

THE  
**DOCTOR WHO**  
PROJECT

**The Eternity Ghosts**



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# Dzailundar

Dying. It wasn't easy.

Dzailundar would know. She'd done it twelve times before.

The difference this time—and it was a big difference—was that on the previous twelve occasions, she'd come back to life afterwards. This time? No such luck.

The thirteenth life was a sad and a scary one. In eating up the dregs of regeneration energy, the final body aged more slowly than its twelve predecessors, which compensated somewhat for the fact there would be no future lives. Somewhat.

But now Dzai's time had come. And she was scared. Terrified, in fact. How could she not be? She'd been particularly unfortunate in that her final body had started out old, the hair already grey and the skin notably wrinkled. A thirteenth body which started out young could last for well over a thousand years. But one that was old to begin with? Not a chance of it. Dzai managed four hundred years only. Four hundred years before her final form became too aged and frail to carry on, and so for the thirteenth time in her life Dzailundar found herself on her deathbed. Her *last* deathbed.

'I don't want to go,' she whispered, as she lay helpless in the Citadel's hospice unit. The ward's whitewashed walls and spicy-smelling vases of fire-flowers were pleasant enough, the sheets gorgeously soft, and the matrons in their cr me robes endlessly caring and sympathetic. Outside, crimson snow iced the citadel and the endless mountain beyond, the lilac skies of Gallifrey darkening for another week. This, she knew, was to be a long, dark night. Likely the suns would not return for eight or nine cycles, and the thought that she may not live to see another dawn broke her hearts.

'I don't want to go,' she repeated, as a matron came by to administer her pain relief.

'Of course, you don't,' the matron soothed. 'Nobody does. But the thirteenth life is where it ends. For all of us. There is nothing to be done.'

Despite the kindness, Dzailundar was enraged. The tenderness she was shown did nothing to soften the horror of her impending demise, the attentive care did nothing to lessen the terror. Time Lord society venerated the old, the experienced and accomplished, but this reverence meant nothing to her now; she'd have traded all of it for just one more life. Because ultimately, the respect she was shown was for her achievements, not for her as a person. They cared for her in her great

age because of what she'd *done*, not who she'd *been*. And it wasn't right. She was not simply a list of accomplishments, though said list wasn't at all to be sneezed at. Scholar. Scientist. Senior Undersecretary to the Chancellor. Keeper of the Old Matrix. An impressive career, no doubt, but behind it was a *person*. Her. A living, breathing, imperfect individual. A wife and a mother. Happy at times and sad on others. Fat twice, once having started out so, the other time brought on by an insatiable fondness for food. She'd been old. She'd been young. She'd been blonde; she'd been ginger. She'd been shy, she'd been boisterous. She'd been...*beautiful*.

Five thousand years of productive, joyous life, and now it was to end? Just like that? How could it be? How had the centuries passed *so* quickly?

After receiving her pain relief, she slept; it was only with the comfort that the drugs brought that she was able to do so. At any other times the pain was too severe.

And it was as she was sleeping, her tormented mind flitting from one nightmare to the next, that a being or force unknown reached out to her.

*'Come to me.'*

Dzai stirred but did not wake.

*'Come...to me.'*

She forced open her eyelids but saw nobody standing over her. The ward was dark now, and she was alone. Night had fallen.

*'Come.'*

The voice was not coming from the room; it was being transmitted directly into her head from farther afield.

'Who are you?' she whispered.

*'Someone in need of your help. Meet me in the Black Level. Do that. In return, I can offer you life. A fresh regeneration cycle. Come!'*

Dzai needed no more persuasion. With her pain relief still yet to wear off, she was able to force herself out of bed for the first time in a long time. The ward was toasty warm, but she shivered, nonetheless. She was always cold now. Ignoring her discomfort, she grabbed her stick and steadied herself as her legs wobbled and the room swayed. It was only the prospect of a reprieve from the great abyss of death which prevented her collapsing back into bed, and which spurred her on out of the ward. She donned her white gown and limped out of the hospice, afforded the matron on reception a smile as she went out into the corridor. There were no rules against this; she was a guest at the hospice, not a prisoner, and patients were free to leave whenever they wished, encouraged to keep active insofar as they possibly could. The matron would likely have been pleasantly surprised to see Dzai up and about.

She made her way towards the transmat port at the end of the corridor and beamed herself straight to the Grand Lift Atrium. It earned its name; it was a round chamber with a shining marble floor, and no fewer than five hundred elevators spaced along the gold-plated walls. Naturally, the invention of the transmat some two hundred thousand years previous had rendered elevators slightly redundant, but many a Time Lord swore by them over transmat travel, citing the latter as making them nauseous.

Also – there were places in the Citadel where the transmats didn't go. A handful of Time Lords, Dzai among them, knew that. And one such place was the Black Level.

The atrium was empty, apart from her and the attendant at the reception in the middle of the chamber, sat at a marble desk directly below the skylight. Craning her stiff neck, Dzai saw the spires of the various buildings which comprised the Citadel, the stars above them winking from afar like so many diamonds against a velvet backdrop.

‘Madam, are you quite well?’ the attendant asked her, noting her deathly pallor and obvious frailty, not to mention the hospice robe which she wore.

‘I’ll live,’ she told him, and hoped that it would be so. ‘I require special access. Clearance Omega.’

The attendant’s expression darkened. ‘Are you authorised?’

‘More than. My name is Dzailundar. Scan me.’

The attendant swiped her briefly with a device attached to his left wrist. A light upon it turned green. It was a fine bit of luck that she had never officially resigned her position upon the Keeper’s Panel.

‘Very well,’ he said, handing her a key card. ‘Do you remember which elevator?’

‘Always.’ Of the five hundred elevators in the atrium, four hundred and ninety-nine were identical in every respect, right down to the font of the numbers upon their buttons. They all stopped at the same floors.

Except from Elevator 263.

Elevator 263 looked just the same as its siblings, and stopped at all their floors, but it had a deeper shaft than the rest of them, which went further into the bowels of the Citadel. Down past the basements, which were generally considered to be the lowest levels of the Citadel, and all the way down to the Black Level. Elevator 263 was the only way down there, aside from by TARDIS, but even that required special permission to land there. The fewer ways in, and the fewer Time Lords who knew of its existence, so much the better.

Dzailundar got into the elevator and immediately collapsed against its back wall, exhausted, and racked with pain. Sensing the key card on her person, the doors of Elevator 263 glided shut and it began descending immediately. It would take a long time to reach the Black Level. Ten minutes, or thereabouts. Time enough for a short rest, perhaps even a little sleep. She shut her eyes and waited, ignoring the stabbing pains beneath her ribcage, as her ancient, tumour-ridden organs valiantly fought the losing battle of keeping her alive.

‘Not long now,’ she whispered. ‘Not long...’

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She was curled on the floor of the elevator by the time it arrived at the Black Level, and found it enormously hard to rise. She crawled from the elevator on all fours, lest it was to close and take her all the way back upstairs again. Sure enough, she heard the doors glide shut behind her and the elevator moved off, no less than a second after she hauled herself outside. She rolled around helplessly on the grimy, filthy floor, trying to muster the strength to get up on her feet. Using her stick, and the dripping grey walls for support, she was finally able to lever herself upright, and stood panting, clutching her hearts, every muscle of her decrepit form searing with hot, stabbing pain.

The Black Level was, like her, sick. It was not dank and rotten purely because it was neglected. No amount of cleaning down here would have made a difference; no maintenance could make it smell fresh or look smart. *Its* poison had corroded the entire place.

In fact, she could feel *it* right now. She suspected that she would. She whimpered as she felt *its* noxious entrails slithering, invisible, into her mind, burrowing into the deepest recesses of her thoughts, her emotions. Perverted, poisonous fingers pored through the things which made her the person that she was, trying to corrupt and damage. It wouldn’t work, of course; as a Keeper of the Old Matrix, she had long since gained natural immunity from *its* awful influence. But that did

not mean that *its* attempts to harm her were painless, particularly since it had been so long since she'd been down here.

'You remember me, don't you?' she wheezed. 'Leave me alone. I'm a friend.' She raised her voice to address whoever had summoned her here. 'Very well. How do I find you?'

'Follow the lights.' On cue, the corridor to her right lit up with orange overhead lights. She staggered that way, her cane rapping sharply on the dirty floor. A few steps in, and she was panting with exhaustion, practically choking on the rancid air. The smell down here was of death; that was the only way to describe it.

The lights lit a path through the labyrinth of corridors, and it was not long before she knew where they were taking her. The Omega Laboratory. The O Lab, for short. Directly above *its* sarcophagus.

Near to collapse by the time she arrived, the effects of her pain relief practically nil, she came face to face with the one who had summoned her here. A strange man. Tall and white of hair and dressed in a smart red tunic not of Gallifreyan fashion. He wore red cotton trousers and black leather boots which came up to his knees. He observed her coolly, and with a slender finger, pointed towards a chair. She collapsed into it gratefully.

'You came.' His voice was a deep burr.

'I did do that.'

'You are Dzailundar. One of the Keepers of the Old Matrix.'

'I am that.'

'And fast dying, I fear.'

'That, too.'

'Yes. Well, I promised you a new regeneration cycle, and I stand by that promise. I am willing to help you. The question is, are you willing – and able - to help me?'

Without hesitation, she agreed. 'Whatever it is you ask of me, I will do. I cannot die. I will not! I'm...*so* scared. You have my help, unequivocally. But I would like to know what it is, exactly, you are doing down here.'

But perhaps she could already hazard a guess. The last time she had visited the O Lab it had been full of lab-benches and test-tubes containing lurid chemicals of every colour, with vast arrays of polished, wood-panelled machinery along the walls, the big chunky levers and buttons reminiscent of those found at the consoles of default TARDIS control rooms. At the far end of the room was a corner portioned by a sturdy glass wall, and it was in there that pieces of *it* were extracted from the sarcophagus below, and studied and stored in safety, measured for any signs of decreasing – or increasing – activity.

The lab benches were gone now, and most of the machinery was switched off. The glass partition did remain, and beside it, taking pride of place, stood a magnificent antique. A Type II TARDIS Time Corridor. Not a capsule, like later models, but a gateway. A gateway to another world, another time. It was shaped something like an egg, constructed of a dull grey metal, with Gallifreyan symbols scrawled all over it. Arton energy, brilliant blue, fizzed and crackled along its casing, and along the various cables which snaked towards power points in the corner. A hole large enough to admit a person was built into the front of the casing. Step through and end up...anywhere. It would have been a marvel, once. Many aeons ago.

'Beneath our feet lie the ruins of the Old Matrix,' the stranger said. 'Held in stasis and buried forever, to prevent it corrupting all of Gallifrey – the entire galaxy, perhaps – with its insidious power. It is my intention to harness that power.'

Dzai feared as much. 'I don't need to explain how incredibly dangerous that is?'



‘I understand. It’s why I’ve brought you here, dear, for only a Keeper would know how to perform this deed safely. So, I ask again and for the final time, are you in? Agree now, and I shall grant you one new life – just one, mind you – so that you have the energy to work. And once your services are no longer required, you will receive the outstanding twelve.’

‘I believe that I already said yes. You are asking a horrific job of me, but there is *nothing* more horrific than death, and that’s all that awaits me if I refuse. I will do whatever it takes. But I find myself at a disadvantage. You know my name; you know who I am, what I’ve done. I don’t know who you are.’

He smiled. ‘My name is Mortimus. But you are not obliged to call me that. You may call me whatever you wish. I confess, I would be rather partial to Commander. Or Controller, perhaps? Boss? But it’s up to you. In a previous life I was known as the Monk, so I suppose you could even call me that if you wanted to.’

‘We’ll stick with Mortimus,’ she told him.

‘As you will, dear. Then let’s get started.’

# Maggie

‘Come on, Doctor! Get us off!’

The Doctor rushed for the console and began dancing around the controls, flicking switches, and yanking levers in such a frenzied manner that a stranger would have thought it random. Panicked guesswork. But Maggie knew better. She hadn’t been with the Doctor for long but knew already that the buffoonery he exhibited was mostly an act. A wicked intelligence pulsed behind those striking eyes of his, and sure enough the ancient engines of the TARDIS began grinding into life beneath their feet. Not a moment too soon; bullets cracked against the police-box hull as their pursuers opened fire on the TARDIS, determined not let them get away. Too late for that. Maggie felt that peculiar eerie sense come over her, the sense of being caught, somehow, between one place and the next, as the planet Ta was left behind, Argonite gangs and all, and they set off for adventures new. And very nearly unscathed; the Doctor had been deprived of his big shaggy beard and his hair had been cut radically short by the trafficking clans, whose slave stock were required to look immaculate for the markets which took place across that forsaken planet, people sold into slavery in the Argonite mines, slavery which would not end until their deaths, borne of injury or sheer exhaustion. That had been the fate that very nearly befell the three of them. With his talent for understatement, the Doctor had summed up the ordeal by saying, ‘I had wanted a haircut, but *that* was rather severe.’

Maggie hoped that their next destination would be a rather more restful sort of place. Although she was strong, and fit, she was no longer young. All this running around was a young person’s game, and though she kept pace with the Doctor and Kaylaar, she inevitably felt more exhausted than either of them afterwards, took longer to recover than they did. She was altogether more conscious of the fact than she let on, and knew that she, bluntly, slowed them down. And it *did* upset her. How could it not? They had strength, drive and vigour, which she was increasingly coming to lack, as the winds of time frogmarched her mercilessly, cruelly, and irreversibly towards middle age, and old age after that.

‘Are you both all right?’ the Doctor asked.

‘Oh, sure,’ Kaylaar scoffed, shaking his head and muttering a few choice words.

‘As rain,’ Maggie said. ‘But look, Doctor, how would it be if we went somewhere a little more chilled next?’

‘Chilled, you say?’ the Doctor said. ‘No can do, Magster. Chilled is another word for peaceful, and peaceful is another word for boring, don’t you know? But I *can* take us somewhere fun.’

‘Safe fun?’

‘If you insist.’

‘I do.’

‘All-righty,’ the Doctor said, rubbing his hands together and fiddling with the controls. He made to run a hand through his thick hair, remembered it was now a buzz-cut, and lowered his hand sheepishly. ‘Museum? Carnival? Arcade! Any preference? Speak now, or forever hold your peace.’

‘Wherever,’ Kaylaar said, leaning back on a seat and shutting his eyes, rocking on the back legs.

The Doctor shrugged. ‘Mags?’

‘Dunno. Museum?’

‘Museum it shall be,’ he said. ‘And don’t worry, I know just the one. It’s small, it’s quiet, it’s interesting. And it’s safe. When you next set foot outside the TARDIS, Magglesworth, you can be assured of your complete and unequivocal safety. One hundred perfect, irrefutable and certifiable safety.’

And then the phone rang.

‘Oh,’ the Doctor said, perplexed, his hand hovering over the old-fashioned receiver mounted on the console. ‘It’s ringing? I didn’t know it could still ring. Well, well, well...nobody’s called me on this, not for a very long time.’

Quivering with excitement, he picked up the receiver and held it to his ear. ‘Yeello?’

He listened, and his face fell, and he said, ‘Oh, it’s you. What’s that? No, not at all. It’s a privilege and an honour to hear from you, Henry. Your Majesty, yes, sorry. And what could I do for you, Your Majesty? Yes, I see. Trouble, is it? Right. Well, I’ll be there as quickly as I can. Yes. Okay. Bye, now.’

He put the receiver back on its hook and grimaced. ‘Ah.’

Maggie mightn’t have been young, nor as fit as she once was, but let it never be said that she wasn’t sharp, intuitive, and well read. And reading between the lines of the Doctor’s half of the conversation, an ugly thought had come to her.

A king.

A king called Henry. There had been eight of those, she knew, but the Doctor’s reaction gave her cause to fear that the King Henry who had just called was in fact...

‘Doctor?’

‘Yeah?’

‘Was that...?’

‘Henry the Eighth? I’m afraid that it was.’

Kaylaar opened his eyes. ‘Oh yeah? Who’s he, then? Nice chap?’

‘Rather the opposite,’ the Doctor said.

‘Well, what d’you give him your number for, then?’ Kaylaar snorted.

‘I met him once before. We were both young, then. And as a youngster, he was all right. I was ignorant of Earth history back then; I had no idea that he’d grow up to become what he did. Giving him the means to summon me back seemed like a good idea at the time.’

‘I see,’ Kaylaar said slowly. ‘And what, might I ask, *did* he grow up to become?’

‘A monster.’ Maggie said.

‘A difficult character,’ the Doctor agreed. ‘Very difficult indeed. But difficult or otherwise, he’s asked for my help.’

‘Tell him to do one, then!’ Kaylaar insisted.

‘Ordinarily, I might have done,’ the Doctor said. ‘But...he spoke to me of demons.’

‘*Demons?*’ Maggie said.

‘Demons.’ The Doctor confirmed gravely. ‘It sounds as though something is going on in Tudor England that ought not to be. I’ve got to go and find out what. Look – I’ll drop the pair of you off at that museum we were just on about. You can wait for me there.’

Maggie and Kaylaar exchanged a glance.

Kaylaar spoke first. ‘Nah, you’re all right, Doc. I’ll go with you.’

‘Me too,’ Maggie said. ‘Safety be damned.’

The Doctor hesitated. ‘All right. But please understand that the environment that I’m taking you into is genuinely dangerous, and I mean genuinely dangerous. Those Argonite gangs are like members of a knitting circle compared to Henry. It’s the court of a madman. The wrong word at the wrong time is all it takes for...unpleasantries...to unfold. Even looking at somebody the wrong way is enough. I can’t guarantee your safety there, nor my own.’

‘I hear you,’ Kaylaar said. ‘But d’you know what, I think I’m starting to *get* it. Travelling with you...danger’s basically part of the deal, isn’t it? Part of the fun.’

‘I suppose,’ the Doctor said. ‘So be it. Mags? Last chance.’

‘I’m in,’ she said. ‘Always liked a bit of history, anyhow.’

‘Okay. Then let’s head to the wardrobes, I think there’s a Tudor section in there somewhere. The both of you, pick out the drabbest, blandest, and most inconspicuous outfits you can find. The less we stand out, the safer we’ll be. If we’re lucky.’

# Kaylaar

Though he resembled the Doctor and Maggie outwardly, there were discrepancies besides his ability to change form. One was that his sense of smell was somewhat superior to the Doctor's or Maggie's, and therefore, arriving in Tudor England was not an altogether pleasant experience. Stepping out of the TARDIS, clad in his silly smock and britches, the collar itchy and the fabric overwarm for the late-spring heat of the day, he was instantly hit by a wall of odours, none of them pleasant. The whiff of sulphur from the blacksmith's down the road; the smell of sewage which seemed to radiate from all around; the stench of the people themselves as they passed, clammy unwashed bodies stewing in filthy rag-clothes. The cobbles were strewn with straw and suspicious piles of brown matter, the homes built of whitewashed stone and supported by black wooden beams.

Hampton Court Palace provided little respite. The court chamber was small and airless, and crammed with far too many bodies, in this, an era with far too little by way of hygiene.

But putting the smell to one side, Kaylaar was enchanted by the sheer pomposity of the court. The room had immaculate mahogany floorboards and the walls were painted burgundy, the windows held in intricate metal frames. Various members of the gentry, all dressed in tight-fitting tunics and caped robes, stood talking in carrying voices that oozed self-importance. Ladies of rank bustled between them in dresses of every colour, most wearing hats, several cooling themselves with luridly painted handheld fans. Servants bustled among the crowd with decanters of red wine, so thick and rich that it made Kaylaar's eyes water when he accepted a cup. Maggie drank her own with gusto, and though the Doctor also accepted a glass, he sipped without enthusiasm.

A notable absentee was the King himself. His throne stood on a raised platform at the head of the room, but it was conspicuously absent of an occupant.

'He'll be here,' the Doctor told Kaylaar. 'Back when I knew him, he was a showboat. That, it seems, hasn't changed. He'll want to make a grand entrance.'

And once upon a time, Henry the Eighth might have been able to make exactly that. But that time had long since passed. His arrival was preceded by the sharp "*tap-tap*" of a walking cane upon floorboards. He emerged to the left of the throne, and he was far and away the fattest man that Kaylaar had ever clapped eyes upon. His hair was somewhere between orange and grey, and he sported a full beard. Two blue piggy eyes bulged from his chubby face, and he wore a thick

smock with white leggings. Kaylaar sniffed; there was a very nasty smell coming from his right leg. An infection of some sort, no doubt.

The court bowed in unison before their king, as he lowered himself onto his throne with a grunt and glared expectantly around the room.

‘The Doctor?’ his voice was a low growl. ‘I summoned him here, but I see him not.’

‘On the contrary, Your Majesty,’ the Doctor said, stepping forward. He looked nervous. ‘I am he. May I present...uh...myself. And these are my friends, Margaret Weitz and Kaylaar. Kaylaar...uh...Esquire.’

Henry’s glare was terrifying, those tiny blue eyes like two hot knives aimed at the Doctor. ‘You are *not* he, my lord. The years have been plenty since last we met, but do you think I would forget his face and form? You are an imposter and have lied before the king!’

‘No, Your Majesty,’ the Doctor said hurriedly, as the court recoiled. ‘I assure you; I am the Doctor. The winds of time change every man, but some more drastically than others.’

‘The winds of time?’ Henry exclaimed. ‘You have *lost* years, you have gained height, and your skin has darkened! Speak not to me so glibly, imposter. You dare to bring witchcraft to my court?’

‘On the contrary, Your Majesty. As you know from our last meeting, my powers, while beyond the ken of England, are benevolent, and more importantly, at *your* service.’ The Doctor emphasized the point by bowing, his dark blue balmacaan sweeping the floor of the court. The assembled lords and ladies stood frozen, rapt in attention. Even with the Doctor’s veneer of respect, Kaylaar reckoned he was speaking with their king far more forthrightly than any of them ever dared.

‘Ask me anything,’ the Doctor said. ‘Anything of your last meeting with the Doctor, and I will be able to answer it true.’

Henry’s eyes narrowed. ‘So be it. When we last met, my lord, the Doctor threw an object at me. Name it.’

‘A parson’s nose,’ the Doctor grinned, his smile faltering when Henry did not return it. ‘But only after His Majesty threw it at me.’

After an agonising pause, Henry nodded stiffly. ‘I believe it so, and I believe it not. My lord, I accept you are the Doctor. But how you have come to be as you are, I cannot fathom. And I should like to. How does a little, aged man with the charm of a sprite become young again, with the likeness of a Moor, and a wholly different manner? Perhaps we will talk of it, later. Perhaps you will explain it to me. But before that, I extend my thanks that you came at my behest. I confess, I did not believe that the talisman you left me would work after so many years. I have always held it close.’ He gestured to a large purple gemstone on his smock, and Kaylaar recognized it as some sort of communication device.

‘As to why I summoned you, we will not discuss that here.’ Henry said. ‘I would dine with you and your friends tonight.’ His eyes flickered from Kaylaar to Maggie and lingered notably longer on Maggie than they had on Kaylaar. There could be no doubt, Kaylaar thought, as to the sort of things going through his mind in that moment. Kaylaar found himself nervous, angry even, on Maggie’s behalf. And though he had known her for only a short time, he would not allow anything untoward to happen to her. He would put himself between her and the mad king if he had to, and not because he saw her as anything other than a friend; simply because it would be the right thing to do, and that’s all there was to it.

‘In the meantime,’ Henry finished, his gaze returning to the Doctor. ‘Chambers have been prepared for you in the east wing. Go. Refresh yourselves and make ready for dinner. Hot baths can be drawn if you require.’

The Doctor bowed. ‘Very kind, Your Majesty.’ He turned around and made for the door at the far end of the hall, Maggie and Kaylaar following in his wake.

‘Hold fast!’ Henry thundered, so loud that Kaylaar could not help but scream. They whipped around and saw Henry on his feet, positively quivering with rage, his cheeks flushing red. His anger was terrifying, so intense and inexplicable, and so horribly sudden.

‘You do not,’ he breathed, limping towards them, ‘*ever*...turn your backs upon the King of England.’

‘But...’ the Doctor gasped. ‘You said we could...’

Henry’s cane rapped sharply on the floorboards as he approached, his lords and ladies cowering in the corners as he crossed the room. Kaylaar winced as he drew level, expecting violence. But instead, Henry placed his thick-fingered hand on the Doctor’s shoulder and drew him in close.

‘You can go,’ he said softly, whispering, though loud enough that everyone present could hear. ‘But no man turns his back on *me*. You will never do it again. Never.’

Just as quietly, the Doctor replied, ‘Your Majesty has no need to threaten me. I am here to help.’

The two men held the uncomfortable silence for an excruciating moment. Then Henry broke into a grin and stepped back with a merry nod. It was as though nothing had happened. ‘You are dismissed. Make merry this afternoon and ask if you want for anything. We will convene at supper.’

So, the Doctor Maggie and Kaylaar retreated from the throne room walking backwards, none daring to take their eyes from the king, who smiled and waved them off, and who they heard cheerfully calling for wine and music after they were gone.

# Ozailundar

Young again.

And beautiful.

Dzai's fourteenth body was blonde-haired, with a wide face and startling blue eyes. The regeneration went perfectly, with barely a day's sickness to show for it. The majority of Dzai's regenerations had been brutal affairs, leaving her bedbound and dazed in the hours which followed, normally with a thundering headache and torrid bouts of delirium, where she drifted in and out of sleep in a maelstrom of pain and terror, and hallucinated foes in the corners of her bedchamber, suffering intently as she waited for her new form to calibrate.

This time, not a bit of it. She was good to go within the hour of her change. Gone was her pain. She had energy and stamina and indeed beauty the likes of which she hadn't known for centuries and could not wait until her work here was done, so that she could change out of the baggy hospice clothes and don the finest selection of Time Lord robes that she could acquire. She would look nothing short of marvellous in them.

But that was for later. For now, she still had work to do.

'To reiterate,' Mortimus told her, shortly after the regeneration. 'You will get your remaining lives when I have no further use for you. No sooner. You shall need to work hard to earn them.'

And he did work her hard. She spent hours at a time in the glass partition, the drill set up boring into the bowels of the Old Matrix's sarcophagus and extracting pieces of its split casing, metal and stone inscribed with words of Old High Gallifreyan. In themselves, the fragments were lethal; they oozed their poisonous radiation from a split reactor, and though she'd been trained to resist their power, she was plagued with feelings of hatred and anguish as she worked, her head thundering as the energies attacked her mind. Fortunately, the shielding that covered the Black Level dulled those energies considerably, limited the damage they could wreak. They could certainly *torment*, but they could do no physical damage.

The same could not be said, she feared, of wherever Mortimus was sending them.

Each time she extracted a chunk of the exploded casing and broke it down meticulously into fine powder for him, he would send it through the Type II TARDIS Time Corridor, the dust



carrying its lethal, pernicious energies to destinations unknown. She had asked him where they were going.

‘You don’t need to know that.’

‘I don’t,’ she agreed. ‘But could you tell me anyway?’ She found that she was altogether more confrontational in this life than the previous, and though still willing to serve Mortimus to get her remaining lives, no longer quite so content to serve in ignorance.

‘I would just as soon not. Because if I did, you might have qualms. And if you have qualms, simply put, the project is ended. I can’t do what you are doing, I am not trained to withstand the Old Matrix. I would kill myself if I spent too long in the partition. So, no questions. Just do as I ask, dear, and we’ll get along famously.’

‘So be it,’ she said. ‘But I am correct, aren’t I, to think that we’re doing damage? You are sending literal evil to another place, another time, and people there are suffering because of it. I’m not wrong, am I?’

‘You aren’t,’ Mortimus conceded. ‘And yet, for all the harm we do, good may yet come of it. Tiny changes are all it takes. Every Time Lord knows this. The smallest amount of tinkering, a little shift in the boundaries here and there, can be enough to change the entire course of history. The course of the universe itself. So, keep working, Dzailundar, and take heart – the changes we make might not be bad ones. What I mean by that, dear, is that sometimes what appears to be good leads only to ill, whereas what appears to be immoral – evil, if you like, though I deplore the word – transpires to bring about the greatest good for the greatest number, in the long run. It’s called utilitarianism. And that’s our privilege, don’t you agree? The High Council say don’t interfere, never interfere, and I simply ask, why not! For if not us, who? Who else is better qualified to make these tough calls, to take these risks for the benefit – or potential benefit – of others? To look at things in the long term, or the very long term, as opposed to the immediate? So, fear not, and focus on your work, Dzailundar. For who knows, history may ultimately look kindly upon you for it.’

# The Doctor

Of the many mistakes he had made, and there *had* been a few, befriending Henry the Eighth all those years ago was not exactly one of his worst. But it *was* a bad one, no doubt. The Henry he had known had been young, well-spoken, and slender of build. A good man to know, and a man of good humour. A master in the jousting ring and a scholar alike, with a keen interest in poetry and theology. He read and wrote a great deal, and so far as the Doctor could tell, seemed to genuinely dote on his then wife, Catherine of Aragon.

And now they were reunited, and that Henry was dead and gone, replaced by a monstrous man, cruel even for this cruel age, and on wife number five, having already had one of them killed. This one was soon to follow; Katherine Howard was eighteen, compared with Henry's forty-nine years. In less than a year she would be dead, beheaded on the king's orders for adultery. From what the Doctor understood of the affair, she *was* guilty. But it was not, of course, an offence which any civilised man or society would deem punishable by death.

They ate in a grand parlour at the back of the palace, the décor identical to the throne room, polished brown floorboards, and smart reddish-pink walls. A fire was burning in the hearth at the far end, making the room warmer than was comfortable. But the Doctor surely wasn't about to complain. The meal was a pleasant one, a light salmon dish to start followed by chicken and honeyed pork with steamed vegetables, and a large fruit jelly for afters.

As nice as the food was, however, the atmosphere was tense; what did one say to a maniac monarch over dinner? The Doctor was stumped for an answer, and Maggie and Kaylaar appeared similarly stuck. They mostly ate in painful silence, punctuated by Katherine asking polite questions after the trio, mostly Maggie, wanting to know from where she came and whether she might like to visit her and her ladies in waiting for a picnic the next day. It broke the Doctor's hearts, listening to her; she was only a girl, not yet a woman. A girl who cared for fashion, and who took picnics with her friends. She was *harmless*. The knowledge of what was to come for her turned his stomach.

Henry dismissed her after pudding, and she took her leave without complaint. Henry did not speak again until the plates were cleared, and he brusquely dismissed his servants with a wave of his hand. They all filed out of the parlour backwards.

‘I did not see fit to let my beloved Katherine have an ear in this matter,’ he said. ‘Because it concerns my eldest daughter, Mary, with whom Katherine does not share a bond. In fact, they are not at all fond of each other. It would displease Mary if Katherine were to know the details of what I am about to tell you.’

‘You are telling us in strict confidence,’ the Doctor assured him. ‘You have our absolute guarantee of that.’

‘I know,’ Henry said, a definite note of threat. ‘Then let us have the truth of it. Mary has been moved back to court. She is here now. And in the simplest terms, she is ill.’

‘How’s that?’ the Doctor asked. In situations like this, he might normally be tempted to wheel out his “not a doctor of medicine” excuse, though truthfully, he did himself an injustice there; he’d studied Earth medicine, gained the qualifications, knew his way around the basics of disease and cure. It was his confidence in the field that was lacking, not his ability. But he certainly wasn’t going to say anything which would displease Henry, so nodded and added, ‘In your summons you mentioned demons?’

‘Just so,’ Henry said gravely. ‘She is plagued by vile forces, my lord Doctor. Every night, they come for her. Her garments and personal effects move of their own volition, as though borne by invisible hands. That is indeed fearful, but not the worst of it; worse are the voices. Mary speaks in tongues and voices which are not her own, and when she wakes the next morn, her spirits are low, and she is increasingly sickly.’

The Doctor nodded slowly. Suffice to say, he didn’t like the sound of this one bit. ‘Okay. And how long has it been going on?’

‘Many weeks. She was moved to court in the hope that these fiends would let her be in my presence, for what demons, we thought, would be brazen enough to enter the court of the king himself, the dwelling house of the supreme head of the Church of England, my noble self? Alas, she is still plagued, and it grows only worse. With each passing morning she is somewhat sicker, takes somewhat longer to recover. Physicians and cardinals have visited, and tried, and failed to be of any help. *You* shall save her, Doctor.’

‘I will certainly try.’

‘You mistake me, my lord Doctor,’ Henry said at once. ‘I spoke not of “trying”. You *will* save her. You *will* put a stop to these happenings. Shall I explain what will happen if not, tell you what became of those who tried and who failed before you? Do you require that information? Or have you heard enough?’

‘I have heard enough,’ the Doctor agreed. ‘And I understand. Your Majesty, my friends and I shall retire to our chambers now and agree the best course of action. With your permission?’

Henry smothered a belch with strictly limited effect, and waved his large hand, permitting them to be on their way. Leaving backwards, of course.

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‘So just to clarify,’ Maggie said, once they were safely back in their attic rooms, the low ceiling held up by support beams, three hard beds in a line beside the window, each with its own wardrobe. ‘This is the woman who succeeds Henry as monarch?’

‘Not immediately,’ the Doctor said. ‘First comes his son, Edward, but he doesn’t live past fifteen. After him comes Lady Jane Grey for all of nine days, before Mary...gets her out of the way, shall as say. And claims the crown as her own. And goes on to earn the moniker Bloody Mary, for her wholesale slaughter of Protestants.’

Kaylaar whistled softly. ‘So, I’m not trying to be difficult, Doc. But this girl doesn’t sound an awful lot better than her dad, and I for one have *not* taken to him. Seriously, why not just leave? I say we make a break for the TARDIS and let ‘em get on with it.’

‘It’s a tempting position,’ the Doctor conceded. ‘If ever a pair were deserving of help, Henry the Eighth and Bloody Mary are not that pair. But that’s not how I roll, Kaylaar. I help when I can, always have. And besides, my concerns go far beyond the wellbeing of Mary Tudor. You see, whatever is happening to her should not be happening. Moving objects? Demonic voices, and the like? They call it the work of demons, because they don’t know any better. I call it what it is – an attack. An attack by perpetrators who have access to technology way beyond this period. And that’s why we’ve got to stay. We can’t let interference like this pass.’

‘All right,’ Kaylaar said heavily. ‘Then what’ve you got in mind?’

The Doctor turned to Maggie. ‘Magglesworth...’

‘Doctor?’

‘You know how you love me?’

‘With all my heart.’ Maggie replied flatly.

‘Indeed. Well, how would you feel about staying with Mary in her chambers tonight?’

She stared at him. ‘Pretty badly, to be honest!’

He grimaced. ‘I know. And I am sorry. But will you do it anyway? I can’t, and nor can Kay. We’re men, see.’

‘Allegedly that,’ Maggie said.

‘Quite so, appearances can be deceptive after all. Well, clearly it wouldn’t be appropriate for us to stay with her. Henry wouldn’t like it one bit.’

‘I *could* do it,’ Kaylaar said at once. ‘I could take Maggie’s form, and...’

‘And what? What if she found out, somehow, and told her father? He’d gut you alive for it Kaylaar, and he wouldn’t think twice. No. I’m sorry, Mags, I really am. But it can only be you. Just stay with her, see for yourself what exactly happens, and then report back to me. Maybe write it down, if you can. I’ll ask Henry for pen and paper. Particularly I’d be keen to know what language Mary has been speaking if not English. That’ll be a big clue.’

She sighed. ‘All right, fine. Just do me a favour – if at any point you hear me screaming in the night, do, please, come at once.’

# Maggie

The truth was that Mary lived up to her historic reputation, and at first Maggie found it impossible to take to her. She was humourless and brusque and took Maggie's Canadian accent for a Scottish one; one of the first things she'd asked her was whether she was one of those ghastly barbarians from north of the border.

But keen to be rid of the hauntings, she allowed Maggie houseroom without complaint and assigned her a closet-sized space nestled snug in the corner of her own great chambers, which consisted of a fine parlour and bedroom, the bed curtains a rich Tudor red in colour. Various cheeses and wines sat on the windowsill, and the parlour's table was home to a stack of cards, which Mary laid and insisted they play late into the evening.

After spending enough time with her, Maggie grew to think that she did not outright dislike Mary, not as she thought she would at first. She was twenty-five years old and yet conducted herself like somebody far more mature, prim and straight-backed, her eyes sharp and (on the few occasions she offered it) her smile something approaching warm, if rather aloof. And while Maggie would never – could never – condone the things she would go on to do as queen, she recognized that for this brutal period of history, Mary was not the monster that she surely would have been in later, kinder periods. Does being borne of an evil era, and living by those evil standards, make a person intrinsically evil themselves? A very good question, and one which Maggie grappled with long after the evening gave way to night, and she climbed into her nasty, scratchy bed in the corner of Mary's chamber.

Naturally, she could not relax; the discomfort of the bed would not have kept her awake in itself, but she was far too wired for sleep. She lay there on tenterhooks and waited for something, anything, to happen. She started at every little noise and the shadows gathered in the corners of the chamber seemed to shift in her peripheral vision, freezing each time she looked directly their way.

One thing that surprised and amused her was just how soundly Mary slumbered, despite the happenings. She did not snore, but her breathing, slow and heavy, was unmistakably that of somebody in a very deep sleep. Maggie envied her that sleep and longed to drift off herself.

After lying awake for an hour, Maggie became aware of a vile atmosphere in the room. It was barely there at first, and she put it down to her own paranoia, the expectation of trouble giving

rise to a budding sense of fear. But it soon became impossible to pass off as her own fear, and utterly impossible to ignore. It was overwhelming. An oppressive sickly terror, the inescapable sense that something *bad* was close at hand, something which meant to do her harm. The air in the chamber was turning frigid, smelled suddenly musty and rancid, and her heart was thumping as if she were running a marathon, not lying in a bed.

There was something in the room with them. She was sure of it.

But *where?* Where in the room? The shadows in the corners, perhaps, which seemed to move when unobserved? She looked again, and strained her eyes, but saw nothing through the gloom.

The wardrobes? There were three of them, two for Maggie and one for her. Great wooden cabinets on stout stumpy legs, space enough to hide somebody – or *something* – inside.

Behind the curtains, then? Maggie was suddenly gripped by a thought that she'd seen them move a few minutes ago, stirring gently as though blown by a gentle spring breeze. Except, now that she thought about it, hadn't the servants shuttered the windows before bed?

Bed?

*Under* the bed?

She swallowed and thought of the space beneath the bed she was lying in. There was surely a lot of it; the frame was set about two feet above the ground, space enough to conceal a person. Or...something *like* a person.

She tried to ignore the creeping sensation of a presence there, directly beneath her. She sincerely tried to, and she tried to for a good, long time.

And couldn't.

She climbed out of bed and sank without much grace to her knees, peering under the frame. As she gazed into the darkness, the hairs on the back of her neck stood sharply at attention and her flesh began to creep. To be certain, she *saw* nothing under the bed, save the chamber pot left for her (she had winced when she was presented with it). There were no scary glowing eyes, no hand lashed out to seize her, and nor did she hear anything stirring, preparing to pounce.

But something *was* there.

It was that sensation, the one somebody gets when they feel a presence over their shoulder without having seen or heard anyone there. A sensation which could not adequately be explained in words, but one so potent, there could be no denying it. There was something under the bed. There simply was. Something alive, something watching her. Something that did not mean well. She stayed a moment, crouched on all fours, frozen with fear, before scrambling to her feet and backing away from the bed, not taking her eyes from the space between the floorboards and the mattress.

'My lady,' she breathed. 'Mary?'

Mary did not wake. Maggie walked backwards the whole way to her bed, as though retreating from that lunatic king, and groped around for the shape of a foot below the sheets. Finding one, she nudged it urgently. 'Mary!'

But Mary simply jerked her foot away without stirring. Frustrated, panicking, Maggie turned around and prodded Mary till she woke.

'It's started,' Mary said, sitting up and trembling, feeling as Maggie did, the crushing atmosphere in the chamber.

'There's something...' Maggie turned back around and pointed at her bed. What she saw there turned her stomach, gave her so great a fright that it was like being slugged in the gut by an iron fist, her heart lurching and her breath catching as she gasped, lungs burning. The chamber pot

was now sitting on the floorboards in front of the bed, the white porcelain bowl glimmering faintly in the low light of the few lit candles.

As they watched, it rose. As though lifted by invisible hands, the pot rose some five feet into the air and hung motionless. For a moment, nothing happened. And then it hurled itself at Maggie, *right* at her, aiming for the face. She screamed and ducked, and Mary dived below her blankets for cover as the bowl soared at speed across the room and smashed against the wooden headboard of Mary's bed, showering the blankets with jagged pieces of porcelain. If that had struck Maggie full in the face, at that speed...it didn't bear thinking about.

Mary scrambled from her bed and stood beside Maggie. 'It's never been violent before,' she whispered. 'Never.'

But it was surely violent now. The room went berserk around them. The window shutters flew open, and slammed shut, so hard that they rattled in their frames and shook loose pieces of the wallpaper. The blankets rose from Mary's and Maggie's beds and began to twist in the air like a pair of sea serpents, the beds they left behind wobbling and thumping against the floorboards, making so much noise that Maggie had no doubt the whole palace would be woken.

All of that was bad. All of that was terrifying. But what followed was worse. Far worse. Mary's body froze and her eyes went blank, and then the voices began. They seemed to be coming from Mary, or Mary's direction at least, though her lips did not move. And emphatically none of those voices were hers. Maggie stepped away and clapped her hands to her mouth as a deep male voice spoke to her, vicious and cruel, the burr laced with a murderous hatred.

'*Get out!*' it said. '*Get out of here, Margaret Weitz! You wrinkled, withered old troll! Get out!*'

A second voice took over, a man again, the voice lighter and playful, but equally as cruel. '*Look at her. Look at her! Thinking she's young enough, pretty enough, worthy enough to travel with the Doctor. Hah! Doctor, Doctor, your dog has no nose! Oh dear! How does she smell? Terrible! Doctor, Doctor, I keep thinking I'm a dog! Oh my! Sit down on the couch and we'll talk about it. I can't – I'm not allowed on the furniture!*'

The voices howled with laughter, the noise piercing Maggie's eardrums, making her head ring like a bell. She clapped her hands to her ears and screwed her eyes shut, desperate to hear no more, her insecurities spoken aloud and mocking her in the cruellest fashion. The voices began to overlap, hundreds of them, male and female, and they chanted in a language which Maggie could not remotely decipher, one she could not have written down even if she had not left her pen and paper on the table beside her bed, the same bed which now crashed relentlessly against the floor.

'Doctor!' she cried. She opened her eyes at the feeling of something fondling her neck. The bedsheets; her bedsheets, draped around her neck. Maggie could not react fast enough to stop them pulling tight around her throat, throttling her. She gasped for breath, her eyes popping, and her face possessed of an awful, desperate tingling sensation as the circulation was cut off. She tried to slide her fingers underneath the fabric and prise it free, but it was far too tight. She sank to her knees and gulped uselessly for air like a fish out of water. She heard the voices warble maliciously in her ear.

'*Never mind, old girl,*' one sang. '*Your best years are behind you anyway.*'

'*Human life spans,*' agreed another, a woman. '*Pathetic, aren't they?*'

She collapsed onto her side, her shoulder thumping painfully against the floor. She jerked and flopped, her vision blurring and darkening, the candles appearing to gently dull and extinguish...or maybe it was her who was extinguishing...she didn't know...she didn't...she...

She barely heard the chamber door fly open, and must have passed out for a moment, because the next she knew she could breathe again, and was being cradled like a child by a pair of strong arms. A familiar face loomed down over her. The room was still.

‘I’m so sorry,’ the Doctor breathed, and she was startled to see tears in his eyes. ‘I had no idea it would be so bad. If I’d have had the slightest notion...’

‘I’m alive,’ Maggie gasped, massaging her sore neck. She allowed the Doctor to haul her upright and stood swaying, relying on his arm for support. Kaylaar had steered Mary back into bed, brushing away the shards of chamber pot scattered like confetti over the blankets. Mary was pale and trembling and looked awfully unwell. Maggie felt poorly herself, not only faint and necksore (was that a word?), but nauseous, feverish, and headachy, as though simply being in the room with those dark forces at play was harmful.

‘That shall be the end of it this night,’ Mary whispered, barely conscious. She seemed utterly spent. Exhausted. ‘They never stay beyond a few minutes each time but shall be back tomorrow night for more.’

‘Actually, my lady,’ the Doctor said. ‘They won’t. That was their last hurrah, as it were. Whoever they are, whatever they are, they nearly killed a friend of mine. Do you know what that means? Anyone?’

The Doctor’s anger was frightening to behold. She already knew that he wasn’t human, he’d told her as much, but that night was the first time that Maggie got a sense of just how different – and more powerful – he truly was. His anger seemed to radiate like a tangible force, as tangible as the awful atmosphere she had perceived in the room, and the sliver of ice in his otherwise kindly eyes wasn’t remotely human.

‘I’ll tell you what it means,’ he said. ‘It means that these forces will be exceptionally fortunate to survive the next few hours unscathed.’

He clapped his hands together and regained his composure, seemingly fretful that he’d let so much slip. ‘All right. Psychic and psychokinetic forces like that cannot occupy a space without a power source close at hand. Likely a relay device, I should say. Receiving the signals from wherever these attacks originate and blasting them into the room. And I’d bet my last life that it’s somewhere within yards of where we’re standing. My lady, with your permission, I would make a thorough search of your chambers.’

Mary nodded weakly. She was shivering violently, eyes closed, her skin the colour of spoiled milk.

‘Tell you what, m’lady,’ Kaylaar said to her, offering his arm. ‘Get up and lean on me. I’ll take you somewhere quieter. Our guest chambers, perhaps. It’s not exactly luxurious accommodation, but you can get a proper rest in there, and we’ll take care of this.’

He guided the king’s daughter to her feet and led her away and returned shortly with none other than the king himself, fully dressed, with bags under his eyes.

‘The commotion has stirred the entire palace,’ Henry growled. ‘I am here to be of assistance.’

‘Good stuff,’ the Doctor said, rifling through the contents of Mary’s wardrobe, something which Maggie feared might draw the king’s rage. And well it might, if the Doctor had not paused a moment to explain himself. ‘We’re looking for a... talisman. An artefact we believe responsible for causing these hideous events. If you would care to help, Your Majesty, then join us in the search.’

And it was the king himself who struck gold. He knelt painfully beside his daughter’s bed and withdrew a decorative dagger from the belt of his smock, slicing open the mattress and hauling



out great fistfuls of straw which he tossed carelessly away, making the chamber looking less like a bedroom and more like a barn.

‘Hallo!’ he exclaimed; his arm buried up to the shoulder inside the mattress. Fumbling around, he extracted a peculiar metal sphere, grey in colour, with what Maggie took to be hieroglyphics scribbled over it.

‘Well done, Your Majesty!’ the Doctor exclaimed, accepting the sphere from Henry. He cast an eye over the symbols, and for a moment Maggie saw his expression harden. But it passed quickly, and he tossed the sphere up and down in one hand, as though it were no more valuable than a bouncy ball.

‘Let’s destroy it.’

‘There, I can be of further aid,’ Henry said, a nasty grin tugging at his lips.

If ever a man should not have owned a firearm, it was surely Henry the Eighth. But a firearm was exactly what he withdrew from a hidden holster in his doublet, one of those old flintlock things, albeit with a short, snub-nosed barrel. It was the sort of weapon which needed the gunpowder and ammunition added separately and stirred around in the barrel with a stick. Henry had all those things upon his person and readied his weapon with well-versed speed. Once it was ready to fire, he pointed it carelessly towards the Doctor

‘Place that item on the floor, and step back.’

The Doctor did as he was told, and Henry barely waited for him to get clear before firing. The shot was ear-splitting in the confined space, and the acrid smell of gunpowder tainted the air. The bullet splintered the casing of the relay device, and for good measure Henry stamped on it, crushing it beneath his slipper.

‘Empty!’ he declared. He was right, at that. No wires spilled out of the ruined casing, there were no mechanisms dashed to pieces. Nothing at all.

‘Hollow, yes,’ the Doctor said darkly. ‘But not empty. I’ll want to study this in greater detail. Kaylaar, with me. Maggie – I want you to stay here and rest up. With this thing gone, there can be no further danger here. What remains is to find out who put it here. And why.’

‘I’m all right,’ she insisted.

‘I know you are. But you’ve had a nasty shock. We’ll be back shortly.’

# Kaylaar

Like Maggie, Kaylaar had noticed the Doctor's dark expression when he'd first seen the relay device, the way his eyes had narrowed and his lip curled grimly. Here in the safety of the TARDIS, he decided to ask the Time Lord about it.

'It means something to you, doesn't it?'

'I recognize the symbols, yes. But I must be sure. I'm scanning it now. It could be a mock-up. A fake. I hope...I only hope...'

He fed a shard of the casing into a compartment in the TARDIS console and bashed away at the controls. Kaylaar watched him closely as he worked. He hoped, from watching the Doctor operate the TARDIS, that he might someday be able to pilot it himself, if ever the need arose. To be able to fly a TARDIS would make him utterly unique among his people and would be a subject of magnificent boasting rights if ever he did end up going home.

The TARDIS beeped and trilled a few times and finally some readings flashed up on the scanner. They meant nothing to Kaylaar – the same strange language that had adorned the relay device, all circles and squiggles, and ancient-looking symbols.

'Blast,' the Doctor spat.

Kaylaar grimaced. 'Bad news, then?'

'Bad enough. The sphere wasn't a mock-up, it was genuine. A piece of Gallifreyan technology.'

Kaylaar stared at him. 'Gallifrey? Ain't that...?'

'My planet? Yes. And there's more. The readings indicate that whoever was behind it, whomever was orchestrating this disgusting business...that person was operating on home-turf.'

'Home-turf? You mean that...'

'Yes, Kaylaar. I'm going home.'

# Dzailundar

*'What?'*

She hurried out from behind the glass partition and found Mortimus bashing away furiously as the console of the time corridor.

'Problem?'

'I should say do,' he spat. 'Our relay device has been destroyed.'

'Which is a problem because...?'

'Because without it, the energies cannot manifest in their new destination!'

'Well, what happened? Any way of finding out?'

'Doing it now,' Mortimus said, tapping a few more buttons, yanking a lever. A voice, voices plural in fact, began to echo through the time corridor.

*'Empty!'*

*'Hollow, yes. But not empty. I'll want to study this in greater detail. Kaylaar, with me. Maggie...'*

'Ahh,' Mortimus said softly. He started to smile. 'Ah! Well, I never. That voice has changed drastically since last I heard it, but I think I know precisely to whom it belongs.'

'How?'

'The arrogance, Dzailundar. The sheer, sickening, unadulterated arrogance. Oh yes, I am in no doubt. I wondered if he'd come; I wonder if I wanted him to, in fact? Yes. Yes, I think that potentially I did.'

'Who is he?'

'The Doctor.'

Dzailundar started. She knew the name, of course; every child of Gallifrey knew the name. Ask someone living in the barren wastes beyond the citadel, and they'd tell you that the Doctor was a hero, perhaps the only hero that the stuffy, decadent Time Lord race had ever produced. Ask the Lord President, however, or any of his councillors, and they'd tell you that the Doctor was a disgrace, an affront to the name and the principles of a Time Lord, a misfit and a freak, frankly someone who should have been incarcerated or killed many centuries ago.

What did Dzai think? As a member of a high chapter, she supposed she ought to be on the "anti-Doctor" side of the argument, but all the same could not deny a certain amused respect for

the man. Throughout her many lives there had been plenty of moments where she would have liked nothing better than to get away from it all. Her work was punishing, after all, and there had been countless instances where simply washing her hands of it, stealing a TARDIS and flying away, seemed outrageously appealing. Wasn't "*doing a Doctor*" an actual term of phrase? She could have sworn she'd heard the expression before, as a metaphor for upping sticks and fleeing. If Dzai's history was right, Mortimus himself had left Gallifrey a few decades after, and wondered if he, ironically, might have been one of the first inspired by the Doctor's flight. How many others shared his wanderlust? Probably many Time Lords had felt, as she did, the urge to follow his lead from time to time, but only a precious few went through with it, and of those who did, fewer still evaded capture and punishment. That the Doctor was still out there after all this time was a source of huge embarrassment for the High Council.

'I've met him,' Mortimus said. 'Twice before. And on both instances, he outwitted me. Left me abandoned. Helpless. I swore then that I would repay him someday, and perhaps, at last, that day has come. Because if he's found the relay device, he'll trace it back to us. He's coming. And once he arrives...'

'Yes?'

'We'll kill him.'

'Kill him?' Dzai gaped. 'Now see here – when I agreed to help you, I knew the work would be of...uh...poor moral character, shall we say? But killing? That, I did not sign up for. That, I will not be part of.'

But really, she hadn't a leg to stand on. She knew it. And Mortimus knew it too. He laughed in her face.

'If you haven't the stomach for this, go. I won't stop you. But in time, that body of yours will wither and rot like the last one did, and there will be nothing that you can do about it. If that's your wish, leave now. And I will deal with the Doctor myself and take your remaining twelve lives for my own. The choice is entirely yours.'

Dzai said nothing.

'In which case,' Mortimus sneered. 'A present for you.'

And he pulled a Staser pistol out of his tunic and handed it to her. It was heavy, the handle and trigger a dark metallic grey, the transparent barrel a faint blue in colour. She cradled it in one hand, the weight of it giving her a peculiar sensation, powerful yet weak at the same time. With this in her hand, she was dangerous. With this in her hand, she could kill. It offered both a sick sense of freedom and a crushing burden of responsibility, and it made her knees wobble as she clutched it in a taut hand.

'You wield it well,' Mortimus told her. 'Have you used one before?'

'Not that I recall.'

'Yes, well. I believe, dear, that a certain thought might occur to you shortly, so let's get this out of the way. I think you might be possessed of an idea that you could threaten me with that weapon, force me into giving you your remaining lives on pain of death. Perhaps you would kill me once I gave them to you. And why not? I know that you have misgivings about our work here, and therefore you would be justified in pulling the trigger. Or perhaps you would instead take me to the High Council, and try to use me as a bargaining chip? After all, illicitly obtaining extra regenerations is a capital offence. But perhaps in exchange for handing me over, they might be prepared to overlook it, this once? I suppose that is not impossible, though I would be mightily surprised if it did happen. If you want to live long enough to enjoy your new lives, you need me. I can take you far away, somewhere you can start anew. So, overall, threatening me would be a dire

mistake on your part. It wouldn't work anyway – you think I would be fool enough to give you a gun that could be turned on myself? This is my long-winded way of saying, Dzailundar, don't try anything stupid. It would be futile, and I certainly wouldn't appreciate the gesture. Are we clear?'

She weighed up her options. It didn't take long.

'All right. What do you want me to do?'

'When the Doctor lands here – and I think we can be confident that he will – then I want you to apprehend him. Take him alive and bring him to me. Oh, we have much to talk about, he and I.'

# The Doctor

‘Good news, Your Majesty,’ he said to Henry, though for him personally it could hardly be described as such; the thought of a foul business like this being carried out on Gallifrey itself was repulsive. ‘I have traced the source of the attacks on Lady Mary, and with your permission I will take my leave of court to deal with it. We want to stop them before they try mounting any sort of response.’

‘Your leave is granted, my lord Doctor.’ Henry said. ‘But you will return to me thereafter, and when you do, you will have this culprit in your custody. In chains, you will deposit him at my feet.’

The Doctor squirmed. Nervous though he was of the king, he would not be able to live with himself if he passed somebody into Henry’s custody, no matter the crimes they’d committed.

He said as much. ‘Your Majesty, forgive me, but I would just as soon deliver justice myself. I’ve a sense you would treat this person very harshly. Understandable, of course, but if you remember me from times gone by, you’ll remember that I do not subscribe to violence unless it is totally unavoidable.’

Henry nodded slowly. ‘You fear for your conscience?’

‘I do.’

‘Then I will make it easy for you. You and your minion here may depart. But the good lady Margaret Weitz will stay. If you do as you are bid, she will not be badly treated. She will retain the chamber to which you were assigned, a more than generous lodging as I’m sure you will agree. She will have the freedom of the grounds. She will be fed and watered and afforded every courtesy. And once I have this vagrant imprisoned in the tower, she – and you – will leave with my blessing and my gratitude forevermore.’

‘Icily, he went on, ‘If you do not do as you are bid...if you fail to capture this renegade, or slay him yourself, or pursue for him any fate besides the one which I have stipulated...then Margaret Weitz’s treatment will not be so courteous. Let me make my meaning entirely plain – a cell will be prepared in the Tower of London tonight. Someone will fill that cell. The renegade. Or Margaret. Which one it shall be, is at your discretion.’

Kaylaar opened his mouth to protest, quite right too, but the Doctor dared not allow it. He seized Kaylaar's arm and coldly said, 'His Majesty leaves us no choice. Might we at least say goodbye to her, before we depart?'

And Henry's smile was as warm and as friendly as a smile could be. 'Most certainly, my dear old friend. Take as long as you need.'

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'I'm so sorry.'

She shrugged. 'Don't be. It's not your fault.'

'I think that it is,' the Doctor said. 'I brought the two of you here. I know you agreed to come, but I ought to have put my foot down. Please, Mags – don't do anything to upset him. Do as little, in fact, as you possibly can. Do not seek him out for any reason. Do not place yourself in his company unless he has specifically ordered you there, but if he does, certainly do not be late.'

She agreed that she would not. Her neck still looked awfully sore, he noticed. She'd been dozing in her bed in their attic chambers when they'd woken up, with Mary still sleeping fitfully in Kaylaar's bed beside her, recovering oh-so-slowly from last night's ordeal.

'I'll be fine,' she said, in a voice he knew was supposed to reassure him. 'More to the point, you two be careful. Where exactly is it, you're going?'

'Somewhere just as dangerous as here,' the Doctor said. 'Someone that I'm not well liked, and certainly not welcome.'

# Kaylaar

It was as if the TARDIS knew where they were going and was no more impressed by the idea than her owner. The take-off was slow and juddery, so rough that Kaylaar felt nauseous by the time they successfully dematerialised from Tudor England and began their journey.

‘Can I ask you something?’ he said, clutching the console as they soared forwards in time and halfway across the universe. Swirls and shapes of every colour lit up the scanner. *Time*. That was what *time* looked like, at least to Kaylaar. The appearance of the time vortex was unique to those few privileged enough to travel through it. Some saw moody grey patterns, no colour there at all. Others saw it as a starfield, a twister or a tunnel of light. While the time vortex had a real appearance behind all those masks, a true form of some sort, it was far beyond the comprehension of a mortal mind. For a mortal to see the time vortex as it truly appeared would be fatal, like trying to load up an antique computer with some sort of state-of-the-art software, like putting the most modern fuel available into one of the oldest models of spaceship. Utterly incompatible. Liable to burn out the brain, if it tried to make sense of the image. The swirls and shapes were the mind’s way of protecting itself, conjuring up a pretty picture to mask the sight of something which it simply couldn’t make sense of. The sight of eternity.

‘Ask me what?’ the Doctor said.

‘You’re unhappy about going home. You say you aren’t welcome there.’

‘I am. I am not,’ he answered curtly.

‘Why, to both?’

The Doctor sighed. ‘I was bored, Kaylaar. Not unlike you, I guess. It’s a mind-numbing place, Gallifrey. For all the good they could do, my people content themselves with doing nothing at all. I wanted to do more. See more. Experience more. That isn’t a terrible crime. Maybe if I had simply taken the TARDIS and gone exploring, the Time Lords – while undoubtedly not impressed – wouldn’t have bothered coming after me. It’s the fact I tend to get a little bit involved which really upset them a little. It’s against the rules, you see.’

‘I do see that. But I ain’t so certain I believe it. Being bored can make a man run away, not going to argue with that. But it doesn’t keep a man running. How long has it been, Doc?’

The Doctor scoffed and shrugged his shoulder. ‘Goodness knows. I don’t keep count. Lifetimes.’



‘Sure. Talk to me. What’s kept you running so fast, for so long? Why are you afraid of going home?’

The Doctor smiled at him, and said, ‘I’d just as soon not. I left...well, I left because I left. I don’t talk about my past, what I left behind, any of that, because I don’t think it matters. I am as I am, here and now, and that’s all that counts.’

‘All right,’ Kaylaar conceded, though with half a mind to press the issue further. What stopped him was that after a brief lull, the TARDIS was starting to grow boisterous again, throwing them roughly around as it made its unwilling way home. The buffeting grew so tumultuous that it made conversation difficult, so Kaylaar contented himself to let the matter drop. But he wasn’t comfortable about it. As a rule, he didn’t trust people that he couldn’t figure out. Maggie was easy to suss out. She was an ordinary woman from an ordinary world. She had stories to tell, hopes and dreams, possessed of virtues and flaws in equal measure, like any person should be. He *saw* her. He could figure her out, which meant that he trusted her. But the Doctor? The Doctor, he could not see. Who was this stranger with whom he travelled now? An outcast from his own people, someone whose eyes remained cold when he smiled, a man who *feared* going home, no less? What kind of a man was he, that going back among his own people frightened him so? And more importantly, was Kaylaar right to travel with such a man?

‘Nearly there,’ the Doctor said darkly, clutching the console so hard that his knuckles were pale. The floor thudded and juddered beneath their feet as the engines spluttered and protested, the column rising and falling faster than normally, like a quickened heartbeat. A nervous heartbeat. From deep within the ship, the grim tolls of what the Doctor called the Cloister Bells started to ring.

‘Shut up,’ the Doctor told them, slapping the console. In response, the TARDIS lurched so violently that both of them were thrown to the floor. Kaylaar’s head collided with metal, and stars floated briefly before his eyes.

‘Just land!’ the Doctor told it, righting himself and hitting the console again. ‘I don’t want to be here either. Come on! Let’s be reasonable.’ But when he looked at the readings, his eyes widened. ‘Oh.’

‘Oh?’ Kaylaar repeated nervously. ‘Problem, is it?’

‘Not so much a problem,’ the Doctor murmured. ‘More like a...uh...catastrophe, I guess.’

Kaylaar grimaced, horror-struck to see that the Doctor looked panicked. ‘Well?’

‘She’s trying to bring us down on the Black Level.’

‘And that’s bad, is it?’

‘Yes! It’s shielded. We’ll have to hold on tight and hope for the best, Kay. Those switches by your hand, flick them all to the left.’

Kaylaar did as he was told, flicking the three orange switches away from him. ‘What do they do?’

‘Those? Those are the safety systems. You’ve just turned ‘em all off. They won’t allow the TARDIS to land on the Black Level. Our best hope now is that a Type 40 is too old to be registered by the shields, because if not...’

‘Yes?’

‘Long answer, or short?’

‘Short.’

‘The TARDIS will be reduced to atoms, and us with it. We’re tossing a coin right now, Kaylaar.’

He swallowed. ‘Best hurry up and do it then, Doc. Before I stop you.’

‘Here goes, then.’ The Doctor flicked a few switches and a shrill alarm blared. The console room’s lights flashed an urgent red, and smoke began to rise from the central column. Sparks flew from the console and Kaylaar and the Doctor were thrown once again to the floor. They crouched down beside each other with their heads bowed and their hands bracing them for impact. Not that bracing would do much good if the TARDIS reduced itself to atoms.

Sheer luck saw them survive, but the landing was so tumultuous that for a moment Kaylaar truly believed it had not, and that he had in fact died. His vision went black and a thick, acrid smell hung in the air, and he momentarily lost all sense of where he was, who he was, let alone what he was supposed to be doing here. It was the Doctor’s urgent tapping on his shoulder which brought him round. Nervously he took his hands from his head and looked up. The console room was pitch black, filled with the acrid smell of burning; the engines overheating, no doubt. With the Doctor’s help he managed to rise, and the two of them fumbled their way through the darkness towards the doors.

They stepped out into an appalling environment. The corridor was dark and ridden with damp, slime dripping from the metal walls and pooling on the floor. The overhead lights were dim and flickering, covered with flecks of black mould. And no sooner had he stepped out into this corridor-come-swamp, a gloomy aura overcame him. He felt, in fact, angry. Angry that he came to close to death just then, angry that they had taken so great a risk to gain entry to a destination so very rank, angry that his head was throbbing, and his heart was still yet to calm from the adrenaline. Angry about all of it.

The Doctor locked the TARDIS and pocketed the key. ‘She’ll be all right. Half an hour for the systems to recalibrate, and she’ll be back in service.’

‘Fine.’

The Doctor frowned at Kaylaar, noting the terseness in his voice, but made no comment on it. ‘I apologize for the setting. Most of Gallifrey is far nicer. This place is poisoned. Sickened with evil. The same evil, in fact, which has perforated the life of Mary Tudor. I ought to have known it was coming from here. I mean, where else? This place is a repository of evil. And someone’s harnessing it. Harnessing it, packaging it, and shipping it out.’

Kaylaar nodded. ‘Then let’s bloody well stop ‘em.’

The Doctor smiled tightly. ‘Let’s.’

# Ozailundar

*‘Then let’s bloody well stop ‘em.’*

*‘Let’s.’*

Mortimus chortled, and rested a hand on the scanner, which displayed an image of a corridor on the far side of the Black Level, which now contained a decommissioned TARDIS with a broken chameleon circuit, and two men.

‘It’s been too long, old friend,’ the Meddler purred. ‘Too long.’ He turned to Dzai. ‘Corridor Omega X3. I suspect you know the way.’

‘I know it,’ she said, pulling the Staser out of her pocket and priming it, changing the setting dial from kill to stun, the fire rate to single shot, and the safety disengaged.

‘Now, you may kill the other one, or not, depending on whether he causes you any trouble. But not the Doctor. The Doctor, I want alive and brought here.’

‘You’ll get him,’ she said. ‘The other, too. I am not going to kill for you. That, you can do yourself.’

Mortimus chortled. ‘So be it. I shan’t lie, I haven’t killed before. Back when I was young, I wasn’t sure...I wasn’t sure if I *could* do it. But now...well, there is a first time for everything, as they say.’

# Kaylaar

His temperament did not improve as they made their way through the labyrinth of rotten tunnels. In fact, it grew only worse. He had heard the term “red mist descending”, but never experienced it himself, until now. For his vision *did* have a reddish hue. It was going hazy. He had never thought the expression a literal one; normally it probably wasn't. But here, in this place of nightmares, no normal rules or boundaries seemed to apply.

Why was he here? For the sake of sweet Katlannu, why? Footsore, tired and miserable, skulking around in the foetid depths of the dwelling house of the most powerful civilization the universe had ever seen, and probably ever would. What would they do if they caught him here? Kill him? Maybe. And why shouldn't they? He was an intruder, in the wrong; if trespass was a crime on Gallifrey, then he was guilty.

It was all the Doctor's fault, of course. He'd admitted as much, hadn't he, back in the palace, when he blamed himself for bringing Kaylaar and Maggie into this situation. And for what? What was the *point*? Where was the *fun*?

Had he – Kaylaar – been *wronged* by the Doctor? Yes, he rather feared that he had. Because he never asked for this. He left home to explore the universe, enjoy himself, not to be put in mortal danger constantly. What right had this renegade, this *criminal*, to bring him into situations such as this? That Kaylaar himself had consented was by the by. The Doctor had no right to accept such consent, to drag mere mortals into his dark and treacherous life.

So yes; he *had* wronged Kaylaar.

The question that remained, therefore, was what Kaylaar ought to do about it? And as he pondered, wandering sullenly beside the Doctor, who seemed instinctively to know his way through the Black Level, a curious thing happened. Kaylaar was possessed of a sudden sense that they were not alone. There were not two of them present after all, but three. Himself. The wretched Doctor. And one other. And this other was a friend; Kaylaar sensed his goodness like a tangible force, such purity, that he knew immediately who it was.

The Great Prophet himself. Katlannu. Dressed in white robes with gold trim, a benign and nurturing smile on his face. A man of great age, though he walked like a man far younger. He caught up with the Doctor and Kaylaar with ease.

‘My lord,’ Kaylaar purred, dumbstruck by his presence. The Doctor, ungracious wart that he was, did not even acknowledge the great one.

‘He doesn’t see me, my boy,’ Katlannu said gently. ‘I am only here for you. I will speak to, and be seen by, only you.’

‘Yes,’ Kaylaar stammered. ‘But does he hear me speaking to you?’

‘He does not,’ Katlannu said. ‘But if it concerns you, let me take his place.’

And that’s exactly what he did. The Doctor froze mid-step and Katlannu simply walked into the spot that he occupied, overriding the Doctor’s presence with his own, so that there were only the two of them present. All the better.

‘Did you kill him?’ Kaylaar said.

‘He lives,’ Katlannu told him. ‘I do not kill, my boy. You know this.’

‘Of course I do,’ Kaylaar agreed. ‘Great one, whyever have you come to me? To relieve me, perhaps? Could you take me home, away from all of this?’

‘With a click of my fingers, it could be done,’ Katlannu said. ‘But shan’t be. You must help yourself. And I am so sorry to say, Kaylaar, but you have disappointed me.’

‘How?’ Kaylaar exclaimed. ‘Why? I have always strived to be a peaceful man.’

‘I know it,’ Katlannu assured him. ‘But peace and pacifism are two very different things. I showed you and your people the means to live in peace, but never did I advocate pacifism. There are times – alas – where the only way to bring about peace is through violence.’ The great one smiled sadly. ‘This is one such time, Kaylaar.’

‘How’s that?’

‘You said it yourself. Or thought it, but speech and thought are one and the same down here. I heard you, in any case. The Doctor has wronged you. Grievously so. You need to right that wrong, and only the harshest possible measures will suffice. Even the most peaceful race must never be afraid to defend itself in the harshest terms, or else how can it maintain that peace? Peace is something which needs to be worked at. It requires...maintenance. Succour, you might say. That succour cannot always be love, kindness. There are times where blood is what’s needed.’

Katlannu seized Kaylaar’s hand. ‘My son, you can fly the TARDIS. You’ve seen the Doctor do it, you understand the principles. Have faith in yourself. End the Doctor. Show him that peace-loving does not equate to pushover, and that you will not stand for his putting you in danger. Show him that you will not be made to feel scared. Not by him; not by anyone.’

‘Yes,’ Kaylaar breathed. He wasn’t scared at all any longer, for with the Great Prophet here, how could he be? He was in control now. He knew what needed to be done.

‘Great One, return the Doctor to me. And I will do what needs to be done.’

Katlannu smiled. ‘Good boy. Good *man*. Be ready, mind. He’ll put up a fight, but physically you are stronger than him. You can best him. Just don’t hold back.’

And with that, Katlannu was gone.

# The Doctor

Strange. He'd arrived here with Kaylaar, hadn't he? He could have sworn that Kaylaar had been with him moments ago. But he wasn't now. He'd gone.

But the Doctor wasn't alone. In Kaylaar's place was another.

A friend.

'You look well,' the Doctor told him, and meant it. His friend's hair was jet black, beard and all, without a fleck of grey. He was young. His simple black robe was snug over a muscle-bound frame, heavysset, but not fat.

'As do you. But so sad. Why?'

'I'm not sad,' the Doctor said.

He laughed at that. 'Doctor, do you seriously think yourself able to lie to me?'

The Doctor considered. 'No. I suppose not. Very well, I am sad. I feel hurt, in fact.'

'By whom, and why? Talk to me.'

'Them up above,' the Doctor said, jabbing a thumb at the ceiling. 'Coming back here, it's made me think. All those times they've meddled with me, sent me on suicide missions, put me on trial. Exiled and belittled me. Done everything in their power, it seems, to make me unhappy, and to degrade me. And I'm just thinking... why? Why do they do it?'

'Why indeed?' his friend agreed. 'What right do they have to do it? Whatever you've done to them in the past – you've more than made up for it.'

'Of course, I have.'

'Right. So maybe now is the time to do something about it.'

'Maybe,' the Doctor agreed.

His friend sighed. 'We're so alike, you and I. You know that don't you? You've always known. Our playfights are fun, are they not, but always tinged with sadness.'

'Always.'

'And how could it be otherwise? We are the same, always have been. Two misfits. Back at the Academy, do you remember? Us against the entirety of the student population. Us against the Magisters. Us against the whole damned race, it felt like. And though we went our separate ways, we took them for all the same reasons. Fear, among them. Fear of life. Of finding a role in

society and settling into it. Of responsibility. Most Time Lords seem to manage, but let's have the truth – you always looked at them, didn't you, and wondered how?'

The Doctor said nothing.

'We both tried for a time, didn't we? To be normal. And it worked, at first. Our lives looked made. Good, worthwhile professions. Fine quarters and garments. We knew what it was to love and to be loved. To nurture. To be called "Father". Then "Grandfather".

'And then it all goes wrong, doesn't it? The High Council raise taxes. Expenses, stacking up without mercy. A bully in the work unit. You want to quit. You almost do. But you can't. You've got mouths to feed, quarters to maintain. And then, just to be cruel, life throws you a curveball. Something breaks down, needs repairing. The next you know, you haven't two Scripp to rub together until you next get paid, and you know you aren't getting paid for many cycles yet. *Life*, Doctor. Was life what you ran from, in part? I think that it was. The fear of trying to exist, make do, in a civilization which doesn't care for stragglers, which tolerates nothing less than perfection.'

Throat too try to speak, the Doctor continued to hold his tongue.

'And so, you ran. Stole a TARDIS and fled, and never ceased to flee. And the day you did, you made yourself far more than a mediocre Time Lord. The day you surrounded yourself with the lower races, you made yourself *magnificent*. I know, because I did it too. I built empires out there, you know. You wandered, you tinkered, you chipped away at the edges of problems. Me, I razed problems to the ground and built anew from the smouldering wreckage. And we were both beautiful. Beautiful among the stars, shining brighter than we ever could at home.'

He sighed. 'But they just couldn't leave us alone, could they? We did them no harm on our travels, but they pursued us, harassed us, just the same. Ask yourself why.'

'Because...they are cruel.'

'Yes!'

'Cruel, nasty, vindictive little people.'

'Yes!'

'People who enjoy the suffering of others.'

'Yes. And what do you do, with people like that? Why, you show them the error of their ways, and you do that by repaying them everything they've given you, and more. An eye for an eye is not enough, it must be an eye for an eye, and then some. The only way to respond to cruelty is with redoubled cruelty, and the only lessons that stick are bloody ones. This, I have long known. So, return to the TARDIS and find a weapon. You must have a few field stasers stashed away in your ship's disused armoury? After that, head upstairs. Head to the Panopticon itself. Once there, why not partake of a little target practice? You abhor guns, I know it, but let neither of us pretend you don't know how to use them.'

'Yes,' the Doctor said dully.

'Naturally, Kaylaar will have to die too. As a kindness. Goodness knows how his mind is reacting to the dread forces that lurk down here. The alternative would be to leave him in the thrall of this foul place forevermore.'

'Yes,' the Doctor said again.

His friend smiled. 'You are a good man, Doctor. But to be good, and to keep being good, sometimes a man needs to make it clear that he'll not be taken for a fool.'

'I am not a fool,' the Doctor insisted.

'Then all that remains is to show *them* that. I'll say goodbye now and leave you to get on with this crucial task.'

And with that, he turned on the spot and folded away into nothingness, leaving the Doctor hungry for blood in his wake.



# Kaylaar

How had he come to be on the floor? He could not recall. Had he not been standing with the Great Prophet just a moment ago? Yet now, he and the Doctor were slumped against the dripping rank walls of the Black Level, limbs splayed, each of them with spittle on his chin.

None of that mattered, at any rate. What mattered was that the Doctor had yet to stir, and that was all the better for Kaylaar. He was on his feet in an instant and standing over him, hands reaching for his throat. He advanced, Katlannu's words ringing in his ears, or the gist of them at least – the exact conversation, he couldn't recall. But he knew what needed to be done, right enough.

Yet still, he hesitated. He hesitated for long enough that the Doctor awoke and scrambled up to face Kaylaar. The two men stood inches apart, cracking their knuckles.

'I've been thinking,' Kaylaar said.

'How about that? Me too. Some very hard thinking. Concerning you, among other things.'

Sensing danger, Kaylaar moved in for the kill, but found himself once again flat on his back without quite understanding how it had happened. There had been no pain. The Doctor had yelled, and then Kaylaar found himself staring up at the ceiling. Just like that.

'Venusian Akido,' the Doctor said. 'Now hold still. I'll try and make it qui...'

He stopped. The glimmer of cruelty faded from his eyes, and he looked at his hands, staring at them in disbelief. 'No. No! We mustn't.'

Kaylaar tried to rise and attack the Doctor, the reasons for which he could exactly recall. All he could remember was that it was imperative the Doctor died, for...for whatever purpose.

'Kaylaar,' the Doctor pleaded. 'Stop. Focus. *This isn't you*. It's this place.'

Kaylaar hesitated.

'Don't you see? The ghosts of the Old Matrix are attacking our minds. Making us see things that aren't there, experience emotions which aren't our own. Talking to us with friendly faces, to try and make us listen. Don't listen!'

'I saw the Great Prophet,' Kaylaar murmured. 'I *saw* him. Spoke to him.'

He thought about it.

No. Never.

'Katlannu would never ask me to kill.'

‘Just as my phantom would never show the slightest concern for my wellbeing. It’s all lies, Kaylaar. We’ve got to resist.’

‘How? Doc, I was nearly at your throat!’

The Doctor gritted his teeth. ‘I don’t know...but this place is shielded from the worst effects of these entities. They cannot wreak physical harm on us down here, not like they could in Tudor England. They can only mess with our minds. To send us to sleep like they did, why, that would have taken a lot of energy on their part. Perhaps they’ve thrown everything they’ve got at us.’

Precisely on cue, as if to prove him comically wrong, what Kaylaar took for another phantom appeared from around the bend up ahead, where the corridor veered sharply left. The apparition was exceptionally beautiful, blonde, with a round face and wide blue eyes. She wore baggy white robes and held some sort of a laser pistol.

Kaylaar raised a trembling finger and pointed as she approached.

‘I see her too,’ the Doctor said.

The woman smiled thinly. ‘I’m no ghost, gentlemen.’

‘Yeah, but a ghost *would* say that.’ Kaylaar retorted.

‘Oh, smart,’ she scoffed. ‘You want proof, here’s proof.’ She fired the pistol at the floor, a blue ray piercing the metal inches from Kaylaar’s boot with a sharp *woosh*, leaving a smouldering burn mark on the metal. He yelped and leapt backwards.

‘Know any ghosts who can do that?’ she said smugly. ‘My name is Dzailundar, and I am very much alive. Now, enough talk. I think what’s best is if you two go in front of me. No tricks.’

The Doctor nodded. ‘As you wish. Where are you taking us? The Omega Laboratory? Just so happens we were heading there anyway, so we’re hardly going to run. No need for the staser, eh?’

‘I’ll keep it handy just in case, if that’s all the same. Now shut up and walk. There’s a man waiting who’s very keen to see you again, Doctor.’

# The Doctor

The lab was brimming with oversized equipment of garish design, the metal stained red and laden with trim and decorative markings, all done to make it look more impressive than it was. The early Time Lords had done that deliberately, made their inventions big, colourful and gaudy, as if to say, “look at this – look what we’ve made! How beautiful it is, how clever we are!”, advertising their might to any passing race which cared to listen. Later, trivialities such as appearance were set aside, with ever-increasing efficiency the sole objective, and the opinions of other races growing progressively less relevant.

Most of these outmoded machines were skeletons, long since left to gather dust in the corners. The only things switched on were the computer banks in a glass partition in the corner, and the large round object which took pride of place in the centre of the room.

The Doctor knew what that object was, on second glance. He laughed.

‘A Type *Two*? My goodness. Well, Mortimus, you have my congratulations. Getting that thing up and running must have been no mean feat, and I admit that I never took you for clever. Brazen, yes. But not clever. Incidentally, I do have your name right, don’t I? Or would you still prefer Monk? Meddling Monk? It suited you then, but less so now.’

‘I kicked the habit.’

‘Very droll.’

‘Thank you. Mortimus will do fine. Welcome, Doctor. Looking very sprightly I must say.’

‘You, not so much,’ the Doctor replied. ‘An interesting reversal, that you should be the one with white hair now.’

‘Indeed,’ Mortimus said. He glanced at Kaylaar. ‘And who might you be?’

‘Kaylaar.’

‘Kaylaar,’ Mortimus repeated the name without interest and turned back to the Doctor. ‘You understand what I’m doing here, of course.’

‘Certainly, I do,’ the Doctor said. ‘You are harnessing the negative, indeed evil, entities attached to the ruins of the Old Matrix. You are blasting them through the Type II, right into the heart of Tudor England. Targeting a king’s daughter, no less. And I know that prolonged exposure will damage her irreparably, in body and mind alike. Or would have, if I don’t put an end to it.’

‘A near faultless summary,’ Mortimus beamed. ‘Just one mistake, and we’ll get to that in a moment. But first – you know *what* I’m doing here. How about why?’

‘I don’t know, I confess.’

‘Then I’ll tell you,’ Mortimus said gleefully. ‘It begins with the destruction of the Old Matrix many centuries ago. You know what happened to it, of course.’

‘Every Time Lord knows that,’ scoffed Dzailundar.

‘The Doctor was a lazy student, though,’ Mortimus admonished. ‘Why don’t you give him a refresher?’

‘The design was inherently unsafe,’ Dzailundar said. ‘The system was powerful enough to accommodate the memories of millions of departed Time Lords. But not hundreds of millions. And certainly not billions. Not that our poor, dear forefathers realised that until it was far too late. They uploaded, and uploaded, and eventually the poor thing went bang. Quite literally. And that could have been the end of it. The end of Gallifrey, the end of the Time Lords...perhaps even the end of everything. Because while not all Time Lords are good—’

‘There’s an understatement,’ the Doctor sneered.

‘There is nevertheless a place for all of us in the Matrix once we are gone, regardless of what we were in life. The interior workings of the current Matrix are polluted with evil, and the old one was no different in that regard. And when it exploded, all that evil was free to escape. Hatred, as a tangible force.

‘Our only hope was to bury the wreckage,’ she concluded. ‘Bury it far below the Citadel and build this place around it, giving those energies a place to languish forevermore. And you can see what they’ve done to it. Everything outside this lab is rotten. That could have been the entire planet, if our ancestors hadn’t reacted as fast as they did.’

‘And I had a notion, Doctor,’ Mortimus said. ‘A hypothesis I longed to test. What if those forces were *harnessed*, and used for specific ends? How might things be...spiced up? That’s where Mary Tudor comes in. But I am not particularly interested in her. She’s a trial run. Small fry. A vicious monarch from a bygone time, on a world which I have always admired for its wild streak, but a world which isn’t ultimately of much concern. What I’m trying to do with her is...shift the boundaries. Use the ghosts of the Old Matrix to madden her. The result? A vicious *and* insane monarch. All her worst traits, coupled with the damage wrought by the entities. What do you suppose the effects of *that* upon the timeline would be?’

‘I really haven’t a clue.’ The Doctor strained to keep his voice mellow while he inwardly seethed.

‘Nor do I,’ Mortimus squealed, quivering with excitement. ‘Who can say? Maybe very little would come of it. Or maybe – just maybe – the changes would be drastic. Would the Elizabethans, for instance, be too hobbled by the problems caused by Mary to advance as they should? And if the Elizabethans are set back, surely it follows that every age thereafter would be too. Little changes, Doctor. Subtle shifts in the narrative of history. Make the right alterations at the right times, and you could set a civilization back by centuries. And if the Victorians don’t have steam trains, does humanity still reach the moon in 1969? If humanity is late in asserting itself on a galactic scale, or fails to appear at all, what does that do to the balance of power in that region of space in later centuries? Who knows? The uncertainty of it is glorious.’

‘It’s bloody deranged, is what it is,’ Kaylaar spat. ‘And because it’s your plan, that can only mean that you’re bloody deranged as well.’

‘No. I am a Time Lord. And I’ll do what I want. Just like the good Doctor here. If my work with Mary yields amusing results, I will move onto bigger targets. Powerful rulers on influential

worlds, in advanced periods of history. Higher stakes at play. I could rewrite the universe! And as I was saying to Dzailundar just recently, perhaps something *better* could emerge! It's not impossible, is it? You judge me harshly now, but would you continue to do so if my experiments ultimately brought about a better universe? It's not impossible, is it? I am not a bad man, my friends. I never have been. The universe is cruel, cold and sickly, and in attempting to change it – even by callous methods – I might bring about...oh, but what's that word? That little word, which rolls so easily off the tongue, but proves, time and again, so impossibly hard to establish and maintain? Peace! That's the word. Peace, or something closer to that than the universe has ever managed to achieve. Hoping for that outcome, I think, is a good enough reason to try.'

'You don't care if this brings about peace,' the Doctor snapped. 'Don't insult my intelligence. You do it because it amuses you. Your own gratification, that's all you've ever been interested in.'

'Is that right?' Mortimus sneered. 'Well, if you insist on being so sharp, I don't want this discussion to continue.' He paused. 'Dzailundar...be so good as to confine these gentlemen to the partition and expose them to some fragments of the Old Matrix. We shall see how long they last, before killing themselves, or each other. But first, Doctor, let us turn to the one aspect of my plan you were wrong about. I can tell you now, it's the part where you alluded to having stopped my activities in Tudor England. You have done nothing of the sort.'

'We destroyed the relay device,' the Doctor protested. 'You don't have any connection...'

But Mortimus only laughed, and a chill, creeping sensation told the Doctor that he'd made a mistake. A huge one. Catastrophic, in fact. One what should have been altogether obvious. Stupid Doctor! Stupid, stupid Doctor!

'Old friend...what disserve you do me. Did you really believe I would be so stupid as not to leave behind a spare? Night falls once more in Tudor England, and the souls of our less kindly forefathers shall play once again.'

# Maggie

She was roused from her bed by the screaming.

‘We thought the matter settled,’ cried a guard as she arrived in the hall outside Mary’s bedchamber, to be confronted by four men trying in vain to break down the door, behind which Mary howled in anguish, the noise complemented by the sound of objects being thrown.

‘So did I,’ Maggie said, worming her way between two men at the front and lending her strength. They pushed with all their might, but the door did not yield. It was locked firm. No, not locked. Held. Held shut from the inside by a force so powerful that it could withstand the combined efforts of five adults, four of them fighting men, to wrench it open.

‘We need it down,’ one of the guards said desperately. ‘Fetch swords. Hatchets. Any which thing that might help.’

Help was already at hand, for another guard clad in chainmail arrived, clutching a hammer in his left hand and a sturdy mace in his right. He pushed to the front of the scrum, told the rest to stand clear, and began mauling the door with his weapons, tearing it apart with furious resolve, the sound of splintering wood ghastly as he ripped open a small opening.

‘I can get through,’ Maggie said.

‘No, my lady,’ he said. ‘Wait for us.’

Maggie ignored him and squeezed through the treacherous little gap. Treacherous was the right word; she had to scrape against sharp jutting splinters and heard her clothes tear and felt the skin below getting gashed. She ignored the pain and hauled herself through, landing in an ungainly heap on the floor of Mary’s chamber.

The room had been torn apart. Ransacked. Mary’s grand bed had been hurled upside down, the wardrobes were knocked over, and the parlour table and chairs lay in pieces, scattered about the room.

Mary herself was afloat. Her toes dangled several inches from the cracked floorboards, and her eyes were completely white. She was drooling, foam and bile spilling from her mouth and down her nightdress. Her neck issued a sickening crack as she looked down at Maggie.

‘*She’s back,*’ cackled a booming male voice.

‘*The old woman,*’ laughed another. Mary sank to the floor and Maggie started towards her, before a foul gust of bitterly cold wind pinned her against the wall.

‘Leave her alone!’ Maggie cried, as Mary took a menacing step towards her, her footfalls so heavy that they splintered the floorboards.

*‘Leave her alone,’* mocked a woman’s voice. *‘And if we don’t, petal? What are you really going to do about it?’*

Mary took another step towards Maggie, who remained trapped against the wall, squinting into the wind. Mary’s mouth was curled up in a horrific smile, and saliva flowed in a stream down her chin.

The guards finally broke the door clear off its hinges and spilled into the room, swords in hands. They stopped dead in their tracks and looked on in horror at Mary.

‘Fetch the king!’ one of them cried.

*‘Fetch the king!’* laughed a voice. *‘Fetch the king, fetch the king! Ours is the kingship here, humankind. Even in death, we are so much more than you.’*

The wind died down and Maggie could move again. Mary turned away and started towards the soldiers, who defended themselves as well as they dared when she pounced at them like an animal, teeth and nails bared, none of them willing to inflict anything like a serious wound on the king’s daughter. Maggie sobbed as one of the guards – the one all in mail, who’d hacked the door down – was lifted bodily from the floor by Mary and hurled into the wall, his head cracking sickeningly against the plaster. She was on him like a wolf on a piece of meat. His scream as she sank her teeth into his throat and *tore* the contents loose was a sound the likes of which Maggie had never heard, and would never forget. At the sight of that, two of the guards outright fled, leaving only Maggie and two guards in play – the incredibly brave, or the terminally stupid. Probably both.

Maggie whimpered as the remnants of the door and furniture began to rise into the air, the splinters jagged and razor sharp. They began to spin and lunge in lethal slicing motions, moving so fast they were only a blur. Maggie threw herself to the floor and put her hands over her head, sobbing and trying her utmost to block out the screaming as the guards, still trying to keep Mary at bay, were nicked and diced by the projectiles.

*Think*, she pleaded with herself, as she lay prone with sharp pieces of wood giving her painful kisses on the backs of her hands as she shielded her head. *We missed something. Destroying the relay device didn’t work. Think!*

She thought. And she arrived at the answer. Say one thing for Maggie Weitz, say she’d got her wits about her.

Back home, there was a rule. The new-fangled computers virtually everyone was using in the nineties had changed the world, altered the way everyone worked, probably forever. And there was a golden rule regarding them, because sometimes they went wrong. And if they did, *when* they did, any work left on them risked being forever lost.

The golden rule – keep a backup. Always keep a backup.

‘There’s another talisman in here,’ she said, shouting to be heard over the commotion. ‘Anyone still able, start searching.’

In response to this realisation, some object or other – she didn’t see what – was thrown across the room and into the window, where it smashed the glass with a sharp, tinkling crack. The shards left behind rose to join the wooden splinters in their deathly airborne dance. The room was fast becoming a literal meat grinder, and it was all that Maggie could do to crawl around on all fours and rifle through the wreckage strewn across the floor, searching desperately for the other relay device, getting dashed across the neck or hand every few seconds by a stray projectile. Wincing, tearful, she made her way to a chest of drawers which remained undisturbed and hoped

to find it there. No such luck. The first drawer up contained jewellery. The second, shoes. The third and fourth bed sheets and blankets. No relay device. And for her trouble she received a thoroughly nasty nick from a shard of glass, which cut a thin gash across her cheek. Another millimetre, and it might have taken her eye.

‘Where is the damned thing?’ she cried, racking her brains for a clue. She was alone in her search; the two surviving guards had managed to pin Mary to the floor between them, two burly men positively sweating with the exertion of restraining a girl half their size, but who was possessed with strength far beyond her normal capabilities. She writhed and snarled in their grip, more animal than human, her screams gravelly and deep.

*‘Let her go,’* one of the voices commanded. *‘You dare to defy us? Us? Human filth! Dirty, feeble pathetic little worms. Unhand the girl! Unhand her, we say!’*

And suddenly, to her shock, Maggie *saw* them. There were ghostly figures standing in the shadows behind where Mary was pinned, faces with glimmering eyes and twisted jester’s smiles leering out from the gloom.

She didn’t let her eyes linger on them for longer than a second, and returned to her search. She dug through a heap of dumped clothes on the floor and found no relay device. She forced herself to calm down, took a breath, and blinked back her tears.

‘Whatever you intend to do, my lady, do it fast!’ one of the soldiers cried, wrestling to keep Mary contained.

In the event, the sight of her bed did it. Like most of the furniture in the chamber, it was broken now, the mattress torn apart and bleeding straw, the frame missing three legs. But seeing it gave her a brainwave. She thought back to the events of last night, where she had been convinced of a presence in the dark space underneath that bed. She had seen and heard nothing, but had been certain regardless that there had been something there...watching her.

She grabbed up the dead guard’s hammer from by the empty doorway, crawled across the room to the little corner where the bed had stood, and rapped the floorboards which were there. It sounded hollow underneath.

Using the hammer, she began to smash them in. At this, Mary went berserk, her ear-splitting howls searing Maggie’s eardrums as the projectiles soaring around the room began to pick up speed. Maggie let out a sob as she was cut in various places, though her rushing adrenaline cut clear through the pain and spurred her on, and in no time at all she had made a hole in the floorboards and peered, hoping against hope, into the space beneath.

It was there. Grey sphere. Symbols scribbled all over it.

Maggie lifted it from its hiding place and gripped the hammer in the other. Drunk on giddy exhilaration, she rose to her feet despite the flying shards, and faced the figures in the shadows, while Mary howled and kicked in a futile effort to break free.

‘Just now, you asked me what I was gonna do about it,’ she breathed, grinning like a lunatic. ‘Well, here’s what.’

‘No,’ the shadows said. *‘No!’*

‘Yes, actually,’ Maggie said. ‘How about *yes?*’

She let the relay device drop to the floor and raised a foot, and with all her might brought her heel down upon it.

The effect was immediate. Mary stopped fighting and lay slack between the guards who held her. The projectiles fell to the floor as one. It grew lighter in the room, and the temperature rose by several degrees, the air taking on a fresh aroma. There were no more shadowy figures standing around Mary.



It was over. And that was why Maggie was surprised and dismayed in equal measure when the guards howled like wounded animals. She hurried across the room to join them, and stopped dumbstruck about a yard away, and saw for herself that the very worst had come to pass.

She wondered what had caused it. Was it the ghosts, acting out of spite in the seconds before they were vanquished? Was it the fault of Maggie herself, for destroying the device while the activities were still ongoing? Was that the wrong thing to do, unsafe, like unplugging a computer mid-update? Or was it simply the stress of such an intense episode which had done it?

She didn't know. She never would. But in either case, it didn't matter; the result was the same, and the consequences for her and the guards would be too.

Because Mary Tudor, daughter of the mad king Henry, was dead. Her heart must have given out. She lay motionless on the floor between the guards, her eyes fixed on the ceiling, her mouth hanging open, and her beautiful (albeit bloodied) face completely clueless in death.

# Ozailundar

Shortly after Mortimus restarted the Type II, it stalled again, shutting down with a feeble, final drone.

‘No!’ he cried. ‘How can this be?’

‘What’s happened?’ she urged.

‘The second device is gone!’

‘How? Who but the Doctor would know to look for it?’

Mortimus exploded into a frenzied rage. He kicked the console of the Type II and thumped his fists against the controls, flecks of spit flying from his mouth as he roared. He glared at the Doctor and Kaylaar, restrained in the glass partition. There was no need for the bindings which held them each to a chair; they were both catatonic. In there, they had no protection at all from the dark forces, and no training or conditioning to withstand such exposure. Particularly in Kaylaar’s case, who could not even rely on Time Lord genes or mental agility. They were both unconscious, their minds eaten away from the inside by the entities. In a short while that damage would be permanent. Kaylaar had minutes only. The Doctor had half an hour, at the outside.

Mortimus leaned over the console and heaved with rage, his shoulders rising and falling in time with his breathing. His face was a horror, his anger frightful to behold. Dzai wanted nothing better than to get away from him, far away, but she couldn’t do that. Not yet.

Regardless of the failure of his plan, she’d done as he asked. She was owed. Which is why, hearts hammering, she padded slowly towards him and rested a hand on his shoulder. He shook her roughly away.

‘You can make more devices.’ She pointed out.

‘Yes, but time. *Time*, woman! It will take me at least five cycles to do it.’

‘Well...I’m sorry.’

‘Are you, dear? Are you really? Well, that’s good to know.’

She swallowed, and tentatively said, ‘What about me?’

He turned to face her. ‘Well, I really don’t know. What about you?’

‘I...’

‘Oh,’ he laughed mirthlessly. ‘Do you want something from me? Is that it?’

‘You swore it,’ she stammered, backing away as he began to advance slowly upon her, a nasty smile tugging at his lips. He was far taller than she and looked down upon her with cold derision. ‘You swore I’d get my lives for helping you. I have helped. I did all that you asked of me.’

‘You did,’ he agreed. ‘I could not have asked for finer service, nor for a more pleasing servant. What a fabulous new body I gave you.’

And from his tunic he whipped out a Staser of his own and pointed it at her. Dzai whimpered and backed up against the wall, her lower lip trembling as she fought not to cry.

‘Dzailundar the Fourteenth. I *made* you, woman. That body, the marvel that it is, was my gift to you. But what is given, can be taken away again.’

‘Please,’ she whispered. She could not contain her tears, which streamed in warm rivulets down her cheeks. Despite her frenzied panting, she was not able to draw enough breath. Her hearts were thundering so hard that she thought they would give out and kill her stone dead before Mortimus had the chance to do it himself. The barrel of the Staser winked at her like a miniature black hole, sucking all trace vestiges of courage or dignity from her, as a real one would consume everything in its path.

‘How would it be,’ Mortimus said fervently, ‘if I gave you a full blast? Not stun, not simply kill, but full disintegration? I made that body, so how would it be if I *unmake* it? Would you like me to do that, Dzailundar? Do you think it any less than you deserve? A coward and a turncoat, a woman too pathetic to let go. Why *shouldn’t* I do it?’

But he did not. He continued to point the Staser at her with a trembling hand but would not pull the trigger.

‘You aren’t a killer,’ she whispered. ‘You aren’t! Look at the Doctor and his friend – you couldn’t kill them with your own hands, and you can’t kill me now.’

Mortimus shook his head. ‘You don’t know me.’

His finger moved to the trigger. Dzailundar broke down sobbing and hid her face behind her hands, cowering against the wall. There was nothing she could do.

# Maggie

The two guards were beside themselves, and so were the three court physicians when they arrived on the scene. With good reason. Simply being there was enough to get them killed, if the Lady Mary did not survive the night. And since Mary was already deaf, each of the five men had every reason to despair just then and to suppose themselves dead men walking.

Only Maggie held out any hope at all. It was a desperate, fleeting hope. Only one notch up from no hope. But it was all she had.

‘I might be able to help her,’ she told the physicians. ‘I’m from...abroad. We have medicines for those on the point of death.’

The physician in charge, an elderly man in a brown robe, needed no further persuasion. ‘Try, my lady. Try very hard. If you fail...’

He didn’t need to elaborate. With the grim reality of the situation in mind, Maggie knelt beside Mary and placed her palms firmly against her chest. She began to pump. She had never attempted CPR on a real human being before, a dummy only, many years ago at school. It seemed a lot harder on an actual person.

‘Watch what I’m doing,’ she told the physicians and guards. ‘It’s exhausting. We’ll have to take turns.’

They nodded their consent and watched, wide-eyed, as Maggie worked. A sweat had already broken out on her forehead, and she felt out of breath. The pain from her various cuts and nicks was sharp and debilitating, and she longed for nothing more than to collapse onto her back beside Mary. But she didn’t do that. She couldn’t do that. She kept pumping, forcing oxygen into Mary’s lungs.

In real life, she knew, CPR did not work like it did in the movies. It did not bring a stricken victim spluttering back to life. Rather, it kept them ticking over, kept them in a short state of grace until proper help could arrive, and maybe – just maybe – bring them back from the edge of the abyss. But no proper help would be forthcoming here in this primitive age; her only hope was to keep Mary ticking over long enough for the Doctor and Kaylaar to get back.

‘Hold on, Mary,’ she pleaded. ‘Hold on!’

# Dzailundar

Still, Mortimus did not kill her. He stood quivering, trying to muster the courage, and though Dzai hoped beyond hope he wouldn't be able to find it, he was a bitter, defeated man with nothing left to lose.

In the moments she took to be her last, Dzai found that she could not disagree with his earlier description of her. She *was* pathetic. And for her sins, rather than dying with dignity and in comfort in a warm bed, here she was, about to die in a cold, rancid pit. There would be no body left to find, so she would not even be uploaded to the Matrix. All the good she had done, all the hard work, meant nothing now. It would be forgotten. She would be forgotten. And why not? What was there to remember? A woman who had sold her soul, turned to crime, in a desperate attempt to live. What right did she, coward that she was, have to a legacy now?

*-No coward-*

She started as a curious, jolting sensation passed momentarily through her head. Memories had flashed, just then, briefly before her mind's eye. She had heard it said that one's life flashes before her eyes at the point of death, so perhaps it wasn't a surprise.

Except that *those* memories, the ones she'd seen briefly, just then...those weren't hers.

Yet she remembered them all the same. Like a dream, almost. Like everything she just glimpsed – the missions, the chaos, the countless battles – had happened to somebody else. Somebody who wasn't a coward. Somebody who was very brave indeed.

There was more. As she stared into the barrel of the staser, she was gripped by a certain, unquantifiable sense of having been in such a position before. Oh, it scared her still – who would not be afraid, looking into the barrel of a deadly weapon? Yet no longer did the experience feel quite so...so *alien* to her.

And more! When she'd been given the staser by Mortimus, had he not himself complimented her? "*You wield it well*" had been his exact phrase. He had outright asked her, hadn't he, if she had used one before.

But she hadn't. Of course, she hadn't! Nor had she ever looked down the barrel of an enemy gun. The notion was ludicrous. When would it have happened? She was a civilian, a scientist! Not a soldier.

What was happening to her? Did this happen to everyone, as they faced their final death? A mind distorted by fear, no longer able to draw any line between fantasy and reality?

She very nearly convinced herself that's all it was.

What stopped her was looking at Mortimus. *Really* looking at him.

He was not dithering at all. He was frozen to the spot. His eyes were frantic, and they were the only part of him that moved. His limbs were stiff, and he was uttering a small, rasping moan, the only noise he could muster.

She'd frozen him. She could do that.

She began to smile, tingling all over, as the memories which *were* hers blossomed and bloomed in her mind. Two separate lifetimes were vying for dominance in her head. The long life of Dzailundar, Keeper of the Old Matrix, who had reached the grand total of thirteen incarnations and procured herself more in disgraceful circumstances.

And another. This other life was significantly shorter, but far more eventful. It was overwhelming the other set of memories, crushing them beneath the weight of its truth.

Because Dzailundar was *not* a Keeper of the Old Matrix.

Dzailundar was *not* a coward.

Dzailundar had *never* been dying.

Dzailundar was coming back.

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She took in her surroundings as if seeing them properly for the first time. The first thing she did was step out from behind Mortimus, wrenching the staser from his stiff hands. She pressed the left side of her neck, activating the homing device which had been implanted prior to her arrival at the hospice. The one which regeneration did not remove.

Goodness, the Doctor and his friend! She hurried into the glass partition and hauled them out one after the other, Kaylaar first. She laid them on the floor besides the dormant Type II, right before a sudden gust of wind and a faint metallic throb announced the arrival of her men, as a proper TARDIS – Type 260, no less – materialised in the corner of the lab, taking the form of a grey, metal closet, the sort where chemicals might be stored. Troops in red armour and white capes poured out, rifles sweeping the lab. Dzailundar showed them her empty hands as precaution; some of them could be awfully trigger-happy.

'Captain,' the sergeant said, lowering his rifle and shaking her by the hand. 'Are you hurt, ma'am?'

'No. Arrest this one,' she told him, jabbing a thumb at Mortimus. The troops immediately rushed to apprehend him. The Doctor and Kaylaar began to stir, and unsurprisingly the Doctor was the quickest to recover. He was up instantly, taking in the scene with bewilderment.

'So, I don't know what I've missed exactly. But I'm sensing things have taken a turn for the better, somewhat.'

'You might say,' Dzai said. 'I'm Captain Dzailundar of the Celestial Intervention Agency. I've been working undercover. Deep cover. So deep that I wasn't even allowed to know it myself. We knew, you see, that someone was down here without authorisation. We just didn't know why. Considering what's down here, it was decided that an outright raid would have been too great a risk. So, I was given a new identity. Aged. Put on the point of death, or so I thought. Turned into somebody else, somebody who might be helpful to Mortimus, and more importantly, somebody who would be willing to offer that help. He took the bait. My programming cancelled itself out

automatically as soon as my life became at risk. He was getting good and ready to kill me, the lunatic.'

Mortimus was no longer frozen in place, but he maintained his silence nonetheless, head down, as he was cuffed by the soldiers and forced at gunpoint to stand facing the wall.

From the Type 260, General Berouva emerged, resplendent in red armour with gold trim. Everyone, Dzai included, stood at attention as he strode purposefully into the room, glowered at Mortimus (or the back of his head, more specifically), and shook Dzailundar firmly by the hand. His current body was rather heavysset, and the handshake was crushing.

'Mission accomplished, sir. He was channelling the forces of the Old Matrix to another world and time. Seeking to undermine history.'

'A capital offence, for certain,' Berouva boomed.

'Yes sir.'

'I must say,' the Doctor interjected. 'You might have put a stop to it sooner! Much longer, and he'd have probably succeeded.'

Berouva glanced at the Doctor, recognized him, and frowned. 'Oh. You're still alive, are you? Still a disgrace to the name Time Lord? The universe hasn't managed to finish you off yet?'

'Seemingly not. Sorry to disappoint.'

'Yes. Well, Doctor, I can assure you that we had everything under control. We were on the verge of stepping in anyway when Captain Dzailundar called us.'

'I believe you,' the Doctor said, in a tone that suggested precisely the opposite. Kaylaar was stirring now, but his inferior physiology was having a harder time recovering. He winced and groaned and clutched his forehead as he sat up. The Doctor and Dzai helped him into a chair, the same chair that she'd occupied as a frail old woman – and a different person entirely – when she'd first come here.

'What's happened?' Kaylaar said groggily.

'I'll explain later,' the Doctor said. 'But we're safe. For now, just rest.'

'Safe, is it?' Berouva remarked, eyebrows raised. 'But forgive me, are you not technically trespassing down here, in a part of the Citadel where entry is strictly forbidden for the best of reasons? That, too, is a capital offence.'

The Doctor's mouth hung open. 'But...'

Berouva laughed flatly. 'Only joking. Hah. Get out of here, the pair of you. And count yourselves lucky I'm in a good mood.'

'Hilarious,' the Doctor said. 'Trust me, General, nothing will please me more than to leave. But I wonder if I might take the prisoner with me?'

'Why, no. I don't think so.'

'Oh, but think about it,' the Doctor urged. 'If he goes with you, you'll need to put him on trial. And that might be rather embarrassing for the High Council, wouldn't you say? Awkward questions might be asked, namely regarding how a known fugitive was allowed to conduct illicit activities from within the Citadel itself. The High Council, keen to shirk any blame, would blame the security services. And the head of the security services would take the fall for it. Remind me, General Berouva, who the current head of security on Gallifrey is?'

Berouva said nothing.

'Might it not be the heavysset chap in such a good mood, with whom I am currently speaking, General Berouva?' the Doctor pressed.

'It might. But tell me, Doctor - would it be accurate for *me* to describe *you* as in any way immune to staser fire? Because if you keep talking...'

‘Good point, well made,’ the Doctor said hurriedly. ‘But come on, General! Give Mortimus to me. You know it makes sense.’

Berouva thought about it. ‘I suppose that I do see some sense in it. But what would you do with him, may I ask?’

‘Me personally? Nothing. But the man to whom I’d give him would do plenty. If he comes with me, he’ll die just as surely as if he went with you. Please, General. The man in question has a friend of mine hostage and won’t let her go unless I hand Mortimus over. Give him to me, and nobody need ever know what happened down here.’

‘Captain Dzailundar, what say you?’ Berouva barked. ‘It’s your mission.’

Dzai, too, saw sense in the plan. ‘I would be happy to hand him over.’

‘Then let it be done,’ Berouva said. He turned to his men. ‘Take *that* to the Doctor’s TARDIS, he’ll show you the way.’

‘In a moment,’ the Doctor said. ‘My friend is still...’

‘Weak? Then carry him.’ Berouva snapped.

‘Now, see here’-

‘I’ll help you with him,’ Dzai said firmly. ‘Like General Berouva said – it’s time for you to go.’

The Doctor scoffed. ‘Worried I’ll steal your glory? So be it. I understand. Naturally you’ll get all the credit for putting an end to this?’

‘All of it, yes.’

‘Thought so. My presence here won’t even be mentioned on the case file, will it?’

Dzai shook her head. ‘I wouldn’t have thought so.’

‘Of course.’

‘In spite of that,’ she said. ‘You do have my personal gratitude. And do me a favour, Doctor, if you would: don’t get killed. You might be a disgrace to the name Time Lord, but I think that the cosmos would be a good deal poorer without you.’



# Maggie

‘Next person,’ she gasped, letting one of the physicians take over, and collapsing exhausted against the wall, sweating like a hog. They’d already taken turns once; this was their second lap. Maggie’s arms were throbbing, and she was reminded again of her age, not old, but no longer young. There was a time, she thought, where she could have carried on a lot longer.

The physician managed five minutes or so, before handing over to one of the guards. Mary’s face had grown steadily paler as the minutes elapsed, her lips taking on a faint blue-grey tinge and her skin cooling. It was a grotesque thing to touch a person and feel no body heat. Claspings Mary’s cold hand made Maggie feel sick to her stomach. But she didn’t let go. It would have felt cruel, somehow.

They needed the Doctor back. It was that simple. They needed him now, or at least soon. Even if Mary proved beyond saving, at the very least he could rescue Maggie, the guards and physicians too. They could escape intact, even if history could not. But in his absence, there was only one certainty – enraged at his daughter’s death, Henry would have their heads lobbed off in a job lot for failing to save her. And that was the *best* outcome. Worse would be if he decided they were not simply negligent, but actively to *blame* for her demise, in which case the penalty would be scaled up accordingly. Hanging, drawing and quartering would await, she reckoned, or horrors to that effect.

Looking back on these events later, Maggie never would remember exactly how long they waited, furiously pumping air into Mary, taking turns to keep her hovering between life and death, willing her not to drift irrevocably towards the latter. All that she knew then, and remembered thereafter, was that the wait was agonising, and far too long. So long that Maggie had all but given up hope by the end and was certain of her death, certain that the Doctor and Kaylaar would return hours too late, if at all, to find her head adorning a good, stout spike on the palace walls. Probably they would join her there.

And then, when all felt lost, she heard it. That metallic wheezing that sounded far away and close at hand at the same time. A hot wind blew gusts around the ruined chamber, as though the atmosphere itself were being gently parted to make room for an object that was both very large and very small, and an object which brought only joy for those who meant well, and only fear for those who did not. Maggie sobbed with relief and backed everyone into the corner to make way,

as the room began to pulse with light, before the lamp, followed by the frame of a blue box underneath, shuddered into existence, and all the while the wind and the noise grew louder, closer, *realer*.

The TARDIS doors flew open, and the Doctor emerged, followed by Kaylaar and one other, a tall, white-haired man in handcuffs, his head bowed. Kaylaar looked dreadful; pale, shivering, barely able to stand up.

‘Gallifrey,’ he said feebly, managing a hoarse laugh. ‘What a place.’

‘Hurry up,’ Maggie cried, seizing the Doctor and leading him towards Mary. ‘Have you a defibrillator on board? Something? Anything? She’s not been gone long; you can save her!’

The Doctor looked down at Mary and nodded his head slowly. He dashed back into the TARDIS and emerged seconds thereafter with the strangest artefact Maggie had ever seen. It was a blue ball of light in a square glass case, not unlike a small museum cabinet. The ball bounced merrily against the sides, too bright to look at directly, its dancing throwing beautiful flashes of blue across the room.

‘What is that?’ she asked.

‘One of the rarest phenomena in the universe,’ the Doctor said. Kneeling beside Mary he opened the glass case and the little ball of light broke free. It bounced around the chamber, hopping from floor to ceiling, wall to wall, hovering in front of everyone present for a second. When it was Maggie’s turn, she shielded her eyes, and squinted to look at it. It was beautiful. Like a fairy, shimmering and twisting in mid-air. On closer inspection, she saw that it wasn’t one light, but rather several tiny ones, swirling around in a tight knit swarm. They moved on to Kaylaar, and then finally back to the Doctor.

The Doctor smiled at them. ‘Go on. You know what to do.’

The light didn’t move.

‘Go on,’ he urged.

The light sank to the floor and disappeared into Mary’s open mouth. One of the physicians immediately went over and pressed two fingers against her neck, feeling for a pulse. He checked her wrist, too. Then he smiled; then he laughed. Finally, he burst into tears of relief and sank to his knees.

‘She lives!’

The light re-emerged from Mary’s mouth. The Doctor grinned, and then nodded to the guard in chainmail, the one who lay dead, mauled, in the corner. ‘Can you do anything for him, too?’ he asked.

The light glided that way and set to work whirring and twisting over the wound in the dead guard’s neck, repairing the damage which was there. It took seconds only. When it was done, the area was red raw and tender-looking, but gloriously intact, new skin stretched snug over a whole neck. The light entered the guard’s mouth, and emerged shortly after, and then he, too, was confirmed alive by the physicians.

The Doctor wiped a tear from his eye as the light – its work done – took a final, victory lap of the room and then gently faded away.

‘Eternity Ghosts,’ the Doctor said. ‘One of the gentlest, kindest, most selfless species in the universe. They exist purely to save others. Healing is all they think about, all they live for. And I held onto that cluster for far too long. Hoarded them, like a collector. It was about time I let them go.’ He clapped his hands together and rubbed them bracingly. ‘Well. That’s that. They’ll both be up and about in no time.’

‘Thank goodness,’ Maggie said darkly. ‘Who’s your new friend, by the way?’

‘Name of Mortimus. Not really a friend. Forgive him his silence, he’s sulking. Or perhaps, having been brought to the scene of his crimes, having seen the carnage for himself, he’s finally getting a sense of the horror that he’s caused. Maybe he’s feeling guilty. As well he should. Either way, let’s take him downstairs. He’s got an appointment with the king.’

# Kaylaar

Henry threw a feast in celebration of Mary's recovery, and though Kaylaar, Mags and the Doctor were all keen to leave, they concurred that it didn't seem particularly sensible to turn down the invitation. And sitting there that evening, still rather weak but steadily improving, Kaylaar supposed that it was enjoyable in its way. Probably if Earth had been his planet, he'd have appreciated it more, for it would have been *his* history. Even so, the music was enchanting, melodies played on lutes and harps with women wailing ethereal notes in various Earth tongues. The food was all right too, but not refrigerated, so on the cusp of turning rank. Or indeed, in the case of the shrimp, already turned; by the stench of ammonia it gave off, it had been rotten for at least a day, and it was only by grace of his superior smell that he realised in time and warned the Doctor and Maggie not to touch it. He felt a trifle guilty as he watched the high lords and nobles chomping away, but there was really nothing he could have done; to cause a scene at Henry's feast, to proclaim the foods from his kitchen inedible, was a risk that he wasn't prepared to take. The poor lords and ladies were in for a nasty stomach upset the following morning, but hopefully nothing more serious than that.

Speaking of the king, he held court spectacularly. He sat at the head of the enormous table with Queen Katherine to his left and the Duke of Suffolk to his right, and he was merry and fat and jolly, his voice booming like a foghorn and his laughter echoing around the chamber. Kaylaar could not reconcile him with the sinister, scowling figure who had exploded into a rage when they'd left the room with the incorrect etiquette, who'd blackmailed them, who'd received Mortimus earlier that day and ordered him taken to the tower, to be hanged, drawn and quartered the next day, by the least experienced executioner the bailiffs could possibly find. The poorer the axe-man, the more vicious and prolonged the death. And that, perhaps, was the most dangerous thing about Henry VIII, thought Kaylaar. A mad king without redemption is a man whom all know to avoid at any cost. But a mad king capable of cutting a kindly figure could suck you in, could call you friend and put you at ease, could make you feel safe, loved even, only to have your head sliced off the next day for the slightest misdemeanour, be the charge real, or otherwise.

And the sooner they were gone, the better.

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Despite their eagerness to leave, the Doctor said it might be bad manners to leave right after the feast, so insisted that they spend one last night at court, in their attic chambers, before departing in peace and with much goodwill the following day.

That was the excuse he gave for wanting to stay one more night, and Kaylaar believed him at the time.

It was ever thus that Kaylaar found himself lying in bed in their muggy chamber after the feast, and it felt as if he'd only drifted off when he was woken, quite suddenly, by a hand clamped over his mouth. The Doctor's face loomed down over him, his expression fearful. Maggie was stood over his shoulder looking equally distressed.

'Mortimus escaped the tower,' the Doctor said. 'The king blames us. Thinks I aided him. We've got to go, now.'

Kaylaar had an idea that the king's suspicions were pretty close to the mark. But this wasn't the time or place to discuss it. He was up out of bed immediately, and they crept down the corridor, headed to the spiral staircase at the far end which would take them to ground level. A bell started to ring. Heavy footfalls and raised voices were audible on the floors directly below. Sounded awfully close.

The Doctor thought so too. He turned to Kaylaar.

'Can you help us?'

The thought had already occurred to Kaylaar. He nodded grimly. 'Yeah. Look away, though. I'll find it easier if you do.'

The Doctor and Maggie turned their backs and Kaylaar shut his eyes. And when he did, he pictured one thing. Just one thing. One person, to be exact. That person was Henry. He screwed his face up and shook with exertion, forcing every distraction from his mind – difficult, in the circumstances – as he focused hard on the image of the king in his head, studying the piggy eyes, the chubby cheeks, the little button nose, the way that the beard, mostly orange, was flecked with grey. Kaylaar felt his skin grow warm, then hot, and he started to ache and prickle all over. Oh, certainly, this ability was a gift. Perhaps a lifesaving gift just now. But that didn't mean it was a pleasant experience. It was damned horrible, in fact. The sound of his bones grinding and changing and his flesh and soft tissues shifting made him feel terribly nauseous. All totalled, the process took about thirty seconds. He opened his eyes and told the Doctor and Maggie to turn around. They'd both shrunk. No. He'd grown. Henry was a tall man, and now Kaylaar was too. Henry was also an obese, barely mobile man, and Kaylaar felt the effects of his assorted afflictions. The pain from his festering leg was maddening. He felt out of breath just standing there.

'Perfect match,' the Doctor beamed.

'The appearance is one thing,' Kaylaar said. 'Got to act the part, too.' He seized the Doctor and Maggie by their forearms and pushed them roughly towards the stairs, limping as he went. He led them down, careful not to trip. His new feet were larger and cumbersome, and Henry's great weight was making him clumsy.

They emerged into a cosy, candlelit little drawing room on the east wing, about the size of a studio apartment, with portraits of assorted important folk hung on the walls. It was full of armed men in armour and tabards, all of whom took one look at the man they thought was their king and knelt.

'Your Majesty,' one of them stammered. 'We had not thought to see you here.'

'I have apprehended these traitors myself,' Kaylaar said. 'And it shall be me myself who deals with them. I will take them to the gallows now, have the hangman sent.'

The gallows were in the courtyard where the TARDIS was parked. The Doctor had moved it there after saving Mary, to allow the palace servants to get to work tidying her rooms.

‘We will assist,’ the guard said.

Kaylaar shook his head. ‘No. Head upstairs and seek out the last of their wretched party. He evaded me. And have a care, he might be armed.’

The guards probably weren’t comfortable leaving their king – or so they thought – with two vagrants, but it was testament to Henry that none of them dared question the order. Swords out, they filed up the spiral staircase, their footsteps hammering on the floorboards overhead.

Kaylaar whistled softly. ‘Damn.’

‘You’re doing great,’ the Doctor told him. ‘Let’s go.’

Kaylaar pushed them through the drawing room and through a set of doors out into the courtyard. The pikemen stationed there on duty bowed as Kaylaar breezed past.

‘Do you require aid, Your Majesty?’

‘No. Your king is quite capable of handling a woman and a scrawny Moor by himself.’

‘Yes, Your Majesty.’

The TARDIS was a few yards from the gallows. They made straight for it, resisting the urge to break into a run lest they attract the suspicion of the pikeman. Discreetly, the Doctor slipped the key from his pocket.

In the event, running was a risk they probably should have taken. They were halfway across the courtyard when the double-doors burst open and troops spilled out, led by the king himself. They stopped, open-mouthed, at the sight of the Doctor and Maggie with another Henry.

‘Leg it!’ the Doctor cried, and they sprinted for the TARDIS.

It was a bloody near thing. Carrying Henry’s weight, Kaylaar could not run particularly fast, and the first of Henry’s men were just feet away when he literally threw himself into the TARDIS, the Doctor slamming the doors shut behind him. From outside, they heard swords cracking against the hull.

‘They won’t get in,’ the Doctor said coolly. ‘No matter how hard they try.’

They took off, and Kaylaar began the arduous process of reverting to his true self, which was every bit as unpleasant as becoming somebody else. Still, it was a huge relief to lose Henry’s weight and ailments, even if he did feel utterly drained once the process was done. Shape-changing was no laughing matter, knocked the stuffing right out of him.

‘What I want to know, though,’ Maggie said, ‘is why Henry thought it was us who freed Mortimus?’

‘Yeah,’ the Doctor chuckled, as convincing as a paper spaceship.

Kaylaar and Maggie glared at him until he broke.

‘All right, fine. Yes. I freed him. Visited the tower after the feast and slipped him a teleport bracelet.’

‘Why?’ Kaylaar exclaimed.

‘Because whatever else he is, he’s one of mine. And because I don’t like the idea of anyone getting tortured to death, whether here or on Gallifrey, whatever they’ve done. But don’t worry, he won’t be going far. It was a short-hop teleport. Furthest he could have got is France. He can jolly well stay there, too. No TARDIS, no friends, no way out, and no means of causing trouble. If he’s sensible he’ll keep a low profile, lest he attracts the attention of Henry’s agents. Now, never mind Mortimus. Where to next, is the important question?’

Kaylaar shrugged. ‘Me, I’m going back to bed. I presume there *are* beds in here somewhere?’

The Doctor waved a careless hand toward the doors leading deeper within the TARDIS. ‘I expect so...somewhere. McMaggles? We said something about visiting a museum, didn’t we?’

She shrugged. ‘Yeah. Whatever.’

‘Or...’ the Doctor said, with a grin. ‘I could use the randomiser. Let the old girl make the decision for us. She could take us *anywhere*, guys, and I mean *anywhere*. At any time. We’ve got the whole universe at our mercy, there isn’t a corner of it that’s off-limits to us. Isn’t it brilliant?’

Despite the danger they had already faced in their short time with the Doctor, the danger they would probably continue to face from time to time, Kaylaar and Maggie agreed that it was. The best, in fact. Absolutely the best.









A Time Lord has thirteen lives, and Dzailundar had used all of hers. A deathbed reprieve sees her restored to youth and set to sordid and insidious work deep within the bowels of the Citadel...

The newly-regenerated Doctor, and his friends Maggie and Kaylaar receive an unwelcome summons from a man whom all would ideally want to avoid - King Henry VIII of England in closing years of his life, at the prime of his cruelty. All is not well at court. His daughter Mary, the future Queen of England, is being tormented by hostile forces; every night, her possessions move about of their own accord, spiteful voices hiss poison from the shadows of her chambers, and when she wakes each morning, she is frail and frightened, growing sicker with each passing day.

The Doctor, Maggie and Kaylaar set to work uncovering the cause of these happenings, and the Doctor is aghast to trace the source of them back to Gallifrey itself. But why are Dzailundar and her employer - an old adversary of the Doctor's, no less - so intent on tormenting a Tudor princess? And how far are they prepared to go, to punish those who would dare to try and stop them?

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