

EXTERMINATE THE THAL

LIOMIDATE THE KALEDS

HAVE YOU SEEN
THESE WOMEN?



THE DIVERGENT WORDSMITHS

GENESIS OF TERROR

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GENESIS OF TERROR

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“Purloined from the exquisite biomechanical computer systems of the Catchvane, the Wordsmiths have deciphered, transcribed and generally squabbled over the Doctor’s vast gallimaufry of cosmic ventures. While many have been recorded by reliable sources, they are more curious of the accounts that have, as Tellurians would say in their idiosyncratic tongue: ‘fallen through the cracks.’ The Wordsmiths’ efforts to document these lost exploits are furnished in the lathes below, left by a divergent scion and reappropriated for the Earth’s admittedly primitive global computer network...”

All characters in this publication are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living, dead or mutating, is purely coincidental.

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Excerpts based on *Genesis of the Daleks* by Terry Nation

INTRODUCTION

“Genesis of Terror”

“Catch it!” she called over the clatter of photonic tomes. His partner fell to his knees, his arms wrapped around the snowflake’s midsection like the rider of an infant megaptera. The warphoop cast hookah circles as it looped around the creature’s centre. One of the beings was flung backwards by the shock, his fingers scrabbling against the opposing shelf, his legs flailing out beneath him.

“Rolme, do you have it?” she called, blind optimism and baleful pessimism mixing to a bizarre concoction of realism.

The shelf shook beneath the Gallifreyan with the warphoop, watching as the creature, caught like a butterfly in a net, wriggled into a niche between the technical manuals and cookery books, and sat still.

“Just about, Malka. Just about...”

“Menti Celesti,” his companion breathed. She lowered herself shelf-by-shelf to the floor of the Archificium, feeling relief warm her hearts and tickle her toes. “You never... told me... how it... got past... the transduction... barriers.”

“I suspect it took a joyride on one of the trading mission vessels. It must have smuggled itself in the TARDIS cradles, the time capsules have a certain... doting,” the word had a sour taste: “attitude towards these creatures.”

The snowflake fluttered meekly.

Rolme felt like blowing a raspberry at it, but resisted the childish impulse. Indeed, he suspected that such a thing had come from the Thort itself. It would be poor form for his protégée to learn such insubordination from her own sponsor. A personage from Earth may have found this intimidating, given the thoughts were backed up by a Pan-like visage, pinched at the chin and the back of the crown.

Far below, Malka observed her haphazard scabble to the bottom. She

was unusually tall, her face framed with a curly fringe and two wings of hair that seemed to sweep out from the back of her skull like those of a trunkike. She noted that the creature seemed to limit its relative dimensions to fit the snare. There were safeguards in place to ensure that it couldn't phase through the atoms and escape, so it was of little worry to either figure.

"Seems docile enough now..." rumbled Rolme.

"Should I consider this part of my tutelage?" asked Malka.

He bit his moustache. "Yes, why not? Do you recognise the thing?"

"Non-Gallifreyan," she played with her hair, stalling. "Beyond our noosphere and the ecology of the planet itself..."

"Good, good... Don't humour me, cut to the chase."

The pretence vanished. "Well, it's a Thort, isn't it? A mnemonic creature from the Omniversal Spectrum."

"I don't know why you were so timid, you're quite correct. It's very rare to see one of these in person; I hope you feel the privilege."

"I thought that's what my sponsorship was in aid of?"

The Time Lord first regarded the Gallifreyan critically: "A leg-up from Lowtown to the Academy is part of it, true, but this is just as important to becoming a Time Lord as anything else," then the creature within the net: "Knowing that there are smiters like these out and about in the wider universe that want to get in."

She pressed a finger to the bridge of her spectacles. "Makes sense. We're an isolated society with one of the strongest cultural pulls around." The Thort didn't make a squeaking sound, so much as implant the memory of one in Malka's immediate past. She wrinkled her nose. "I find it untoward, Rolme."

He kicked the scattered redback, greenback and bluebacked tomes aside from his immediate path on the floor while his sponsor carefully replaced the five linking books back on their upturned pedestals.

"I wonder what it stole," he griped, on the verge of strangling the Thort. "Out with it. Come on."

Malka looked up, her arm filled with the Book of the Eternal Champions. "You're hurting it."

Rolme's gunbarrel arms loosened somewhat. "Better?"

It left the impression in his mind of a nod or its closest equivalent.

Still able to do that through the net, that's a worry, he chewed it over. Ah, of course, the telepathic centres of his brain must have been triggered. He focussed his mind, set up the usual barriers and asked the looter what it had hoped to make off with.

"Archival ephemera from a potentialities strongbox..." the words punctuated the air as though he'd stepped on jumping jacks.

"What?"

"Mind your own business," he muttered gruffly.

Her curiosity being what it was, Malka eavesdropped, catching a few ideas here and there. The first concrete thought—a word—filled her with dread. "Oh, that's not good..."

Together, they had enough of a telepathic presence to hear it whispering. Voices and words enmeshed together in a tight cloister of muttered potentialities:

"Together, my children, we shall make the universe in your image."

"I am marvelling at your sheer determination to survive."

"I will not play party to your monstrous games, sir!"

"Violence is alien to me as a means of resolving conflict."

"Fine lads, the lot of you."

"This is about the fate of our universe. Maybe all universes, even this one..."

And that same single word underlying all of them—*Dalek*.

"...Come along." Rolme threw it over his shoulder.

"I've heard about the Daleks," said Malka. "They were used in the arena games, weren't they? Back when the Pythia was in charge."

"This thing must've been gnawing on a fairly ancient datastore to garner information about their creation," he bit an enormous thumb and turned to face the library's outer hallway. "Still bad. Bad that we found it and bad that we caught it."

"Should we let it go?"

"Certainly not," he set off at a brisk stride.

“Where *can* we go?”

“To the closest member of the Chancellery Guard we can find. We put it in their capable gloves, dust off our hands and forget all about this business.”

“Hold on, you said creation. Someone *created* the Daleks?”

“A reference tome for another time.” He paused, letting the cool stonework eke through his boots, then he pivoted towards the stairway and marched onward like a huntsman.

She fell silent, hiking up with him. A few minutes ticked by in silence, then she passed him swiftly: “Now’s another time.”

He sighed. “Very well. The Daleks were created by a mutated scientist. His name, I can’t quite rightly recall. The planet, ah, something or rather has become a vital part of the Web of Time. Intervention of the sort found by this Thort would spell disaster. For everyone,” he gave it some thought and frowned. “Weren’t you there for the Chief of Multihistorical Research’s symposium?”

“Professor Qualenawitvanastech?”

“Yes, yes, him,” he ducked his shoulders under the hallway’s surveillance system.

“It was a bit excessive,” admitted Malta. “I think he ran overtime... Good stuff, don’t get me wrong, particularly in regards to the Daleks’ present influence, but it was too much all at once...”

“A pity. It covered retrotemporal stasis, timestream latency recordings, the unique properties of artefacts recovered from negated timelines... His explanation for this box was rather ideal,” he felt the Thort jostle against his back. “For an Interventionist, but we shan’t hold that against him.”

Malka thumbed the creature. “Wouldn’t he be interested?”

He sighed. “You’re still young.”

“What’s that mean?”

“It’s dangerous. Remember our Laws, remember the evils of paradox, some nexus points are severed from the timestreams for a reason. It’s not our place to question why, simply to accept. They simply aren’t meant to be.”

“But, surely—”

“We’re here.”

The door to the Watch stood before them in corrugated green, mist settling into a conspiratorial hush around their static forms. Rolme slammed his fist against its frame and lowered the creature to the ground. He put his arm around his protégée and lead her away, careful to avoid the camera once again.

Their argument would continue until the long hours of the night. Until the spider rewove the Web of Time. Neither particularly minded it, Time was circular. It would all return to stasis. Nothing would be lost.

And, as the Thort, observed woefully, nothing would be gained. Perhaps the youngster was simply another renegade in the making. It wrinkled the projective centres of its mind. Perhaps not.

In either case, it welcomed the sudden rush of light from within the Watch as openly as it could. Basking in the inviting warmth. It was going up on this world, of that it was certain. All it needed was to distract it with what it had learnt. Let it linger. Let it fester. Then break free and spread wide to find more places in which to nestle and feast.

The first? Yes, it would begin with the first...

A HALF-SHARE IN THE UNIVERSE

By J.A. Prentice

There is always a question of where to begin in a story that exists outside of the comforts of linearity, beyond the restrictions of cause and effect. When, the Chroniclers of Gallifrey ask, did the story truly start?

Perhaps it was in their future, when the Nine Homeworlds burnt, when Arcadia fell, when the sky trenches fell and all was lost. It was the premonition of that possibility, the whisperings of the Matrix that saw all and knew all, that spurred them to action. (Or so one account had it.)

Perhaps it was in the distant past, when two galaxies collided in white-hot fury, matter striking matter, planets colliding, gravity fluxing, and a planet was born, conceived in death, its surface blazing like a star: newborn Skaro, an insignificant rock unaware of the role it would play in the future of the universe.

Perhaps it was at the Dawn of the Age of Unreason, when tensions between the great civilizations of Skaro—wise and artistic Dals in their shining city, warlike Thals, doomed Tharons, others yet forgotten by history—reached their breaking point and cold wars began to burn.

And perhaps it was when the Master of the Universe, Supreme Lord of the Daleks, Emperor of Skaro, visited his oldest and truest friend in the shadows of the cells under the ruins of the Panopticon. Smoke trailed from a cigar still burning between his gloved fingers.

“Another galaxy fell today,” he said. “A million worlds brought into my empire.”

The prisoner said nothing. He hung from his manacled wrists, his velvet jacket torn and ash-stained, the grey mane of his hair grown wild and tangled.

“Nothing?” the Master asked. “No retort? No lecture? No wit? How very unlike you, Doctor.”

The Doctor didn’t glare. The Master wished he had. A glare was just part of their game. A glare meant they were both playing their parts. He knew the Doctor never meant the glares.

The look the Doctor gave him wasn’t self-righteous anger or sanctimonious judgment. It was disappointment.

The Master looked away and took a drag from his cigar. He tasted the poisons on his tongue: the carcinogens, the addictive chemicals. They had no effect on him, though he had to admit that using a respiratory bypass system to smoke was a little extravagant.

“Are they treating you well?” he asked. An absurd question. An invitation for wry wit, for a speech on the inherent dignity of prisoners, for begging to be released.

Nothing. The Doctor said nothing.

“Come now, Doctor,” the Master said. “We’re both reasonable beings. You know that I’ve won. Finally and absolutely won. There’s nothing you can do to stop me, not anymore. The universe is mine to command.”

The Doctor gave the subtlest shake of his head.

“Or, perhaps, *ours*.” The Master smiled. “Consider it, Doctor. The Daleks at your command. The universe within your grasp. History ours to shape. We can prevent every atrocity, avert every wrong, wipe the tears from every eye.”

Nothing.

“Think carefully. I’m offering you a half-share in the universe.”

Still only that sullen silence, silence so deep that all Gallifrey seemed dead, as if they were the only two beings in creation and everything beyond the cell door had ceased to exist.

“Very well.” The Master turned away. “Perhaps a few centuries of isolation will change your mind.”

The silence followed him from the cell, out into the deep Cloisters amongst the ghosts of the forgotten dead, and up into the ruins of emerald spires and shattered glass.



But perhaps the best place to start is on the surface of the dying world, poisoned by a thousand years of endless war, wreathed in tendrils of choking grey fog. The air stank of death, sulphuric and burning. The ground was littered with corpses, sank into the barren earth.

Two beings stood alone in the haze, clothed in black, watching silent as grim reapers. The day was cold, cold as night and almost as dark.

“So,” said the first, a slight smile on his lips. “This is how it ends.”

“I don’t understand,” the other replied, robes swaying in the breeze.

“You’ve come to take me back. To take me in at last for my crimes.” He held out his hands as if to be handcuffed. “I hope, at least, to get a trial. Exile, perhaps? To a world where my talents might be of use.”

“I am not here to bring you in.”

A moment’s silence. He studied the robed figure in his absurd hat—almost like a jester’s, if it weren’t for the black. Then he laughed.

“Of course. You’re from my future. Relatively speaking. Reaching back, damaging the Web of Time.” His eyes glinted. “And what could induce a Time Lord to break such sacred laws? To risk the destruction of everything?”

“We have a task for you.”

“A task? For me? You must be desperate.”

The robed figure walked on, across the battlefield. The dead beneath his feet were countless, layers upon layers of bones, generation after generation buried by the elements alone. “We foresee a time when the Daleks of Skaro will become a threat to the all life in the universe. They will exterminate planet after planet, species after species, until they remain the only lifeforms in the whole of the cosmos. You, perhaps, can change that.”

“You may have mistaken me for *him*.” The Master turned away. “I have never been commended for my altruism.”

“It is his altruism,” the other Time Lord replied, “that makes him unsuited for the task. His morality is too pure, his methods too

unpredictable. We need someone who will accomplish his mission without hesitation.”

“And why should I accept?” the Master asked. “Why should I do Gallifrey’s dirty work?”

“Because we are already on Skaro. And if you do not accomplish your task, you will be stranded here.”

The Master gave a small, thin-lipped smile. It was the smile of a man who’d just decided to kill you, but wasn’t sure of the when and how.

“This,” the other Time Lord said, offering a small arm-band, “is a Time Ring.”

“I know what a Time Ring is,” the Master replied. “Where will this one take me?”

“Gallifrey. When your task is complete, use it. If we are satisfied with the results, you will be returned to your timeline and your TARDIS. If not...”

“An incentive,” the Master said. “I would have liked a carrot to go with the stick.”

The other Time Lord frowned.

“An Earth idiom,” the Master replied. “I’ve picked up a few. Like viruses.”

“You have three options,” the other Time Lord said. “You may either avert their creation, find some way to make them less aggressive, or find some inherent weakness that we might exploit.”

“It sounds simple enough. And it isn’t as if I have a choice.”

The other Time Lord smiled. “No. It isn’t.”

There was a breeze, a tear in space-time, and then he was gone, melting like the fog, and the Master was alone on the surface of Skaro with the numberless dead.

There was something the Time Lord had forgotten, something the Master always remembered, something a friend had told him long ago, when they were children together.

There are always choices, even when they tell you there aren’t. You can always choose another way.

“Three ways to change time,” the Master said softly. “But I can think of a fourth.”

He smiled and set off across the battlefield, through the swirling mist, towards the vast curve of the domed city in the distance, tucked away against the mountainside.

Perhaps he would have helped the Time Lords if they'd offered him something in return. If they hadn't trapped him. If they hadn't tried to play him. But they had and for that, he would make them regret ever daring to summon him to Skaro.



The bunker was guarded by the dead. The Master prodded at the nearest corpse: empty flesh holding an empty gun, propped up in the trench. Flies buzzed around the exposed flesh. The body was cold to the touch, the muscles slack rather than rigor-mortis stiff. The smell was like ripe meat in sun.

Long dead, then. Dead before he was put at his post.

Clever. A logical and efficient use of resources. Even the fallen doing their part for the cause.

He walked past them with indifference, towards the sealed doors as those doors began to open. Soldiers spilled out, antique rifles trained on him, fingers on centuries-old triggers. They were little more than children: spotty-faced, shaking with barely-restrained fear. Midnight-black uniforms hung loosely from malnourished frames. No doubt a hundred dead had worn them before. The weapons were as likely to blow up in their faces as kill him.

Nonetheless, he raised his hands and let them take him, grabbing at him with bony-fingered hands, shoving him towards the bunker. Their commands were the yips of frightened puppies trying to seem more than they were.

The doors sealed behind them and they were enclosed in concrete and steel, the bitter air of the wasteland replaced with the stale air of tunnels and catacombs.

“Who are you?” barked a soldier. “Are you with the Thals? Name and rank!”

The Master smiled. His dark eyes lit up with an inner fire, swirling like two black holes, and the soldiers stared straight into them. He spoke, his voice perfectly modulated: the right emphasis on the right syllables, the right pitch, the right tone.

“I am the Master and you will obey me.”



General Ravon was a soldier from a long line of soldiers, purest of pure Kaled stock. Each morning he checked in his chipped full-length mirror for the slightest hint of mutation, feeling his skin for any sign of infection, studying his face to make sure no change had crept in while he slept. It could happen to anyone, mutation. Even in the Dome, they weren't safe, no matter what the propaganda said. Radiation and bioviruses crept in through the little cracks, into the pipes, the air, slowly poisoning them all.

Ravon clutched so tightly to his purity, to the supremacy of his people, because he knew he would lose it. They would all lose it. Mutation would take root and they would become no better than the Mutos, a mongrel race doomed to wander the wastes of Skaro, all the greatness of their ancestors forgotten.

It had been that infection, the corruption of genetics, that had taken Ravon's father. His genes had unwound like fraying string and his features melted like wax. By the time the soldiers took him away, Ravon no longer recognized him as the man who'd told him stories while Thal bombs echoed in the dead of night.

Ravon tried not to think of stories. Stories were a relic of the old Skaro, when the Kaleds had been scientists, artists, philosophers. There were libraries, his father had said, where bookcases overflowed with leather-bound books, shelves overflowed with crinkled yellow scrolls, and great thinkers overflowed with wisdom.

Skaro had no books now, no scrolls, no philosophers. Books and scrolls were hauled away by truck and cart, thrown into the bright-burning flames to heat the furnaces to melt lead for bullets. Philosophers, artists,

writers—all those who did not or would not contribute to the War—were put to use as well. There was no waste on Skaro.

The strong were used as labour. Some of the others were given to the Scientific Elite, never to be seen again. And the rest, the old and infirm, useless as his father had been useless...

Ravon tried to forget what happened to them every time he ate his rations.

But Ravon was proud of the Kaleds. Of Skaro. It was a great civilization, the legacy of their forefathers, lean and hungry like the hunting cats that had died out three hundred years before he was born. All excess, all indulgence, all weakness, all false empathy was stripped away.

What was left was *pure*.

But Ravon still felt twinges of weakness: grief for his father torn away, despair for the war, protectiveness of the troops under his command, close as he would have to children. They were so young, so much younger than him, a seasoned soldier of twenty-six. He treated them as a father should: beat them if they showed fear, punished them if they showed insolence, shot them if they brought him dishonour.

Ravon could tell when there was something amiss with his soldiers. He could smell weakness in them. This newcomer, standing before them as if he were the general, had cast a spell over them.

Ravon didn't believe in spells. There was no superstition amongst the Kaleds. Even their ancestors had been rationalists, throwing out such foolishness as the Horned Beast when they charted the course of each star in the sky.

Yet there was something about the man's eyes, burning like two black embers.

"Who are you?" Ravon demanded. "A Thal spy? A Muto?"

He knew even as he said the words that they were nonsense. The man had hair darker than his, eyes so perfectly deep and strong. He was the image of Kaled supremacy, as if Davros had bred him in one of his accursed labs. He was no Thal.

He supposed the man could be a Muto. A Muto without obvious deformity. He'd have to be screened for that.

"My name," the visitor said, "is the Master. I am a visitor to this world. I've come to help you."

"Help us?" Ravon sneered. "You're a madman. A Muto. There are no other worlds. We are the only life in this universe. Davros tells us that."

"Davros." The Master turned the name over on his tongue. "A scientist?"

"The greatest scientist on Skaro," Ravon replied.

"I would like to meet this Davros." The Master brushed a spot of ash from his black clothing, precise as Ravon's uniform. His voice was cool, level, commanding. It reminded Ravon of..

The bombs sounding. Father close by, his voice so strong I could cling to it even if the rest of world burned—

"Davros," Ravon snapped, pulling himself out of recollection, "does not see spies, Mutos, or madmen!"

"But he will see me," the Master replied. "You know I mean you no harm, don't you, General?"

"I..." Ravon hesitated. Those eyes. They burned. It was hard to see anything else, hard not to get lost in them. "I don't know anything of the sort. I—"

"I've seen your future," the Master said. "I know where this world is heading. I've come to save you, if I can. Will you let me?"

If anyone else said those words, Ravon would laugh, then have them beaten, but the way the Master said them, the way he spoke, the sincerity in his eyes... Ravon didn't doubt him for a moment.

"You'll help us win the war?" Ravon asked. "Defeat the Thals?"

"I'll change the fate of this world," the Master replied. "You have my word."



Davros, the greatest mind on Skaro, made the Master wince to look at him: the fusion of flesh and machinery, the face burnt and twisted, unseeing eyes shut tight, one step from Death's domain. His head hung

limp from his neck, but the eye in his forehead pulsed a bright, electric blue. His life-support system whirred as it moved. The Master could smell the ozone of the electrostatic discharge. The chair was powering itself as it moved, tearing energy from the metallic floor to supplement its internal battery. Ingenious, if primitive.

But the face. The Master couldn't get past the ruin of it.

A face like that, he thought, studying his handsome, bearded features in a sheet of reflective metal over Davros's shoulders, *would be worse than death*.

There was a man in glasses by Davros's side. He walked just far enough behind Davros that no one would mistake him for being in charge, as if he were the broken scientist's shadow. Cold eyes stared from the pinched, pale face behind the glasses.

Security Chief Nyder. That was what Ravon had called him.

This was a man to watch out for. Not a scientific genius like Davros, perhaps, but a genius in his own way, a chess player three moves ahead.

"My dear Davros," the Master said, giving a curt, respectful bow. "I've heard a great deal about you."

"And I have heard of you." There was a crackle to his voice, a distortion, but his voice was clear and calm and quiet. "They say you are from another world."

"I am."

"Impossible." The chair rotated, away from the Master. "There are no other worlds. I have studied the skies. Our telescopes have observed the surfaces of dead worlds. Rocks floating in the dark."

"And yet here I am. You're a man of science, Davros. Will you ignore the evidence of your own eyes?" A slight smile. "My apologies."

Davros whirled back round. The blue eye blazed and his face twisted. Then his shoulders fell and he smiled.

"Two hearts," Davros said. "They said you have two hearts."

"I do."

"I know. I can see them. Beating away like wings. But still. I cannot be sure. You could be a mutation. Your external anatomy seems Kaledian." Davros frowned. "You see that I cannot be sure."

“Genetic testing,” the Master replied. He rolled up his sleeve and held out his arm. “You’ll find that I have less in common with you than you have with a starfish. You have such equipment, naturally?”

“Naturally.” Davros turned to Nyder. “Fetch the equipment. We will conduct his test. We will see if his blood proves true.” He looked back at the Master. “And then we will discuss things, this traveller and I. If his story is true, if he comes from another world, another time, then he may know information that shall be invaluable to my work. To the future of Skaro!”

“And to the Daleks?” the Master asked.

A shot in the dark, but a well-judged one, by the look on Davros’s face.

“The Daleks?” Davros’s chair crept closer, his good hand tapping against the controls. “What do you know of the Daleks? What do you know?”

“That you are to be congratulated,” the Master replied, standing his ground as the chair stopped centimetres from his boots, so close the stench of chemically-preserved flesh was almost overwhelming. “Skaro creates the most powerful race of killing machines the universe will ever know.”

“So. I am successful. The creatures are successful. Good. Good.” He paused. “And they are... undefeated?”

“Not quite,” the Master replied.

“You will give me dates! Names! Details of battles lost! You will help me shape the future of this world! Of the Daleks! Of the Universe!”

The Master smiled. “I’ll do more than that. I’ll give you the keys to Heaven itself.”

He pulled the Time Ring from his pocket.

“I believe that we may be of immeasurable assistance to each other. Just think of me as your Scientific Advisor.”



Davros led him through the corridors of the bunker, laid out like warrens of concrete and steel. They visited a room of travel machines,

their eyestalks drooping, their gunsticks inert. The machines seemed as if they were sleeping, waiting only for the right words to awaken.

There were three varieties: the Mark I drawing power from the floors, the Mark II with a transmitter dish fixed to the back, and the Mark III with sleek vertical slats to draw power from even the smallest electrostatic discharge in the world around them. The first two were silver and blue; the latter was a dark, muddy grey and black.

“These, of course, are only a conveyance,” Davros said. “A shell. A crude construction of metal. The engineering is impressive, but it is nothing compared to the creatures themselves.”

They passed from the room, down another corridor, and into the observation rooms, full of writhing, coloured smoke. The air was hot and foul, the lights sickly, but they were nothing compared to the thing in the incubation tank before them.

The Master’s expression remained as controlled as ever, but he felt a chill run down his spine.

The thing was foetal: slimy body small and shrivelled, head enlarged, veins visible under greenish skin. One eye was larger than the other, closed under the pressure of amniotic fluid. Wrinkled bulges swelled from the lopsided skull. The arms were long and thin and there were five of them, sprouting from the spine, from the centre of the chest, from dislocated shoulders. The fingers were like strands of seaweed. The legs were matchstick thin and had too many joints and not enough muscle.

If the Master were to break the glass, to let the thing spill out onto the floor, it would be unable to stand, arms and legs flailing like so many tentacles, lungs howled as it lay on the floor, neither living nor dying.

It was an abomination, a thing so pitiful it almost moved him.

Almost.

“Impressive,” he said, turning to look at Davros. “The flesh atrophies, but the mental capacity is enhanced.”

“This,” Davros said, “is the future of Skaro. Already the infants born in the city display such deformities. The radiation is poison to us, but it shall

be as milk and honey to them. Our children. The supreme beings in the universe!”

The Master raised an eyebrow. “Most people, if they saw such a future for their race, would run away. But you race towards it.”

“They are... our legacy,” Davros replied. His withered hand tapped at his life-support controls. “I find them... beautiful.”

“You would do anything to protect them?” the Master asked. “To ensure they came to be?”

Davros nodded. “I would.”

“How many have you made? How fast do they breed?”

Davros rattled off figures whilst the Master inspected the screens, studying the dance of corrupted double helixes. Genetics twisted back on themselves: interbred from the same specimens, the same donors. He remembered accounts he’d heard of Royal Families on far-flung worlds: the Matriarchs of Natash, fleshformed from a shallow genetic pool, the Children of the Fisher King, wedding brother to sister in a desperate attempt to maintain purity of their bloodlines, the Hapsburgs of Earth, with their prognathism.

That was where purity always led. A genetic dead-end.

Davros finished his conclusions and fell silent as if waiting for the Master’s approval.

“No,” the Master said. “That won’t be enough.”

“It will be enough to destroy the Thals,” Davros said. “To see the end of their line. To make Skaro pure once more.”

The Master sighed. “For a man of vision, you have difficulty seeing beyond the sky. There are so many worlds out there, worlds beyond your comprehension. With the Daleks behind us, we could conquer them all.” He glanced back at the screen. “But we’d need more.”

“My resources are limited,” Davros replied. “Petty bureaucrats with petty concerns read over our costs as though each credit was being stolen from their children’s mouths. As though their children’s mouths matter when the Daleks alone are our future. They defend their crumbling castles, unwilling to see the citadels that must be made from the stones. Would

that I could make a hundred thousand more Daleks. A million. Sometimes I dream of a sky full of my children, swarming in their infinite majesty, supreme above all other life. This is the world I wish to give them.” He looked at the Master. “But my hands are tied.”

The Master bit his tongue before he could say “Hand.”

“You believe that they will evolve naturally?” he asked. “Created by the radiation after the war?”

Davros made a dismissive, jerky gesture. “Perhaps. They are our destiny. But natural mutation is impure. Imprecise. It could take a hundred generations for them to truly be Daleks.”

The Master paused and looked back at the thing struggling in the tank. Its eye cracked open: a blinding stare of pure hatred.

“You have genetic weapons,” he said. “Bio-engineered viruses, that sort of thing?”

“We do.” Davros paused. “I believe I can see the direction of your thoughts. To rewrite the genetics of living creatures, to give them the Dalek genetic imprint. It is beyond our science.”

“But not beyond mine,” the Master replied. “Combined with a nuclear weapon of sufficient magnitude, it should be possible to reshape the life of this world in the image of the Daleks.” He looked at Davros. “Would you be willing to do it? To release this virus and condemn all life on your planet?”

“A fascinating question. Only one life form remaining on the face of Skaro. To hold that power and to release it, to let my people die in the flames so that the Daleks might be born from their ashes. Yes. Yes, I would do it.”

“And once this was done, could you build the travel machines?”

“There are creatures in the petrified jungles, long dead,” Davros replied. “They have hides of solid metal. I have taken samples and rendered them into a pure metal. Dalekanium. The only difficulty was in acquiring the specimens. The radiation around the jungle is quite lethal. But that will not be a problem for the Daleks. Another way in which we can see that they are the lifeforms this world shall require. It rejects the Kaleds, the Thals, as

too weak. Inferior. Their blood tainted by intermarriage, their cultures tainted by art and compassion. Only the Daleks may survive on the Skaro to come. And thanks to us, they shall.” Davros paused and in the silence, the Master heard the gurgling in the tanks, mockeries of life hurling themselves against their prison, yearning to be free. “How do you intend to launch this nuclear weapon? Or this virus?”

“That’s simple. Your people will do it.”

“You expect them to willingly bring about the change?” Davros gave the slightest shake of his head. “They are people of limited vision. They cannot see the beauty in this future.”

“I expect them to fire a weapon that we guarantee will destroy the Thals,” the Master said. “And I don’t expect them to have the opportunity to object after.”



On the morning the world ended, Cassan knew she would be dead soon. That was why leadership had sent her out to the front, after all. To die.

Her mother had given the orders. Some intermediary with a forgettable face and a forgettable name delivered them, but Cassan knew they came from her. It was her idea of a solution, to let her daughter die from Kaled weapons or radiation rather than at the hands of a tribunal. She supposed it was a sort of kindness, but camped at the edge of the wasteland, a thin silver tent all that kept out the radiation, a flimsy bow her only weapon, Cassan wasn’t inclined to feel grateful.

Agati stirred behind her in the sleeping bag, her short blonde hair sticking to the pillow. Cassan hated that she was here. It was enough, surely, to send her to this place of dying for her mistakes. Sending her second was cruel. Agati had been no part of Cassan’s defiance. She didn’t deserve to die out here, her life thrown away. She was an innocent.

But there was no space for innocence amongst the Thals.

When she was a child, Cassan was taken to the Pit. Deep in the dark, skulls gleamed dim as the stars in the dead sky. They had built their city around this place of broken bones. Here the malformed children, the

weak and the twisted, were cast into the shadows, that they would not blemish the Thal race.

Her mother had been so proud, as she explained. Cassan was a good child. Her blood was true. She would be a fine warrior one day. Perhaps even a general.

Even then, Cassan had wanted no part of that.

She did as she was told: serving as a second, then a commander. She'd handled every kind of weapon the Thal army had to offer, from machine guns to hand-axes. She'd fought their war, followed their orders, fallen in line.

And then there was the pacifist: a young man robed in black, his eyes shining blue, who refused to take up his gun. Her orders were clear. Any pacifist was to be shot. Pacifism was weakness. The decadency of scholarly Dals, not the proud nobility of the Thals.

She'd picked up her first stone and taken aim. They didn't use bullets on pacifists. They didn't have any to spare.

He just sat there, looking at her, and shook his head.

"What is the point of fighting," he asked, "if there's nothing left to fight for?"

Cassan had dropped the stone. The moment it left her fingers, she knew her career, her life, was over.

She didn't care anymore. She had seen the villages turned to ash and rubble, the trees turned to stone, the water turned to poison, the skies turned dark. The pacifist was right. There was nothing left to fight for.

"The war is over," she whispered. "Skaro lost."

"Did you say something?" Agati murmured, pulling herself up. She looked at the thin clear patch in the tent at the sky outside, barely a shade lighter than it had been at midnight. "Dals be cursed, it's almost noon, Cassan! Aren't we supposed to be out there? Fighting? They're relying on us."

Cassan almost laughed. Almost cried.

"It's fine, Agati," she said. "It doesn't matter. We can still complete our mission."

“Oh.” Agati nodded. “Good.”

She peered up again, at a small pinprick of light tearing through the lifeless sky.

“What’s that?” she asked.

Cassan looked and felt her blood run cold. She thought of the rocket they were building with the Muto slaves—information that a traitor like her shouldn’t have. Another reason her mother needed her dead.

They did it, she thought. They launched it. We’re going to wipe out the Kaleds.

But no. No, it was heading the wrong direction. Away from the Kaled dome, not towards it.

It was heading towards them.

“Gods,” she whispered. “This is it.”

“What?” Agati looked at her with eyes too wide, too young, for a soldier’s. “What is it?”

“Don’t be afraid,” Cassan said. She took Agati’s hand in her hers and held it tight. “The war is ending. We’ll have peace soon.”

Agati smiled. “Peace.” Then she frowned. “And what do we do then? What do we do with peace?”

“No need to worry about that,” Cassan replied. “Just close your eyes.”

The glare of the explosion was the brightest thing Cassan had seen in her life, brighter than their sun had been for centuries. There was something almost beautiful in that white-hot glow.

The wave passed over them, burning tent, Cassan, and Agati to ash in the fraction of an instant. There wasn’t even time to feel pain.

They were the lucky ones.



Skaro was screaming.

The Master could hear it, even if none of the others could. The Scientific Elite were running around in a panic, demanding to know what had gone wrong, how the missile had hurt the people inside the dome as well, how Davros could have made such a terrible mistake. They were shouting, weeping, demanding, but to the Master they seemed no more

than the softest murmur against the deafening cry of the world beyond the reinforced bunker.

Time Lords were telepathic, attuned to hearing the subtle whispers of a working mind. There was nothing subtle about the pain he was feeling now. Every Kaled, every Thal, every man, woman, and child left alive, was in agony.

Their genetics were being rewritten, their skin bubbling and melting, their minds twisting, their limbs atrophying, their lungs demanding poison air, their cells burning like molten lead inside them.

And worse, some of them saw what they were becoming.

Davros was wrong about his creation. The Daleks didn't believe they were superior. How could anything so twisted and broken believe itself to be supreme?

They knew what they were—hideous, malformed abominations—and they hated the rest of the universe for it. They hated symmetrical faces with their two clear eyes, hated voices like angels singing, hated those who could feel the air upon their skin and breathe nonirradiated oxygen. They hated the beauty they could not have and the weakness they felt.

Daleks were creatures of fear and hatred and the thing they hated most was themselves. That was what drove them, what would make them kill billions upon billions, what made them shout “Exterminate!” and turn whole planets into engines of death. It was a hatred they could never destroy, a fear they could never overcome, an enemy that could never be defeated until the universe was empty of all life, until every other lifeform had been exterminated.

I can use that, the Master thought. *I can use them.*

A scientist—a portly man with white hair and coat—grabbed at his arm.

“You!” he said. “You did this! You came here to destroy us.”

“Not at all,” the Master replied, pushing the man aside and giving the slightest tug at his sleeve. “But they did.”

The door opened and the Daleks came.

There were more screams, the shouts of “**EXTERMINATE!**” echoing over blasts of energy, bodies falling lifeless to the floor. Then there was only silence.

The Master stepped over the corpses, approaching the grey-and-black shells of the Daleks.

“You have done well,” he said. “We’ve taken a world, the first of many. Gather your brothers and sisters from the world above. Construct the travel machines. We have a universe to conquer.” He smiled. “But I have one last visit to make.”



If Davros’s tear ducts hadn’t been melted away, he would have wept tears of joy.

His children swarmed over the surface of Skaro, breathing their first breaths, the skies echoing their birth cries. He wanted to gather them close to him, to see each of them in the wonderful, undiluted purity, to show them the world they would inherit.

“Together, my children,” he whispered, “we will make the universe in your image.”

“I must congratulate you, Davros,” the Master said, stepping from the shadows. “You’ve lived to see your dreams fulfilled.”

“Fulfilled?” Davros shook his head. “I am only just beginning. Skaro has been reshaped, but there are a thousand other worlds for my children to inherit. A thousand other skies for them to fill. And we owe it all to you.”

“It was a joint effort,” the Master replied. “But I’m afraid our partnership is now at an end.”

“Oh? What a pity.” Davros turned away. “I had hoped you would continue to be useful.”

“I am no one’s pawn. Not the Time Lords’ and certainly not yours.”

“Let us not part ways as enemies. We have so much in common, you and I. We are both scientists, both men of vision.” Davros flicked a switch on his chair. “You are perhaps the closest thing I have left to a friend.”

“Nyder might be sorry to hear that,” the Master replied.

“*Nyder*. Nyder is a tool, no more. You would not call a microscope a friend. He is scarcely our equal. But you and I, we are superior intellects.”

“In that case,” the Master said, “it won’t grieve you to hear that he’s dead.”

He reached into a pocket and produced something no bigger than the palm of his hand: a little doll with Nyder’s face, frozen in agony. Then he dropped him and ground him into the floor with the same deference he might show a spider.

“Why did you do this?” Davros demanded.

“He was a threat,” the Master replied. “I disposed of him.”

“Yet another way in which we are alike,” Davros said.

The door slid open and a Dalek rolled in, eyestalk swivelling from the Master to Davros.

“The Master is an enemy of the Daleks,” Davros said. “An alien lifeform. Exterminate him!”

The Dalek was silent for a moment. Then it spoke, its voice crackling.

“**NO.**”

“No?” Davros’s chair spun, his blue eye fixed upon the Dalek. “No? I am your creator! He is an alien! Exterminate him!”

“**HE IS THE MASTER OF THE DALEKS.**” The Dalek fixed its gaze upon Davros. “**YOU ARE AN ENEMY OF THE DALEKS.**”

“That’s right,” the Master said. “Exterminate.”

The bolt struck Davros before he could say another word. His last feeling was not betrayal, not anger, not even fear.

He felt pride. His children had outgrown him.

The Dalek left the room without giving its dead creator so much as a second glance. The Master turned to follow, but then looked back. A single red light pulsed on Davros’s chair.

“No,” the Master said. “I think not.”

He smashed it with his fist and Davros slumped, dying of wounds inflicted all those years ago, the last Kaled victim of a Thal weapon.



Nothing felt real after he killed Davros. Time passed swift as a dream. The Daleks multiplied, building their shells, the bunker and the wastes alive with their screaming. Dalek Prime, the one who'd killed Davros, was always hovering around, watching the Master with his fixed eyestalk. The Master couldn't look at him without remembering the creature inside, the deformed thing closer to living cancer than humanoid lifeform.

Even though he had anti-radiation pills, the Master stayed inside the bunker. Once a draft came in, sizzling hot, stale as death, and he'd felt... He wasn't sure what. Certainly not guilt. That would be absurd.

The Daleks grew in number and strength. Soon there were thousands upon thousands, then millions, swarming across the surface of their dead world like rats in a barrel, waiting for him to give the word.

The Master wired his Time Ring into a gate of twisted Dalekanium and broken mirrors buzzing with static electricity and with it, he punched a hole through time and space, all the way back home.

Gallifrey fell in hours. The Sky Trenches, the Citadels of the Last Watch, the Transduction Barrier—and were useless when the threat simply passed them by. And that was without accounting for Gallifrey's greatest weakness.

Most worlds were ruled by the dead—by precedents set before living memory, by founders deified, by ancient customs preserved without question—but Gallifrey took this one step further. Behind the Presidency, behind even the CIA, was the Matrix, the dead minds of countless Time Lords swirling in a stale soul of complacency and corruption, anticipating the future, clinging to the past, and controlling the present.

The Master knew the Matrix well, better perhaps than any Time Lord still living. He had erased himself from its memory once, made himself into a nobody, so that he could not be tracked when he ran. He had made other alterations, slight adjustments of facts, back in the day. Once, as a favour for an old friend—the last favour, perhaps, but he couldn't recall—he had created an entire alternate identity, made a whole life from scratch to cover up a secret.

When the Master led to the Daleks to Gallifrey, the sky above the citadel raining glass and the air smelling of fear and static electricity, the Matrix welcomed the Master like a faithful dog greeting a favourite child.

By the time he crowned himself Emperor of Gallifrey, watched by a thousand eyestalks, chanted at by shrill, garbled voice, there was nobody left to oppose him. The remaining Time Lords bowed so low and so often that their next incarnations were likely to end up spineless. It was they, the traitors of Gallifrey, obsequious and compliant, who woke the Eleven War TARDISes from their slumber, furious and hungry things, living machines that desired only war, and let them loose upon the universe, each swarming with Daleks within the militarized rabbit warrens of their interiors.

They materialized upon unsuspecting worlds, doors splitting like eggshells, spilling Daleks into alien skies. With each TARDIS came a message, booming across all the stars in the sky.

“Peoples of the Universe, please attend carefully. The disorder of your lives has come to an end. Anarchy, need, and evil will be stamped out. All you need to do is submit and the Daleks will spare you. I am the Master and I bring you utopia.”

The Daleks were brutal. Efficient. Whole worlds bent their knees within hours. Rebellions were dispatched with surgical precision; disloyal cities scourged from planets; civilizations brought to heel.

The Master was content to let them do their work on most worlds. There was only one that required his direct attention.

Until the last moment, he did not expect to win. He expected to hear that the fleet had been repelled, the War TARDIS destroyed, all his plans come to nothing. He expected to hear *that* voice, smugly satisfied, infuriatingly polite, offering him a last chance to stand down.

But he didn't.

UNIT were the last to fall. The Master arrived as the ashes of battle were still cooling, walking corridors lined with dead humans and living Daleks, watched by unmoving eyes and twitching eyestalks.

“He is in here,” the Black Dalek said, gliding by the Master’s side. “We spared him as you requested.”

The Master paused, his hand on the lab doors, scorched black with Dalek gunfire.

“Why do you hesitate?” the Dalek asked.

For a moment, the Master saw something in the glimmer of its eyestalk. As if the Dalek *smelled* his weakness.

But that was absurd. The Daleks were his. They couldn’t disobey.

And there was no weakness in him.

He pushed the doors open and entered the room. Lab equipment was strewn everywhere. The dilapidated blue police box sat in the corner. The Doctor knelt on the floor, three lifeless Dalek casings around him, the floor littered with the pieces of more. His sonic screwdriver, snapped in half, lay forgotten by his side.

He cradled the body of his assistant in his arms: Miss Grant, cut down by a Dalek ray.

The Master felt a stab to his right heart. Absurd. The Doctor’s assistant was just another human. Scarcely more evolved than a gnat. He hadn’t developed the Doctor’s odd attachment for this race of savages. He hadn’t.

The Doctor looked up at him and whispered one word.

“Why?”



The Daleks took the Doctor away to his cell, deep under the capitol, deep as the old foundations, so deep you could hear the groanings of the ghosts in the Cloisters. The Master sat on his throne, swarthy, slender, and sinister, king of his world of glass and metal, ruler of the universe. He’d won. The Doctor was defeated, Gallifrey was his, the universe was his. He’d done everything he’d set out to do.

He asked himself why.

There had been a reason at some point. When he lay under the midnight sky in his father’s fields, his best friend lying beside him, when they had been just two children and not the Doctor and the Master, and they spoke

of the injustice of Gallifrey's inaction, the need to be more than watchers, to bring justice and truth to every star in that sky.

A child's dream. But a reason.

When he first went out into the universe, bringing science and invention with him, improving the lives of those around him—even if the Doctor dared to call his intervention selfish, to call him the worst of their people—there was a reason of sorts.

When he'd first thrown in with would-be conquerors for a chance to rule the universe, there was a reason then too, a memory of those childhood conversations, that dream of purging the universe of evil, of bringing it under an enlightened rule.

But why after that? Why keep invading the Earth? Why ally with the Daleks? Why kill his own people?

Because the Doctor believed that the Earth was special and he wanted to prove him wrong. Because the Time Lords had tried to force his hand and he resented that.

Spite. That was it. Nothing more than petty, childish spite. Like pulling the wings from a fly.

There was nothing left to be spiteful towards. The Time Lords were defeated. The Doctor was beaten. He'd won.

And he was utterly alone.

In the shadows he saw the Daleks watching as he walked the corridors of the Panopticon. The echo of their whirring travel machines filled every moment, waking and sleeping.

Once he saw two of them speaking in hushed voices, whispers of static and fury, and then cease as he came near, their flashing lights dimming.

They were plotting against him. It was impossible, but that wouldn't stop them. They were Daleks. They were designed to kill, to hate, to be superior. They'd tolerate no Masters.

And he'd tolerate no more of them.

It was midnight when he came to the Doctor's cell, walking past the Dalek guards. The Doctor looked up at him and said nothing.

“If you could get to a TARDIS,” the Master said, “could you undo all of this?”

“What?” The Doctor’s voice was dry and cracked. “And destroy your perfect empire?”

“I tire of empire,” the Master replied. “Better, I think, to rebel in Heaven than rule in Hell.”

The Doctor hung his head for a moment. “It’s possible,” he said at last. “This timeline is a result of your intervention in the first place. If we were to undo that intervention, everything that’s happened will have never been.” He glared at the Master. “Which absolves you of none of it.”

“I’m not looking for absolution,” the Master said. He snapped his fingers and the Doctor’s chains sprang open, dropping him to the floor. He offered a hand. “Together at the end, old friend?”

The Doctor took the hand and let the Master pull him to his feet. “Together.”

“There are two Daleks on the far side of the door.”

“Only two?” The Doctor smiled.

“And a thousand more between us and the TARDIS bays.”

“Ah.” The Doctor was silent for a moment. “I have a plan. It’s a slim chance, but—”

“But possible?”

“Possible, yes.”

Alone against the Daleks, only the Doctor by his side, the odds stacked against them, with death almost certain, the Master smiled.

DESTRUCTIVE GENETICS

By Antony Kernow

I: Warzone

Ushas was furious. She had been working in her laboratory, outside the Capitol, when it had faded from view like a flutterwing exposed to necrotising fasciitis. A rocky and muddy landscape swathed in mist had appeared in its stead.

In the distance, she could hear gunfire. A smug Time Lord with his ridiculous high collar walked towards her out of the mist.

“How dare you interrupt my work at such a crucial point!” she yelled at him.

The Time Lord just regarded her with amusement which only made Ushas even more annoyed.

“We haven’t forgotten the giant mouse you created that ate the President’s cat. And most of his leg. Therefore, we feel it necessary to keep a close eye on you, Ushas,” he stated firmly.

“I was trying to test a new growth hormone. Furthering my knowledge,” Ushas protested.

“For what purpose? Purely, for your own twisted idea of what scientific research actually means,” he said icily.

“Your science division is set in stone. There’s more dynamism and creativity in that plodder the Doctor, than those fools,” she paused mid-tirade. The gunfire was getting closer. “Where is this lump of rock you’ve brought me to? Shada, at last?”

“Skaro,” the Time Lord answered. “We have a job for you. Our temporal technicians have looked through the timelines and can foresee a time when the Daleks will have wiped out or enslaved every living thing in the universe.”

“Not that surprising an outcome given they are ruthless determined killers,” Ushas replied dryly. “What am I supposed to do about it? Why didn’t you ask that madman who calls himself the Master instead?” she asked mockingly.

“We have brought you to before the Daleks were created. You have a certain set of skills in neurosurgery, biochemistry and genetics. We think you could engineer the Daleks so that they develop into less aggressive creatures or discover a weakness we can use against them,” the Time Lord concluded.

“What if I refuse?” Ushas asked. Already knowing the answer, she asked a different question. “What about my assistant, Mortimus?” she asked.

“We will have him brought to you. Do not lose this time ring, it is your lifeline.” The Time Lord’s voice echoed as he disappeared from view. “Farewell, Ushas. We wish you success.”

“Don’t strain yourself.”

This was quite a challenge, but Ushas was looking forward to it. A chance to see the creation of the Daleks? It piqued her scientific curiosity.

Skaro was a dangerous place. There was vicious fighting going on, that was edging closer to her location. A noise behind her made her spin round.

It was her assistant.

A Time Lord that wasn’t quite as insufferably superior as the others and quite useful. He looked scared and shifty, as usual.

“Mortimus. Welcome to the planet Skaro,” Ushas said simply.

Mortimus looked at his colleague visibly shaken. Ushas seemed as cool and unperturbed as usual. Her straight black hair was cut into a bob. She had a round face, dark brown eyes under elegant arched eyebrows and a thin mouth that seldom smiled.

“Well don’t just stand there gawping! We need to find cover,” she snapped.

“Why are we on Skaro?” he asked not really wanting to hear the answer.

“We are here because our *esteemed* High Council can’t be seen to be interfering in the development of other species,” she replied in sarcastic

tones.

“But why us, specifically?”

“Who knows? I doubt it’s in appreciation of our skills. Does it matter?”

“Oh, a great deal. A great deal. Perhaps,” he hopped over a length of barbed wire. “We should anticipate a cold reception.”

Suddenly, climbing over the muddy terrain. They saw the top of the huge dome just visible through the fog.

“What’s that? Some sort of settlement?” asked Mortimus.

“We won’t know until we go and look. Keep alert, the fighting sounds quite close now,” she warned her colleague.

The landscape was a mess of muddy craters, barbed wire and trenches. The pair picked their way across the treacherous rocky terrain. Eventually, they reached the edge of the trench.

Ushas, jumped down onto a wooden board in the trench. Her black leather boot sank slightly into the layer of mud that covered it.

Mortimus clambered awkwardly after her. Dressed in his customary deep red monk’s robe with its hooded cowl he wasn’t exactly dressed for a war zone.

“Typical arrangements for Time Lord troubleshooting, it seems...”

His associate wasn’t listening.

At least I’m warm, he thought glumly.

As they made their way along the length of the trench they saw the victims of war slumped where they died. Ushas, prodded at them with a black gloved hand.

“Look at this. The dead propped up to make the trench appear occupied,” Ushas said grimly.

“There is a radiation meter on this one,” remarked Mortimus, pointing at another fallen soldier.

“We need to find shelter. We don’t know the level of radiation. Come on,” Ushas said urgently.

The heavy artillery started up again. The noise was deafening. Then with a whistle and a huge crump a missile hit the ground nearby.

“Do we have to explore in the middle of a war zone?” Mortimus

moaned.

“Stop complaining and put your energy into getting to that dome,” Ushas replied.

Any further discussion was stopped by the loud thud of an artillery shell further up the trench. A light green gas started to creep along the trench.

“Gas attack!” shouted Ushas.

Mortimus grabbed the nearest gasmask from a dead soldier. Ushas did the same. They had just managed to stretch the masks over their faces, when a small party of soldiers charged towards the trench.

The soldiers were wearing red-yellow gasmasks and metallic helmets. They started to jump into the trench. From behind Ushas and Mortimus, further up the trench, more soldiers arrived. Ushas crouched down low in the trench hoping not to be spotted.

These new arrivals immediately started defending the trench. They began driving the other soldiers away with ferocious rifle fire. Soldiers on both sides slumped to the ground; more casualties of war.

Mortimus, cowering behind a dead soldier, was hit by a stray bullet. Ushas saw Mortimus go down but could do nothing. A soldier spotted Ushas and she was hauled back along the trench to a rocky outcrop with a metal door set into it.

The door opened and Ushas was marched along a rocky tunnel. Her destination was an underground transport system. The jab from a rifle told her she was to board the cart that ran on metal rails into another dark tunnel.

Feebly primitive, she thought as they set off. One of the Thals reloaded the rifle’s magazine with cartridges from his belt. *But adequately lethal*.

“I have information for you. Vital information from enemy lines. I request asylum.”

The soldiers before her discussed it at length, then she felt the track shift slightly beneath them, their intended destination altered.

II: Interrogation

General Saron was a thin man. His face was scarred and cold blue eyes looked at his new prisoner.

“We found her in the trench by Entrance 2,” the Kaled soldier reported. “She claims to have information that could help us.”

“Explain your presence in a restricted Kaled area, Thal spy,” the general’s voice was quiet, but menacing.

Ushas longed for a research dossier or even an autopsy report. She presumed a “Thal” must be the current enemy of these black-suited militaristic idiots. She came out with a brazen lie she hoped might keep her alive a bit longer: “I have defected. Those troops your soldiers beat back were after *me*. As previously stated, I request asylum.”

Ushas held the General’s gaze.

The General was surprised by her cool demeanour, but she lacked the workmanlike appearance of someone in the trenches living hand-to-mouth. The mechanical skill that he personally admired. “Do you really expect me to believe your lies?”

“My people have no vision,” she stated firmly. “They cannot see, that this war will not end their way. They lack the ruthless determination of you, Kaleds. Your enemy respects you, but are afraid to admit it. I am not. I decided to disown my people. I want to join. To assist the right side of this interminable war.”

Ushas could see this was a risky strategy. The General moved away into a corner of the room. He started talking quietly into a handheld communicator. She surreptitiously felt for the time ring. Mortimus would have to fend for himself..

Her hearts skipped and fluttered.

The time ring was missing.

She was stranded in this nightmare.

The general returned with a smile at her expression. “I have no reports of a defector expected at Entrance 2. If you are the genuine article, give me the information I require. Who is the current Thal leader? Who occupies the governing council seats? What colours are on the Thal flag?” he barked the questions at her in quick succession. A pause. “You do not

know? Perhaps you are a Muto. A diseased remnant from the wastes.”

Ushas looked witheringly at him.

“Why are you wasting time? Asking me questions you already know the answers to? I have scientific knowledge that will benefit the Kaled people. Knowledge and skills, you lack. Stop being obdurate,” she argued.

The general slapped Ushas viciously across the face. His strike had left a red welt on her pale face. She glared at him with utter contempt.

“Did that make you feel better? You can’t intimidate me. Your only recourse is physical abuse against an unarmed prisoner,” she sneered. She looked at the other guards who were looking uncomfortable. “Perhaps it was to show your men that you are in control? Are you, general? Or is this posting a tidy knothole instead?”

The General’s face turned red. He had been an engineer turned officer, pushed beyond his passion to a desk and an inescapable position. Insubordination would not lower him down the chain, it would end him. He spat a frustrated order to his men. “Take the prisoner to the punishment wing. She is to be hung, until that insolent spirit of hers is broken!”

Ushas was grabbed roughly by the shoulder. She said calmly: “You forget one thing, general. I am a scientist. I can assist your scientists. Killing me would be a waste of an important asset. The most precious commodity of all.”

“What?”

“Information.”

The general raised his hand. He was intrigued by this brave female. If she was a scientist, then she could be an asset to the war effort. Better, she could be an asset to him. Perhaps a means of returning to where he truly belonged.

“Let her go but keep her covered,” the general ordered. Once again, he spoke through his transceiver to an unseen voice.

Ushas approached the table that showed the military positions of the Kaleds and Thals. Each race seemed to have a domed city.

He broke away briefly. “Keep her away from that.”

She obeyed freely of her own will.

One of his men took particular glee at her mistaken discomfort. “We will wipe your people off face of Skaro. We will be the righteous avengers for all Kaleds. The peace that arises from the total extermination of the Thals will be a monument to their sacrifice.”

Ushas tried not to look bored. The military mind was so one-dimensional. She looked to him, at him and through him. He backed away from her.

She had control here. For the present.

III: Assessment

General Saron took Ushas to Security Commander Dax Nyder. Saron held his hand up in the military salute like a policeman stopping traffic.

“As I explained earlier, she claims to have defected from the Thal science division. She is insolent, but seems to think she will be an asset to us due to her scientific knowledge.”

“She will be interrogated and tested to reveal how extensive her scientific knowledge really is. You are dismissed to your post, general.”

He hesitated. “But, sir, I thought I could—”

“Her insubordination is catching, is it not?” Nyder’s voice was clipped and emotionless.

“Sir,” the general clicked his heels and left under a cloud. General Dax Nyder had a hawkish face with round steel rimmed glasses. His black tunic had a high collar with the silver insignia indicating his rank as the most senior military commander in the Kaled Elite.

He stood silently regarding his latest prisoner. Ushas stood firm, totally ignoring his glare. She broke the silence.

“What are you waiting for? Let’s get the pointless military interrogation out of the way,” she said dryly.

Nyder thought carefully before replying. His eyes narrowed.

“Why shouldn’t I just shoot you for being a treacherous fool who is wasting my valuable time? Justify your continued survival,” he asked

coldly.

“I am an expert in genetics and neurosurgery. My people do not have the ability to end this war. I know that you and your scientific elite do. No turning back. I formally request to assist you in your research.”

Nyder laughed dryly, “You must be either a reckless fool or a dangerous spy. I can’t believe for a moment you are telling the truth.”

“Why not an empirical test of my scientific ability? Pen and paper?”

“We can do one better and this method is purported to be infallible.”

Ushas was taken to a room with a computer and sat down. There followed a rigorous examination that was used to test candidates for the Elite. Ushas was careful not to do so well that she was conspicuous. The questions to which she required answers, she failed. The correction was given and a greater measure of information attained.

At the end, Nyder tore off the printout. “Your score on the Elite Scientific Assessment was second only to Davros, our chief scientist. In biochemistry and genetics your score was nearly 100%,” he scrunched up the paper. “Your knowledge will be most useful. However, be warned any sign of treachery will result in instant death.”

“Surely, that will be needed for the chief scientist?”

“Information is already being transferred down the landlines. You will follow.”

Ushas was escorted to the Scientific Division of the Bunker. The scientists were all dressed in a germicidal white. She was introduced to Ronson, a junior researcher. He was a nervous Kaled, stocky with a round face and brown hair.

“Well, now. You *have* caused a bit of a stir, Ushas is it?” he said ushering her to a seat at his workbench.

Not wishing to indulge in small talk, she asked: “What do you need me to do, junior researcher?”

“Well, as you know, the radiation from the weapons used in this conflict have caused grievous harm to the DNA of both races—”

“Children in the nursery know this, Ronson.”

He licked his lips, changing tack. “Davros wishes to map the Kaled

genome and discover whether the mutations can be halted or if the genes involved can be repaired by using gene therapy.”

“That seems a rather obvious strategy, why haven’t you done this sooner?” she snapped. He looked at her curiously as she remembered herself, her cover story. “Of course, I realise that at least you have realised the potential of genetics. My people shut my experiments down. They considered them unethical.”

“What exactly were you doing?” asked Ronson.

“I was learning my craft. You cannot learn about the genome without having live specimens to examine. They only valued my skills as a neurosurgeon to treat their wounded. They refused to see that a true scientist needs to constantly be engaged in research. The subjectivity of morals and ethics should not interfere with breakthroughs in scientific discovery,” she concluded.

Her passionate response to Ronson’s query was born out of constant battles with the High Council. This was the reason she moved out of the Capitol. Her research was largely ignored, although she always expected a raid by the Chancellery Guard. He had that same shrinking cravenness she recognised in the politicians. It was hidden just as well.

“Well, I’m... I’m sure you will find no limitations placed on you here. The Elite exists to ensure Kaled victory by any means possible. Now let me show you around the laboratory complex,” he said warmly.

“I hope at last, I will get to use some proper equipment?” Ushas asked dryly.

Meanwhile, Mortimus awoke with a start and groaned. His head hurt. He removed his gasmask, coughed and looked around. He got up and tried the door. It was firmly stuck.

He kicked it in frustration before a glint in the mud caught his eye. He lifted the object out of the mud. The time ring! He couldn’t believe his luck. Ushas would have to fend for herself. He was off to gather reinforcements. He focussed his mind’s telepathic centres, tapping into the device’s machine-circuitry and pressed the button in the centre.

It wouldn't work. Nothing happened.

Cursing, he put the bracelet on his arm and walked along the trench until he found a place to climb out of. He looked at the landscape in front of him.

Desolation was an understatement. He would not be sorry to leave this planet, but he had to get the time ring working. Oh, if they had only sent him alone. Too many drudges, spoil the bouillon. He started walking towards the dome, unaware that a limping figure with a wooden staff was following slowly behind.

IV: Ambush

The Monk walked carefully through the battlefield. The habitation dome showed that the humanoids on this planet had some technical expertise. His foot kicked a small atomic pistol, which he propped deftly into the pocket of one of his sleeves. He tinkered idly on the ring's mechanics.

Humanoids...

Skaro could be quite peaceful in its way. A chance for him to think...

Those ones from Sol 3 had always fascinated both himself and that oddball who now wanted to be known as the Doctor. Human history and development was an elective module of the exobiology course at the Academy. Both the Doctor and he had an interest in Earth history, albeit for different reasons.

The Monk loved the tales of the merry monasteries. The fact that many of these monks were supposedly pious, but were really breaking all the deadly sins amused him. Ravellion or something, wasn't it?

It was the Doctor, who had nicknamed the Monk because of his tight, blonde and curly hair, round cherubic face and preference for wearing the deep red monk's robe. A relic acquired from a retro-dissimulation of the Time of Legend. No starchy, stiff collars for him and the hood helped him wander in and out of the Capitol largely unnoticed, a product of the material, gleaned from days where the ecclesiastic were looking increasingly disfavoured. At least a fourth or perhaps a third of those

secret passages must have been preserved by the cast-out monks.

Unfortunately, he had become so wrapped up in his thoughts, he had failed to notice the danger he was in. He looked up, realising he was not alone. A group of figures dressed in rags and carrying hefty clubs had him surrounded.

A figure with a twisted malformed face addressed his fellows.

“Look at him. Perfect unblemished face. No difficulty walking. Blonde hair. He is a norm. You know what happens to norms,” he shouted angrily.

“All norms must die!” the group chorused menacingly.

The four-barrelled pistol swept out from his sleeve and he fired. Two of the figures dropped to the ground. A third lost his head, but kept lumbering forward with every inch of accuracy as before. There were too many. Too many! Too many! He began to panic. They advanced towards the terrified Monk who fell to the floor curling himself in a ball to minimise the damage. A club to the head and he knew no more.

A pounding, drumming throbbing pain at the back of his head woke the Monk up. The vicious kick from a soldier’s boot.

“Get up!” shouted the soldier.

“I’m trying to...” Mortimus started to say.

“Shut up. Who are you? Are you a Kaled?” asked the soldier.

“No...” Mortimus replied hazily, examining the boots. “I’ve just escaped from them.”

He had a hunch that his rescuers were not Kaleds. He looked up. They all had blonde hair like his own. Maybe, just maybe...

“I was captured, my men were killed. I managed to escape when the patrol who captured me were ambushed by another fine company,” he counted them idly, “Yes, company like yourselves. In the confusion, I just ran.”

Mortimus put his hands into his sleeves and smiled warmly. The gun was missing. His smile tightened.

“Why are you dressed like a Muto?” asked another.

“Disguise, my dear chap.”

“Well, whoever you are, move!” snarled the first.

Mortimus moved in the direction he was shoved and they walked briskly towards the Thal dome. Mortimus gave an anxious look behind him. He wondered how Ushas was coping in the Kaled dome.

Ushas was almost enjoying herself.

While the equipment was very primitive compared with her own, she was able to work. As she looked at the viewscreen of the electron microscope, she could see the double helix strands of Kaled DNA.

The power of the gene was what fascinated her. The ability to twist nature to obey her will. Time travel was just a means of getting from A to B. Genetic engineering gave her control over life itself.

“We need some Thal DNA to compare with the Kaled DNA,” Ushas asked Ronson.

“Well there are some Thal prisoners waiting to be interrogated I’ll ask Nyder. Anything else?” he asked.

“I need to build a machine to help speed up the DNA sequencing process. Do you have computer hardware and software designers?” she replied.

“We have some technicians that specialise in computer science,” replied Ronson warily. “Any procurement or diversion of personnel to a new project would have to be approved by Davros.”

“Surely, research into the effects of radiation on Kaled DNA is vital to the continued survival of your people. The Thals have no such genetic research program. This will give you a military advantage?”

Ronson nodded. ““It would still have to be cleared by Davros,” he walked over to Nyder sat at his desk. Ushas knew she would be granted her requests. The Kaleds were desperate for anything that would give them victory in this futile conflict.

Mortimus stood before a Thal commander dressed in khaki battle fatigues. His face was lined and he had dark patches under his eyes. Wearily, he looked up from his desk.

“...you claim to have escaped from the Kaleds. How do we know you’re not a spy?”

“You don’t. I was trying to establish Kaled troop positions when I was captured.”

“You were trying to establish Kaled troop positions...” the commander repeated. Whether dubiously or dejectedly, the Monk couldn’t tell.

“I am an engineering expert. I was building new weapons to help defeat our enemy, a service to our nation, you would agree?” he looked around suspiciously. “The information must be kept in the strictest confidence?”

“Strictest...” the commander blinked, he sat upright and pointed his guardsmen to the door. “Wait outside.”

Mortimus smiled. Long ago and today still, the Time Lords had been linked by a telepathic intelligentsia. A unified subconscious of sorts, which allowed for mountainous concepts to pass through society with ease. Conformity as a telepathic force.

Not everyone would agree, of course. Some might openly resist noosphere, but apply a little pressure to a member of the lesser races, however, and their defences would crumble.

By the time he had finished influencing the commander’s mind, he had gained access to the Identigraph and Census Datacorder. The information had been childishly simple to forge.

His task done, the commander was released. “If you are a Thal engineer, where are your identity documents?”

Mortimus reached into his sleeve and dropped them smugly on the desk.

The commander read the papers and studied him briskly “You had better get back to work, Mortimus. We really need these new weapons of yours.”

“Sir,” he said with mock deference.

He called his soldiers back into his office.

“Escort Mortimus to his quarters. Inform Ralcena and Sylvan to expect his arrival,” requested the commander.

Mortimus was escorted along grey dusty corridors to the section of the dome where the Thals lived. He was taken to the home of Ralcena and

Sylvan.

They welcomed him politely at the door.

“So, Mortimus, you’re joining us on the weaponry development team?”

Ralcena said looking Mortimus up and down.

“That’s right. From what I’ve seen, we need some new ideas,” he replied.

Sylvan called out from the room: “Let him in. We can discuss different ways of killing Kaleds tomorrow.”

His hosts lived in a two room dwelling with no windows. There was a bedroom with a shower and a kitchen living area. While Ralcena cooked a meagre meal, Sylvan bathed Mortimus’s head wound.

No luxuries served here, thought Mortimus, as he ate his thin stew. He nearly asked what meat had been used. Then he decided he would rather not know.

He was given a blanket and a thin foam mat to sleep on and gradually drifted off to sleep. In the morning, Mortimus was shaken awake by Ralcena. He was brought before Thal military commanders for questioning. He told the Thal military how his knowledge be used against the Kaleds.

After the military command had given their assent, Sylvan and Ralcena took Mortimus to the shooting range. They demonstrated the weaponry available to the Thals. They were both excellent snipers.

“You are obviously highly skilled,” Mortimus smiled at them dotingly, like an uncle. “However, you are being let down by your equipment. Have these rifles ever jammed on you while you were in a combat situation?”

The pair nodded. Apparently, it wasn’t a rare occurrence. Mortimus asked for some paper and drew several designs for blasters. He then asked them what resources were available. He told them with the right resources he could design and build better weapons for their soldiers.

Mortimus integrated into Thal society pretty quickly, once they got used to his odd dress sense. Using the limited resources available he started designing a weapon. During moments when his captor’s attention was elsewhere he worked on repairing the time ring.

Mortimus, Ralcena and Sylvan brought the finished product to demonstrate it to High Command.

“As you can see from Sylvan’s excellent shooting skills. Our weapon doesn’t depend on bullets. It is a projected energy weapon,” Mortimus explained.

“We haven’t the means of sustaining energy production for ground assaults,” muttered one of the commanders.

“It’s why we abandoned laser weaponry to begin with,” added a second.

“The battery packs are recharged by cannibalising a wide variety of other power sources,” interjected Sylvan. “Lasting for between two and four hours.”

“Battles can last for days,” argued the first commander.

“Yes, but what weapon in our current arsenal can draw power from the electrochemical impulses of your opponent?” rebutted Mortimus.

Murmurs of astonishment and guarded approval rippled through the committee.

“Approve my project, gentlebeings, and the Kaleds will fight your war against them for you.”

That gave the cynics pause.

After some discussion, the Thal military decided they wanted to use the weapon to attack the bunker. It worked well, and was cheap to produce. Mortimus insisted that further modification and improvements were needed before it could be used on the field of battle. He was ignored and the blaster went into mass production regardless.

Both Ushas and Mortimus became valued, if not entirely trusted members of their adoptive race. A justified impulse as production on both sides slowed to a crawl by blockages and issues created by their newest acquisitions. Nevertheless, each one kept busy contributing to the destruction of the enemy. To their ultimate goal.

V: Davros

Ushas had been offered a basic room with a bunk, in a female wing of

the Elite's accommodation wing. She only used it briefly to get away from the incessant chatter of her co-workers.

She got more work done late at night, with only the blinking red lights of the security cameras for company. During one of these sessions, while she was working at the sequencing computer, she became aware of another presence in the laboratory.

She saw in the chrome reflection of the wall as she worked, the figure of Davros. She had been told about her accident. However, nothing could have prepared her for the twisted and broken figure before her.

His thin lipless mouth opened and a rasping cold voice spoke, "I am sorry if I startled you Ushas. I have come to discuss your work."

"The Kaled genome sequencing is nearly complete. Once it is, I shall be ready to try the gene therapy experiments you require," she replied holding his gaze in the mirror image with fascination rather than repulsion.

"You regard me as a freak perhaps?" he snapped. "Face me!"

"Not at all Davros. I am marvelling at your sheer determination to survive," Ushas replied truthfully, turning around.

"You have more faith in me than my own kind. They were convinced when I saw my injuries I would commit suicide," he said bitterly.

"Instead, you channelled your agony into exacting revenge on those who had nearly caused your death," Ushas observed.

A smile twitched at the corners of his mouth. "Correct, Ushas. When others would have crumbled and taken the cowards way out. I fought, I prevailed, my one constant aim. Total annihilation of the Thal race!"

Ushas watched Davros in silence. He was... a disappointment. A fierce mind, yes, but this pathetic body had poisoned it. Consumed it with such hatred for his enemies. If that hatred was directed at other races, nowhere would be safe.

Just as the Time Lords had suggested.

She was disgusted by their apparent foresight.

The awkward silence was broken by Davros speaking in more conciliatory tones, "I am aware I am speaking of your friends and family being wiped off the face of Skaro. Does it... upset you?" he asked

curiously, almost whispering.

“Attempting to determine the truth behind the propaganda? Our morale is strong, why would it? My family were killed in a rocket attack. Friends?” she scoffed. “I lost all friendships when I started my work in genetics.”

Davros looked at her dispassionately.

“I know the story you concocted to fool Nyder and Ronson but I know better. Our agents in the Thal Dome have been most forthcoming, there is no genetic research capability there and there never has been,” Davros announced smugly.

Ushas thought quickly. Whatever she said next could send her back to the Punishment block for summary execution.

“Your sources are well-informed. There was no *official* genetic research. However, until I was shut down, I had a small genetics laboratory authorised by the Chief Science Officer alone. I was based in an abandoned part of the city. My assistant betrayed me to High Command who decided my work was unethical. My supervisor warned me to flee before they imprisoned me or sent me to a work camp,” she explained carefully.

Davros now spoke to Ushas with amusement in his grating voice. This had been a power play to establish his authority, little more. “Whether I believe you or not is irrelevant. We need your skills. You can delegate the final stage of the sequencing to others. I have a special project for your attention.” He moved to observe her work. Was she a threat? She found the idea rather amusing. “The Kaled people are weakened by radiation poisoning and genetic mutation. We have cast out our Mutos into the wilderness. We need to genetically engineer the Kaled people into war machines.”

“Where do I start?” Ushas asked.

“Come with me. I shall show you my first creation.”

Ushas followed not knowing what to expect.

What Davros showed her was a figure strapped into a similar base unit to Davros. The figure was dressed in Thal battle fatigues and slumped over.

“Useful lessons learned, but nowhere near conclusive. Also, at that stage I only had a captured Thal soldier to work with. It took all my powers of persuasion, but I have obtained living Kaleds to experiment on. I can now pursue my ultimate vision. A strong Kaled race, free of mutation, melded into the perfect biomechanical warriors.”

“So the Kaleds will become like you?”

“I am flawed physically,” he admitted. “The new Kaleds will be perfect. A capable and relentless fusion of biology and engineering. You are to lead the team working with our conscripts.”

At the extraordinary meeting of the scientific Elite, Davros outlined the new project to his staff.

“We are bringing new hope for the Kaled people. We shall transform them into warriors of immense power. Biomechanical, genetically engineered soldiers who will never tire, never admit defeat, until every Thal is destroyed.”

Watching the address on the screen, her new laboratory had all the equipment she had been using before with one important difference.

Lying, sedated on a trolley at the side of the room, was their test subject. An unusual specimen. Kaled. Female. Twelve years of age. Ideal. She hadn’t bothered to learn its name.

Ushas and her team worked tirelessly. She was careful to carry out her work when her team left to drag their exhausted bodies to get food and sleep. She was becoming invested in her experiment and, for a scientist like herself, that could prove deadly. Comparing the two sets of DNA. Thal and Kaled, side by side, there were distinct similarities and differences between the two races.

Concealing her experiments from her team proved easy. They were competent, but dogma ripped away the curiosity they required to realise the truth.

She was forced to demonstrate a new faster technique for gene-editing. Otherwise, the task would have taken years. The one concession to her true identity that she had made in her work. Everything else could have been accomplished with Kaled technology of the era. Ushas informed

Davros that the genetic engineering would be supplemented by neurosurgery. However, Davros was too busy creating the base unit to supervise Ushas properly, so with her team none the wiser, she removed a vital aspect from the subject's brain.

As the team waited for the girl to awake from surgery, Ushas wondered why she was taking such a risk. There were excuses she could fall back on, scapegoats to highlight. Genetic engineering and neurosurgery could and did produce unexpected results. She could also point to increased knowledge of her team.

But why? She decided it must have been her scientific curiosity. This had driven her on day-after-day. She had to see whether her genetic and biological intervention could alter the basis for an entire civilisation on the genetic level. There was too much to gain here to surrender to impuissance. Besides, it was practical. She would never be able to return to her work otherwise.

She paused with a scalpel in hand.

Did she want to return?

Her thoughts were interrupted by an alarm.

VI: Invasion

“Attack, attack, attack!” shouted a technician.

They ran to the armoury. Ushas was given a rifle and they reported to Nyder in the main laboratory.

Nyder was giving out orders on a communicator. Davros ordered his scientists to their appointed defence positions. The sounds of battle were edging closer, reports of casualties on both sides were coming through on the battle computer.

Accompanying his battalion, Ushas observed that Nyder was a brilliant tactician. She had underestimated him. He used the maze-like layout of the bunker to corral the attackers into a dead end. It was all over and the survivors were taken to the military wing for interrogation and execution.

Mortimus found himself on a torture device alongside a Thal soldier. General Saron took great pleasure in inflicting pain on the prisoners. He was fascinated by the applied physics of electrical currents through the living body. The relentless questions about the new weaponry were almost a side benefit.

Mortimus was able to withstand the excruciating pain but even he was about to crack when he heard his Thal escort scream. “It was him! Mortimus! He designed the new weapons!”

“Yes, he does look the type.” Saron viciously twisted the dial on the machine up to maximum. The soldier screamed, convulsed and died in agonising pain. “A traitor to his own is a traitor to all,” he extended a gloved hand. “Among the rank-and-file, of course. I’ve always had a great fondness for the engineering division. Are you really the designer of these new energy weapons?”

“Of course, but they aren’t meeting their full potential,” Mortimus replied conversationally. “We were too keen to use them. I did say they needed refinement.”

Saron nodded. He knew Nyder and Davros would be interested in this new arrival, so Mortimus soon found himself in the main laboratory being interrogated by the chief scientist.

Mortimus was visibly shook by his appearance.

“Does the face of your infamous enemy fill you with fear, Thal? It should. Your weaponry killed some of our best soldiers. I should have you executed with your own blaster. However, your engineering knowledge may be useful in my great project. You have two choices. A lingering death or collaboration with your sworn enemy and a swift execution.”

“I am grateful for your mercy. I am willing to assist you in improving my weapon,” Mortimus replied, a little too eagerly. “It will be an honour.”

“You have no honour,” Nyder told him with a cold hard edge to his voice. “You’re a traitor. Davros and I will be watching your work. Any evidence of sabotage and you will wish you died in battle.”

As a technician guided him to the engineering section of the laboratory, Mortimus noticed a familiar grim face, framed with short black hair. He

feigned a swoon and a brief telepathic conference passed between them. Opening their eyes, they exchanged glances before going back to their respective roles as devil's advocate.

A single word between them lingered.

Information.

VII: Reunion

Gradually, as they worked as cogs in the Kaled war machine, they met for brief snatches of conversation. One day, after the rest of the workforce had gone for their brief rest period, Mortimus headed for Ushas's laboratory.

Ushas was not pleased to see him. They made contact telepathically and had a brief conversation.

Are you trying to get us both killed? Davros and Nyder are going to get suspicious if you come here when I'm working late. We're both Thals don't forget. The enemy.

The worst they'll suspect is some torrid affair between prisoners of war.

What a revolting prospect.

He tried folding his arms into his sleeves, forgetting the uniform. He lowered them awkwardly to his sides. *I had to let you know. From memory, Davros was known to have a sister at one point. A member of the Peace Corps who collaborated with the Thals.*

Is this important?

It was almost impossible to find. What was left of my contact was returned to me in a water canteen. I suspect Davros maintains a certain degree of loathing to this group and its ideals.

Anything else?

I have the time ring, he put a self-conscious hand to his belt, but it's not working. I've been trying to repair it, but it's dead.

You've been too preoccupied with the immediately obvious. Typical for you. Rather than try to catch the receiver signal—

I should try for a transmission?

We could be fortunate, someone may be listening.

And if they're not, Ushas?

We're stuck in the middle of a pointless war working for a deranged scientist.

Terrific.

We'd better look like we're at work, Mortimus.

Have you removed the audio circuits from the surveillance system?

Speak glibly and find out.

She broke the telepathic link abruptly.

"So, do you know how your pet Kaled is going to control our weaponry yet or are you just resting on your laurels?" Mortimus asked flippantly, rubbing his forehead.

"Kalena," Ushas snapped. "And that's rich coming from someone employing vampirism to win his wars."

"You've given it a name?"

"The project required a title, I looked up the census records," she flicked a dismissive hand. "She will be the first of a new battalion of Kaled warriors. We're going to use neural implants which will enable her to control the weaponry."

"From an engineering point of view we're nearly there. Davros is supervising the final testing himself," Mortimus told her. "You've got the difficult bit, integrating the biological component to the electronic and mechanical systems. And you've *named* her."

"What of it?"

"Names form attachments, Ushas. Names form attachments."

"Keep working on the time ring."

He left, whistling some annoying doggerel about a masked Shobogan in over his head at the Central Office of Temporal Observation. Ushas looked at Operation: Kalena lying on the trolley, oblivious to its fate. If it knew what was planned she would beg Ushas to kill her.

IX: Demonstration

After months of work by Ushas, Mortimus and the rest of the scientific Elite. The technicians and scientists were ready to assemble the new Kaled

warrior.

They lowered Kalena's sedated body into the battle unit. Ushas and her team then connected the various systems to the neural implants in Kalena's metal skullcap. Life support, weaponry, synthesised speech and other systems were all connected in turn. Kalena was wearing bonded polycarbide armour. While, the weapon Mortimus had designed was now even more accurate and had several power settings.

Davros almost purred with satisfaction when he was presented with the completed unit for testing. He had decided to name it the Mark II Kaled Battle unit or M2KB. "Ushas! Revive the organic component," he ordered. Ushas injected Kalena with a powerful stimulant and stepped away into the crowd. Kalena's body shook and slowly she stirred into life. Her eyes opened and she stared at the large group of people watching her, willing her into life.

"**I AM KALENA, WHO ARE YOU?**" a shrill computerised voice was heard but her lips did not move.

"I am Davros. Obey your master. Follow my instructions so I can check your systems are working correctly," Davros addressed her calmly.

"**I AM NO ONE'S MASTER. WHERE IS THIS PLACE? WHY DOES MY HEAD HURT SO MUCH? WHY AM IN A METAL BOX?**" Kalena's shrill voice shattered the stunned silence of the assembled scientists. All the questions of a child. The mind within the shell that should have been discarded at the beginning of the project. "**GET ME OUT OF THIS! PLEASE... I'M SCARED OF THE DARK, I DON'T LIKE—**"

"I am your creator. Your primary aim is to destroy all inferior forms of life."

"**WHY?**"

"*Why?*" A gurgling shriek bubbled from the plastic of his voice box.

"**KILLING IS WRONG. I WILL NOT DESTROY. PEACE IS WHAT IS NEEDED ON SKARO. WE MUST TALK WITH THE THALS. THIS WAR HAS GONE ON LONG ENOUGH.**"

Davros was shaking with rage and frustration. This was worse than a

failure, it was an embarrassment. The empty words of the Peace Corps! He turned to address his peers. “What is this abomination? Who is responsible for this failure?” He paused. “The geneticist, Ushas, bring her to me. She will be punished for her failure.”

Ushas and Mortimus had been surreptitiously been working their way to the back of the group since the beginning of the session. Once it had become clear that she had been successful in her attempt to remove aggression from Kalena (and the subsequent humiliation of Davros apparent), they departed from the laboratory.

The sound of running boots and shouting.

“That time ring had better be operational.”

He fiddled with it. “It was—I mean it is—I—Oh, blast!”

The soldiers caught up with them and started firing. They were both hit, but their bodies spun away into nothingness.

In the aftermath, Davros and Nyder berated the soldiers.

“Where are their treacherous corpses?” demanded Davros.

A brave guard answered. “We hit them and they just disappeared...”

“What do you mean they disappeared?”

“Vanished, sir. They must have had a disintegration capsule on their persons for—”

“Unacceptable, corporal. You’ve failed in an important aspect of your duties. Return to barracks for your court martial.”

“Y-Yes, sir...”

“We must review the security camera footage,” said Davros.

“Agreed. What do you want to do with this?” asked Nyder.

“Kill it. Exterminate the biological part but do not harm the battle unit,” Davros said coldly. Nyder’s machine pistol had a full magazine. He switched from select fire to full automatic and aimed for the head.

Davros watched impassively as Kalena died screaming.

All he felt was frustration.

IX: Renewal

Two figures appeared in Ushas's laboratory on Gallifrey and fell to the floor. Mortimer could not feel his legs. He turned his head to see how Ushas was.

"Do you think that was enough?" he asked, breathless.

"It had better... better... had..." Her eyes closed, her abdomen covered in blood. Suddenly, she was surrounded with a milky golden haze. The room was bathed in light that increased in brightness until Mortimus had to shield his eyes. As it started to fade and dissipate the new Time Lady was revealed lying in a pool of blood.

Mortimus tried to move but he could only move his arms. A figure rushed in and knelt by him. He couldn't see who he was, but the poorly-polished dress shoes and swashbuckling cravat at his waist had given it away.

"I never thought I'd be glad to see you," Mortimus smiled weakly. "I'm paralysed... It's time for a change. Go... See to Ushas."

Clutching one of his lapels, the figure checked Ushas's hearts. They were weak, but still beating. Another glow had enveloped Mortimus's body. The stranger watched as his familiar friend was replaced by a totally unfamiliar one.

Ushas sat on the edge of the bed in the regeneration therapy unit. She looked into the mirror at the unknown staring back at her. Sylph-like black hair had been replaced by longer brown hair. She now had cat-like blue eyes, high cheekbones and a harder, more angular face but one with perhaps more gravitas than before. She would get used to it soon enough.

She lay back on the bed and closed her eyes.

Those months on Skaro had been a nightmare. The Time Lord authorities had sent her and Mortimus into hell, without their consent.

When the Doctor visited, she had refused to see him. He had barged in anyway and told her that if he hadn't received Mortimus's transmission signal from the time ring and uncovered the rogue CIA operative, they

would have ended their many lifetimes on Skaro.

It seemed the haughty Time Lord who had spoken to Ushas had returned to Gallifrey as expected. He had then told the monitoring technician to turn off the recall circuit in their time ring.

The High Council had dispatched a communiqué to his TARDIS with the knowledge he'd been on assignment for them in another part of the Seventh Galaxy. He'd been in the neighbourhood, so to speak. It soon became apparent that there was a plot to rid Gallifrey of two of its unruly elements.

“Clean house,” he had said, dusting the endtable. “In order to ingratiate himself with the present Coordinator. Dreadful business, but fortunate that I was on hand to assist.”

Eventually, after an extended period of reflection stranded on a lifeless asteroid, the technician involved had confessed to the Doctor and they reactivated the recall circuit.

This revelation was not surprising to Ushas. With the expected assassination attempt now fulfilled, she had to flee Gallifrey and set up her work on a new planet. Preferably one with weak and suggestible inhabitants. A place where her research could continue without interference. She made careful plans to steal one of those new TARDIS models with the remote control unit and find a planet where she would be the supreme ruler.

She decided that she could no longer bear to be called by her Gallifreyan name, Ushasteranivedicar. After this betrayal by her own people, a new body needed a new name. She'd discovered it on a backwater planet of no consequence, scouting for a suitable test ground among the local inhabitants. A title for an ennobled ruler was a *rani* in their language.

The Rani... Yes, that would do.

Far from the Capitol, the Doctor visited Mortimus and teased him about his lack of curls as a way of breaking the ice. He'd frowned. This incarnation had always seemed to be purloined from the pages of one of Earth's humourists. If not for the shabby condition of his clothes,

Wodehouse would have leapt to mind almost immediately.

It made him consider his own features. His round moon-shaped face remained albeit a bit older and more lined. Mortimus now looked even more like a medieval monk. His blonde curls and blue eyes were gone. He now had brown eyes and short dark brown hair covering his head.

Was he happy with the change? Well, he'd best get used to it.

After hearing the Doctor's tale, the Monk started wondering about his own future too. To assume the Time Lords' patronage and protection was one thing, but he definitely did not want to become their stooge. Absolutely not.

He remembered the Doctor's blather about the joys of his favourite world. Perhaps... He could steal a TARDIS and visit Earth? At a far more lax period, of course. He could investigate its history, maybe tinker with it, have some fun for a change. The Doctor's own machine could do very nicely. As a wreckrider pilot or, if necessary, unsung passenger.

Yes, he had plans to make...

As for the Time Lords, they decided to continue to monitor the situation on Skaro. The report Mortimus gave them indicated that their intervention had made things worse. Both Ushas and Mortimus had given the inhabitants of Skaro new technologies and ideas that would now accelerate the development of the Daleks. Dematerialisation. It seemed their only recourse for those responsible of such heinous interference.

Timelines heaved under the exertion of the change as millions of solar systems winked out one-by-one.

In the Council Chambers, the Coordinator at his side, the Chancellor addressed those present among the High Council in wearied tones, fully aware that he was to be mirrored in the sulphurous pits of a war zone.

X: Conclusion

In the Incubator Room, Nyder at his side, Davros addressed the remainder of his Scientific Elite in exultant tones, fully aware of the

challenges that would impede the creation of the Dalek.

“...The M2KB project, Operation: Kalena, was not a total failure. We have learnt much from the two Thal spies. They have given us excellent foundation to build on, a foundation that you presently are working from. The battle unit can be improved and become an impregnable armoured device enabling soldiers to exterminate further resistance. I see now that the issue was not exclusively one isolated within the genome.

It was a question of nurture and fosterage.

More intensive methods of psychological conditioning will be required to eliminate waste impulses. My genetic research will continue in this field and I will supervise this genetic engineering project personally. No more mistakes will be tolerated. These new techniques and computer programs will give us the opportunity to ensure the Kaled race is genetically repaired and even enhanced.

The Thals will become extinct. While the Kaleds, will become the conquerors of Skaro. It is our destiny and one we shall share with the world.”

A LITTLE HISTORY OF THE DEAD PLANET

By Barbara Rait and Alan Camlann

Translator's Commentary by Alan Camlann:

This translation is intended to supplement the collected historical ephemera recovered from the 8276 Chloratesiago dig on Skaro. Initial translations proved controversial as they detail the earliest recorded form of the Raitian language family. To preserve the integrity of the original text, any sections impossible to faithfully reconstruct without considerable inference have been annotated accordingly.

Preface—Sarki Mountains and The Waters of Fire

Handwritten in ink. Severe damage; animal or botanical in nature.

The nightmare began in the brief span between a tick and a tock. Between the past and the future at a world's end. For as long as I can recall, I have a repeating dream where my body is thrown upon the cogs and wheels of a longcase clock like a sabot, gristle and sinew grinding and stretching across the mainspring. As I unwind and the machine unwinds with me, I forget my name, my home and all that I am.

My name is Barbara Rait, late of Bedfadsa, Inland in the year 1963. I am writing on the anniversary of our exile here on the planet Skaro, a familiar landscape perhaps to you, but to me something strange and terrifying.

I can't tell if the warmth in my hand is from the pen as I write this or the bloodshot glaciers of the Sarki Mountains around us. It's a beautiful place. Molten magma billows in deadly curtains like liquid gold through the ice. Everything here is kept in careful balance by the quills of ore that pull the radiating heat back down into the bedrock. Nothing as soft as tundra here,

only fire and the secrets it lures to its lightning rod.

They say the private life is dead on Skaro. Well... Not even the strongest cipher decoder could unravel the secrets of this language. For a time, long enough to mind, I'll wager, it'll be possible to keep our secrets guarded.

Sometime ago now, myself, Ian, Suzan and the Doctor made a decision that irrevocably altered the course of all our lives. Far more than our initial displacement from our home, yet it seemed an almost inevitable consequence. We were all unilateral in our agreement. Each illustrating their own argument as to why this had to be the way it was. That said, it was the Doctor alone who insisted that he'd performed the task. He felt responsible, perhaps, or maybe it was a task he felt only needed one to conclude it. We shouldn't have let him, but we did.

I remember that the bracelet, the artefact that had wrung our decision from us, had an unusual, impossible reflection on its surface. If you stared long enough, you could see through the world like a cross-section, warped in the unpolished iron. He held it out in supplication to the Waters of Fire, the charnel smoke of rock oil leering in all its filth out through the air. Clouds of cloying ash clung so tightly to our clothes that even now you can scent it in the strips taken to bind this book.

We were afraid, as was he.

He took action, where we couldn't.

Crackling on an amethyst zephyr, the Doctor cast the bracelet into the flames like a rocket.

And it was gone.

The seasonal decarain came in a wounded gush of hale as we made our way back to our guide. The Doctor's hands were black with ash and he was silent. He could not look to me, let alone speak to me. He didn't sleep, he wouldn't eat, he simply stared and studied the complex striations in his palms.

The first time he spoke to me since that day, at my prompting, he spoke: "The fate lines have altered, my dear. But to what end, hm? Where are the stars...? Where does our destiny lie now?"

Our fellow survivors never commented once.

In truth, it would have been difficult to tell if those present would have even known a glimmer of the truth. Few acknowledge our part in the final three days of war and our part in the collapse of the Bunker was kept vague in order to preserve the course of history.

I confess that the Thals' discretion had become something of an obsession of mine. War has bred rigidity into the survivors like frostbite and we are finding it increasingly difficult to find welcome support for even the most basic of tasks. Our stance, our walk, even simply the way we spoke distanced ourselves from those we hoped to befriend. True, we've spent an inordinate amount of time on other worlds, but the permanency of staying here, in this place. It's smothered something vital. It seems more important now than ever before that my memories of home remain undisturbed and untouched. I haven't tried to learn their ways, nor have they tried to teach me.

From what I've been able to gather from them, their own history has been heavily skewed to the point of blind fantasy. Lionising their own efforts while demonising others, a trend that they are unaware of and reluctant to change. Their hold on civilisation is still so fragile even now. Any intimation of cultural weakness could mean collapse and disintegration. The Thousand Day War has ended, but they are still fighting to prove the justness of their cause. I fear they will eventually start warring amongst themselves. The signs are already there. I don't think they know any other road but conflict.

For those who uncover this text and are capable of translating it, the excerpt beneath this note—hopefully still attached with the sap from the Arkellis flower—was to be the first of a picture book, styled after that I read as a child. I originally began this intent on recounting the final three days, but as I began reviewing my tale in relation to reports from Thal High Command and those leaked from the Council of Twelve, I discovered something extraordinary. Since that day, the Thals had almost completely halted their own recorded history.

Perhaps it's the tenuous nature of our collective circumstance, but no single record had since been created to document the Great Diaspora.

None. Indeed, my friends, Ian Tsestertan and the Doctor, since grew suspicious, concerned about the increased level of censorship that has begun to almost universally circulate around the otthontuzek and their auxiliary base camps. We ourselves are partly to blame, Ian has told me that he has decided to extend his blanket of secrecy to cover Major Bettan as well. The science of Erth may not be the same as that of Skaro, a wildly different periodic table for a start, but he's too wary about it being used to kill.

Since the Daleks' entombment, they have been too busy trying to corral survivors and salvage what little they can from the surrounding environment. Ethics have fallen by the wayside. It's been some time now and there is little sign of them growing out of their single minded resolve for combat. The change that is to come will take centuries. For now, conflict is the only thing they know and while he understands that it will happen at its own pace, he still nevertheless tried to change them. To force it. As I once did, a long time ago. They've broken his trust simply by being themselves. The how of it was kept to himself, but I've always had my suspicions. I'd seen the children with the adamant blowguns sent off to hunt the mutations nesting beneath the expeditions within our otthontuzek here in the Sarki Mountains. One of many such caravans spreading out across the surface of Skaro.

Even out here in the Indítas Cleft, I can feel it. There's so much uncertainty here. I wonder if this was how the prophets and prophetesses of ancient civilisations felt when they scried the future of their world? If nothing else, let this be said—we will not be warriors. We will not be the victims of another war. If nothing else survives, then perhaps this account, cradled in the warm ash of our awestruck world, can yet shed some light on this lethal age as it unfolds before us.

Orphaned Extract

Machine-written on dot-matrix transcoder. Pristine quality.

Standing in the desolation where a field had once flourished, beneath a

sky choked with soot, a grey man spoke of change.

To an ant in the eye of a hurricane, it would have seemed an indescribable upheaval. The kind of violent collision that would rend stars and sunder worlds to their very core. But to these two men of the fourth dimension, the concept was well understood. One existed above the web of history, maintaining its delicate balance with a deft hand and a quiet hush. The other had escaped this dispassionate prison and fled from the grey world into a flourish of colour.

He was expected to rant and rail, his temper charged against his jailer, but instead the fugitive out of time had simply stood in silence—his head stooped to listen—as the grey man, a functionary of the seers, told him of prophecies and fears.

Those who knew of these People, spoke of them as if they were the gods of Olympus or perhaps the primordial Titans who had coloured the earth and shaped the mountain that these deities dwelt on. If they knew of Them, then they were aware of the god who had sought to become a man. The grey being spoke to the healer very candidly and the healer listened, but he did not turn to face him.

The healer's lips tightened, a sharp sigh of regret escaping from the roof of his mouth. "So, it has come to this..."

"Your diligence in maintaining the balance of the cosmos is laudable, but it does not disguise you from our watch, Doctor."

"No, indeed..." he rubbed his forefinger and thumb together. "What of my friends? Where have you taken them now?"

"They will be arriving shortly."

"Will you be here to offer an explanation?" He could sense the grey figure shake his head behind him. He lowered his own, eyes searching the impenetrable mist before him with keen scrutiny. "No? Hmn, no, I didn't expect you would. Tell me, this outrageous scheme must go beyond the conventional ambit of your Agency. How will you aid us in ensuring the success of this preposterous horror?"

"Have faith in your abilities, Doctor."

"I do not want your faith, sir!" For the first time in their conversation he

turned to face him. “Not your faith, not your surmises, but knowledge. Knowledge will always triumph over the unknown. Of that there can never be doubt. Now, will you aid us or will you leave us here to die? No. Worse than die. Fail, hmm?”

“By giving you this foresight,” he shrugged, impassive. “I have already aided you.”

“I am no more able to carry out your task than I was before, sir. The Web—”

“Has its spider, as well you know.” He approached. Not with any degree of emotion, his words were calm as if he were reciting ancient words of power from a tome yet older still. “You and your companions have been carefully selected for this task. We believe you have the abilities necessary to carry it out. The spiders say to the fly, perform this action as an extension of our will or it is over.”

His voice rose in challenge. “An ultimatum?”

“A choice.” Two words as flat as a blade. The grey man held up a band of metal to be worn on the wrist, dull gold with an emblem rotating like a spiral galaxy ever so imperceptibly at its peak. “As required. It will allow you to return to your Ship once your task is complete.”

The argus-eyed Doctor looked down, clasping the ring. Suspicion and false promises fuelled his latest reply: “And if I should refuse?”

“You and your friends will remain here on Skaro for the rest of your natural lives as a part of the historical continua. You can remain in obscurity until the fighting dies down, *if* the fighting should die down without your interference, but should you decide to follow the operation to its natural conclusion...”

The oldster scoffed derisively, his cheekbones tightening with heedfully warded contempt.

“Then your lifeline will remain unflustered.”

“And my punishment?”

“To be exacted as according to your actions. Keep your head, Doctor.”

“Yes, while all about you are losing—” he looked up. The visitant had gone. He sighed, his voice quiet with reticence: “...and blaming it on you,

hmm.”

“Doctor?” called a familiar ghost in the smog. “Doctor, are you there? Ian, come over here, I think I’ve found him!”

Nesd Gale-Fikoren

Handwritten in ink. Mild water damage.

In the years following the end of the War, we’d observed that the Thals had begun to gather what supplies they could from weapons caches and ammunition dumps across the wastelands. In preparation for what we are now calling the Great Diaspora. It’d taken a decade of sifting through the dust, but now their delicately wrought ideal was beginning to gain some measure of traction. To commemorate this achievement, the four of us—the Doctor, Ian, Suzan and myself—had eventually decided that we would visit the site of the Dal civilisation’s most august and noted trading capital, the city of Inxuleg Dacol.

Our initial efforts to find a sponsor or even a guide to the region proved exhaustive and confronting. Lacking the expected colouring of their citrine brethren, we were treated with the same contempt that the Kaleds would have experienced had they survived the Bunker. I had the misfortune of reading my own dossier once, from the Thal special security division organised by the first provisional government. Officially, no such reports exist under the Transparency of Readings Act. Unofficially, as provided by friends in low places, I can transcribe an excerpt of the redacted file here:

17121929—”BARBARA”—NONAME—17121929

CLASS-V - SADISTIC DISSIDENT.

Despite initial surveys indicating suitability for recruitment, subject has demonstrated continual association with suspected elements within the fledgling astronomical community. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] When questioned as to their activities and the theft of experimental

materials, subject became defensive and acted in direct opposition to the acquisition of “DOCTOR ALYDON”. [REDACTED] “AGENT-[REDACTED]” to be reprimanded for loss of weapon and sent for further resistance training. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Subject and associates have since been added to the blacklist, any effort made to record or distribute media is to be treated as politically sensitive and obliterated. Automatic denial of any appeals. Further charge of disorderly conduct to be appended and enforced at soonest measure.

Suffice to say, we were known, but not commonly welcomed.

The Doctor’s long silver hair and proud raven-like figure allowed us some degree of leeway among the scientists and those formerly of some repute. If he weren’t mistaken as a curiosity, for one of the mutations, then perhaps someone of some ambition with power to share.

Tired and disgusted from discussions decorated with half-truths and appealing mead pots, he and I had decided to walk around the perimeter of the camp. Beyond the lines of dead and the empty graves that were being drilled into the petrified magma The loneliness of the place was almost indescribable. I could see why this particular otthontuzek of mollusc farmers and weapons traders had chosen it as a site to bury their dead, it *ached* with absence. There was an atmosphere that seemed to angrily lash out at anyone attempting to approach the edge of the rise, what we had discovered was rather aptly called the Shore of Hither and Yon. Where life ended and death began. It was there that we encountered Davitaker, on her hands and knees with blazing danger in her eyes.

I don’t think she knew that she was speaking aloud.

“*Find, find...*” she muttered, over and over again, her disquiet only growing as the rels ticked by. I asked what the matter was, just as she clawed a fistful of dust and threw it against the horizon in bitter disappointment. She howled in a hollow, cracking voice: “*Not here! Not*

here... Notnot—not...”

She was young. Much too young.

The Doctor’s eyes softened with compassion. “I always find it difficult to discover something that doesn’t want to be found. Perhaps, if you would inform us of your—*ab*—lost property, we may find a way to assist, *hmm?*”

She suddenly stood rigid. Her hand went into a coat pocket and retrieved a packet of sweet cigarettes, her eyes hardening.

“It’s alright,” I said. “If we’re prying, we’ll simply leave you be. Won’t we, Doctor?”

“Oh, naturally, my dear. Naturally, but I rather think we’re the best candidates to assist, don’t you agree?”

I can still remember the tickling pain of that smile in my face. Unused to such a simple expression.

Irritation, however, marred the features of the young woman, blossoming into frustration as even that seemed impossible to express. She shook her head angrily and held her hands around her throat like a nervous itch. “*Neck...*” she rasped, her throat wrung dry with frustration and broken Ukhulic. “*Searchneck.*”

“Neck deep in her search, perhaps? Something buried up to the neck?”

Her hands wound around her throat in close orbit, fingers flexing and twisting in search of any modicum of understanding.

I could see the Doctor focus his mind, trying to recall what obscure words and phrases he could. “*Search*, my dear? Assist... No, no, no... Now, what was it... Er, ah, *help?*”

The girl’s hands fell away. “*Yes. Help. Search.*”

“*Where? Young woman, where?*”

“*Inxuleg Dacol.*”

The clouds above opened like the Grand Canyon and poured out its acid rain. Under a fleximetal tent roof, almost deafened by the storm, she told us her name and we told her ours.

Aboulia Bosk

Handwritten in ink. Mild water damage.

Against our best hopes, a cyclone of fire from below forced us up from the Stratum of Screaming Winds to the surface through one of the hollows in the planet's bedrock. The constant rapid circulation of air masses had polished the caverns to a near mirror-like smoothness barely visible from our camp by the sinkhole. We'd have to wait out the howling gale below before we could continue. The path on the surface is too treacherous even for the experienced among our expedition, though that doesn't stop the more adventurous among us from daring against the border.

The Doctor insisted on taking first watch while we passed the time by lamplight. A short rest and an opportunity to try and answer a few pressing questions. I stumbled time and again in conversation with Davitaker. Suzan's linguistic skills and a sense of empathy tried to bridge the divide between our half-languages. It took some trial-and-error. The hours waned away like years, bringing back old memories of Kaul Hill. Scrubbing dirty slates and warming frozen milk by the radiator. I doubt it was due to any education on my part, but eventually Suzan acted as intermediary, constructing a basic dictionary of nouns and verbs I could use for conversation.

When we finally got talking, Davitaker didn't speak of her main objective. The subject seemed too delicate for the medium, but somehow, we found ourselves on the subject of childhoods. I remember being gifted a model of the HMS *Victory* for my birthday, the year we left Erth, and she recalls something in a similar vein. She remembers being attired in her academy dress uniform and marching in formation down the pastel-coloured hallways, wearing one of the "blood-and-gold" gasmasks assigned to her class during a gas attack drill. They had to be very careful not to drop them as they were the genuine article and vital to the war effort. The children used them to play a game where they tossed small knick-knacks from mask-to-mask, trying to catch them in its folds. Now,

they were not only a constant means of survival as we camped among the black earth and petrified vines, but an object of play and nostalgia as well.

I swear Davitaker was about to mention a name when something distracted her. The light of a distant mountain eruption that bathed the stillness in a Phonetician bronze. Lacking the means for an explanation, she went to investigate with Suzan. I felt a discomfort at the burns that had never healed on her arms and the rifle she now kept slung over her shoulder. Suzan had been the one most charmed by the Thals' descendants and her natural telepathy had left her vulnerable to the prevailing airs of the current climate. It was disheartening to see someone supposedly so young, dig a hole so deep for their hopes and bury them.

The Doctor gifted his granddaughter an anti-radiation scarf to keep out the cold, prompting a vigorous half-discussion between the two women as they left. It attracted some attention from other members of the expedition, but not much.

We tried to remain to ourselves it's not our place to interfere, but Ian... Ian was Ian. I can't find a better way of describing him than that. It was difficult for him. For all of us. We developed such an unexpected kinship with the Thals we knew, but here our friendliness was met with justifiable suspicion. An "overeagerness," as summarised by our guide rather warningly. They were not a people to be tested or belittled, but that was never our intention. We lacked their current mentality for conformity, we simply couldn't help but be outsiders. Any more than Ian could help scolding a child of the expedition for sneaking up on a mutation and attacking it with his blowpipe.

I think he did it for me. To try and show to me that we still had a chance. I wanted to believe him, I think in some respects now, I do.

At the time however, it all went as we'd long come to expect. They were grateful to him until he gave his reason. He said that the mutations were living beings too. People like themselves and didn't deserve any further cruelty piled upon the conditions forced upon them. Some habits were just too hard to break and it reminded those in the expedition of our strangeness.

It was a Hhuman reason, not a Thal reason.

The children's parents wouldn't speak to us from then on, but Ian's strange thoughts provoked some children to playful misbehaviour or—in some cases—uncomprehending rage. They danced around him while he rewound a length of rope like they were dwarves and he were Snow White. At first it was endearing, but as the journey wore on and they persisted, despite their parents' wishes otherwise, it grew distinctly uncomfortable. It became easy to see how these children could grow into adults who sought justice at the end of a rope. I suppose the things we don't understand always find a way to frighten us. The mind can conjure up such terrors with an empty space.

My friend, the Doctor, I think frightened me.

At the time, I couldn't bring myself to think of him. Not in any particular depth. The poor man had suffered greatly. The despair that Ian and I had felt at never returning home seemed to pale in comparison to the death of his journey through the stars. The disappearance of the TARDIS had left an indescribable sense of loss, the nature of which he claimed was difficult to describe even in the terms of his own People, but after a full evening of discussion I'd eventually found a suitable analogue he, at the very least, had not dismissed out of hand.

It was rather like a farmer and his horse who had remained together for half a lifetime. Stubborn as one another and just as fierce in their loyalty, until one day, without their consent, the two had been separated. One may have even been killed. When he asked me the question, I found it kinder simply to return it. I'll always remember the way his hand went to grip at his collar, his face turned away from me as his eyes stung with distress. I had thought that was it. The end of our friendship. A terrible waste because I lacked the courage to speak up.

The helplessness I'd felt during those initial months had manifest itself in ways I hadn't expected. I'd grown self-conscious.

I'd forgotten.

I thought he'd considered himself spurned, but not a long while later, I found him watching our suns set behind a fence of smog. He stood on his

cane, royal in height and solemn with severity watching bolts of lightning linking to one another in the atmosphere. They formed a daisy chain of blue light against the olive miasm. I found him in a similar way on the edge of the camp. Always on the edge, never interacting in the midst as he once did. We never spoke of what had lead us to that ridge. Our argument had otherwise been forgotten, there was no more to be said.

Presently, I touched his shoulder gently, his eyes snapping open with a keen energy. I remember the conversation well. He placed a hand against his face and said to me: “My apologies, my dear... I must have fallen asleep.”

I sat down beside him, patient. “Pleasant dreams, I hope?”

“My people are not reckoned to dream, Miss Wright. At least, not in the same sense that you mean. Prolonged travel in the fourth dimension inhibits the dreamer substantially. Is Tsestertan well?”

“As well as can be expected under the circumstances.”

“Children can be a handful certainly.”

“So I saw. Doctor, there’s something I’ve been meaning to ask you.”

“Yes, Miss Wright?”

“Do you dream now?”

“Since our exile, you mean?”

“Since the Ship has...” I didn’t know how to finish that sentence.

“I do,” his hand tightened around his cane, “as a matter of fact.”

“Of home?”

“No, indeed, your world. The sun rising in the east and setting in the west. A single star rising to meet the clarion call of the day and the quiet of night. Now... Only of this planet and its continued woes. It is difficult to leave the anxiety, the tension, frozen in the air around us.”

“I thought it was just me.”

“They’re afraid, my dear. Afraid for and of the future. Just as we are.”

I hummed. “I find it difficult sometimes to remember what life was like before we arrived... The future we saw was guaranteed, wasn’t it? We were part of it.”

“In a sense... It’s difficult to say whether we will see it begin to emerge in

our own lifetime. I did not find any records of ourselves when I examined them, but I will admit I wasn't searching for the like at the time."

"Horrible place."

"Yes," He studied Suzan and Davitaker as they returned, deep in discussion with one another. "Though not without its virtues..."

"I sometimes wonder if I remember it better than it was."

"Speaking on memory, our young friend there," he pointed surreptitiously Davitaker. "Surely, she must have been able to speak the language of her peers at one time or another?"

"Yes, I'd been thinking about that."

"As have I," he tapped his ring finger against the knuckles of his opposing hand, watching the moonrise of Omega Mysterium. "It's possible that when the war ended that young woman fled into the wilderness."

I gave it some thought. "History would seem to bear that theory out. There are any number of figures you could cite having lost their ability to speak."

"Simply for a lack of anyone to speak to."

I shifted forward. "Doctor, she can't have been any younger than she is now. She'd never have survived otherwise."

"Yes, perhaps her guardians thought it was the only way to protect her, Barbara. The environment around here..." his brow wrinkled, "can't have been much better than a deserted island, she'd have been stranded."

"Like Robinson Crusoe."

The Doctor shushed me warningly, eyes darting to the sky. He looked around conspiratorially before lowering his voice, a weather-worn twinkle trying to ignite in his eye. "You know, I once met Daniel Dafoe during the Great Storm of 1703."

I tried for the optimistic incredulity of our initial travels, but it only reached my cheekbones. He seemed to appreciate the gesture all the same. That made it easier.

"Oh, yes," he continued comfortingly. "When all of Whitehall was ablaze with lightning, there we were together. I tried convincing him that

the cyclone could be described by products of scientific method rather than religious superstition, but he was adamant.” I felt him tense beside me. “No, instead he viewed the passage of history in his own terms...”

I’d leant forward. “Are you worried that we might be doing the same?”

“Quite the opposite, my dear. I fear we’re being led into a trap. One which—” Suddenly, he shot upright under his own power like a lightning rod.

His cane in his hand he lashed out into the blacked earth with a shout. It crackled with an alexandrite glow and I saw, for a moment, a blur of brass no larger than my hand. He struck it again and shouted: “I will not play party to your monstrous game, sir! Do not torture us with false promises! Let us alone!”

As it clattered against the lip of the hollow, I finally saw what it was. It wasn’t brass, but gold. A cirlet to be worn around the wrist. The Doctor let go of his cane as I pulled him back into the ashes, the torturous colour glittering against his shielded eyes. It lunged like a hansom carriage off a mountainside, behaving contrary to its presupposed physics, lingering and taunting its would-be victim.

The Doctor spun around to me with an order: “You must never tell Tsestertan or my grandchild of this. Better to dash their hopes than allay them with poison.”

“Have they done this before?”

“*Promise me!*” he’d snapped.

“*I promise, yes!*” I pulled at his arm before he could walk away. “But you can’t expect me to work in the dark. What’s happening? What do you know? Is it?”

He shushed me again. Their name, which I haven’t transcribed here, is said to have great power even at its mention.

His voice had gained a closely-held flame. Ablaze in the conspiratorial moonlight. “Only as much as you. We are about to see a fundamental change in the history of the Skaro, I can feel it. And we must be ready for whatever comes next. Yes... *Yes, we must!*”

Orphaned Extract

Machine-written on dot-matrix transcoder. Severe damage; microbial in nature, legible copy preserved on blotting paper.

Long ago and far away, the Doctor had been pacing agitatedly to and fro. His cane tapping irritably against the begrimed concrete floor of the Kaled Bunker. “Against every conceivable moral code, I am forced to tend the cogs of history as a, ah, bureaucratic horologist! And now... Now, we are tasked with walking into a trap of our own devising. Punished for our failure and our success. Tethered. Driven like cattle across a minefield into defying a universal law as unconquerable as gravity.”

“And yet the Rait Brothers learnt how to fly, grandfather,” chimed Suzan knowingly.

“Precisely, my child,” he’d answered, flicking his fingers. “*Precisely*. I must think. Yes. Yes, I *must* think.”

“I’ve never seen him like this,” said Ian.

“Seeing him so...” I struggled for the word.

“Frantic?” He’d frowned, that didn’t quite fit.

“Helpless. Panicked. After all this time, despite all his wisdom... I think it frightens me, Ian,” I’d admitted quietly. “I think we’re jolly well out of our depth this time.”

“Maybe we’re not incapable of changing history like we thought,” hummed Ian. “Perhaps, it’s more a case that we shouldn’t.”

“Shouldn’t?” The word seemed to scorch the Doctor’s ears, his mind like dry straw in a desert heat. “We are *forbidden*, Tsestertan! By legal precedent, by moral code. Unable to distort the web of the fourth dimension for fear of exterminat—” he cut himself short, his hands shaking. He steadied himself against one of the nearby tables, his fingers tightening to white bone against the wood of his cane.

I think his every worst fear had come true.

They—whoever they were—had sought him out, the Ship, his granddaughter, us, everything he had learnt since he’d fled home. All of it was lost. They would destroy him, wipe his very existence from causality

or do far worse. He described it to me as peeling his memory down to the core like strips of flesh from his back, returning him no more aware to some unimportant civil service position. To stagnate. Buried alive in the antique dust. It was horrible.

“Doctor, who are they?” Ian demanded. “We have a right to know.”

“Yes, and Suzan too,” I added.

I remember he couldn’t meet my stare. “The ones who sent us here, the ones holding the Ship. They... are of our World, Suzan and I. Members of an advanced civilisation that can grasp the corona of stars without scalding their fingertips and make their orbits dance assuredly to their uninventive tune. Their powers are tremendous. Yes, indeed, tremendous. Dare I say unbeatable.”

“Are they like the Daleks? Is that why you’ve both never talked about them?” I’d asked.

“No,” they’d said in unison.

The Doctor had looked to his granddaughter, almost as if for some measure of strength and elaborated further.

“Those days are long behind them. They exist beyond the spirals of Time within a realm subject entirely to their whims. Somehow, through means unknown to myself, they have found a way to bring us here to the Daleks’ birth. This is more than simply severing their source of power as we did millions of years in the future. We are here—now—to prevent their very creation.”

“Can we?” I remember squeezing my hands. “Have we even a choice?”

“None at all,” answered Suzan grimly. “They wouldn’t allow for that.”

“My granddaughter is quite correct. It would be like letting the genie out the bottle—” the Doctor stuttered and corrected himself, “—lamp. Once this decision is made...”

“I think I’m beginning to understand,” acknowledged Ian. “I don’t want to, but...”

The Doctor nodded. “And you are only grasping at a tenth of the consequence, Tsestertan. In this moment alone,” he chuckled sadly, smiling with a soft, gifting gaze, “Oh, how I envy your people’s benign

state of childhood. Despite my every expectation at the beginning, you have both accomplished much in your travels.”

“Their veracity is questionable, surely,” said Ian modestly, trying for levity.

“Nonsense. You’ve accomplished extraordinary things, my boy,” he patted the man’s knee. “Who else could have saved us from Skaro, from Marinus, from a dozen other crises besides? You as well, young woman. Trying to prevent the death of a civilisation in spite of their own failings, in spite of the conquistadors, in spite of the disease and destruction they would ultimately bring. You wanted so much to change what is inevitable. Extraordinary, my dear. Yes. *Ha-hum*. Yes, extraordinary.”

“You’re both talking like you’re never going to see us again,” I’d noted. My tense confusion came out almost like an accusation, but uncharacteristically, the Doctor simply just let the conversation lapse into silence.

Ian dipped his head slightly, worried that any further inquiries might push the Doctor over the edge.

I’d hid it well according to Suzan, but even she could feel the anxiety wrapping its coils at the centre of her mind’s eye. She’d had spent much of her travels coping with not only her own emotions, but ours as well. There had been much she had learnt from her grandfather before Kaul Hill and far more she had learnt from two supposed “ignorant savages” after we’d been spirited away to another life. So, she did the only thing that felt right in the situation. What her grandfather himself was struggling to say.

She told us the truth.

Inxuleg Dacol

Handwritten in ink. Mild water damage.

The final leg of our expedition took us around the Radiation Range. An almost indescribable wonder in Skaro’s otherwise blighted landscape. Raw cobalt produces stunning harp-strings of vaulted light between the unprocessed ore and the heavy mirror of lampblack floating in the upper

atmosphere. It was wonderful to be able to finally see it in person after hearing so many tales over the past months. The great plains, which had so defined the Domes, had begun to undulate and shift beneath us like melted copper. Glass coral waltzed and stained the bottom of the transporter with the essence of exquisite magic. To think that something so terrible had come from something so beautiful buried beneath the mountains gave me pause and left me silent. As we grew closer, I could see that disturbances beneath the tectonic plates had given rise to an ocean of caustic ooze. Tugging at her scarf, Suzan hypothesised that it may one day claim the two Domes beneath it forever.

The stalwart rocks at the crest of the acidfalls leading down to the Inxuleg Dacol had poured in an igneous drip, hot oil from a cauldron off the battlements of a castle.

Beyond them, the ash-brown foothills were dead and the bronzed sky above still haltered heavy with black clouds. No one in their right mind would have dared return to this place. Every time we looked at the sky, we felt a need to stoop, the sense of oppressive confinement was almost too much to bear at times. Nevertheless, we pushed forward, across the sickly gold sand with the radiation counters in hand.

I kept close to Ian, who'd faltered thanks to a malformed rib that had never adequately healed. "If only we knew what we were searching for, Barbara."

Davitaker and Suzan slid down from the transporter beside us.

"We might have an answer to that," Suzan raised her hands around her throat to her neckwear, which Davitaker noted with a nod. "We've been talking and we're probably searching for one of these. They're service-issue, given to members of the Thal exploratory service."

"Why?" I asked.

Davitaker lowered to her haunches and dug down into the silt, peeling contours into it with her hands, picking up fistfuls that fell in curtain-like waves from her hands.

Ian understood. "You bury a man with his uniform."

I'm not certain if it was his tone, but her face cracked into agonising

glee. *At last!* it said. *At last! This task can find rest.*

“Was it a sibling? A spouse?”

“I don’t know,” said Suzan. “A sister—I think.”

Davitaker patted the girl’s shoulders at that moment, seemingly confirming that assessment.

“We’ll find it,” I assured her.

“*Past—important, know—future,*” she affirmed warmly.

Before I could react, the Doctor shuffled through the crowd’s midst.

“What are you all standing around for? Come along, let’s get on with it.”

The city of Inxulug Dacol itself was a ruin with one special quality. While the rubble and clinker above belonged to modernity, the lower levels closer to its bowl-like centre were Sparasunian in origin. The closer and lower you moved to its duneswept centre, the more its utilitarian brutality seemed to shrink away from its jasper fundamentals. Something once quite beautiful might have sat there. In its marrow, before the city had donned its onyx armour and marched off to war.

I wondered if it could do so again. The past was irrevocable now, irreconcilable, but could something be learnt from the lessons taught here? Davitaker’s sister could have thought so to come here. One. At least one had begun to question their own ways... If one, why not many more?

It was so simple. The possibility gave me hope. *Hope*. I thought I’d lost it forever, the realisation had me in tears. Ian held me when he found me hunched over against one of the walls. He had something to show me, if I was ready.

It took some time to reach, but closest to the slope of the mountain, Ian was the first to discover it. A large rectangular prism of ice, inimical to the desert city surrounding us, which had frozen into a fat lens of black mirror on the plain. It sat like a cyst, a scrap of cloth waving like a knight’s standard from its base. We’d have never found it from above.

With little warning, the outline around the shape hissed and the sand began to fall away. The Doctor and Ian pulled themselves clear as an exhaust barrier rose into the air on massive hydraulic joints. I grabbed Suzan and leapt for my life down behind it for safety. An instinct that

saved us.

Something echoed from deep within the heart of the launch chute.

To understand such a moment in time, particularly as viewed by an outsider like myself, I feel it's important I clarify one of the more profound terrors of our age. Much has been spoken of the Daleks and their impact cannot be understated, but moving into this new age of rocketry and interplanetary travel, there is another travesty that must be addressed. An ancestral horror that has given rise to what we are now capable today.

Suzan and I were part of the final workforce that armed the distronic rocket launched on the Kaled Dome. That remains historical fact. What isn't recounted is that we were two of three escapees who were able to breach the launch tube and escape from the silo into the wastes. Perhaps it's our fortune that made us feel the weight of responsibility. The automated defence systems scattered across the ridge just before the Dome arguably saved our lives. After so long, we couldn't tell which were loaded and which had been expended, so we approached the problem deliberately and cautiously.

I was sixteen when the first nuclear attack occurred on Erth, the proliferation of which had led to my friendship with Ian during the Oldamas marches. Understand that a year or so after I had left home, we had come to the brink of an atomic war. A confrontation between North Amerika and the Souviat Union over the island of Kjuba. Standing in the petrified forests and jungles, I still feel this terrible sense of dread. I never wished to experience what an explosion would feel like.

But we did.

It didn't make a sound. Not at first. The flash burned through my eyelids, I could see the veins of blood pulsing through my hand and arm, now translucent like milky glass. An extraordinary rainbow tore in fire-trails across the horizon. Bright enough to diffuse the light behind it. Suzan was shaking me, her mouth moving voicelessly, I felt as though I'd gone deaf. Then the earth cried out like a sickly newborn in the most appalling suffering. A sound so overwhelming that made you want to howl

and hide. I cried for my mother as Suzan cried for her grandfather. Soon, we cried for each other and held tight to one another. The amber heat as though from a furnace tore the air from our lungs in rippling, blind destruction.

The ground itself yawned to become an open grave.

Alone and together, we swam in darkness for what felt like years. I thought it would never end. I suppose in many ways it hasn't. Crimson oozed from the third's ears, but even he, through the terrible pain, could witness the survivors emerging from the hourglass of smoke that decanted from the Dome. At a distance, you could have mistaken their waxy, melted forms for articles of clothing, but they were naked. Skin dripped from beneath their fingernails like ragged cloth, eyes porcelain white with cataracts and their backs scarred into disgusting purple quilts. We know few who survived the weeks after it. None were coherent or cognisant enough to document what they'd seen.

The last one I was able to speak to had spoken to me of the future. He or she, it was now difficult to say, said only that they had become terrified of becoming so fundamental an outsider. They had always been othered for a variety of reasons, but now their mutation had externalised their worst fears about themselves. The nightmare had come alive. Their body was so small, ~~why in Heaven's name would we let this happen?~~

~~Why? Why? Whywhywhywhywhy?~~

[Section illegible.]

I never knew their name before they died.

The roar that scraped its teeth across my eardrums forced past and present together in a column of flame. It shot from the vessel's motive units, freeing itself from its quicksilver sled as it spat high up into the sky, red with tapering fins like a balna. Condensation had just begun to form on its shoulders as it breached the sound barrier high above us. We could see it now, through the stinging tears, we couldn't believe our eyes.

A spacecraft!

The first of its kind from the surface of Skaro. History had been made beneath our feet and we'd never known it. I asked the Doctor if he had

recalled something from the Dal records long ago in the future, but tragedy shunned his answer.

The initial triumphant shriek of its rocket motors ended in cataclysmic failure. The single spear of flame bisected in twain. The back of the craft split like wet reams of paper in an industrial waterwheel; a sky and surface united under one gilded tint, swept away like so much running paint. A death knell glow so bright as to be a searing blue fell across the landscape. To anyone beyond the foothills, it would have looked like an metallurgic eruption. Not uncommon in the Radiation Range, particularly now with so much geological activity, but our small group knew the truth. The blast was so immense that it broke open the sky. The chemical fog and choking ash gave way to our first view of the stars in a decade. I cannot describe to you the emotions we felt in that moment. The weightless sense of awe-struck wonder.

Its beauty was matched only by the ferocity of its starfall.

Radioactive hail bombarded us from above, the burning smell of x-rays melting the sand and ice on the closing launch chute into bulbous glass. Hungry from the launch, the desert consumed many of the fragments without trace, it was only through the Doctor's stubborn determination and Ian's physical strength that the motive unit of the craft was salvaged. Our experience with meteoroid storms already had us moving as swiftly as we could back towards the transporters.

If the flight team were among the wreckage, they had been rendered unrecognisable, but the crews dispatched by Flight Control from the launch chute? They remembered us. And we remembered them.

The grating shriek howled at us with the same weight and awful disgust as the wail of an animal in a slaughterhouse.

"HOW MUCH HAVE YOU SEEN? SPEAK! SPEEEEEAAAK!"

"Tsesteron, get us out of here!" the Doctor had snapped.

The lightning bolt crackle of the Daleks' ray flashed against the fleeing expedition members and crumbling masonry alike, reducing both to blistered, fuming effigies of their former selves. Horrid streams of topaz flame gnawed Inxuleg Dacol like the first vicious sparks of the Great

Tenmei Fire. No emperors, nor courtiers to flee these great palaces, just us to warn of the disaster. Only us.

We bore witness to the return of the Daleks.

Exodus—Sarki Mountains

Machine-written on dot-matrix transcoder. Mild water damage.

[Handwritten] Per Care of the Doctor.

XXXX 98/M/75 XXXX DECODER OPERATIONAL XXXX
TRANSMISSION INTERCEPT / DISPATCH CARE OF SCIENTIFIC
DIVISION / ZERO-THREE ATTENDING / TOP PRIORITY / RE: TEST
FLIGHT OF PROTO 2 / OPERATION UNSUCCESSFUL / CRAFT
DISINTEGRATED / CAUSE: UNFORSEEN CHEMICAL REACTION IN
PROPELLANT UNDER HIGHER ATMOSPHERIC PRESSURES /
RECOMMENDATION: ANALYSIS OF CAUSE / TOP PRIORITY:
EXTERMINATION OF INTRUDERS DETECTED ON VIBROSCOPES /
TRANSMISSION ENDS

[Handwritten] Tell Suzan that may just be the missing link.
Tsesteron informs me that we have the infestation of Arkellis in the mines under control now. Once our final test of the motive units has been achieved, we will be able to move our equipment to the launch site you suggested in the Inditas Cleft.

The long-extinct Tharons have a poem—*The Sing-Song of the Old Zomite* – that, roughly translated, begins with these simple lines:

*“O’Tharon! Listen well
To the guns that beat their drum,
O’er bodies like candles, blasted well
Kill, kill, kill, they say, and still more will come.*

I'm reminded of it as I sit here among the dimming handtorches, waiting for the final checks for the rocket to complete. I remember how it ends:

*I kill alone by moonlight and now there is no one left
Here, O'Tharon, there is no one left to hear me moan,
I see those so crazed to in-fight, can leave the world bereft
Here, O'Tharon, O'Enemy both, I die alone!"*

Alone.

The midsection has since been lost to everything you'd expect from a history long suppressed. It has not stopped them from conjuring up their own variations, but this book here, I hope will survive the change of Skaro in its time capsule. For our return or the return of our grandchildren. It's a learning time now. We've taken aboard those with wanderlust, those who seek to travel beyond Skaro's bloated sphere and see what potentials exist beyond the poisoned world. To Omega Mysterium. To Falkus. Perhaps even to horizons further still. To go forward with all our convictions and prove not only to others, but to ourselves that we can still seek out the light of truth and good from cringing deceit and evil.

I am Barbara Rait and I hope—I wish—whoever's reading this that when you've long since passed our flashpoint, you're standing before a good future. I wish that with all my being. Remember our little history of the dead planet, for while the world turns to ruin, its people do not.

Safe journeys.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Barbara Rait', written in black ink.

PSYCHIC IMAGE

By Billy Walker

THE DOCTOR'S LOG—ACCOUNT 91651 (EXCERPT)

I woke up with no idea where I was. I was surrounded by mists and smoke. There was a feeling inside me. Fear! But what was I afraid of? Why should I be afraid without knowing where I was?

Then I saw an image in front of my eyes. It seemed to be blocking my vision. It was the image of a gun! An ordinary looking gun! Why was I seeing a gun that blocked my vision?

I eventually closed my eyes to shut out the image. When I opened them, the image of the gun was gone. What just happened? I didn't understand what was going on.

My thoughts were then interrupted as I looked and saw my companions, Nyssa and Billy, coming towards me. I was so relieved. I went over to meet them.

"Doctor, where are we?" Nyssa asked. "What happened?"

"I don't know," I replied. "I was wondering that myself."

"How did we get here?" Billy asked. "Where's the TARDIS?"

"Perhaps we got here by some other means of transportation," Nyssa suggested. "Transmat beam, Doctor?"

"It's very likely," I replied. We were then interrupted by an ear-piercing sound. Realising the danger we were in, I shouted, "Nyssa, Billy, get down!"

Before my companions asked questions, I pushed Nyssa and Billy to the ground behind some rocks. This was before explosions started going off. Nyssa and Billy gave cries once this happened. The explosions went off for a number of seconds. We covered our ears as the explosions went off. Fortunately the explosions didn't kill us. Why? Had we been spared by

some external force?

After waiting for the explosions to end, Nyssa, Billy and I got up.

“I feel as if we’re in the middle of a war zone,” Billy said. “It’s like we’re back in time to the Second World War on Earth.”

“Is that where we are, Doctor?” Nyssa asked. “Are we back on Earth?”

“I don’t think so,” I eventually replied. “I’m pretty sure I’ve been here before, but...I can’t remember where and when.”

“What?” Billy said startled. “You can’t remember, Doctor?”

“Can you remember anything yourselves?”

My companions nodded, they believed so.

“Difficult question, isn’t it?” I mused. “Plato’s Cave and all that.”

“In the Academus grove where he taught?” Nyssa asked, looking around.

“A bit of philosophy from Earth, my dear,” Billy explained. “The idea that what we perceive to be true, may not objectively be true.”

“Oh, yes...” she remembered. “A side-effect of our transportation?”

“Possibly...” I hummed.

“Doctor, could it be the Time Lords?” Nyssa suggested.

“I wouldn’t be surprised.”

“You don’t sound so sure...”

Billy noticed something. He pointed it out to Nyssa and me. Following the explosions, there was a soldier lying on the ground, wearing a gas mask. We went over to inspect the soldier. Billy was certain we were in World War II on Earth. But I pointed out that the soldier had some sort of radiation detector on his shoulder. Nyssa also pointed out that there was a mixture of weapons including an old fashioned rifle and an advanced weapon that could fire lasers.

Billy was disgruntled. “So much for my World War II theory,” he said.

I told Billy to be open-minded. Nyssa asked where we should go from here. I thought about it. “Forward!”

With that, I led the way. Nyssa and Billy followed. We had no idea where we were going.

**EXTRACT FROM: OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS, A JOURNAL
BY NYSSA OF TRAKEN**

The Doctor has suggested we recall events as best we can and note discrepancies where possible in cross-examination. As I myself am one of the three variables in our experiment, I cannot guarantee objectivity. Only observations.

I found the journey through the strange war-torn wastelands slow and perilous. The Doctor, Billy and I walked through a minefield but managed to escape death. We saw an awesome sight before us. It was a large protective dome that almost covered an entire city! The Doctor wondered if he'd seen something like it before.

During our journey, I tried asking him further, but he had no memory of the recollection. At his insistence, it was during our walk that he gave me this fold-out journal, Billy a PanPal digital postcard and himself a psi-log from his coat pockets.

We eventually arrived at the foot of where this large protective dome was situated. This was before we got ourselves into a trench. Billy changed his mind about it being World War II. He said the trench we got into was similar to ones he'd seen in photographs of the First World War, not the Second. We saw a number of fallen bodies in the trench. I felt sickened. So did Billy. The Doctor was sad.

I observed they were all wearing gas masks and there were piles of weapons both futuristic and primitive lying about in the trench.

"Just what kind of war zone are we in, Doctor?" Billy asked. "We're not on Earth! Or are we on an alien planet that resembles Earth?"

"I don't think it's as simple as that," the Doctor replied. "I'm pretty sure I've been here before. It's all coming back to me but..."

"Déjà vu for you, Doctor?" Billy asked.

"Déjà what?" I asked.

"I'll explain later."

Just then, I heard a whizzing sound. I told Billy and the Doctor this and we listened for a moment. Another explosion occurred nearby.

But it didn't cause a great big bang. This time, gas started to spew around us.

"Gas shell!" the Doctor cried urgently.

Billy shouted in horror. We began to panic. The gas made us choke as we began to breathe it in. The Doctor urgently told us to fetch a gas mask and cover our faces. Billy and I did as we were told. We took a gas mask each off two of the fallen soldiers in the trench and put them on. The Doctor struggled to find one for himself.

Suddenly I was jumped upon from behind. Another gas-masked soldier, alive and well, was attempting to knock me out with the butt of his advanced laser rifle. I fought back but he was too strong for me. I struggled to escape his grip.

I saw Billy was being attacked too. He struggled to fight a gas-masked soldier jumping onto him from behind. The gas-masked soldier attacked Billy and ripped his gas mask off his face. My gas mask was being ripped off my face by my attacker too. What had become of the Doctor? Had he found a gas mask and survived? Was he being attacked by a gas-masked soldier too? I found I was slipping into unconsciousness caused by the gas nearby.

It was I could see black-uniformed soldiers coming out of a door in the wall of the trench. They opened fire with submachine guns. But my vision became blurry as I struggled to keep my eyes open. I found myself slumping to the ground. I saw Billy slump to the ground too. The gas was doing its work. Billy and I were falling unconscious. The last thing I saw was the Doctor being taken inside through the door in the wall of the trench by one of the black-uniformed soldiers. Darkness then took me and I knew no more.

**POSTCARD TO MR. AND MRS. FRED WALKER
BY BILLY WALKER**

**[THANK YOU FOR YOUR PURCHASE OF THIS PANPAL DIGITAL POSTCARD.
BRIDGING THE COSMIC DIVIDE BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES.]**

Dear Mum and Dad,

I was relieved when I found I was still alive. I woke up, thinking I'd fallen asleep. But I remembered the gas attack, the gas-masked soldiers attacking me and Nyssa, and slumping to the ground. How was I still breathing?

My relief turned into panic when I saw Nyssa slumped nearby. I made my way over to her. Once I reached her, I took Nyssa's left hand, stroked it gently and patted the right side of her face with my right hand.

"Nyssa!" I cried urgently. "Nyssa, are you alright?"

No response at first.

"Nyssa, my dear, please! Wake up!" I cried louder.

Eventually Nyssa groaned and woke up. I felt relieved and embraced her.

"Nyssa, I'm so glad you're alright," I said. "I was afraid you were dead."

Nyssa eased me off gently and said reassuringly. "I'm fine, Billy! Really, I'm fine!" She looked around before asking, "Where's the Doctor?" I couldn't see him either. He wasn't among the fallen bodies in the trenches. I eventually stood up and went over to the door in the wall that was near us. I struggled to think for a moment.

"Before we passed out," I said, "I saw black-uniformed soldiers coming out of this wall. This was when we were attacked. Those black-uniformed soldiers fired submachine guns all over the place."

Nyssa concurred, "They must have taken the Doctor inside with them."

I tried to open the door but couldn't. I suspected the door could only be opened from inside. Nyssa took my hand and suggested finding an alternative entrance. I didn't argue. We soon made our way out of the trench to find another way in.

It was an hour later that Nyssa and I were walking into the wastelands. We soon realised we were lost. We admitted to each other that we were scared but tried to reassure each other that we would find a way into that domed structure. It was getting dark by that point, but we persisted onwards. I couldn't help feeling that we were being followed.

We eventually came to a clearing where we stumbled upon a crumbling

structure. Nyssa could sense some activity going on. We quickly hid ourselves before peeping over a wall.

Nyssa and I saw an old cripple in a wheelchair. I couldn't help feel disgusted by the sight of the creature. It looked deformed and monster-like.

We also noticed another man with the wheelchair cripple. He seemed cleaner and more reassuringly human. He had grey in his hair.

It took a while for me and Nyssa to register what was being said between the two people. The cripple said something about a 'moment in history'. We saw the cripple flick a switch on his wheelchair, revealed out of the dim light...

Nyssa and I couldn't believe it! It was a Dalek! We were horrified! From past experience, I'd encountered Daleks before when I was on the Moonraker in the 26th century. The Dwaxi were there too. Nyssa had had many encounters with the Daleks before, including ones on 22nd century Earth, 42nd century Earth, Stockbridge in the future and on the planets Traxana and Mojox.

We eventually heard the cripple order the Dalek to "Exterminate!"

Fortunately the Dalek wasn't firing at me and Nyssa. The Dalek fired at three cardboard cut-outs of green soldiers as target practice. The cripple seemed to approve of the weaponry and said that 'we'—whoever 'we' were—can now begin.

Nyssa and I held our breath as the cripple, the other man and the Dalek were about to leave the crumbling structure. We hid out of sight, thinking for a moment that we were going to get caught. Thankfully we weren't.

Once the cripple, the other man and the Dalek had gone, Nyssa and I came out of hiding and went into the centre of the crumbling structure. We were about to share what we thought of our recent experience before we found ourselves surrounded by men (at least we thought they were men) in ragged cloths and hoods. Nyssa and I were about to make contact with these ragged figures before we got knocked out.

I'll get back in touch with you soon, Mum and Dad.

Love from your son, Billy Walker.

THE DOCTOR'S LOG—ACCOUNT 91651 (EXCERPT)

I was having a rough time. Ever since I had been captured, I'd been prodded, bullied and pushed around. I was forced to move on to where I was to be questioned by someone called Ronson. He was a white haired man in a white suit. He had a fierce look on his face, but seemed a kind soul.

I said to Ronson that I hoped we could talk without any interruptions from rifle butts. Ronson threatened that if I didn't cooperate, I'd be sent back to the Thals piecemeal in an ammunitions crate. Well, so much for a nice chat!

After being questioned about my belongings, Ronson was surprised to find that my blood scans and chemical make-up were identified as being extraterrestrial. Ronson found it hard to swallow. Alien life didn't exist on other planets, Skaro's solar system was reportedly empty. This world was all they had. Every inch the Thal I may have looked, I reminded him that he shouldn't always judge by the initial picture.

I asked Ronson what planet we were on. Surprised at first, Ronson eventually told me we were on Skaro. That sent a chill down my spine. It was a planet I knew very well. A long time ago when...An alarm rang out and the thought vanished. Ronson stood to attention as did all the other Science Division members. A tannoy blared out saying something about Davros and all members of the Elite scientific corps had to assemble in the main laboratory. Ronson told me that Davros was coming.

I was made to stand up by Ronson. It was then that a cripple in a wheelchair entered. He was male and looked deformed and withered. I recognised him from somewhere.

I heard the cripple say something about experimenting on a Mark III project and that he was anxious the Scientific Division should see the remarkable results he had achieved.

That image of the gun came back to me. This time however, there was a red haze over it. I felt my eyes burning. The image seemed to be getting

hotter. I closed my eyes and raised a hand to my head, trying to get rid of the pain. It was like getting a headache except it was excruciating.

I thought I was going to pass out and I lost track of time before I got interrupted. A voice broke my thoughts.

“ALIEŃ! I MUST EXTERMINATE! EXTERMINATE!!!”

I opened my eyes again and saw the nightmare before me. A Dalek! Very primitive but definitely a Dalek! The image of the gun seemed to have gone now. I had more worries to think about as the Dalek raised its gunstick towards me. I was sure this happened before.

Just then, Ronson stepped in, shouting “No!” before he switched the Dalek off. The Dalek went dead. It seemed a demonstration had been arranged by this cripple called Davros to show off his Dalek. Wait! How did I know that?

Davros was furious with Ronson for interrupting his demonstration. I’d never seen anyone so angry and yelling with rage in all my lives! He had stood beneath the teeth of the Kaled war machine, to shield a Thal no less, and halted his experiment. Davros told Ronson he would be punished and he profusely apologised. He asked for me to be spared so that he could interrogate me further. He said I would be extremely valuable, a defector with scientific knowledge that could benefit the Elite enormously. I recounted what scraps of information I knew like a schoolboy summoned to the head of the class. Idle trivia in other circumstances, but here, uniquely valuable.

Intrigued, Davros eventually agreed to Ronson’s request, saying he could interrogate me until first light. I found myself being taken away to a prison cell.

The image of the gun came back to me again as I was escorted away. Dalek? Kaled? ...Thal? It was possible. We were ideally situated for a tactical drop. A memory wipe wouldn’t be beyond our capabilities. Our? *Their*. The thought lingered on in my mind, caught in every silver facet of the hallway.

EXTRACT FROM: OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS, A JOURNAL

BY NYSSA OF TRAKEN

When I woke up, I found myself surrounded by the ragged figures. I discovered they were called Mutos. Billy woke up too. He tried to fight the Mutos off before he got knocked down, ending up unconscious again. I tried to wake Billy up. He wouldn't respond.

It was then a squad of green-uniformed soldiers, who I later discovered were Thals—Thals! I met them before!—turned up and shot one of the Mutos trying to get away. I was horrified. Another Muto, who I later knew as Sevrin, and me got taken away by the Thals. We were to be their slave labourers at their dome. I begged the Thals to take Billy with us. But the Thals told me to 'shut up', threatening me at gunpoint as they assumed him to be dead. They moved me and Sevrin off to the Thal Dome.

Hours later, I found myself working at the Thal Dome with the Mutos as well as a few of the black-uniformed soldiers that I discovered were called Kaleds and had become slaves. We were in a rocket silo, packing the nose cone of a Thal rocket with explosives.

I asked Sevrin what was happening. Sevrin, who was a kind-hearted man, shared that the Thals were placing their remaining resources into their rocket in the hopes of bringing them victory in a decisive final strike. Sevrin told me the explosives were distronic.

"But there's no shielding to protect us," I argued. "Don't the Thals care that we'll get distronic toxæmia and die after a few hours' exposure?"

"We're lucky to be alive as it is," Sevrin replied. "The Thals would have shot us on sight ordinarily."

I shook my head in disbelief. "I don't understand," I said. "I've met Thals before and they were never this cold-hearted."

"Who are you? You look too healthy to be one of us."

"What if I told you I was from another world? From a planet called Traken?"

"I'd say maybe you aren't so different from us after all."

I paused. His body had tightened, an instinct trying to make himself look larger. "You think I'm mad, don't you?"

“War does terrible things to people,” Sevrin told me. “Both to Kaleds and Thals. There’s no knowing who’s sane or insane anymore. I can’t blame you for wanting to run to the nearest fantasy and duck in cover.”

“Is it my clothes?”

“Your face, too healthy. You a Kaled weapons contractor or someone in the family?”

“Alright. If it will make the conversation go any easier, I could be. What about you? Whose side are you on in this war?”

Sevrin shrugged and said, “I’m a Muto. I don’t count.”

I shuddered in horror and disgust. I knew Sevrin had suffered a horrific mutation during the long thousand year war. Even he had forgotten what species he once was. I found myself being shoved by a burly Thal guard in a radiation suit who barked orders at me, saying, “Get back to work!”

I did as I was told, moving along with Sevrin beside me.

“If only we could get away and escape,” I said.

Sevrin shook his head sadly. “I’ve heard it’s been tried many times,” he said. “But every time a person tries to escape, the Thals catch you either dead or alive.” He paused for a moment. He must have seen the worry on my face. “I’m sorry, Nyssa,” he said. “But I don’t think there’s a chance of us getting out alive. I’d lie to you, but it’s kinder this way.”

“I don’t need any more reality.”

He shrugged. “As you say.”

An alarm bell went off. This startled all who were present in the rocket silo area including the Thals and the prisoners—Kaleds and Mutos alike—as well as me and Sevrin. Some of the prisoners attempted to escape as they began to run riot. But the Thal soldiers in radiation suits seized upon their chance to start shooting and gun down some prisoners before they escaped. Sevrin and I made sure to stay out of firing range whilst we ducked down behind the foot of the rocket silo.

We watched as the Thal soldiers in radiation suits were joined by Thals in green uniforms. The Thals fired their weapons—laser-like I believe they were. The Thals were shooting down many prisoners—Kaleds and Mutos. They seemed to completely ignore Sevrin and me. I hoped we might be

able to escape without being seen from our hiding place.

It all seemed too good to be true when one of the Thals in a radiation suit came by and knelt down towards us. I shrieked in terror. Sevrin held me back protectively.

The Thal raised his hands up and said, “Nyssa, it’s okay! It’s me, Nyssa! It’s me!”

I recognised that voice! The Thal took his helmet off and revealed himself as...Billy!

I sighed with relief before hugging my boyfriend, “Oh Billy, I’m so glad you’re alright!” After I embraced Billy, I asked, “How did you get here? How did you know where to find me?”

“I woke up as soon as you were taken by those soldiers,” Billy replied. “I knocked out one of the blokes in boiler suits, dressed myself up in this garb, discovered you were working here and went off to rescue you. It was me who set the alarm off.”

“We’re very grateful you came.”

“And speaking of rescue,” Billy continued, “we should get away as quickly as possible!”

“Of course,” I agreed. “But how do we get out? Where do we go from here?”

“There’s a tunnel passageway nearby,” Billy told me. “Come on! There’s no time to lose.”

It wasn’t long after me and Sevrin joined Billy that we were being chased by Thal soldiers. We ran as fast as we could with the Thals shooting at us. Fortunately the Thals missed us. Billy, Sevrin and me ran as fast as we could, making for the tunnel passageway nearby.

**POSTCARD TO MR. AND MRS. FRED WALKER
BY BILLY WALKER**

**[THANK YOU FOR YOUR PURCHASE OF THIS PANPAL DIGITAL POSTCARD.
BRIDGING THE COSMIC DIVIDE BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES.]**

Dear Mum and Dad,

It didn't take long to find the tunnel. I discovered it by chance whilst I was following Nyssa's trail after she and her friend Sevrin were taken by those soldiers into their building. Nyssa, Sevrin and I entered the tunnel whilst those Thal soldiers fired upon us. One almost shot Sevrin in the leg as well as me in the arm. Fortunately we entered the tunnel, locking the hatch behind us.

Once we were out of harm's way in the tunnel, Nyssa, Sevrin and I breathed a sigh of relief.

"Billy," Nyssa said. "Thank you so much for saving us! Now we need to go and find the Doctor. He's still in that other domed building. The one we were trying to get into."

"The Kaled dome, you mean?" Sevrin asked.

"You know a way to get into that place?" I asked him.

Sevrin nodded. "We came into these tunnels to scavenge for food. It was mostly in the day time when the creatures weren't about."

"Creatures?" Nyssa asked, puzzled.

"He'd be referring to the monsters I encountered in these tunnels," I told Nyssa. "I don't know what they are. They were too hideous and hungry-looking to look at that I had to get away."

"It's said they were the remains of deadly experiments," Sevrin told us. "You see, that's where most of the food comes from. The food we Mutos scavenge for. It's sent down into the tunnels at night from the service tunnels of the Kaled dome. The monstrosities get to the food before we do."

"It must be scraps from the Kaled kitchens," I suggested.

Nyssa said to Sevrin, "You said you knew a way into the Kaled dome."

"Yes," Sevrin said. "Through the service tunnels."

"You mean...we climb through the service tunnels to get to the Kaled dome?" I asked before shaking my head. "It sounds dangerous to me. And almost too easy."

"It won't be easy once we get inside, Billy," Nyssa said to me. "We'll have to pass many guards and soldiers to avoid being detected until we

find the Doctor.” She took a deep breath before saying, “But we have little choice.” Nyssa turned to Sevrin and said, “Take us to these service tunnels please, Sevrin.”

Sevrin nodded before saying, “This way!” as me and Nyssa followed him deeper into the gloomy tunnel. We treaded carefully, making sure we didn’t come across any monstrous creatures.

We’ve just rested up and have to start moving again. I’ve got to go, Mum and Dad. I’ll write to you again later on.

Love from your son, Billy Walker.

THE DOCTOR’S LOG—ACCOUNT 91651 (EXCERPT)

I was waiting in my prison cell. I discovered I was not in the Kaled dome anymore. I was inside a bunker a few miles away. I’d been beaten up a lot and said a lot of gobbledegook whilst learning this information. I also learned that the Kaled dome was bomb proof and the Elite Scientific Division had become powerful over the years.

It was that Ronson, the scientist who interrogated me earlier, came to visit me in my cell. Ronson seemed apologetic about the treatment I’d received.

There it was again! The image of a gun! Why was I seeing it?!

Ronson interrupted my thoughts. “You don’t seem surprised Davros has now called his new travel machine a Dalek.”

“Don’t I?” I asked. “Maybe it’s because I don’t know much about your Davros’s scientific projects.”

“Perhaps,” Ronson said dubiously. “Only four hours ago, Davros announced that henceforth his Mark Three travel machine would be referred to as a Dalek. Now, how could you have known that?”

“News travels quickly. Maybe Thal High Command already have knowledge of the travel machines.”

“Impossible, neither Davros, nor Nyder would never let the information leave the laboratory. No one else could have possibly known. There is an alternative, however...”

I leant forward. "I'm delighted you think so."

"Maybe you *do* come from another planet."

I didn't say anything, just smiled knowingly.

"Who are you?" Ronson asked. "Why are you here? Are you alone?"

After a few moments' silence, I leant back and replied, "To be honest, Mr Ronson, I'm not entirely sure. I know I came to Skaro for a reason." I paused for moment, thinking. "You're not happy working for your supreme commander, are you? It's not professional envy or pride, it's something else."

"An admission would be tantamount to treason, Doctor."

"So, who's admitting?"

Ronson said nothing for a moment. He went to make sure the prison cell doors were closed and that they weren't overheard. He told me that he and others of the Elite Scientific Division were concerned about Davros' project to create the machine creatures now called Daleks. Initially the Elite had been formed to produce weapons to end the thousand years' war that had happened between the Thals and the Kaleds. But it seemed that intention of the division's research had been turned into something immoral and evil by Davros. Ronson went into more detail about how Davros had attempted to reverse the genetic mutations caused by chemical weapons to create the ultimate creature.

The image of the gun came back to me again. It was clearer now. It vanished when I looked at Ronson again.

"Now, whether Kaled, Thal or... something else..." The thought disturbed him. "Surely, you have a vested interest in the development of this mutation? Surely that's why you're here?"

"Ronson, I will do all I can to help address your concerns about the Daleks."

"You must do more than that."

"How much more?"

"Before I continue, I must ask... Are you committed?"

"To the ultimate defeat of the Daleks? Without question."

Ronson considered for a moment. I suspected he wasn't sure whether to

believe me or not.

After a short while, Ronson said, "I'll help you all I can."

The words came from my mind without my consent. "Give me your gun."

It looked exactly like the one I'd seeing lately. My hand slipped across its grip until it became an extension of my arm. Warm. Comfortable. The fog in my mind felt as though it had narrowed to a column. I had focus.

Direction.

I was disturbed by all of this. I wondered why I would I arm myself like this. Why now?

"If your mission is to kill, Davros..." Ronson said slowly, "I can point you in the right direction to where he currently is."

I wasn't sure what to make of that. It sounded reasonable.

"Nyder will be an obstacle."

"You'll find I'm persuasive. Where are they?"

"Follow me," he replied.

Ronson opened the cell door. Fortunately no guard was outside. Earlier, Ronson had told the guard to leave as he would deal with me alone.

Once outside, Ronson gave me instructions on where to go.

"Go down the end of the corridor, Turn left, Then take a second right, Head off down the end of that corridor,, Then turn left again. There you should find his office. Have you got that?"

I memorised the instructions Ronson gave me. The brightest of my recent memories. It seemed easy.

"I believe so," I replied. "The gun?"

"It's fully loaded," Ronson reassured me. "You can use it to shoot down any guards you encounter. When you see Davros, you can use it to assassinate him."

"Violence is alien to me as a means of resolving conflict," I protested.

"I don't understand, you took the gun yourself."

"Yes..." it felt as though it had fused to my hand. "Yes, I did..."

"If it's what you came here to do," Ronson replied, "then you'll be freeing us from an unwanted future? Isn't that nobility? The future of both

the Kaleds and the Thals has been decided on less..”

Just then, footsteps echoed nearby.

“Quickly,” Ronson insisted. “You must go quickly before you’re caught. I’ll keep whoever’s coming occupied.”

With that, Ronson left me to attend to whoever was approaching nearby. I pondered for a moment. Very soon, I made a dash for it. I headed off to find Davros in his office and presumably kill him. The image of the gun came back to me. To taunt me.

Is this a firearm I see before thee, with its muzzle pointing towards my hand?

Will would have been proud.

**EXTRACT FROM: OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS, A JOURNAL
BY NYSSA OF TRAKEN**

Billy and I came out of the dark tunnel as Sevrin now guided us through cave-like structures. We had come across some deadly mutations on the way. One of them stretched out and wanted to eat Billy’s head. Thankfully Sevrin and I were there to pull Billy away and the monster returned to the darkness. It wasn’t a pleasant journey. Would we ever reach the service tunnels?

Thankfully we did as Sevrin pointed the entrance to the service tunnels before us.

“Here you are,” Sevrin said. “It’s small and cramped to crawl into, but you should be alright.”

“Thanks,” Billy said wryly. “I’ll remember to breathe in and keep my arms and legs tucked in.”

“Sevrin, thank you,” I said graciously to him. “We couldn’t have asked for any more help.”

Sevrin nodded and said, “If you wish me to accompany you then...”

“No Sevrin,” I insisted. “Go back to your people.”

“But there must be something I can do,” Sevrin said.

“He’s got a point, Nyssa,” Billy said. “After all, it’s Daleks we’re tackling. We’ll need all the help we can get.”

I considered for a moment. “Sevrin! Round up some of your people and any surviving members of the war willing to help—Kaleds, Thals, Mutos. Have them gathered and tell them to stand by.”

“Stand by for what?” Sevrin asked.

“I don’t know,” I replied. “The Doctor will know. Wait for us at the crumbled ruins where we met. Billy, the Doctor and I will return and tell you what needs to be done.”

“Avoid any Daleks,” Billy told Sevrin. “You don’t want to be exterminated before we return.”

Sevrin considered, then nodded and said, “Very well. I’ll gather as many people as I can.”

“Thanks again, Sevrin,” I said. “Off you go and good luck!”

“Yes good luck, Sevrin,” Billy said encouragingly.

Sevrin acknowledged before he headed off out of the tunnel. He said, “Good luck to you too!” to us as he headed off.

Billy and I soon lost sight of Sevrin once he left. After a little while, we looked at each other before turning to the service tunnels.

“I suppose we’d better get on with it then,” Billy said.

I took hold of Billy’s hand to reassure him. “Come on,” I said. “Let’s get the hatch off this service tunnel.”

POSTCARD TO MR. AND MRS. FRED WALKER

BY BILLY WALKER

**[THANK YOU FOR YOUR PURCHASE OF THIS PANPAL DIGITAL POSTCARD.
BRIDGING THE COSMIC DIVIDE BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES.]**

Dear Mum and Dad,

It wasn’t long before Nyssa and I got the hatch off the service tunnel. We got inside and crawled through the tunnel. Nyssa was in front of me. We were cautious as we made our way through the tunnel. We heard roars and snarls nearby, presumably from monsters.

It was then we came to a grille in the tunnel.

“Nyssa, be careful!” I cried out. “There’s...”

“I know,” Nyssa replied. “I see the grille.” She paused before saying, “Those deadly mutations sound closer. Don’t let any of them bite you, Billy!”

“Same for you too, dear.”

We eventually passed the grille and thankfully avoided a claw from a monster getting through to us. We crawled further away from the grille, not speaking to each other for some time. We were determined to get out of the tunnel as soon as possible. Hopefully in the bunker underneath the Kaled dome.

Nyssa and I managed to get out of the tunnel as we found the hatchway. We pushed it open and soon stepped into a corridor. No-one was around. Nyssa and I agreed to keep quiet and be alert at all times.

“Where do we go from here?” I whispered. “This must be the bunker Sevrin told us about.”

“Yes,” Nyssa replied. “Let’s hope we can find the Doctor.”

“Where do you suppose they’ve taken him?” I asked before saying, “It’s a pity we don’t have a weapon to knock out anybody who tries to stop us.”

“No matter,” Nyssa said. “We’ll do without weapons.”

“Alright then. Which is it to be? Left or right?”

Nyssa thought for a moment. She considered her bearings.

“We go right.”

With that, Nyssa and I headed off turning right down the corridor.

I’ll be in touch again soon, Mum and Dad. Stay tuned!

Love from your son, Billy Walker.

THE DOCTOR’S LOG—ACCOUNT 91651 (EXCERPT)

I didn’t shoot anyone on my journey to Davros’ office. I avoided being spotted and thankfully the alarm didn’t go off. I knew I would have to use the gun I was carrying for a specific purpose. To kill the creator of the Daleks. But why? Why must I do this?

It was at that moment I came to the door of Davros’ office. I pressed a

switch and the door opened. I entered and there was Davros in his Dalek-like wheelchair with his back to me. He was in the centre of the room. He must have heard me enter as the door made an electronic noise as it opened.

“Nyder?” Davros swivelled round to face me. “Ah...”

There was a moment’s silence. I held the gun firmly in my right hand. Davros didn’t seem alarmed to see me. “Welcome, Doctor.”

I couldn’t help be surprised. “You know me, then?”

“I’ve been reading the initial reports of your interrogation by Ronson,” Davros replied. “Most illuminating... I knew he would set you free from your cell. He showed Thal sympathies when he interrupted my demonstration of the Dalek machine I created. To risk such ostracisation before the Elite? For the life of a Thal? That is a fact that required further investigation.”

“Don’t harm Ronson...”

“Ronson will be dealt with later,” Davros said. “I am more interested in the claims you made that you travel through space and time. Here on Skaro, it is a concept utterly dismissed.”

“But you seem more willing to believe me.”

“Perhaps I am more flexible, Doctor,” Davros said. “Though the power of such travel is beyond my current scientific comprehension, it is not beyond my imagination.”

I thought I had heard Davros say those words before. But when? I couldn’t seem to remember. Davros asked me why I had come here.

To stop the development of the Daleks.

“To kill you, Davros.”

I raised the gun in my right hand, aiming directly at Davros. The image of the gun came back in my eyesight with the red haze all over it. I kept my concentration whilst focusing my aim.

Davros didn’t seem perturbed. He seemed rather amused. Or was it intrigued?

“And the truth reveals itself to me, at last,” Davros said. “You are not the first to try and kill me. You will not be the last. I may not know you,

but I sense an element of weakness from you. A pacifism. Something I've eradicated from my Daleks. It will make them stronger to overcome their enemies."

"It's because of the Daleks I have come to kill you, Davros," I told him. "Your abominations will cause destruction and the loss of millions of lives."

"Lives will be saved!" he protested. "Skaro will become a crucible for the ultimate form of life. There will be victory and an end to the war with the Thals. Your ancestors!"

"I'm no Thal."

"They'll hang you as one!"

The red haze burned. I held a hand to my ear, trying to drown out the static.

"You seem... overwrought, Doctor. Could it be that you do not wish to kill me?"

I hesitated, but kept the gun firmly in my right hand. "I don't know," I eventually replied. "But it's something I've got to do... An image of gun with a red haze seems to be telling me that... that..."

"And where did you get this image from, Doctor?" Davros asked. "When did you first see it?"

I was about to ignore Davros' questions when it suddenly hit me. It was when I first arrived in the desolate battlefields outside the Kaled dome. That was when I first saw the image. I told this to Davros.

"I have seen the effects of mental conditioning applied to unwilling specimens. The subjects become erratic, confused and innately prone to suggestion," Davros triggered a switch on his chair and raised his hand. "Listen to my voice. You'll be making a terrible mistake. Your attempt to assassinate me might mean the loss of millions of lives itself. You'll be causing the destruction of all life. Your world should not exist. Put down the gun, Doctor."

I was about to falter and lose concentration. But I kept my aim fixed on Davros, pointing the gun at him and said, "No! It's something I have to do. I must kill you, Davros! I must... kill you! I could do it before, I can do

it again. Only this time, I can look you in the eye and—”

Even as I said those words, the image of the gun was blazing red before my eyes. It was beginning to be excruciatingly painful again. I still aimed the gun I carried directly at Davros.

**EXTRACT FROM: OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS, A JOURNAL
BY NYSSA OF TRAKEN**

We didn't know what to expect when we searched various corridors and rooms to find our friend, the Doctor. It was by chance that one of the rooms Billy and I entered happened to have the Doctor in it. We went in, relieved to see him.

“Doctor,” I said. “Oh, I'm glad you're alright!”

“Stay back, Nyssa, Billy,” the Doctor told us, almost hypnotised. “I must do this!”

I was puzzled when I saw the Doctor holding a gun in his right hand.

“Doctor, what are you doing?”

We looked to see who the Doctor was pointing the gun at.

Billy gasped, horrified.

“So, Doctor... You have allies, after all...”

“It's him!” Billy exclaimed. “That cripple in the wheelchair! The one we saw with the Dalek in the crumbled ruins!”

“Cripple? My Daleks shall become the masters of the universe! I have a greater purity of thought than anyone else in this bunker, let alone this room!”

“It's alright,,” the Doctor said reassuringly. “Everything will be quite alright. I'm going to kill Davros... And the Daleks will never happen.”

“What?!” Billy said, alarmed. “That's not like you, Doctor. It's a bit extreme!”

“Billy's right!” I told the Doctor. “You can't do it! You can't kill someone in cold blood!”

“Listen to your friends, Doctor,” the cripple said hypnotically. “Their words have reason!” “Don't you see, you two? If I kill Davros, the universe

will be safe! It's what I came to do! I'm to save the universe from the Daleks by killing Davros!"

"Are you sure that's what you came here to do, Doctor?" I asked him.

The Doctor was puzzled. "I... I don't understand," he said.

"You said 'save the universe from the Daleks by killing Davros,'" Billy reminded him. "Were you given those instructions when we came here, Doctor?"

The Doctor struggled to think. "Yes... No... I mean... I keep seeing an image of a gun. It's been with me ever since we arrived. When Davros is in the room, I see the image of the gun covered with a red haze... It must mean I have to kill Davros!"

"No, it doesn't!" I told him. "That image could've been planted into your mind by some alien intelligence. Our memories... We weren't sure, remember? This could all be to make you do something you're not supposed to do. Are you sure you're correct in your judgement to kill someone in cold blood?"

The Doctor seemed sure of himself. At first. "Except..."

"Yes?" Billy and I asked in tow.

The Doctor hesitated again. "I'm sure this happened before... In another lifetime..." The Doctor paused for a moment.

"Who sent you to stop the development of the Daleks, Doctor?" Davros asked.

Again the Doctor struggled to think at first. But then he said, "The Time Lords! Yes! It was the Time Lords who sent me!"

The Doctor then seemed to have a seething headache as he shut his eyes. Billy and I came beside him to support him. Davros had activated his communicator switch and begun ordering in the military as I asked the Doctor what the matter was.

"The image of the gun I see!" he replied. "It keeps getting redder! I feel my head's on fire when this happens! But why?! Why is this happening to me?!"

At that moment, soldiers entered the room. They circled Davros' office, pointing their weapons at us—me, the Doctor and Billy. Nyder strode in,

about to give the order to fire, but Davros told the leader of the soldiers to wait and observe. The Doctor seemed to be in more pain now.

After some time and rather suddenly, the Doctor cried out as he threw the gun down to the floor. He looked up and seemed to be talking to the ceiling.

“No!” he shouted. “No, I won’t do your dirty work! No matter how justified you think it is I should kill someone, I won’t take that chance!”

The Doctor moved away from us. Billy and I were awestruck and befuddled by this point.

The Doctor continued shouting and said, “I won’t do it, do you hear? I won’t kill Davros! I’m listening to my friends Nyssa and Billy here! If you want Davros killed send in somebody else!”

He fell to the ground on his knees, snarling like an animal.

“A pity...” said Davros. “He is a madman, after all...”

“Open fire!” Nyder snapped.

Suddenly, Billy, the Doctor and I seemed to be enveloped in some... light. A bright, white light! Davros and the soldiers didn’t respond. The light didn’t affect them. Soon, Billy, the Doctor and I found ourselves fading into the white light.

POSTCARD TO MR. AND MRS. FRED WALKER

BY BILLY WALKER

**[THANK YOU FOR YOUR PURCHASE OF THIS PANPAL DIGITAL POSTCARD.
BRIDGING THE COSMIC DIVIDE BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES.]**

Dear Mum and Dad,

I woke up to find myself, Nyssa and the Doctor back in the TARDIS. I felt groggy. What had happened to us recently? I remembered we were in a room with that ghastly looking cripple. The Doctor was shouting up at the ceiling for some reason. There was this bright white light and we blacked out.

Nyssa came over to me to check I was alright. I told her I was and we turned to the Doctor. With little hesitation, he asked to see our notes and

compare.

“Doctor, what happened?” Nyssa asked. “How come we’re back in the TARDIS? We were just about to be shot and you were shouting out loud to someone.”

“That’s right, Nyssa,” the Doctor replied, preoccupied. “I was talking to the Time Lords. I assume they were responsible for putting us on Skaro in the first place.”

“The Time Lords?!” I said, surprised. “They had us go through that?!”

“Hence why we’re back in the TARDIS,” the Doctor replied. “The Time Lords must have sent us on a mission to stop the development of the Daleks. The first time, I refused, I feared that if I killed them I’d end up like them.”

“Do you still feel that way, Doctor?” I asked.

He looked at me, haunted, but didn’t answer.

“So all that happened with the three of us, Davros, Skaro and the development of the Daleks... It could have been in an alternative reality?” Nyssa suggested. “A parallel existence?”

“Indeed, a unique opportunity provided by a recent universal tumult. Or two. Who knows how many other microrealities have been created in an attempt to stop the development of the Daleks? Incidentally...”

“Yes?”

“Best to check the TARDIS’s link to the Matrix, just to be safe...”

Dumping the journal and postcards on the console, he activated the computer and ran a check through its memory. “As I thought. It wasn’t enough to remake the universe in miniature, they had to possess my own genuine self. Irresponsible, pompous lot! We’ll soon be out of here.”

“Will we forget what we’ve been through once we’ve stepped out of the TARDIS?” asked Nyssa.

The Doctor thumped the console. “They’ll have to catch us first.”

“Is it really just the Time Lords, Doctor?” I asked. “There could have been a small group that wanted us to change history with the creation of the Daleks as they would have done to others.”

“That occurred to me too, Billy,” the Doctor said. “But the mental

blocks, the reduction to primitive instincts at a trigger... It smells of the CIA. Time Lords, again, except..."

"Except what?" Nyssa asked.

"Why *me*? Why not a projected copy or one of my past selves? I wonder if they were trying to achieve something different with my current incarnation. Not just in my past, but in my future too?"

"I don't understand," I said.

"While you were unconscious, I had time to consider... The assassination attempt on Davros might have something to do with what I might do in the future. That I may..."

"That you may compromise your morals?" Nyssa asked slowly.

"That I may murder one man to save the lives of many? In this life or, perhaps, another... The Daleks are locked in stasis with the Movellans for now, Nyssa, but for how much longer?"

"Doctor," she looked at him earnestly. "What aren't you telling me?"

He picked at his fingernails. "I'll admit, I considered it before, as my fourth self. It was during my second encounter with Davros. I thought with one press of the bomb's detonator, a terrible evil would never be permitted to rise again."

"Did you do it?" I asked.

The Doctor winced, visibly distressed by the memory. The unspoken word was *Yes*. "I failed there because I hesitated. Today, I hesitated. Barely. But tomorrow..."

I was baffled by his words, but I couldn't help feel a sense of dread. "You're scared."

"A future where I can accomplish such a thing and consider myself beyond reproach, Billy, is not one that I would want to live in," he leant forward over the console, suddenly looking very tired. "Yet, it may be one that I inevitably create."

Mum and Dad, I don't know what the future holds for us, but I'll send these postcards to you once the Doctor, Nyssa and I step out of the TARDIS. Remember us.

Love from your son, Billy Walker.

DIVERGENT WORDSMITHS

GENESIS OF TERROR

A DALEK SHORT STORY STARRING

PETER BUTTERWORTH, GRAEME GARDEN, RUFUS HOUND AND CHRIS ADDISON



CAT 1/19

THE MANY MONKS

WRITTEN BY CHRIS TAYLOR



THE MANY MONKS

By Chris Taylor

The sky was pink with unhealthy fog. The dead brown hills were far away. The flat, barren ground rumbled.

There was no strength left in young Davros's legs. But terror would not let his limbs yield to gravity. For to do so was unquestionably to die. All around the filthy and bruised boy, mud-grey hands reached out for him. Staring at him with eyes of poison green, each one a parody of life's essence. The most horrifying thing of all was how dispassionate said eyes were. So relentless in their search for weakness upon which to prey. Unblinking. Unyielding.

Were his own blue eyes all that different? a part of him asked. The part that never allowed itself to be cowed by terror, only moved forward by determination. The part that his agemates shied away from. Buried under cold sweat and torn hand-me-downs, a little piece of Davros howled against the injustice of such an ignoble death. Refusing to give in.

An alien sound—a sickly wheezing grind the likes of which he'd never heard before—gave him a target, and that renewed his resolve. Trembling, he turned around. To see, roughly fifteen meters off, an outcropping of half-shattered rock that he could have sworn hadn't been there mere moments minutes before. No, it hadn't been there at all! Davros *knew* it! If it had been, he'd have run right into it! By the ancient, dead gods he'd have leapt onto it for refuge from these horrible hands!

From behind these rocks, the only ones larger than a pebble for miles, approached another impossible sight. A mid-sized man wearing dark brown robes of a sort the boy had never encountered before, bound at the waist by a simple cord. A dozen ways in which that rope could be used as a weapon rushed through the boy's mind even as he catalogued further physical features. The man's hair was short and brown, grey at the temples.

His face was kind and rectangular, and a little over-fed. He was a stranger to young Davros' eyes. And on Skaro, 'stranger' meant 'enemy.'

Yet Davros could not run away from the man's soft-footed approach, nor charge at his bloated throat. He was very much surrounded.

The stranger drew a rose a small, conic device to his mouth. It amplified his words, which at first came in short bursts. "I know it sounds impossible, my boy, and you have every reason not to, but you have to trust me." His words were quite sincere, but that could be faked.

Knowing that handmines did not respond in any meaningful way to sound, the boy shouted back with all his remaining might. "Who are you? Why should I trust you?"

"I'm all alone out here," the man said, again after a brief hesitation. "I could use a friend in this terrible place. Couldn't you?"

Davros considered his options, and the multiple potential weapons hidden within his satchel.

"Wouldn't you rather take your chances with me than them?" the robed one asked, this time with a notably darker lilt in his voice. "Hmmm?"

Davros quietly unlatched the flap of his satchel, calculated a way to reach his hand into it unseen, and nodded.

The man praised his bravery with a smile and a bizarre hand gesture. A raised fist with the thumb extended. Setting the amplifier to a hook on his 'belt,' he drew out of his clothes a long, thin device, blinking green at both ends. Which he brought to his face and wiggled as one would a pacifier before an infant. "This device will create a prismatic corridor between you and those 'rocks' there. The... things caught inside will be blinded. Quite unable to harm you."

Davros nodded again, firmly resolved to kill this intruder at first opportunity. Practical enough to keep that intention from reaching his face. The other was still smiling as he tossed the device over. It landed harmlessly near his boot. Nobody's fool, Davros made a careful visual inspection of the blinking thing before reaching down to it.

The instant the boy contacted the device, he was reduced to his constituent quarks. The energy released from his annihilation was

sufficient to heat the air around him to high enough temperature to melt dozens of the handmines in a wide circle. The rest, now deprived of a victim, descended back into the muck. The lightly chuckling murderer merely walked back behind the broken rocks, and vanished with them.

For several decades, the scene of a promising boy's death would stand witness to yet more violence. Acts of bloodshed great and small, achingly loud and terribly private. Until, at last, there was quiet. A peace enforced by a trio of green-cased Daleks floating over the patchy handmines upon a transolar disc.

“PATROL SQUAD SEVEN REPORTING!” The one in the middle-front announced to its Emperor, listening many miles away. **”SECTOR SECURED! ALL IS WELL!”**



Old Bettan felt every one of her fifty years, standing with anxious breath in the steel-lined corridor. She'd hardly stopped running during the hour since her infiltration team's scout had brought to her a strange, oddly infuriating man dressed in the sleek colours of Kaled aristocracy. A man—travelling under the name Mortemik—claiming to carry important information that she and her fellow Thals needed to hear. Secret data regarding some new weapon called ‘Dalek.’ Secrets which soon revealed themselves to be deathly true.

An hour of running. Her team barely keeping one step ahead of Kaled troops, losing someone at every turn. Now, she and Mortemik were all that was left. Now, the fate of a whole world was reduced to two wires. One red, one green. Ends stripped to reveal two finger-widths worth of naked metal. That was all that stood between a world of peace and sanity and a world of mechanized monsters. A world even worse than the one she'd been born to. Old Bettan had risked—and damn near given—everything to prevent from ever coming into being.

These immeasurably important wires stood in the hands of the man standing next to her. The energy coursing between the frayed lines was enough to add even more curl to the man's bountiful, ginger moustache.

“Another man my position, burdened by an overabundance of sanctimony, perhaps, might ask himself if he had the right to do this.”

The platinum-haired warrior’s arms tensed beneath her green jumpsuit. Was the self-proclaimed Oncoming Storm seriously not going to go through with the endpoint of his scheme? After all the other opportunities he’d had to lose his nerve? Here, in the heart of Science Leader Ral’s bioweapon facility?

The man looked to his co-conspirator with manic glee in his eyes. Unable to restrain a teasing guffaw. “The correct answer is, ‘Of course I do! I’m a Time Lord!’ “He rammed the wires together with giddy abandon. Explosion after explosion set off within the room just behind her. *boof. Boof! BOOF! BOOF!!!* A chain of destruction coming her way with force enough to all but knock her off her feet. When the aging warrior once more stood fully upright, her strange and often irritating companion was holding a crusty looking armband covered in spirals.

“That’s one disaster averted,” the woman said warily, looking and listening down both ends of the corridor for Supremo Nyder’s security forces. New beads of nervous sweat finding room for themselves on her brow. “But it’s not over yet.”

“Oh, of course not silly girl,” he laughed. “But I expect for you it soon will be.”

“What the hell are you talking about,” she demanded. “We can still make the rendezvous, if you’ll move your arse. And what the blazes is a Time-Lord?”

“Look around you,” The man started dancing around in a stuttering circle centred on the band. “You’re in the middle of a secret base surrounded by enemies who are just about to find out that they’ve lost their ultimate weapon. Not for the first time, if you want to get nitpicky. I don’t much like your chances when they catch you!” He tipped the side of his head downwards at her in that way common to old maths tutors chiding a student who failed to put together all the pieces of an equation for themselves. “And isn’t it strange that our backup hasn’t arrived? It’s

almost as if someone sent the baddies a coded transmission giving them something to do other than keep on our tails.”

“You son of a slyther!” Bettan lunged, hands outstretched to claim his throat. But it had become intangible.

“Only room on this ride for one!” The double-dealing bastard faded away as he supplied this final taunt. Leaving Bettan alone to hear, and flee from, the sound of oncoming footsteps.

“Nothing for it but to take as many of those scum with me as I can.” She wasted no further time fuming at the betrayal, instead breaking into a run down the eastward corridor. She hadn’t quite reached her last stash of explosives before running directly into a squad of enemy troopers led by none other than Security Commander Kravos. Like her, his hair was fading to grey, and his face was lined with experience and loss.

“Fire,” was the sole word Old Bettan heard before the world turned very bright and then became very dark.

Less than five years later, the very spot of Bettan’s death stood host to a relief of her face, a determined stare cast in bronze. The lower half of the plaque bore her name with many others. Between her visage and the names of the honoured dead, twenty embossed words:

**IN THIS PLACE DEDICATED TO DEATH, THE
CHAMPIONS OF PEACE GAVE ALL PEOPLES OF SKARO A
SECOND CHANCE AT LIFE.**

This plaque stood for centuries, and saw many a penitent visitor, before the day came when it was exploded by three focused bursts of blue-hot energy. Its destroyer, a Dalek in aquamarine casing studded with half globes of purest white. Rolling across the floor, the metal monster’s eye stalk looking for any trace of new targets to kill. Thals or Kaleds, it didn’t matter which.

It’s battlecry: “**◀X-TERR-MIN-ATE!**”



Scientist Shan had lost count of the number of times she'd taken off her glasses to rub the bridge of an irritated nose. She'd only been wearing them a week, but it seemed as though she'd never get used to them. *'If only Ral had been less careless during that energy weapon test, I wouldn't have to deal with the damned things on top of everything else.'*

Still, there was work to be done. And a distraction to endure before she could get back to it. She stopped outside the door she'd been summoned to in order to check her stark white jacket for any sign of imperfection. Her cropped brown hair received a quick comb-through, after which she knocked upon the portal to Minister Mortemik's office.

"Enter," came a jubilant reply. The man sitting behind a stark black desk inside bore receding white hair. The cut of uniform and shape of his rank pips were such that she'd never seen before on a living figure. This grey-eyed elder allowed her a moment to recall the icon from her history lessons at the Military Youth.

"I thought the Religious Elite was disbanded centuries ago," she told him, barely containing her surprise. "When the rulers of the time determined that the gods of old had abandoned the Kaled people, or at least had ceased to be of any used to them. That we were on our own against the Thals and Mutos."

"It was," he nodded. Steepling his fingers, he spoke on, "But in these troubled times, Supremo Calcula has seen the wisdom in dusting off some of the old ideas, to see if they might be evolved to meet our people's current needs. Evolution, my child, is the reason I why wanted to speak to you." With a wave of a hand, he directed her to sit down at the only other chair in the room, which stood directly opposite his desk.

No sooner had she sat down did he remove a sealed document from beneath the very official-looking folder to his right. The folder was labelled **CLASSIFIED TOP SECRET**. The document, turned for her eyes and slid closer to them, bore a title with which she was very familiar.

THE DALEK SOLUTION

“Scientist Shan, is that your name stamped upon the title page?” he asked.

“It is,” she said, truthfully.

“And are the words to be found within yours and your alone?”

“They are.” There was obedience in her voice, but a question in her eyes.

Mortemik gave her a kind smile, bright and wide enough to crinkle the lines of his eyes. “I thought so. I just wanted to hear it from you.” He shook his head, the weight of a world suddenly upon his shoulders.

“These days, you never know what enemies lurk in one’s own home. Some self-serving worm might try to claim credit for your ingenuity. Climb the ranks of the Scientific Elite on the back of a brilliant woman, whom no doubt will be left to wallow in anonymity while he rises higher still.”

Shan couldn’t help but think of the prior week’s incident at the testing range. Had her near-blinding really been an accident? No, she couldn’t see Ral resorting to such devious means! Nor Ronsen, the active head of their research and development team. But perhaps one of them was being used as a tool of another...? Kavell, then? Yes, she could see him peeking from the shadows with hungry eyes. Always keeping his inmost thoughts clear of the light.

The very idea of having her intellectual accomplishments stolen away stuck in Shan’s throat. With stiff back and high nose she declared, “I wrote the paper. And if you doubt me, I can lead you to a stash of papers I’ve secreted away. My earliest works on the concept, and notes on the ancient documents that led me to the insight. In my handwriting, still covered no doubt in my biometrics.”

“Oh ho, that won’t be necessary,” the old man laughed. His hands clapped triumphantly. “As I said, I believe you!” He reached for two glasses that she hadn’t noticed on the table before. “I’m afraid I have little in the way of congratulating you for your success. But may I offer you a drink?” From within his desk he procured a small blue bottle, the contents of which he poured into the glass, filling the space between them with a bitter-sweet bouquet. He emptied his own cup quickly, and let out a satisfied exhalation. “Dalazarian wine. From my own private reserves.”

Again, her mind returned to that flash of blue agony. The demands for more viable disruption results had increased not long after Nyder was promoted into Calcula's inner circle. Only a handful of days in the infirmary, and she was already lagging behind her peers. Perhaps it was time to finally start playing the game. Indulge her superior's whims, if only to allow him to accept her as his ally. *First, make sure my own future in the Elite is secured. Then slowly slip the right words into conversation. Learn if this one's a friend to the pacifist movement, or could be made one.*' The young woman claimed the glass, tipped it in his direction, and took an experimental sip. It was all of the third time her lips had tasted alcohol, and the woman for whom everything could be whittled down to definable elements was at a loss as to how to catalogue the flavours. Yet his eyes were staring eagerly at her, wide and bright, as though expecting to hear what she thought of his precious brew. She opened her mouth to improvise an assessment—

Nothing came out. And nothing went in. With horror in her eyes, she realized she wasn't breathing. She dropped the cup, and slumped into her chair, unable to leap free of it.

The man's smile never faded. "That bitter flavour washing over your tongue right about now is the juice of a Judas Tree. I don't expect you to know the name. It's not at all local. I coated the glass you drank from before you arrived." The only reply his victim could offer was to limply collapse onto his desk. The strength in her arms completely sapped. Though her muscles refused to move, within them there was fire. Every inch of her vascular system burning so intensely she could mentally map out her every vein and artery. Through these hellish seconds she was denied even the catharsis of a scream, for her lungs were already dead.

The elder sighed, "I apologize for the pain you are experiencing. Really, I do. Truth be told, that particular toxin was meant for someone else. But *we're*—that is to say, I'm—running out of options..." He rose from his seat, to come pat her trembling back. "My other selves would never have appreciated your ingenuity. I've learned better. I want you to know that."

The light left Shan's eyes, and 'Mortemik' slipped her life's work under his arm. Straightening his cuffs, he retreated behind the desk. Where he

tapped opened a secret panel on one of the support beams at the back of the room. It opened, revealing an impossibly large space inside, centred around a hexagonal control console. Once he was inside, the panel closed, and the beam disappeared. Leaving nothing behind but a wheezing echo which no one could hear.

The discovery of Scientist Shan's body, and its connection to the revived Religious Elite were but one blow of many to Supremo Calcula's reign over the Kaled people. She suffered many more before her regime was toppled by her protégé, Nyder. And, conniver that she was, she buried many secrets by way of holding off the end. But secrets, particularly the nasty ones, have a way of becoming uncovered. And when the secret designs of Scientist Shan were finally put into use, some two thousand years on, they led inexorably to the end of Kaled and Thal alike. And the final obliteration of (almost) everything they had ever created.

Where Calcula's estate once stood, there came to rise a vast complex, circles upon circles of construction crowned by a fifty-story-high spire. A shining tower of metal supported by eight struts, all rising from a spherical base half-buried in the rubble-strewn land. A complex lorded over by a mustard-yellow Dalek Supreme from a control room miles away from this orbital cannon. Who watched with satisfaction while another test module full of mind-wiped slaves was loaded into the spire. **“INITIATE FINAL COUNTDOWN TO MOON ROCKET LAUNCH! THE DALEK CONQUEST OF SPACE BEGINS NOW!”**



The domed bell tower of the Kiskany Monastery tolled its beckon call to the citizens of 16th Century Milan. Upon the grounds within lay a chequered picnic blanket complete with Styrofoam cooler. Sitting atop the blanket, in the thick red robes and golden trim of a Venetian bishop, was the Time Lord known as Mortimus. Who finished off the last of a platter of buttered scones before lazily picking taking a large, black journal from the basket and placing it on top as an impromptu desk. He produced a

ballpoint pen from under his skullcap, and sounded a *pop!* when clicking the retractor pin.

“Dear Me,” the brown-haired man spoke while he wrote, as was his habit, “Met with one Leonardo da Vinci today. Discussed powered flight. Quite the scatterbrain, that one. No, cross that!” He did exactly so, eradicating his previous line with a gash of ink. “Attention span of a flea. Kept going on about that silly horse sculpture rather than talk real innovation.” He underlined the final two words repeatedly before continuing, “But I’ll get him. Or I will, when his package is delivered.”

Tapping his pen against his chin, he continued, “One crate full of Scorchies, delivered parcel press! They made a mess of Hero of Alexandria’s workshop, let’s see Leo do better! LOL!” His laughter continued from the page, a light and fluttering thing. But it soon slowed, melting into a concern frown. “Hmm, I’d best pay that Maldovar fellow off! He might actually be able to send someone to come collect!”

Addressing the journal once more, he added, “Must remember to drop by the Bank of Karabraxos and deposit some finds to pick up the interest on later. Perhaps a millennium? No need to be greedy! Not today anyway! HA!”

Closing the journal shut, Mortimus lay back to bask in visions of his soon-to-be-savoured victory. Not long after, he noticed an odd sound on the breeze. A bird migration, perhaps? Did Italy get starlings this far north? “No,” he realized, craning his ears. “That’s a... A TARDIS! Landing by the cloister!” Eyes wide with terror, he bolted to his feet. “No! They won’t get me again!” He ran as fast as his legs could move in the cumbersome outfit. Only to rush back to collect the journal.

He raced to the wine cellars and a stacked pile of thick, rounded barrels within. Opening a secret hinge in same, he retreated into the safety of his own time machine. There to find an orange-topped ne’er-do-well grinning a Cheshire smile from the other side of the control console. Dressed as a Victorian-era safari hunter, pith helmet and all. Sitting in Mortimus’s favourite lounge chair, the cheek! His feet were propped up on the

cluttered Navigation Panel, between the Sceptre of Dagobert's avian head and an autographed copy of *The Life And Times of Scrooge McDuck*.

"Hello, you!" the ginger beamed. "Oh, no wait, that's someone else's line, ha-ha. Hello... *me!*" The absolutely impish grin was twined with the twirling of his sizable moustache.

"Me?" Mortimus blanched, pointing to himself with both hands. Then his apparently future self. "You?" Next a hand to each of them, this time with the beginnings of a smile. "Us!"

"And not for the first time, pally-boy!" beamed the other, who leapt up to give the outstretched hand a hearty shake. "Who do you think stole you away from Celestial Intervention in the first place?"

Come to think of it, Mortimus was a bit fuzzy on the details of how his 'sabbatical' from Gallifreyan black ops had started... "That's the trouble with being the first one," Mortimus grouched, clapping his fellow renegade's back. "I'll never get to remember these mashups."

"So write it all down. That's what I do." The man who next entered Mortimus's home was dressed in business attire from several centuries off in the planet's relative future. He had a large, balding head and small eyes that seemed ill at ease with the bright light and white walls of the room's Default desktop format. In one hand he carried a boombox from the 1980s. This he deposited upon the nearby Osiran ossuary. He pressed a button, replaying the sound that had driven Mortimus to this rendezvous. "I've got all the hits on this beauty. Our TARDIS, the Rani's, The Corsair's, The Artisan's. Oh, you've not met that last one yet, have you? Remind me to fill you in before we go our separate ways."

"Two in one day!" Mortimus's smile couldn't get any brighter. Extracting himself from one later self, he offered his hand to this second. "You know—well, I *know* you know—I've had in mind a way we could differentiate each other when a day like this arrived. And has before, apparently." This last comment he murmured to himself. "Shall we?"

"Why not?" The larger fellow slid a hand up his balding forehead he declared himself, "Mortimus Lux at your service. Which makes you...?" He addressed the other up-and-comer.

Mortimus Ignus. And you?”

“Mortimus Brunneis.” The original model added a slight bow to his introduction. He hopped-to to serve refreshments. Though first he had to clear a mound of bric-a-brac from the assigned roundel. “So, what brings you fine gentlemen to my neck of the timeline?”

Followed by Ignus, Lux made for the chaise lounge to one corner. “Let’s say somewhere in your near future you’re going to make some rather unfortunate friends,” he suggested.

“You won’t. Not anymore,” said Ignus, patting something hidden in his jacket. “You’re very welcome! But say you did, and in even more time, these ‘friends,’ these Daleks, start soaking up more and more of the CIA’s attention.”

Brunneis had a long face on when he approached with a Silurian-silver tray covered in snacks and soft drinks. Quite the selection of them in fact, as he had no idea what he’d be partial to in his future.

Lux helped himself to a Grape Nehi and a double serving of chocolate fingers. “Let’s say CIA timescoops you, salivating for your experience with Daleks, and give you very little choice but to help them eradicate the lot of them.”

“You mean keep them from ever becoming a threat in the first place,” reasoned Brunneis warily, placing the tray down before he could drop it. Never picking up the Lindis Fizz he’d intended for himself. “That’s more their style. I expect they’ll snatch this lovely TARDIS away and slap a time ring on me?”

“Good guess,” Ignus slipped just such a device, and used it to pop the bottle cap off his ginger beer. “Let’s say we stop saying ‘let’s say.’ Daleks turn out to be the mutant leftovers of a thousand-year war on a miserable little dung pile called Skaro. The deep-fried nutter who created them, and the battle-shells they live in, is called Davros. But by the time you work that all out, he’s sequestered in a shielded bunker behind a squad of very well armed thugs.”

Brunneis swallowed hard. “I’m not a warrior! How in Rassilon’s blessed name am I supposed to— Wait!” He pattered around the chamber for a

short time, humming to himself. Searching amid his treasures. He found what he was seeking buried under a pile of *Professor X* audio drama CDs. (The good ones with the original actors, not the rubbish imitators). Six translucent white squares. Which he held up triumphantly, resolving to keep on his person at all times from now until the day they'd be needed. "I'll put up a hypercube around that thing!" He pointed to Ignus's time ring. "And send it to my future self! Not one of you, though, it has to say within my own iteration. Goth and the others won't notice any short skips my timeline. I have that me deal with 'Davros' before he's in long pants. No creator, no Daleks! Then he picks me up before the new timeline catches up to me—"

"Which is exactly what you did," Lux nodded. "Will do."

Brunneis frowned. "Then if you're here now, I imagine it didn't go so well?"

"Which is where I come in," continued Ignus, his face losing much of its lustre. "That cube trick bought us a few lifetimes, but the C.I.A chucked me in the parky killbox anyways when, and I quote 'The situation had deteriorated.' I pulled the same ring trick I remembered from your day. Only I went back a tick.' He shoulder-nudged his in-between-self. "Problem number one is: Davros is *also* a kid genius who cracked most of the genetic roadblocks before You Number Two got to him."

"So you got him when he was even younger?" Brunneis asked.

Mortimus Lux shook his head. "Wouldn't have done any good. For the much same reason throttling Little Adolph in his crib wouldn't put a stop to Nazism."

"National Socialism developed independently of Hitler," Brunneis realized. "He usurped it for his own ends, starting at the beer halls." And the Weimar Republic that fell in his wake had been such a fun place to visit. "The next practical step would be to do in the person who had the idea this creator fellow refined."

"She's been taken care of," Mortimus Lux stated flatly. Earning a sharp look from the corner of Ignus's eye. Which he either didn't see or chose to ignore. "What we're after now is the person or persons she took her

inspiration from.” Mortimus Lux rose, returning to his radio. Wedged the handle was a Kindle which he handed over to his younger self. “The Book of Prophecies. Collected ‘wisdom’ of the age before the one that ends in Daleks. Contraband in Davros’ lifetime, short as it was now. Read it. Know it. Especially the pages I highlighted.”

With trembling fingers, Brunneis swiped and speedread his way down paragraphs of mystically-written dross, coming to a trio of lines which he read aloud. “As a larvae becomes a wasp, the sons and daughters of Skaro shall one day leave these vessels of weakness and temptation behind. Assume our true selves, in body and mind. On that day, we shall be as gods.” He looked up to his fellows. “Standard spiritualistic dross. We haven’t a clue who we’re looking for, have we?”

His older selves shook their heads in unison. Ignus stole a chocolate finger from Lux.

“But if we don’t find it, and prevent anyone from seeing it, Gallifrey, the universe, and *us and all the other uses* will be as good as gone?”

“That’s about the sum of it,” confirmed Lux.

“And if we botch a bit of it, Celestial Intervention will never stop chasing us?”

“Hound is the word I’d use,” sneered Ignus. “We grabbed you here and now because CIA isn’t eying this part of your timeline. But if you muck up, they’ll pull out the fine tooth combs.”

Defeated and deflated, Mortimus Brunneis slumped against the console. Knowing he had no choice but join this worrisome cabal. “I could be worse, I suppose. I might have regenerated into a *woman*.”



The Sparasunian age of Skaro, twenty-five hundred years and more before the troubled days of Calcula, held far more amiable sights than the rubble of a thousand years of war to come. A vast forest that had yet to mutate into a menagerie of abominations formed an endless sea of green over which the great city of Theladon rose. Building upon building mounted on huge elliptical platforms. These structures elevated from the ground by elliptical support struts. Connected to each other through an

intricate network of bridges and to a fleet of solar-energy collecting sky-sails by delicate riggings. These sails existing in such size and numbers as to provide a good deal of shade to the many open-air pavilions through while Mortimus Lux had been travelling incognito for the past several hours.

“What is it about Golden Ages and togas?” he asked himself as he made his way past yet another rectangular garden embedded in the market platform. The voices of future prophets—philosophers in their own time—following faintly from the Speaker’s Square he’d left behind. The standard clothing around these parts wasn’t what he would term a ‘Toga Classic,’ however. These were low on excess ruffle and high on metallic sheen. Accented with proper belts for both sexes. “There must be some correlation of attraction, some law of cultural development that the Ancient Gallifreyans forgot to write down. Another failure on their part, hmph.”

Lux himself was dressed in as anonymous an outfit as possible as scanned by his TARDIS upon landing and manufactured by its custom-programmed Costume Machine. A simple green tunic and matching boots under a hooded grey cloak. His role in this early phase of the tri-party scheme was cultural research. Something he, at least among his fellow selves, had always found to be a chore. But the investment usually paid off in dividends. For the tendency of young civilizations to attract religions was another unwritten law of the universe. And to know the ways of a local religion, to correctly mimic the jargon of its guardians, to infiltrate its bastions, was to have at one’s disposal a shield forged of privilege. Safe behind it, one’s marks didn’t ask many questions. Politeness, political concerns, or mere legal force prevented it.

Of course, there were certain eras and places where hiding among the cloth would bring more scrutiny. Still, the best scams were the reliable ones! And this Mortimus, at least, took no offence to being identified by his taste for ecumenical camouflage by those such as the Doctor, who had accidentally granted him the title of Monk.

The Doctor. Lux had to stop, sit himself down on a flowerbed. Hands wringing over each other, he looked off into nothing. Years after her death it, was unable to think about the Doctor without also thinking of—

“Tasmin.” Ignus’s voice was unmistakable, both in its cheery tenor and its sly tone of accusation. He stepped out of the shadows between trees in a darker version of the cloak-and-tunic combo. “She’s all over your face. I knew if followed you I’d see it.” His facial hair embellished his frown.

“You never intended to go through with it, did you?”

Lux tapped his earbud communicator, to confirm it was active. “I found a better use for *my* toxin. One which led us here.”

Ignus shook his head. “I gave you those time-space coordinates on Apoca-Skaros to help you get past her! Give you a feeling of resolution! A little old-fashioned revenge to clear your head! And stop the Daleks's feud with the Doctor ever happening. *And* I had to suss out the Master’s back door into the Matrix to find them! I ended up with a two-week migraine for trying to think like that loony for twenty minutes!”

“And here I thought your ‘generosity’ was because you remember me sneaking the stuff out of Stormcage, but were a bit fuzzy on how and where I used it,” Lux noted dryly.

“Bollocks to that!” Ignus spat, “You flipped the table on purpose! You did! All you had to do was dose the anti-radiation meds the Thals slipped him on Day One. But no! You made sure we *couldn’t* kill the Doctor! Because a timeline where the he kicks off as a shrivelled up grouch is one where you never get to poach a pet from one of the older models!”

Lux opened his mouth to object, but ended up nodding his head. “Is it really so bad that I don’t want to have never known her?”

A moment of reflection later, Ignus’s magnanimous smile returned. “Naaaaah! How could I ever stay mad at myself? What’s the of chasing after treasure if we can’t pick favourites, eh? Me, I’m rather partial to a set crown jewels I picked up on Kleptos. So, why come down this way?”

“Waiting out a shift change back at Life of Brian Row.” Lux hitched a thumb backwards, still a little on edge. Unsure just how long he’d been shadowed, he reported, “I’ve checked off three prophecies already.

Including a particularly grisly one about what will happen to a baker's pet if it doesn't keep its feet on one side of a fence. But no sign of the of big fish."

"Oh, I found our fish!" Ignus beamed. "Three hours ago, ha! I've got Junior tailing him!"



Despite his charming exterior, Mortimus Ignus was starting to wonder how much longer he could put up with his past self's eccentricities. At least Numero Uno was staying on task, his locator beacon now a direct line to the soon-to-not-be wannabe prophet. The tracker led back towards Speaker's Square.

"How'd you find him so fast?" asked Lux on the way. "And why not just bump him off then and there, if you're going to nitpick who I do and don't kill?"

"We have to find his followers, too, remember. Let him talk, see who listens." The signal was delivering him nearer the middle of the market platform. Green vistas were giving way to taller buildings of stucco lined in bronze. "As for finding him, well, I've picked up trick or too since my regeneration. I am particularly good at noticing when someone is being followed by another peppering him with questions about whether or not his beliefs out into practice could result in unforeseen circumstances. Such as a world-wide shortage of plungers."

"Now there's a prediction," Lux snorted.

"And there he is now," Ignus whispered. Slowing at the public gathering space, keeping clear of the people gathering there. He pointed out the back of the jokester he'd seen earlier; a firmly-built man with a crop of black curls atop his head. His toga was an austere burgundy, but the belt he wore with it was s'Thai-dyed clash of colours. Next, he indicated Brunneis, who was worming himself deeper into the throng.

Lux pointed out something too, just in time to be seen before the crowd grew too dense. The speaker's platform had a peculiar build. No, a disturbingly familiar one; three concentric circles forming steps, each one covered in a single line grey half-globes. The fellow now ascending these

ominous stairs was rectangular of face and long of nose. Silver of hair and dark of eyebrow. His toga was blue-grey coupled with black trim.

“And there’s our fish,” whispered Ignus. “Serving himself up on a plate.”

“Here we go again. Tern Yatto, out to regale us all with his tales of future glory!” the heckler in the Technicolor belt couldn’t be bothered to contain his giggling. A trickle of laughs rewarded the outburst.

No longer needing to hide from one of themselves, Ignus tapped his earbud back on. “Good work, Brunnie. Look out for anyone that gives Mister Check the stink eye.”

“I know, I know!” Brunneis waved him off from within the crowd. “I’ve been ‘round the block a few times less than you two, but I’m not daft.” There had to be fifty or more persons milling about for him to check.

Lux sidestepped away, speaking now into his own communicator. “Best not to be too close together now. I’ll look to see if he’s leaving any pamphlets or the like around.”

Ignus asked him to stay in sight, and focused on the brewing battle of words.

The speaker had endured the disruption while sucking his teeth, there was a notable gap in his upper front ones. “Hello again, Master Clothier. Perhaps this time you’d care to join me upon this dais for a proper debate? A formal discussion where each side is permitted to have their say *uninterrupted?*”

“Nah, I think I’ll stay down here with the common folk, thanks.” Ignus could only see the man’s back, but his body moved quite a bit as he spoke. Drawing more and more eyes to himself. “All the better to bask in your brilliance. Speaking of, I see you managed to get your boots on the right way round this time.” More laughter, some of it louder, some of it his own. “By the sound of it, we won’t even *have* feet in your glorious utopia. What was it we’d have again, again? Tentacles? Feather dusters? Bunions of pure thought?”

“I’m sure I don’t know,” Yatto answered, speaking over the titters. “Surely none of us here will live to see the day when our children’s children unshackle themselves from the forms we suffer within.”

“Well thank you, that was very depressing. What say we all retire to Wilestra’s Tavern for a bit of shared misery? First round of suffering’s on me!” The heckler raised an invisible mug to a round of cheers. “And don’t call me Shirley!”

Ignus found himself cheering along. Lux, as well. Brunneis was too busy studying the crowd to pay much attention to what they were hearing.

“Your petty mockery is nothing but a symptom of the ills of which I speak!” Yatto snapped. “I look not to wallow amid the swamp of sarcasm! I see a world in which Skarons of will be as gods! If only we would chose to rise up above your kind’s failings!”

“And what happens when someone comes along and invents agnosticism?” The heckler let out a theatrical gasp, openly playing to the crowd. “We’ll all be out of work! You’re a job-killer, you are!”

Over another bout of guffaws, Yatto stated, this time directly addressing the audience and with true compassion upon his face, “Imagine it, friends! The heights we can achieve if we only work together to reach them! No more pain, nor more sorrow!”

“And two tallywackers on every man!” Ignus shouted, surprising himself “One for the missus, and one for Rosey in accounting!” The laughter he drew out of himself, Lux, and the whole audience became a flood which washed away the last of the speaker’s heart. Flourishing his cape, Yatto left the stage, disappearing into the crowd.

“He gets me, he gets me!” the jokester turned to face Mortimus Ignus and walked towards him through the already-thinning throng. Giggling all the way. The laugh lines beside his wide blue eyes deepened when he confided, “But then... he *is* me. Or he was.” Words which were delivered directly into his earbud.

“*Another* me?” Ignus fumed “Now, look here, bucko. *I’m* in charge of this rodeo—”

“And you did a bang-on job killing Yatto and his pals.” “The Clothier” giggled. That alias was a new one on Ignus, but anything was better than *Monk!* That moniker made him sound a one-trick pony! The new guy carried on, “Problem is, you’ll do such a good job that the more

conspiratorial minded among this lot will start asking questions. *Why* did he die? Was it because of what he'd said? They reconstruct his lectures from memory, and make a point of hiding them from the next pack of assassins. More copies survive the upcoming wars, more people get to thinking about making GMO babies earlier, and sciency-wiency Shan puts the finishing touches on the Daleks during her OWL levels. Oh, and don't try tinkering with *her* childhood," he groaned. "That just ends in *Thaleks*. I still haven't a clue how."

The new guy stopped expositing long enough to wave the younger two back over. He paused a moment to look at one then the other and back again. "Are we missing one? Oh, never mind! If I remember correctly we're doing the Carthage thing? You lot can call me Tenebris."

"Tenebris? Carthage?" Brunnais muttered, lost in memory as he walked forth. "I think I... remember... Something about selling someone a herd of elephants?"

"It seems we've yet another lap of this course to run," Lux noted. "What's your scheme, then? And how much to ante in?"

"Just follow his lead," Tenebris pointed to Ignus. "Kill the enemy with mockery. Ridicule his notions at every opportunity. I've been flying solo the past couple years, but now that I've caught up to you lot we can hit him in numbers, make every audience into our audience. And set the philosophy of Tern Yatto down in Skaro's history as its biggest joke!" He rubbed the back of his neck and affected a raspy lisp. "Defeat bad ideas with better ideas, to borrow a phrase." This time, his giggle-fit was joined by two of his fellow selves, the ones that recognized the voice of the Doctor in his days of exile. A Doctor which Mortimus Ignus had certainly gotten the better of! Ha!

"*It won't work,*" someone new sing-songed into the commline. No, it was this *Tenebris* chap! But a version who didn't have to fake an aged voice.

Tenebris I was none too pleased. "Oi! Are you hijacking my hijack?" Ignus flashed a vengeful grin.

"Oh, dear," Piped Brunneis. "It's another us!"

“Yes, do try to keep up,” the voice sighed. “Plan Peanut Gallery left only snarky memories of Yatto behind, but still memories. Once Skaro builds up the mass media system that’ll them into camps centuries from when we’re standing, the crank squads start working together to make all the bad jokes real.”

Lux’s eyes lit up wide as they’d ever been. “Oh! You mean like that time on Earth when I—”

Yes,” Tenebros II interrupted, moving quickly on. “Me V Point 1 was about to invite you to his tailor shop to pick out togs to make an ever bigger crowd of yourselves. But he hasn’t been paying much attention to where he gets his fabrics. Nor anyone else on this world. Nobody knows I went back twenty years and cornered the textile market. Ate up a tonne of stock through dummy corporations, yum-yum! Anyway, I’m sitting pretty on the factory floor having just set off a master stroke—pardon the pun!—that will let us all go back to our lives. For real his time.”

Ignus was curious, but sceptical of a self who couldn’t bother with a proper introduction. “Oh? Do tell?”

“Look around you,” Tenebris II answered slyly. “Listen around you.”

Ignus suddenly realized how quiet the common area had become, save for the chattering of plural Mortimii. Lux was the first to point to a male figure lying prostrate on the ground. Then another, and another. And a young woman sprawled against the back half of the Dalek-flavoured pedestal. More still were there to be found when Ignus approached one of the males. A tallish teenager. Closer examination revealed he’d just died in blue-lipped agony. An analysis confirmed by his other selves, looking own at other corpses.

The tunic we wore seemed awfully tight, like too little drumskin pulled over too much drum. The outfit disengaged itself. And simply floated away, as if carried on a breeze that was far too slight to hold them. Behind a bend in the street it went, towards the markets. From which the sounds of screaming could now be heard.

“Stenzan Death Shrouds,” the unseen Mortimus explained. “I’m happy to report that all the dust the Doctor kicked up on this planet is about to be swept clean by another from their adversary collection. Telepathic textiles programmed to seek out anyone with a memory of Tern Yatto or his missives. Of course, rouge AIs do have a

tendency to take their commands a lit-tle too lit-er-al-ly. And Stenzans aren't the type to err on the side of pacifism. I expect this planet will be completely depopulated inside of a month. No people, no memories! Easy peasy!"

Tenebris I's smile fled as his older self bragged on. Slowly, carefully, he slipped out of his toga.

"And don't anyone worry about anything happening to my beloved past selves! They're tailored to ignore Time Lords! One hundred percent guaranteed! Just don't steam-press them. They hate that." The man really did like to giggle.

But, so far as Ignus was deserved, the glee was warranted. "Bang-on job, yourself!"

"Brilliant," Brunneis grinned. "Inspired!"

"Of course it is," hooted nearly naked Tenebris I. "I'm going to think of it!"

Thumbs hitched to his belt, Lux kicked a nearby bit of rubble "Not that I mind all my work being done for me, but after all this effort I should have liked to do *something!*"

Ignus wrapped him in a side-hug. "Of course you have something do, silly! We all do! Even Spooky Voice Man!" Looking out past a threesome of blank faces, he waved his arm out along the chaotic vista. "It's called *looting!*" His laughter was soon magnified five times over, and followed up with a round of triumphant handshakes. If nothing else, the various Mortimii present had this much in common; they all knew themselves to be the most wonderful Time Lord of all to spend time with. "Come along, chaps! We have a whole world worth of treats to scoop up!"



The planet once known as Skaro had been burned raw by a thousand years of war. Not between humanoid warriors, which had been wiped out a hundred millennia ago or more. The relics of Sparasunian civilization were long, scoured by nature and time or (far more likely) blasted into rubble by devastating weaponry. What, if anything, remained of bipedal make now laid buried deep, deep within the low-rising mountain ranges of the sole remaining continent. Mountains now coated in pink and unhealthy fog.

Through this miasma hovered a squadron of indigo-cased Daleks. A squadron charged to flee a losing battle, and retreat across a muddy plain back to their valley base. A squadron which had severely underestimated its enemy. Around them uncloaked twenty beige-coloured Daleks at ground level, another fifteen in the air, and above them a trio of solar discs closed off the suns' meagre light. The beige drones fired, headless of destroying each other in the crossfire. Any and all sacrifices were acceptable in the name of finishing this battle.

The seven darker enemy units were eradicated in less than ten seconds. The last of these attempted to escape by ejecting from its casing, Seeking to use the smoke-plumes of six doomed brethren to mask its subterfuge. Upon reaching the ground, it attempted to burrow into the mud in hopes that it's naturally brown hide would escape notice.

It failed. **"RENEGADE DALEK ESCAPING!"** shouted the bronze-globed field commander. **"EX-TER-MIN-ATE!"** Three disruptor weapons found their marks. Their target let out a final, telepathic gasp as it died. Deprived of its animative consciousness, the many tentacles which made up half its form collapsed into a handful of wound bandages. The bulbous head crumpled into a pile of burnt fabric.

"THE LAST OF THE RENEGADE DALEKS IS DEAD!" shouted the Field Commander. **"THE DALEK RACE IS PURE!"**

"THE DALEK RACE IS PURE! THE DALEK RACE IS PURE!" repeated its subordinates.

The Commander turned its copper-plated stock to the Communications Officer. **"INFORM CENTRAL COMMAND OF OUR VICTORY! ALL HAIL THE DALEK SUPREME!"**

"I OBEY!" it answered, **"ALL HAIL THE DALEK SUPREME!"**

A lone figure monitored this carnage from the relative safety of the valley foothills. Seeing precious little detail through multiple layers of smoke and fog. But his stolen commboard picked up every word. "This is where it begins," he whispered through a corroding breath shield. "The

fall of Arcadia. Last gasp of Gallifrey. Right here in this moment. The moment when the Daleks become united in conquest.”

He picked himself up into a crouch, his body wholly covered in slapdash camouflage. Half of it natural, the other half a mish-mash of cybernetics designed to foil Dalek sensors. “Like Hell it does.”

The man picked up the comm-unit and retreated behind a large boulder. That great stone hiding the entrance to a TARDIS. The command room inside was composed of black and steel-grey walls. Three concentric rings of barrier railings—each higher than the last and weaponised—centred around the control console. Which itself was secured within a dome-shaped bunker featuring six slit-shaped windows through which to look out upon the rest of the chamber.

The still-camouflaged man discarded the comm unit halfway up to the bunker. One inside, numerous tactical and navigational holos lit up, which he ignored. He slapped off the brake, and the moment the multipistoned Time Rotor barrelled into action, he sidestepped to another console. Where he pushed one big red button and ran his still-gloved hand down rows of flip-switches below that.

He spoke with brisk authority. “This is Mortimus Ultimus, calling the Pax Motrimii. In my time, your future if we fail to prevent it, creatures who powers rival Gallifrey’s darkest legends have descended upon it. I have just confirmed that they are derived from ones several of us—and I mean *us*—left lying around to stop another threat from ever forming. A simple cleanup job that you made a joke of. *Well I’m not joking around!*” He slammed an armoured fist into the console. “I am in possession of a Type-15 Battle TARDIS. Snatched away from destruction during the Atraxi Wars. I command firepower enough to keep this world’s suns from ever forming! No one else knows I have it, so no one else can see it coming. All I need is your TARDIS’ assistance in calculating the matter dispersal vectors.” This Mortimus knew himself too well, well enough to know his younger selves might not risk themselves without cause. “Those of you who have lived as refugees for denying Rassilon or Celestial Intervention, you can get your lives back. Maybe the token Earth

Apologist among our number can get his Human back. And those of you who are too young to know what I'm talking about can live your lives in blissful ignorance of agonies and embarrassments you'll never have to endure." He left unspoken the pains he himself bore. Tasmin, in the end, had turned out to be but the first of Mortimus's losses to the Daleks. "What say you?"

Twelve lights on his console blinked. Twelve former selves coming to his aid.

"Fine lads, the lot of you. Converge on these time-space coordinates. Mortimus Ultimus out." Mortimus found the Captain's chair and slouched into it. Peeling off his mask, he revealed a dark brown face and crisp white beard. Through a frowning mouth he took a deep breath of sterilized air.

He missed his own TARDIS. The one he'd taken from Gallifrey. She'd seen him through many a misadventure, and forgiving him his many mistakes. It taken twelve lifetimes for one of them—logged by one Mortimus Brunneis in his journal before the peculiarities of paradox stole knowledge the events from his mind—to fully catch up with him. But now that they had, now that he'd damn near lost everything to the Daleks, to their allies, or to enemies back 'home,' there was nowhere left to run. Nowhere, but into another paradox.

"What's one more tear in time-space going to hurt anyone?" he mused. "I've never stolen a sun before, anyway. It could be fun." The very thought of such a heist should have had him bounding about the room in reckless abandon, he knew. But not even a smile broke through his weathered face. He'd been through too much in this regeneration.

Mortimus could only live in hope that when this 'job' was done, he could laugh again.

INTRODUCING
JOSEPH MARCELL
AS

CMT 1/19



THE WAR MONK

The Time Lord strolled through the wasteland as though it were a garden of roses. 'We pride ourselves we seldom interfere in the affairs of others...'

Before the Doctor and his two companions are spirited away to Skaro, before a cloaked representative of the Time Lords was even briefed, there were the Celestial Intervention Agency. The Janus-faced shadow arm of the High Council, tasked with maintaining the Web of Time at all costs, they foresaw the dominating power of the Daleks and decided on a course of action. To enact the annihilation or manipulation of the entire Dalek race through means inscrutable and acts wholly deniable.

But who to dispatch?

DW-AN-02