



HOW MANY TIMES DID THE DOCTOR RUN AWAY?

“PERHAPS I SHOULD GO HOME... BACK TO MY OWN PLANET...”

Overview

Everybody knows the story. The Time Lord later known as the Doctor, tired of the corruption and stagnation of their people, fled from the planet Gallifrey in a rickety old TARDIS in maintenance to embrace the life of an exile.

But almost immediately we find conflicting accounts, not only of the Doctor's motivations, but also the manner of their departure. The former can be simply handwaved with the oldest and truest of truths – the Doctor lies, especially about themselves. However, the latter is more difficult to articulate with regard to the available Matrix Retrieval Files. In one account of eventsⁱ, his first incarnation departed Gallifrey with his granddaughter – later known to adopt the alias of Susan – in a faulty Type-40 TT Time Capsule after a brief exchange with a technician whose face was somehow familiar to himselfⁱⁱ. Notably, the Doctor and Susan wore clothing typical of the planet Earth. An oddity, since the Doctor claimed ignorance of the planet when the two landed on its Moon in their first TARDIS trip. By anotherⁱⁱⁱ, stated that the Doctor left Gallifrey alone. Steered by the Hand of Omega, he was thrown back into the history of his own People, an occurrence forbidden by Gallifreyan law and considered a conventional impossibility. In the Dark Times, he encountered a young girl, the last of her family, who immediately recognised him as her “grandfather”. Together they departed, the Doctor claiming that they could not return home to his own era for his transgression carried the strictest penalties.

These are often dismissed offhand as contradictory. Irreconcilably so. A side-effect of the severe beating the Doctor's timestream has taken over the centuries, accumulated from encounters with skull-wearing cultists, xenophobic mutants, cosmic intelligentsia, impossible girls from Blackpool, among others. While this alternate line of doublethink is possible, an interesting alternative presents itself.

Namely, the Doctor didn't run away from Gallifrey once. They ran away twice.

Escape into Memory – Gallifrey's Past

The first time was the semi-accidental jaunt to Gallifrey's own past where the Doctor discovered he

possessed a granddaughter. He believed that this journey would result in exile, but with the aid of the Hand of Omega and a dangerous ally, a new alternative presented itself. The crime could be covered up and the ancient child's identity concealed.

One of Gallifrey's chief security flaws has always been its reliance upon the Matrix. Whilst most Time Lords believe the Matrix to be infallible, this is certainly not the case as shown by the falsification of evidence at the Doctor's own trial on Space Station Zenobia^{iv}, the incursion of the former Imperatrix known as Pandora and the Master's erasure of his own identity. Indeed, during the Deadly Assassin Intervention, the Doctor was fully aware that the Master was capable of such an erasure. Perhaps because the Doctor had similarly altered Matrix records when generating a false identity for his new granddaughter or perhaps because it was the Master who had helped them in the first place. After all, who else would the Doctor turn to but his oldest friend? With his skill and the computational power of the Hand of Omega (who'd let its presence be known only to the Doctor and Susan), such an alteration would be child's play and the covert Renegades could all fade away into their desired anonymity.

From what little can be gathered from his early psychological profile, it is unclear what exactly prompted the Doctor's return. Accounts demonstrate that he possessed no desire to abuse his moment of temporal serendipity, nor apply that knowledge to assuming any political power in the modern era. A Renegade considered dangerous, but tolerable. Enough to be openly recruited shortly following the War Lords Intervention. As he had severed ties to his established household, there remains one simple display of what humans call Occam's Razor: his trip into Gallifrey's past was his sole venture in that TARDIS. At least, initially. Against his better judgement, he used the Fast Return Switch to return the Ship home to its maintenance cradle and disappear into the biowork with Susan in tow.

Perhaps they all had every intention of leaving Gallifrey, but lacked the means to do so just yet.

Tempus Fugitive – Initial Travels

Accounts of later events are largely unknown at this present time, but there is scant evidence of the Doctor, his travels and the fate of Susan during this particular period.

The Master recalls the Doctor being one of Gallifrey's finest TARDIS engineers^v, corroborated by the latter's own claims to have once been a pioneer amongst his own People^{vi}. Abandoning his previous post as a lowly Scrutationary Archivist in the Bureau of Possible Events, it's possible he adopted the identity of a Quadrigger – presumably under an assumed alias – and joined an expedition to other times and spaces. Caught under stifling supervision and on a short leash, he nevertheless learnt much about its operation and maintenance and indeed grew close to the more advanced Type 50 as its only consistent occupant^{vii}. It was likely an experimental model or prototype that he had improved upon as it demonstrated abilities that would not be common until the Second War in Heaven^{viii}. His alterations to his later Type 40 using his engineering background may have been extensive, leading him to claim outright or otherwise imply that he had constructed it himself^{ix}.

It is during these unknown travels of the Doctor that one could hypothesise he and Susan – an occasional stowaway aboard the craft – acquired the clothing they would wear in their later escape. A visit, perhaps, to Edwardian Earth or a tellurian colony with a throwback sense of fashion. Whether the Doctor remembers this adventure now is uncertain. Susan doesn't seem to and the procedure involved in covering up the Doctor's first adventures may have involved the use of Gallifreyan memory acids, siralanomode or something possessing similar effects from the ketchoftus group. After all, the Fifth Doctor would later remark during his first encounter with the Ferutu that memories before his second

regeneration had become rather hazy^x. Garden-variety attrition would be considered a natural cause, but given the Doctor's long history with memory alteration – of note, following his criminal exile on twentieth-century Earth and their encounter with Zodin – it would suggest something altogether more deliberate at work^{xi}.

Yet another account of the Doctor's departure from Gallifrey suggests Susan assumed the identity of Lady Larn, an heir to Rassilon's bloodline^{xii}. When weaving a lie, it is best to stick close to the truth. That Susan's new identity should be linked to the founding Triumvirate of Gallifrey was only logical. Ironically, this identity – meant to protect her – instead made her a target when riots broke out demanding the overthrow of the Presidency and a return to hereditary rule by a descendant of Rassilon. The Doctor rejected both sides of the conflict and instead focussed on completing their escape before it was too late. On the one side, seeking to use Susan as a figurehead whether she'd consented or not was the Master. If he was involved with the Doctor's deceit, he may have been playing his own game, seeing a route to the reforms of Gallifreyan society he and the Doctor both desired. Why fight to escape out among the stars when you could bring the stars to yourself? On the other, President Pandad VII ordered Lord Burner Braxiatel to erase the Doctor and Susan from history^{xiii}. Unexpectedly, for sentimental reasons, Braxiatel instead allowed both to flee Gallifrey.

These accounts became distorted legend amongst the Shabogans, who said the Doctor stole the President's wife and the Moon, but the Doctor clarified that she was the President's daughter^{xiv}. Indeed, Susan's very existence from her birth to her escape would seem to hang on the best kind of chronological absurdity. Sentimentality.

A Child of Grandeur – Susan and the Signet Ring

The Doctor's telepathic communication with another Gallifreyan, nicknamed Patience by his associates, during the Ferutu's attempted invasion suggests what seems to be yet another possible origin for Susan's presence abroad. Here, the First Doctor visits ancient Gallifrey already wearing his blue signet ring and saves his infant grandchild from a purge of womb-born. An artefact with unusual properties, it may have assisted the Doctor in his escape from Gallifrey^{xv} and, as Patience notes, bears an uncanny resemblance to her own husband's ring. A great pioneer and explorer, known only as the Other. However, at no point is it clear how the Doctor could have acquired that ring.

An obvious solution presents itself from the proceeding evidence: Susan gifted it to the Doctor when they first met in ancient Gallifrey. From her perspective, his rescue of her infant self had already occurred and as the last child of her house, she was given the ring as a reminder of her heritage^{xvi}.

Presented with the implication that he himself was responsible, he arrived at the night in question – possibly during his temporary boon, alleged to have been granted by Rassilon himself following the Death Zone Intervention – and closed the causal loop. Indeed, his asynchronous visit to Rebecca Nurse before her execution in Salem would suggest that this event may have been one of the last accomplished through his boon. His use of his companion's family name, Jackson, and his noting that “both” (presumably including Polly Wright) were asleep in the TARDIS would suggest this was one of the last tasks he accomplished in his initial lifetime^{xvii}.

No doubt he didn't stay long in the past. Interfering in your own history is a tricky business and best left to a minimum.

Summary Judgement

The proposed linear timeline of events are as follows:

1. Driven by family drama, the tedium of stagnation and an ancient weapon, the Doctor steals a TARDIS from the cradles. Most likely the same Ship that he would later travel with for millennia, though he himself may not be aware of this.
2. He travels to ancient Gallifrey at the behest of the Hand of Omega and meets Susan who recognises him as her grandfather, despite from the Doctor's perspective having never met her before. Engine troubles force him to return immediately to Gallifrey (via the Fast Return Switch) with Susan and the stellar manipulator in tow.
3. Matrix records are altered to conceal their crimes and Susan's true nature. During this time, Susan assumes the identity of Lady Larn and is given into the trusted custody of another Time Lord, whilst the Doctor continues/begins a career in TARDIS engineering, using a modified Type 50 as his main mode of transport.
4. Prompted by the civil unrest caused by the attempted overthrow of the Presidency (and other more personal factors), the Doctor, Susan and the Hand flee contemporary Gallifrey once again. This time, under their own power and to the wider universe beyond.
5. Likely towards the end of his life, the Doctor travels to Susan's birth, which we may speculatively place further down Gallifrey's relative timeline, rescues her from a purge and delivers her to ancient times.

After that, the rest is history. A bit of the future and a few unwatched corners of the present.

This is, of course, all utter nonsense. Which makes it very likely true.

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- i MRF: *Name of the Doctor* and *The Beginning*.
 - ii "Premonition," the Doctor would later note, "is just remembering in the wrong direction."
 - iii MRF: *Lungbarrow* // Cross-ref: *Nightshade*
 - iv MRF: *Trial of a Time Lord*
 - v MRF: *Birth of a Renegade*
 - vi MRF: *The Daleks* // **Addendum:** Though this could easily be a slip of the tongue reference to the Other's own past as occurred in MRF: *Remembrance of the Daleks*.
 - vii MRF: *Prisoners of Fate; Celestial Intervention – A Gallifreyan Noir*.
 - viii MRF: *Alien Bodies*
 - ix MRF: *The Chase*
 - x MRF: *Cold Fusion*
 - xi MRF: *The Five Doctors; Time of Your Life; Spearhead from Space*; et al.
 - xii MRF: *Birth of a Renegade*
 - xiii MRF: *Gallifrey: Disassembled*
 - xiv MRF: *Hell Bent; A Brief History of Time Lords* // **Addendum:** The President is unlikely to be Pandad VII, but rather his predecessor.
 - xv MRF: *The Three Paths*
 - xvi Whosoever gifted the infant Susan with the signet ring is unlikely to have been surprised by the presence of two in the same room, this was Gallifrey.
 - xvii MRF: *The Witch Hunters* // **Addendum:** It's altogether likely that Ben and Polly were caught in a time bubble to keep temporal interference to a minimum. A Time Lord could be trusted with such a gift, but humans less so. Presumably, when the boon lifted, they were returned to normal and resumed their natural course through history.