. "He also has two circulatory systems, his blood type can't be matched and his DNA doesn't show normal base pairing sequences."

"What is he then, some kind of mutated freak, genetically engineered, what?"

"Genetic engineering couldn't do this," said the medic.

"I believe he's an alien," said Wainwright.

"What?" Cohen's voice fell to a whisper and he moved away from the Doctor's body, signalling for the medic and Wainwright to follow him. "You're saying he's not human?"

"It would appear so," said Wainwright.

"You don't have to whisper." The Doctor's eyes opened and he turned his head to stare at the trio. "I already know I'm not human." He pushed up onto his elbows. "What happened?"

"You threw something out of your pocket into the wall and it released us," said Wainwright.

"That's right." The Doctor sat up and swung his legs off the table. "Never underestimate an Osirian, they're devious."

"Is that what you are, an Osirian?" asked Wainwright.

The Doctor paused then continued massaging his neck. "No, I'm Gallifreyan. The Osirians are an enigma to my people and I came to Mars to investigate the legacy they left behind."

"So you are a xeno-archaeologist after all."

"More or less."

"Did you have anything to do with Professor Hindley's disappearance?" asked Cohen.

The Doctor levelled a stare at Cohen. "No Commander, I didn't. The Professor has fallen foul of Osirian ingenuity and guile."

"He is dead then."

"No, but he is trapped." The Doctor stood and leant against the table. "Hmm, still a little woozy."

"Can you free him?" asked Wainwright. "You seemed to be making some progress with the wall."

"I nearly got us all ensnared in the professor's predicament. That passage is one way, its purpose to trap Sutekh. Anyone else entering the field will also find themselves trapped."

Wainwright bowed his head. "So, he is lost then. I know his wife. She will never forgive me for this."

"But it had nothing to do with you," said Cohen.

"That won't matter, Commander. Maria entrusted me with his safety."

"I wasn't planning on giving up," said the Doctor. "I have some equipment on my ship that may lower the field energy and allow Professor Hindley to cross back over."

"I'll send Miller and Leibster to help you bring it back," said Cohen.

From his bubble, Christof observed the exit of the Doctor, Cohen, Wainwright and the medic. It only left him the one guard for company.

Wainwright picked up the baton shaped piece of metal studded with what looked like specks of crusty mould. He turned it this way and that. "What exactly is this thing?"

"It's a field dampener, Professor, and it's quite capable of dampening the electrical impulses in your brain down to nothing if you point it the wrong way."

"Oh." The professor returned the dampener to the floor. "Which way was it facing?"

The Doctor leaned over and minutely adjusted its position.

"All right," he said, dusting his hands against his pants. "All that remains is to connect the power."

"Err, Doctor." Wainwright feebly pulled at the Doctor's sleeve. "I think there's a problem."

"What?" said the Doctor turning to face the same direction as Wainwright.

Christof and Patrick blocked the entranceway. Each held a gun.

"Oh, I see."

"Patrick, what are you doing?" said Wainwright.

"The pyramids on Mars were built by humans."

"You know that's yet to be proved, one way or the other."

Patrick's gun waved in the Doctor's direction. "With him here it will never be proved."

Wainwright stepped in front of the Doctor who used the opportunity to slip a shard of pulsar crystal into Wainwright's pocket.

"Professor, move away from me. Get out of their line of fire," said the Doctor.

"I agree," said Christof. "Get away from that demon."

Wainwright back-stepped moving beyond the field dampeners until he pressed up against the wall. He continued to edge to the left as Christof and Patrick's attention returned to the Doctor.

"Now, demon, it's time for you to return to your maker."

"Kill me," said the Doctor, "and Professor Hindley will have no chance of returning to this world."

Wainwright spied the dull bit of bronze he sought. He took another step.

"Hindley has been corrupted," said Christof. "He cannot be saved."

Wainwright pushed his heel into the dull spot. Nothing happened.

"Flesh, Wainwright," said the Doctor. "Put your hand on it."

Christof squeezed the trigger as the Doctor became a moving target. The first bullet missed and ricocheted off the wall. Patrick sunk and huddled on his knees, the angry zing of a near-miss bullet reverberating in his ears. Wainwright touched the dull section of wall with his hand.

The wall wavered. The professor pulled back from the polished surface.

Christof fired and the Doctor ducked. A baton shaped dampener sailed back toward Christof and clouted him above the nose.

He swore, stumbling, and the Doctor used the delay to grab Wainwright by his collar and spin the professor clear of the immediate pull of the portal.

The Doctor peered quickly at the befuddled professor. "Your pocket, Wainwright, the pulsar crystal shard, throw it."

The Doctor dove into the melted face of the wall at the same time as a bullet punctured the surface above his head.

He saw red sand and tucked himself into a judo roll coming up on one knee and facing back towards the wall. He saw Wainwright throw the crystal, a bright flash of light

and then Christof's face squashed up against the wall. Stunned, the soldier slid down the wall. Wainwright collected Christof's gun and frantically reached for his own communicator. The professor swung the gun between Christof and Patrick as he hurriedly spoke into the communicator.

"That was rather a tight situation."

The Doctor jerked his head around to find a neatly dressed middle-aged man standing quietly behind him.

"Professor Hindley," said the Doctor.

"And you would be?"

The Doctor came to his feet and extended his hand. "The Doctor, Professor. We've been looking for you."

"Yes, I've noticed," he said, pointing at a transparent sheet hanging in mid air. "I've been watching although I couldn't hear anything."

The professor frowned. "What exactly *is* going on back there?"

"A religious dispute over the existence of non-human intelligence."

The Professor's face sagged becoming more lined and care worn. "So we brought the divisions with us."

"At the moment that's the least of our worries." The Doctor pointed to one of his dampener batons. It was missing its top. "Looks like Christof did manage to hit something of worth."

"What were you planning on doing with those?"

"Lower the energy threshold of this portal." The Doctor ran his hand over the surface of the transparent window. "It may have allowed us to return."

"And now?"

"We won't be going back this way." Movement in the treasure room caught the Doctor's eye. Cohen had arrived with his men.

"Well there's a black pyramid over that way." The professor pointed to his left. "I've walked for one kilometre along each of the eight cardinal compass points, and this was the only structure I saw. There's sand in each direction though. Lots of sand."

"Then I guess the pyramid is our destination."

The Professor smiled. "I'll enjoy the company. I feel like I've been alone for quite some time."

The Doctor stared around him at the sand. "How have you been surviving, Professor? Did you find a food and water source?"

"No, but surprisingly I haven't been thirsty or hungry. I feel fine."

"Have you been sleeping?"

"A little. But it's never dark here."

"Curious."

"Just red sand, blue sky and sun."

"And a black pyramid?" said the Doctor.

"Yes," said Hindley. "This way."

They followed Hindley's old footprints in the sand for the first kilometre then stepped onto virgin sand.

The pyramid was small with a single entryway leading into a hollow interior. It was cool and dark inside but light gleamed along the edges of long crystals hanging from the pyramids apex and pointing down at a golden disk in the floor.

Hindley was staring up at the apex. "Very pretty, but what are they?"

"Pulsar crystals," said the Doctor. "They'd hold enough power to rival a black hole."

The Professor whistled. "What would require that much power?"

The doctor looked at the floor with its golden disk. "Activation of a time portal." The Doctor approached the disk. "But what I don't understand is why the Osirian's would give Sutekh a means of escape, why not just trap him here?"

"Sutekh?" said Hindley.

"Yes, Professor Hindley. Sutekh." The Doctor knelt and traced his hand along the embossed edge of the gold disk. "The pyramids on Mars were built solely to trap Sutekh. Horus's eye held him unmoving on Earth while Osiris's crown was the back up plan for when the eye failed. The crown and Hathor's mirror were designed to bring him here when he freed himself."

"Your saying Sutekh is alive on Earth?"

"No," sighed the Doctor. "Not any more. He was defeated, but this trap remained."

"So, why the door?" said Hindley.

"I expect it's a choice--of sorts." The Doctor stood and brushed dirt from his knees. "Stay here or surrender yourself."

Hindley frowned. "Surrender to whom?"

"The only race that could control Sutekh, the Osirians."

Hindley pointed to the crystals. His face had paled. "You're saying this leads to an alien race."

The Doctor nodded. "I also believe, Professor, that it's our only way out of here."

Hindley took a breath. "Out of the frying pan and into the fire," he murmured.

"Quite possibly." The Doctor gave Hindley a wry smile. "Shall we go, Professor?"

Hindley waved toward the gold disk. "After you, Doctor, after you."

The Doctor found himself deposited in total darkness. He could hear Hindley's rushed breathing.

"Doctor, are you there?"

The air lightened and a form took shape against the blackness. A misty, robed figure with a horse-like head sporting horns and soft cow-like ears steadily solidified.

Hindley stepped back bumping into the Doctor. "What in the blazes is that?"

"An Osirian," said the Doctor. "Or a lifelike projection of one. Hathor, I think judging by the horns and ears."

"Is it... real?"

"Real enough." The Doctor walked closer to the form suspended in mid air. Its eyes were shut. "I think it needs to be activated."

"Hathor, the cow goddess, greeted the souls of the dead in the underworld." Hindley's voice was calmer, more scientific. "In the Egyptian Books of the Underworld, the dead needed to know the secret names of the deities in order to gain passage."

“Their secret names.” The Doctor looked back at Hindley. “Or their Osirian names?”

The Doctor straightened and faced the image and gave Hathor’s Osirian name.

The image’s eyes blazed tinging the dimness with blue light. Muscles on the face moved, brought the animation to life, as the creature’s eyes settled on the Doctor.

“I was told to expect Sutekh.” The voice was like wind piping through dead reeds. “You are not he.”

“We were brought here by mistake,” said the Doctor. “Can you send us back to the pyramids on Mars?”

“I can return you to the black pyramid or send you forward, that is the limit of my power and the limit of your choice.”

“Only me?” said the Doctor. “What about the Professor? Can he accompany me?”

“Yes, but understand it is your journey and the trials of the forward path are not intended for your kind.”

Hindley edged closer to the Doctor’s back. “What did Hathor mean by trials?”

“And if I fail what happens to the Professor?”

“It depends where you fail. If early, the other will be returned to the black pyramid; if later... he may be returned to Mars.”

Hindley tapped the Doctor on the shoulder. “What trials?”

“Those alluded to in The Egyptian Books of the Underworld.”

“The weighing of the soul?” breathed Hindley.

“Judgement and atonement,” said the Doctor. “This path was intended to bring Sutekh back into the fold.”

“Exactly how dangerous is it, Doctor?” asked Hindley.

“Very,” said the Doctor. “A trial designed to chastise Sutekh could kill a lesser being.”

“Then we shouldn’t do it,” said Hindley.

“The alternative is to spend the rest of eternity back at that black pyramid and I don’t fancy doing that if there’s a small chance of success this way.”

“But, you’re the one taking all the risks,” said Hindley.

The Doctor shook his head. “No. No I’m not. This is the only chance you’ve got Professor. An eternity on that sand plane would send you mad.”

“I see.” Hindley sighed. “Very well, Doctor, but you must choose, not me.”

“Hathor, I choose to go forward.”

“State your name.”

“Doctor.”

“Doctor, in being sent forward do you agree to be bound by the strictures that comprise this path?”

“Yes.”

Blackness returned to claim the Doctor and the Professor.

The Doctor’s eyes adjusted faster than the professor’s to the growing light levels. They were in a cavern and the Osirian image suspended before him had the narrow, elongated head of the Ibis.

“Thoth,” said the Doctor.

Hindley narrowed his eyes and peered at the hazy figure. “I believe you’re right, Doctor. Thoth, the Egyptian moon god. Also the god of writing and knowledge.” Hindley moved closer to the image. “Looks like he’s holding some sort of ball.”

“I’m about to activate the image, Professor. You may want to step back.”

With his hands clasped behind his back, Hindley raised an eyebrow at the Doctor. “Probably prudent.” He wandered back into the shadows.

The Doctor called out Thoth’s true name and the image became animated.

“You’re not Sutekh.” Thoth’s voice was like the crunch of gravel underfoot.

“No,” said the Doctor. “But we have taken this path to return to our own time.”

“It is not an easy path,” said Thoth. “Who makes this journey?”

“I am the Doctor.”

“Doctor, do you accept this trial?”

“Yes.”

The ball in Thoth’s hands glowed white. “The unblemished light of the soul.”

Thoth extended his arm and released the globe. It floated in the air.

“Take it, Doctor.”

The Doctor heard Hindley’s startled intake of breath. The orb of light drifted nearer and the Doctor raised his hands.

“Doctor, I don’t think you should touch that,” said Hindley.

“We have no choice.” The Doctor let the orb nestle between his palms. The bright light faded, waning to a dull yellowy flicker.

“You have a heavy heart, Doctor,” said Thoth.

“So it would appear.”

“I would counsel you against concealing the truth from Osiris.”

“Osiris?”

The Doctor gasped as blinding light flooded the room and white noise filled his ears.

The Doctor tightened his grip on the hardness of the orb waiting for the disorientation to pass. There were flashing stars before his eyes and he blinked, trying to clear his sight. His ears seemed to be ringing.

Hindley was talking. “...devil was-- Oh my....”

The Doctor glanced up. The being before them was solid and real. Its lower limbs were swathed in the soft blue folds of skirt, but above the waistband, brown skin like polished leather mapped out long, lean muscles stretched over a narrow chest with rounded shoulders and thin, spindly arms. A stick-like neck seemed too delicate to support the elongated face and snout of Anubis, the jackal-headed god of the dead. The Osirian’s eyes were a solid blue.

“Only Sutekh was expected by this path.”

“The natives of Earth are a curious species,” said the Doctor. “One crossed over using the path intended for Sutekh, and I followed.”

Anubis’s head tracked left to take in the Professor. The Doctor could sense Hindley cowering, trying to make himself smaller and invisible to that omnipotent gaze.

The Osirian’s gaze released the professor and returned to the Doctor. “Then you are not of the Earth?”

“No.”

“But you are the one who alighted on this path?”

“Yes.”

Anubis’s attention switched to the flickering globe. “To end your journey, you must present yourself before Osiris.”

The Doctor felt pressure against his fingers and the globe broke free of his grip. It floated towards Anubis who plucked it out of the air. “Osiris will require this.”

The Doctor and Professor Hindley followed Anubis between two lines of tall carved columns. The pillars supported no structure and blue sky arched overhead. The path of pillars ended at a flight of stairs, on the top of which rested a rectangular structure with a woven roof of green fabric. Inside, seated upon a granite throne was a human-like Osirian wearing an open robe over a body swathed in bandages.

“Osiris,” breathed Hindley.

Anubis approached the seated figure.

“This is the Doctor,” said Anubis. “He came via Sutekh’s destined path.” The god of the dead handed the orb to the seated Osiris.

Osiris’s human eyes settled on the Doctor. “The power that holds Sutekh immobile would have prevented such passage.”

“Horus’s power was destroyed,” said the Doctor.

The globe in Osiris’s hands glowed blue.

“Truth,” said Anubis.

Osiris turned the globe slowly in his hands. “If Horus’s eye was destroyed, then Sutekh would be freed.”

“He was freed.”

The globe gave a bright flare of blue light. “You speak truth, Doctor.” Osiris studied the shadowy depths of the orb. “But your soul is tainted, shadowed by sin.”

Hindley noticed the Doctor stiffen.

“It may well be, Osiris, but I do not believe that your race, who removed themselves from the concerns of the Cosmos, have the right to judge my actions.”

The Doctor’s voice stayed level, but Hindley observed the soft tremor that belied his outward calm.

“You are right, Doctor.” Osiris rested the globe in his lap. “So I will not judge you on those matters.” The Osirian waved his hand over the globe and most of its original brilliance returned except for a single band of grey. “Which then leaves this.”

Hindley saw shock register on the Doctor’s face.

“I don’t understand,” said the Doctor. “I have committed no act that would concern your race.”

Osiris raised an eyebrow. “Have you not? If Sutekh is free, Doctor, why is it you appear before me and not he?”

The Doctor rubbed a hand across his forehead. “Sutekh stepped into a space-time corridor. He became trapped inside.”

Blue light tinged Osiris’s face.

“Truth,” said Anubis.

“Then he died inside?” said Osiris.

“Yes,” said the Doctor.

“Truth,” said Anubis.

“Did he miscalculate?”

Silence stretched and Hindley turned to look at the Doctor. It was obvious from the set of the Time Lord’s jaw that he did not wish to speak.

“Perhaps.”

Blue followed by red.

“A partial truth,” said Osiris.

The Doctor sighed. “He may have underestimated the threat I posed to him.”

Hindley’s jaw fell open. “You were there!”

The Doctor scowled at Hindley, silencing him.

“How did your actions cause Sutekh to be trapped in the space time tunnel?”

The Doctor shut his eyes. “I shifted the timing of the destination far into the future.”

“You knowingly *chose* a time beyond Sutekh’s life-span?”

The Doctor’s green eyes slowly opened. “Yes.”

“So, you assigned him to death? Murdered him?”

“I had no choice,” said the Doctor.

Osiris’s eyes hardened and Hindley hugged himself. Whatever defence the Doctor was pleading, the Professor felt the ground was falling out from under the Time Lord’s feet.

“If Sutekh had reached his destination he would have destroyed the Earth and then gone on to destroy the rest of the galaxy.”

“You’re wrong.” Osiris’s eyes blazed with cold green light. “Sutekh’s hatred of Horus would have driven him to Mars in search of his nephew’s whereabouts. That path would ultimately have led him here to repent and be reunited with his people.”

The Doctor shook his head. He stood like a belligerent child facing a headmaster’s dressing-down but one that would have far worse implications than a suspension or stinging hands. “But I witnessed the future he would bring. I saw the earth destroyed.”

The orb glowed blue.

“You speak truth,” said Osiris. “But there are two truths here, Doctor.”

Hindley’s mouth fell open. “The Hall of Two Truths,” he whispered.

“Osirians can change the future, Doctor. It was why we chose to remove our influence and ourselves from the Cosmos. What you saw was just one possibility from a myriad of alternate futures and it was your own emotions, your own fears, that determined the future you witnessed. In effect, you chose that future, Doctor. The probability that Sutekh would choose it was very low.”

Professor Hindley watched the colour drain from the Doctor’s face.

“So is revealed the second truth,” said Osiris.

“Then I am guilty of killing Sutekh,” murmured the Doctor. “I have taken him from you.”

The globe glowed blue.

“And I must stand before your judgement.”

The Professor swallowed around the lump growing in his throat. “Hey, wait a minute. The Doctor couldn’t have known about the second truth. For him there was only one truth – that Sutekh would destroy the earth.”

Osiris’s gaze flicked to Hindley. “And that is why the Doctor will not be judged for his actions. We do not punish ignorance.” Osiris’s eyes dimmed to human appearance and the globe burned white casting off the grey band.

Gasping down a lungful of air, the Professor glanced at the Doctor who slowly blinked at the floor. Hindley thought the Doctor's reaction stemmed from relief but as he watched the Time Lord's face fell into sadness.

"Forgive me, Osiris," said the Doctor. "I have done you and your people a great wrong. You wished your brother to return to you, and now he never will."

"Sutekh's body is not beyond recovery, Doctor, and he can be revived as I was once revived." Osiris's human mouth lifted in a cold smile. "The procedure is somewhat debasing and my brother will not appreciate his body being handled in such a manner. I find it rather fitting that he will endure what he once subjected me to."

"Mummification," gasped Hindley.

Osiris pushed to his feet. "Your journey is ended, Doctor. You will be returned to the original point of insertion and upon recovery of my brother's body the pathway that brought you here will be deactivated."

"So the Osirians will be lost to us once again," said the Doctor.

"Your race has come to understand the nature of time, Doctor, and when you truly comprehend space, then we may meet again."

"Space?" queried the Doctor. "What about space?" But his surroundings were stretching into long spinning strands and he couldn't sense solid floor beneath his feet.

The Doctor and Professor Hindley materialised into darkness.

The Doctor heard an abrasive scratch and there appeared a small orange flame animating Hindley's sheepish face.

"Matches," said the professor. "Forgot I had them." Hindley turned on his heel. "Where are we?"

"Probably inside a secret chamber of the pyramid." The Doctor trailed his hand along the wall. "The Osirians have thoughtfully avoided the situation where we'd have to explain to the rest of the expedition how we managed to appear out of thin air."

"Oh my, and just how do we even begin explaining what happened to us?"

The Doctor pressed a depression in the wall and a door slid open revealing a dimly lit corridor. "This looks familiar," said the Doctor. He waved Hindley in front of him.

"And of course there's the science papers to write..."

The Doctor stopped and the professor moved on ahead.

"...I'll need your collaboration there too, Doctor. Perhaps you can come to Cambridge..."

The Doctor back-stepped, turned and quickly walked in the other direction.

Hindley's voice faded with each step the Doctor took.

Humans, he thought. He'd had enough of them, particularly when they desired to covet his time.

LESLEIGH FORCE

Lesleigh hails from Australia. She enjoys writing short stories and illustrating, and her work has been published in ASIM and NFG magazines. '*New Born*' a season 31 TDWP story was her first foray into print and as such TDWP will always be special to her.

