

BBC

BOOKS

DOCTOR WHO

THE TIME TRAVELLERS



SIMON GUERRIER



'Have you ever thought what it's like to be wanderers in the fourth dimension, to be exiles?'

24 June, 2006. The TARDIS has landed in London. Ian and Barbara are almost back home. But this isn't the city they knew. This London is a ruin, torn apart by war. A war that the British are losing.

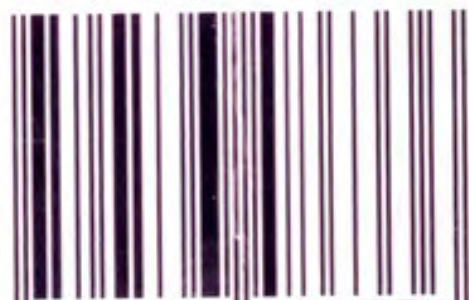
With his friends mistaken for vagrants and sentenced to death, the Doctor is press-ganged into helping perfect a weapon that might just turn the tables in the war. The British Army has discovered time travel. And the consequences are already devastating.

What has happened to the world that Ian and Barbara once knew? How much of the experiment do the Doctor and Susan really understand?

And, despite all the Doctor has said to the contrary, is it actually possible to change history?

This adventure features the First Doctor, Susan, Ian and Barbara.

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DOCTOR WHO

The Time Travellers
SIMON GUERRIER

scanned by
the wrong gun

**DOCTOR WHO:
THE TIME TRAVELLERS**

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For Tom

Aw'ight, bruvva?

Prologue

16 September, 1967

Joan scraped away the last of the soup, slopping the grey lumps into the pig bucket. They tried not to waste anything, not even these paltry scraps. She gathered up the empty plates and carried them over to the sink. One of the men joined her. He rolled up his threadbare sleeves and dumped his hands into the water. Saying nothing, he got on with washing-up. Joan liked it when they came to help. She dried, keeping her eyes on him. He worked with care, peering at the crockery as he scrubbed. She watched him trace his thumb over the surfaces, too, checking his eyes had not missed anything.

The man was tallish, straight-backed, and had probably been athletic in his youth. He might once have been in the army - he would have been old enough to have fought in the war. His straggly hair and beard were white, but it was the lines around his eyes that spoke his age. Though he shared that musky stink of all those who slept rough, he wasn't offensive to the nose. By the usual standards, he was quite the dandy.

He finished up. Joan put the last of the things away, and the man remained by the sink, unsure of his next move

'I normally put cocoa on when all the cleaning's done,' she said. He said nothing. She often intimidated them, though she never understood why. 'Would you like a cup?' She wasn't meant to share provisions. They couldn't really spare them, and besides it smacked of favouritism; everyone was welcome here. Yet she liked to reward those who made the effort. The hot milk would help him find some peace, as well. He had that lost, wanting look about him.

When he did not reply, she assumed his assent and poured a whole pint of milk into the pan. It sizzled on the hot plate.

'It'll only be a moment,' she said. The Aga was her pride and joy. She had always wanted one. It had decided her on this place, that she would stay. For the first time since she'd lost her house, Joan had found a home.

The man took a seat at the table. The kitchen was only a

small place to feed so many. As a result, they kept it nominally off limits. They couldn't all fit, and things would get broken or go missing. It was easier to have a rule, but Joan liked to have people around. She liked having a brood to look after, to keep her busy. Her adopted family stopped her thinking about all she'd lost herself.

The man said nothing. His hands wavered, clasped together on the table-top. Many of the men drank, she knew. Although they couldn't bring their grog into the mission, they often showed the signs of over-indulgence. Their hands would shake and they'd talk earnestly to themselves. Those were often the most dangerous ones. They could fly off the handle at nothing. Joan had never had any trouble herself, but some of the other helpers had.

She couldn't believe this one would be like that, though. Somewhere beneath the mad tangle of his hair, he was good-looking. Striking in an assured way, trustworthy. The embodiment of the phrase 'fallen on hard times'. A bit longer here, some more simple chores, and he'd be on his feet again. Like her.

He looked up, held her gaze. She could not tear away from him, as if she recognised him, or something in him. Perhaps he had once been famous. He might have been in the papers, back in the days before...

The milk burred in the pan. It wasn't meant to boil; she quickly grabbed a tea towel, hefted the pan from the heat and dolloped chocolate into two chipped mugs. She instinctively reached for the sugar bowl, too, though they'd seen the last of that some weeks before. Joan handed the man his cocoa and took the seat opposite him.

'Thank you, he said, his voice hoarse. He spoke well, clear, like he'd had an education.

'You do speak, then?' she teased.

'Mrs Wright...' he began.

'Call me Joan.'

'Joan,' he said. He took another sip of cocoa, steeling himself 'I've been looking for you a long time.'

She didn't know what to say. Looking in his sad, sad eyes she had recognised something. 'Who are you?'

'I knew...' he said, and his voice cracked. She put her hand

out to his, helping him through this. He took a deep breath. 'I knew Barbara.'

Joan was vaguely aware of snatching her hand back. Her mug clattered from the table, spewing cocoa across the floor. She put her hands up to her mouth, wanting to cry out, to scream. No sound came.

And then she knew him. She had never met him, but she knew his face, knew all about him. He had been in the papers. With Barbara. The pictures of them both, side by side. Mr Chesterton.

Hope welled up in her. He could tell her what had happened, where her daughter had gone, and why. Joan struggled for breath.

His lips quavered, trying to find the words. He looked too old for his years, she thought. He'd been a young man in his picture, late thirties at most. Whatever had happened to him since he'd vanished had taken a ghastly toll. And if that had happened to him... Her delight suddenly snuffed out. She would never see her daughter again. Barbara was gone.

Still, she needed to know. 'Please,' she asked, her voice trembling. 'Tell me.'

'She'd have wanted you to know...' The tears fell freely. He was an old and worn-out man, destroyed by the recent past. Compassion took hold of her: whatever he had been through, whatever he had seen, Ian Chesterton had suffered more than Joan. He had loved Barbara. And it was killing him.

'It's okay,' she said.

He shook his head. 'It's never going to be okay,' he said. 'She's never coming back to us.'

Chapter One

'I think we're beginning to materialise,' said the Doctor. 'Perhaps I shall know now where we are.'

Ian Chesterton, his arm still round Barbara as he helped her to sit down, turned back to the Doctor.

The old man had his back to them, busy at the complex series of controls. He waggled levers and switches, tutting to himself as he did so. He hesitated, checked the results, then banged his fist down on the console. 'Now look at it,' he snapped. 'I can't see a thing!'

Ian quickly made sure Barbara was comfortable, with Susan looking after her. Barbara waved him off, as if she'd feel better with him out of the way. Their last adventure had been tough on her, but she couldn't stand being a nuisance. Knowing better than to argue with her, Ian did as bidden. He took his place by the Doctor, who gazed up at the scanner. Static danced across the screen.

'We've landed in a snow storm, have we, Doctor?' asked Ian, adjusting his cuffs.

'We've not even landed at all,' said the old man. 'The ship has run aground *inside* of time and space!' He tapped his forefinger against his top lip, as if to hide his evident excitement.

'That's not right,' said Susan, from behind them. The Doctor didn't answer, his eyes still fixed on the screen.

'Is it bad, Doctor?' Ian prompted.

'Of course not,' he replied. 'We just need a bit more power.' He made his way to the far side of the console, working buttons and dials as he went.

'We *are* safe, though?' Ian persisted.

'Of course we -'

The crash knocked Ian off his feet. The lights went out. Ian tried to rise, but a second violent lurch sent him tumbling the other way.

The Doctor hauled himself back to the console. Ian watched his hands work the controls in a blur. The eerie glow of the time rotor cast strange, frightening shadows. Ian got to his feet, glancing round at the girls. Barbara, her own tiredness forgotten in the crisis, was helping Susan up from the floor.

As he hunched over the instruments, working desperately, the strange lighting drew out the Doctor's distinctive features. His expression was stern.

'What was it? What attacked us?' asked Barbara.

'Something was trying to get into the TARDIS!' said Susan. The Doctor ignored them, busy at the controls. The central rotor shuddered, then began to rise and fall again.

'Well...' huffed the Doctor. But he didn't get any further. Once more something outside crashed into the ship. Ian dashed round to help the old man to his feet.

'There is something out there!' said Ian.

'Impossible!' said the Doctor, again reaching for the controls. 'Nobody could possibly -'

But Susan was pointing up at the scanner. 'Look!' she gasped, horrified. They all turned to look.

Tumbling outside in the darkness was a young man in a lab coat, wide-eyed and silently shrieking.

Ian dashed from the police box as soon as it materialised, ignoring the Doctor's protests. Susan had been close behind. Barbara had waited, and not just because of exhaustion. When the man in the lab coat appeared on the scanner, she had seen the Doctor's face. It showed horror, plain and simple. Not disbelief or amazement. Even now Barbara could see him stalling as he fastened his cloak. He knew something. About the man on the screen, or how he'd got into the vortex, or at least what such a thing meant. Whatever it was, it terrified him.

She took his arm, letting him lead her out. The police box had landed in a long, grey hallway, the lighting regular, low and calming. Pillars of pale stone supported the level above their heads. The bottom six feet of each pillar were plated with large, patterned, aluminium tiles. At regular intervals down the centre of the hall, pairs of escalators led upwards, the steps unmoving. On either side of the hall, tall screens of toughened glass barred the way to a short drop and railway tracks. Ian had his face up against the screen on their right. He put his hands up around his eyes, to shield against the reflection.

'Well?' called the Doctor, fussing in his waistcoat pockets for his key. His voice echoed down the hallway. 'Is he here?' 'He *has* to be!' said Ian.

'There's no reason at all that he should,' chided the Doctor. Barbara took a step back, careful not to get in his way as he closed and locked the doors to the Ship. 'He was moments away from us in flight, but that could be miles away in real terms. And years, too!'

'He *could* be here with us though, couldn't he, Grandfather?' said Susan, emerging from behind one of the pillars. She came running over and took his arm. Barbara saw the way his hackles fell - he could never be cross with Susan for long.

'A slim chance, I dare say,' he said, patting her hand. 'But we don't even know where "here" is yet, do we, hmm? That must be our first concern. His eyes narrowed as he glanced all round. Barbara went over to the screens of toughened glass.

'It's a railway station,' she said. 'It looks new... unused.' Ian came back towards them.

'They're the same kind of tracks you get on the London Underground,' he said. Barbara drew her cardigan more tightly around herself. Were they home? Was it possible? 'They're raised up on blocks,' Ian continued. 'That way, if you get caught on the tracks when a train comes, you can get down underneath.

'But why have they closed them off?' asked Barbara, running her fingertips across the smooth glass. 'We never needed screens like this in London.'

The Doctor looked around again, piecing together the clues. He nodded to himself as it all came together.

'This hallway,' he said, 'is far wider than the Underground stations of your time. You could fit hundreds of people down here. Imagine them all, crammed in, restless to get to work!' The thought of it made his face light up. 'You'd need these barriers,' he chuckled, 'to stop them pushing each other in front of the trains!'

No one else laughed with him.

'It's horrible, said Barbara. 'So impersonal.'

'The rush hour always was, remember?' said Ian, putting a hand on her shoulder. 'But why is no one here now?' Barbara nodded, and placed her hand on top of his. Susan, who had wandered off again, called out from further down the platform.

'Come and see!' she called, pointing at something under the escalator. 'If we are on the Underground, it's not a station I've

heard of before.' Ian hurried down to join her, leaving Barbara's hand hanging in the air. She quickly folded her arms. The Doctor had evidently noticed, but he said nothing. They joined the others by the sign - a circle behind a bar. In simple, capital letters were the words 'CANARY WHARF'.

Ian went over for a closer look. 'It looks like the same design they used on the Underground,' he said. 'Perhaps this is a new station.'

'A wharf would mean we're near the river, wouldn't it?' asked Barbara.

'That's right! Perhaps we're back in the East End, where the docks are.'

'You can't know that yet, my boy!' said the Doctor, harshly. 'It could be anywhere at all.'

'Perhaps the London Underground stretches all across England now...' said Susan. She winked at the teachers, letting them know she was just teasing the Doctor.

'You could be right, Susan!' said Ian, eagerly joining in the joke. 'The National Underground...'

The Doctor wagged a finger at them. 'Idle speculation isn't going to help us, is it? Or that young fellow we saw. Scientific method is what's called for. That's how we'll know what this is all about.'

'Yes, Doctor,' said Ian, fidgeting with the sleeve of his polo neck.

It was funny, thought Barbara. When the Doctor chided him, Ian acted like a naughty schoolboy. Maybe he did it on purpose, letting the Doctor take charge.

They continued to look around. Unusually, there were no timetables on the walls, no maps of destinations that would tell them where they were.

'Grandfather!' cried Susan. 'I've found something else!'

Susan had her face pressed up against the screens on the far side of the platform. Scurrying over and under and between the rails were dozens of white mice. And three white rabbits. They were all marked with the same code number, stamped in clear black letters across the fur on their backs: DZ-11-B29-03. Even the Doctor was lost for words.

'White mice aren't wild, are they?' said Barbara, eventually.

'They could be part of a batch, for an experiment...' said the

Doctor.

'Maybe we're in some kind of research facility..? said Ian, catching Barbara's eye. What had they stumbled in on?

'That is possible, yes,' said the Doctor. He looked around the hall once more, his hand up against his jaw. 'Something's wrong here...' he said, more to himself than the others.

'I can feel it too,' said Susan, hugging her arms.

'It is quite cold,' agreed Ian.

'No, not that. Something just feels. . . Wrong.'

From somewhere upstairs, there came a whirling, seething noise - like nothing on earth. It echoed through the hallway, deafening in the otherwise quiet. Susan grabbed for the Doctor. They stood, arms around each other, listening to whatever it might be.

In the midst of the sound, there was a terrible, human scream. The scream was cut short by a crash. All was silent again.

'Chesterton!' called the Doctor, crossly. 'Wait!'

But Ian had started bounding up the escalator, taking the steps two at a time.

The two women looked to the Doctor. 'We have to help, if *we can*,' said Barbara.

The Doctor shook his head. 'We can't know what we're getting mixed up with.

Barbara glared at him, but something in his expression made her hesitate.

'Grandfather?' asked Susan, breaking the spell.

'You know what this could mean?' he asked her, gravely. But he didn't scare her as he once had.

'We have to help,' she said, firmly, and raced away upstairs.

Eventually, the Doctor nodded. Barbara followed him up the stairs. His tired old bones were no match for the tall steps, and he was out of breath as he emerged onto the level above. He hunched down onto his stick and gasped desperately for air. Barbara waited with him. He still had his quick wits about him, and while he caught his breath, he looked all around.

The ticket hall was a vast space, the high, arched ceiling an impressive achievement. It felt more like a church than a railway station. That could have been the low, soothing light, or the simple, unadorned materials - stone, aluminium and toughened glass. Presumably the place was brighter and less catholic during

the day. At the far end, five tall, unmoving escalators led up and out to the night sky. Barbara could just see the lip of a glass dome, protecting the way in from the elements.

From the top of the escalators where Barbara and the Doctor stood, passengers would be ushered towards a high fence of ticket gates. Ticket-reading gadgets appeared at regular intervals all along it. On the nearer side of the fence, a swing-door was open. On the Tube that Barbara had known, they had similar gates to let people with luggage through. The hall continued some way on the far side of the gates, a great space before the escalators, interrupted only by two thick stone pillars up to the ceiling.

Beyond the pillars, at the foot of one of the escalators, Ian knelt, examining something. Susan had nearly reached him.

‘Susan!’ the Doctor called out, the effort winding him. His breathing was still hard.

‘You shouldn’t be rushing about!’ Barbara told him.

‘It’s not that,’ he said, as crossly as he could manage. ‘There’s something in the air..?’

Barbara helped the Doctor over to the others. The man they had seen from inside the TARDIS lay at the foot of the escalator. His head was cocked back terribly. Pale blue eyes bulged from their sockets, and his mouth was still open in a scream. He had broken his neck.

‘He must have materialised on the steps and lost his balance,’ said Susan, with morbid fascination. She wouldn’t look directly at the dead man. Instead she scrutinised the steps that led up and away from him.

‘Or in mid-air,’ muttered the Doctor. ‘Come away from him, child.’

They watched as Ian examined the body. Barbara took in details for herself. She would never get used to the sight of the dead, but she had learnt to analyse what she witnessed, to look for clues. The dead man’s hair was cropped in a neat, military short-back-and-sides, now spattered with blood.

Above them, out in the night sky, there was an ominous rumbling. Susan turned to the Doctor, who listened hard, trying to place the sounds.

‘Those were bombs falling,’ said Barbara, levelly.

Ian looked over his shoulder, at the sturdy pillars supporting the ceiling.

‘This place looks structurally sound,’ he said. ‘Perhaps it was built

to double as a bomb shelter.’ He didn’t sound convinced. ‘We should get a move on, in any case,’ said the Doctor. ‘Chesterton, is there anything on this unfortunate man to tell us who he is?’

Ian checked the pockets of the lab coat. After a quick search he found a padded envelope. Ian handed the envelope to the Doctor without a word. The Doctor poked a finger into the envelope, peering through the contents. He handed it on to Barbara. It was full of money: notes and coins of all kinds. Next Ian produced a small plastic card. It had a photograph of the dead man on it - in colour.

‘His name is Colonel Andrews,’ said Ian, reading from the card. ‘And he was born in 1975. There’s a serial number, too. And look at this. When you hold it up to the light, you get a strange rainbow pattern over his picture.’

‘They do that to stop forgeries; explained Susan.

‘Going by how old he looks,’ said Barbara, ‘it’s the early twenty-first century.’

‘It’s okay, Barbara,’ said Ian, gently.

‘Except that we certainly don’t know that this is his time,’ snapped the Doctor.

‘Because he was in the vortex?’ said Susan.

That is one indication,’ said the Doctor. ‘But there’s also this money. Look at it. There are different denominations of pounds, shillings and pence here. They range from before your time,’ he nodded at Ian, ‘up to... I think the latest dated coin is from twenty-oh-three. I thought you would be on a decimal system by now...’

‘I don’t understand.’ said Barbara.

‘This man is a time traveller,’ said the Doctor. ‘And not by accident, either.’

They looked down at the dead man, not sure what to say. The throbbing baseline continued overhead, outside.

‘But if he lived in 2003, he’d carry money minted years before that, wouldn’t he?’ said Susan.

The Doctor smiled. ‘Then why so much loose change, hmm? Why the abundance of coins going back forty-odd years? No. This man needed enough ready cash wherever he turned up.’

Barbara remembered the tales she’d been told during the war, about Germans who kept English money in their pockets when they came on bombing raids. If they were shot down, they had enough to survive on. But never any change. The pubs were on the lookout for young men buying single pints of beer with pound notes. That

was a fortune, even back in those days.

'This fellow was heading back in time, and he knew there was a war going on,' the Doctor continued. 'He's got enough coins that, if he should need them, he's not going to draw attention to himself.'

'So he wouldn't have known which year he was going to?' asked Ian.

'Or it was a precaution,' said Barbara.

'You think it's a military time machine they've got here, do you, Doctor?' asked Ian. 'The man's rank... the bombing outside... the planning that went into that money...'

The Doctor looked to Susan, Barbara noticed, with some terrible meaning. When she glanced round to see how Susan reacted, Susan was looking down at her feet. Barbara looked back to the Doctor.

'It's dangerous here, isn't it?' she said. 'We should get back to the TARDIS...'

'I don't think the Ship will help us!' snapped the Doctor. What had got into him? 'Someone needs to be told where this poor man has come out,' he said. 'And I want a look at this machine they've made themselves.'

'Doctor.. .?' said Ian. 'That could spell trouble.'

The Doctor gripped his lapels. 'Trouble?' he said. He nodded at the dead man. 'I should say it already has.'

The domed entrance to Canary Wharf station looked out onto a courtyard, bordered by vast, elegant skyscrapers. Ian had to lean back to look at them - they really did reach up to the sky. At first, they reminded him of pictures of New York, but the buildings here looked new and gleaming. The full moon made it all so unreal. This couldn't possibly be London, he thought, not the London he knew.

Across the courtyard, behind a Dali-esque statue of a woman's face melting, there was a marina. A few hundred yards out, a monorail track arced high over the surface of the water, before threading through the tall buildings on either side. There was no street-lighting - odd in such a futuristic, urban space. The moon, peeping through thin cloud, provided pale and eerie light. Some miles beyond the marina, in the direction the station entrance faced, the sky was burnt orange. Barbara had been right - the sounds coming from that

direction were of bombs falling, flattening a city. Ian knew that terrible noise only too well from his childhood in the war. The bombers were likely using the moonlight as a guide. But for the bombs, he could hear nothing. No words, no whistling, nothing recognisable as home.

He glanced round at the buildings to his left and right. They were undamaged. In fact, the stone and glass gleamed. Why weren't they a target, he wondered. He still didn't know where they were.

A quick scout round the station had failed to reveal a telephone, or any other obvious means of attracting emergency services. He had to admit that he might not know what to look for, if this *was* the future. Susan, however, had assured him that phones would still be signposted, as clearly and obviously as could be. Still they found nothing. No one manned the information desk, and the passageways off to each side of the station had been locked securely.

So they had agreed that he and Susan would make their way up the escalators and into the open air, daring to risk the dubious grumblings outside. The Doctor and Barbara would slay with the body. The Doctor had given Ian the colonel's identity card, reckoning that they might need to identify the man they had found. The old man had warned Susan to be careful, not to wander off. Ian had barely nodded at Barbara. 'Hurry back,' was all she had said.

They had climbed the escalators. Ian had had to stop at the top to get his breath back, giving him a chance to admire the domed entrance. It looked modern and new to him, until he noticed the torn and twisted metal housing on either side. It looked like the gates had been removed, by force, from inside the station. Normally, he knew, stations were locked up at night to keep the tramps and drunks from using them for shelter. But in this case, someone had broken out. What could that mean? Had the gates been to keep people *in*?

Susan, ignoring her grandfather's warnings, had already run ahead as soon as they emerged into the open air. She now peeked over the low wall running round the marina. Ian made his way over to her, afraid to call her back. But for the bombing far-off, all was silent and still around them. There were no boats, no ducks, no activity but the gentle undulation of

the water. Ian could hear his own clipped footsteps on the flagstones. With a war down the road, he could make no sense of this empty stillness.

'Which way should we go first?' asked Susan brightly when he reached her. 'Left or right?'

'You're the one with the intuition, said Ian, quietly. She took the hint, biting her lip and nodding. They made their way to the left, following the edge of the water. Ian kept glancing *all* about them, expecting something to jump out on them at any moment. Susan's feelings of disquiet seemed to have evaporated as soon as they'd got outside. Though she conceded to whisper, she gabbled excitedly.

'This is a future you and Barbara might live to see!' she said. 'If your grandfather can get us back home,' Ian reminded her. 'Oh of course he will!' Then she hesitated, and gave Ian a funny look. 'Eventually.'

Ian grinned. 'Perhaps I can call myself up when we've found a phone,' he said. 'I wonder what I'm doing these days.' Susan's eyes crinkled. 'Perhaps you and Barbara have grandchildren!'

'Very funny. Yet if this was their future, he, too, had assumed he'd still be with Barbara. That wasn't wrong, was it? He couldn't imagine them being separated, not after all they had been through together.

They wandered up to the nearest building. Heavy, inter-linking iron gates meant they could only get so neat Through gaps in the barrier, they could make out a comfortable, inviting lobby. Leather seating, coffee tables, all manner of plush furnishings - it could have been a hotel. Susan tried the sturdy metal gate in front of them. It didn't budge.

'Locked,' she said.

'You could try the bell,' Ian suggested. He pointed to the chain hanging down beside them and Susan tried it, tentatively. When that appeared to do little, she gave it a more violent tug. There was an airy, musical tinkling from up above them. They waited.

After some moments, a thick-set man in heavy uniform emerged from a door at the back of the lobby. He looked weary, Ian thought, that same haggard look all the adults got in wartime. His eyes lacked any sparkle, he was practically a

walking corpse. How long had the war been going on? As he made his way out to them, the man collected a shotgun.

‘Good evening,’ said Ian, cheerily, delighted to have met someone at last.

‘Get out of it,’ came the gruff reply, the accent East End. ‘Your sort aren’t welcome here.’ He jabbed his gun towards them.

‘We’re sorry to trouble you...’ Ian persisted, but to no avail. The doorman ignored him. He nestled the back of the gun into his shoulder, put his cheek up against the trigger housing as he took aim. Susan grabbed Ian’s arm and yanked him out of the way as the gun fired. Without Ian in the way, the bullet barked across the courtyard, ricocheting off the marina wall.

Before he could aim again, Susan and Ian had raced away, down the side of the marina and out of view.

The Doctor and Barbara sat on the bottom steps of the escalator and waited. The Doctor had unclipped his cloak and draped it round Barbara’s shoulders. She still felt cold, or rather, unnerved. She tried not to look at the body. Thank goodness Ian had closed the poor man’s eyes. The Doctor seemed content to sit there, mulling over the evidence. He exuded an air of knowing, of appreciating some factor she hadn’t considered.

‘Is there a war going on?’ she asked. ‘You must have been to the future.’

The Doctor sighed, and looked round at her. He held her with that piercing gaze, and he almost seemed sorry ‘I can’t tell you, my dear,’ he said. ‘I mustn’t.’

‘It’s our future, isn’t it?’ said Barbara, quietly. ‘When we get home, this will be our future.’

The Doctor said nothing, and Barbara knew better than to press him. She looked again at the dead man on the floor in front of them. Colonel Andrews had been about her age, she thought.

The Doctor put his hands on his walking stick, and his chin on top of his hands. He looked out across the hall. ‘You wouldn’t want to live back in 1963 and know what was going to happen. It’s a terrible burden.’

‘And we might try to change things,’ Barbara nodded. ‘Yes,’ said the Doctor.

‘It’s all right, Doctor,’ she said, batting his arm lightly. ‘I learnt my lesson in Mexico. You can’t change history. It’s not possible.’

The Doctor’s face twitched - it might have been a wince or a smile. He didn’t say anything.

‘What can have happened here?’ Susan asked as they hid among the struts holding up the monorail. High up on the other side of the water, the rails led into a small station - ideal for the people who must work in the tall, immaculate buildings. Behind where they hid, steps led up to another stop. The short walk to the Underground station made this an easy interchange. It also afforded them cover.

‘I can’t imagine,’ said Ian. ‘He said “our sort”. But you noticed his accent, didn’t you? We’re as native as he is. Do you think it could be some kind of civil war?’

‘We should get back to the others,’ said Susan.

‘With that man between us and the station? He might take pot-shots at us. I don’t think so, Susan. We had best press on, see if we can find our own answers.’

More cautiously now, they followed the pavement beside the marina, away from the station where they’d left the Doctor and Barbara. As they went on, their path rose upwards, and further from the water. The marina joined up with other waterways and led off underneath them and to the left.

Now out of the pedestrianised area, Ian and Susan crossed a road - bereft of traffic, but with a zebra crossing and familiar, English road signs - and made their way across a roundabout. A low wall on the other side looked out onto the bend of a wide, slow-moving river. It was low tide, and burnt and broken wreckage on the riverbed broke the surface. On the far shore were familiar-looking buttresses and warehouses. Downstream, the buildings were ruined, and in the distance Ian could even see the bombs, as they rained down on the far-off part of the city.

He shuddered. This had to be the Thames, thought Ian. So they really *were* home.

He expected Susan to rush over to the wall, to gaze thrilled at the water as she had before. But she stood perfectly still, staring wide-eyed down the hill to their left. Ian looked after her. From their roundabout, the road meandered downhill

gently, following the path of the river. It soon met a second, smaller roundabout, covered over by a tangle of traffic lights all stemming from a single trunk. The system of lights had been designed to look like a blossoming tree, and *the* branches variously held back, blinked at and beckoned the non-existent cars all round. But it wasn't the tree that had, caught Susan's attention. At least, not now.

To one side of the roundabout, at a slight angle to the road running by it, stood a police box.

Ian took Susan's arm to stop her from running down to it. They looked all around them, watching for any movement. The traffic-light tree would afford them little protection if any other gunmen wanted to shoot at them.

They made their way down the road with trepidation, Ian continually looking back over his shoulder and to the left and right. But, Susan's attention became more and more fixed on the police box.

She walked all round it, ducking under the branches of the traffic-light tree to do so. Ian put his palms out, onto the familiar blue surface. His jaw dropped open.

'What is it?' Susan asked.

'Feel it, Susan,' said Ian, amazed. 'Feel it - it's alive!'

Susan's eyes widened. 'But that's impossible!' She tentatively put her fingers up to the box. Then she pressed her hands against it. She turned to Ian. 'I don't feel anything at all,' she said.

Ian grinned at her. 'Gotcha' he said.

'Very funny,' she replied, pouting. 'So this isn't a TARDIS?

'I don't think so, Susan, no,' said Ian. 'I can't imagine there could be more than one. But it does mean we're not too far from our own time, doesn't it?'

Susan shook her head. 'How do we know that?'

'Well,' said Ian, 'even in my day there was talk of replacing these things with phones in officers' cars. I bet in the real future, policemen talk into their wristwatches or something, like Dick Tracy.'

'Yes Ian,' said Susan, sarcastically. 'I bet there are watches like that behind the panel.' She reached for the handle of the small, inset door on the front of the police box.

The small door opened with a click, and Susan reached her

hand in for the phone. She suddenly snatched her hand back, like she had been stung.

‘That’s not a telephone.’ she said.

Ian looked. The end of a hose pipe hung from a specially built cradle. What looked like a metal thistle had been bunged into the end of the hose, closing it off. Ian lifted the hose pipe from the cradle and pulled it towards him. The hose extended easily out towards him, but he could feel the gentle pressure resisting. If he let go, the hose pipe would withdraw itself again inside the panel. There would be some kind of counterweight within the police box. Maybe that was why they had to be bigger now.

‘You know how this works?’ asked Ian.

‘No,’ said Susan. ‘We’ll have to find something else.’

‘I’ll have you know that I know how it works. It’s a speaking tube. The Navy used them during the war. It’s just a bit of hose pipe with a whistle in each end. You unscrew the whistle from this end, like this. Then you blow down it to make it whistle at the other end. Someone hears that, unscrews their whistle, and then you can talk down the tube at each other. Simple.’

‘So why aren’t they using telephones?’ said Susan.

‘I’ve no idea. Maybe it’s something to do with the war. Let’s get on with this.’

He took a deep breath and blew down the tube. They both heard the whistle from the other end. After a moment there came a man’s voice, sounding hollow as it emerged from the hose pipe.

‘Your name, rank and number.’

‘Er... We’ve found a dead man,’ said Ian. ‘We want to report it.’

‘Your name, rank and number.’ The voice lacked any kind of warmth.

‘Chesteron.’ said Ian, ‘Private, 15110404: He grinned at Susan, And whispered, ‘National Service.’

‘Noted. You can identify the corpse?’

‘Yes,’ said Ian, fussing in a pocket for the identity card.

‘Colonel S Andrews, 81215922.’

‘Noted. Location?’

‘Canary Wharf Tube station,’ said Ian. ‘At the bottom of the main escalator.’

‘Noted. Remain with the body.’ With a rattle, the voice was gone.

‘That was friendly,’ said Susan.

‘Yes,’ said Ian. ‘But it’s done now. We should get back to the others. It’s not safe here.’

Barbara jumped when the Doctor spoke again, puncturing the silence.

‘It’s not always the case,’ he said.

Barbara composed herself. Why weren’t the others back yet, she wondered. ‘What isn’t always the case, Doctor?’ ‘Time,’ he said.

Again Barbara waited for him to go on. After a moment, he turned to her, his gaze intense. ‘I think you’ll understand better now,’ he began. That didn’t sound good. The Doctor took a deep breath, but before he could continue, there suddenly came a noise from up above them.

‘Ian?’ said Barbara, turning to look up the stairs behind her. ‘Oh.’ A uniformed woman pointed a gun at them.

The Doctor took Barbara’s hand.

Ian and Susan made their way back up the hill and over to the far side of the marina. They hoped that if they crept back to the station on that side, the gunman they had run into before would leave them be. The low wall around the marina offered little protection, though, and they could not be sure there were not gunmen in any of the other buildings. So they remained cautious, keeping low and silent all the way.

They were still some way from the courtyard in front of the station when they saw the police car arrive. It was an armoured car, the thick plating burnt, bent and buckled from heavy-duty use. Three armoured officers emerged from the back. Though their clothes were clearly marked ‘Police’, they looked more like a crack squad of soldiers. Their guns primed, the officers had staked out the entrance to the station, taken up defensive positions. One of them, a woman, had ventured inside.

Ian and Susan kept very still, not saying a word. Soon enough, they saw Barbara appear at the station entrance. She had a defiant look on her face, but was doing what the policemen told her. Ian stepped forward, ready to help. Susan grabbed him, refusing to let him go. Ian conceded, and they stayed hidden, watching.

The Doctor emerged soon after, bent double from the climb up

the steps. The policewoman prodded him with her gun to get him moving. The Doctor turned to snap something back at her, then thought better of it. He and Barbara were bundled into the back of the police car.

Two soldiers went into the station carrying a tarpaulin. They returned within moments, lugging a body-shaped parcel between them. Without ceremony, they got it into the back of the car and closed the doors. The policemen kept lookout for each other as they took their places in the front, and the armoured car sped off. It lurched round by the building where Ian and Susan had met the gunman, and was gone.

For a long time, they stayed silent. Ian edged forward, into the moonlight.

‘What are we going to do?’ asked Susan.

‘I don’t know, Susan,’ said Ian. ‘It looks like Canary Wharf is a police state.’

‘Do you think all England is like this?’ said Susan.

Ian didn’t reply. He glanced around the deserted square, searching for anything that might be of help. He felt useless and hollow. How would they follow the others? How could they rescue them? What was going on here?

Susan gasped, and Ian ducked back into the shadows with her. She pointed towards the station entrance.

A man was making his way up the escalator. Oblivious to any possible danger, the man reached the top of the stairs and stepped out. His lab coat gleamed brightly in the moonlight. It was Colonel Andrews.

Chapter Two

The bombs continued to fall. The tall woman watched as a church was hit, exploding into silent flame. She twisted the dial on her binoculars, zooming in on the shrieking people pouring out as the fire took hold. Women, children, their prayers all come to nothing. What else did they expect?

The tall woman hadn't slept. She never could when the enemy were near. She felt nothing for them, though, the people out there. She watched them suffer and fall, but her hands were steady as she held the binoculars. It might have been different were she in among them. Up here, away out of the danger, it made it easier to deal with. She had the top floor of the tallest building in England and the bombers would not dare come near. Yet her office, the pyramid at the top of the building, bestowed only limited power. She could watch it all happening around her, but there was nothing she could do nothing she wasn't already doing, anyhow. The city had to and for itself until her work was completed.

'Sir?'

She turned from the window. Her current orderly hovered in the doorway. Belcher, his name was. He couldn't be more than seventeen, young enough to be her grandson. Children fought this war for them now. They were committed from birth to battling the aggressor, fighting for values and a way of life they'd never even known. The boy looked terrified. Not of the apocalypse going on outside, but of her. The tall woman liked to conjure that attitude in those around her. To demand their respect.

At her nod, Belcher came forward. He handed over a memo, folded and sealed. She split the seal with her thumb, turning so the boy couldn't read what was written. Her hands began to quaver as she read. She felt her heart thumping.

'When did you get this?'

'Minutes ago, sir,' the boy replied.

General Bamford nodded. This had to be it. This had to be them. 'Righto,' she said. 'Lets get down there.'

The body-shaped parcel, wedged in around her feet, was more horrifying than the body had been on its own. Barbara couldn't tear

her gaze from it. From him.

She found herself hypnotised by the dead man's suede shoes, poking out of the end of the fabric. They were square-toed, unlike anything she'd ever seen before. Elastic sides meant no need for laces. They looked more like running shoes, she thought; they looked comfortable. The revelation of this detail, this insight into the man's life, filled her with sudden grief.

'It's all going to be all right, my dear,' said the Doctor, still holding onto her hand.

'Oi!' said the policewoman sat opposite them.' I said no talking.'

Barbara squeezed the Doctor's hand, praying he wouldn't answer back. What could have happened here? Why were they treated like criminals? The police must think they had killed the man. Did that mean that Ian and Susan hadn't yet found a phone, that they had not been able to explain?

The armoured car swung violently round a corner and the Doctor crashed into her side. His weight surprised her - often he could seem so frail and fragile. The two-pole benches on either side of the van afforded little comfort or suspension. Even the policewoman seemed miserable about sitting in the back. It made it harder to look threatening, Barbara thought. The car stopped suddenly, and at first Barbara thought they'd met an obstacle. The policewoman opened the doors, letting in the silvery moonlight. She and her colleagues bundled the body out, then one policeman jabbed his gun toward Barbara and the Doctor.

'Out,' the policeman said.

Barbara stepped carefully down from the van. Her skirt didn't make that easy. Overhead loomed a tall, featureless block of a building, reminding her of pictures from communist Russia. It had no windows. A banner by the guarded front doors proclaimed 'Byng Street Correction Facility'.

Looking back behind the van, Barbara estimated the skyscrapers were something like half a mile away. They were a different world compared to this grim place. Between the tall buildings and where she now stood, a dark sea of overgrowth swallowed up the pale light. Small buildings, the ruins of houses and shops, peeped out of the surface, entirely overrun by weeds. The relics of her own time, she felt certain. She was so nearly home, and yet the place was as alien to her as anywhere else their travels had taken them.

She helped the Doctor climb down from the car. He took his time - slower and more arthritic than ever. The tall escalator at the entrance to the station had taken it out of him, but she had never seen him like this. He was doubled up with pain and effort. It could have been the drive, bumping around in the back of the van. Or, as he had said, was there really something in the air? When he had both feet on the ground, she let him go. He tottered forward and she had to catch him again. 'Are you feeling all right?'

'Eh?' said the Doctor, staring all round like a madman. As his eyes passed over hers, she thought he might have winked.

'The man is confused?' a policeman asked, making no move to help.

'He's just tired,' said Barbara.

'We have immediate powers where confused vagrants are concerned, the man said, prodding his gun in the Doctor's side. The Doctor swatted the rifle away with the back of his hand and stood up straight. His eyes gleamed.

'I'll have you know that I'm perfectly sensible,' he said. Clearly it had all been an act.

'We'll see,' said the policeman. He kept the gun on them while he closed and locked the armoured car.

'It's martial law!' Barbara whispered.

The Doctor stroked his chin, more fascinated than frightened. When the policeman gestured with the end of the rifle to get them moving, the Doctor just shook his head wearily, as if conceding to play a child's game. He led Barbara into the facility.

Still hidden, Ian and Susan watched Colonel Andrews examine the station entrance. The night was cold, and Ian realised Susan only had on her short-sleeved blouse and dungarees. He slipped off his suit jacket and draped it round her shoulders. She grinned at him, drawing the jacket around her. Ian tried not to let on how cold he now felt.

Across the courtyard from them, Andrews had spent minutes searching for something. Ian noted the systematic, practical way the man worked - starting at one end of the station entrance and slowly making his way across to the other. Sometimes he would stop to make notes in a pocket book. Despite his scientific approach, however, he clearly couldn't find what he wanted. Ian could see the man's frustration as he clapped his notebook shut and stuffed it back into his lab-coat pocket.

Andrews seemed uncertain. He stayed safely under the veil of the station entrance, looking out at the buildings around him and across the marina. He withdrew his notebook again and wrote several pages. He glanced frequently up to look again at the buildings as he did so.

Ian had begun to think the man would never move, that he and Susan would have to approach him, when Andrews took off at a confident pace. He made his way round the far edge of the marina - the same route they had taken earlier. He moved quickly, as if late for some appointment. They watched him as he approached the same, heavy-gated building they had called on before. He made his way up to the main gate, and rang the bell.

'He's going to get himself shot!' said Ian, stepping forward from their hiding place. Susan grabbed his arm.

'It's too dangerous, Ian!' she said. 'You mustn't!'

'I can't let him go to his death, can I?'

'He looks like he knows what he's doing,' she replied, a strange look in her eye. Susan was usually the one to rush headlong into trouble. What had got into her now?

'I'm sure we did, too, Susan. He needs our help.'

'But he's dead!' she insisted.

'He's looking quite well for it.'

'He *will* be dead. We saw him. We know how he's going to die.'

Across the water, they could just see the same, tired guard make his way out of the building lobby, collecting the shotgun on his way.

'Yes,' said Ian, 'and that's why -'

The guard made his way outside. He raised his gun. And lowered it again.

He didn't seem to recognise Andrews, Ian thought, but they exchanged a few words quite amiably. The guard considered whatever Andrews had asked him, then pointed out across the marina, to precisely where Ian and Susan were hiding.

They sank back into the shadows, Ian putting himself between Susan and the gunman. But the guard did not shoot. He continued talking to Andrews, pointing off to the left. Andrews nodded, repeating the gestures.

'He's getting directions!' said Susan. 'He didn't see us at all!'

'So it seems,' said Ian.

'He doesn't know where he is!'

'No,' said Ian. He smiled. 'And if he's a stranger here, he won't

know us from Adam.'

'We can't get involved, Ian. Grandfather would -'

'Would he? We don't know anything for sure though, do we?'

Ian's eyes twinkled. 'We need more evidence before we can make assumptions.'

'But we can't -'

Andrews thanked the guard and made his way back round the marina, towards them. The guard disappeared back inside.

'Susan. He's somebody important, or that guard would have shot at him. We'll need him on our side if we're going to help the others.'

'We mustn't!'

Andrews had passed the marina, and continued to get nearer. He was just a few yards away. Ian didn't move. Susan's insistence had got to him. She was terrified, and her instincts had proved correct in the past.

A shape leapt out on Andrews, and he fell back. The shape was a ragged man, wild-haired and wild-eyed. The tramp had his hands round the colonel's throat. He snarled as he throttled the man.

Susan held onto Ian, trying to hold him back. 'We can't get involved,' she said, quietly.

Ian slipped from her grasp. 'Susan,' he said, 'we got involved the moment we stepped out of the TARDIS. I can't not help him now.'

* * *

Barbara had never been inside a police station before. She wondered how different this place was to the Coal Hill station of her own time. It didn't feel like the future. She and the Doctor were marched past the front desk, the policeman stationed there nodding at his colleagues, and then down a corridor, decorated with information posters and handwritten bulletins. Barbara glanced through side doors at bustling staff - almost all men. However far in the future they were, people still created mountains of paperwork. Files and folders were crammed onto shelves, under furniture or sprawled across desks.

Their escort stopped at a door marked 'Interview Room', and motioned them inside. The room was dank and needed repainting. There was no window. The policeman told them to

take the seats on the far side of a plain table. When they had done so, the policeman left, locking the door behind him.

'What are we -' Barbara began, but the Doctor wagged his index finger.

'They're watching us.' He pointed up at the mirror on the wall. They sat in silence, waiting. Some time later, an officer brought them pale and undrinkable tea. They left their mugs, still full, on the table. They waited. The Doctor drummed his fingers.

The door swung open and in came a bearded man in his sixties, a piece of paper in his hand. The Doctor stood up to greet him, but the man told them to sit. He had a portly, friendly face, his eyes tired but kind. His beard, flecked with grey, needed trimming and his lab coat was well worn. He looked like he might have slept in it.

'Professor Kelly,' he said as he plumped down in the seat opposite them. His tone was gruff and impatient. He didn't want to be here either, 'You passed on the offer of tea,' he said. 'Best thing, really.'

'I am the Doctor, and this -'

'*Doctor* Chesterton, is it?' said Kelly, checking his piece of paper. Before the Doctor could correct him, Barbara interrupted. They mustn't give Ian and Susan away.

'You already have our names?'

'Desk sergeant minuted the call you made,' said Kelly. Barbara took care not to respond, not to look at the Doctor. She didn't even flinch. Ian and Susan had found a phone. So where were they now?

Professor Kelly amended the notes on his paper, adding 'Dr' His writing was terrible, while the desk sergeant's original notes were easy to read, even upside down. Barbara stopped short. The date was given at the top of the page.

Saturday, 24 June, 2006.

Barbara gazed in wonder. She liked to know the date Wherever the Doctor landed them, the past or the future, she could add it to her timeline. As a teacher, she would always start a new class by swiping a line of chalk right across the blackboard. At one end she would mark an 'x' for 1066, and at the other an 'x' for today. The class would then help her fill in the important dates in between: Magna Carta; the Spanish Armada; the Battle of Waterloo. It helped the children make sense of where history fitted, and she liked to think it helped them make sense of where

they were, too.

Of course, some children would ask for things like 'the dinosaurs' or their birthdays to go on the line. You found out in that first lesson who the live wires would be for the rest of the year. Barbara prided herself that she could always make the timelines work, whatever dates they threw at her.

Travelling with the Doctor, she still kept a timeline - in her head at least. 1289, 1794, 1692... she found years from history easiest. The future, running on after the final 'x', didn't seem so real, the blackboard wouldn't reach that far. The twenty-eighth century, the thirtieth... they were so far beyond what she knew she didn't need to worry. That's what she would have said to her pupils. Those years were probably out in the playground.

2006 was different. For all it was the future, for all it was so far beyond her home, she could still easily see it. It would be the wall beside the blackboard, a hand's span from her own time. June 24th, 2006. Not really the future at all.

'You found the body?' asked Kelly, snapping Barbara back - to the present. His manner was terse, like he had better things to be doing than interrogate them. Perhaps, she ought, he already assumed them guilty of murder.

'You're not with the police?' asked the Doctor. Of course, thought Barbara, the man had a lab coat on. He probably worked with Andrews - though he didn't seem that bothered about the death.

'That's a question of perspective. I've a rank and number just like everyone else. Now, your papers...'

The Doctor patted his pockets, sadly. We must have mislaid

'I see.' He scribbled something illegible down on his paper. We didn't murder the colonel,' said the Doctor.

'I never said you did. But you were wandering about the station at...' he checked his watch, 'two in the morning. And you just stumbled over him. Bit of a coincidence, isn't it?' I'm sorry if we've got you out of bed,' said the Doctor.

'We heard him fall,' said Barbara. 'He cried out. We think he may have arrived...' she tailed off. The Doctor was glaring at her.

Kelly sat back in his chair and filled his pipe.

'Go on,' he said. And his voice had changed - now curious, provocative. Dangerous, even. He lit the pipe, and acrid, yellow smoke crept hesitantly from the bowl. It had a cheap, oily

'He may have arrived at the station too hurriedly.' said the

Doctor. 'Missed his footing on those stairs.' He paused. 'What else could we mean?'

'I see,' said Kelly 'You know that vagrancy is an offence here?'

'Vagrants?' said the Doctor. 'We're certainly not vagrants! We're... visitors.'

'You've your own money?'

'Yes.'

This obviously surprised Kelly. He sat forward. 'Really?'

'In a range of denominations going back some forty years.' said the Doctor, with meaning. Barbara realised he meant the money they had taken from the dead man. He and Kelly stared at each other. Kelly finally smiled. They were caught up in a battle of wills, thought Barbara. Why did the Doctor always have to be up to something? Honesty was the better policy. It was less likely to land them in it up to their necks.

'You'll forgive the heavy-handed approach,' said Kelly, the Doctor evidently having convinced him of something. 'This area has a major vagrancy problem. Always has done. That's why they built this place, to deal with them all.'

'You find them places to live, to work?'

'Those who can work, yes.'

'And the rest?'

'They are... taken out of the equation, shall we say?'

He spoke with no hint of threat, but nor did he disguise to what he was alluding.

'You... execute them?' asked Barbara, appalled.

'Not me personally.' The look on her face must have spoken volumes. He tried again, more agreeably. 'We do try to find them useful roles, but many are confused, and, unsuited to any form of work. They merely drain our already limited resources.'

'That's barbaric!' said Barbara.

'Well, I'm no politician, but if the policy is hard on them, it only matches the situation we find ourselves in. You do know what's going on around us?'

'Of course,' said the Doctor, before Barbara could speak. 'You'd be amazed by the numbers we get in who don't. Confusion reigns.'

'But you know we're different,' said the Doctor.

'I think so. But you'll need to convince me. Tell me about yourselves. Who are you? Where are you from?'

His smile flickered, just for a moment.

‘And when?’

‘Colonel Andrews, I presume?’

Ian helped the man to his feet. The colonel’s neck was red, imprinted with the shape of the tramp’s hands. Ian had rugby! tackled the tramp, dragged him bodily from the colonel. The tramp had sized Ian up, not liked his chances against both men, and hurried off.

‘And you are?’ said Andrews. Though hoarse, his voice was sharp, educated, old school. He had a dashing, silent-movies look about him. His hair was slicked back and he sported a pencil moustache.

‘I’m Ian Chesterton. This is Susan.’

Susan stepped forward, into the moonlight. She was skittish, suspicious.

‘I’ll be! You’re bally civilians.’ Andrews could not hide his shock. The very idea was ludicrous, it seemed.

‘Yes.’

‘Had some training in the military arts, though, I see. Jolly grateful for that, let me tell you! Thought I was toast.’ ‘It looked like an unprovoked attack...’

‘I’ll say. Something queer going on here, I’m bound. Not often the Isle of Dogs is open to the public.’

Ian could have leapt for joy. They were in London! This had once been the East India Docks, he thought. His own time had been their heyday, they had never been more busy or prosperous - even at the height of Empire. He wondered how much time had gone by since then, to bring them to this. How long did the docks he remembered have left?

He wavered, unsure what to say next. They had so much to learn from the colonel. Yet what reason did he have to trust them? What could Ian do for him?

‘We found your card, said Susan, nudging Ian in the side. The colonel’s eyes narrowed. ‘My card?’

Ian held out the identity card. The plastic finish gleamed in the light. Andrews did not take it. From a safe distance, he inspected the details.

‘Where in heaven did you find that?’

‘In the station. It is yours then?’

‘ ‘Fraid not, young lady.’

‘But it is your picture, your name.’

‘Oh that’s me all right. Good likeness, too. But I have my card

right here.

He opened one flap of his lab coat. Pinned inside was an identical card. No, not identical, when Ian looked closer. In this picture, Andrews had his head slightly to one side. Ian held his own card up for comparison. The two photographs, though different, could have been from the same sitting.

‘And you said these couldn’t be duplicated,’ he said to Susan. ‘I should report this,’ said Andrews. ‘It may be important.’

‘Report it to who?’ said Ian.

‘I work not far from here.’

‘We’ll come with you.’ Andrews eyed him suspiciously, but Ian stood firm.

‘Good plan. They may want to quiz you, anyway,’ said Andrews. There was something threatening in his tone. Ian and Susan followed him down the street. Susan kept nudging Ian, trying to warn him off. They shouldn’t go far, Ian knew. They might lose both the station and the TARDIS. They were heading away from where the Doctor and Barbara had been taken, too. Yet they had no choice, he reminded himself. Andrews was their only lead.

They turned a corner, emerging into a street lined with fountains and neatly tailored patterns of grass. It all seemed unreal - too clinical and corporate. Ian couldn’t imagine people actually living and working here. Again, he couldn’t comprehend how somewhere as neat and perfect as this could remain standing while the horizon burnt orange with fire. He thought he could smell the flames, even this far away. Perhaps it was memories from his youth, the smell of London at war ingrained into him. As they walked, Ian found himself coming up with more and more questions. Why had there been no sirens, no anti-air artillery? Had London really been so beaten down? And why leave the Isle of Dogs unscathed? In the war Ian remembered, the docks had been a primary target for the bombers, the whole East End made to suffer for them. What had changed? What was going on?

He had so many things to consider that he walked slap into Andrews’s back. The man had stopped suddenly, on the corner of a street. There were no cars about, no traffic. He might have done it on purpose.

Susan’s eyes were on Andrews as he looked all around. He marched off across the road, but Susan caught Ian’s arm before

he could follow.

‘He’s our only lead,’ Ian told her.

‘But Ian!’ she whispered. ‘He doesn’t even know where he’s going!’

Barbara’s jaw hung open. The Doctor said nothing, though she could see him barely holding back his emotions. Was it anger, or fear? Had he been outplayed?

‘What do you take us for?’ laughed Kelly. ‘You’ve come back a see our project, in action.’

The Doctor glared at the man.

‘I should say it’s of great interest,’ he said eventually.

‘Ha!’ said the professor, slapping his hand down on the table. ‘I knew this would happen. We made it work, didn’t we?’

The Doctor stroked his lip. ‘You will have to appreciate that it would be wrong of me to comment at this stage,’ he said. Barbara was horrified. Surely he couldn’t be going along with this fascistic regime, even if they were travelling in time...

Kelly’s eyes twinkled. ‘But the fact that you’re here...’ he said.

‘As I say, we cannot comment.’ No, thought Barbara. The Doctor was playing a more considered game. Kelly took the Doctor to be an ally, and the Doctor neither corrected him of that notion, nor committed himself to anything either.

‘Of course, you’ll be bound by protocols,’ said Kelly, all seriousness now. ‘Careless talk and all that.’

‘Indeed,’ said the Doctor, clearly enjoying himself.

‘Please,’ said Barbara. ‘You’ve not said how you knew Colonel Andrews.’

‘Knew?’ said Kelly. ‘Andrews works for me.’

‘Worked,’ corrected the Doctor. He must have realised how that sounded. ‘I didn’t mean...’ he began.

‘No, no,’ said Kelly. ‘I quite understand your concern. It’s been quite a shock to us, as well. But let me assure you, the colonel is perfectly well.’

‘But he’s broken his neck!’ the Doctor insisted.

‘Has he now? Why don’t I introduce you both to him?’ He stood, folding the piece of paper up and shoving it into a pocket. ‘I can show you where it’s all happening, too.’

‘It’s got me quite jiggered,’ Andrews admitted. ‘The very moment I think I’ve got my bearings, something’s off bat again.’

They were back in the square with the fountains. Ian and Susan had followed the colonel up and round and down the streets between skyscrapers, only to land back where they had started.

‘But you do know the area?’ asked Ian. He was finding this difficult. He couldn’t shake from his mind the image of Andrews from before, lying dead at the foot of the escalator, his head wrenched backwards from his body. The more they followed the Andrews with them now, the closer the man got to his death. It stood to reason: it couldn’t happen any other way. No matter how lost they were, every step took them nearer to the man’s death. Perhaps, Ian thought, he and Susan would be caught up in however he died. But what other choice did they have but to stick with him?

‘I’ve worked in Canary Wharf for nearly a decade. Since before the war...’ Andrews said, craning his neck as he looked all round. He froze. Something had caught his attention. He scurried across the square for a better look. Susan took the chance to whisper again to Ian.

‘He might not be in his own time!’ she said.

‘You mean he’s jumped ahead?’

‘That would explain why he’s lost, wouldn’t it?’

‘You think we should confront him?’

‘I don’t think -’

She fell silent as Andrews hurried back to them. He had his notebook out, checking what he had written earlier. ‘Things are definitely different,’ he said, wide-eyed. The bridge is in a different place altogether. And you noticed the gates were missing at the station?’

‘Yes,’ said Ian, wondering where this was going.

‘They lock the place up at night. I’ve been caught out working late. This time of night, I thought I’d be locked in. But the gates hadn’t been there for years.’

‘You think they sent you forward?’ said Ian. Andrews nodded, not appearing to notice what Ian had given away. ‘Possibly, though it may be that spatial dislocation is a symptom of...’ He started scribbling in his notebook, his writing erratic, almost crazed. He looked up to say something. And stopped.

Andrews stared wide-eyed at a building down the street. It looked like all the others - pristine, new, anonymous. But it meant something to him. He grinned.

‘That’s it,’ he said, amazed. ‘That’s the one!’

They emerged from the gloomy corridor into the laboratory. The odour of old eggs and gas immediately reminded Barbara of Ian’s own labs back at Coal Hill. A man in a dirty lab coat worked at the tall workbench that ran all the way round the room. There were gas taps and plugs at regular intervals. In one corner, large machines clanked and whirred. They looked no different from those she had seen in her own time - slow, valve-driven and prone to moths.

Through a window in the far wall, Barbara could see some kind of testing room. Inside stood a thick metal hoop, as tall as she was. Scientists fussed around it, poking, prodding and making notes. They were fastidious in their work. In fact, the whole lab was spotless, clean. Not at all like the mayhem of paper she’d seen at Byng Street.

The lab technician turned round from his work. His hair was a mess.

‘Oh!’ he said. ‘I thought it would be more -’

‘Get on with your work, Griffiths,’ said Kelly.

The Doctor stepped forward, tapping his finger against his lips as he surveyed the lab. He pointed at the testing room as he turned back to Kelly. He looked furious.

‘I take it -’ he began.

‘Barbara!’

A thrill went through Barbara. Ian had emerged from a side door. Susan quickly followed him out, running to the Doctor and throwing her arms around him. The Doctor stroked her hair. Barbara took Ian’s hands. Her eyes picked over every familiar detail of his face, wowed by the sudden relief at having him back.

‘How are you?’ he said, the same relief she felt evident in his voice.

‘We were arrested,’ she said. ‘This is London, 2006.’

‘We’re at war again,’ Ian nodded. ‘The police didn’t hold you, though? We saw you taken away...’ She didn’t have a chance to answer.

‘Just who are these people?’ snapped Kelly.

‘I’m Ian Chesterton. This is Susan.’

‘You’re the ones who made the report.’ Kelly turned to the Doctor. ‘You’re his father, are you?’

‘I am the Doctor, as I said. You wrote it down. This young lady

is Barbara. I think there has been some confusion on your part.'

'You deliberately -'

'Sir?' said the timid-looking scientist. 'They came in with the colonel.' He scratched at his jaw, nervously. 'Should I put the kettle on again?'

Kelly let out a sigh. 'Very well, Griffiths. You do that' Griffiths bobbed through the side door and out of view. 'I suppose you were being cautious,' said Kelly to the Doctor. 'Best thing around the soldiers.'

The Doctor was eager to change the subject. 'You said you would show us around this experiment of yours, hmm? I must say it all looks in order. Spick and span, in fact!'

'Doctor,' said Ian. 'There's something you should see.'

'In good time, Chesterton. We must see what they're up to here, mustn't we?'

'But Colonel Andrews!' said Susan.

'Now Susan...'

Barbara gasped as the side door opened. A strikingly handsome man emerged. His hair was slicked down and he sported a sly moustache.

'Someone shout?' said Colonel Andrews, offering his hand to the Doctor. 'I'm Andrews,' he said warmly. 'Gather you're here to shed light on our little hitch.'

The Doctor shook the man's hand, his eyes flickering to Susan and Ian.

'I would be glad to help,' he said.

'It's not possible!' said Barbara. The man smiled at her, holding his arms out as if inviting her to prod him. She couldn't hold his gaze, and looked down. He had those same square-toed shoes on. Barbara felt her eyes prickle with tears.

Griffiths appeared again, brandishing a metal tin of tea leaves. He spoke to no one in particular, avoiding their eyes as he glanced all round. 'How do you all take it? We've not had sugar in ages, of course...'

'Barbara,' said Ian. 'The colonel here isn't the man we found.'

Griffiths looked down at Barbara. 'Oh, didn't you know about...'

'He has to be,' said Barbara. 'Look at him!'

'Sorry to disappoint, miss; Andrews grinned, waggling an eyebrow at her.

'Come and see,' said Ian. He led her up to the side door. A

window in the door looked in on a mess room - small tables and chairs jostling in front of a kitchen. Various men in lab coats sat around chatting, drinking tea, making sandwiches. generally taking time off from their work.

They all had the same, uniform kind of haircut. Perhaps their hair gel was military issue. And then she got it.

She took a step back, her throat constricting, unable to speak her surprise.

Every one of them in the room, all half dozen of them, was Colonel Andrews.

Chapter Three

St Paul's Cathedral towered over the wreck of London. Nestling in a rooftop alcove, just out of the chill night air, Richie Roberts surveyed the damage done. The north of the city was on fire, explosions pinpricking the darkness. He watched the meagre relief efforts down on the ground, hurrying to assist. Each night they fought a losing battle, each night they lost more ground to the sky.

Wren's great cathedral, however, remained pretty much unscathed. In many respects, firewardens on the roof were among the safest people in England. Tall, gothic follies like the old parliament buildings and Westminster Abbey had been brought down in the early days of the war, shattering like glass under the enemy's precise onslaught. The cathedral was different; Roberts knew all the stories. In World War Two, a 500-pound bomb had knocked a hole through the roof and exploded right over the high altar. For any other structure, that would have been it, but the cathedral just absorbed the blast. For years after, like now, its huge frame was all that marked the London skyline. Wren had built it squat and stocky, on classical principles, and had insisted on the Roman ratio of 1:1.6 throughout. In his day, they'd had no notion of redundancy in engineering; they had built an unsinkable monolith simply because they'd not known any better. Roberts liked that; so very English, in its unassuming way.

They had still shored up the structure for the war, though. Roberts had overseen the project. They had reinforced the eight great pillars in the middle of the church, the ones that supported the inner dome. The fat, sturdy pillars were the nearest the cathedral had to an Achilles heel. The chances of a bomb knocking them out were remote, but St Paul's had become the emblem for the city's resistance efforts. So long as the cathedral's dome still rose from the clouds of ash and cinder, the people would never give in.

The reinforcements were fixed deeply into the resplendent brick cladding that made up each pillar. As Roberts had discovered, behind the white enamel was soft filler material that powdered at the touch, like old concrete. It had been easy to drill into this, to fix the supports and to jacket the pillars in thick

shielding that would take the brunt of any blast.

Roberts had assured all those who asked that the cathedral would now be secure. He would show them his calculations; tables of numbers, with graphs and diagrams showing how force would be siphoned off. The people - fellow watchmen, the bishops, the congregation of desperate, dirty faces made homeless by the war - all wanted to believe him. Sleeping in the cathedral, they sought refuge with God and the city's patron saint. They trusted in the combined might of celestial powers and Roberts's mathematical skill.

On his last ever night on the rooftops, Roberts felt little for the people. He had lied to them, and so had condemned them to death. Yet he had no doubt at all about why it was necessary.

He glanced quickly round to ensure the other watchmen had their eyes elsewhere, and withdrew his sleek, silver phone from his pocket. He dialled the number without having to think about it.

'It's Roberts,' he said.

There was no response; there never was. 'The explosives are in place. Begin your attack run.'

Again nothing. And then, a voice with an accent he'd not heard in too long said, 'Understood. Be well out of range. Await further instruction.'

'Understood.' Richie Roberts snapped the phone shut. He collected his satchel, found his cap, and disappeared from London.

'But Doctor,' said Ian, 'what can it mean?'

The Andrewses ignored them. They must have grown used to the scrutiny, Ian thought. They drank tea, played cards or talked quietly in twos and threes. Some wore lab coats, some did not. They did not all sport moustaches. Yet they were clearly all the same man. It was quite incredible.

The Doctor stuck his thumbs into his waistcoat pockets as he turned to Kelly. He bore a bemused smile. 'So you've knocked up a time machine, have you?'

Kelly glowed. 'The portal is still very much in the experimental stages. But we have seen some initial success.' Susan turned to her grandfather. 'But they shouldn't know -' She fell silent at a stern look from him.

'Can we meet them?' asked Barbara. 'I'd like to speak to them.'

Kelly demurred. Ian saw the Doctor take Susan's hand. Again something passed between them. They knew more than they were letting on about all this. Of course, it was their territory. Even so, Ian had seen this before. Things never went well when the Doctor got secretive.

They made their way into the kitchen. There wasn't really room for them all. The Andrewses squashed up, offering seats to the newcomers. As before, they were dashing - cut from the same cloth as the slick officers he'd seen in films like *The Great Escape*. They were more welcoming, too, than the man Ian had met outside. Now they had Kelly with them, Ian and the others were taken in as family. One Andrews put the kettle back on, another found mugs. Ian helped them gather up the newspapers strewn across the table in the middle of the room. They were six shillings each - an extraordinary amount - but looked cheap, with tatty print and paper. Ian glanced over the shock headlines: 'Invasion now!', 'Afrikaans ready!' They had read the same sort of trash in his mess during National Service. He had to remind himself there had been several decades of inflation since he'd last bought a paper.

Ian looked round the room again. Once, long ago, he had taught identical twins. The boys revelled in mischief, answering for each other, winding their teachers up in knots. Their anonymity gave them a strange power. Ian, however, had been forewarned: one twin had a mole just above his lip, the other had darker eyebrows. The twins had been amazed when he'd known who was who, they'd even been scared of him. Pupils always were when you remembered their names. Ian had cultivated that skill. Now he never forgot a face. He'd make sure he could tell these men apart.

'You're all right?' said Barbara, checking round. 'None of you are hurt?'

Some Andrewses laughed, others looked to each other. One took a seat. He didn't have a moustache, and styled his hair more severely than the Andrews Ian and Susan had met.

'We're all first rate, thanks for asking, ma'am.' said the Andrews sat with them. He seemed younger than the one from outside, Ian thought. That had to be it; these were the same man at different ages. If so, Ian would be able to work out who was the youngest, and then up in sequence. He wondered how many trips they had made, each time that little bit older. All leading

inexorably to the dead man they'd found in the station...

This wasn't the result you expected, was it?' harrumphed The Doctor. He had accepted a mug of tea but declined a seat.

He looked agitated, his bottom lip stuck out. 'I should say it took you all by surprise!'

The Andrewses grinned the same grin. 'Expect the unexpected they chorused without meaning to, then broke into laughter. It was hard not to laugh with them. They were enjoying this. Only the Doctor stayed stony-faced. You never once thought through the consequences of what you were trying to do, did you?'

'Doctor,' Kelly began, 'I can assure you -'

'You can assure me of nothing. You can't even comprehend what you've begun.' The Doctor's eyes narrowed. Ian saw the age in him, barely restrained. 'And how could you? How could you?'

Kelly felt his shoulders give way. They had got it wrong. That was why the Doctor was here from the future: not to celebrate their achievement, but to clear up the mess they had made. The man couldn't disguise it. Kelly took a seat.

'Perhaps you can give us your insight.' he said. The Doctor must have taken note of the anger in his voice. He held up his hands.

'I'm sure you didn't mean it to be like this, the Doctor said. 'Why don't you tell us what happened from the beginning?'

Kelly took a long gulp of tea. The test was scheduled to begin at oh-one hundred.'

'I daresay you've been working on the project for some years?'

We've only built the portal in the last year, but the work has been going since the late sixties, all told. The artefacts we've been studying since then, well... they're not of human manufacture, are they?'

The Doctor and his assistants swapped glances. They said nothing, but their looks spoke volumes. Perhaps, Kelly thought, his team had got that detail wrong too. His old tutor, Professor Townsend, had often said that scientific endeavour was like chasing the horizon: you never got any nearer to the end. Every answer just raised more questions. But this... Just a couple of hours ago, Kelly had been absolutely certain of the experiment, had known what results they would see. Now, his life's work was unravelling in front of him.

'Colonel Andrews was to be the first human subject to pass

through the portal. As is standard operating procedure with any test pilot, we wired him up with ECG, heart monitor, the usual sort of thing. Again, as standard, we tested the receiving equipment prior to his stepping through the portal. But rather than indicating one Colonel Andrews - or even two, as we anticipated in a successful experiment - the equipment went off the scale. Too much raw information.

'I've always over-performed,' said one Andrews. Kelly ignored him.

'We took everything apart to check for errors. A full, intensive check. And while we were busy with that, another Andrews walked into the laboratory, declaring the experiment a success. This second Andrews didn't remember himself turning up before he left, or the problem with testing the receiver. After some discussion, we concluded we had therefore changed history.'

Barbara, started to say something. Kelly glared at her and she fell silent. He did not like to be interrupted, and certainly not by a woman.

'There was some more delay,' he continued, 'as we assessed the situation. We came up with a number of theories. And, all the time, more Andrewses turned up.'

There was a long silence while the Doctor thought. Everyone in the room hung on what he would say, what his verdict would be. Once, Kelly thought, he had commanded the same respect. Back when he'd had more than just two staff under him.

'Duplication,' said the Doctor. 'That's what it appears to be. Your experiment copies people when it means to transport them.'

Griffiths, who stood somewhere behind Kelly, stifled a laugh. So much for the expert knowledge.

'Nonsense,' said Kelly.

'A science-fiction idea!' said one of the Andrewses. 'We're not copies,' said two others at the same time. The Doctor brooded, stroking his jaw with a fingertip.

'The duplication could be the result of multiple -' began the young girl with the suit jacket on. The Doctor silenced her with a wave of a hand. She dug her fists into her pockets and pouted. It had to be part of an act, thought Kelly. What could the child possibly know?

The Doctor furrowed his brow. Which of you gentlemen was the first?' he asked.

'Me.' said an Andrews at the back of the room. He came

forward, pulling back the sleeve of his lab coat to reveal the plastic band around his wrist. On the band, in felt-tip, Kelly had written 'Andrews 1'. Around the room, the other men drew back their sleeves, showing their bands, their designations.

'Hmm,' said the Doctor. 'And you tested the machine before you put a human through it, of course?' 'A rabbit,' said Kelly. 'Is it relevant?' Dee-zed-eleven, bee-twenty-nine, oh-three,' said the girl, brightly.

'What?'

'That was the code number we used for the rabbit, sir,' said Griffiths.

Kelly's throat felt dry, like he had a cold coming on. He rummaged in his pocket, found his pipe. Of course the girl would know the number. She'd have learnt it at school. This was all history to their little troupe. His hands shook as he prodded the leaves into the drum.

'We passed a rabbit through the hoop last night, he said. 'Appeared exactly where it was meant to, on the other side of the portal. And exactly when it was meant to, too. On the spot of midnight. Nothing wrong there.' He drew in a lungful of smoke, feeling it oil his insides. It had a ghastly flavour, serving only to kindle his need for real tobacco.

'It appeared where?' asked the younger man, Ian.

'On the other side of the portal. In the test room, of course.' 'We saw mice and rabbits in the station,' said Barbara. 'Before we found the body.'

The Andrewses all looked round at her. Kelly cursed. Typical woman, spilling the beans like that. He had not yet had the chance to brief them about the dead man.

'White mice,' added the Doctor. 'White not wild, what does that tell you? And they all - all - had that number on them. What does that tell you, hmm?'

The Andrewses were now talking among themselves. Kelly would have to talk to them, put them at their ease. He would get Griffiths to do it. That would get them out of the way, letting him talk to the Doctor.

The choice between whether we sent a rabbit or a mouse was made at the very last minute,' he said. 'We might have sent either. We thought the rabbit would be easier to catch in the portal room. But so what? What difference does that make?'

Again, the Doctor held back. Kelly hated that knowing smirk.

He hated having to tease the detail from him.

‘Think about how your system works. Where did you expect your rabbit to end up?’

‘Our key concern was ensuring subjects landed where and when we wanted them. You can’t just send something back in time. The Earth is constantly moving through space. At this latitude, the Earth rotates at a little over 620 miles per hour, while it also travels at 67,000 miles per hour round the sun - which is in turn moving within a galaxy, which is also moving.’

‘Yes,’ said the Doctor archly, glancing at the girl. ‘Some of us are more sensitive to that fact than others.’

‘Without fixing space as well as time, you’d be throwing the subject out into a vacuum.’

‘D and E!’ exclaimed Ian. ‘They’re interlinked.’

‘It’s fundamental,’ the girl nodded. Kelly persevered.

‘Our system enables us to condition linked particles inside the portal. With enough energy, we can designate the whole area inside the hoop. It’s six feet in diameter, but in theory the portal can be as big as you like. So, we create an “anchor” of the portal at midnight. An hour later, we have the portal seek that anchor, an hour previously. That’s what creates our tunnel to the past. So putting our rabbit through at oh-one hundred, it ought to appear on the other side of the hoop an hour earlier.’ He took another long draw from the pipe. ‘Which it did.’

‘And Colonel Andrews?’

Kelly almost choked. Of course, he thought. Not one of the Andrewses had appeared in the lab. They had all walked in from outside!

‘I think I know that one,’ said Andrews 1. ‘It’s because I’ve not been through, isn’t it?’

Kelly saw the Doctor’s face turn pale. The old man was stricken.

‘You’re not the first to arrive,’ said Ian. ‘You’re the original!’ That’s it,’ said Andrews1. ‘Meant to step through the portal, take my turn and all that. Got distracted by all these other chaps. Reckon that’d throw it all out of whack.’

‘He’ll get round to it, though,’ chimed in another Andrews. ‘He has to, doesn’t he? Look at us...’

‘Doctor?’ asked Kelly.

‘You don’t understand,’ said the Doctor quietly. ‘You can’t understand what you’ve done.’

‘Why’s it so bad, Doctor?’ asked Ian. ‘What does it mean?’ The old man was badly shaken, but he had no time to reply.

Kelly turned at the commotion behind them, and leapt to his feet. Through the window in the kitchen door, he just saw a bullish woman in her sixties as she marched into the lab. Soldiers followed on her heels.

Bamford had arrived. And - surprise, surprise - she was not happy.

The general surveyed the laboratory. They kept it tidy, the paperwork out of the way. She liked that care and attention. Indeed, she had closed projects down where the boffins had been less meticulous. The place was empty, though. Another tea break, or they were all off getting some kip. Whatever the case, if no one was using the lab, the instruments should all be turned off. They couldn’t afford to be frivolous. She made her way to the observation window, looking in on the test room. A tall, metal hoop stood in the centre.

A chill ran through her.

Behind her, Kelly appeared from a side door, tucking his pipe into his pocket. She wondered how a man on his salary could afford to smoke. He made a slouchy excuse for a salute.

‘Sir!’

‘What the hell is this all about, Major Kelly?’ Bamford barked. Kelly stood up straight.

‘Sir?’

‘You discharged civilians from Byng Street. Bit outside your remit, isn’t it, Major?’

‘Well, sir...’

‘But then you’ve been overstepping your remit a lot lately.’ She gestured back at the test room with her thumb.

Kelly shifted uneasily on the balls of his feet. Managing boffins could be like herding cats. They responded to prodding and bullying, but would then go off on their own the moment your back was turned. They could also be mutinous when cornered. Kelly, however, took his time. Perhaps he had an eye on the soldiers all round him.

‘Our work does adhere to the funding and resources you allotted, sir,’ he said. ‘I’d be happy to talk you through what we’re doing here.’

Behind him, one of the soldiers was looking through the

window in the side door. His jaw dropped open. Bamford's men weren't easily shocked.

'What is it, Skinner?'

'Think you should see this, sir,' said the man, taking a step back.

Bamford looked to Kelly first. He looked terrified. Got you, she thought, and went up to the door. It took her a moment to realise what she was seeing.

'I can explain,' said Kelly, hurrying to the door. 'They arrived at Canary Wharf station and we -'

Bamford held up her hand and he fell silent. 'Canary Wharf can wait,' she said.

She opened the door and went in. It was crowded. A group of strangely dressed civilians helped themselves to the tea rations. Around them buzzed a dozen lab technicians, all made up to look like the same man. It was pandemonium. The men in lab coats all looked identical.

'It's not as bad as it looks,' said the young, suited man, seeing the look on her face. Bamford wondered where he'd trained, speaking to his superiors so glibly.

'You're a family of technicians, are you?' she asked, retaining her composure. 'All of you exempt from military duty?' 'We're here by chance,' said the old man. Bamford sighed. 'Vagrants, is it? Take these people away.' The soldiers behind her snapped to attention. One came forward, his gun in his hand. The civilians held onto each other. The identical men stood their ground.

'General, I must protest!' said Kelly

'We don't carry freeloaders, Major. You have papers for every one of these people?'

'I... Colonel Andrews has papers.'

'One set of papers? One of them can stay. Everyone else to Byng Street. You know the rules.'

'We are not freeloaders!' said the old man, getting to his feet. The women tried to stop him.

'They're not!' agreed Kelly. 'They're valuable! The Doctor here knows all about our work. He has useful intelligence!' Bamford scrutinised the old man. 'I don't know what nonsense you've been up to here, Kelly. But it's stopping. Now.'

'I believe I can be useful,' said the old man, holding her gaze. She liked that; he had spirit. And what damage could the old duffer do? Especially with the others locked up.

‘Fine,’ she said to Kelly. ‘You can keep him, everyone else is to go.’

‘Now really, woman.’ the Doctor began. Bamford turned to Kelly.

‘I’ve shown more leniency than I’m obliged to, Major. Get these people out of here.’

The soldier waved his gun. The identical men obediently filed out, taking it all very calmly. That would go well for them in their individual reviews, thought the general. The civilians held back, though, whispering among themselves. It looked like the younger man was their leader. He evidently advised them to do as they were told. Good man. They said perfunctory goodbyes to the Doctor, who promised to catch up with them soon.

The last of the identical men held back, watching Bamford. ‘You’re the one with the papers?’ she said. He nodded, looking torn - no doubt feeling he should stand with his fellows. His conscience didn’t prick him long, though. When she didn’t say anything further, he hurried through into the lab and found himself some work to do.

Left in the side room with Bamford now were Kelly, the Doctor and another scientist - a sorry excuse for a man, his hair wild and unwashed. He hadn’t shaved for a couple of days, and his tired old lab coat was spattered with stains. He scratched at his sleeve as he sought her attention.

‘What is it, man?’

‘Corporal Griffiths, sir,’ the man said, battling a stammer. ‘I think I should go too. To Byng Street.’

‘You do, do you?’

‘These people need to be debriefed. There’s lots we could learn from them’

‘Yes, we can help you,’ added the Doctor. ‘We’re here to help you.’

Bamford considered for a moment. Or rather, she paused so it looked like she was considering.

‘Fine,’ she said. ‘The review meetings won’t take place before dawn. You have until then to ask your questions.’ Griffiths made to leave. ‘You’ll supply me with a copy of your transcripts, though.’ Griffiths turned, tripped over his feet and collided with the door frame. He grinned, stupidly, and was gone. No wonder he’d been able to stay with the lab thought Bamford. He’d be a liability on the front lines.

'Soldier,' she said. A man appeared at her side. 'Take some men. Search Canary Wharf station. Let me know if you find anything... out of the ordinary.' The man hurried off. Kelly and the Doctor regarded her.

'You said that's where these people were found?'

'Yes, sir.' said Kelly. 'Now ...'

'Now, Major, you're going to show me around this facility of yours. I'm not impressed so far with how you're running things. I think it's time the military took more of an interest in what's being done.'

Kelly smiled, though his eyes were glassy. 'Of course,' he said. 'Come this way.'

They made their way outside. Ahead of Ian, Susan and Barbara held onto one another. No one spoke, no one looked round. There was a terrible resignation about it all, which Ian couldn't stand. He kept his eyes on the corridor in front of them, looking for anything. There'd be an opportunity to escape somewhere.

Their party stepped out into the moonlit night; the cold sliced through him. The Andrews ahead of them piled into the back of an armoured car. When eight of them had got aboard, a soldier slammed the door shut. He drew the bolt on the back of the door, locking the men inside.

'Another car's coming,' said one of the soldiers. He kept his gun ready, his finger poised over the trigger-guard.

The car started up, belching out foul-smelling brown smoke. They watched it tear off down the road. Ian saw his chance. He took a step backwards, back into the building. No one had noticed. He wouldn't wait until the second car arrived, he would grab the Doctor now. They would collect the girls and - 'Now's not the time, Ian,' said a voice behind him. It was Griffiths. Ian sighed. Slight though Griffiths might be, fighting him would only alert the soldiers. Griffiths led him outside again, puffing himself up as he approached the soldiers.

'I've come to interview them before the executions,' he said. 'The execution of the orders, I mean.' He looked down at the ground, muttering at himself for the slip.

Down the road, another armoured car approached. There was no escape now. Ian stood with the girls. Barbara held Susan tight.

* * *

Kelly let Bamford and the Doctor into the test room. The portal stood in front of them. Admittedly, it didn't look like much. Thick cabling snaked around the floor, connecting the base of the hoop to the instruments in the main room.

'This is the portal itself,' said Kelly. 'We've made it this size so that a man can step through without having to duck his head.' 'How convenient,' sniffed the Doctor, stepping round the hoop. He made certain never to get too near. 'I expect that trebles or doubles your energy needs, hmm?'

'Not at all, Doctor,' said Kelly, keeping his eyes on Bamford. The general was resting against the wall, gazing at the metal hoop. She looked exhausted. He hated to think what her life involved. Defeat wasn't easy to cope with.

'Sir, if you'd like a rest...' he said.

She snorted. 'The enemy isn't resting, is he?'

The Doctor took an interest. 'The bombing is worse?' Kelly wondered how much the man knew, both of what had been happening and what was to come.

'It looks like the South Africans have taken France,' he explained. 'That's why the raids are more regular?'

'I see,' said the Doctor. 'But we remain safe here?'

'You're quite safe,' chided Bamford. 'They won't come near the Isle of Dogs, not with the Dome so close. Dropping a bomb on a nuclear power station, even in error, would be their undoing. It would impact on their allies. I'm surprised you haven't been keeping up, Doctor. Don't you read the papers?' 'The Doctor is too engrossed in his work,' Kelly cut in. And we have so little contact with the outside world.'

'A luxury,' said Bamford.

'But you're holding them back?' asked the Doctor.

'Of course,' she said. 'Though it's no easy business. I remember a time when the UK had an airforce, control of its own skies...'

Kelly found this melancholic version of the general worse than the bully. She was unpredictable now, might close his team down on a whim. When had she last slept? When had she last had cause for hope? He had to make something of himself, had to make her understand how important this was.

'Okay, Andrews!' he called out. In the main room, the sole remaining Andrews flicked the switches. Power murmured round

the test room. The portal quivered. The Doctor hurried back from the hoop, flattening himself up against the wall. The murmur grew in confidence. Now the floor vibrated, Kelly's joints protesting at the tremor through his legs.

The hoop began to glow.

The noise grew louder and louder, a guttural brumm! from the machines around the room. The hoop glowed a dark, unnatural blue. It got steadily brighter. Kelly had never seen it like this up close. He had always been in the main room when tests were being done. From where he stood, staring right into the hoop, it was beautiful. Instead of seeing through to the far side of the room, the air inside the hoop melted, like a mirage on a sun-drenched day. Blobs of strange colour swirled in there, indistinct movement, dreamlike and alluring. The hoop itself was blinding, suffused with energy. He turned away.

The Doctor looked aghast at the thing, even nauseous. Bamford was mesmerised.

Bamford took a tentative step forwards, a beatific smile on her face. She stretched out her hand. The brilliant light reached for her, sparking around her fingertips. It seemed to pull her forward...

The Doctor grabbed Bamford's arm, yanking her back from the portal. 'Switch it off!' he demanded.

Kelly came to his senses. 'Switch it off, Andrews.' he called. The brilliant light crunched off, leaving only a green-pink halo burnt onto his retinas. The machines wound down with an agonised groan. Bamford stood, gazing at her fingers where the light had teased them. Her skin was steaming.

'Wow,' she said. Her voice sounded distant, without the gruffness Kelly had come to fear. She sounded... girlish, he thought. Like someone else entirely.

Barbara cradled Susan as the van hurtled down the street. They were squashed up inside with Ian, Griffiths and the remaining four Andrewses. The Andrewses assured each other that they would all be okay, that there were simply procedures to be followed. They were all military personnel when it came to it, and the army would see them all fine. Bamford looked out for her boys, they said. They seemed happy, relaxed. Barbara wondered how much of that was bravado, how much that bright-eyed outlook just went with their job. Test pilots needed to believe that

things would always turn out for the best.

Griffiths, beside her, scribbled in his notebook. He muttered as he wrote, admonishing himself for some silly blunder. She wanted to whisper to Ian about the stereotypical scientist, drinking too much coffee, worrying his sleeves and talking to himself. Ian, no doubt, would have reminded her of his own chosen profession.

‘Why sugar?’ said Susan. She was straining over Barbara’s arm to see better what Griffiths was doing. Griffiths batted the notebook up against his chest, hiding his work. Then he relented. He handed the book to Susan.

‘When the Andrewses first arrived,’ he said to Barbara, ‘I tried to make them tea. Not all of them took sugar.’

‘Does that mean something?’

‘Perhaps they gave up at some point,’ said Ian. The Andrewses opposite them shook their heads. Barbara couldn’t help but smile: they looked comical, all acting the same.

‘I’ve never taken sugar,’ said one.

‘I would if I could get it,’ said another. ‘Haven’t seen any in years.’

Susan lifted her head from the notebook. ‘They’re all a little different, aren’t they; she said. “That’s what you’ve been looking at.”

‘Surely they’re all the same man at different ages...’ began Ian.

Susan shrugged. ‘That’s not very likely, Ian,’ she said. Ian’s face was a picture, thought Barbara. Sometimes Susan could make them both feel like wayward pupils, struggling to keep up with class. She knew far more than they did about most subjects. Yet she was growing up, too: she had realised how that sounded. ‘I didn’t mean...’

‘Our hypothesis,’ said Griffiths, ‘is that our portal has changed history. With each arrival, history changes. We’re rewriting it again and again.’

‘But that’s not possible,’ said Barbara. ‘The Doctor said that we couldn’t rewrite history, even if we wanted to.’

‘It’s more complicated than that,’ said Susan, carefully. Barbara shook her head. When they had been waiting in the station, the Doctor had said something about time. He had been about to qualify his earlier statement. A horrible thought struck her. Back in Mexico, had he lied to her?

‘Rewriting history is possible,’ said Susan. ‘It’s just complicated. Imagine I went back in time to meet Grandfather

when he was young.'

'Before he'd had children, you mean.' said Ian, nodding. He always got these things faster than Barbara. He had such a logical mind.

'Well, yes.' said Susan, pulling a face. The idea of a young Doctor must seem strange to her. It seemed pretty strange to Barbara, too. 'So if I went back and met him, and something happened...'

'If the Doctor didn't have children,' said Barbara. 'You'd never have been born...'

'But then, if you hadn't been born...' said Ian.

'You couldn't go back in time and meet him, so the change would never happen!' Barbara had been with the Doctor and Susan for nearly a year now, traipsing from place to place, but it had never struck her before what damage they could do.

'It's what we in the field call a "Grandfather paradox",' said Griffiths. He might have been joking.

'It's not what happens, though,' said Susan. 'I would meet Grandfather, but I wouldn't just disappear out of time. Time would change around me. I would avoid the cause and effect because, being in my own past, it would overtake me.'

'But that doesn't make any sense,' said Ian.

'Griffiths understands,' said Susan, pointing at what he'd put down in his notebook. All eyes were on Griffiths. He shrivelled under the glare.

'I just thought it would be like with typesetters,' he said. 'You lay out the blocks of print, and then an editor wants something changed, a word or a phrase. The typesetter removes some letters and puts in others in one place, and they take up a different amount of space on the line. So you move words up from the line below. And that affects what follows. A clever typesetter can do that with the minimum of fuss. He'll change words in one line, and it'll only affect the next couple of lines. The change melts away the further down the page you go.'

'Time is a force,' agreed Susan, 'pressing down on reality and flattening out the effects of change. Can I have your pen?'

She started scribbling an involved diagram in Griffiths's book. Griffiths and the Andrewses peered down at what she drew, fascinated. As she worked, they began to spar ideas. Susan, without looking up, would correct them every so often.

Barbara and Ian looked on, amazed and intimidated.

* * *

Kelly tried to be patient, but Bamford just wouldn't listen. She had been taken by the project, now, but she needed it to have practical value. She needed it to win the war, in one stroke. He could see the Doctor fuming, too.

'You've swallowed up a lot of resources with this thing,' the general went on, 'more than your fair share. It's time you paid us all back' She stopped, and for a moment Kelly thought she was inviting a response from him. But no.

She had been interrupted by a runner. The young soldier handed Bamford a slip of paper. She tore through the seal with the side of her thumb and read the message. She looked up at Kelly like she'd caught him out.

'What do you know about a police box, down in the station?' she said.

Kelly caught the Doctor's eye. The old man shrugged almost innocently, but Kelly could see he knew something. 'In the station?' asked Kelly.

'On one of the platforms. The men think it's got machinery inside, but they can't get the doors open. Something to do with your lot, isn't it?'

'Not at all,' said Kelly. Why would she possibly think that, he thought.

'Well, I doubt it's a coincidence.' She wrote something quickly on the back of the note. 'I'll get them to bring it up here. We'll soon get it open, see what it's about.'

She handed the note to the runner, Who saluted and then hurried off.

'But General,' said Kelly, 'we hardly have the room here. 'And this object might be dangerous,' ventured the Doctor, quietly.

'Nonsense. There's a secure room down the corridor that's not being used. That'll hold it.'

She was right, of course. Kelly tried not to seem shocked: he had spent so long in this one lab he had forgotten the secure room and the other facilities at his command. With his staff constantly being reassigned to the war effort, he'd not needed the space.

'Now, your drain on resources,' said Bamford.

'We've been careful to run our experiments at night,' said

Kelly. 'Tonight's work was scheduled for midnight, as agreed with the chiefs at the Dome.'

'Yes, yes, you've tried to minimise inconvenience. But nuclear power still has to be paid for. So the question remains: what use do we get out of this gadget of yours?'

'Scientific investigation should not be motivated -' began the Doctor.

'There are all kinds of important applications for the work,' said Kelly, cutting him short. He realised the Doctor could be a risk; they could only push Bamford so far before she closed them down. 'We're doing things here nobody else in the world can do, and certainly not the enemy. We're just beginning to understand the potential.'

'Military potential would be good,' said the general.

'Yes, good,' snapped the Doctor. 'So long as it remains just a potential!'

Bamford seemed amused by his outburst. 'You have views on the matter?'

The Doctor missed the tone of her voice. The machinery here is foolhardy enough. Try to use it as a weapon and you'll be lucky to leave anyone alive on the planet!'

Bamford considered this for a moment.

'That's what we're after,' she said.

The prisoners unloaded themselves from the car. Above them rose the dark edifice of the Byng Street facility. As Barbara had said, it had a Stalinist quality. For the first time, Ian understood her fear. He offered Barbara his arm. She declined with a quick, determined shake of the head. The Andrewses still doted on Susan, perhaps glad of the distraction from their impending fate. While they had been jolly in the car, the Andrewses clearly knew what went on in the facility, and now they were here, they would not say a word.

'But why don't all the realities arrive at once?' Griffiths asked, scratching at his neck until his skin was raw. 'They've been coming in one at a time.'

The police herded them into the building. 'There's probably a mass ratio, or inertia,' said Susan as they went. She looked sadly at the Andrewses. 'I think you're bottle-necking, and have to wait your turn.'

'Like fighter planes stacking up, waiting to land?' said

Griffiths.

‘It could be something like that. The nearest realities are smaller, so they’re at the front of the queue.’

‘But that means -’ began one Andrews.

‘That as time, our time, goes on -’ continued another.

‘The realities arriving are more and more different,’ agreed Griffiths.

‘Or the other way round,’ said Susan. ‘Time works like that, too, remember? And, equally, an increasing fallout of energy.’

That took the Andrewses by surprise. Susan cocked her head to one side. ‘The energy has to go somewhere,’ she said. ‘And all the time the experiment goes on, you’re putting more pressure on time and space.’

Ian tried to picture the equation involved, the values marked D and E. It was all beyond him, frankly. The scientists, however, looked grave.

The interior of the facility was officious and grey. The walls were grey, the carpet was made up of grey patterns, and even the light seemed grey and mundane. As Ian was led further into the labyrinth of corridor, he glimpsed grey-faced men in suits, hurrying about the complex with slips of paper. Once, he spied a couple of men whispering urgently to each other. They didn’t look up as Ian and the other prisoners were marched by. Prisoners in escort must be a common occurrence here.

Well inside the building, the carpet ran out. The hard, grey floor beneath echoed their footsteps. The paint on the walls was chipped, untended. This would be the unfashionable end of the facility, Ian thought.

They arrived at a series of cells. The doors were heavy, with a tiny window in the top. Through one, Ian saw the other Andrewses, the ones who’d gone in the first car. He, Barbara, Susan and the scientists were herded into the facing cell. The room was dark, dank, without furnishing of any kind. The floor and walls were bare concrete. They couldn’t keep them here long, he thought.

The door behind them slammed. Ian waited for his eyes to get used to the darkness. Barbara, Susan and the others around him were crude, uncertain shapes, black on black.

‘And what then?’ asked Griffiths.

‘I don’t know for certain,’ said Susan. Ian felt a moment’s relief. ‘Your planet collapses. Or dissolves. Something like that, I

think.'

It took four men to shift the police box into the sealed room. The room had lead-lined walls and, when the doors were closed, it was airtight. Even with the doors open, it made Kelly's ears ring. He watched the men work, fascinated by their no-nonsense style. Bamford ran a tight ship. The men used a wheeled pivot to lift the box, which one man could drive on his own. The others were needed to help steer. That had been a surprise; as the men said, a real, concrete and timber police box should be heavier.

The men worked the police box into the middle of the room. It hummed with power, echoing eerily in the confined space. The Doctor walked slowly round the police box, scrutinising it. He tapped one edge with the back of his knuckle, then looked up at Kelly.

'It's certainly a mystery,' he said.

'Get the doors open,' said Bamford.

'Do you really think that wise?' asked Kelly. 'That vibration: it could be a bomb!'

Bamford snorted. 'You can step out into the corridor if you feel the need, Professor Kelly.'

He found himself blushing. He hated how easily she bullied him.

'I'm sure this object has nothing to do with the matter at hand,' said the Doctor. 'The experiment is -'

He stopped short. The soldiers all stepped back from the box. The vibration increased. Wild energy buzzed around the room, rebounding off the reinforced walls. The hairs on Kelly's neck stood on end.

Something, a shape, blurred into being beside the police box.

The Doctor stepped forward. He extended a hand to the thing. Kelly had already guessed what - who - it was. 'Thought as much,' said Bamford. 'I want this thing taken apart,' she ordered and marched out.

The soldiers set to work on the locked doors. The new arrival just gaped, bewildered by where he'd ended up and at all the commotion. Kelly went up to him.

'Impeccable timing there, Andrews,' he said.

Chapter Four

Abigail Ali looked down on the ruin of the great city, picked out in the moonlight. London lay flattened below her. The campaign aimed to take out the infrastructure, their efforts directed at strictly military targets: the bridges, the power stations. Over recent months they had picked these out, crippling the enemy bit by bit. And yet still the Englanders held out, still they fought on, in their dug-outs and hidey-holes, happy to blow themselves up so long as they took a few of their liberators with them. For this raid, Abigail had a new directive, a symbol. Something to stop the English dead.

The plane filled her head with noise and fumes, clouding her brain, making it hard to think. She preferred it that way. If she dared to consider her orders, she might not be able to carry them through.

Below her, patches of rubble marked out what had once been Southwark. She had memorised the route before they left Calais, yet still she checked the view against her map. The starfish of roads was Elephant and Castle, beside it the broken line of a railway, dotting and dashing north across Borough Road, then Webber Street and Union Street. She recognised the ruin of Bankside Power Station.

The Thames suddenly gleamed beneath her, bright in the full moon, betraying the city on its banks.

She tore at the cord in front of her. The plane dipped, the pilot quickly adjusting to the sudden loss of weight. Abigail felt her harness cut into her. She leaned out, holding her breath as three fat bombs spilled into the sky.

The first bomb hit the river, a silent sploosh, then a great wet rupture. The noise of the plane made it silent, made it seem unreal. The bomb would have had little impact anyway. There weren't even any fish in there to kill.

The second bomb fell into St Peter's Steps, on the north bank of the river. She saw the bomb burst, a brilliant flare of red and white. The buildings on either side of the steps quaked, as if from fright. She could just make out the bricks wriggling loose. The front of one building, a pub it looked like, came free. It toppled forward, shattering down the steps.

The third bomb glanced off the roof of the cathedral itself. It rebounded off a cornice, turned over in mid-air, slid down a section of tiles and came to rest. For a moment, nothing. It lay there, cradled in a nook, too fat for the eighteenth-century gutter. Abigail let her breath out slowly.

She pressed the red button beside the pull-cord. A blink of light, and she saw the windows of the building blow out. The whole cathedral bristled. Richie Roberts must have packed the place with explosive, she thought. Nothing else would bring the great building down. And for a moment, Abigail wondered how many people had been inside, praying to a God with no intention of sparing them.

The great dome slid, toppling forward as the building collapsed underneath it. The spire dipped. Suddenly the whole thing fell away, the roof giving out. Abigail heard the crash, even over the growl of the plane. Smoke, dust and splinters billowed out all round. Before the plane banked right, taking her back to France, Abigail saw the dome split, bursting like an over-ripe fruit. She had done that, she thought. It would be her line in the history books.

People had been inside, she knew. Hundreds of people. Their bodies would be lost, as well. The city hadn't the resources left to recover them. Abigail felt nothing for them, no remorse. They had brought this on themselves.

'When are you from?'

The question hung in the air. Barbara considered; she was back in the Interview Room, the same one where she had first met Kelly. Ian had told her to tell the truth; that way their stories would match. Any kind of 'cover' they devised in the cell would soon be pulled apart. It would only get them into hotter water. That was why, he said, the Andrewses had not come back. Taken one at a time for questions, they'd now be languishing in other cells somewhere. It meant stories couldn't be compared, made it easier to play the prisoners off against each other. She hated the thought of mind games, the chance she'd say something to incriminate them all. Ian had reassured her. 'Just tell the truth,' he said.

'1963.' She took care with each syllable, hoping to sound calm and assured.

Griffiths showed no surprise, nor did the soldiers who flanked him. A note was made, Griffiths muttering to himself as he wrote.

Barbara again noticed his worried sleeves, poking from his lab coat. His jumper was in a shocking state, coloured woollen threads untangling from one another. He had a haunted, exhausted look about him, something desperate and dangerous just behind his eyes. A caged animal, she thought, that's what he was becoming. She had seen the look before, long ago, on soldiers on leave, just before they were shipped away to the front again. Was it the war going on around him, she wondered, or the stress of his work?

'And how long have you spent in our time?'

'We arrived not long before you arrested us,' she said. 'The first time you arrested us, that is.'

'You've been to this time period before?' He couldn't be much older than she was, she thought. Meaning he wouldn't even be born until the mid-seventies.

'No.'

Another note was made. Again, he muttered as he wrote. 'Why this time period? You're here for our experiment?'

'We came here by accident. We can't control where we're going. Or, when.'

'So how do you return to your own time?'

'We can't. This is the nearest to home we've ever been.' That surprised him. He held her gaze for a moment, then scribbled some more. He must have written a whole paragraph. She heard some of the words he said - 'objectives', 'fallout' ... What had she given away?

'You've visited a more distant future?'

'We travel back and forth in time.'

'So you've been to the past, interfered with established history?'

'We've visited. Not interfered.'

A smile. 'We're not attuned to the distinctions, of course. What do you know of our present situation?'

'Very little.'

'Locally or globally?'

'I know there's been a war. We've gathered that much since we got here.'

'And you consider the present situation a new conflict?'

'I don't understand.'

'Let me rephrase the question, then. Has World War Three ended? In your opinion, at least?'

He was trying to trick her, she knew. He said the words with meaning, as if springing a trap. Could anyone deny there was a war on, she thought. The bombing and the police state gave the game away... and yet she was a stranger here.

‘We really don’t know anything about what’s happened in the last forty years. I’m not qualified to answer that question.’

‘It’s dangerous to be so ignorant, isn’t it?’

She laughed. ‘It’s got us into trouble before.’

‘But forty years is a long time. The computer. Television and radio. The machine-people they say live on the South Pole. The war. You really don’t know about any of these things?’

‘We had television and radio in my time,’ she said. ‘But otherwise, no.’

Whatever he had expected her to say, that evidently was not it. He regarded her for some time, as if waiting for her to go on. Then he made another careful note. He thought for a moment, before his next question.

‘So none of these events impact on the future you’ve seen? They’re all forgotten by then?’

‘They might do. I don’t know. If they did, I didn’t see it. I’m sorry, we’re not meant to get involved.’

‘I wish we all had that luxury.’

‘I don’t mean to seem callous. The Doctor wants to spare us from foreknowledge. When we get home, knowing what’s to come would be dangerous.’

‘You might try to make things better? To prevent horrors you know are to come?’

‘Something like that, I think.’

‘And you think somehow that would be wrong?’

He’d got her. She didn’t know what to say. She wanted to answer, but she knew she’d only be repeating parrot-fashion the things the Doctor had said. The sanctity of time, the immutability of history. Things she just didn’t want to believe true. They should try to make things better, whether they achieved anything or not. It wasn’t right otherwise.

‘You’re asking me about moral responsibility?’ she said. ‘Yes.’

‘But what are you doing about Colonel Andrews?’

Griffiths looked up suddenly. ‘I’ve conducted interviews with each of him.’

‘They’re going to be executed, aren’t they? Everyone knows it, but no one will call it what it is. And if you thought it was right,

you wouldn't hide it. You all know they're innocent, that killing them answers nothing, solves nothing, and yet you're going to do it anyway.'

'What would you have me do?'

'Free them and help us to escape. Stand up to that general woman. Make a difference. Do what's right.'

'Freeing them would be a capital offence. It would do them no good, and it would only make things worse for me. If you're not with the regime, you're against them. That's the Wartime Assignments Act.'

'You're not a military man. You're not like the others.' She gestured with her eyes towards the soldiers on either side of him.

'I'm not sure how to take that.' He looked into space for a moment, drawing on his memory 'You can't afford not to know Wartime Assignments, not while you're here.'

'I don't care.'

'Clause 1,' he said. 'An individual who fails, without reasonable cause, to prove that he is designated by the Secretary of State as a contributor to the war effort shall be considered an enemy combatant.' A smile played across his face. 'They made us learn it at school.'

'I didn't mean -'

'Clause 2,' he went on. 'Such enemy combatants shall not be entitled to claim any rights, freedoms or privileges that would otherwise be available to them, and no public authority shall be obliged to respect any such rights, freedoms or privileges. We've no rights at all?'

'You're on borrowed time.' It took her a moment to realise what he meant. She, Ian and Susan were facing the hangman's noose.

Griffiths called over one of the guards. 'Take her away. Bring in the next one.'

Barbara got to her feet resignedly. Griffiths did not rise, just finished his notes. The discourtesy stung her. This England truly was a foreign land. Had he just forgotten his manners, she wondered, or had he signed off on her? She would now be led off to an unmarked room where they did their run-of-the-mill killing, the soldier responsible bored by the work. She felt a terrible pang at the banality of it. At not saying goodbye to Ian.

The newest Andrews - number fourteen by Kelly's reckoning - was escorted away by one of the soldiers. Despite his disorientation, Andrews was good about it, had done as he was

told. Kelly liked that in the man, putting a brave face on his imminent doom. It seemed such a waste, to be honest. Surely Bamford needed more men with that attitude. He was providing her with a valuable resource that really might win them the war. She was squandering that gift, throwing the men away over formalities.

The remaining two soldiers discussed how best to carry out Bamford's order with regard to the police box. The Doctor folded his arms, watching as the men hefted sledgehammers. He seemed to be quite enjoying this, the old goat. He must be the kind of scientist who revelled in blowing things up, tearing them apart. Kelly despaired at such recklessness. He liked care and attention. The only reason he'd ever given a damn about his position was that authority let him choose who he worked with. He could see he'd clash with the Doctor, were he to work on his team.

A soldier winked at him. 'Want to give us an 'and with this?'

'I wouldn't want to spoil your fun,' said Kelly. The troops all ribbed him. They thought he'd tricked his way out of the war.

Mucking around in these labs, on projects nobody understood or gave a damn about, couldn't be proper war work. When, soon, his contribution to the victory was self-evident, these troops would remember what a great bloke he'd been to work with, what an inspiration to the men. They'd all want a piece of him then, and they'd live off their stories about what he was really like. Best to be a good sport about it at this stage, for the sake of his place in history.

Clang-clang.

The soldiers strained to raise the sledgehammers up above their heads, but put no effort into the swing. Instead, they just let the hammer fall, its own weight doing the work. It was probably better for their muscles, he thought.

Clang-clang.

They attacked the box in sequence, a regular rhythm of paired strikes. When Kelly had been a boy, his dad had been a bell-ringer. He had always craved a go. By the time he was tall enough to reach the ropes, the Machine had been on them. Bells had rung when the war began, and again when it ended. By then, though, Kelly had found a career in the scientific corps, and a project to take up all his time.

Clang-clang.

Beside him, the Doctor looked increasingly pleased with himself. Of course he knew more about this police box than he was ever letting on. He would have read books about what it was doing, what it signified. And he was keeping that knowledge to himself. Something boiled inside Kelly to know the answers. But he'd control the urge to ask. This was his experiment, his domain. He'd find the solution himself. He knew he would. The Doctor wouldn't be here if he didn't.

Clang-clang.

Bamford reappeared. Her face was grave as she stuffed a memo into her pocket. More bad news. What had the bombers got now?

'Haven't you got started yet?' she snapped. Kelly opened his mouth to protest on the soldiers' behalf, but the look on their faces was enough. Bamford understood. They were sweaty, red-faced from the effort, and angry. The police box hadn't even been scratched. Beside it, a shape blurred slowly into being.

The soldiers looked to Bamford, expecting rage. Instead there was something about her thrilled by the challenge. Kelly thought that twitch might even be a smile.

She waited for Andrews 15 to fully materialise in the room. 'Colonel,' she said quite sweetly, 'one of these men will escort you to your rooms.'

'Dashed kind of you,' said the man, looking a little giddy. 'Lead the way.'

When he was gone, she walked all round the police box, appraising it.

'I'm sure we can get into it somehow,' said Kelly.

'I've got a better idea,' she said. 'We put it through the hoop.'

'When are you from?'

'1963,' Ian replied. Griffiths seemed cowed, afraid of him. Perhaps it was guilt. He knew they shouldn't be locked up like this. What had they done to Barbara? Where was she now?

'And how long have you spent in this time period?'

'I don't know what the time is now,' he said. 'But we arrived not long after midnight. As far as I'm able to tell.'

'You've been to this time period before?'

'Never.'

And why this time period in particular? You came to see our experiment?'

'Not intentionally.' Griffiths looked up from his list of questions

at this. 'That's been a bonus.'

'How much do you know about the experiment?'

'The Doctor's the expert,' said Ian.

'Our work is based on materials discovered before the Machine came. The then British government thought it was extraterrestrial, and kept it off limits until the war.'

Griffiths must be trying to catch him out, thought Ian, to see what he did and didn't know. Why else give him that detail? Ian was meant to be the one to answer questions. Was there something in this account he was meant to respond to? Whatever the hidden trick, Ian kept to his own rule. Tell the truth, don't pretend anything.

'If you say so,' he said. 'Where's Barbara?'

Griffiths made some notes, talking to himself as he did so. He kept his voice low, but Ian could see the agitation in his eyes. He had made some kind of connection. What had Barbara said, he thought. What had he got wrong?

'I need to report this to Bamford,' said Griffiths, getting up from his chair and gathering up the papers. 'You'll wait here.' 'I've nothing better to do.'

To Ian's surprise, Griffiths then instructed the soldiers to follow him. As he left, Griffiths looked back at him. He opened his eyes wide, communicating something. Before Ian could respond, his captors were gone. Ian was left in the room alone.

He sat back in his chair and waited. He ran the interview over in his head, wondering what information Griffiths had gleaned. He had kept his answers curt, he thought, volunteered nothing that hadn't been asked for. Had Barbara done the same? Surely she had said nothing else...

He jumped up from his chair, began pacing the room. There had to be something he could do. He glanced over at the door. His jaw fell open. The door had been left ajar. That was what Griffiths had meant by his funny look. He'd given Ian the chance to escape.

Was it a trick? Maybe this was another test, and stepping out of the door would incriminate him. Yet Griffiths had caught Ian before, back at the lab, and not shopped him. He'd said it hadn't been time. The man certainly wasn't enamoured of the army. There had to be something to this.

Ian went up to the door. 'Guard?' he called out. He kept his voice low - only someone right outside the door would hear him.

No answer. He waited, just to be sure.

The door creaked as he pulled it open. He flinched, opening it slowly, to draw the creak out until he could squeeze through the gap. He put his head out into the corridor. Nothing. He ventured out. To his left, he could see the main entrance of the building, and the night sky beyond. A soldier sat behind a desk, looking outward and away from him. It would not be so difficult to slip by the man. If he escaped on his own...

Keeping his eyes on the soldier, Ian crept back the other way. He thought he could remember the route from the cell. He would rescue Susan, and they would find Barbara and the Andrewses. They would get out of this together.

Closed doors sectioned the corridor. He heard people working inside the rooms, the clack of typewriters and the calm words of clerks and administration. He hurried on.

Reaching a T-junction, with voices echoing his way, Ian froze. The voices were coming from his left, towards the cells. He ducked right, moving fast. He had to be out of view of whoever was coming. The fork he had taken led onto a corner. He hid, just out of sight, listening. The voices had not changed. The people talking were standing still. They blocked his route to Susan.

Ian rubbed at his neck, considering options. His shirt collar had worn against his skin, making it raw. He had been wearing the same clothes for too long. He could do with a wash and a shave. He probably stank, all this running about. He dipped his head and sniffed.

The stink was oily and rich, but came from down the corridor. Raising his head, sniffing again, he could trace the smell.

The smell was familiar, he felt sure of it. Yet it filled him with terrible dread. He had to investigate.

Steeling himself, he went forward. He took each step slowly, unconsciously putting off the confrontation. The smell got worse. He was definitely tracking it. His eyes began to water.

He continued down the corridor, following it left and left again as it weaved through the building. It emerged into a long, narrow room. Like a shooting gallery, he thought. The room was dark, he could not see the end of it. The stench filled his body. He fought back the urge to be sick. He listened, strained to see any movement back there in the darkness. Nothing suggested itself. He reached for the light switch. There were other controls on the

wall.

Light gleamed off the tiles, covering ceiling and walls and floor. Six of the Andrewses lay on the floor at the back of the room. The same size and shape as each other, they looked neat and tidy. It took Ian a moment to notice the blood. They had all been shot, a thumb-sized hole marking each forehead.

He looked back at the controls on the wall outside the room. This was an incinerator. How many did they kill here, to make a room like this necessary?

Barbara was not among the dead. He had to find her.

He made his way back down the corridor, no clue where to try next. The voices were still in front of him. He paused. Something caught his eye.

On the floor, so small he had missed it coming the other way, was a bit of woollen thread. It was brown, bright against the grey flooring. He knew the colour. It came from Griffiths's sleeve.

Ian looked all round him. He saw another piece of thread, some way further down the corridor. Leading him towards the voices. A trail! Griffiths was helping them escape.

Ian crept onward, following the route laid out for him. The corridor turned to the right. He edged up to the wall, and peeped around the corner. Two men in suits stood a few feet away. One had a clipboard. They discussed 'intakes'. Ian would never get by them unseen.

A thought struck him. He checked his polo neck was tucked in and stepped out into the open. The men stopped talking to look at him. Ian kept walking. He had meant to ignore them but they stared at him.

'Morning,' he said. The men relaxed.

'It was still night just a minute ago,' one of them said. The shift will be over...'

Ian rolled his eyes as he passed them. If he looked busy, they would leave him alone. The men went back to their discussion. They would finish up now they knew they could go home. Their conversation died away behind him. He turned yet another corner, the building like a rabbit warren. He heard more voices, up ahead. His heart leapt. Barbara.

She was talking levelly. On the floor, the pieces of thread led him on towards her. He stopped outside a closed door. Inside, he heard her mention the school where they had worked. Someone replied, a man's voice. He looked through the spy-hole in the

door and saw Barbara, a guard and four Andrewses.

Gingerly Ian tried the handle on the door. Locked. Barbara continued to speak - she had not seen the handle turn. Ian licked his lips, thinking out his next move. He took a step back, stood up straight, then reached out a hand and knocked squarely on the door.

Barbara fell silent. Ian heard people moving around in the room, whispering. The door opened. The soldier peered out at him. He had a pistol in his hand.

Ian didn't give him a chance. He dived into the man, knocking him off his feet. The gun clattered across the floor. They fell back, struggling and kicking. Ian tried to get purchase on the man's face. The man smacked and batted at Ian's back. Then he gave up.

Ian got to his feet. The soldier stayed where he was. An Andrews was pointing the gun at him.

Barbara rushed over, threw her arms around Ian. He hugged her back, relief surging through him.

An Andrews took a plastic card from the cowering soldier. They were eager to get going. Ian stepped back from Barbara. She wiped away a tear.

'How did you...'

'Griffiths is helping us,' Ian said. 'We need to get Susan, then the Doctor, then back to the TARDIS.' He looked up at the colonels. 'We'll take you with us.'

'Now, listen here old stick -' began one of the Andrewses. 'I've seen your other selves,' snapped Ian. 'They've all been shot.' They fell silent, numbed.

'They can't all have -' began Barbara.

'All of them,' said Ian.

The Andrews with the gun went to the door. 'Let's be off, then,' he said simply.

They left the soldier in the cell. The Andrews with the plastic card used it to lock the door behind them. Ian hadn't time to ask how it worked.

They continued down the corridor, back towards their original cells. They met no one. It had to be four in the morning, with only a skeleton shift on. Perhaps that was why Griffiths had waited to help them. Why he'd stopped Ian escaping back at the lab. Now was the better time.

Susan was not alone - two new Andrewses had been brought

to her cell. She lay curled up under Ian's jacket, while the two men compared stories and tried to make sense of it all. Susan jumped to her feet as Ian and the others came in to the cell, and ran to Barbara. She had clearly been crying, though she pretended otherwise.

'I'm fine really, Barbara,' she insisted. 'These two were brought in after you left.'

Ian shook hands with the two new Andrewses. Having spoken to Susan, they were eager to meet their other selves. 'Actually surprised there's not more of you!' said one, with a grin.

Barbara looked quickly over to Ian, and when he nodded, she led Susan out into the corridor. The Andrews with the gun shared the news with his fellows.

Andrews 14 and 15 took it surprisingly well. 'We'll escape, find somewhere new,' said one.

'Retire to the country, you think?' said the other. 'Or have you got other ideas?'

'The Doctor will know what to do,' said Ian. 'If you're new here, perhaps you've seen our friend. He's an old man, with white hair. We left him in the lab.'

'He's still in there,' said an Andrews. 'When I turned up, he was working with the professor and our other self. Wondered who he was!'

'The lab,' nodded Ian. 'Good. Then that's where we're going.'

'But how?'

Ian checked the corridor. The trail of thread ended right outside the cell. Ian had seen no other branch, he could think of no alternative. Griffiths must mean them to leave by the front door. Ian said so to the others. He had brazened it out so far, and they need only get past the front desk.

They made their way back up the corridor. Susan held onto Barbara. The Andrews with the gun went first.

The two men Ian had seen earlier were gone. Ian was glad: the Andrews might have had to shoot them.

They reached the main lobby. A soldier sat behind the desk, reading a paper. He glanced up at them. Ian nodded curtly. The soldier nodded back. He wasn't paying attention, didn't see there were six of the same man.

They reached the door, looking out onto the forecourt. The sky was lightening. Barbara glanced over to Ian. They had made it.

' 'Scuse me,' said the soldier. Ian looked round. 'I'll need to see

your pass if you're signing this lot out.'

Ian went over to the desk, fishing in his trouser pocket for the pass he didn't have. The soldier leaned back in his chair, folding his arms. He was too far back behind the desk for Ian to reach him. He wondered what he'd do.

The man's eye exploded. Ian heard the gun go off behind him. The soldier, his face a mess, tumbled backwards over his chair. Ian looked back. The Andrews with the gun was unrepentant.

'We're running for our lives,' he said. 'Time to be elsewhere,' and he ran through the door. Another Andrews followed close behind him. Four Andrewses remained. With Barbara and Susan, they looked to Ian to lead them. The soldier lay dead behind him. There was nothing he could do about that.

'We should go,' he said. Two more Andrewses ran out into the courtyard. The other two remained with Susan and Barbara, waiting for Ian to go first.

He hurried out. Two pairs of Andrewses ran ahead of him, vulnerable out in the open. In the distance, Ian heard a crackling. The sound was picked out clearly in the night air. He strained to see in the darkness.

The headlights of an armoured car raced across the courtyard towards them. White explosions glittered to either side, guns poking from the car windows.

'Back!' shouted Ian, getting those behind him into the facility again. The two Andrewses immediately in front of him stopped in their tracks. Ian turned to see what they had seen. Out on the courtyard, the first two Andrewses staggered and writhed as bullets cut them down.

Ian cried out to the two men watching: 'Back inside!'

As he ducked into the facility, bullets nicked the door frame.

The bullets stopped. Ian held Barbara and Susan close. The two Andrewses, the only ones left, cowered with them. Outside, they heard the soldiers confer. Ian made his way to the door and peeped out. Soldiers picked over the dead men idly. One soldier ran off, no doubt to get help. The second two Andrewses, halfway between the facility and the dead, put their hands up. Soldiers beckoned them over. They had no choice but to surrender.

A noise behind him. Ian turned. The last two remaining Andrewses had the desk between them. They heaved, dragging it to the door. With Ian's help, they wedged it into the gap. Susan added the chair, and they quickly filled the breach with whatever

they could find, all the furniture around them. They stepped back, panting.

‘And then there were five,’ said an Andrews, dolefully.

They all looked to Ian, ready for his next command. He had no idea what to tell them. The barricade would not last long. Behind them in the corridor, people in suits emerged from doors. They wanted to know what the noise was about.

Kelly had never seen Bamford like this. She looked terrified. The Doctor bore down on her, wagging a finger as he spoke. ‘We don’t just break things when we don’t understand them,’ he snapped. ‘We use our minds, our intellects. We are intelligent beings, and I should say that we behave as such!’

He glared at her, thrusting his jaw out. Bamford collected herself. Kelly saw the way she built her confidence up, step by step.

‘I merely posited a theory,’ she said. ‘Posited. That’s what you scientists do, isn’t it? And though you’ve shouted me down, you’ve not given me any kind of argument why we shouldn’t put the box through your hoop. Can you tell me that it won’t end all this tomfoolery?’

‘My dear lady, my box, *this* box,’ said the Doctor quickly, ‘won’t even fit. Believe me, it has nothing to do with what’s going on here. And if it did, we should study it, not throw it away!’

‘It’s not your decision, Doctor, and I think it will fit easily when we lie it on its side. What is it?’

A young soldier caught her attention. She nodded him forward. He saluted, then gave her a folded memo. ‘More on St Paul’s?’ she asked, whatever that meant. Kelly tried to read her eyes as she scanned the message. She gave nothing away.

‘We’ll resume this discussion shortly,’ she said. ‘There’s something I need to take care of right now...’

If her eyes had been unreadable, the tone of her voice was clear. As she marched away, Kelly wondered who had earned her anger. He couldn’t help but feel sorry for whoever it was. She clearly had murder in mind.

Ian had found everyone something to do. Barbara and an Andrews dealt with enquiries. They told the workers there had been an invasion. Pitched battle was going on outside. They should go back to their offices, lock themselves in.

The other Andrews kept busy with Ian, gathering whatever they could find to add to the barricade. People stared at the

identical men. No one was rude enough to stop them. Perhaps they just thought they were twins.

Susan pressed up against the barricade, peering through a tiny gap. 'The soldiers are all just waiting,' she reported. 'They're standing in a line and not doing anything.'

Ian considered. 'They must be awaiting orders. That gives us a little time. You and Barbara, see if you can find another way out of here.'

'What makes you think there'll be something?'

'Look for coloured threads on the floor,' Ian replied. 'Griffiths set this all up. He must have planned a way out. Now go!'

As Bamford approached him, she saw the bruises. The man, Griffiths, had his arms wrapped round his head, swatting at the medics to leave him alone. They were nestled behind the front line of armoured cars, a hundred yards from the facility. Soldiers waited on her word.

'What happened?'

Griffiths stared up at her. His fringe was knotted with blood. His lab coat and clothes were torn. He had lost a whole sleeve of his jersey. 'He overpowered me. Ian did. He killed the soldiers I was with.'

'But you got away?'

'He went to rescue his friends. I raised the alarm when I woke...'

'Don't cry about it, man. Why aren't you in there?' This she directed to one of the officers.

'He said the people inside were worth keeping, sir.'

'They know things!' wailed Griffiths, clutching his head. Bamford tutted. 'Man's in shock.'

The soldier nodded. He handed her ear protectors. Griffiths received the same. He kept his eyes on her, open wide and imploringly. She'd once had a dog who begged in the same way. Yet it might serve to be pragmatic where the civilians were concerned.

The soldier was relaying orders. She caught his eye. 'Try not to damage them,' she said. He saluted, then hurried off. Bamford didn't watch the explosion, she just heard the dull thud through her ear protectors. She looked up to see the first wave of soldiers, running low. They approached the ruin of the barricade with textbook ease. They wore gas masks, but even from this distance Bamford knew each of them by sight. Quickly and efficiently,

they checked for traps and resistance. Pale fog played around their ankles, seeping from the building's main door. Men at the flanks kept watch, their guns ready. They didn't know what to expect from the enemy inside, but he wouldn't make it easy. They would take no chances. Hence the tear gas, shot into the building before the explosive went off.

At a hand signal from one of the men, the rest of the soldiers ran forward. They swarmed into the building. Bamford plucked off her ear protectors. She listened for the gunfire.

Barbara emerged from the tunnel into the dawn. They were by the river. Apart from the water, all was quiet. She looked round, searching for landmarks. At a guess they were a couple of streets from the facility. An armoured car was parked just up the path. The windscreen reflected the golden dawn sky at them. She could not tell if anyone was inside.

'I said Griffiths would see us right,' said Ian.

'But what now?'

An Andrews, however, had the answer. He had gone to the car. Now he called them over.

'There are keys in the ignition,' he said. 'I'm driving!'

They piled in. Beside the driver, there was a double-seat. Susan and the other Andrews sat in the front. Barbara and Ian took the back. She felt awkward sitting there, boxed in again. Ian held her hand as the car started.

A shutter slid open in the partition, and Susan beamed at them from the front. 'Where to?' called the Andrews in the driving seat.

'The lab,' shouted Ian. 'That's where the Doctor is.'

They drove. Military vehicles passed them, but they were not stopped. The windscreen reflected back the dawn, so no one could see who they were. The pink and gold of the new day filled them with hope.

Canary Wharf was a different place in the daylight, gleaming with welcome and promise. Barbara basked in the dawn flooding into the van. She looked back at Ian. He smiled gently at her, and she had to turn her head away for fear she would laugh out loud. The nightmare was over. They would soon be away.

They parked outside the entrance to the lab, exactly where they'd been picked up a few hours before. Ian leapt out before the others had got moving. He stopped Barbara from following him.

'No argument,' he said. 'It's too dangerous.' She tried to

protest, but he slammed the door. She heard him run round to the front of the car. 'Take them to Canary Wharf station,' he told the Andrews at the wheel. 'I'll fetch the Doctor and join you there.'

Barbara held on tight to the rail she was sitting on. The car raced off towards the TARDIS. She prayed Ian would not be far behind them. Just this last hurdle, and they could all leave this godforsaken place behind.

Nothing. No firing, no shouting.

Bamford gave the men time to clear each floor. She preferred them to take their time, to not feel pressured by her being there. It was safer for them. Her soldiers' lives were valuable to her. They were a finite resource these days.

People in suits appeared at the door, coughing and retching. The facility's night staff had been caught unawares. Soldiers tended to them, checking they were who they claimed to be.

An officer at the door waved his hand at Bamford.

'Come on then,' she said to Griffiths, cowering beside her. 'Eh?' he said, loudly. His ears were still covered. Bamford grabbed him by the arm.

'You should see this, she said.

The officer gave them gas masks and led them into the building. The Byng Street Facility had always been gloomy. The tear gas, thick and choking, meant they could see no more than a metre ahead of them. Shapes and faces lunged from behind the veil, ghost images, her imagination pricking her. The men would have been kept busy, searching all corners, adrenaline coursing through them as they looked for the enemy and his friends. It was worse to follow them in with nothing practical to do.

Bamford glanced quickly at Griffiths, who was checking his mask was on properly. She shouldn't have been surprised: at his age, he'd have been taught how to use them at school. Yet he seemed so incapable, her men tripping over him wherever he put himself. Likewise he looked down on her, she knew. Simple, practical operations like this were beneath him. He lived in his mind, was a foreigner to the real world. He'd have been the one at school who avoided the football field to read. The one the others all bullied.

She was bullying him now, of course, making him come with her. She would justify it somehow. He had to face the man who'd overcome him, it was important for morale that he saw justice

done. Not that anyone would question her. No one would take the feeble man's side.

The officer took them through to the holding cells at the heart of the building. Perhaps the spy had holed himself in. They made their way down some steps and into the basement. They stooped underneath the low ceiling. Bamford turned quickly at a sound behind her. Griffiths had cracked his already damaged head. He had not been paying attention, and walked right into a supporting concrete beam. Through the glass in his mask, she saw tears. Grow up, she thought.

The air cleared the further they went into the basement. At the back of the room, soldiers crouched around a square hole in the floor. As she approached, one hurried to intercept her. He had a padlock in his hand.

'It's not been forced, sir,' the man said. 'They must have had a key.'

And where does that lead?'

The soldier took a deep breath. 'Outside, by the river. We haven't got anyone there.' He waited for her response. She said nothing.

Griffiths made his way to the open hatch, peering down into the darkness. He tapped a finger against his mask, that mind of his at work again. He reached down to something on the floor. He saw Bamford watching, and quickly showed her what he'd found. A bit of thread. Nothing of any significance.

'You could be more helpful,' she said.

'Ian must be a South African spy,' replied Griffiths, his voice quiet and awed. 'He overcame me, he overcame your soldiers, and now he's been able to open the trapdoor.'

'You've just worked that out?' she snorted. 'Get out there she said to the men. 'Find them, put them down.'

'Wait!' called Griffiths as the soldiers hurried away. His tone, though slight, was commanding. They turned back, bent comically under the ceiling. Even Bamford paid him heed. 'The women, both of them. They know about the experiment. We have to speak to them more.'

The men looked to Bamford for the decision.

'Fine.' she said. 'But the man's to be shot on sight!'

'But I must remain here, I must!'

Ian had found the Doctor exactly where the newest Andrewses had said. The TARDIS stood in the middle of the reinforced room,

scaffolding all round it. Ian's spirits had sunk the moment he had seen it, and he was in no state to argue with the Doctor.

Scientific apparatus hung from the scaffold. It might have been drilling equipment. Scattered about the floor were sledgehammers, crowbars, some kind of welding torch. Ian was thankful the Doctor had not handed over the key. Yet he stood between Kelly and the first of the Andrewses, and refused to listen to Ian's entreaty. He had deserted his friends and his granddaughter. Ian could hardly believe his ears.

'Doctor, you have to come with me.' Having eluded the soldiers this long, he was frantic to get moving. They couldn't afford the delay.

'The Doctor remains here,' agreed Kelly. Ian could have thumped him. The original Colonel Andrews stood by the professor, ready to protect him if Ian got rough. It seemed odd, the man not being Ian's ally.

'What is it, old man?' asked Andrews. Ian must have been staring. They all looked at him with the same expression, as though he was crazy. Ian had had enough.

'Did you know what they'd do to the other ones like him?' he asked. 'They've already shot most of them. That's why we made a break for it.' The news shocked them. Kelly put his hand out to Andrews, gripped his arm.

'That's all very distressing, yes,' began the Doctor.

'I thought they'd just interview them,' Andrews said softly. 'We must find Bamford!' Kelly decided. He exchanged glances with the Doctor, and seemed content with what he saw there. 'I'll see you presently,' he said, and he and the colonel hurried off. The Doctor and Ian were left alone. Neither spoke for a moment.

'We have to go, Doctor.'

'Impossible,' he replied. 'It's impossible!'

'Susan and Barbara will be waiting for us now, and -'

The Doctor shook his head wearily. 'I appreciate you've tried your best. But you've no idea what we're up against. We can't just run away, not this time we can't.' Ian had never seen him like this. He was only ever resolute when he wanted to run away, to leave people they'd met to their destinies. 'Susan and Barbara will have to wait. There are things we must do before we can leave.'

He led the way out of the reinforced room. Ian followed him down the corridor, back towards the lab. He walked on tiptoes.

He had avoided the soldiers so far. His luck couldn't hold out for long.

The lab was empty. The Doctor crossed quickly to the bank of controls on one side of the room. He pointed a crooked finger at each set of switches, muttering to himself as he made sense of them. He took his time. Ian knew better than to hurry him. Instead, he kept watch on the door. Sweat itched down his back. His whole body buzzed.

'It's quite simple really,' the Doctor laughed. 'You can see why they've had so much trouble?'

'Doctor, please!' hissed Ian. The Doctor's face fell. He looked for a moment like he might argue, then thought better of it. He turned his attention back to the machine, moving a sequence of levers. Nothing happened. Ian checked the corridor again, then hurried over.

'Well?'

The Doctor held up his hand for quiet. They listened. The lights flickered. The great metal ring, standing upright in the test room, began to tremble. Power coursed loudly through it. It started to glow ever brighter...

Ian could not take his eyes off the hoop. He took a step towards the door of the test room. Behind him, he could hear the Doctor adjusting the controls, altering the input, controlling it. Ian didn't care. The door opened easily inwards. The noise and light took hold of him. He stood in the test room, looked through the electric blue hoop. Inside the ring, the air danced and sparkled.

'Step away from the machine!'

Ian turned. The soldier stood in the doorway to the lab. A gun was waved towards the Doctor. With his free hand, the man shielded his eyes from the brilliance of the test room.

The Doctor kept his hands on the levers. He cocked his head back. 'I can't leave it like this!' he said.

'Turn it off then!' the soldier yelled. His eyes gleamed with fear. He couldn't be out of his teens, thought Ian.

The Doctor worked the machine. The terrible noise began to fall back. The light slowly died. The air in the middle of the ring sparkled. Ian could still make a dash for it...

'You!' said the soldier. He was looking directly at Ian now, suddenly able to see him against the lessening glare. Ian put his hands up. 'I'll come quietly,' he said with a shrug. The boy raised

the gun a little higher. Not the orders I've been given,' he said. He held Ian's gaze. Ian could not make out the emotion he saw there. He glanced at the portal, just a few steps away. He might just make it...

Blam!

Ian fell back, startled. It took him a moment to register that he had not been shot. Spots danced before his eyes. The boy was grappling with someone behind him. The someone was winning, hands held tight around the boy's throat. Ian watched the boy's face contort. It flushed red then terrible violet. The boy's jaw worked frantically. It managed one horrendous, final breath. Ian saw the light go out in his eyes.

The attacker let the boy drop as soon as he'd stopped struggling. The body collapsed into the ground, its arms flapping gracelessly as it fell.

Ian stared at the killer. He stared at his own reflection.

'It's you!' said the Doctor, hurrying to the man. Ian watched, rooted to the spot. His other self fell forward into the Doctor's arms. His polo neck - the same polo neck he was wearing now - was bloody. It was not the dead boy's blood; Ian's other self had been shot.

Ian looked quickly down. His own shirt was clean. He had been spared. This other him, dying in the Doctor's arms, had saved his life.

The Doctor struggled under the weight of the wounded man. Ian ran forward, took his other self in his arms, eased him down to the ground. He sat, the dying man sprawled awkwardly across his lap. There was blood everywhere. The bullet had gouged a hole right through his chest. Ian put his hand to the wound.

Blood, his own blood, seeped through his fingers.

The man looked up to him. He put his own hand to Ian's, over the wound. He wore a wedding band.

'T... t... tell,' the dying Ian said. 'Tell B-baar-'

The breath escaped him. He looked surprised, peaceful, as he died. Ian closed the dead man's eyelids.

'I'll make sure she knows,' he said.

Chapter Five

Dawn soaked into the square. Barbara stepped out from behind the car into sunlight. She closed her eyes, and let her lungs fill with air. It smelt of fire after the night's bombing.

'Mind yourself,' said Andrews, behind her. She paid no heed. Out in the gathering sunshine, there could be no danger. Birds chirruped and sang. She had been fidgety in the back of the car, cross that Ian could desert her. She felt that all slip out of her now, unknotting her shoulders and back.

They were free.

She heard Andrews approach. He said nothing, just stood by her. She knew he was right to be cautious. They should really keep behind the car, under cover of the station's domed entrance. Yet Barbara had insisted on waiting for the others. The Doctor would need help down the stairs. That's how she'd justified it. Andrews had agreed to stay with her, his going with Susan to ready the Ship.

She listened to the man's breathing; regular, content. She was glad the Andrewses would come with them. It had surprised her, before, when Ian had suggested it. What would the Doctor have said? It had always been just the four of them.

Yet the men had nothing here, and to leave them behind would be killing them. The TARDIS would accommodate them easily, and perhaps it was time they increased their 'family'. The Doctor, once such an introvert, now warmed to strangers. He wouldn't turn them away, she was sure. They would be stronger with more of them, better able to cope wherever they next landed. Barbara desperately craved getting back to her own time, getting back to her mum and her friends. Yet deep down she knew what their chances were. The Doctor didn't want her and Ian to leave, even if the Ship could go where he told it. Perhaps some new faces would ease the transition, allow him to take them home.

She opened her eyes. The buildings all round dazzled light at her. This was a new world, a new day. Things would be different. Just as soon as Ian and the Doctor arrived.

The soldier escorting them kept looking at Andrews. Andrews acted as if he'd not noticed the attention, but Kelly could see he was riled. He also saw how the soldier's trigger finger twitched.

As they made their way to Byng Street, other soldiers glanced their way. They all had the same predatory eyes. In twos or threes, there were soldiers every way you looked, in every street and alley they passed by, out in force to find Ian.

'To the lab!' their soldier called out to his comrades, every few minutes. The men hurried off, eager to be in on the action. Ian didn't stand a chance.

Their soldier had been one of a pair who'd intercepted them just a few streets from the lab. He and his colleague had asked their business, looking only at Andrews. Their tone was positively rude. Kelly had felt insulted. Surely they knew he was the superior officer. He puffed out his chest.

'I hear there's a rather zealous clearing regime at the facility these days.' The soldiers didn't react as he'd hoped.

'Where'd you hear that?' asked one. Kelly didn't answer. The soldier's eyes narrowed. 'Back at the lab, is he?'

'I demand to see Bamford!' Kelly cursed inwardly. He'd given Ian up to them. Well, there was little he could do about it now. Ian would be long gone anyway, he thought. The Doctor would have got rid of him.

'Do you now?' snapped the soldier. 'You and your friend can come with me. I'll take you to Bamford.'

The other soldier must have gone straight to the lab. Kelly and Andrews stayed with their escort, not daring to say anything else that would compromise them. Kelly felt his anger, his indignation, slip away from him. The army made him feel so useless. They didn't understand what he did for them, what his work would do for them.

The last scrap of anger evaporated when he caught sight of Bamford. She had better things to do than hear him out. She barked orders, her troops hovering around her, hanging off every word. That was what she was, he thought, the queen bee. Which meant he and Andrews were just drones. Drones she hardly even glanced at.

'Be quick,' she said.

'They're at the lab,' said the soldier. 'I've sent men that way.' She nodded. 'Get my car.'

The soldier ran off. Bamford looked Andrews up and down quickly, then seemed to dismiss him.

'You've been killing the colonels,' said Kelly, matter-of-factly. His voice sounded minuscule, even to him.

'The ones who haven't escaped, yes.' He'd expected her to deny it, especially with Andrews beside him.

'But that's -' Andrews began.

'They killed two of my men, and you should see what they did to poor Griffiths. He's off with the medics, having his injuries seen to.'

'That just can't be true. Griffiths is my friend!'

'You're complicit with those other men?'

'Well,' he said, flashing a sarcastic smile. 'They are all me.' She was immune to his charm. 'Careful whose side you choose, Colonel. Or you'll be assisting with our enquiries.' Andrews went pale.

'That's absurd,' said Kelly. 'I can vouch for this man. You'd gain nothing from an interrogation.'

'Then we'd forgo the interview,' smiled Bamford. 'And just have him processed.'

She let that hang in the air. Kelly tried to muster some kind of reply. He hated this spontaneity thing, he never had the right response. It would come to him later in the day, when he was working on something else. No doubt throw him off whatever he needed to be doing then...

Bamford's car pulled up. She got into the front, then looked back at the two browbeaten scientists.

'If you think you can maintain the silent treatment, she said, 'I'll be happy to give you a lift.'

Ian let the Doctor chivvy him to his feet. His dead self fell away from him, thudding to the floor. A dead weight. He smiled meekly at the thought. Ian couldn't keep his eyes off the man, the blood pooling around him on the floor. His own blood, and yet not his own.

'We must get you away from here,' said the Doctor, quickly. 'Get you hidden before more of them come.'

Ian nodded dumbly, barely making sense of the words. The Doctor prodded him to the door. 'We can let them think this is you,' he said gleefully. 'It really is almost ideal!'

Ian knew he should hate the Doctor for that remark, but it barely scratched the surface of his mind. He just stared down at his dead self, fascinated. He knew he had to run, that he couldn't waste what the dead man had bought him. But there was one last thing he had to do first...

He knelt down to the dead man again, took his hand. The Doctor tutted, seeing what Ian was up to.

‘There’s no time for souvenirs,’ he said.

Ian finished with the dead man. He got to his feet. He couldn’t look at the Doctor.

‘Let’s go,’ he said.

‘I know just the place,’ said the old man. He took Ian by the arm and hurried him out into the corridor.

‘I think they’re rather fun,’ said Andrews about the clocks. Barbara had not seen them until he pointed them out. There were six of them in all, on the top of tall, cast-iron posts to the left of the station. Their faces were bright, with stark black numerals you could read from a distance. The styling was simple, like something Japanese.

‘They’re so cold,’ she said. ‘So functional.’

‘They are for telling the time!’

She had initiated conversation, asking how long they’d been waiting. In the back of her mind, she knew things were wrong. She just wouldn’t admit it to herself yet.

Andrews, it turned out, knew all about time. He chatted away, distracting her. Professor Kelly, he said, had been keen he grasped the theory and sent him down to Greenwich to swot up. He now knew all about the history of watchmaking, and the names of the stars in three languages.

‘Townsend still calls himself “Astronomer Royal”,’ he said of his tutor there, ‘whatever’s become of the Windsors.’ Barbara did not ask what that meant. She’d heard the republican dream while at university, all of them raging at the world. They had made her angry; they wanted only to break things. What alternatives they occasionally raised were never any better, never made any sense when you thought them through. She should not have been surprised, nor disappointed, that they’d succeeded in getting their way. Not from what she’d seen of this terrible place. They had brought the house down, and taken the country with it.

This wasn’t her home, she thought. It was less her home than anywhere else they’d ever been. The irony didn’t escape her, but she longed to escape it. They would find somewhere else. Somewhere better. They would recover from their ordeal... and they would start again.

Andrews went on, though he must have known her thoughts were elsewhere. For all he had learnt, he said, he'd still been baffled by Susan. 'She knows all about our experiment, or at least how it works. Poor girl could scarcely hide her amusement at what we've struggled for years to achieve. Our radical developments in science and technology, they're just child's play to her. It doesn't do one's ego much good, I can tell you, or one's enthusiasm for the work. Probably for the best I'm rethinking my career.'

'What would you want to do?' asked Barbara, idly.

'I don't know,' he said, smoothing his moustache. He had a fine, movie-star look about him. 'Though I do enjoy not being a soldier. Discussed the same thing with Griffiths months ago, when the others in the lab got their transfer. Bamford cleared them all out to the front lines. Guess most of them have bought it by now.'

'That could have been you.'

'Griffiths had an idea to refuse them, if his health hadn't got him out of it anyhow. Was all set to join the Red Cross or something. Anything rather than fight. I don't reckon I'm that brave.'

'He wasn't just running away?'

'It's always harder *not* to fight, Barbara.' Andrews said. 'Imagine being up in the city right now, the only one there without a gun. How long'd you last?'

'That's...' she said, not sure what it was. She had underestimated Griffiths. He had come through for them, given them this chance to escape. She had thought him laughable. 'He believes in people.' Andrews sounded wistful, like he'd once shared that faith and now pined for it. 'He can see the war ending one day...'

He tailed off. Behind them, footsteps echoed up from the ticket hall. Andrews listened. He looked to Barbara and she nodded. No need for alarm, the footsteps were definitely Susan's. She would be racing to the escalators, bored waiting for them. No patience, that girl.

Andrews took a step closer to Barbara. 'Before she gets here.' he said. His voice was suddenly quiet, unsure. 'Are you and Ian...'

She laughed, embarrassed. He looked stung, though, and she wanted to say something, to deny it, to make it all right. Was Andrews really making an advance on her? They had hardly met,

hardly knew one another. He was handsome, yes, attractive. But if he came with them...

From halfway up the stairs, Susan cried out: 'The Ship!'

She emerged into the light, red-faced and breathless. She struggled to get the words out.

'The Ship,' she said. 'It's not there! We've searched everywhere!'

Barbara felt the world tip beneath her feet. Andrews remained calm. He asked Susan simple questions. What had she expected? Where could it be? How many men would it have taken to move the thing? Susan explained how they'd searched the platform. She was distraught.

The other Andrews appeared from the station. He took deep breaths, recovering more quickly than Susan.

'A police box,' he said to his other self. "That's what they've been after.'

'Oh bother,' said the other one levelly, the one she had almost -

'It's not really a police box,' said Susan. 'It's our Ship, and it's gone!'

Barbara could see Ian's plan dissolving around them. They would never get away now.

'It's not got far,' said her Andrews. His tone was serious, frighteningly so. 'Your Doctor was showing it off to Kelly, when I turned up in the lab. Thought it was odd at the time...'

'He wouldn't!' said Susan.

'I think I saw it, too,' said the other Andrews. 'But when I was still travelling through -'

'We have to get back there,' said Barbara. Susan's Andrews began to argue. The other silenced him with a look. They scrambled quickly back into the car. Barbara took the front seat. Susan squashed in beside her, pushing her up against the driver. Andrews - she didn't know which one now - fought with the ignition. The engine protested, hacking and coughing awake. Barbara pushed back against Susan, letting Andrews reach the handbrake. The car revved eagerly. Andrews clicked the ignition off. He shrugged. Barbara followed his gaze.

Across the square, armoured cars sped towards them. Soldiers and guns leaned from the windows. The cars converged on them, closing the gaps between each vehicle. They were trapped.

'Best retire gracefully,' said Andrews. 'Don't want anyone hurt.'

They slowly got out of the car. From the back, the other

Andrews called to them to keep their hands visible, not to move quickly. Barbara kept her eyes on Susan, worried she'd do something foolish. Susan did exactly as she'd been told. She looked terrified. A thought struck Barbara: the soldiers weren't the problem. The girl was terrified of what the Doctor had done, of the scientists getting hold of the Ship.

The two Andrewses were bundled away first, into the back of one car. One of them, she guessed the one she had talked to, looked back at her, as if about to say something. The moment was lost; Barbara and Susan were ordered at gunpoint into the back of the other car. Barbara smarted at the meanness of that. Yes, the soldiers had caught them, but they didn't have to be so nasty about it, to enjoy the excessive display of strength so much.

As Susan climbed in, Barbara looked the soldier in the eye. The man sneered back.

'You caught Ian, too?' she said.

'Shot'im.'

Barbara held onto the door of the car. The world swirled around her. 'But he's all right?' she begged. The soldier actually smiled. He loved this.

'He's dead.'

'No!' It was Susan who cried out. Barbara felt nothing, just coldness.

The soldier hurried them up into the van. Barbara, numb, led Susan to a seat and wrapped her arms around her. Susan clung to her desperately as the sobbing came. Barbara held her. Guilt flooded through her: for how cross she'd been with Ian when he'd left her, for the time she'd just spent with the colonel. It wasn't possible. There were things she'd meant to tell him. Things they both knew but had never found the right moment to speak out loud.

The doors of the car were slammed shut on them, and the car started up. Susan continued to weep. Barbara could think of no words of comfort. She wanted to say it would be all right, but it wouldn't be.

Not ever again.

He snuck into an office no one used any more. The bulbs had gone. The lights would only have encouraged attention, he thought. Checking the corridor again, he closed the door. He went over to the window, nestled up to the edge of the blind, and

looked out. The alley, running down beside the building, was empty. Not a sound, he'd be safe.

He reached into his pocket and withdrew the device. It still troubled him. Every time he used it he expected to be his last.

They said that couldn't happen, that they'd ensured against it. But he'd been brought up with the horror stories. Since he'd been in London, he'd even seen the survivors. They all had the same look about them; haunted, dazed, meek. That was what got to him, their surrender.

His thumb hammered over the small controls, picking out the sequence of numbers. He held the telephone up to his ear. After three, distant rings, it went quiet.

'Operations,' he said. 'Hold off. Developments here. Repeat: hold off. No action is to be taken until I report again. Imperative.'

Silence. He held his anxiety at bay. Silence meant nothing bad. On the other end of the line, there'd be frantic activity. 'Understood,' said a voice. It might as well have been a machine.

He sighed. 'Heard about St Paul's,' he said. 'Good work.'

'It was Abi up there,' said the voice, more human now. 'Out.'

Again silence. He clicked the phone off and put it back in his pocket. He would digest the news later. He couldn't think about Abi now. He had work to do.

Soldiers crowded the lab when Bamford arrived. They held the Doctor at gunpoint. He didn't look bothered. Instead, she saw how he looked down his nose at them. It had been years since Bamford had last seen prejudice against the common soldiery. It was a disdain for fighting, whatever the cause. She used to have people with that kind of attitude shot. For the Doctor, their heavy-handedness now proved him right; her troops were just vulgar barbarians, ripping up the town. She hated how knowing, how smug he appeared.

His friend's battered corpse had been picked over. The dead man had been kicked about, she could see. Nothing for her to engage with, though. The men had lost one of their own, they had vented some grief on the killer, yet they had still shown restraint. The damage was superficial, lines imprinted on his face from the soles of their boots. She'd turn a blind eye, and her men would remember her for it. They would go that extra mile when she asked them to.

She would need to call in such debts soon, she knew. The city was finished. The South Africans couldn't be more than a day or

two from their invasion.

She examined the dead soldier, Sharrock. It would have been quick. And he'd got the man who killed him. She liked how that balanced the scales.

The men had kept clear of him, a mixture of respect and fear. The Isle of Dogs was not used to deaths among the soldiery. You were meant to be safe, stationed here. Sharrock had been unlucky. They kept away in case it was catching. As a common soldier, a long time ago, Bamford had known that same superstition. Death was contagious.

There were men chosen to deal with fallen comrades. They wore black armbands. The Parlourists' - some volunteers, some not - came forward when she called for them. She gave instructions, quietly so the other men wouldn't hear. There were details they didn't need to know about death. Details about disposal, about ceremony. Such detail made you think about your own mortality, how fragile your own existence was. She knew that first hand. Her men should be spared that. They had to think they'd survive.

'He'll have full honours,' she said to the men, as one of the Parlourists hurried out. He would return with a flag, for wrapping the body. Only the commended dead got such treatment. Bamford wanted them all to know Sharrock was special. She looked out for him, she'd look out for all of them.

The men began to disperse. Officers split them into groups, found them better things to do than clog up the laboratory. More Andrewses were appearing in the secure room, so there'd now be a detail to meet them, to escort them up to Byng Street and deal with them.

'You seem to be keeping on top of what's happening,' said the Doctor. His voice was full of scorn.

'It's my job.'

'It is only the *appearance* of order, of course. My dear lady, you don't even know what is happening here.

'The experiment has got out of hand. It needs shutting down. He couldn't argue now, not when she'd volunteered his own advice. He glared at her. He'd wanted an argument, to provoke her. Scientists liked arguments, but Bamford liked solutions. Give her a problem to deal with, not one to discuss.

'But wait,' said Kelly. He had been talking to Andrews, that first Andrews, the one claiming a right to be here. 'There's no

reason to -'

Bamford raised her hand for quiet. An orderly had brought another memo. Once, memos had meant good news. Now, they were always tidings of doom.

'Oh,' she said, reading the five words.

'What is it?' asked the Doctor, seeing her surprise. She showed him the note.

' "All taken at Canary Wharf." Now why were your women there? Could it be that's where they thought they'd find the police box?'

'You could choose to think that, but it is one possibility among many.'

'It's something of a coincidence, you'll admit.'

'If you want to get away quickly, a railway station is a good place to start.'

'You can't suspect him!' cried Kelly. 'The dead man, he wanted to kidnap the Doctor. They weren't in league together. The Doctor turned him down.'

'Is this true?' asked Bamford, still not convinced.

'The work here is important,' said the old man.

'Then I've done you a favour by having him shot.'

The Doctor was suddenly furious. 'Violence is never the answer. Never! It can only ever make matters worse. I've no qualms, Doctor. We are at war, and I've been too lenient already.'

'These people are time travellers, come to examine our experiments for the good of posterity,' Kelly added. 'General, they don't even come under your jurisdiction.'

'I can't accept that,' said Bamford. 'Wherever they're from, they've accepted I'm in charge. They must have known what they were walking into. I'll not dish out special treatment just because they've come to gloat.'

Behind her she heard a snuffle. Griffiths, head wrapped up in bandages, had come back to work.

'I should be allowed to interview them,' he said. 'There's so much to be learned.'

Bamford didn't like him. She didn't like his obsession with the two women. This was a man who'd clearly never courted anyone. 'I won't hear another word, Mr Griffiths. It's your fault they escaped.'

'M-m-my fault?'

'let your guard down. I hold you responsible. Clear this place

up, Kelly. I'm too busy for your mess.'

As she made her way out, she heard Griffiths mumbling to himself. 'Yes, Mr Griffiths, she said. 'It is time something was done.'

Soon after the Doctor had left him, soldiers came into the secure room. They chatted. Watching them in silence from inside the TARDIS, Ian tried to lip-read from the screen. They spoke too quickly. He turned back to the console. Beside the button that turned on the scanner, a green switch let you *hear* outside too. He was sure that was what it did, and he pressed it.

'... you last have *good* sausages?'

The voice was suddenly loud all around him. Ian had been right. He watched the screen, eavesdropping as the soldiers discussed the breakfast they were due.

'Working the night shift should mean better rations,' one said. Suddenly the console twitched and twittered. The lights in the central column flashed. Ian leapt back from the controls. For a terrible moment, he thought he had set the TARDIS in flight. What had he done?

The column did not move.

The men outside were alarmed as well. Ian looked up at them on the screen. An Andrews blurred into being in front of them. The TARDIS quietened down as soon as he'd fully formed. The soldiers soon overcame their concerns. Andrews was led out at gunpoint.

They weren't all the same man, as Ian had thought earlier. He'd seen a whole pile of dead Andrewses. It would have broken the line. Something else was going on.

No, they were different people. The same, but with differences. An Andrews who took sugar in tea, another who used to, one more who never did.

And the other Ian? The one he'd watched die?

The dead man had killed the soldier, throttled him where Ian would have knocked him out. Perhaps being shot could do that to you. He knew he was dying, and his last act was to kill his own killer... Ian would have liked to think he would never have been driven to such action.

The man was different. Ian looked down at the ring he had taken from the dead man's hand. He ran his fingertip around it. Blood stained his hands, black in the lines on his skin. Blotches

of sticky red stained the ring, too.

The other Ian had been married. Ian didn't need to guess who his wife had been.

* * *

Susan pressed her face against the bars in the door, looking but into the corridor. Barbara didn't stop her. She sat on the floor, hugging her knees. No tears would come. Susan couldn't believe what had happened. She insisted the Doctor would have done something. Barbara fretted that perhaps he had been injured too. She couldn't cope with Susan's energy, she just wanted time on her own.

'Hey, girl,' said a man, out in the corridor.

'Come away from there.' Barbara called, suddenly worried and alert.

'It's all right,' said Susan, grinning. She got bolder when Barbara was fretting.

'I'm not going to hurt you,' said the man. 'Not with you in here.'

Barbara hurried over to the door. The soldier was pulling a trolley. the sort they had in hospitals. A white sheet, stained in some places, hid an ominously familiar shape. A body. 'Thought you'd want a look-see, what with me passing.' teased the man. 'Friend of yours, wasn't he?'

He whipped back the sheet. Susan screamed, and buried her head into Barbara's chest.

Ian's bloody corpse lay across the trolley. His arms and legs looked awkward. Barbara wanted to reach out and move them. to make him more comfortable.

'Why?' she asked the soldier.

'As he was coming this way, thought you'd want to say goodbye.'

She looked at the body, at the man she had loved. Yes, she could admit it now. It seemed wrong she had even worried about that, before. She had loved him. She was sure he'd loved her. One day, whether or not they had ever got home, they could have...

Whatever they had had, it was gone. 'Goodbye, Ian,' she said.

The soldier leered at her. Then he tossed the sheet back over the body, covering most of it up. He whistled as he took the

trolley away again.

They would take the body to a furnace, throw him in among all the Andrewses they had murdered. Barbara had seen the footage from Auschwitz. She knew what the mountain of dead had looked like, how bleak and anonymous. Ian would not be remembered. There would be no grave. It all seemed so tawdry. Ian was gone, entirely erased from her life. He wasn't even part of history. There would be no record of any of them, the exiles in time. She would fare no better. By now they would have killed the Andrewses they'd escaped with. It wouldn't take them long to decide she and Susan were surplus to requirements, too. And the Doctor appeared to have abandoned them. Why hadn't he saved Ian? Why had he given up the TARDIS? Why had he given up on them?

His granddaughter still believed in him utterly. 'Grandfather will come for us,' she told Barbara. Barbara simply couldn't believe that was true.

Kelly followed the Doctor out of the secure room, keen to get him back to the lab. The old man consented to carry on the argument, but his priority remained the police box. He barely hid it from Kelly now.

The Doctor's concern was the soldiers placed around it. He wanted it left unguarded. The soldiers were worried by this, inferring the thing would explode. The Doctor made no effort to dissuade them from that. But Kelly would not ask him what the thing was. He would discover in due course. That was how history worked. He had to earn the knowledge.

Griffiths buzzed around them. He'd been given instructions to help Andrews clean up the lab. Yet he wanted to speak to the Doctor himself. More bloody questions. The man had no sense of the world around him. It was too dangerous to be like that now. The soldiers were off the leash, indeed they had carte blanche to kill who they liked. Kelly could only protect the Doctor from them for so long. Yet the death of Ian had unhinged the old man. He would not hear reason.

'We must do as the general says. Shut the experiment down and make everything safe,' he said.

'But it's working!'

'Do you know of a problem we've not seen?' asked Griffiths. The man had his notebook out, like this was a college lecture.

'It's working too well. Look at all these men!' Behind them, emerging from the secure room, yet another Colonel Andrews was under escort to Byng Street. The poor man seemed happy enough about it, blissfully ignorant of what awaited him.

'I've kept you from the same fate,' said Kelly. 'You can't turn on me now!'

'You'd turn me over to those people?' The Doctor looked suddenly afraid. Or perhaps he was just appalled by the meanness of Kelly's threat.

'You've betrayed me,' said Kelly. 'You were on my side.'

'I stayed, didn't I?' said the Doctor. 'I could have gone, but I stayed. Your work is important.'

Kelly didn't have an answer to that. He watched the Andrews being taken away. Poor bugger, thought Kelly. Some chaps get all the bad luck.

'What clues can you give us?' asked Griffiths. He had a fixation about the Doctor's foreknowledge.

'Pipe down, Griffiths,' Kelly said. Why could the man not get it into his knocked-about head that the Doctor couldn't just tell them the answers. If only Griffiths had some rudimentary social skill, he'd understand the etiquette the Doctor lived by. They were blundering into the time-travel field, and it didn't help to act like bumpkins. 'You've had a day of it. Knock it off, get some sleep.'

'I'm really okay, and I want to be a part of -'

'Griffiths!'

They looked up. The Andrews down the corridor was pointing back at them. His eyes were wild. Certainly not the unflappable colonel of Kelly's acquaintance. These arrivals were not the same man, they could not be. Bamford was right about that.

'He's a spy!' the lunatic shouted. 'He's working for the South Africans!'

Ian watched them leave. He had kept his eyes on the Doctor, trying to fathom what the old man was up to. They had made a mistake, he thought, escaping from Byng Street. They should have gone underground, not tried to get away. The Doctor had been right. They couldn't just leave, there were things to be put right here.

Ian hated not being able to do them. He felt so useless. He needed to know what had happened to the others. Was Barbara

all right? The Doctor had done his best to get rid of the soldiers. Even now, they discussed guarding the TARDIS from out in the corridor.

To their left, a blur coalesced into shape. The soldiers jabbed their guns forward. Another Andrews was coming through; number 38, so the soldiers reckoned.

The new arrival glared at them. It wasn't Andrews at all. The soldiers stepped back from her.

It was Bamford.

Kelly grudgingly admired the way the Doctor carried on. The man's attitude would only get them all in more bother. Bamford had made it clear: the army was in charge. Yet the soldiers responded to the old man. For all they were eager to ship this new Andrews out, the Doctor had only to hold up his hand and they halted. The men actually smiled.

'You say they caught this spy some weeks ago,' said the Doctor. He addressed the Andrews as if a prosecution witness. 'Would you care to tell us how they caught him out, hmm?'

The Andrews - Kelly had lost count of what number he'd be - replied to Kelly. Apart from Griffiths, the only one in all this he would recognise. His eyes were wide, pleading. He thought Kelly could save him.

'He had a wireless telephone in his pocket, sir.'

Kelly almost laughed. 'Well there you are then,' he said. 'He can't be from our world.'

The soldiers took that as their cue. They bundled Andrews away, his pleas echoing back down the corridor.

'Of all the things to come up with,' chuckled Kelly. The Doctor was staring at him, hands fixed to his lapels. 'Oh really, Doctor. What kind of world can he be from where they still have phones?'

'I dare say you're right,' said the Doctor. He didn't sound convinced.

'But why pick on me?' asked Griffiths, scratching at his bandages. The poor man had suffered enough, thought Kelly. 'You were there to be picked on,' said Kelly. He meant it kindly. Griffiths didn't look any happier.

The Doctor put his arm round Griffiths. 'We'd never have believed such a thing,' he said. Griffiths backed away from him. The Doctor moved suddenly to one side, his hand dashing back from the pocket of Griffiths's lab coat. He had something in his

hand. It was a small oblong of plastic. It had a key pad and a screen. It took Kelly a heartbeat to understand what he was looking at.

‘Well I never,’ said the Doctor, looking at the phone in his hand.

‘Very good, Doctor,’ agreed Griffiths, suddenly a different man. ‘In fact, you’re too good.’

From his other pocket, he pulled a gun.

Chapter Six

'We must have been here for hours,' said Barbara, arms folded as she leant her back against the door.

'Thirty-six minutes,' said Susan. She hesitated. 'I'm sorry, I didn't mean to...'

'It's all right Susan. Really.' Barbara tried to compose herself. She often forgot Susan was different. The girl had strange abilities, as well as strange knowledge. She never wore a watch, had no need to. It was as though she could actually sense the time passing around them, could feel it innately. That insight was unsettling. For all this, she still hadn't grasped what awaited them. She still didn't know they would soon be killed. She had been too busy crying to think of their own predicament. Barbara knew she should be of more comfort to her, that the death of Ian had hit her hard. However, she felt cut off from the girl and her grandfather. Without Ian, Barbara was desperately alone - completely estranged from her own time, her own people. Susan and the Doctor were all she had, and they were strangers to her, they were alien. And part of her knew it was all their fault. If it hadn't been for the Doctor, if it hadn't been for Susan, Barbara would still be at home. She would still have Ian.

'Someone's coming!' Again, Susan had heard the footsteps before her, though Barbara was by the door.

'Back away,' snapped a man's voice behind her. Barbara took her time, holding her head up, thinking of the passive resistance of the civil rights movements she had once seen in newsreels at the cinema. Her mother had leaned over to make some remark about the blacks, but froze at the images on the screen. The black men stood tall, unyielding to the rabid whites who yelled and careened around them. Mum had talked of nothing else that night, her whole world turned upside down. Their dignity had awed her, their nobility of purpose. They had embarrassed her, from all those miles away in America, just by the way they stood. 'I couldn't have been so brave,' Mum had said. 'The world is against them, even the police and the priests, and they still face up to it.'

Her mother's words echoed in her ears as Barbara stopped, just in front of Susan.

'All right,' she said. She would go first, whatever happened.

Keys rattled in the lock, and the door of the cell banged open. The soldier appraised the women, checking they'd not try anything with him. Satisfied, he nodded at Barbara.

'Come here.'

Susan grabbed Barbara's hand. Barbara patted the girl's knuckles and let her go. Keeping her back straight, her head level, she walked up to the soldier. She held his gaze, making him the one afraid. He swallowed. She saw his pupils narrow down to points. Barbara felt strong, in control. He was going to kill her, she knew. But because she now had nothing to lose, he could hold nothing over her, do nothing else to her.

'At my feet,' he said, not half as gruffly as he'd have liked. She glanced down, a sudden panic taking her. Of course they could make it worse for them. They revelled in their cruelty.

But she had got it wrong. Between the man's feet was a tray. Barbara stared numbly down at two bowls, two cups, some cutlery. She had been so determined to look her killer in the face, she'd not seen the meal he had brought them.

She knelt to gather up the tray. The gruel in the bowls looked and smelled disgusting, the water in the mugs unclean. She resisted the urge to gag, a mixture of the smell and her own impoverished nerves. But hunger clawed at her, too. She got slowly to her feet, worried she would drop the food. 'Thank you,' she said. She couldn't help herself. Manners were still ingrained in her.

'Probably be here some time,' said the man, still awkward. She had misjudged him.

Hunger had got the better of Susan, too. She took the tray from Barbara and hurried back into the middle of the room. She didn't seem put off by the look of the meal. Then again, she'd been brought up on anonymous, ersatz slabs from the TARDIS food machine. A meal to her was just an intake of fuels.

Barbara turned back to the soldier. He had his hand on the door, all ready to lock them in again. 'We're not going to be...' she said quietly, darting her eyes right. He understood she meant Susan was not to hear.

'Not till we've done with the others,' he said, keeping his voice low. 'The ones that all look the same.'

'The ones who were with us?'

The man's eyes lost their shine. 'Done them two,' he said. Barbara should have felt something. She should have been

appalled to lose her comrades, but it seemed so casual, so inevitable. 'More keep coming all the time,' said the soldier. 'Orders are to do them before you. More gentlemanly, isn't it? 'Ladies last!' He laughed at that, and seemed affronted that Barbara did not join in. 'So you'll have a while yet,' he added sulkily. 'Might as well eat.'

He shrugged and slammed the door shut. Barbara sat down opposite Susan, busy shovelling food into her face. She looked up at Barbara.

'Ian would want us to eat,' she said.

Barbara nodded, meekly, and picked up a spoon. The gruel was cold, thick in her mouth like congealed white sauce. She was hardly aware of it. She just stared into space.

Kelly kept his hands raised. Griffiths really was different. You could see it in his eyes, in the way he stood. There was something able about him, capable of anything. The jittery, weak-willed underling had been an act. The man clearly had military training. He knew how to handle the gun.

'There's really no need for any of this,' said the Doctor. He hadn't put his hands up. He stayed up close to Griffiths, making it harder for the man to cover them both. A dangerous game, thought Kelly, but a clever one. Griffiths took a step back.

'I didn't want to kill you,' Griffiths agreed. 'But I can't let you give me away.'

'I should say we could come to an arrangement,' said the Doctor, amicably. He stepped forward again. 'We're all reasonable men.'

'That's right!' said Kelly. There had to be a way out of this. Griffiths was a scientist, after all.

'You'll run straight to the general,' said Griffiths. He took another step back, now alongside the door to the secure room.

'And what would we tell her?' asked the Doctor.

'I'm sorry,' said Griffiths. He raised the gun. 'I can't afford the risk.'

Kelly shut his eyes. He was actually going to shoot them
Crack!

He heard the body in front of him smack hard into the wall, then crumple to the floor. The Doctor was dead, and he'd be next. Kelly thought of his wife. He should have been there more.

Nothing happened.

He opened one eye, then the other. Griffiths lay on his back, unconscious. A thin line of blood marked the edge of a bruise on his temple. The Doctor was on his haunches beside him. He picked up the gun, holding it upside down, the handle between thumb and forefinger. He showed such distaste for the thing, Kelly noted. The Doctor's bones creaked as he stood again, and he handed the weapon over to Bamford.

She had been in the secure room. It wasn't possible. She *couldn't* have been in the secure room, thought Kelly, they had just come from there. But she had been in the secure room, and heard Griffiths. She had stopped him, she had saved their lives.

'Soldier!' she yelled. She examined the gun, clicking the safety back on. The two soldiers in the secure room came running. They showed no surprise, seeing Griffiths's body laid out on the floor. 'This man's a spy,' said Bamford. 'Get him to Byng Street. He gets his own cell.'

The men took an arm each and got the unconscious Griffiths to his feet. They hurried off with him.

'Keep a watch on him, mind. He's more than he looks.'

'That man should be shot,' said Kelly. He hoped she hadn't seen him with his eyes shut.

'He will be,' said Bamford.

'We must find out who he was working for,' said the Doctor.

He watched Bamford curiously. Perhaps he now felt in her debt, Kelly thought.

'If he's not with us, he's with them,' said Bamford. 'The South Africans.'

'Then we have to know what he's told them,' insisted the Doctor.

'The experiment!' Kelly suddenly understood. 'He'll have told them everything we've done here.'

'Could they use that knowledge against us?' Bamford scrutinised the back of her hand, stroking the torn skin. Kelly wondered if she practised boxing, or whether it had simply been instinct. It had been a real, knock-out punch. No wonder her troops were subservient.

'We need to know what they know,' said the Doctor.

'Fine, talk to him,' said Bamford.

'Thank you,' said the Doctor. Kelly couldn't believe it. The two of them suddenly seemed friends.

'Violence can be the answer, sometimes,' said Kelly quietly.

‘What was that?’ Bamford raised an eyebrow.

‘What you said to the Doctor, back in the lab.’ She stared blankly back at him.

‘I’ve the court martial to set up,’ she said, her tone suddenly gruff again. ‘Reckon the tour is over. Thank you gentlemen. Most informative.’

She marched away. Kelly scratched his head. ‘What does she mean? What tour?’

The Doctor smiled that infuriating smile. He stroked his chin. ‘Don’t you see? Don’t you see what must have happened?’ Kelly shook his head, but the Doctor would give nothing away. ‘There’s more to the general than you think... I must get to Byng Street,’ he said. ‘You puzzle it out.’

She had only managed a mouthful. Susan had been eager to finish for her. Barbara watched her eat, saddened by how at ease the girl seemed. She could be fickle at the best of times, but she had put her grief entirely to one side. She would come back to Ian in due course, no doubt, but right now the food held her rapt. All misery was forgotten. Ian would have laughed, she thought. He would have said Barbara was envious of the girl. And he would have been right.

Susan suddenly leapt to her feet and hurried to the door. ‘There’s somebody...’ she said as she pressed her face up against the grille, trying to see out into the corridor. ‘Oh Barbara!’

‘What is it?’ Barbara got up and ran over, but there was no way both of them could see out. ‘Susan, what do you see?’

‘They’ve arrested Griffiths,’ said Susan. ‘He’s being carried into a cell.’ She stepped back from the grille - not to let Barbara have a turn, of course, but because now there was nothing to see. ‘They must have found out about the escape...’

Barbara nodded but said nothing. It was all playing out in her mind. If the Andrewses had been tortured, they might have given away their friend. Perhaps Ian had been made to talk, too. They said he had been shot, but what had they done to him before he died? Had they made him suffer? ‘It’s good, in a way.’

‘How is it good, Susan?’ she snapped.

‘If he’s against them, he’s definitely for us, isn’t he?’

‘And how does that help us when they’ve just locked him up?’

Susan didn’t have an answer. She mooched back to her remaining gruel. ‘Grandfather will think of something,’ she, said.

The secure room had been empty some time. Ian waited, his frustration growing every second. The Doctor was up to his neck again, and who knew what had happened to Susan and Barbara. They needed his help. He had to do something.

He kept his eyes on the scanner screen, watching the secure room. Nothing. No soldiers, no more Andrewses. He wondered what the two guards had been called out for. How long before they came back?

Ian pressed the controls in front of him. The screen cut off. Behind him, a deep hum of power signalled the great double doors opening. He would take his chance.

He leaned his head out of the TARDIS, listening all round. He could hear nothing. He stepped out, closing the door securely behind him. He listened again.

On a chair in the corner of the room was a lab coat. An Andrews must have left it, he thought. He put it on, hoping it might buy him some time. The soldiers might ignore him, from a distance. After all, they thought he was dead. The sleeves were too long, so he folded them back. It was the best he could do.

He made his way back to the lab. He would need to go through it to get outside. He crept up to the door. Two soldiers stood at the far end of the room. He would never get past them.

‘Got you.’

The voice was quiet, right by his ear. Andrews, the original Andrews, had snuck up behind him. Ian turned, slowly, expecting the man to have a gun. Andrews had his hands in his lab coat pockets. He seemed to consider his next move.

‘I should turn you in.’ He said at length, speaking quietly so the soldiers would not hear.

‘Probably,’ said Ian. ‘But you know what they’ve done to your other selves, don’t you? And you can’t go along with them.’ Andrews shrugged. ‘I can hardly stand up to them, either. They’d cart me off to the knacker’s yard, too.’

‘That’s where I’ll be headed if you hand me over, Colonel. You’d be sentencing me yourself.’

‘It is quite a pickle, yes,’ said Andrews.

‘I’m not asking you to oppose them openly. But help me, help your other selves. They deserve that from you, don’t they?’ Andrews considered Ian’s words, and then walked boldly into the lab. For a moment, Ian thought he was being given up, but

Andrews made his way to one of the desks and rifled through the papers there. The soldiers looked up, but said nothing. They were used to Andrews by now, tinkering away on the machines, checking and rechecking the experiment. He was considered no threat. They didn't expect him to try anything stupid.

Andrews glanced back at Ian, nodding his head and inviting him out into the open.

Of course, thought Ian. Andrews was going to bluff them. It might just work, and Ian had no choice but to go along with it now. It was either that or go back to the TARDIS to hide. He took a deep breath, and followed Andrews into the room.

Barbara stayed by the door, keeping watch on the corridor. It made it easier to ignore Susan, who kept trying to start conversation. Barbara didn't want to talk. She just wanted to be left alone.

A guard had been posted outside one of the other cells. Susan said that was for Griffiths. They didn't have a guard on their cell, though. Perhaps since he had helped others to escape from this place, the soldiers were taking no chances. Or perhaps she and Susan, being women, weren't deemed dangerous enough.

'Can I see?' said Susan, suddenly right beside her. She was restless and fidgety, like any other child stuck indoors. Barbara held her ground.

'Quiet,' she said. 'There's something ... '

Two soldiers had joined the guard. They spoke to each other. Another soldier followed, escorting someone who could only walk slowly. The soldier cast a shadow, so Barbara only saw who it was as they reached the cell door. She gasped: they had finally arrested the Doctor.

No, she realised, the soldiers took their orders from him. Somehow, the Doctor had come out on top again.

She wanted to laugh. They would get through this. He had something planned.

The old man waited while the soldiers unlocked Griffiths's cell. He scratched at the back of his neck, turning his head towards her. Their eyes met, and then he quickly looked away again. Barbara saw him step into the cell, and the door close behind him. The soldiers stood guard outside.

She stepped back.

'What is it?' asked Susan.

'The Doctor. He's gone to see Griffiths. He's up to something. I said he was! He'll come and get us soon. I know he will.'

Barbara said nothing. Susan wrinkled her forehead.

'What is it?' she said again.

'I don't know,' said Barbara, hugging her own arms. 'He looked at me and...' She struggled to find the words. 'He looked like he was sorry.'

Barbara continued to watch the corridor. Perhaps when he came out of the cell, the Doctor would look over again, reassure her. She might have got it wrong.

Behind her, Susan circled the room. She counted thoughts off on her fingers. She looked up when she realised Barbara was watching her. 'Grandfather might not be able to save us,' she said.

'No.'

'We have obligations, Barbara. The time experiments have to come first.'

'Obligations to who? You don't work for anyone.'

'He'll have to do something. He'll have to.' She continued to pace the room.

Barbara let her be. Susan was right: she had seen that in the Doctor's eyes. He was apologetic because he couldn't help them. He had other priorities. In their travels together, he had always been fiercely protective of time, and now someone was encroaching on his territory. With that to deal with, in the meantime he could only give them up. Susan, his own granddaughter, had been abandoned. And, for the first time, the girl understood. She knew the terrible threat hanging over them both.

She muttered to herself, the words breaking up. Barbara went over to the girl and put her arms round her. Susan clung to her like her life depended on it.

* * *

Griffiths and the Doctor sat in silence for a long time. Griffiths knew the technique - he had studied interrogation methodology to make himself harder to crack. By just sitting there, calmly, the Doctor was an enigma. The anticipation of what he might say would do the work for him. Griffiths was meant to tie himself up in knots waiting for the questions to begin. But he had trained for this kind of thing. He thought about other things. He thought

about Abi.

'They won't go easy on you,' said the Doctor at length.

'Perhaps you could talk to them,' Griffiths replied acidly.

'Perhaps I could. I'm the closest you have to an ally. But you'll need to do something for me in return.'

'A trade?'

'That's it, said the Doctor. 'A trade. You have it.'

'I don't have anything to trade. You've got my phone and my gun.'

'I was thinking of something more in the abstract. 'Ah. The abstract.'

'You have information.'

'Do I now?'

'I don't care why you've betrayed them,' said the Doctor. An elementary mistake as interrogation went. He had let his guard slip, shown that this mattered to him. 'It doesn't mean a thing to me. What's important is the experiment.'

'You know what it can do.'

'Yes, I know. I know more than any of you.'

'You want to know what I told them.'

'I have to know. Can they repeat the work?'

'Yes.'

The Doctor sat back in his seat. He looked pale. Griffiths still didn't know where the man fitted in, what his angle was. Yet the Doctor really did know more than any of them about what the hoop meant. It terrified him. The man wasn't with the army, any army. He could see the destruction the hoop could bring about, and it didn't excite him. He didn't want it for himself.

The Doctor was also, as he'd said himself, the nearest thing Griffiths had to an ally. He should use that.

'But they won't,' Griffiths said. The Doctor glared at him. 'They really won't.'

'You're very sure.'

'I know who the good guys are,' said Griffiths. 'And they're not people desperate to change the past. They're the ones interested in a future.'

The Doctor considered. 'You've really not told them, have you?' he said. Griffiths smiled.

'I gave them a tantalising glimpse. That's why they've kept off this place. It's not the power station, it's the lab. Kelly's work is the biggest thing in physics for a century, and the English

haven't a clue. It'll change everything, and only Kelly and Andrews and I know anything about it.'

'You were in the perfect position to bargain with the enemy.'

'I was in a position to see if it worked.'

The Doctor flinched. 'And Kelly and Andrews? You would have killed them both?'

'Once I'd been convinced the theory was sound.'

'Let the English take the risk, then steal the results? Bamford wouldn't even have known what you had taken.'

'No.'

'You'd have handed the South Africans their victory.'

'I don't work for them. I'm a free agent. What they used to call a "businessman".'

'I recall the term. So the South Africans can't build one, they can't repeat the experiment for themselves?'

'Not with what they've had so far,' said Griffiths. 'We hadn't agreed a price.'

The Doctor actually laughed, slapping his knee with the flat of his hand. Not very tactful of him, thought Griffiths. He could at least have concealed his pleasure. Griffiths would be taken off and shot, and all the old man's worries would be over. The Doctor got to his feet, made some idle promises about helping out at the court martial, then banged on the door. A soldier let him out. He turned back to Griffiths before he left. 'Thank you,' he said, and seemed to mean it.

Griffiths checked his watch. Ten past five. Ten after five, he thought. He no longer needed to translate everything. He sat back on his seat, going over his conversation with the Doctor. It had been fun. He had said all the right things.

He could just picture the old man's face when he discovered how he'd been conned.

From the top of the building, you could see right across London on a bright day like this. Belcher stood up against the glass, ticking off the smoke plumes against the intelligence on what had been hit. The biggest grey mark in the sky was St Paul's. Completely gone, their report said. They had also lost all their bridges again. A hospice had been hit, a school. The area around Senate House - what had once been Senate House - had seen a lot of activity, too. The South Africans must have thought it a military target, though God alone could guess why. He ticked his way down the list. Best not to think about it. The civilians, as

always, had suffered the worst. He said the same thing every morning at the briefing: in a war zone, it was safer being in the army.

‘Good morning, Belcher.’

He wheeled round. Bamford stood in the doorway. She’d been up all night, too. He had heard some of what had gone on, down on the ground.

‘Sorry, sir,’ he said. ‘I can come back later. I thought you’d be at -’

‘You do what you’re doing,’ she said. ‘I’m just going to catnap.’

She sprawled out on the settee, under the shadow of bookcase and out of the light. She was a different woman up here, less frightening. You could almost like her. The pyramid at the top of Canary Wharf tower should have been the most dangerous place in London, but the bombers never came near them. It was Belcher’s job to report on the attacks, and he knew full well that nothing within a mile had been hit in years. The South Africans stayed well clear. They didn’t dare drop a bomb so near to the Dome.

As that had become evident, the army had taken over the area, pushing the civilians back into the city and erecting their metropolis. Gleaming, immaculate towers, physically and metaphorically it defied the invaders. The tower was a mid-digit, jabbing back at the Continent. Bamford, in charge of London for years, had been awarded the penthouse. She had cried when they’d told her, a rare revelation of her softer side. She loved the place, and even now, with the end almost upon them, she relaxed up here. The men said Belcher and Bamford had something going. It wasn’t that. It just wasn’t possible to be up here, in a place like this, with the view and the sunshine and everything, and believe the enemy could win. It was such an absurdly defiant place, you believed in it. Whatever the evidence to the contrary.

Belcher finished the list. He meant to creep out so as not to disturb the general, but she was watching him. Curled up on the settee, she looked almost catlike, cute. If you could see beyond her age, and the uniform.

‘Busy day at the office?’

‘Fair bit to do.’ She sounded sleepy.

‘How was the court martial?’ He liked to show her he kept up with events, even all the way up here. She liked that initiative.

‘Court martial?’

'I had a memo. Said you'd be up after -'

She sat up quickly. 'Show me.'

He rummaged in his pocket, found the paper. She read it a couple of times, fully awake and scary again.

'You don't know anything about it?' he asked.

'No.' she said. 'But I'm about to find out.'

Ian followed Andrews from one machine to the next. The soldiers watched them. At first they had been suspicious. From the corner of his eye, Ian could see them fingering their weapons. Yet Andrews was carrying on. They ignored the soldiers, and pretended to work. He would say something, and Ian would repeat it.

'Intake gauge is at oh-three-fifteen.'

'Oh-three-fifteen,' nodded Ian as if he knew what that meant. He wondered if Andrews did, either. Andrews peered at a dial, then tapped the valve beside it with his finger.

'Horoscope doesn't look good, though. We might have blown it last run.'

'Could be serious,' said Ian.

'Expensive, more's the point. Kelly won't like that one iota'

'Or the general. What do you want to do?'

Andrews feigned to consider. 'I say,' he said to the soldiers. 'One of you be good enough to escort my colleague over to Byng Street?'

What for?'

'Well, the horoscope's gone on the blink, and I'd like the boss's say-so before I take the thing to bits.'

The soldiers debated this among themselves. They had their own suggestion.

'You two can stay here. I'll go, with a message.'

Ian felt his heart sink. Andrews remained deadpan.

'Very decent of you,' he said. 'Just say to Kelly that the morpho-metric reflex line is probably the matter.'

'The what?'

'He'll know exactly what you mean,' agreed Ian. 'Might grill you about incipient leakage on the Smithers scale, but make out like you've no idea what that is.'

The soldiers debated again. Ian glanced at Andrews. The man was a study of seriousness. Ian had to look quickly away, biting his lip to prevent a smile.

‘Fine,’ said the soldier. He nodded at Ian. ‘You come with me.’

Kelly had sat in on trials before, but scientific ones. A scientist would put forward his paper, and then a group of learned peers would assess it, line by line. There would be biscuits and tea, and a chairman would keep the jokes to an acceptable minimum. It was an agreeable way to increase the school of knowledge.

He wondered how much a court martial differed from the other kind of trial, the ones they still had for murder and looting. Bamford liked rules, he knew, and had insisted on some degree of formality for the vagrants and petty criminals who came through Byng Street. They got to say something, for the record. They got a chance to argue with their sentence, before they were taken out and shot.

Griffiths would have no chance to speak. As a spy, he surrendered any right to be heard. The Wartime Assignments Act was very clear on that, right there in Clause 1. He didn’t get a defence, only a prosecution. It was a strange business.

‘Telephony has been illegal in this country since 1968,’ said the clerk, some way into listing all the things Griffiths had done to forfeit his continued existence. ‘The Wartime Assignments Act also gives powers -’

‘Illegal?’ asked the Doctor, sat next to Kelly. The word echoed across the room, though he had ostensibly whispered it behind his hand. All through the proceedings, he had been fiddling with the wireless phone. First, he had popped the back off with a screwdriver and examined the contents. He had, since then, been trying to put it all back together. The clerk swallowed. ‘Since 1968.’ he said.

‘You’ve something to say on the matter?’ asked Bamford. She was already wearing the square of black felt, to show sentence had been decided before the trial began.

‘Not at all,’ said the Doctor. ‘I beg the court’s pardon. You carry on.’

‘Strike it,’ Bamford told the stenographer, a pencil-thin woman with thick glasses.

The clerk continued with the litany of offences. The Doctor leaned over to Kelly. ‘Illegal?’ he said, more quietly.

‘Yes,’ said Kelly, his eyes on Bamford. She didn’t look their way. ‘The Machine, you know?’

‘No,’ said the Doctor. Kelly stared at him, but the man really

meant it. Could it be that the last forty years were all forgotten in the future, just another footnote in the annals of history? He wondered what could possibly come next that would overshadow his whole life. It had to be the hoop...

'They were all banned,' said Kelly. 'All broadcasting of any kind. Television, radio, telephony... they'd all been compromised by the Machine.'

'I don't know the machine to which you refer,' insisted the Doctor.

A computing machine, back in the Sixties. It could talk to other machines. Was right here in London and it took over the world. Well, bits of it. What used to be the civilised world. People lost their minds. They'd be rung up or hear it on the television... they destroyed the Machine in '69, but the world was a mess. Everyone fell in on themselves...'

'And so the war began. I see,' said the Doctor. 'A machine...' 'That phone shows just how desperate and dangerous the South Africans are.'

'You may be right.'

'Well they can't be as strong as we thought if they're resorting to stunts like this, can they?'

The Doctor, however, was not listening. He'd been completely ignorant of the history, and now he just didn't care. It made Kelly's blood boil. Who did the old man think he was? Their lives, their times were important. It didn't matter what the Doctor thought.

He would have said so, but the clerk had stopped speaking and the court was suddenly quiet.

'Is there anything else to be said?' asked Bamford.

'On behalf of my client -' the Doctor began.

'Very well,' Bamford said, cutting him off. She looked up at Griffiths. 'You've been found guilty of the crimes listed. You've no defence under the articles of war. You're an enemy agent.'

'Yes,' Griffiths smiled. Bamford ignored him.

'You infiltrated a top secret and highly important programme of research,' she continued. Kelly had never known her have a good word to say about his work. She had always treated him with disdain. Funny, he thought. He could never have imagined Griffiths being the one to bring them together.

'I have it here that you contributed to the project in a number of ways, not least in your work on the horoloscope. That does not

mitigate in your favour, however. You are still an enemy agent.'

Kelly agreed completely. Griffiths had betrayed them, however good his work had been. He wondered where Bamford had got that detail, though. He had never told her. Perhaps it was down in a file somewhere. Perhaps the Doctor had said something. Bamford had an eerie way of knowing everything, anyway. You could never get anything past her.

'Take him away,' she said. 'Process him.'

'Call it what it is,' said Griffiths, getting to his feet. He was so different from the terrified creature Kelly had worked beside. Just this once.

'Take him out and shoot him. Better?'

A step in the right direction,' said Griffiths.

The soldiers got him moving. They got him as far as the door, then stopped. Kelly glanced back at Bamford. She was clearing away her notes, muttering to the stenographer about something. Kelly looked back again to Griffiths and the soldiers.

Their path was blocked by Bamford. Another Bamford. 'What the hell's going on?' she demanded. The soldiers stepped back, mouths agape.

The Bamford who had presided over the trial looked up. She took a moment to make sense of what she saw. She didn't look shocked or surprised, Kelly noted. She just absorbed the facts. She removed the black square of felt from her head.

'Griffiths is a spy,' she said.

The other Bamford, the new arrival, looked the man up and down. 'Get him out of here, then,' she said to the soldiers. They obeyed.

The Bamfords glared at each other from across the room. Kelly looked back and forth, noting the same anger and terror blazing in their eyes.

'You've puzzled it out, of course?' asked the Doctor beside him. Kelly realised what he had meant, back when they'd been outside the secure room. He pointed at Bamford the judge.

'She stepped through the hoop, when we gave her the tour,' he said. 'One stepped through and one didn't. You stopped her.'

'That's right, I did,' said the Doctor, brimming with excitement. 'So all this is my doing! Now I expect things are going to get interesting.'

Chapter Seven

She struggled with the clasp. They said the parachute had to be tight, but Abigail Ali also needed to breathe. Fighting with the harness also kept her mind off what they were about to do, what they were about to throw themselves into.

A hand covered her own, stopping her fidgeting. She looked up, and Wu raised an eyebrow at her.

‘We’ll be fine,’ he said. ‘Trust me.’

Abi shrugged. ‘Yes, sir,’ she said. Wu had already given her ‘chute the once-over, and decreed that all was in order. ‘You were the one who insisted on coming,’ he said. Which was true. She’d landed from the bombing run, taken one look at all the activity on the airstrip and known exactly what they were about. She had not hesitated, grabbing a pack and demanding permission to join Wu’s team. Stupid, reckless girl, he had said, but exactly what he needed. The others were edgy, fired up on adrenaline and the saki that had been passed round. Abi’s steely enthusiasm to play her part had impressed them all. They gave her tips on fighting hand-to-hand, skills many had learnt just that week. She would be their mascot, they said. Even the other women joined in. There could be no backing out now.

‘I’ll be fine, sir,’ she said.

He nodded and went to tend to one of the others. Abi left her parachute alone. It would have to do. She gripped the gun they had given her, wishing there had been time to try it out. She’d not fired an energy weapon since her basic training, years ago. A soldier should really know a gun’s weight, its kick, its aim, before having to use it on someone. Would it even work? They told horror stories of dud supplies. You only used equipment you could trust. Going into battle, there were few enough guarantees.

The lab coat made all the difference. The scientists might be the lowest order of men on the Isle of Dogs, but the soldiers still let them be. Ian made his way down the corridor, and nobody glanced his way.

He had left the soldier waiting in the car, just outside the main entrance. The gamble was that he would take them all back to the lab without asking any questions. Then they could all wait in the TARDIS - assuming Susan still had her key. The Doctor

could join them whenever he'd finished what he had to do. However long that took, at least they would be out of harm's way. That was the plan.

Ian took his time, trying to look preoccupied and busy. What he really wanted was a clipboard. It was an old dodge, one he'd seen in a comedy picture. Carry a clipboard with you and people assume that you're working.

He reached the row of cells, struggling to recall which cell it had been. He settled on one, sure it was the same cell he had rescued Susan from before. It was empty. For a moment, he thought he had got it wrong, but the room had been occupied recently. A tin bowl and a cup remained on the floor, evidence of some paltry meal.

There was no reason, he thought, that they'd have been put back in the same cell. It made more sense to put them somewhere else, somewhere they'd not escaped from before. Which meant they could be anywhere. Painfully aware he might be challenged at any moment, Ian checked the other cells. He listened keenly, straining to hear the approach of soldiers, or even to catch a hint of women's voices.

Nothing. Empty cell followed empty cell. Perhaps he was just too late to help them. His stomach knotted at the thought. He carried on.

The door to the very last cell was locked. Ian peeked in through the small window. Barbara and Susan were sat on the floor, cradling each other. The women looked terrible, exhausted and hurt, but he was thrilled to see them there. They did not look up. Perhaps they had heard him running round the corridor, and assumed he was one of the soldiers. There were no Andrewses with them. He should have anticipated that. The women were obviously lower on the list of priorities. Was it wrong to be thankful for that?

Ian had no key for the door. He rummaged in the pockets of his purloined lab coat, on the off chance of a miracle. Nothing. He looked up and down the corridor, but nothing suggested itself to him. Damn. Panic skittered through him. He had to find something.

A sound.

Ian froze. Someone was coming. He glanced all round, then quickly snuck into the cell on the far side of the corridor. Hiding behind the door, he waited.

The booted footsteps grew louder. The soldier, it had to be a soldier, didn't sound in any hurry. But Ian could not have been seen.

The soldier stopped outside the women's cell. There was no sound of keys, so Ian guessed the man was now peering through the spy-hole, checking his charges were still there. Ian had to act.

He stepped quickly round the door and charged forward. There was just time for the man to turn his head before Ian bundled into him. The man fell back, his skull thudding hard into the metal door, which rang out with the impact. From inside, Ian heard a yelp of surprise. The soldier's eyes rolled. He clawed at Ian's neck. Ian grabbed him by the shoulders and smacked him into the door again. The man stopped fighting. His body went limp, and Ian lowered him to the floor.

Ian took the gun from the holster on the man's hip, and dropped it into his lab coat pocket. He would never use it himself, but now nor could anybody else.

The keys were hefty and snagged on the man's pocket as Ian struggled to free them. His hands shook as he tried each key in the door. Finally one fitted, and he roughly turned the lock. He stood up straight, keen the women didn't see his exhaustion, and pushed the door open.

Barbara and Susan stood at the back of the room, arms clasped tightly around one another. They were terrified.

'It's all right,' he said. Ian had expected them to rush over to him like they had the last time, but they stayed exactly where they were. 'It's me,' he said, holding his lab coat open as he took a step forward. Perhaps, in the feeble light, his disguise worked too well.

Susan broke from Barbara and ran to him. They embraced, and he held her as she wept into his chest. Barbara watched them both. She wouldn't meet his eye.

'Barbara?' he asked.

Susan turned back to her. 'It is Ian,' she said, 'it really is.'

'It can't be,' Barbara said hoarsely. Her head shifted awkwardly, left and then right. Of course, thought Ian, they'd heard about earlier.

'They told you I'd been shot,' he said.

'We saw your body,' said Barbara. 'You were dead.'

'It wasn't me. It was another me, a duplicate, like Andrews.'

Susan backed quickly away from him. 'You're a duplicate?' I'm the original,' he said. 'Honestly I am. I've never been through the hoop. We have to get you out of here.'

Susan looked to Barbara. Barbara shook her head again. She pointed behind Ian. 'What's that?'

Ian turned. The soldier he had fought lay in the doorway, blood pooling on the floor round his head.

'He had a key. I had to rescue you.'

'You killed him?' Her voice was laced with suspicion.

'Of course not. He's just unconscious. We have to get you out of here.'

There was a terrible silence. Susan looked from Barbara to Ian and back again. Barbara came to a decision.

'All right,' she said levelly. She took Susan's hand. 'We'll come with you.'

Ian led them out into the corridor. He crouched, listening for more soldiers. He took the gun from his pocket, the one he had taken from the unconscious man. It might help him protect the women. Behind him, he heard Barbara whisper to Susan.

'The real Ian could never have done this.'

She hadn't meant him to hear, he thought. The unconscious soldier could not have been more than twenty. Just a child, really. Ian knew he'd had no choice, not if the women were to be freed. Nor could he explain to them now. He would have to convince Barbara later. He didn't look back, couldn't face the shock and anger he knew he'd seen in her eyes.

'Come on,' he said.

'Shoot her.'

'No, shoot *her*!'

The soldiers did not move. Kelly watched their heads swing from one Bamford to the other, trying to make sense of the chain of command.

The stenographer squinted over the top of her spectacles at the Bamford who had led the court martial. 'How should I log this other you?' she said.

'We can make sense of this,' declared the Doctor. He stepped forward into the middle of the room, thumbs jabbed into his waistcoat pockets. He looked like a high court judge of the old kind, thought Kelly. He only lacked the robe. 'A change of policy is what's wanted.'

'You did this,' said the Bamford in the doorway. 'You did something with that machine of yours, and now you've created this!'

The presiding Bamford sat back in her seat. Her face was ashen. 'I stepped through the hoop,' she said quietly.

'I resisted,' sneered the other. Her tone was superior, making clear that she had just taken charge. But, Kelly knew, she had lied. She hadn't resisted at all, and would have gone through were it not for the Doctor. The soldiers all looked to her now for their lead. One by one, they raised their guns towards the seated Bamford.

'There's no need for any of this,' said the Doctor, stood in their line of sight. Only Kelly seemed to hear him. Clear and authoritative as he might be, he wasn't the general. That was all that mattered.

'Aberration from the truth cannot be condoned,' said the Bamford in charge.

'The truth?' asked the Doctor. 'My good woman, you can't mean -'

The other Bamford got to her feet. She stood tall, on duty. 'Beg permission to be relieved, sir,' she said. Her voice was empty of all tone or emotion. She sounded dead inside.

Kelly looked back to the Bamford in charge. Her own face was a mask, giving nothing away. 'Granted,' she said gently. For a moment, Kelly thought the matter was settled, that authority had been decided through reason.

'Get out of the way, Doctor,' said Bamford the judge. He turned to protest. Kelly, acting on instinct, grabbed him by the arm and yanked him back. The soldiers did not hesitate.

Their guns barked, echoing loud in the courtroom. Kelly even thought he glimpsed the bullets, lunging into Bamford. Blood exploded from her face and neck. She flailed over the back of her chair, breaking it under her weight.

Then there was silence. The soldiers looked to each other, overawed by what they had just done. Bamford's broken body lay tangled on the floor.

'Good,' said the other one. There was no remorse in her. Kelly had to believe that was an act. She had seen her mirror image torn apart by gunfire. Yet Bamford simply gave instructions for the disposal of the body. No ceremony, no special treatment, nothing to suggest they'd just killed their leader. As the soldiers

busied themselves with the corpse, she turned to Kelly and the Doctor.

‘That was unnecessary,’ said the Doctor. He didn’t challenge her, he just stated his own position.

Bamford didn’t react. ‘We must ensure this doesn’t happen again,’ she said.

‘What’s this all about then, old boy?’

The man could have been his reflection, but for the thick moustache. Andrews still couldn’t get used to his doubles. At first he’d thought there was something wrong about them, that their faces weren’t quite on straight. He’d soon realised his mistake. The men weren’t reflections, reversed like he saw in the mirror, they were what he really looked like. He felt silly about them, self-conscious. He hated how they moved their shoulders when they walked, and he hated the penny-bit bald spot he’d never known he had. He hated how they stared back at him, wide-eyed, and his own weakness for looking hurriedly away.

They *were* him. Whatever he thought of them, whatever discomfort they brought out in him, he had to help them. Ian had been right.

‘They think we’re a mistake,’ he explained, keeping his voice low. ‘They’ve been topping us as we arrive.’

His other self nodded, taking it all too reasonably. ‘You’ve gone AWOL, then? You old rogue.’

‘I’m the only one they’ll let live. Least I can do is help out you chaps.’

‘Throwing your luck in with us, eh? Good egg.’ Andrews squirmed. Did he really talk like that?

They hurried on to his quarters. Another two of him were already there. ‘Stay here,’ he said. ‘I’ll bring more of us. We’ll work something out.’

He closed the door on their protests, praying he had convinced them of the danger they all faced. He was usually good at following orders, but had to admit he might balk in their shoes. If they got restless and ventured outside... well, they’d drop him right in it, too.

Such thoughts took him swiftly back to the secure room. He nearly choked as he strode through the door; the soldiers had returned. Two of them stood, watching the police box. One glanced back at him, but only briefly. They had got used to him,

as the original, as the one they let live. Not that they could tell him apart, he knew. It was just that he used the door, rather than blurring into the room like the one appearing now.

‘You’ll come with us,’ the soldier told the new arrival.

‘Certainly,’ said the man, unsteady after his trip. ‘You lead the way:

He looked baffled, seeing Andrews by the door, but since no one else seemed fazed, he said nothing. The man stuffed his hands into his pockets, and cheerily followed the soldiers out.

Andrews stood alone in the secure room, furious with himself at his own inaction. He could have done something, and now the man was strolling to his death. He could have stalled the soldiers, or fought them. His other self would have taken his side, surely? They might have got away...

No, Andrews knew that wouldn’t help anyone. He had to play it safer than that.

A figure blurred into view in front of him. Another Andrews, and one he could help this time. ‘Come with me,’ he said, his voice low.

‘Certainly,’ grinned the man.

Andrews would save those he could. He would do what was possible.

It didn’t make him feel any better.

Barbara couldn’t keep her eyes off the man. He needed a shave, and the lab coat he said he had stolen didn’t fit him. He was not Ian, though. This wasn’t the man that she had lost. This duplicate was too desperate and dangerous, too feral in the way he led them through the facility. When Ian, the real Ian, had rescued them before, he had done it with style, with good grace. He kept his head up and showed no fear. This man was an impostor, a sick parody of the man she had loved. He had to be.

They would stop at every junction so he could peer round and check for soldiers. He seemed so scared of everything. He would risk nothing, try nothing. Instead, at any hint of an obstacle, they would edge back the way they had come, and look for another way out. Barbara said nothing, afraid it would all pour out of her if she did. She would stay silent until they at least got outside. Then she could fight him off, get him away from them. She held on tightly to Susan’s hand, keeping the girl from getting too close to the man.

He beckoned them to a doorway, his face grave. 'There are too many men round the main entrance,' he said. 'We can't go out that way.'

'Whatever you think best,' said Barbara. She saw him try to hide how the words hurt him. He must know he wasn't real, she thought. She could spare no pity for him, though.

'So what will we do?' asked Susan.

'I don't know,' he admitted. 'What else can we do?'

Barbara glared at him. This was just hopeless. Susan, however, tugged at her arm. Her eyes were alive with excitement. 'We can ask Griffiths!'

They made their way down the stairs from the courtroom. The Doctor lagged behind, his old bones unable to keep up. Kelly did not often feel the sprightly one, but the Doctor seemed inordinately old. He leant him an arm to lean on, and the Doctor accepted gratefully. Bamford did not wait for them. 'She's utterly ruthless,' Kelly whispered. 'That woman was her: 'She's hiding something,' said the Doctor.

'You think she's actually upset about it?'

'Perhaps. But you saw the understanding between them, about what had happened. That other one of her, she accepted her fate. She surrendered herself to the firing squad. That's not like this woman at all, she's a fighter. Believe me, Bamford knows more about your experiment, and its ramifications, than she's ever admitted to us.'

'You think so?'

'I'm sure of it.' She hit upon the Ship, too. The police box. She knew it was involved all along, as if she'd seen it before...'

'I don't follow. How could she? And you said it had nothing do with it.'

'Well, I lied,' he shrugged. Kelly let it pass. 'She's scared out of her wits by something.'

'The enemy is on our heels, Doctor.'

'It's not that,' he said. 'It's something to do with your work. She knows something.'

'What are you two blathering about?' Bamford called, from - levels below them on the stairs.

'The experiment,' Kelly called back. 'We were discussing what we could do...'

'We already know what to do,' Bamford tutted. 'We're putting the police box through the hoop.'

Griffiths closed his eyes. If they had been going to shoot him from the front, he would have kept them open. It unnerved the firing squad when you looked at them, granted you a place in their nightmares. That was why those to be executed were often given blindfolds - not for their own sake, but for the executioners'. Here, though, the soldiers stood some way behind him. It was disrespectful, he thought, purposefully so. They wanted him to know how worthless they thought him. He was just a piece of rubbish to be disposed of.

They hadn't even cleared up the Andrewses. The dead, identical men heaped up on the tiles in front of him hardly looked real. He had seen places of execution before, in Africa and Europe, before he ever came to London. They tended to look like any other abattoir. The Byng Street facility didn't even treat you like cattle. They crammed the bodies into the tiled room, filling it to capacity before they turned on the flames. At the rate the Andrewses were showing up, he thought, his cremation might even take place before nightfall.

The soldiers told him not to move. They busied themselves with something behind him. They were moving something, something heavy and unyielding enough to make them swear. He fought the urge to look back. Perhaps they were teasing him. He flinched at a movement to his left. Cursing himself for losing his cool, he watched the two soldiers drag a tarpaulin parcel to the pile of bodies. An Andrews, he assumed, killed out in the street. Maybe the poor guy had tried to escape, or had just asked the wrong question.

The soldiers heaved at the load, trying to spill its contents onto the pile. The parcel was heavy, and the body inside must have been in some state. It seemed to have stuck to the tarpaulin.

An arm slapped wetly against the tiles as the body rolled out. Griffiths blanched; it was Bamford. She'd gone down in a hail of bullets, her head and torso pockmarked with holes.

'What happened?'

The soldiers didn't even look at him. 'Face forward,' they said. He watched them recover the tarpaulin, and retreat back behind him, out of view. Possibilities raced through his mind. Had an Andrews done this? Or one of the Doctor's friends? Perhaps Kelly had finally snapped. He would never know. He heard one of the soldiers leave. It was now just him and his executioner in the

room. He wondered which of the two men he had got. He heard the man fuss with his gun and the unmistakable click of a safety catch coming off. , Griffiths closed his eyes again. He thought of his daughter. Mr Griffiths?' the voice was, impossibly, Ian's. Griffiths slowly turned his head. The younger of the two soldiers, really just a child, had his eyes tight shut. Ian had a pistol up to the man's temple.

'Ian!'

'We're returning the favour from earlier.'

'I'm grateful,' said Griffiths. 'What do we do about this one?' The soldier made it easy for them, fainting away. Griffiths stepped neatly forward, catching the man as he fell and relieving him of his gun.

They hurried out into the corridor. Barbara and Susan were waiting for them. They both looked a lot worse for wear.

Griffiths noted how Barbara kept looking at Ian, and saw the distaste in her eyes. Things had moved on since he had last been with them.

'We can't get out the front,' said Ian.

'We can use the tunnel,' said Griffiths. 'They haven't even locked it from last time.'

* * *

Wu stared at the phone in his hand, willing it to ring. Griffiths was late, he should have rung by now. He had never been late in all the years he had worked for them.

He must have been compromised, thought Wu. So where did that put them now? They were passing over the Dover coast, and would be on top of London before long. The man had to give them a signal, or Wu would be required to abort. They couldn't risk the mission, and he wouldn't risk the men. But nor did he want to be the one to tell Abi that something - had gone wrong.

Wu stroked the display screen on the phone with his thumb. Come on, he thought. Griffiths had never let them down before. He needed to come through for them now.

The change in Griffiths was startling. The man was alert and efficient, with no sign of the fears he had shown earlier. Ian knew the man was an enemy agent, that he was working against Bamford and the British. Yet he was their only ally, when even

the Doctor seemed to have forsaken them. He let Griffiths lead them through the tunnel, and out into the sunshine by the river. It must be getting on for six in the morning, he thought. Almost a civilised hour.

Ian had told Griffiths about the soldier waiting for him in the car. Griffiths had considered the point quickly, then decided they dare not risk reaching the man. They would find their own transport.

Keeping low, terrified that any moment someone would see them, they made their way alongside the river. After what felt like an eternity, Susan spotted an armoured car, parked in front of an office building. Ian kept his eyes on the building as he followed Griffiths to the car, sure someone would stop them. 'We need to be quick about this,' he said.

Griffiths nodded, gingerly trying the handle on the car door. Locked. He glanced round once and tapped his elbow against the driver's-side window. He didn't hit it hard, but the glass broke. Ian grinned, but Griffiths just got on with the matter in hand. He reached in, opened the door, and swept the bits of glass out onto the road. As the others piled into the car, Griffiths took off his lab coat. He handed it to Barbara.

'Put this on,' he said.

Griffiths then tugged off his tatty old jumper. He had a clean shirt on underneath. He called to Susan, in the back of the car, to look in the boot. She rummaged around, and soon found a heavy army overcoat. They passed it out to Griffiths. He found a sergeant's cap in the pocket. With the cap, and the coat done up over his shirt, he looked like top brass. The way he stood and the determination in his eyes completed the transformation.

Ian sat in the front of the car. Griffiths, driving, never raced. He took things easily, piloting the car so it drew no attention to them. In fact, thought Ian, were Griffiths really top brass, he'd be chauffeured.

'This isn't the way to the lab,' muttered Barbara behind them. Griffiths nodded.

'It's crawling with soldiers, you'd never get in there.'

'So where are you taking us?'

'I have friends. I need to reach them.'

He said nothing more, though Barbara wouldn't let him alone. Playing his cards close to his chest in case they were caught, Ian reckoned. Perhaps he just didn't trust them. Barbara's

embittered tone didn't exactly inspire confidence.

'Okay,' Griffiths said, pulling up in a street one along from the Underground station. They exited the car, and Griffiths reached into the back to withdraw a briefcase Ian hadn't even noticed was there.

They followed Griffiths through the tall, glass doors of a building. The lobby was polished marble, extravagant and gleaming. A woman in a tight-fitted suit came over to them.

'We're to deliver this to the lot on the third floor,' Griffiths told her, brandishing the case.

'What's in it?' the woman asked, her voice shrill and frosty. 'No idea,' said Griffiths. 'Eyes only, she said.' Ian was amazed by his cheek. The timid little scientist had turned into James Bond.

'And these people are?'

'Technicians. We might get asked questions.'

The woman eyed them all carefully. Ian tried not to meet her gaze, worried he would give them all away with a smile. The woman perused his face, gauging his stubble and sunken eyes. What must she think of them?

'Been up all night?' she smiled.

'No breakthroughs without hard graft,' cut in Griffiths.

'Go through,' said the woman. 'Take the lift, and I'll let them know you're coming.'

'But they'll come after us,' said the Ian as the lift doors closed on them. Barbara wanted to tell him to be quiet. Griffiths knew what he was doing. His ease at this made the Ian look pathetic.

Griffiths produced a flat piece of plastic from his back pocket, and slipped it into a groove on the lift's control panel. An electronic note chimed in response, and the lift began to rise. 'Borrowed this from Bamford,' he said. 'Had it ages.'

'So where are we going?' asked Susan. She held onto Barbara, but was fascinated by this.

'Top floor,' said Griffiths. 'Exclusive access.'

The lift ascended. They waited, standing awkwardly in the imposed closeness. Barbara gazed at the Ian's back. He had a couple of strands of grey hair, she noticed. Her Ian had never had those, she was sure. She wanted to find other differences, to have evidence for when they got back to the Ship. She knew she was tired and grieving, but she knew, too, that she was right about this. The Ian in front of her couldn't come with them when

they left. It would be a slight to the real Ian's memory. Finally, the lift slowed. The doors slid open onto a luxury penthouse. They were right at the top of the great tower, perhaps hundreds of floors up, inside the glass pyramid itself. There were exotic plants, a bed, plush furnishings. A teenager in uniform sprawled out on the chaise longue, snoring contentedly. Griffiths motioned the others to stay still, and tip-toed over to him.

The boy woke, just as Griffiths reached him. He had a gun in his hand. Barbara's view was obscured as the Ian ducked in front of her. She tried to see round him and the gun went off. There was a loud crack, and pieces of glass tumbled down from the ceiling. The wind outside howled suddenly louder. Griffiths stepped back from the boy, rubbing his hands together. Barbara didn't look to see whether the boy was dead or unconscious.

'We need to start a fire,' said Griffiths. 'Gather anything that will burn.' He threw the case down and gathered up bedding, piling it directly below the broken pane of glass. He looked round, sizing up other items for fuel.

The Ian turned to Barbara. 'Help me with the bookcase?' She was stunned that he had asked her, but did as he asked. They cajoled the bookcase across the room. Old, leather-bound books jostled from the shelves as they worked. She glanced at the titles: histories of Britain, of the monarchs and the empire. Churchillian bedtime reading, she thought. They dumped the bookcase over the top of the bedding. Susan scooped up the books they had dropped and added them to the pile. Griffiths pulled the drawers from a desk and threw them on top. They soon had the makings of a bonfire. Griffiths found matches in the flat's little kitchen. He knelt by the heap of debris, cradling the flame, getting it to spread to the bedsheets.

Barbara stepped away from the petty vandalism. The view was incredible, looking down on the bright skyscrapers of the Isle of Dogs. She followed the path of the Thames towards London. She couldn't get her bearings at first. The war had knocked down all the landmarks she was looking for. Tower Bridge was gone, as was the dome of St Paul's. Everything she had known had been taken from her.

Then, far in the distance, she made out the four white turrets of Battersea.

The smell of burning brought her back to the room. The bedsheet was engulfed in flame, and the furniture heaped on top

began to smoke. An industrial, plastic stink filled the room. Had Barbara been nearer, she would have wanted to gag. Griffiths let it build, stepping well back as he pulled off his coat. He folded the coat over, then flapped it across the top of the bonfire. He snatched it sharply back again, before the flames could reach it. A ball of black smoke lurched up into the air. The man paused, then flapped the coat out again. Back and forth he went, the rhythm unnatural. Barbara couldn't make out how it helped the fire grow.

'Morse code?' asked the Ian. Of course, she thought. He would have been a boy scout, too.

'Variation on it,' said Griffiths.

'But who are you signalling?'

'Look south.'

Barbara, Ian and Susan all looked. Barbara recognised the green block of Greenwich on the horizon, the broken white shapes of what had once been the hospital. The observatory, high on the hill, looked unscathed. A black line ran across the sky behind it. It looked like a flock of birds, she thought, but the perspective was wrong.

A white light winked from the midst of the blackness. It was like a star twinkling.

'Griffiths,' said Susan. 'There's a reply.'

* * *

The warm summer day was just getting going. They made their way back to the lab on foot, just to savour it. Bamford had sent an orderly ahead of them to get things moving. The plan was that they'd find the police box already in the test room with the hoop when they got there.

It would be breakfast time soon, Kelly thought. He was famished. Engines growled from the sky. The enemy were out in force again, intent on levelling London. The military were so single-minded.

'It won't make any difference,' the Doctor was saying. The old man was full of energy keeping up with Bamford now. Had he feigned his weakness on the stairs?

'You've failed to convince me how,' she said.

The Doctor started to protest. Bamford waved him off as another soldier ran over. The man looked terrified, and could

only stammer the words out. 'Your apartment,' he said.

Bamford looked up. Sure enough, grey smoke curled out of the top of the tower. As they looked, shadow fell across their faces. The sky was suddenly black with aircraft of all sizes. The noise was incredible. The South African planes passed by overhead - making their way west, Kelly supposed. He'd never realised how huge their attack runs were, how many planes took part. He scratched his nose. The fire seemed the least of their worries.

'The moment has come!' Bamford called out to anyone near enough to hear. Soldiers rushed around, appearing from buildings everywhere. They set up tripods, threw down sandbags, built gun stations. Kelly had seen them drill like this before. Best to get out of their way.

'Breakfast?' he asked. The Doctor didn't answer, his attention fixed on the sky. He was mesmerised.

It looked like rain, thought Kelly. It took him a moment to realise that every one of the heavy dark blobs was a man. They were soldiers, kilted out in state-of-the-art stealth armour and the latest low-density weapons. There were too many of them to take in.

The entire South African army was dropping out of the sky towards him.

Chapter Eight

The air roared past Abigail Ali as she dropped into the fray, firing down at the insect-sized soldiers on the ground, who scurried about and took pot shots at them. The English were short on resources, and only had crude, old-fashioned guns. Still, sometimes they were lucky - a dead man in a shredded 'chute dropped suddenly past Abi's left. He hit the side of one of the pristine skyscrapers, windows smashing around him. Broken glass and gore rained down onto the heads of his killers.

Abi and her comrades fired back in force. Column after column of brilliant blue energy rings swirled down to decimate the English men and defences. As she got steadily nearer, Abi could be more discriminating. She hit one of the English soldiers as he tried to find cover, the arc of blue light puncturing his forehead and exploding his brains out the back of his neck. She swallowed, unable to look away. This was an invasion, and they had no call for more subtle weaponry.

She tugged on the control straps hanging by her head, determined not to let the crosswinds drag her into the massed English ranks. Some of her comrades had been killed that way, too keen on shooting to control their descent. She aimed for a wide expanse of courtyard, littered with fewer clumps of charred masonry and bodies, and downwind from the backs of retreating English soldiers.

Ten metres from the ground, then five, and Abi yanked back hard on the control straps. The 'chute responded, lurching her upwards again by a metre, slowing her rate of descent quite drastically. She got one booted foot onto the ground and clicked the release, rolling out from and under the 'chute as it was given up to the breeze. Gun in her hand, Abi leapt into a deserted gun post, nestling down behind the cover of sandbags. She peeped her head out to see her parachute billowing, picking up speed now it was free of her weight. The great sail swept across the courtyard and caught itself up in some of the fleeing men. They struggled to extract themselves, one man screaming hysterically like he'd seen the funny side. They were sitting ducks and Abi picked them off one by one.

The main action was some way from her now. Explosions sounded a block or two westwards. Heart hammering, Abi checked all round before venturing into the open again. She

could see no one around. Taking a breath, she bolted in the direction of the voices and fighting.

After a frantic sprint across open ground, she emerged onto a street strewn with the dead of both sides. The English had clearly suffered the worse losses. Some of the bodies still moved, the wounded crying out for aid that would not be coming soon.

'Drive them into the river!' That was Wu, just a street away, his authority clear over the relentless vlorty! vlorty! of South African guns, and the sporadic rattatat! in reply.

Another street, and Abi emerged into the battle. The English were withdrawing; they were simply outgunned. They would desperately pick over the corpses of Abi's own side and take their weapons, but couldn't fathom how to use them. London had never progressed beyond bullets; the English were cowed by technology of all kinds, and would never have parlayed with the machine-people like Abi's own government had.

'Abigail Ali!'

She didn't shoot the man who called out, though his accent and uniform were English. Instinct overrode her reflexes, and it took her a second to see why. She squinted at the gaunt battered man in the enemy uniform. He was older, far older than he should be and his face was dappled with bruises. A nasty mark just above one eye showed where someone had punched him.

'Griff!' she said. 'What have you done to yourself?'

'There's a war on, Abi,' he replied, that old mocking tone grating in his new voice. Three frightened technicians in lab coats huddled behind him. He must have been keeping them away from the fighting.

'None of you have any armour on!' Abi looked all about them, checking the real English were nowhere nearby. 'We must get you to cover. No HQ up yet, though. Any bright ideas? We'll need a place for the wounded, somewhere big. And easy to defend.'

Griffiths shrugged. 'Something you've left in one piece?' The male technician beside him stepped forward. 'I think I've an idea, actually.'

'You must get your people out of here, General! You're outmanned and outgunned.'

'I knew you weren't with us, Doctor,' Bamford yelled back, over the noise of the fighting outside.

The general stood at the front of the command post, practically

right out in the open. Since she so evidently wanted to be in the thick of the fighting, Kelly couldn't understand why she didn't just get on with it. She achieved nothing where she was, barking out orders as she might rail against a thunderstorm. And with her in the way, Kelly and the Doctor could only estimate how the invaders were doing, basing their assessments on what they could hear.

'It's not that,' snapped the Doctor, calling forward over the shoulders of the men between himself and Bamford. The general could barely have heard him, Kelly thought. 'I just don't share your glee for killing the most people possible. It's unnecessary!'

Eyes still on the battle, Bamford called back to her officers 'If he speaks out of turn again, you can shoot him.' She didn't even look round.

The Doctor muttered something under his breath. The tall captain right in front of him turned to look at him. The Doctor smiled demurely until he looked away again.

Kelly, pressed against the back wall of the bunker, was the only one who could see that the Doctor was not taking sides. His sharp wits had puzzled out the invasion. He knew Bamford was defeated, and could now only lose more of her men. He didn't care that Bamford was losing, he just hated the wastage Kelly sympathised. He wouldn't say so out loud, of course but things could be better for a man like him under the new regime. The South Africans had respect for learning.

He found himself grinning at the Doctor. 'You know what they're using against us?' he said, leaning in close to be heard. 'Those have to be laser guns. We'd heard rumours about them.'

The Doctor listened, his face alive at the prospect, though he also seemed wary of speaking out. 'That's lazy conjecture,' he ventured. 'It could be ultrasonics for all we know. That burbling noise would make more sense if it was!'

He was cut off by another volley of strange, South Africa gunfire, loud and nearby. The invaders were almost on top of them. Of course, Kelly thought, retreat was the only practicable option. Why didn't Bamford see that? Again, he was cowed by the Doctor's knowledge of the most esoteric and involved subjects. He must know more than he said about what the weapons might be.

Kelly peered over the shoulders of the officers in his way. He could see little but smoke, and nothing with which to refute the

Doctor's claim. If only they were nearer the front, he'd have had a better view. In fact, he had already said as much and more than once, but the soldiers ignored him. Their own needs came first, though their comments on the battle were hardly illuminating. They merely found more contrived ways to opine that the South Africans could, and would be defeated. Kelly's wry comment about the lack of an evidence base for that had already earned him a stern look from Bamford. Still, her officers had grown edgy, too.

'This position is not going to be tenable soon,' shouted one of the men to Bamford's left, and no more tactfully than the Doctor had put it. His name was Skinner, Kelly thought. One of the more able ones.

'I can see that,' Bamford yelled back. No one said anything. The gunfire and screaming continued outside, growing steadily closer. Kelly suddenly wondered if she would make them sit it out, let the enemy reach them and kill them on some obscure point of honour. It was the sort of thing he thought soldiers might do. He hated the injustice of it, the stupidity.

Bamford reached into her coat and withdrew an envelope, marked with a seal of red wax. She hesitated, before passing it back without a word. Skinner opened it and withdrew a single page of foolscap. Kelly and the Doctor both strained to see what the paper said. Little was written there, maybe no more than a couple of sentences, yet Kelly could make nothing out, and nor, he felt sure, could the Doctor. Skinner read over it twice, then tucked the page into his pocket.

'Take two men,' the general commanded.

Skinner saluted, selected two officers from those stood behind him, and hurried out into the thick of the fighting. Kelly could, feel the tension in the bunker, and knew he'd missed the significance of whatever had just happened. He thought better of asking, though, especially now that Bamford had her eyes on him.

'Major,' she called. 'You and the Doctor will accompany me back to the lab.'

'I should say that's rather a hazardous journey right this minute,' the Doctor shouted back.

'It's an order!'

The Doctor shook his head sadly. 'Well, that's all very well,' he muttered, 'but I fail to see what you hope to achieve there.'

'Courage, Doctor,' Bamford said. 'We've still your police box to

deal with.'

Barbara tended the wounded, barely conscious of what she was doing or where she was, just keeping busy. Susan knelt next to her, doing the same. She chatted away to the soldiers, whether they could hear her or not. Canary Wharf station was packed out with the wounded, gathered up from both sides by the South Africans. What limited medical resources there were, they shared evenly among them. You could tell the difference though: the South African army mostly comprised blacks, but all of them were well built, tall and athletic, like the American GIs Barbara recalled from her youth. They all had good teeth. Some of the English still able to speak were refusing treatment. Barbara looked after them anyway.

Griffiths raced about, swapping materials and gleaning news. Abi helped out, her eyes peeled, constantly on watch. Wu, the Chinese who had given them their orders, had told her to be bodyguard. Barbara couldn't believe, for all she had seen, that Bamford's troops would attack their makeshift hospital. Not when it was full of their own men, too.

She was glad to be occupied, to have something she could do, and glad that Ian was kept busy on the far side of the hall. He had taken a job as a stretcher bearer, helping get the sick in and out of the lifts. He gathered up their belongings, ran errands, carried people. He, too, was desperate to be useful. Abi came over to her.

'Hey' she said. It was a strange, Afrikaans greeting, too casual for Barbara's liking. She knew Abi was eager to make friends, just unsure where exactly to start. Barbara realised why: Griffiths had stood off from Abi, acted cold to her. Abi had given him all the news of what his daughter was up to - eight now, pretty and good at mathematics - and Griffiths had not said a word. Barbara had been shocked by how long he'd been in London. He'd not seen his daughter in more than four years. Griffiths still didn't say a word about that, either. He organised the hospital, and got them all moving. Now he kept his distance from them.

Barbara wasn't the only one bowled over by how different he had become - suddenly commanding, responsible for the whole strategy of attack, and able to brief Wu on all that had happened to them. Susan had gazed at him agog while he played down his

own role in their various escapes, and made Ian out to be the hero. Abi, too, couldn't keep her eyes off him. she glanced at Barbara, and they realised they were both staring after him.

Abi grinned. 'We're just friends,' she said. 'We were at school together, that's all.'

Susan, beside them, snorted. They looked round, and the girl blushed scarlet. She said nothing, hiding her face as she fussed with a bandage, already placed where it should be.

Abi shrugged at Barbara, who grinned back, despite her mounting feelings of awe. The women of this time were different, it seemed - stronger, more competent, a match for any man. She'd met very few Indians before, anyway. But still, Barbara wanted to ensure that they'd be friends. She wanted this woman on her side.

'How long has your country been comrades of the South Africans?' she said, just to make conversation. Abi stared at her, wide-eyed.

'I am South African,' she said, and Barbara blanched at the anger in her words.

'I'm sorry, forgive me, we're so terribly ignorant of the outside world...'

Abi took a deep breath, but she could not disguise her scorn. 'Whites were always the minority in our country.' she said. 'It was only a matter of time. But we didn't round them up, the minorities, not like you did. Griffiths and I were at school together, we were in the same class.'

'I'm really very sorry...' said Barbara, fighting back tears. She was suddenly aware that in all the time they had been here, until the South Africans had arrived she had not seen a single non-Caucasian face. It had never struck her as odd until now, and she'd been more surprised by Griffiths taking his orders from a Chinese. No, she corrected herself, cursing her own prejudice, Wu was South African, too. She was filled with shame. She had felt torn before, watching London invaded, but now she didn't know what to feel at the fall of the English. She had, after all, seen what they did in the facility on Byng Street.

'They really sent everyone they could spare, then,' teased Griffiths, right behind her. Barbara noted a hint of Afrikaans creeping into his accent. She wondered what he'd overheard, and if he had come to distract them. It might just have been good timing. 'You're not with infantry, Abi.'

‘Volunteered, though,’ Abi replied, sweetly. ‘Missing you too much.’

There was an awkward silence, Griffiths seeming to realise he’d walked in on something.

‘We’re worth fighting for,’ Barbara said quietly. ‘We can change things here, make them better.’

Abi sized her up. ‘Yes,’ she concluded in all seriousness. ‘We’ve a duty to do so. Things don’t just need changing here, though. The regime needs sweeping away.’

Her zeal was disturbing, and Barbara recalled what Griffiths had said to her, during the interview on Byng Street. He’d asked her about moral obligations. He had sounded her out as a possible ally, even then.

But what of the obligations Susan had alluded to? The door the Doctor had given them, back when he went to see Griffiths, had borne that same absolute, righteous conviction that now scared her in Abi.

Suddenly Abi was on her feet, and she and Griffiths were racing across the ticket hall. Barbara turned to look. There was a man on the escalator up to the surface. He carried a rifle. He was English.

Someone cried out to him, told him to stop. The man kept coming down the stairs. Halfway down, he reached for something.

Electric gunfire echoed through the ticket hall. Blue swirls of light jerked the man backwards, and whatever had been in his hand fell forward, clattering down the steps. Soldiers around Barbara cried out in alarm. Someone grabbed her arm, pulled her backwards. As she turned to protest there was an explosion right behind her.

The gunfire started in earnest, and a second grenade burst right in the centre of the wounded soldiers. A band of English troops took position at the top of the escalators, a commanding view down on them all.

Ian had Barbara and Susan both by the wrist, dragging them away from the prone bodies. He shouted something to them but it was lost over the noise of the fighting. Barbara saw a man try to rise from his stretcher, his arm out, pleading for help. She looked quickly away as a grenade fell beside him. ‘Stay here!’ Ian shouted again. He hurried off, and Barbara clung to Susan in a nook at one side of the ticket hall, hiding the girl’s eyes from the

chaos. Ian darted back, helping people to their feet. She remembered what Andrews had said - the Andrews she'd talked to where the gunmen now were, that first time they'd escaped. He'd said Griffiths was braver by not carrying a gun when everyone else did. She could see that now, with Ian. Without one, he didn't look outward at the battle raging around him, he just got on with helping people. He might be hit any second, was powerless to do anything about it. That fact seemed to liberate him.

The lifts pinged, an absurd and cheery note amid the fighting. Barbara saw English soldiers emerge, firing into the backs of the South Africans who'd faced the barrage from the stairs. She saw Griffiths and Abi spinning round to blast blue light back at the lifts.

English troops poured down the escalators, some reaching the floor alive. Wounded men grappled with them, even those from their own side. One man, Barbara saw, had his eyes gouged out. An English soldier stared right back at her, raising his gun as someone else shot him first. Blood spat from his mouth and nose as he fell.

She had lost track of Ian... No, there he was, across the hall. He stared back at her, yelling something. She looked round. The soldier's face was bloody as he lunged for her, and he'd lost some fingers. Pulling Susan behind her, Barbara ducked out of his way and smacked her shoulder into the wall. She had nowhere to escape to. Susan yelped, and kicked out at the man. He leered, and blood dribbled from between his broken teeth. Susan kicked him in the shins, but he kept on coming. He put his hand around the girl's throat. Barbara pummelled him with her fists, but he smacked her with his free hand, and she found herself dazed and down on the floor. Struggling to her feet, she heard Susan's choked whimper. The man had his back to Barbara, and she saw a knife in his belt. Without a moment's thought, she grabbed it and plunged it into his back.

Susan dropped to the floor, gagging. The man wheeled round on Barbara. His eyes boggled. He reached round for the knife, but his fingers couldn't get a purchase on it. He tried to say something, to explain to her, as his legs gave out under him. Barbara reached out, wanting to stop him falling back onto the knife. The man waved her off, lost his balance and fell forward. His body and face slapped smack into the floor.

Barbara helped Susan to her feet. The fighting had died down as the raiders were overcome. At the top of the escalators, she could see Wu and his men, battling with gunmen. She spied Andrews, too, three of him. For a moment she thought he was fighting the South Africans, but it was soon clear that he had swapped sides, too. She felt immense relief. 'You're all right!'

Ian stood panting beside her. Susan ran to him. He had reached them as fast as he could, she could see, but surely the real Ian would never have left them alone. Abi hurried over, and glanced down at the dead man.

'Good,' she said, appraising Barbara. 'Desperate last effort, this lot.'

'You've beaten them?'

'Looks like it.'

The guns and the yelling soon faded, and there were more injured people to tend.

Skinner bashed at the toughened glass with the butt of his rifle. On his first strike, the glass quivered, a strange note reverberating down the platform. He hit again, more firmly, and the glass fractured. It had been designed to shatter into small and harmless pieces.

Upstairs, the gunfire was dying down. They had never had much chance against the South Africans' laser weapons, but he was angry that it had been so quick. Good men had been killed in that last stand. Yet they would not have died in vain.

They had given him the distraction he needed, to slip past with his unit, down into the tunnels.

He leapt down from the platform, squishing mice underfoot. The dirty white creatures positively teemed. They must have thrived since the trains had stopped running, he thought. His men jumped down, gathering behind him, awaiting his word. The darkness of the tunnel in front of them did not inspire confidence. Skinner produced a torch.

'Let's get on with it,' he said, running headlong into the gloom. The men would have to keep up with him, if only to stay with the light.

The ticket hall was a mess, the medical resources even worse than they had been. They did what they could. While Barbara worked, she listened to the discussion between Griffiths and Wu.

'Bamford's gone back to the lab,' said Wu. 'Holed up there with what's left of her men.'

'That's where we'll head next then,' chipped in Abi.

'There's also the tunnels below us,' said Griffiths. 'That's what they attacked us here for. I saw Skinner and some of Bamford's other key players dash off down that way.'

'You don't think they were simply escaping.' It was not a question.

'No, sir. The Tube takes them under the river.'

'To the peninsula?' Wu nodded. 'That's not good. Right. Griffiths, you take the lab, and Abi, you're with me.'

Abi and Griffiths just nodded at each other as they went their separate ways. Barbara recoiled at their cold, functional manners. How could people live like that, their emotions so guarded? The South African soldiers divided up into two teams. Barbara would have been happy to remain behind, to continue with nursing the sick. However, Ian had other ideas. Without a word to her first, he volunteered to help Griffiths.

'Bamford still has the Doctor with her,' he explained.

'Yes, we've got to come with you,' agreed Susan, eager to be away from the wounded and dead.

'I can't guarantee he'll survive this,' Griffiths told her. 'He's on her side.'

'But he's not on anyone's side!'

'That doesn't make things any better for him, Susan.' The girl pouted, and Griffiths rolled his eyes indulgently. 'Okay,' he said. 'We'll do what we can for him.'

'They'll be on us any moment!' Bamford called out. 'I want that thing gone before they get here!'

Balanced on the wheeled pivot, the police box was trundled toward the test room. One man bent under the back of it, steering the trolley, while soldiers swarmed round and directed him. Their comrades let them through, then worked to barricade the entrance to the lab. They expected the siege any moment.

The police box halted abruptly outside the test room. The Doctor stood in their path, his expression stern. It made even Bamford hesitate.

'Get out of the way, Doctor,' she told him.

'I can't allow you to do this, General. It won't make any difference. You'll only make matters worse.'

‘Get him out of the way,’ she said. If the soldiers noticed the uncertainty in her voice, they did not show it.

A soldier stepped forward. The Doctor stared the man down, and Bamford thought they might have to drag him away kicking and screaming. The soldier took another step, and brandished his pistol. The Doctor’s shoulders sagged. He smiled sadly at Bamford and stepped out of the way of the door. The soldiers bundled the police box into the test room.

Kelly started up the machinery. The test room came alive, gradually building up light and noise. The soldiers readied the box, tipping the trolley forward so that it fell into the arms of the waiting men. They then lifted the thing between them and carried it up to the searing ring of light.

‘We haven’t set an anchor,’ Kelly called out, puzzling over the dials. ‘I don’t understand what it’s fixed to.’

Bamford smiled. ‘Destiny,’ she said.

Across the room, the Doctor regarded her. He nodded, understanding, a look she had longed for, for too many years... Did he know what she was, then? And for how long had he known?

The soldiers edged the police box further towards the hoop. Tendrils of light reached out to the object, caressing it, pulling it inwards. The soldiers staggered as the hoop snatched it from their grasp. As she had known it would, the hoop wanted the police box, recognised it, claimed it as its own.

Vlorty!vlorty!vlorty!

Electric blue pulsed across the lab from behind them. It burst against the observation window of the test room and shattered the glass. One of the soldiers tottered over, shards embedded in the back of his head and neck. He bashed into the police box before he slumped to the ground. The barricade was obliterated in that instant. Bamford reached for her pistol.

‘Not a moment too soon!’ called the Doctor, behind her. ‘Get the police box gone!’ she cried back. The men simply let the light take it from them. With an electrical noise like a kiss, the police box vanished from the test room.

The men who had carried it now rushed to Bamford’s defence. Together they faced the South African horde who fought their way into the lab. There was no cover, either for them or for her. Bamford shot one man, aiming for his face, but ripping open his throat and nearly taking his whole head off. The man stumbled

backwards, his body tangling up under his fellows as they charged over him. Bamford shot another of them, and realised as he fell back he'd been Colonel Andrews. Of course, she thought, the man had gone over to the enemy. Despite their strange, alien weapons, the soldiers didn't shoot back at her. They must want her alive, and those guns wouldn't allow them just to disarm her. They were too powerful, too devastating. She shot three more men, then held back, knowing she had just a single bullet left.

The South Africans kept piling into the room. Another Colonel Andrews was among them, and another. He must have helped his other selves escape. Inevitable really, she thought. She'd known they were trouble, that they needed putting down. She levelled her gun at him, recognising the band round his wrist, the one that said he was 'Andrews V. The enemy soldiers took positions around her. Her own soldiers were cornered, and they looked to her for their lead.

'Drop the gun, General.'

Bamford knew the voice, or rather she knew something like it. The timid double agent, Griffiths, was with the enemy, too. Now he was all bravado, even his accent had warped. Behind him, among the soldiers were the civilians, the two women and... even the man, Ian, had survived. More duplicates, more aberrations. She didn't have enough bullets to put them all right.

Bamford kept the gun on Andrews. This was the original man, the one who had started all the trouble. He deserved to be shot. Still, with just her one bullet left, she waited, bided her time.

The soldiers and civilians fanned around them. To her right, the civilians hurried up to the Doctor. Of course they were all in league together, she had expected as much. Griffiths stepped forward.

'We can sort this out,' he said, showing no fear.

There was no way out of this, she knew. She had lost. And yet. she had scored one last important point against them, hearing the Doctor's heartfelt admission to his friends. 'You're too late,' he said. 'We've lost the Ship.'

Bamford kept her arm out straight, the gun aimed squarely at the bridge of Andrews's nose.

'No one do anything,' Griffiths told his troops, taking his place beside Andrews. It was an uncharacteristically brave thing to do, Bamford thought. Double agents were always such cowards.

'There's nothing you can do,' she mocked, eyes locked on her

target. 'In an enclosed space like this, your laser guns will only kill your friends. Really, Griffiths, you -'

She stopped. Ian had joined Griffiths and the Andrews.

'You think you can build a better England on your lies and these...' She nodded her head towards Ian and the Andrews. 'These aberrations? You're an idiot, Mr Griffiths.'

"Thank you, General," he demurred.

'You might kill me now, but your allegiances to each other won't last. Loyalty, trust... these aren't easy to come by, they take an effort you don't even understand. My men know where they are with me. You, Griffiths, command troops who'll always be watching their backs.'

'If I might ask a question,' said the Doctor, from behind her. He stepped forward, not joining the others clustered round Andrews but taking a spot well out of range of the gun. Bamford resisted the urge to look at him, to take her eyes off her target. The crafty old fox, she thought, he knew how to make things most difficult for her. He was far more astute than his friends had been.

'Why do the duplicate people bother you?' asked the Doctor. He spoke quietly, musingly, yet it chilled her.

'You've lived a long time,' he continued. 'Seen many things most people wouldn't even believe. I can recognise that in you. We're alike, you and I.'

Bamford said nothing, ignoring his steely gaze. The gun felt heavy in her hand. She tensed her finger round the trigger.

'You're, what, in your sixties now?' the Doctor went on. 'So you would have been born at the end of the last world war?'

'Yes,' she said, her hand beginning to waver. She felt sweat bead down her forehead. He knew. Of course he knew.

'So tell us something from your past, hmm? What were you doing, if you can recall, when President Kennedy was shot?'

Bamford said nothing.

'The president was shot at?' said Barbara from over by the test room where she huddled with the other civilians.

'Well?' said the Doctor. 'Or aren't you old enough?'

'You know, don't you?' said Bamford, in a voice that sounded timid even to herself.

The Doctor drew himself up to his full height.

'Yes, I know,' he said. 'You're also a time traveller, aren't you?'

Chapter Nine

Abi followed Wu and the other two soldiers through the hole in the toughened glass screens, and down onto the tracks. The glass had shattered into small, safe pieces, but they stepped carefully over the teeming rabbits and mice, all the time checking for traps left by Skinner and his men. They found nothing. Footsteps echoed from the tunnel in front of them, leading off to the east of the city. Abi was keen to run headlong into the looming darkness, to get on with the chase, but the others held back.

‘It’s a tunnel,’ said Wu, adjusting the controls on his gun. ‘There’s nowhere they can run or hide.’

He aimed the gun forward and let off a rapid burst of fire. Great loops of blue energy scattered away down the tunnel, illuminating the floor and ceiling as they went. The first couple of shots killed the rabbits and mice, the air suddenly tinged with burnt fur and flesh. His next shots carried further, following the contours of the tunnel as it dipped out of sight. Abi and her comrades listened out, and moments later heard the telltale screams as the shots caught up with the English.

‘Got them,’ she said.

‘We’ll have to see,’ said Wu.

They ventured forward, dead mice crunching quietly underfoot. The soldiers, Cranford and Teague, started whispering to each other, sharing some joke in poor taste. Abi held a finger up to her lips and they fell silent. They didn’t want to give the English any advantage over them.

Inky blackness embraced them. Wu reached into his pocket and produced his wireless phone. He tapped the keypad and the small screen lit up. It only gave out a paltry amount of light, hardly reaching beyond his hand, but Abi knew he wouldn’t risk more. It was risky enough in itself.

‘What the hell’s that?’

The soldier’s astonishment pierced the silence. Wu raised his phone up, making his way to the side of the tunnel, examining the stalactites. A pair of legs protruded from the wall, fused into the brickwork. They were singed where Wu’s earlier gunfire had passed over them, but they must have been long-dead already.

As Wu got closer, the legs moved slightly, swinging at the knees. It was an eerie sight. For a moment, Abi thought it must be some kind of sculpture - art perhaps, or an advertisement. But the first train to pass down the tunnel would just shear the legs off from the wall...

'It's one of their test pilots,' said Wu. 'He must have landed inside the tunnel wall. Not much we can do for him, now.' He turned away, the dangling limbs lost to the darkness again. Abi was glad to lose sight of them, but as they kept on down the tunnel, phantom shapes played in her mind, legs swinging in blackness.

Bamford almost surrendered to him, very nearly just gave up the gun. The shock of the others brought her back to her senses. Their gasps, their words of disbelief... she still had something over them.

'How did you know?' she said. 'What gave it away?'

'Nothing in particular, I assure you,' said the Doctor. 'You've kept your secret very well. But you knew the police box was involved, and you recognised the portal when you first saw it. Once I'd observed that, it was simply a matter of asking the right questions and listening attentively. You knew an Andrews, once, of course...'

'Yes,' she said.

'I wondered why you took so against him. But the man here is not the man you knew...'

'I was the test pilot, years ago - for me,' she said, pitifully grateful to be able to tell them. 'I was the colonel, and an Andrews worked for me. He was nothing like this parody of the man.'

'I don't deserve to die, just because of that,' said Andrews, a boyish smile taking over his features. She recognised that look from the man she had known.

'You're not him,' she said levelly.

'That's why you were so keen on getting rid of his fellows, of course,' the Doctor continued. 'They simply served to remind you of how far you are from home.' While everyone else in the room was horrified, the old man appeared not to judge her. It was as if he found the whole concept fascinating - this was a novel twist on his experiment, and he merely wanted to explore the ramifications.

'The 2004 I knew was quite different,' she said, trying to hide

the hope welling inside her. 'Can the hoop get me back there?'

'No,' said the Doctor. 'It's a one-way ticket. That can't be a surprise to you.'

'No' said Bamford. People round the room sighed, as if she'd just given in. She set her jaw. 'If I shoot this one, then the experiment never happened. He never walked through it, so these other versions of him will just disappear.' Her fingers were sweaty around the handle of the gun. She was usually such a sure shot.

'It won't make any difference,' said the Doctor, calmly. This was all just a riddle to him, and, she realised, one he'd already worked out. 'You will merely cement the paradox.'

She actually laughed. 'You don't get it, do you? I created all his. I sent the police box back to the beginning. It was me.'

'I don't understand,' said the Doctor. He looked like he might, at last, be afraid of her.

'She sent the TARDIS back in time to herself in the past,' Susan cried, from over by the test room. 'Don't you see, Grandfather? It's what started all this. It's what the experiments are based on!'

'I saw it,' said Bamford. 'In the haze, as I passed through time, saw a police box.'

'We saw it, too, you know,' said one of the Andrews duplicates. 'An odd sort of vision, I thought. Makes a bit of sense now, though.'

'You're nothing to this,' she told him. 'I found the police box years ago. And I've locked it away, Doctor. Where you'll never find it.'

Another Andrews stepped forward. There was now a small group gathered around the original.

'We've all of us been through the hoop,' one of them said. 'It's all for one now, like the damn musketeers. Sorry, but you're one of us too, General.'

'And you've only one bullet left,' said Griffiths. 'By my count.'

'No!' said Bamford, desperate not to let them draw her into their cosy world. They weren't afraid of her. She needed them to be afraid of her, to keep everything together. The aberrations - for that was what they were - could not be allowed. 'I can offer you a new life,' said Griffiths. 'An armistice. Don't do this.'

'At least,' chimed in the Doctor, 'tell me what day you arrived on. What was the date?'

The question threw her. He, alone in the room, did not hope to

overcome her. She realised what he would do with the information, or at least try to do. Bamford had no better options open to her. Let him take it on.

‘The seventeenth of October, 1972,’ she said.

‘And where? Where did you arrive?’

‘On the dockside, at West India Quay. Where the station is, now.’

‘Thank you, General.’

‘No. Thank *you*, Doctor.’

She sighed, held the gun steady, pointing right into the first Andrews’s face, and pulled firmly back on the trigger. A shot echoed across the lab, and the women behind her screamed. A flush went through Bamford, exhilaration at what she’d just done. The Andrewses stared wide-eyed at her, their astonishment making her giddy. Griffiths stepped forward into her line of sight and snatched the pistol from her hand. He already had his own pistol. It was smoking. Just like him, she thought, to have an old-fashioned bullet-shooter, when all his friends had laser guns. He was always so backward.

He dodged out of her way as she fell forward into warm shadows. Bamford felt, from a distance, the floor smack into her. She felt nothing but relief that her war was finally over.

They saw the soldiers waiting for them, silhouettes darting about in the light at North Greenwich station. Wu felt sure Skinner had only a handful of men, and most of those they had found in the tunnel, sprawled out wherever they’d been caught by the energy blasts. They had not found Skinner’s body, though, and assumed he’d left his men behind him, to delay his pursuers.

‘He’s got reinforcements,’ said Abi. ‘The Dome will be full of soldiers.’

‘We’ll deal with them,’ Wu said. ‘We’ve got the strength of arms.’

‘But you can’t call for help from down here. Your phone won’t work.’

‘Not a problem.’

So saying, he fired one pulse out in front of them. The swirl of blue light swept down the tunnel, and the soldiers at the station ahead of them cried out as they died. A rifle crackled in reply, but the antiquated English guns just didn’t have the range to reach Wu and the others. They fired twice more before the

English fell silent.

They made their way warily into the light of the station. A dozen English soldiers lay dead on the tracks, their bodies letting off a pungent, burnt whiff. After all his years in the army, Wu almost found that stink welcome. It meant hard-won victories. He didn't like the disadvantage he and his troops were at now, down in the gully for the track, the platform at chest height to them. They kept low, out of sight, wary for wires and other crude traps.

Above their heads, the toughened glass screens were all open, as if awaiting a train. Presumably, the English had wanted maximum access to the track, to ease their defensive positions. Skinner had not told his men exactly what they would be facing. They were not prepared for South African energy weapons. A bullet whistled some feet above his head and smacked into the curved, concrete wall of the station. A stupid move on the part of whoever fired it, achieving nothing but to give away their position. Abi raised her gun so that it peeped up over the platform. She fired a number of blasts, drowning out the sound of screaming as more soldiers died.

Again there was quiet. Abi raised her head. Wu waved his other two men back, waiting for Abi's report. She nodded, reached her hands up and leapt, catlike, onto the platform. Wu watched her, crouched and cautious as she ventured forward. A good soldier. She ran forward, out of sight.

Tense moments followed. They could hear nothing. Wu could never stand the waiting.

A sound, footsteps, and the men raised their weapons. Abi appeared on the platform above their heads.

'All clear,' she said. 'There's a tunnel takes us right up into the Dome, but there's no one up there.'

'Good,' said Wu. 'Let's get going.'

Wu, Cranford and Teague clambered onto the platform. Three dead English soldiers lay sprawled on their backs, around a half-assembled gun on a tripod. There was one exit to their left.

They made their way up the corridor in spearhead formation, the best way to cover whoever was in the lead and therefore most exposed. They saw nobody, heard nothing. Wu expected an ambush at any moment.

The corridor led them into an open area, with two escalators leading upwards. Far up at the top, daylight peeked in through a

doorway. A pale shape - blotting out much of the sky - had to be the Dome.

'I don't like this,' he said. 'It's too open.'

They couldn't get up the stairs without compromising themselves. English soldiers at the top would have no problem picking them off at their leisure. Wu held back, considering.

'We'll go in pairs,' he said. 'Cranford and Teague, you're up first.'

The soldiers nodded, knowing he didn't like this any better than they did. They hunched over, guns at the ready, and ran forward to the stairs. They took the same escalator, keeping close together as they bounded up the steps, presenting the smallest front to any enemy marksmen.

No one shot at them. As Cranford and Teague got halfway up, he could see their disbelief, just in the way they ran. He knew they'd be grinning like idiots, and wanted to shout at them, to tell them to knock it off. They weren't out of this yet.

Abi, beside him, was eager to move. 'Hold on,' he said. 'Griffiths would never forgive me if I -'

She batted him in the arm. 'Griff doesn't come into it!' she said. He shrugged.

'Yeah, well, in that case I was thinking -'

Abi threw herself at him, knocking him onto his back. She was heavy in all her kit, surprisingly so. She let out a great sigh while, above them, bullets spattered against the walls of the corridor, shooting from back on the platform. One of the Englishmen had only been pretending to be dead! Abi should have checked that.

Wu shot back, not able to see what he was doing with Abi still strewn on top of him. His second shot took out the gunner, and again there was silence. Cranford and Teague were bounding down the escalator to offer assistance. They were too late.

'Dammit,' said Wu, as they lifted Abi from him. The bullets had flecked her back and head. He closed her staring eyes.

'Probably never felt it,' said Cranford, putting a hand on Wu's shoulder.

'And saved your life, as well,' said Teague. They were right to be so blunt; there was still work to be done.

'Yeah,' said Wu, getting to his feet. 'But I'm the one who'll have to tell Griffiths.'

They left the body and charged up the escalator, two steps at a

time.

Barbara watched the soldiers gather up Bamford's body, fascinated by the men's attention. Griffiths had told them that the general would be accorded a decent burial. Barbara liked that. For all Bamford had done, for all she had done to the people in this room, they would prove themselves better than her.

When they carried the wrapped body away, Barbara returned to her friends. Ian had something in his hand. The moment he saw her approach, however, he closed his fingers over the thing, stuffing it into his trouser pocket. Barbara had never known Ian to be secretive, but the look he gave her was one she remembered. Once, after a parents' evening had dragged on till late, Ian had asked if she fancied a drink. He had said it so casually, she had barely paid heed - turning him down, she told him, because she had her mother to get home to. Then she had seen his face, trying to smile, trying to mask the embarrassment that engulfed him. Trying to spare her. She had spent weeks afterward agonising over it. He had that same look about him now. She realised what she had seen him hiding from her: a ring.

The Doctor and Susan had examined the equipment in the laboratory, but had found nothing that could help them get the Ship back.

'I can only apologise again,' said Kelly, as if it were somehow his fault.

'We really have lost it, then?' Barbara asked, eager to think about anything other than Ian.

The Doctor just glared at her.

'I don't think so,' said Susan. 'If it's gone back in time, then it will already be here. It will have been waiting for us.'

'Bamford said she'd locked it up, so we just need to find it,' said Ian. 'We saw a police box though, didn't we? When we first arrived, by the traffic-light tree.'

'You did?' asked the Doctor.

'I don't think that was the TARDIS, though,' said Susan, frowning her brow 'I don't think it can have been. It was different, a real police box.'

'No,' nodded Ian, looking up at Barbara. 'That would be too easy.'

She almost joined in the joke with him. She wanted to, but still she held back. Barbara couldn't help feeling suspicious of

him.

‘But if the TARDIS was sent back in time,’ she said, ‘it would have to be somewhere here now. It’s cause and effect, isn’t it?’

‘You think of history as a straight line, yes?’ The Doctor seemed impressed with her. That usually meant he would knock her theory down.

‘Yes.’

‘Well, let’s see,’ he said, taking a pen and making his way up to the blank wall of the laboratory. She was rather amused by the thought that he would write across the bare plaster, show such a reckless disregard for normal behaviour. With his thumb, he flicked the cap from the pen. He paused, pondering, then in one, swift movement, he drew a great sweep of a line up the wall, as far as he could reach.

Vertically, not horizontally.

Barbara wanted desperately to argue, to tell him that he had got it wrong.

He drew a notch in the line, right near the top. ‘This is where we are,’ he said. He drew a notch towards the bottom of the vertical line. ‘This is where Bamford first arrived, back in 1972.’

‘But she’s not from this time, is she Doctor?’ said Ian.

‘No? Then where is she from?’

‘Well...’ Ian turned to Barbara for assistance.

‘She’s from another now. Another 2006.’

The Doctor waggled the back of the pen at her. ‘Very good!’ he beamed. ‘That’s exactly where she came from.’ He turned back to the line on the wall. About halfway between his two notches, he added another line, cutting off from the main trunk, and reaching diagonally up. He had now drawn what looked like a capital letter ‘Y’. He made a notch near the top of this new branch. ‘That is where the General left from, test pilot for someone else’s time experiments. She would have been a young woman then.’

‘It’s incredible!’ said Kelly.

‘So her past and our past is the same place?’ asked Griffiths. The Doctor tapped the lower notch with the pen. ‘Just so, Mr Griffiths, just so.’

‘But why did she go so far back in time?’ asked Kelly. ‘Our experiment was only for an hour.’

They all exchanged looks. Barbara saw the Doctor and Susan grin at each other. She understood what that meant. ‘It’s the

TARDIS, isn't it?' she said.

The Doctor regarded her coolly. He had no sharp answer to that, which meant she had to be right.

'Yes.' he said at length.

'But you told the general the police box had nothing to do with it!' protested Kelly.

'Well, I lied,' said the Doctor, shamelessly. He stuck his chin out. 'Your mechanism looks for an anchor, doesn't it? That's what you called it, an anchor. Well the Ship will be a bigger magnet, a bigger lodestone.' He turned back to the wall again. 'There is a TARDIS here.' he drew a circle around the notch at the bottom of the tree. He looked back at them all to see if they had cottoned on. Shaking his head when they obviously hadn't, he drew a circle around the first notch he had made, the one marking where they all were now. 'There was also a TARDIS here, until just a few moments ago.' He redrew the line between the two circles, thickening that branch again and again.

'So people who step through the hoop don't just go back an hour,' said one of the Andrewses. 'They end up somewhere between those two points.'

'Precisely so, my boy,' said the Doctor. 'I daresay there's some advantage to starting from a nearer branch. That's why all of you have ended up here when you did.' He continued to add branches to the main line, making it look more and more like a tree.

'But Bamford was from a further away branch,' said Ian, 'so she was pushed back further in time. She went back thirty-odd years.'

'It's absurd,' said Kelly. 'It's not possible. I mean think of what you're saying. How many test pilots would that mean have been turning up here for decades?'

The Doctor lowered his eyes, as if mourning. '“The Isle of Dogs has always had a problem with vagrants”, isn't that what you said? They're what your butcher's shop on Byng Street was built to deal with.'

The scientists at the Dome followed Skinner without argument. From their side of the Thames, they had watched the South African army raining down on the other bank, and they assumed they'd soon be visited by one army or another. Skinner hated the way they toadied around him, knowing they'd have acted no

differently had the enemy got to them first. These people had no scruples, no loyalty. England didn't deserve a victory if this was the best they could do.

He brandished the paper Bamford had given him. 'These are my orders,' he said. 'You will comply in full.'

'Yes, sir!' exclaimed one of the scientists. Skinner had not asked their names. It was better that way.

'The orders refer to classified documents. You have those to hand?'

'We'll need to open the safe.'

'Do that. I've no time to spare - there are enemy soldiers close behind me.'

'Yes, sir.'

The scientist nodded at two of his fellows and they hurried to fetch the papers.

'Good,' said Skinner. 'You have defensive procedures here?'

'We can lock a series of doors on them.' The scientist bit his lip. 'The soldiers were all called out to Canary Wharf, I'm afraid. We've only had basic weapons training.'

Skinner nodded. 'It's imperative you keep them out until my work's completed.'

The scientist swallowed. 'We'll do everything we can, sir.'

They wouldn't last long, Skinner knew. Glancing back, he had seen the three South African soldiers emerge from the Tube station, which meant they'd cut a path through his men. A handful of eggheads with a few weekends' firearms practice would barely inconvenience them. Still, it might stall them long enough for Skinner to finish his mission, and it would keep the scientists from under his feet. It would also mean they couldn't protest at what he was about to do.

Barbara sat with the Doctor in the mess room, out of the way of all the activity taking place in the lab. She had made them both tea. With the door to the mess open, they could eavesdrop on the work being done. The Doctor had his eyes closed as he listened in on Susan. The girl had offered to help Kelly and the Andrewses with their experiments, and was now looking over the instruments that controlled the time portal. Barbara heard her laughing every so often, no doubt at the scientists' best efforts to understand.

Barbara was more interested in Ian. He and Griffiths dis-

cussed plans for the new regime, Griffiths with a phone in each hand, keeping track of the South African units scattered about London. Barbara could glean only fragments of what was going on. A man, Roberts, had turned up in Walthamstow, leading a militia of English turncoats. Griffiths and he were apparently old friends. The City of London had no one left in office to formally surrender to the South Africans. Frantic negotiations were going on to elect someone with some kind of authority to cede.

'You find him unsettling?' said the Doctor, quietly, not opening his eyes.

'Ian?' she said. 'Yes, I do.' She thought for a moment. The Doctor did not move, did not attempt to encourage her. That was what made it easy to talk to him, to unburden herself.

'He's the real Ian, I know that now,' she said. 'He's just the same as he always was. He always does the right thing, and he always tries to protect us, to protect me. I just feel... I felt...' She put her hand up to her mouth. 'I saw him earlier. When they took Bamford away... He had a wedding ring. He hid it from me.'

The Doctor brooded, keeping silent.

'You knew, didn't you?' Barbara continued. 'The other Ian, the man who died, it was his ring. It's me, isn't it? On the branch he came from, we would have been married.'

Still the Doctor said nothing, but she knew that if she'd got it wrong he would have said so.

'That means there's another me, different but me all the same. And she's a widow. We've lost him.'

'Ian is here, and alive,' said the Doctor, reaching for her hand. 'But the branch he was from...' Tears pricked at her eyes. She refused to let them come.

'He changed things when he came here. Where we are now is all that matters.'

'So that branch is cancelled out? It just stops being there?' The Doctor held her gaze. He didn't lecture her, he didn't patronise her. Very simply and quietly, he said, 'I don't know.' Barbara stared back at him. What could she possibly say to that?

'We cannot reach them anyway,' the Doctor went on. 'All we n work with is what's here and now.'

'That's why you don't change history,' she said. 'It's not that you can't, you just won't. It breaks everything up.'

And it's easy to get carried away,' he said carefully. She felt

like he understood, like he'd wanted all along to spare her this pain and confusion. 'We can't afford to be ostentatious in our travels.'

'But why, Doctor? Who can ever know what you've done, 'what you've changed?'

He smiled sadly 'There are those who can,' he said. 'And they will find us more easily if we draw attention to ourselves.'

Barbara considered this. 'The experiment here,' she said. 'It's bad news for us, isn't it? I mean for you and me, Ian and Susan.' The Doctor said nothing.

'How bad is it going to be, Doctor?'

His eyes twinkled mischievously at her. 'I haven't any idea at all,' he said. In an instant his mood had changed again. 'But it will be noticed, it will catch up with us, sooner or later. At least, it will catch up with me. I shall have to find a home for Susan. Somewhere safe for her.'

Barbara recoiled from him. 'You're going to abandon her?' She couldn't believe it.

The Doctor rested his chin on his hands. 'If ever I get you and Ian back to your own time, perhaps you would take her with you? Yes, I can see she'd be happy with you.'

Barbara took his hands. 'Of course we'd do anything you asked us,' she told him. 'But you must understand: Susan won't ever leave you. Not voluntarily.'

'No,' said the Doctor, shaking his head. He looked broken. 'I don't believe she would.'

A man in a lab coat leapt from the gangway, dodging the blue energy rings Teague had sent his way. The scientist hadn't thought about what he was doing, he acted instinctively. The gangway was twenty storeys up inside the Dome complex, and the scientist, arms and legs windmilling, screamed all the way down. He was cut short by the concrete on the ground. These weren't soldiers they were fighting, Wu could tell, yet what they lacked in training and experience, they made up for in zeal. They were worse to fight than soldiers. Soldiers you could predict.

Wu, Cranford and Teague had made slow but consistent progress into the power station. Concentrated fire from their energy weapons could get through each sequence of doors. Each door they obliterated had one or two gunmen stationed behind it, who took a few minutes to overcome. Then it was into the next

door, and the next... The gangway spiralled up, around the main mass of the power generator on their left, Leading up - they assumed - to a control room at the top. They were only a third of the way to their goal, Wu estimated. Even so, he didn't like firing weapons inside a nuclear power station. They concentrated their fire to the right, away from the complex of machinery and systems, some bigger than Wu's house.

He reached for his phone. The dialling tone crackled in his ear. No doubt the power station interfered with reception. Griffiths answered after just the one ring. Wu gave him a quick appraisal of the situation.

'We've got to assume Skinner means the worst,' he said. 'He intends to blow us all up.'

'Agreed,' said Griffiths. 'Reinforcements are close behind you.'

'Not going to make much difference, Griff. I thought you could use your magic hoop, have us in here before Skinner arrived.'

The line crackled. Griffiths was either considering or consulting his team.

'Assume we can't,' he said at last. 'We'll try it, though.'

'Understood. Got to go anyway. Out.'

Teague and Cranford had almost demolished another door. Wu slipped his phone back into his pocket and raised his gun again. He was glad he'd not been asked about Abi.

The hoop glared with energy, blinding them all with white light. Three soldiers stepped forward, guns ready. They looked terrified, thought Ian. They were caught between the imminent nuclear holocaust Griffiths told them was coming, and the tantalising horror of the portal. Would they share Andrews's fate, Ian wondered, and each be split into half a dozen men? It would only help them take the Dome that much quicker if they did.

The Doctor had been seconded to the controls. He and Susan had argued about co-ordinates, and not even the other scientists had understood.

'In layman's terms, please, Doctor,' Kelly begged. 'Tell us what this thing is going to do!'

The Doctor didn't answer, being too busy with the complex mathematics in his head. Susan rolled her eyes.

'We don't have an anchor,' she said. 'We're just throwing the men into time if we let them go through it now.'

'They might end up anywhere!' The thought had obviously not occurred to Kelly. The soldiers regarded him nervously. 'So we're

going to do something else,' said Susan. 'The hoop reaches into time, and we think we can adjust the focal length.'

'Like a lens!' an Andrews laughed. 'When I was a youngster, the first experiment I ever did was using a magnifying glass and the sun to start a fire.'

'Me too,' said Ian. 'It's a bit more complicated than that, though, surely.'

'Yes it is,' barked the Doctor. He waved them all away from him. 'This is very difficult indeed, and I will need some space to think it out.'

The Doctor's hands moved quickly over the controls, that same fluency he had with the TARDIS. He and Susan hardly exchanged a word as they worked. Kelly, Griffiths and the Andrewses were entirely at a loss to explain what was happening.

'Right, Susan,' said the Doctor. 'Switch it over.'

Susan slowly worked a dial. The test room flushed with searing pink light, and the machines around the laboratory clanked and gnashed in protest.

'You'll destroy it!' Kelly yelled over the cacophony.

'It's eating up power,' said the Doctor, reading from one of the gauges. 'But I think you can step through.'

The soldiers all looked to Griffiths. When he nodded, each man stepped into the incredible brightness of the hoop... and was gone.

As soon as the last man had stepped through, Susan turned back the dial. Slowly the machines quietened, and the brilliant light of the time portal was dimmed.

Griffiths was soon on the phone.

'Wu?' he said. 'Any change there?' His brow furrowed as he listened to what Wu had to say. 'Fine,' he said. 'Understood. Tell Abi I'm sorry.' He snapped the phone shut.

'No good,' he said. 'No change.'

'Confound it!' said the Doctor. 'It ought to have worked.' 'We're all going to die if they do anything to the Dome,' Kelly said, terror overcoming him.

'Why didn't it work, Doctor?' asked Ian.

The Doctor shrugged. 'Those men have gone over to another branch,' he said. 'They may have been able to do something, but not here.'

'Or they were drawn off course by the TARDIS,' Barbara added.

‘Yes,’ said the Doctor. ‘But whatever the case, we’re not going to stop the bomb from dropping now, are we?’

The control room of the Dome was a small cabin, surrounded by consoles of one kind or another. The lights directly in front of him flashed urgently. Outside, behind the locked door, Skinner could hear the siege going on. The South Africans were almost on top of him. But he, too, had almost completed his work.

The secret file they had unearthed for him had been sealed with wax. Inside were two documents. The first was a three-page briefing on the Dome. Skinner had been halfway through the introductory paragraph on fast-breeder reactors and the military potential of the additional plutonium they created, before he realised he could skip it. The second document was a single page, all in succinct bullet points. It was simply a matter of working his way through the instructions.

The majority of his work was disabling the fail-safes. ‘Switch “liquid sodium coolant” to “off”,’ said one. Skinner searched through the various controls, found the switch marked ‘liquid sodium coolant’, and pressed it. Somewhere down below him in the reactor, machinery responded. Warning lights flashed.

‘Ignore warning lights,’ his instructions continued. ‘Wait for “coolant” lights to turn off (approx. three minutes):’, Skinner found the coolant lights, a row of ten bulbs, all alight. As he waited, listening to the South Africans plough onwards towards him, the light furthest on the right flickered out. He licked his dry lips, willing the system to hurry up. If the enemy stopped him, it would only be by a whisker. After maybe two or three seconds, the second of the lights went out. There was a crash against the metal door, so loud he flinched. He watched the row of lights. Another bulb went dark. A moment later, the door was hit again, leaving a dent. The invaders were using a fire axe to get in to him. They would not risk their energy weapons on the control room, he realised.

The fourth bulb went out. Come on, he thought.

Another strike to the door gashed a long sliver out of it. The axe man wriggled the end of the axe into the gap, but could make no progress that way. He returned to bashing the door again. When Skinner looked back round at the coolant lights, bulbs five and six had gone out. Then seven. Just three left!

He licked his lips. The axeman broke more splinters from the

door. Skinner could hear him swearing under his breath.

He could almost feel sorry for the man.

Another light went out. Two bulbs to go. There was enough of a gash in the door now for Skinner to just see the men on the far side. He glared at the coolant lights. One flickered and died. One left.

He hurried to the controls marked 'control rod operation'. He held his breath.

The final light winked off.

As instructed, Skinner clicked off all the safety clamps. His hands were clumsy, too eager to get the job done.

'Give yourself up, Mr Skinner,' called a man from the far side of the locked door. His accent couldn't hide evident terror. 'We won't harm you if you surrender to us now.'

He ignored them. The penultimate bullet point told him to 'withdraw the control rods'. He could see nothing that said 'release' on it anywhere on the board. In a sudden panic, he looked all round. He almost fell over the wrought-iron lever, housed in the floor of the cabin. A brake protruded from the top. He squeezed the brake, feeling the lever free itself to him. The South Africans kept at the door, prising out a splinter half an inch wide. They tried to wiggle a pistol into the gap. They were too late. They would never get their victory. England for the English... or not at all.

Skinner read the final instruction - 'Don't bother trying to outrun it.' - and pulled sharply back on the lever.

There was a bang, and heat, and for a moment he thought the explosion had been instantaneous. Staggering forward, he realised he had been shot. The gun fired again, but he had moved, and the bullet pinged into the controls. It made no difference. As the briefing notes had spelled out to him, inside the reactor, neutrons were now being flung about unchecked, the rate of reaction spiralling upwards towards critical. They were all of them dead now.

* * *

'Professor Kelly!' the Doctor called out. 'We need that link!' He had got them all working frantically, tearing out two of the larger control boxes in the lab, connecting cabling up all round them. Ian stood out of the way with Barbara, watching it all, feeling

useless. Susan and the Andrewses were dashing about, checking connections and read-outs. The men took their orders from the girl. They clearly didn't understand what she was asking of them, none of them did, but they worked quickly and efficiently. Perhaps they were just keeping the scientists busy, so they wouldn't think about what was about to hit them.

Griffiths's phone rang. He answered it in that first ring, and listened to no more than two words. 'Dammit,' he said, dropping the phone and getting on with his work. 'Doctor, meltdown is coming!'

Ian put his arm around Barbara's waist. She took his other hand in hers.

'Finished!' Susan squealed, jumping back from the circuitry. 'Switching on!' the Doctor said, and twirled a dial all the way round.

Nothing happened at first. Ian felt a tremor go through him, as if from a distance. Was that fear, or the Dome exploding? No, he realised, the machines all around them were humming into life. The hoop in the test room suddenly burst with colour and light. Gloopy patterns of red and pink played across the laboratory, twisting and weaving. Ian stared blindly into the heart of the swirling, rippling mass. The light reached out around the scientists, around the Doctor and Susan. It flattened them, like people seen through binoculars, he thought. No, that wasn't right. Their dimensions were different, but not flat. He just couldn't take it in.

All eyes were on the hoop. Before, it had been enthralling. Ian had felt himself drawn towards the white light. Now, its power was undeniably stronger, but Ian wanted to stay where he was. He couldn't see the hoop itself, just an epicentre of light. He stared transfixed into that black hole for what might have been forever.

The spell was broken by the Doctor, turning from the portal and dusting down his hands. 'I think that seems to have worked,' he said.

It took a moment for anyone else to respond. 'What did you do?' Barbara asked. She had recovered her wits faster than Ian.

'Oh, it was simple, really,' the Doctor said. 'We needed more power last time to stretch the - what did you call it, Susan? -the "focal length". By stretching the focal length even farther, we've had to take in that much more power.'

'You used the explosion!'

'Harnessed it, yes. Well, some of it, anyway. It's impossible to know how much, of course, not knowing the size of the bang in the first place.'

'You saved us all!' That came from Griffiths.

'Well, only maybe,' said the Doctor. 'As I say, there might still be fallout. I might only have siphoned off the merest percentage of the power. The rest of it will be irradiating the world outside.'

'But the portal's still open,' said Kelly, mesmerised by the swirling vision in the test room.

'And it might continue to be for many hours,' said the Doctor. 'That doesn't mean to say that it's burning off the power from the Dome like some kind of gaslight. You think too much in simple, linear terms, Professor.'

'So where does the portal lead now, Doctor?' asked Griffiths. 'How far did you push it?'

'October 1972,' said the Doctor. 'At least, if I've got my sums right.'

'Why then?' asked Griffiths. Then he realised. 'That's the same date as Bamford said she'd arrived.'

'Yes,' said the Doctor. 'This should come out a little before the seventeenth, though. That's maybe a day or two ahead of her.'

'If one of us went back... we could stop her. We could stop the experiment. We could change everything before it happened.'

'Yes,' said the Doctor. 'We could.'

'I'll do it!' said Griffiths, running towards the test room. The Doctor stepped into his path. They glared at each other, Griffiths towering at least a foot over the old man.

'You can't stop me, Doctor,' he said levelly.

'Griffiths, you've a daughter here!' cried Barbara. Griffiths did not look back. 'You knew,' Barbara said, pulling free of Ian. 'It's what you've always planned, to change things. You knew you were never going home, that's why you were so cold to Abi.'

'I can make things better for all of us,' said Griffiths. 'It's what has to be done.'

The Doctor gripped the lapels of his waistcoat. 'Not on your own,' he said.

'What? You want to come too?'

'Grandfather, we can't!' cried Susan, running to him. 'We can't change history.'

'We already have changed it,' the Doctor replied. 'All this, all

this work, has been based on my Ship.'

'We don't know that! How can they have got inside? You locked the doors, remember?'

'Yes, yes, but they've had three decades to find a solution to that! And they must have found some way, because without it, they wouldn't have a time machine now. It stands to reason, and even Bamford understood that. She's the cause of all this. If we recover the Ship before she or the scientists can get to it, the time experiments will never have happened. We can unmake all this mess!'

'1972,' said Kelly, staring blankly into space. 'We were working in the offices in Whitehall. I can give you the address.' He rummaged in his pockets for pencil and paper.

'Thank you,' said the Doctor. He stepped forward. 'You realise what this will mean though? To all your years of work?'

Kelly glanced about the lab. 'The portal was meant to end the war,' he said, quietly. 'It can do better than that. It can make it never happen.'

'But we could look for the Ship here,' Susan insisted. 'We don't need to go back...'

'Susan, the Ship has been missing for a very long time. The general could have hidden it anywhere. Yet Professor Kelly can give us the exact address of the place, if we only go backwards in time.'

Kelly handed over the paper he had written on. 'I was quite junior, then,' he said. 'I never got to see the alien materials myself, but that's where it all was. You'll need a pass, though, to get in to see it. And -'

'I'm sure I can talk my way in,' said the Doctor. 'I do have experience they'll be interested in.'

'Then it's agreed,' said Griffiths, pocketing his phone.

'We mustn't change history,' Susan pouted. Ian had been so awed by her work on the portal, he'd almost forgotten she was just in her teens.

'But Susan,' said the Doctor in his softest voice, 'we change history every time we step out of the doors of the Ship.'

'You said that -' began Barbara.

The Doctor whirled on her. 'Do you really want to know, Miss Wright?' he said. 'Do you really want to know? The TARDIS is built specifically not to change history. We can visit, we can observe, and the Ship can disguise itself so no one need ever

know we were there. But only so long as we never step outside. We watch it all on the scanner. My people, you see...' He paused, searching for the words.

'Doctor?' Barbara prompted.

'I couldn't do that, could you?' he said. 'It's not travel, it wouldn't be real. We've seen the most incredible things, but without stepping out of those doors, I might as well have stayed in your time, content with your television sets.'

Ian took Barbara's hand, stopping her from responding. He knew what she wanted to say: that the Doctor had lied to them, that time in Mexico. He had lied to them about what they could do, about what their responsibilities were. He had made them feel like children, when they had been right all along. Still, recriminations could wait.

'We can't hang around,' said Ian. 'We don't know how long the portal will remain open.'

'Very true,' said the Doctor. 'There's no time like the present!' They had no belongings to gather up, the Doctor simply led them into the test room. Kelly and the Andrewses held back. 'You should come with us,' said Ian. 'We don't know how much fallout there'll still be.'

'What will become of us, if you succeed?' asked Kelly. 'Will our branch of time simply cease to be?'

They all turned to the Doctor. 'I don't know,' he said. 'I'm sorry, I really don't.'

'My family are in Woolwich,' said Kelly. 'I couldn't leave them. Not like that.' He looked crestfallen.

'I'm sorry, Professor,' said the Doctor. 'You've done excellent work. You should be proud.'

Kelly smiled, gratefully.

'And you?' Ian asked of the Andrewses.

'Once was enough,' said one of them. 'And who's to say it won't duplicate you, like it did with us?'

The Doctor huffed. 'I could explain to you exactly why not if we only had the time,' he said. 'But let me assure you, there aren't going to be any other Doctors floating about the place. You should come with us.'

'It's no joy ride,' said another of the Andrewses.

'We'll make the most of what's going on here,' said a third. The Andrews with 'Andrews 1' on the label round his wrist could only shrug. 'I'll stick with these chaps.'

They did not come forward, there were no final handshakes or hugs. After all they had been through, this parting of ways was the hardest, Ian felt. It was the uncertainty, the terrible uncertainty both parties faced. Colour and light from the portal swam across their faces, distorting their friends' expressions. It was all wrong, deeply wrong.

'Best of luck,' said Ian, and meant it.

'Mind how you go,' said three of the Andrewses, all together. No one smiled.

'Come along,' said the Doctor, taking Susan by the hand. She linked arms with Griffiths, who linked arms with Barbara. Barbara turned to Ian and held her hand out to him. In her eyes was that look he knew only too well. They were in the thick of it again, with all the odds stacked against them, and yet she felt better for Ian being with her. That was enough for him, for now. He took her hand, held it tight.

'Okay, Doctor,' he said, suddenly sure it would all work out somehow. Without another word, they walked into the light.

Chapter Ten

Pain bursts my eyeballs pink and amber and the ache isn't falling, it's turned inside out like I'm tied to it, deep inside bones and guts and feel my teeth waggling loose. I can't spit them out I can't find the saliva dry, whole body bleached away. Voices whisper about me around me, where I've been and who I don't have ears any more to hear them, my whole head sanded smooth a billiard ball the wind has gnawed through me pain to stop it stop it stop the brightness of the light bright to take away my eyes again remember no memory feeling, only feeling and I laugh though I can't laugh and Barbara's hand is tight around my own but I can't touch her, can't feel her there just know she hangs onto me and there's no separation when we're all one, co-mingled and the Ship it haunts my senses bleeding into one another I taste blood and noise and we all fall upwards into the never getting nearer gloom...

'I once got lost in a smog like this.'

Clarity voice quiet and not me and rushing by me. Funny. He's funny and I know it -

'It was when we were living in Coal Hill, and my work had kept me out later than I'd meant.'

Coal Hill a schoolroom and test tubes and chalk and wide-eyed teens.

'A great blanket of grey came down out of nowhere. I couldn't even see the end of my pipe! What do you think of that, hmm?'

The Doctor. The Doctor telling a story. I can see it, too, the smog. I can feel it. The smog is holding me together.

'And you know what I did, to find my way home, hmm? I counted the steps! I should say I counted my way all across London, one foot then the next.'

Yes. Count the steps. Find your way home, out of the murk.

'One step. Two. Three. Four... '

Five... Six... Seven... I can think again. I can feel myself coming back together. Eight... Nine... The Doctor's voice, I can fix on it. Ten... Eleven... Twelve... Barbara's hand is clenched around mine. Thirteen... Fourteen... He's got us through this! Fifteen... Sixteen... He's got us through.

They were whole again. Barbara stood in jelly-legged amazement, eyes and extremities almost shrieking with relief. She could see, she could breathe. Ian grinned at her, his hair ruffled. She felt sick, deep inside, with a horrible, bristling dryness at the back of her throat. Phantom visions played across her mind - of the others falling and melting and screaming around her, of Andrews and a hundred other faces, too, shrieking their lungs out and making no sound, frozen in that ghastly instant. The Doctor's voice had pulled her back from the abyss. Without him, they might all have been lost, their insides and outsides mixed up by an all-pervading, monstrous lodestone. A lodestone, she realised now, that had looked like a police box.

They all stood where they were - Ian, herself, the Doctor, Susan and Griffiths. They still held hands, just breathing, feeling real again. Barbara could have stood like that forever. A glorious, cold drizzle whispered against her skin.

West India Quay was brown, the water sloshing thickly in the dock speckled over with mouldering leaves. Beneath the surface loomed dark, industrial shapes. Girders, machinery, cranes, given up to the depths like a sacrifice to old gods. The kerbstones around the quay were chipped and uncared for, the broken windows of the warehouses all round them reflected the autumn. It was cold. Even the air was full of decay, stagnation.

Barbara let Ian's hand go reluctantly. They stood in the drizzle and took in the new world, a mockery of the Canary Wharf they had known. The pristine skyscrapers had been replaced with squat, square, red-brick follies, gutted and blackened by fire. There was no monorail, no Underground station, no aluminium or toughened glass.

'It's so different,' said Susan.

'We know that thirty-four years have yet to pass,' mused the Doctor. He wheeled round, shaking a finger at one building after another. 'I should say, though, that this could be prime real estate. It would appear that way to anyone, if they only applied their minds. Yes, I can see gleaming spires sprouting up all round us one day!'

Susan laughed along with him. Barbara knew what the old man was up to. He was often at his best when he downplayed the dangers that faced them. This run-down place promised to be as intimidating as the year they'd just left. They would have to be cautious, to learn its rules.

'There are people,' said Griffiths. Dirty faces and beady eyes peered at them from behind broken glass and from shadows. Yet, Barbara thought, they were not the threat Griffiths's tone implied. They were furtive, these half-glimpsed people. They were more like prey than predator.

'I suppose they're used to people appearing out of thin air,' said the Doctor.

'Even so, we should keep out of the open,' said Ian, practical as ever.

'At least until we can establish what's what,' agreed the Doctor. 'We still need an eye on this bit of the quay, though,' said Griffiths. 'We want to be here when Bamford turns up.' They made their way to the nearest of the buildings, waiting while Griffiths ventured inside. He had not brought a gun with him, and as she listened for his return, Barbara found herself furious. He should have been armed; he had a duty to protect them.

They heard nothing. Eventually, when anxiety had nearly eaten them all up, Griffiths appeared again. 'I think we're all right,' he said.

'It's safe?' Susan squealed, far louder than Barbara would have liked. They couldn't afford to draw attention to themselves. Griffiths winked at the girl.

'It's not five-star, but come see for yourself.'

The place stank, making Barbara's nostrils flare. It took a moment for her eyes to adjust to the gloom. The building might once have been offices, the ground floor made up of small partitions that she guessed would have been too constrictive for storing cargo. Pale, skinny bodies cowered in corners, peering out from under their dirty blankets. They were unwashed, undernourished, and she couldn't guess how long they'd been living like this. It was hardly a life, it was just existing. In one cubicle, she saw a woman sat perfectly still, propped against a wall. She was covered by what at first looked like a ragged fur blanket. The blanket undulated, coalesced. Barbara realised the woman had died recently, her corpse now ensconced in rats.

'We can't stay here,' she said.

'We need shelter,' said Griffiths, not turning back. 'We need to be out of the open.'

He led them further inside, past more and more grotesque inhabitants. They made their way to the foot of a staircase, the steps uneven where they weren't missing altogether.

'No one's upstairs,' he said.

'It's not safe!' said the Doctor. 'It hardly looks structurally sound.'

'The damage is mostly cosmetic,' said Griffiths. 'Trust me, this place was built to last.'

'I admire your optimism, young man, I do. But this won't do for us.'

'Come see the room first.'

Griffiths took the stairs carefully, probing each step with his toe before committing to it. The Doctor swapped looks with Barbara and the others, but it was clear they had little other choice. Barbara followed the old man upstairs.

The mould and stink were no different on the landing, but there were no people to be seen. Droplets tick-tocked through the smattering of roof. The floor underneath them was slick with foul water.

'We can't camp down in the wet,' said Ian.

Griffiths ignored him, following the passageway round the stairwell, the corridor leading them back over the top of the way they'd just come. As they followed him, Barbara's senses were overcome by the dreary stench of damp.

They emerged into a large room at the end of the passageway. A bomb must have hit it, shattering the thin dividing walls, opening the space out. The far wall had been ruptured, letting them look out onto the quay. The roof had fallen in, too, the rubble strewn about the middle of the room.

Griffiths made his way over to a corner, disappearing into the shadows.

'It's dry here,' he said from the midst of the darkness. And there's room for all of us.'

'Yes,' said Ian, hurrying over to investigate. 'We could make something of this. We can be safe here. And we can keep an eye on the quayside.'

'A fire in the middle of the room won't do any damage,' said the Doctor, also getting into the spirit. 'We'll need to keep warm tonight.'

'We need to know the date, to know how long we'll be here,' said Barbara. She wasn't convinced by the room, whatever the men seemed to see in it.

'And food,' said Susan. 'I could do with some food.'

They divided up the tasks. Barbara would go with Griffiths to

investigate food. In Ian's jacket pocket was the envelope of money they'd found on the dead Colonel Andrews, all that time ago. In convenient, small denominations, there was nearly a hundred pounds. Griffiths counted out half, and gave the rest back to Ian.

While he and Barbara were gone, the others would settle in, clear the space for the fire, and gather materials they could burn. Barbara could see that both Ian and Susan were unhappy that she was the one going with Griffiths. Susan was envious, wanting his attention for herself. Ian wasn't worried about Griffiths.

'Be careful,' he said, taking Barbara's hand.

'And you,' she said.

'We'll be an hour,' Griffiths told them.

'I don't have a watch,' said Ian.

'It's easy,' Susan beamed at him. 'I can tell you when an hour's gone by.'

'Yes, Susan, I believe you can,' he said. 'Okay, be off with you both. The sooner you're gone, the sooner we're all together again.'

Barbara followed Griffiths back along the passageway. The stairs were harder to manage on the way down, and Barbara thought she might fall at any moment. The man exuded such an air of authority, of ability, that she hated the thought that Griffiths might see her stumble.

They hurried out of the building, Barbara never glancing at their fellow tenants. Outside, the drizzle continued. Griffiths scanned all round.

'Which way do you think then?' He made it sound casual. She liked that he thought to consult her.

'South will take us to the river,' she replied. 'It's where you'd go to trade.'

'Good plan.'

They wove their way between the ruined buildings, Griffiths ever watchful. Again, people peeped out at them, but they were never challenged. Griffiths stayed alert, but Barbara felt herself relax. She stopped paying attention to the wreckage around them. Traipsing behind Griffiths, she thought of the London she had once known. How different it had been, how busy and bustling. How fragile, too, that madcap pace had been, if this ruination waited just a decade later.

'We can talk, if you like,' said Griffiths, as if sensing her disquiet.

'Yes, I'd like that,' she said. 'Tell me something useful. You

studied this period, I suppose.'

'Oh yes,' Griffiths smiled. 'You're a historian, aren't you?'

She laughed at that, knowing he was teasing her. 'Hardly. It's funny, though. I'd have been retiring when you were starting school.'

'It gets worse, I'm afraid. If this is 1972, I've not been born yet.'

Barbara shook her head. 'It's so strange,' she said. 'We've been travelling with the Doctor for such a long time, but I still can't get used to it.'

'You want to know what the state of the world is now?'

'Please.'

'Well, I wasn't always the most attentive pupil. And the records from this time are patchy. So, in broad brushstrokes, there are various groups trying to take charge, now the Machine has been beaten. There's no contact with other countries, in fact each city pretty much fends for itself. In London, this is the time of would-be leaders, bumping each other off, each candidate coming up with harsher and harsher policies.'

'Abi said people were rounded up in camps.' She felt something in her stomach tighten, just at the thought of it. 'It's not happened yet, I don't think. Minorities are targets for abuse right now, but there's no one to organise anything on that scale for some years to come.' He looked wistful. 'Byng Street will all be just fields.'

Barbara smiled. 'We must be able to -'

A man suddenly lunged out from a doorway at her, eyes bloodshot and raving. A woman was close behind him, crazy and screaming. Barbara had no time to cry out or fall back. The man's ravaged fingers grabbed for her face.

The man suddenly dropped to his knees, the anger in his eyes flicking to amazement. Griffiths was stood right behind him. Quickly, without effort, he slipped his hand round, under the man's jaw and cracked his head to one side. The man keeled over, dead. Barbara gazed in horror at the body. For all his savage looks and wild beard and hair, the man still wore the tatters of a lab coat.

Griffiths had killed the woman too, and Barbara hadn't even noticed. The corpse lay face down in the doorway.

'Poor wretches,' said Griffiths. 'Come on, we shouldn't linger.' He took Barbara by the arm and led her quickly onwards. As her senses returned to her, Barbara was aware of other people,

muttering and hurrying on their way. The dead couple, she realised, might have had friends.

They emerged from between buildings into an open space fronting the river. A mass of people swarmed around boats drawn up on the shore, jostling each other to get to the produce on offer. It looked like the market had been going on all day - the stalls were nearly empty, and what they did have looked of poor quality. Or perhaps that was the best this miserable time could do.

'We're not going to get much of a bargain here,' she said. Griffiths watched the crowd like a hunter regarding his prey. She was glad to be on his side. 'We've no choice but to try, though,' he said. 'Let's get on with it.'

When Ian got back to the room, the Doctor and Susan had got the fire going. Flames licked around the edges of the wood they'd stacked, smouldering grey smoke curling up into the exposed sky. The fire hissed and sizzled, sparking where the drizzle touched it. Susan and the Doctor were lit up in gold, and their shabby room was transformed into a cosy bolthole. Outside, darkness had fallen. They had left 2006 in the morning, but they'd arrived here in the late afternoon. It had already been too long a day.

Ian dumped the bric-a-brac of wood he'd found, clattering it on top of the pile they'd built beside the fire. Finding broken-off bits of wood had been easy without having to go far, but finding wood that was still dry had been more of a challenge. 'That should keep us going through the night,' he said, dog tired. He could see nowhere to clean his dirty hands. Not wanting to venture out of doors again just yet, he plumped down beside the others. The warmth reached into his body, was rough against his face.

'There's been no word from the others,' said the Doctor gravely.

'It been fifty-three minutes,' added Susan.

Ian regarded the fire. 'We don't know which way they'll have gone,' he said. 'We'd be chasing our own tails if we started after them now. Give them the full hour. Griffiths knows what he's doing.'

'I'm sure you're right,' said the Doctor, though he didn't sound convinced.

'I hope they have found us something to eat,' agreed Susan. 'I'm starving.'

'Gruel and potatoes do you?' Griffiths marched cheerily into the room, hugging a cardboard box stuffed with provisions. Barbara hurried after him, wielding a frying pan. 'We managed to find the market.'

Susan leapt to her feet, running over to investigate what they had found. Ian watched her, amazed by her reserves of energy. He was ready to drop. The girl took the box from Griffiths, and began removing each item, lining them up on the floor. There were some small, muddy potatoes, some tins, some paltry greens. All very basic fare.

'Is this it?' she said. 'Did you spend *all* the money?'

'We found some plates and cutlery, too, Susan,' Barbara explained. She looked like Ian felt, worn out. Strands had come loose from her high sweep of hair. There was an endearing smudge of dirt on her nose.

'What was the market like, Barbara?' asked Susan, eager for any kind of gossip.

'Busy,' she said. 'So many people. All the women wear trousers, too. There are stalls selling all kinds of things, but it's expensive, and some people are just there to fight.' She must have seen the concern on Ian's face. 'Griffiths looked after me...'

'I'll cook something up,' said Susan.

No one was going to protest, and they let her bustle about. Griffiths and Barbara sat down by the fire, not having to say a word to express how good that felt. After a moment, Griffiths produced something from his inside pocket, a slim newspaper, folded lengthways. He opens the battered pages out, and handed them over to the Doctor.

'We've a date for you,' he said.

The Doctor squinted to read the blocky print. 'The fifteenth of October,' he said. 'And 1972! I told you I'd get my sums right!'

'They have newspapers?' Ian asked. 'When they're living in such squalor?'

'They've all sorts of them!' Barbara replied. 'The man at the market said this was the one with the best news today, but there were plenty to choose from. There must be twenty or thirty different titles.'

'The press grew up once the Machine was beaten,' Griffiths explained. 'There's no other source of news, no other authority.'

There's still loads of different papers in my time.'

'And very politicised, too,' said the Doctor, scanning quickly over each page in turn. Full of stories about terrible conditions in the city. They don't seem to have any food there. Inflation is rife, and the Government - there *is* a government - are doing nothing about it.' He offered the paper to Ian. 'So it says here, anyway.'

'I wouldn't believe everything you read,' advised Griffiths. 'There were stories about cannibals in the city for years. Never any evidence found.'

'It makes for a good story,' said the Doctor.

'Still,' said Ian, glancing over the desperate, angry newsprint, 'it's not going to be easy for us, getting to Whitehall.'

'We should take it easy until Bamford gets here,' said Barbara. 'Recover our strength before we make the journey into town.'

'That's astute,' said the Doctor. 'What are your thoughts, Mr Griffiths?'

'I agree,' he said. 'We've already run into trouble with the natives - nothing I couldn't handle, Ian, don't worry. Keeping our heads down for the next day and a bit should see us through fine. How's the food coming along, Susan?'

The girl's ears burnt pink as she looked up at them. 'I think it's okay,' she said.

'It smells... intriguing,' said Ian, not sure what else to say.

'After the hearty dinner, I suggest an early night. We could all do with that.' Griffiths had taken charge of the group again, asserted himself over the Doctor. It had been different back in the future, in the test room. There the Doctor had been calling the shots. But Griffiths was a survivor, he knew how to exist in enemy territory, he knew how to get the job done. This was his turf.

And yet there was something about Griffiths that Ian didn't trust. Griffiths was unstintingly ruthless. A great ally he might be, but he wasn't someone you wanted to cross.

'I'll take the first watch tonight,' he said, keen to win what favours he could in advance. Should he ever need to call them in. 'Someone should stay on guard through the night.' Despite his confident tone, his body railed against the idea, sleep by the fire such a welcome prospect.

Griffiths's eyes narrowed. Had Ian been too bold, too obvious in his suspicions? The man licked his lips, bringing to mind a wolf about to strike.

‘Good man,’ was all he said, though. ‘I’ll go next.’

16 October, 1972

They cleared away their makeshift breakfast. Griffiths had found where the other tenants got their water - a free-running supply from a broken pipe. Barbara and Susan rinsed the crockery, Ian standing guard. He didn’t look as if he’d slept much. There was something haunted about him. Barbara felt stiff from a night on the floor, but better for the sleep and some food. The gruel was plain, tasting of plastic, yet it felt good just to eat something.

Susan seemed especially invigorated. She nattered away about where she’d like to explore first, knowing she’d need to win over Barbara and Ian before taking the matter up with her grandfather. She wasn’t content to sit all day listening to Griffiths and the Doctor tell stories.

‘I thought we could look at where the lab is going to be,’ she said. ‘You’d like that, wouldn’t you, Ian? You’d come with me, I mean?’

‘We’ll have to see, Susan.’

Other people were less fastidious about clearing up after themselves. There was litter all over the floor, meagre scraps from the meagre meals the other tenants had to keep them going. Rats scurried about, and insects, helping themselves to the leftovers. Barbara kept finding her gaze drawn to an old man down the hall, streaking his bushy moustache with leftover fat, greasing it out into great handlebars. Like the man who’d attacked her yesterday, the old man still wore a ragged, dirty lab coat. He might have been in his fifties or sixties, but Barbara still recognised him: he was Andrews. Another, older Andrews, one who wouldn’t know them, whose dignity and poise had slowly been leached away by the paltry existence he eked out here.

A shiver ran right through her body. If they didn’t discover the TARDIS, how long before they were reduced to the same state?

If they had listened to Griffiths, they would have remained in their room all day, keeping well out of sight of the natives, keeping themselves to themselves. He’d not liked the market one bit - it posed too many variables for him to negotiate, for him to be sure of anything. With no hope of fathoming the myriad

loyalties and connections of the people jostling there, it might have been a mistake to ask so many questions, or to show how much money they had. He couldn't shake the thought that he and Barbara had been followed back to the quayside, a gang of surly privateers now waiting for an opportune moment to waylay the strangers. They were vulnerable, vagabonds in time. They shouldn't compromise themselves.

By the afternoon, however, the Doctor could resist Susan's pleading no longer. Griffiths protested, but the Doctor brushed him off. Perhaps stretching their legs would be good for them, he said. Having received the Doctor's consent, Ian offered to escort Susan so she wouldn't get into trouble, and she promised to stay with him at all times. He asked Barbara if she wanted to join them, and Griffiths saw how relieved the man was when she agreed straight away.

Griffiths preferred to remain behind.

'Bamford might be early,' he said. 'Or we might lose our nest.'

The Doctor stayed with him. They watched through the hole in the wall as Susan dashed round the side of the marina, continually glancing back to make sure Ian and Barbara were not too far behind. The girl's merry yelps and giggles echoed out across the water. All eyes were probably on her, and Griffiths could only grit his teeth.

'You need not worry,' said the Doctor beside him, as if he had read his thoughts. 'I watched a man in a lab coat materialise this morning. He was taken in by a group in that house over there. We're part of a community now, all misfits in this time. Nobody wishes us harm.'

'I'd like to hope so, Doctor. But my experience...'

'Yes, yes. But you like Susan, though?'

Griffiths was not sure how to answer that. Was the Doctor sounding him out as a prospective match for the girl? It hardly seemed likely, or desirable. She was so immature.

'She needs to grow up a bit,' he replied, guardedly. 'Hmm.'

What had the Doctor expected him to say? This was hardly an appropriate juncture. They stood in silence, watching Susan and the others wander farther away. Finally they were lost beyond warehouses and rubble. Griffiths could still just make out Susan's voice.

'You'll forgive me,' said the old man, dabbing at his brow with a handkerchief. 'I simply worry about her future. I won't always

be here to look out for her.'

'You've your other friends. Ian and Barbara are very good with her.'

The Doctor turned to him, fixing Griffiths with a terrifying stare.

'I'll be plain with you, Mr Griffiths. Barbara told me what you did yesterday, to protect her. I hope you understand, I could hope for little more for my Susan. Especially should anything happen to me.'

'You're expecting trouble?'

The Doctor furrowed his brow. 'No,' he said.

Griffiths nodded. He could understand that. He thought of his own daughter, of the tiny, hard bead of feeling he still had for her, hidden away deep inside himself. Mxolisi would never be born now, not if he was successful in his mission here. He had sacrificed her to the greater good, the moral imperative. She had been a brilliant, bright-eyed girl, and all he could think was that if, somehow, there'd been a way to speak to her, to explain what he had the chance to make different... Her name meant 'one who forgives', a name for a new age, for a reconciled world. He'd taught her about their responsibilities to others. She would have understood.

'I'll take care of her,' said Griffiths. 'Should anything happen to you, I'll take care of her.'

Ian and Barbara walked hand in hand. She couldn't remember them ever having done that before. Perhaps it was the late-autumn sunshine, or the fact they still had a day left ahead of them with nothing required to be done. They had leisure time, their first pause in what seemed far too long.

Or perhaps it was something else.

'We're different, aren't we?' she said. 'This has changed us.' She meant that they had become closer. But her words had a terrible effect on Ian, stopping him right in his tracks. She took his other hand in hers, and it looked like he was struggling to find the right words. He looked older, she thought, worn thin by their last twenty-four hours. Yet he remained resilient, still fighting, ever the gentleman. Her heart went out to him.

'Barbara,' he said. 'The man who died. The man like me...'
'You're the original,' Barbara told him. 'I realise that now.'

'He was different,' he went on, agonised by this. 'I couldn't

sleep last night, no matter how tired I was. I couldn't get him out of my head. You see he killed a man. I watched him, I watched me, and I murdered a man. I did that.'

'What are you saying, Ian? You're not a monster.'

He screwed his face up, and for a moment she thought he might weep. Instead, he chuckled, a high-pitched and maddened sound. She had no idea what to do with him. She let go of him and took a step backwards. Ian stood where he was, head bowed, staring at his empty hands.

'He was married,' he said. 'I took his wedding ring from him.' 'Yes, I know,' said Barbara. 'I saw you with it. He was different, Ian. From a different branch from you and I.'

'No,' said Ian, looking up at her. 'We're the same man, capable of the same things. I've looked at the ring. It's worn and old, Barbara. He'd been married to you years ago.'

Her heart hammered in her chest. 'Me?' she said. 'He wasn't married to me, not me standing here. Like you said, they did things differently. Please, Ian. You're not making any sense'

'No,' said Ian. He reached for her hands again. She let him take them. 'Barbara,' he said. 'Will you -'

A scream pierced the quiet afternoon. Susan's scream. Ian let Barbara's hands drop, staring all round.

'It came from up this way!' he said, instantly the man of action. 'Come on!'

They raced down the street, Barbara lagging behind Ian's quick strides. Catching sight of something as he passed, Ian skidded round a corner, bashing his arm on the wall. Barbara followed, in time to see a wiry old devil scurrying out of sight. His head was shaved, but his bushy beard was snow white. His frantic, bow-legged run made him look like a pantomime villain.

Ian ignored the man, racing to Susan, curled into a ball on the pavement.

'Susan?' he said, and she sprang at him, wrapping her arms tight around his body. When Barbara caught up with them, Susan came to her.

'He asked me my name,' she wailed. 'And then he grabbed me. He said... he said...'

'It's all right, Susan,' Barbara told her, cradling her as she wept. She looked up at Ian, his own worries forgotten in his concern for the girl. Their eyes met, over the top of Susan's head. 'It's all right.'

'I shouldn't have run off,' she said.

'No,' Ian said. 'I think we'll stay indoors from now on.'

17 October, 1972

Ian and Griffiths must have stayed up all night. When Barbara awoke, a little after six, they were comparing notes on pubs they both knew, the characters of the locals unchanging, despite being forty years apart. It was like they were testing each other. Their voices were quiet, hoarse from all the hours and barely discernible over the crackle and spit of the fire. The men never once moved their heads, both had their eyes fixed on the spot by the quay where they themselves had materialised.

'Morning,' said Ian, not looking back at her.

'Good morning,' she said, trying to sound bright and cheerful for his sake, to show she appreciated being left to sleep. He didn't respond. She could tell he'd not been able to sleep again, still haunted by the actions of his other self. Seeing yourself die, she thought. That must be terrible. She would just have to leave him be, give him time to sort it all out in his head.

He and Griffiths were silent now, as if she'd intruded on their watch, ruined the intimacy they'd built up. She needed to find something to do.

Barbara rummaged in the food bag, knowing the men would be grateful for breakfast. Unable to clean her teeth, she wanted some food herself to overpower the furry, sleepy taste in her mouth. What she wouldn't have done for a full English, the kind she used to love cooking at weekends for Mum. She would have to make do. They had only a couple of tins of the featureless gruel and a final packet of dried biscuits. It was hardly enough for all five of them. As she opened the tins, Barbara wondered how much money they had left to buy more. Bamford would arrive soon, and they had nothing to feed her.

The gruel slopped easily into the frying pan. Barbara balanced the pan on some coal-like embers.

'Anything?' she asked.

'Nothing yet,' said Ian.

She stirred the gruel, knowing she was making no difference. It would take a good while for the food to heat through. When she looked up again, Ian was watching her. His eyes were sunken,

exhausted, and he desperately needed a shave. Barbara had always admired him for being immaculate. It had been only a couple of days for them since the TARDIS had brought them to the Isle of Dogs, and already they were haggard and broken, pale imitations of their former selves.

The food took an age. Barbara stirred it with the wooden spoon, staring into the endlessly changing swirl of patterns she cut into it, lost in melancholic thoughts she couldn't recall afterwards. Eventually, the gruel burped and bubbled. The plastic odour had filled their room, and Susan and the Doctor were sitting up, watching her. Susan looked pale. She hadn't spoken since they'd brought her back inside last night. She had simply huddled with her grandfather.

'Give me a hand?' Barbara asked. The girl didn't seem to hear. After a moment, as if having considered it, she scowled in protest and extracted herself from her tangled blankets to come over. She spread their plates out, tore open the packet of biscuits, placing two oat slabs neatly on each.

'Smells wonderful,' she said, sticking her head right over the pan to inhale. Putting a brave face on, Barbara could tell. The giddy, flitting persona was an act. Barbara was rather impressed.

'It's the best we can do,' she chided, prodding Susan out of the way with her elbow, to spoon gruel onto each of the plates. It looked like macaroni cheese, she thought. Only without the pasta.

Susan gathered up two of the plates and hurried them over to Griffiths and Ian. The men took the food without thanking her. Susan lingered around them, willing them to notice she was there. They didn't look round, too busy watching the quay. After the long night, they'd be determined not to lose sight of Bamford now.

Susan was nearly in tears. 'Come and eat,' Barbara told her. Bamford had still not arrived by the time they had finished their meal. Barbara and Susan took the dishes downstairs to the pump, taking their time washing up because it was all they had to keep them occupied.

'Do you like Griffiths?' asked Susan, trying to make it sound casual.

'He's a very able man, Susan. But he's tough, too, like a diamond.'

'Yes!' replied Susan, gleefully. 'He is like a diamond. He's

strong like that.' Barbara saw her bite her lip, realising she had said too much.

'Don't get too carried away with him,' Barbara warned. 'His mission will come first, you know.'

Susan lowered her face. 'Or perhaps you like him, yourself,' she said.

'Susan!' Barbara cleared her throat, aware how shrill her surprise had been. 'I don't think of him like that. He's been good to us, that's all.'

Susan seemed to take that on board. She carried on scrubbing at the frying pan, furiously.

'Anyway,' she said, without looking up. 'You've got Ian'

'Yes,' said Barbara. 'I've got Ian.'

'I was thinking -' began Susan, but she didn't get any further. They both turned at the commotion. Griffiths and Ian were racing each other down the corridor.

'You think she's arrived?' asked Susan, grinning.

'When you're finished here, we can go and see.'

The woman on the quayside was no more than thirty, younger than either of the men. She was startled when they tumbled out of the warehouse, breathless and waving madly, but she stood her ground. Slim, lithe, her hair cropped short in a military style, she looked like she could handle herself. Her eyes were wide though, and Ian realised she was still reeling from the trip. She was tough, even at this age.

'You're some kind of welcoming committee?' she said.

'Yes,' said Ian. 'Welcome to 1972, Colonel Bamford.'

She scratched at one ear. 'Something screwed up then?' she said.

'Doesn't it always?' said Griffiths. 'You expected to pop out on the far side of the hoop?'

'Kind of hoped to. And you guys are?'

'Ian Chesterton,' said Ian, extending his hand. She had a firm, businesslike handshake. 'This is Griffiths. You know I never learnt your first name.'

'No,' said Griffiths. 'You didn't.'

Bamford was grinning at them, her smile quite glorious. It didn't seem possible this was the same person. She nodded at something behind him.

'He'll be the boffin, I guess?'

Ian turned. The Doctor had emerged from the house, strutting

forward regally, a hand at his lapel. Ian knew the look on his face. He was such a charmer when it came to the ladies. 'You're very welcome, Miss Bamford,' he said. 'I trust you know what's happened here.'

'You screwed up, right?'

The Doctor blinked at her. 'Me, no,' he said, sternly. 'I never "screw up". I'm the one here to clean up the mess.'

'Righto.' said Bamford. 'You tell me what you want.' Barbara and Susan joined them. Susan's jaw hung open, but she'd not yet thought of anything to say. Surely she'd known Bamford would be younger.

Any more of you?' asked Bamford, once introductions had been made. 'And how long you been here? You all look a right state!' Her smile was infectious. They were all lit up by it.

'You'll have to forgive us our appearance, my dear,' the Doctor said. 'The experiment has produced some odd results.' They stood on the quayside while the Doctor told Bamford the version of events he'd prepared. She interrupted when he started to explain about the 'tree' of choices, the myriad branches that existed in time.

'Know the theory,' she said. 'Had to swot up before they'd let me on the team.'

'Very well.' said the Doctor, flustered by her easy charm. 'The means to correct all this is in Whitehall, of course.'

'Where the early work's being done. Gotcha. You want to get in there, borrow their stuff, and jump start us back where we should be.'

'That's right.' Griffiths said quickly. 'That's exactly our plan.' Bamford considered. 'Yeah, okay.' she said at length. 'I'm with you guys.'

'It won't be easy.' Ian told her. He explained what they knew of the city and its dangers. Bamford seemed fine with that, and even offered them her resources - she too had an envelope stuffed with different kinds of cash.

'Well, we might as well be off, then,' said the Doctor, evidently baffled by how simple it had been. He couldn't keep his eyes off the woman. And not, thought Ian, because she was so easy on the eye.

Griffiths ducked back into the warehouse to gather up what food they'd got, and they then headed west to join the river. Ian glanced at Bamford, shocked to find her grinning right back at

him.

‘1972, eh?’ she said, like this was all some great adventure.
‘You know, there’s someone I wouldn’t mind looking up.’

Chapter Eleven

The buildings alongside the river were neglected, damaged by the elements where vandals or fire had not got to them first. Barbara looked out for signposts, for any kind of clue that might tell her where they were, or how far they had come. It felt like they'd been walking for hours. Sometimes, their Thameside path was just the pavement running next to the road, other times it wove around and between buildings, negotiating those structures that fronted onto the river while keeping their journey as close to the water as possible.

The grey day was probably the best thing for walking, the air cool and refreshing. Surely they would hit Wapping any moment, she thought. That seemed so strange: Barbara knew Wapping. She didn't know it well, but she had been there several times. It was not that far from Shoreditch. It was not that far from home.

She walked at the back of the group, beside Griffiths. The Doctor and Susan were next, Susan huddling close to her grandfather. The attack the girl had suffered the previous day had changed her. She was timid, now, never out of arm's reach of the old man. It was a blessing in some ways, Barbara thought. It would have been a nightmare to make the same journey with Susan always running ahead.

The group was led by Ian and Bamford. They both moved like soldiers, ever alert and setting the fast, no-nonsense pace.

Neither of them spoke, instead they watched all round for danger. A group of four men and women walked towards them down the path, but Ian and Bamford had already learnt how to deal with strangers. They squared their shoulders, walking tall, but keeping to the left, a respectful distance from the others. The strangers were wary, sinking back to their own side of the path. It was like watching rival packs of animals in the wild, thought Barbara, prowling around one other. There was a ritual to how the gangs sized each other up. They avoided engagement as long as it didn't mean a loss of honour. It was a tricky business. The strangers passed by. Griffiths watched them until they had moved on out of sight.

That they had so far passed without incident did not seem to make Ian or Bamford any happier. The longer they waited for someone to ambush them, the more edgy they became. Their

state of mind was contagious, too. Barbara could feel the muscles clenching in her neck and shoulders.

She was also concerned about the Doctor. Whenever she dared to ask him how he was doing, he waved her off crossly, insisting he was perfectly all right. Yet she could see he was exhausted - as much by the speed at which they were herded onwards as by the distance. They couldn't yet be halfway to Whitehall, she thought. The Doctor would need to rest.

'Maybe we should stop somewhere for lunch,' she suggested to Griffiths. He answered without looking at her, keeping his eyes peeled. He had volunteered to take guard duty at the back of the group, but Barbara wondered if he just preferred to have everyone ahead of him, where he could see them.

'Yes,' he said, his gaze now on the Doctor. 'We could all do with putting our feet up.' He took a sudden, deep breath. 'Ian!' Ian froze at the sound of his own name, a bullet of noise in the quiet. He and Bamford turned quickly, ready to see off whatever threat Griffiths faced. They looked disappointed that he only wanted their attention.

'What is it?'

Barbara saw how Ian regarded Griffiths, still suspicious of the man. Unless it was envy on his part - she had walked beside Griffiths all this time. No, surely Ian couldn't be jealous...

'Getting peckish,' said Griffiths. 'You're the expert on local watering holes.'

Ian considered for a moment. 'I don't really know,' he said. 'But there must be something. We could try Wapping High Street. It's only a little out of our way.'

'There might be something. It won't hurt to try.'

'And they do good food in Wapping, do they?' asked the Doctor, suddenly showing an interest. He had looked dead on his feet just a moment ago. Barbara felt herself smile: he could be such a selfish old rogue.

'I hope so,' said Ian. 'Anything other than gruel.'

'That's if anything's open,' warned Barbara.

'It has to be open,' said the Doctor, dragging Susan after him as he pushed rudely past Ian and Bamford. 'How ever could it not be?'

The Charles the Third was a traditional sort of pub, full of people reading newspapers, or bickering with their neighbours about

what the papers said. On first impression, it reminded Ian of the pubs just north of Oxford Street, where the writers and BBC lot would get drunk. Conversations were male-dominated and over-earnest, with the consonants filed off by the deep-ingrained booze. He spied headlines that gave some clue to the world they'd arrived in: 'Bring back our policemen!'; 'Guy's will reopen!'; 'A letter from Manchester!'. Despite the hubbub, however, Ian found the place lacking in atmosphere. As the Doctor and Susan took seats in an empty snug, he realised what it missed. Though the tables and enclaves were mostly all occupied, no one was smoking. Ian was used to supping a pint amid a fog of cigarettes and cigars. A pub where you could breathe easily, where you could see across the room, just seemed wrong somehow. The place didn't have that homely stink that smoking would lend it. In its place there was just the reek of stale beer.

'I'm going to have a pint,' he said, trying to raise his own spirits as much as everyone else's. Griffiths, Bamford and Barbara were all watching the other drinkers. Ordering drinks, Ian thought, would make their group less incongruous. 'What will it be, Susan? Doctor?'

'A glass of water will suit me just fine,' said the Doctor, wheezing. The walk had taken a lot out of the old boy. 'And we should all stay alert, don't you think?'

'Yes, Doctor,' Ian demurred. Of course, they had to keep their wits about them. And yet it had been such a long time since Ian had had the simple pleasure of a good, British pint. His shoulder sagged as the others all asked for glasses of water, too. He couldn't be the only one letting down his guard.

'I guess I'm getting these anyway,' Bamford said to him. 'I'm the girl with the spending money.'

'See what food they do,' Griffiths told her.

'Say please.'

'Please. And get a move on, I'm starving.'

Laughing, Ian followed Bamford up to the bar. The barman was a tall, round fellow who might have managed the place for centuries. Vast, Victorian-style sideburns hid a ruddy complexion.

'What'll it be?' he said, addressing the question to Ian.

'Six glasses of water,' replied Bamford, curtly. The barman rolled his eyes.

'Go careful,' he said, reaching up to the shelf above the bar.

‘And what food can you do us?’

‘Specials board on the wall,’ said the man. Ian looked, but could see no board. He looked back at the barman, who was chuckling to himself as he filled each glass from a groaning, protesting tap.

‘No specials today?’ asked Ian.

‘Not now I think about it,’ said the man, deadpan. ‘You know how things are.’ He slid six glasses of slightly murky water towards them. ‘But I’m sure I can magic you up something sort-of-edible. Depends what you got in the way of payment.’

Bamford withdrew the fat paper envelope from inside her uniform. Like Andrews, she had a range of notes to choose from. The barman lunged forward, curling his fat fingers over the money. For a moment, Ian thought he was trying to rob them.

‘Keep that out of sight!’ the man said, trying to lower his voice. But it was too late. Behind them came the scrape of chairs. Ian turned to see a group of swarthy-looking locals heading their way.

The Doctor was telling Susan a story about the notorious Captain Kidd, who had ended his days not far from where they sat. Barbara found herself laughing along as the Doctor extemporised. But whatever droll punchline he’d been working towards was cut short. Griffiths had stood up, suddenly.

‘Stay here,’ he told Barbara. ‘Get them out if you need to.’ She nodded, and looked back to the main door of the pub. Yes, she was sure, their escape would be easy.

Only then did she look round at what had alarmed him. At the bar, Ian and Bamford had attracted the rabble.

‘Got money to burn, then?’ leered a man a full head shorter than Bamford, and missing most of his teeth. Ian saw how the man kept one arm behind his back, as if reaching for a knife. ‘Can I buy you gentlemen a drink?’ Bamford asked. ‘Gonna buy us all a drink, is she?’ came the heckle from another table.

‘We don’t want any trouble,’ said Ian.

‘Dontcha?’ The toothless man leaned right into Ian’s face. His halitosis could have stripped wallpaper.

‘No he doesn’t,’ said Griffiths, right behind the leering man. ‘And neither do you.’

Ian saw the leering man consider his options, weighing up the

odds against the unseen newcomer. Then the man spun round, thrusting a dagger at Griffiths.

Griffiths had the longer reach, and smacked his fist into the leering man's face a whole second before the dagger could have reached him. The man swung back, and Ian grabbed at the hand holding the knife. Twisting, the leering man tried to fight back. Griffiths fired off rabbit punches into the man's chest, then withdrew as the man vomited up his beer.

Ian let the man go. More locals were out of their seats and hurrying to join in the fight.

Bamford dodged to the left, ducking round the first punch thrown her way. The man didn't get a second chance to hit her. She raised her knee sharply, doubling him over. Kneeing him again broke his nose. It made a satisfying crunch. As the man dropped to the floor, Bamford lashed out at another of the locals.

Another man got a punch in to Griffiths's side before Griffiths floored him with a single, curt blow. More locals were getting up from their seats. They had to finish this quickly.

He turned to Bamford. A man had his hands round her neck while another clawed the envelope from her fingers.

Barbara watched, horrified, as Ian hurled himself at one of the gang of rogues, smashing them both into the bar, and shattering the glasses of water.

She could see the look in his eyes, the fury and determination. He fought well, as well as Griffiths and Bamford did.

Like them he'd had training in the martial arts. She remembered him freeing them from the cell in Byng Street, and the poor kid he had knocked unconscious. It made her blood run cold to think of it.

Her whole body tingling as the breath was squeezed from her, Bamford had nowhere to turn. She wriggled and fought, but the men were too strong. Kicking out, she hit one in the shin. But to no avail! Her eyes watered, and she felt her senses swim.

She gave the envelope up to concentrate on her strangler. He had a ratty little beard and a crooked nose. She thrust her fingers into his face, jabbing nails into his eyes. He screamed, but still he held his fingers tightly round her neck. The fight was

draining out of her and there was nothing she could do.

Ian fell out of the way of a chair being thrown, and leapt up to punch the man who had thrown it.

‘Gentlemen!’ called the landlord behind him. ‘Gentlemen!’ Someone’s foot smacked into Ian’s leg, behind the knee. His whole body flared with pain. He toppled forward, arms flailing, and someone’s elbow cracked into his head. Seeing nothing but bright lights, Ian crashed into the floor. Prone, unable to get up again, he watched Bamford collapse backward as someone throttled her.

Griffiths tried to get to her. Fighting off three men at once, he struggled to reach Bamford and the man standing over her. He knew he’d never make it. They were finished.

‘Ere, lads,’ said a small, Cockney voice.

Griffiths punched one man, leaving the impression of his knuckles in the skin. He jabbed his arm back again, catching another of the locals in the neck.

“Ere, lads,” said the voice again, louder this time. This ain’t any kind of money I know!’

The fighting just stopped.

Griffiths turned, as did his attackers, to the skinny man rifling through the envelope. The thief pulled one note free from the bundle and held it aloft for them all to see. ‘Who’s this King William, then?’ he said. ‘You can’t spend that round ‘ere!’

Laughing, he stuffed the note back into the envelope and threw it, underarm, to Bamford. She caught it, checked it and, amazed, offered it to the man who’d been strangling her. He didn’t even bother to look through the notes. Instead, he helped his comrades to their feet, and they all staggered back to their tables. It was like the fight had never happened.

Griffiths squatted down beside Ian on the floor. ‘You all right?’ Tine,’ said Ian, dazedly. ‘Don’t we get an apology?’

Barbara came running over. Ian lifted his head, and she hugged him. Griffiths got out of their way.

The Doctor and Susan were seeing to Bamford. She had terrible, dark marks around her neck, but she seemed otherwise to be in one piece. Griffiths made his way over to the bar. The landlord stood behind it, his arms folded.

‘You’ve nothing worth stealing,’ he said, simply. ‘How were you

gonna pay for the food?’

‘We thought...’ began Griffiths. There was no answer he could give. ‘I’m sorry.’

‘Hmf,’ said the landlord. ‘You’re heading into the city, I take it?’

‘Yes’ Griffiths only felt angry with himself. He should have known better than to bring them here. Londoners never took to strangers.

The corner of the man’s mouth twitched. ‘Well if you promise you’ll never come back again, you can have something to eat on your way.’

* * *

By late afternoon they had reached the city. Ian had to point out the Tower of London to Barbara. Tower Bridge had lost its stone cladding, the gaunt, cast-iron bones twisted and strange, while William the Conqueror’s great castle had been levelled. The broken-down stones were black. Wooden boards and other rubbish bridged the gaps, making homes no bigger than kitchen cupboards. It took a moment to pick out the wraithlike figures that stalked this shanty town. Their rags and skin blended in too well, as if they’d almost melted away. Ian and Bamford kept their party moving.

Cannon Street brought them eventually to the great eastern end of St Paul’s Cathedral. Getting nearer, they could hear hymns being sung inside. Ian made to lead them left, taking the road round to the front of the building and on towards Holborn. Bamford, however, held back.

‘What is it?’ said Ian, ready for danger.

‘I... I want to go this way,’ said Bamford, jabbing her thumb to the right. She was still hoarse from the brawl.

The others had caught up by now. ‘That’s not the way to Whitehall,’ said Barbara.

‘I know,’ said Bamford, quietly.

The Doctor stroked the line of his jaw. ‘I think perhaps you have someone you want to go calling on, hmm?’

Bamford stared him down. ‘Yes,’ she said.

This was no time for frivolous day trips, thought Ian. They had to stay together. ‘Doctor,’ he said. ‘We should -’

‘I’ll go on my own,’ said Bamford. ‘You can’t stop me.’

‘Exactly,’ said the Doctor. ‘We can’t stop you.’ He stared hard at Ian. ‘You’d not be so ungallant as to let her go unescorted, alone in a city like this? Where are your manners, school-teacher?’

‘I don’t need a minder,’ Bamford said resentfully. ‘I can take care of myself.’ In her bullish tone, thought Ian, there was a lot of the old general from thirty years’ time.

‘I dare say you can,’ said the Doctor. He said it so kindly that Ian could see Bamford relax. ‘I would be happier though if you weren’t unaccompanied.’ Of course, thought Ian, the old devil knew she could do her own thing. He just didn’t want her out of his sight, though. She was valuable, and he didn’t want to lose her.

‘I’ll go with her,’ said Ian. ‘If that’s what you want.’

‘You don’t have to -’ began Bamford.

‘Thank you, my boy,’ said the Doctor, patting him on the arm. His eyes twinkled. ‘I appreciate it. For my peace of mind.’

‘I’ll go with them, too,’ said Barbara. Ian grinned at her, but she didn’t smile back. She seemed cross with him, had again put up a barrier between them. He wondered if she found the young, handsome Bamford a threat.

‘Then it’s settled,’ said the Doctor before anyone else could argue. ‘Let us meet back here at...’ He looked all round him as if for inspiration.

‘Midnight?’ suggested Griffiths.

‘Will that give you enough time?’ the Doctor asked Bamford.

‘Yes,’ she said. ‘Agreed.’ Without another word, she headed off.

‘Keep with her,’ the Doctor said. ‘She’s important.’

‘Yes, Doctor,’ said Ian. ‘You be careful too.’

Without another word, the Doctor, Susan and Griffiths headed off in the other direction. Again, Susan cuddled up to the Doctor.

‘I hope Susan is okay,’ Ian said to Barbara as they hurried to catch up with Bamford. He didn’t like them being just a group of three. As a six, they’d outnumbered most of the gangs they’d encountered so far. Three was less of a problem for anyone wishing them ill, especially when one was an exhausted old man, and another a terrified girl.

‘She’s stronger than she looks,’ Barbara replied. ‘And the Doctor knows what he’s doing.’

Ian could only hope so.

They walked on. Ian was surprised how much of the city had

changed since his own time. Cheapside was like another world, the shops all gone, the road covered in broken glass and rubbish. It looked worse than he remembered during the war, the one from his youth. They carried on, passing the ruin of a church bombed in Ian's time, and then a statue of a Victorian gentleman. Rowland Hill, Barbara explained, inventor of the Penny Post. He seemed so terribly out of place.

As they turned left into the alley called Little Britain, a gaunt woman wandered into them. Ian tried to step around her, but the woman took his arm. Her eyes were wide, and vacant. 'I'm sorry,' said Ian, relieving her grip a finger at a time. She said nothing, just stared as if trying to focus on him. Bamford came to his rescue, holding the woman's shoulders while he extracted himself.

'Is there anywhere you want to be?' she asked kindly. The woman just stared back. Then, without reason, she shook herself free from Bamford's hands and carried on down the street. 'We should do something for her,' said Bamford. 'We can't just let her go' Ian realised his mouth was hanging open in surprise. 'What?' she said.

'You're worried about these people,' he said. 'It's... it's just not what we're used to.'

'The Machine robbed them of their minds,' Bamford bristled. 'It's not their fault.' He had to remember she wasn't the vicious old woman they had known before. She hadn't become like that yet. This Bamford was a caring, decent person. What had happened to change her?

'Come on,' she said, gruffly. 'We're nearly at the hospital anyway.'

'It's strange seeing Nelson's Column still standing,' said Griffiths. 'I've only ever seen it in photographs.'

They still had a South African Embassy, too. Otherwise, he thought, Trafalgar Square was the same derelict patch of concrete he remembered from the future. There were some pigeons, too dim-witted to understand that the tourists were never coming back, but there were no people.

Continuing on to Whitehall, the streets seemed eerily quiet. They had had to negotiate bustling, shabby people as they'd made their way through the city, but there were no guards or gates to suggest they'd wandered into anywhere off limits now.

The light was fading, and everything seemed more shadowy, more dangerous around them. It had to be getting on for six in the evening. Perhaps, thought Griffiths, people went indoors at dusk. Perhaps the night simply wasn't safe. Now he was aware of it, he could see small groups of people, keeping to the shadows. All had bodyguards who carried weapons, though in some cases that meant just sticks. Griffiths thought it best not to point that out to his charges.

The Doctor busied himself counting off the numbers on the grand government buildings all along Whitehall.

'This appears to be it,' he said, outside a smog-blackened edifice no different from its neighbours. He stepped forward and tried the door. It didn't budge.

'Not very friendly,' he muttered, as if it were disgraceful that he could not just stroll inside. He rang the bell chain. A few moments later, a panel in the door opened and a snooty-looking woman peered out at them.

'What do you want?'

'Good afternoon,' said the Doctor warmly. 'We're here to see your most senior scientists.'

'Are you indeed?' said the woman sniffily. 'I don't recall any appointment.'

'We don't have an appointment,' said the Doctor. 'But they will want to see us. Believe me.'

The woman's nostrils flared. She looked the three of them up and down. They must look a likely trio, thought Griffiths. He had torn his clothes in the pub brawl, and all three were exhausted from the walk.

'Who exactly are you here to see?'

'Your most senior scientists,' repeated the Doctor. He said it so convincingly, Griffiths almost hoped that she'd let them in. 'You can't even give me a name?'

'No. But I'm sure you know who the senior ones are. Tell them we've something to show them.'

'You've something to sell, is that it?'

'Not at all, my dear lady. I can see you're wary, and that's very astute of you. My colleagues and I could of course be anyone. So perhaps a token of our good faith? Mr Griffiths, you've something quite appropriate in your left pocket.'

It was news to Griffiths. He put his hand tentatively into the pocket, expecting to find some weapon, or maybe a security card,

something the Doctor had slipped him. But no, he withdrew the small, rounded form of his wireless telephone.

‘What’s that?’ asked the snooty woman.

‘Ask your best minds that question,’ said the Doctor, banding it to her through the slot in the door. ‘If they don’t want to talk to us, then we’ll trouble you no more.’

The panel slammed shut. They stood on the doorstep and waited. Griffiths wondered if handing the thing over had been their best move, but thought better of saying so. Instead, he pulled faces at Susan, trying to break through that persistent, sad frown. He thought he might just have seen the corners of her mouth twitch when the front door swept open. The Doctor, who’d been leaning on it, almost toppled into the men standing there.

They were both out of breath, as if they’d just run all the way from the top floor. Neither looked the sort to take any regular exercise. Both men were pasty-skinned and overweight. And one of them, Griffiths realised, was Professor Kelly. The wispy excuse for a moustache suggested he was barely out of his teens.

‘This is yours?’ panted the other, senior man, holding up the phone.

‘That’s right,’ said the Doctor. ‘We fancied it would be of some interest.’

The two men glanced at each other. ‘Please, come in off the street,’ said the older man, waving his hand. ‘We’ve so much to talk about.’

‘Ms Bamford?’

‘Yes?’ They hurried up to the reception booth, eagerly. The hours had crept slowly by since they’d arrived, the waiting room peopled by eerie, blank-eyed zombies, like the one they’d met outside. Bamford, when Barbara had asked, said these were victims of the Machine. No cure had ever been found for them - even in the future Bamford came from. It was a relief to finally get some news. Barbara felt a pang of guilt at that thought. Of course, they were also eager for Bamford’s sake, too.

‘I’m sorry, we’ve checked everywhere,’ said the receptionist, though she sounded like she wasn’t sorry at all. She had more important things to be doing. ‘No one of that name working here.’ The glass partition slid smartly shut and the woman got on with her work.

‘I don’t understand,’ said Bamford, after a moment. It was still

painful for her to talk, and her words came out as barely a whisper. 'She has to be here.'

'Perhaps there's a mistake,' Barbara suggested. 'You're sure that's her given name?'

'Baldwin. Yes.'

'You're asking about Karen?'

They all spun round at the question. The nurse who had spoken was bustling through reception, driving an empty wheelchair in front of her. She had that practical, slightly haughty air about her that Barbara felt was so typically NHS. 'You knew her?'

'Yes,' said Bamford. 'I'm her -'

'We're family,' Ian cut in.

'Oh, I'm sorry,' said the nurse. She glanced down at the empty seat of the wheelchair, as if expecting to find some answer there. When she looked up again, she eyed them carefully. 'You haven't heard,' she said. 'Look, maybe we can find somewhere quiet...'

'What? What happened?' Bamford's sore throat made her sound more desperate than she probably was.

'We don't have to do this here,' said the nurse. 'Come with me.'

With Ian taking Bamford by the arm, they followed the nurse into a side room, decorated in soothing, innocuous murals. There were dull grey seats all round the room, and they sat down opposite the nurse.

'Look,' she said. 'We really did try to reach the family. I thought everyone had been told.'

'Just tell me,' said Bamford. The nurse sat up straight, in a mannered, unreal kind of pose. She probably had to do this all the time, thought Barbara.

'Karen was with an ambulance detail. They got called out to the Isle of Dogs one night, but we think it was some kind of set-up. There's this wretched colony of tramps out there, and they tore the ambulance apart. They must have thought it had food in it.'

'Why would an ambulance contain food?' asked Barbara, Ian glared at her.

'We don't know. They're a horrible, desperate lot out there. Anyway, the crew didn't stand half a chance against them.'

'She can't be dead,' said Bamford.

'I'm afraid so,' said the nurse, reaching out to pat Bamford's hand. 'I'm sorry. They all died.' She bit her lip. 'I think it was

probably quick.'

'Of course it wasn't quick!' snapped Bamford, shaking the nurse off. 'Where's her body? Where's she buried?'

'I don't know,' said the nurse. 'I guess someone came for her. I'll find out.'

She couldn't leave the room quickly enough. Bamford stared at the floor while Barbara and Ian watched each other. Ian shrugged, which was no help at all. Barbara gingerly reached her arm over Bamford's shoulders to comfort her.

'She didn't meet my dad until '75,' said Bamford, her voice uneven and strange and bereft. 'And she didn't die until '81.'

'It's going to be all right,' said Barbara. It was the only thing she could think of to say.

'No it won't be,' said Bamford, almost smiling. 'You see, if she's dead now, I can't ever be born.'

'We've a team of fourteen permanent staff,' said Townsend, the professor in charge of the labs. He was tall, with an untended beard and a way of shaking his head that was just like Kelly. The older Kelly, from the future. Yet he still hadn't asked their names, which Griffiths found amazing for a man with so many questions. 'Now, you were saying about radio frequencies?'

He led them through an office teeming with paper. Box-files tumbled from shelves as Townsend pushed past them, documents spilling all over the floor in his wake. There were no administrative staff Griffiths could see, unless they were lost under the papers. Susan helped the Doctor to step over the obstacles. Such mess would never have been allowed under Bamford's regime.

'Yes, yes,' said the Doctor, revelling in keeping the man on tenterhooks. 'All in good time. You said you'd, show us the artefacts first.'

'A pooling of resources,' said Townsend, nodding. 'We'll be only too happy to share what we've got. But frequency must determine the scale of the relays...'

'The cells run at something between 800 and 1,800 megahertz,' said Griffiths, just to put the poor man out of his misery. It stopped Townsend dead in his tracks. He held a finger up to his forehead as he worked through the possible implications of that detail. It was exactly the same gesture Kelly used to do.

'You'd want to keep people away from the antennae,' he said at

last. 'They're too dangerous to be used too widely.'

'Radio frequency is non-ionising,' said Griffiths. 'Wireless phones don't cause cancer.'

'Pfff!' said Townsend, and carried on towards the vault. It was as if that was all the argument he needed to disprove Griffiths's assertion. Griffiths felt his jaw drop. It wasn't possible that such a petulant, childish man could be in charge of the whole operation here. The Doctor must have seen his expression, and leant forward to whisper to him.

'You can tell the Machine took their best minds first. This idiot must be all they have left!'

That was it, thought Griffiths as they continued to the vault. The man had no one to challenge him, to challenge his assumptions. It was the worst thing you could do to a scientist. It made you lazy.

At the back of the room of strewn paper, their passage was blocked by an old wooden door. A 'No entry' sign hung slightly at an angle. Townsend produced a thick bunch of keys, trying each in turn before finding the correct one. The door had a simple, pin tumbler lock. Griffiths could have picked it in less time than Townsend took to open it.

The door opened in on what might have once been a broom closet, a small utility space. Townsend tugged on a hanging piece of string and a naked light bulb plinked on. 'Mean anything to you, then?' he asked.

Stacked up to the ceiling were fragments of strange machinery. Griffiths cast an eye over the wrecked pieces, putting them together in his head. Something that looked like the horoscope, but more compact, drooled fibre-optic cables over what might have been an anchoring unit. It was all clearly the basis for the experiments he had worked on himself. Had it really taken them thirty years to make sense of it all?

'It's a trans-materialisation booth,' said Susan. It was the first time Griffiths had heard her speak for a day.

'Very likely,' said the Doctor. He turned to Townsend. 'Where did you happen across it?'

Townsend beamed with pride. 'Cellar of a school in East London. Army picked it up, couple of years before the Machine and all that. We've not got a lot of records for back then, of course. Not much I can tell you. Good, though, isn't it?'

'Yes,' said the Doctor, warily. He reached a hand out and

withdrew a gold-coloured pipe, leant against the stacked pieces. The pipe was a half-metre in length, and the old man and Susan both flinched on seeing it had a trumpet-like end.

‘We call that the sink plunger,’ laughed Townsend. ‘No idea what it’s used for.’

‘What can have happened?’ asked Susan, keeping well away from the strange machinery.

‘I don’t know, Susan,’ said the Doctor. ‘They must have visited the Earth at some time...’

‘I don’t understand,’ said Griffiths, not missing the Doctor’s grave tone. ‘Who’s “they”?’ He didn’t get an answer.

‘Grandfather,’ said Susan, ‘this is what they based the experiments on!’

‘Yes, Susan. They adapted a side effect of the anchoring system.’

‘You understand it?’ Townsend nearly leapt for joy. The man was a liability.

‘But if that’s the case,’ said Susan, her eyes wide, ‘then wherever can the TARDIS have gone?’

Chapter Twelve

A miserly, autumnal squall swept through Little Britain. It swirled up leaves and litter, hurling them into the empty frame of Smithfield market, looming from the darkness. Ian wrapped his arms tightly around his body.

'You're sure we can't stay?' he asked the guard. 'It would only be until midnight.'

The guard - a hospital porter in a bullet-proof vest - only shrugged. He didn't look at all comfortable pointing a gun at them, but Ian knew better than to try his luck.

'Rules is rules,' said the man. 'Can't make exceptions. You know where we'd end up.'

Ian couldn't blame him. Of course the hospital had to turn them all out at night. Their resources were horrifically limited, and they couldn't risk being overrun. Ian thanked the man - which earned him a wide, surprised smile - and made his way over to Barbara and Bamford. They had taken shelter in a doorway.

'No room at the inn?' asked Bamford. Her words might be cheery, but there was something blank and lifeless about her eyes.

'Not tonight,' he replied. 'We've got three hours before we're due to meet the others. What do you think?'

'We can't hang about around here,' said Barbara. 'I don't think it's safe.'

'It's too exposed,' agreed Bamford. She looked all round. 'I could do with a drink,' she said. 'Only funds still being a problem...'

'I've been thinking about that, actually,' said Ian, keeping his voice low. 'I think there may be an answer.' He reached into his pocket and withdrew the wedding ring he had taken from his other, late self. It glinted coldly, catching the light from the hospital foyer. 'We can sell this.'

'But you can't!' said Barbara. 'It's not right!'

Bamford, however, was more practical. 'Whose is it?' she asked.

'It belonged to me,' said Ian, looking quickly between the women as he spoke. 'Another me, one who came through the hoop. The Doctor said he was from a different world, a different

branch of time. Something to do with the hoop changing history.'

She nodded, understanding. 'Some kind of kink in causality, yes?'

'You probably know more about it than we do. He died. He died saving me. And I've been carrying this ever since.'

'It's all right, Ian,' said Barbara, reaching out to him. 'You had a connection,' Bamford said, matter-of-factly. 'He was you.'

'Yes,' said Ian, 'but he also wasn't me. I realise that now. He did things differently. He did things I wouldn't do.'

Again Bamford nodded. 'That must have been odd.' Her eyes suddenly came alive. 'Cocked things up good and proper, didn't we?'

'It's not exactly gone according to plan, has it?' laughed Ian. 'I don't think anyone could have foreseen what's happened!'

Barbara still had his arm. 'You're putting him behind you?' she said.

'I won't forget,' he replied, 'but I don't owe him anything. That man wasn't me.'

'That's what I told you,' she said quietly. Ian found himself drawn to her, their eyes locking.

'Yes,' he said. They gazed at each other, and Ian could feel that everything had changed between them. He and Barbara now stood on the cusp of something new.

'Ha-hum!' Bamford muttered, winking when they both looked round. 'Can we do this over that drink?'

'Now you're sure this is everything?' asked the Doctor, flicking quickly through another three-inch-thick paper on their various experiments. Kelly thought that the old man might even have read the thing in that instant. He was more like a wizard than a scientist.

The heap of artefacts towered above the Doctor's head. Machinery was scattered around his feet, too, as were great blocks of paper - copies of all their reports and findings. It had taken hours to get it all in one room. Susan and Griffiths crouched down on the floor, Griffiths taking instruction on how the bits fitted together.

Kelly leaned in closer, hoping to glean something he could actually comprehend. But no, the assorted systems and circuits and wiring meant nothing to him. Even the terms Susan used were a mystery; what in heaven was a horoloscope? The man's

accent - Scandinavian, maybe? - didn't help. Kelly could take some comfort, though, that it meant nothing to any of his colleagues, either. They stood shoulder to shoulder, crammed against the back wall of the lab, all desperate to understand what was happening.

'Oh yes,' grinned Townsend, as if he were somehow still in charge. 'It's everything from the vault and everything we've been working on. But is it enough, Doctor?' His voice was shrill with excitement. 'Can you make any part of it work?'

The Doctor juttied out his jaw, not committing himself. That was agonising. At his feet, Susan inspected another alien component, thought better of it, and tossed it over her shoulder. The next piece, some kind of twinned coil, she handed to Griffiths. It seemed strange, thought Kelly, his being junior to the girl. It reinforced the obvious conclusion that these people *had* to be from the future.

They continued to work, content, it seemed to Kelly, just to play with the pieces, to tease the scientists. Kelly's colleagues jostled against each other for the best view, taking their frustration and ignorance out on one another, whispering predictions about what the Doctor's creation might do.

They all hushed as Susan looked up at her grandfather. Her smile was angelic.

'I think we've got a loop,' she said simply. The scientists buzzed with excitement, though they were no wiser for what she'd just said. Kelly noted the change that had come over the girl since he'd first seen her on the doorstep. She'd been mousy and quiet, like the women he'd known at the barracks. Now she'd become like a child, laughing and grinning and making noise. In any other circumstance, someone would have snapped at her, insisted she behave. Yet the old man treated her as an equal, and nobody in the room would dare to contradict him.

'Good,' said the Doctor. 'Good work, Susan.' She, glowed with pride as he glanced over what she and Griffiths had assembled. It didn't look much - a few odds and ends crudely soldered together, wires tendrilling out to power sockets and controls. The old man, however, seemed happy. He handed the thing back to Susan and walked calmly toward Townsend. 'We'll be able to give you a demonstration,' he said to the scientists.

Kelly found himself grinning like a schoolboy. He wasn't alone in that.

Susan helped Griffiths pile the discarded artefacts into a tidier heap. She measured the distance between the heap and the block they were going to focus their attentions on, did a hasty calculation in her head and nodded to the Doctor. Obviously they didn't want to imperil the unused materials. Perhaps further work could be focused on them - the sort of thing Kelly could spearhead. He saw himself contributing useful, secondary analysis while his peers all fought to work alongside the Doctor.

'Well?' asked Townsend.

'You'll all need to stand back,' said the Doctor.

Muttering, the scientists edged back to the door of the lab. Kelly ignored the elbows of an over-anxious colleague.

'Mr Griffiths,' said the Doctor. 'Your phone, too.'

Griffiths looked for a moment like he might argue, but he did as he was told. The remarkable wireless device sat neatly on the top of the heap of discarded materials. Kelly couldn't see how it fitted in, but perhaps it emitted signals or energy that could be harmful to the test. No doubt it would all become clear. They were on the brink of a glorious new scientific age, and they'd have to learn to be patient for the Doctor's explanations.

The Doctor and his assistants stepped back from the block. 'Switch on,' the Doctor commanded. Townsend had the honour of pressing down the lever.

At first, nothing discernible happened. Kelly held his breath, willing the miracle to begin. Gradually, he became conscious of the low hum of power as the alien artefacts came to life. 'I do beg your pardon,' interrupted the Doctor. 'Would you like a better view?'

Kelly nodded his thanks, never once taking his eyes off the machinery. He tried not to show his frantic eagerness. The Doctor, Griffiths and Susan passed between the scientists, letting them jostle forward.

'Not too close,' warned the Doctor indulgently, now stood behind them all.

The machinery continued to growl with power. Light began to leak from the cables. The noise became louder. Pens rattled on a desk, then clattered to the floor. Kelly could feel the vibration in his joints and gums. Someone ought to be taking notes, he thought, a pen hanging in his hand. They should record their thoughts for posterity. But he could simply not move, transfixed by the light, ever brightening. It was beautiful. He'd never forget

this for the rest of his life, he felt sure. The air all round the machinery blurred. Kelly felt the hair on the back of his neck stand on end. His vision swam. No, it was the far side of the room, bleeding in on itself like a mirage. The noise was now deafening. It grew and grew and he could almost feel his teeth loosening. He could not tear his gaze away, like it was dragging him forward and into it and through it and -

There was silence.

His ears rang. The light, the brilliant light, had simply winked off, and Kelly blinked to clear the spots from his eyes. No one spoke for some moments. With the vanishing of the light, all the precious alien relics had vanished, too. The discarded stuff, the pile of papers and notes... Even the block that had done it had gone. The lab was empty. It was the most remarkable conjuring trick.

The scientists applauded wildly. They turned to each other, patted each other's backs. It worked, it bloody well worked! Everything they'd been doing had changed.

'Brilliant,' said Townsend, choked with emotion. 'Quite brilliant.' He stood on tiptoe to see over the massed ranks of scientists in his way. 'So, Doctor,' he called, 'how do we get everything back?'

Kelly saw Townsend's face fall. 'Doctor?'

The dead Ian's wedding ring earned them a pile of grubby notes from the landlord of a pub round the corner from the hospital. He asked no questions, which Ian was grateful for, and included their first three pints in the deal. The dark ale was called New London. Ian delighted in the never-forgotten skill of pressing the three glasses together to carry them back to the others.

The women had found a quiet spot at the back of the pub. No one even looked their way, everyone kept themselves to themselves. As a result, the pub felt safer than the place they'd been in earlier that afternoon.

'Sorry,' said Ian as he put down the drinks. 'This is all they had. No gin and tonics any more.'

'Well,' said Bamford, raising her glass, 'to time being all over the place.'

They clinked drinks and Ian took a long, indulgent sip. He felt his eyes water. The beer was quite revolting.

'It's an interesting flavour,' Barbara said, and though she had

obviously meant it sincerely, they laughed.

'I guess we have to make do,' said Ian. Again the women laughed, no doubt at the heartbreak in his voice.

Nobody spoke for a while after that. Ian listened to the murmurings coming from other tables around them. He could not pick out the individual words being said, but from the soft-spoken tones, peppered with good-natured chuckling, he could tell that stories were being spun. It all felt so familiar to him, so very close to home.

'So,' said Bamford, stretching in her seat as she relaxed. 'How long have you two been together?' Before Ian could say a word, the look on his face must have given her the answer. 'Oh,' she said. 'Sorry...'

'It's not like that,' said Barbara, sitting back in her seat as if to distance herself from Ian.

'We're only friends,' said Ian, though he knew that wasn't right either. They had become more than just friends. 'Sorry,' said Bamford again. 'Got the wrong end of the stick.'

She took a swig of beer - and Ian thought the glass might have hidden a wry smile.

'Bamford,' he began, feeling he should protest on Barbara's behalf if not his own.

Bamford put down her drink. 'You don't have to call me that,' she said quietly. 'My name is Louise.'

Ian couldn't quite think of her as Louise. It was a girl's name. It seemed strange that the dangerous, bullying old general could have had a first name at all. He realised Bamford was still waiting for someone to respond.

'We know nothing about each other, do we?' he said. 'Tell us about yourself, Louise,' said Barbara.

Bamford - Louise - leaned back in her chair. 'I was born in 1976,' she said. 'When I was five, Mum died and I got taken in by friends of hers. Joined the army in '87 -'

'But you'd only have been eleven!' Barbara said. Bamford shrugged.

'The war, you know. Didn't know anything else. Passed some exams and got into the scientific corps... Married in 2001, no kids yet. 2004, I stepped through the hoop and lost everything.'

'Not everything,' said Ian.

'What have I got?'

'You.'

‘Hah. I can’t be me when I never existed.’ She smiled. ‘Louise Bamford was from another branch of time. I’m this whole other person.’ She took another long sip from her pint, and Ian watched her, amazed by the change. She really had become someone else.

‘Now,’ said Bamford, wiping beer from the corners of her mouth. ‘Why don’t you tell me about you two?’

‘And you’re sure that they can’t get anywhere now?’ laughed Susan as they hurried by Trafalgar Square and onto the Strand.

‘My dear child,’ said the Doctor, breathless from the run, ‘it took them thirty-four years to get anywhere in the first place, and that was when they had working examples to copy. I should say that without their precious relics, those gentlemen couldn’t come up with a digital watch!’

Griffiths decided they’d run far enough. The scientists could give chase, but they had enough of a start, and besides, he’d keep them to the shadows. The Doctor and Susan were glad of the change of pace.

‘You’ve changed history, then?’ asked Griffiths.

‘Oh I hope so, young man, I hope so.’

‘And where did you send everything? Isn’t there a chance they can get it all back?’

‘The great problem of trans-materialisation of matter,’ said the Doctor, ‘is the effect that dense objects nearby can have. If you don’t compensate properly...’

‘Everything ends up in the sun!’ laughed Susan.

‘Yes, Susan. So the time-travel experiments are at an end. We have undone them.’

Griffiths could see the old man wasn’t entirely happy. There was still one question left to be answered. ‘And your own Ship? You know where that is?’

The Doctor’s face fell. ‘I had thought it would be the source of their efforts, but you heard them. They knew nothing about a police box.’

‘No. So we’re all stranded here, then. This isn’t the best of times to be stuck in.’

‘Perhaps,’ said the Doctor with a far-off look. ‘But I never say never. Perhaps young Bamford knows more than we think.’

‘You mean she’s got the TARDIS?’ asked Susan.

‘Not as such. But her elder self must have discovered it. Before

she died, she told us how she had locked it away? 'And you believed her?' asked Susan.

'It's the only chance we have.'

'That's why you sent the others with her, isn't it?' said Griffiths.

'Yes,' said the Doctor. 'I didn't want her fate to change. Whoever she's gone to see, if that's where she would have gone, then that's where she must go now. If we change her, if we change her responses, we'll never find the Ship again.'

'And you trust Ian and Barbara?'

'They know not to interfere,' said the Doctor. 'Now that's our only hope.'

They crossed Lancaster Place - leading, on their right, across Waterloo Bridge. Suddenly the Doctor grabbed Griffiths by the arm, tried to bustle him and Susan into the nook of a doorway, shrouded from the Strand.

'Quickly!' he snapped.

Griffiths resisted, began to protest, when he heard the engine. A car far off on the street behind them, but getting ever louder. They huddled together silently, waiting.

After an eternity, the car sped past, showing no police or military markings. Brakes screeched as it arced left round the back of Bush House. Griffiths waited until he could no longer hear it before letting the others back out onto the street.

'Was that them?' asked the Doctor. 'Are they pursuing us?'

'I think so,' said Griffiths. 'Though it was just the one car...'

'Well they didn't know which direction we would run in,' snapped the Doctor. 'They've probably sent cars out all over the city.'

'Do you think they'll come back?' Susan asked Griffiths. Griffiths glanced quickly at the Doctor, uncomfortable at the girl treating him as the leader.

'Probably,' he said. 'Let's keep moving.'

They carried on past Somerset House and the boarded-up shop fronts. Susan kept running ahead ten or twenty metres, then hopped about waiting for them to catch her up. Griffiths stayed with the Doctor, knowing Susan could make an escape when the car came back, but that the old man was in no shape to run for it. He remembered the Doctor's earlier plea, to take Susan on should anything happen to him, but surely this wasn't what he'd had in mind. Were the Doctor captured by the

scientists now, if they interrogated him, then all his efforts to change history could be undone. Griffiths could not allow that to happen. He would have to protect the Doctor.

‘Come on!’ Susan called. She was nervy, energised by the chase.

‘You’re enjoying this!’ he said as they caught her up. ‘No.’ she said, shaking her head petulantly.

‘Okay, okay. I’m glad you’re feeling a bit better, anyway. That man, the other day...’

Susan glanced quickly at her grandfather - who seemed not to notice. Griffiths saw the misery inside her, the despair. ‘You don’t have to tell me anything,’ he said. She didn’t respond, perhaps unsure whether to confide in him. ‘I can’t imagine what an attack like that must have been like.’ Susan bit her lip, as if to keep the words in. ‘But he didn’t attack me,’ she said. It wasn’t like that -’

She stopped short. A car was hurtling towards them. ‘Get her out of here,’ said the Doctor.

‘We’re not leaving you behind,’ said Griffiths, just as firmly. ‘Don’t be obstinate, man,’ the Doctor began, but Susan ran over and clung to him. Griffiths looked quickly around, hoping for some kind of advantage to present itself. Nothing. The car skidded to a halt. Two men leapt out, yelling and waving guns at them. As Griffiths stepped forward to intercept one, he noted they were wearing lab coats. Neither knew what they were doing with their weapons. Griffiths smacked the first man in the jaw. As the man fell back, Griffiths kicked him so that he smashed headfirst into the car. The second man, mouth agape, waggled his gun ineffectually. Griffiths tore it from his hand and then knocked the man to the ground. He clicked the safety catch off the gun and coolly aimed at the ridge between the man’s eyes.

‘Wait!’ called the Doctor. Griffiths didn’t look round. He stared into the terrified eyes of the man on the ground. It was Kelly.

‘We can’t let him compromise us,’ Griffiths said. The last time he’d pointed a gun at Kelly, he’d been ready to kill the Doctor, too. Times, he thought wryly, had changed.

‘You don’t need to kill them,’ said the Doctor. ‘We can take the car. We can let him live.’

‘He’ll have the others after us,’ said Griffiths.

‘I won’t!’ blubbed Kelly. ‘I promise I won’t!’

‘We’ll be long gone by then,’ said the Doctor.

‘Please,’ said Susan. It was the horror in her voice that finally

persuaded him. She was appalled by what he'd done, how ruthlessly he'd put down their pursuers. Griffiths lowered the gun.

Kelly scrambled away from him, tears streaming down his face. Susan ran to help the man to his feet, but he cried out in alarm and she backed off.

'We're not what you think,' she said miserably. 'We came to help you...'

Kelly paid no heed, his head in his hands as he wept.

'Pick your friend up,' Griffiths told him. Kelly didn't hesitate to obey. He hurried over, and dragged his barely conscious colleague to his feet. They stumbled over to the far side of the road. With the wounded man, thought Griffiths, it would take him longer to reach his comrades, to tell them what had happened. And they would be on foot, having just surrendered their car. Griffiths opened the driver's door.

'Oh,' he said. 'It's a stick-shift.'

'That doesn't present a challenge to me.' said the Doctor, brushing him aside and taking the front seat. Susan hurried round and got in behind the passenger seat. She didn't once look at Griffiths, and as he too got into the car, he found himself ashamed.

'I won't apologise,' he told them, while the Doctor studied the various controls of the car. 'We're still at risk, letting them go like this.'

'Of course we're not.' said the Doctor, crunching the key in the ignition. The car started forward with a lurch. 'Don't underrate mercy young man. We all have need of it sometimes.'

He fought the gearstick into reverse, and managed a clumsy three-point turn. As they sped off east towards St Paul's Cathedral, Griffiths realised that it didn't matter if they found the police box or not. He would never go with the Doctor and Susan. For one thing, he was chafed by their disapproval - and the fact that he knew that their morality bested him. And for another, he thought as he gripped his seat, he didn't for a minute trust the Doctor's driving.

'She's hiding it well, but she's distraught.' said Barbara, watching the door to the ladies' in case Louise should suddenly return.

Ian nodded. 'Yes.' he said. 'It's a good thing we were here for her. She'd be in pieces otherwise. But she won't show that with

us around. I think she's keeping it together for our sakes.'

It was a horrible thought. 'And if she'd been on her own?' Barbara asked. 'What would have happened to her then?'

'We've seen what happened, Barbara. We saw what she became.'

'Yes, but -' The door to the ladies' opened and Barbara shut her mouth. Louise ambled towards them. She had been drinking quickly, a full pint ahead of them at the last round. It had done her good.

She rubbed her hands together. 'One more?' she said.

'They've called time,' said Ian. 'We should be getting back to the rendezvous.'

'You're no fun,' said Louise. 'Anyway, time doesn't apply to us in the same way. We're different.' She grinned. 'We've branched out.'

'We need to meet up with the others,' Barbara told her, guiding her towards the door. 'The Doctor should have found the Ship by now, and then we can all get away from here.'

'It's not so bad here,' said Ian. He didn't look keen to swap the pub for the biting gale outside.

'Beer grows on you,' agreed Louise.

'We have to go,' said Barbara.

The street was dark and silent, but it seemed to her that it was not quite so cold. That might just have been the beer inside her, of course. In the old days, Barbara could make a spritzer last an entire evening, but tonight had been special. It hadn't just been about looking after Louise. No, it had been about celebrating with Ian, sharing time with him. Their time in the future had almost separated them, split them up. Now they were back together, and it felt like they had never been closer. With Louise and Griffiths about to join them all in the TARDIS, their lives would be very different. Life with the Doctor and Susan was always moving, but now, for the first time in ages, she felt things had really changed for them all.

She tagged along behind Ian and Louise as they made their way back towards the cathedral.

'You'll be pleased to see Griffiths again I expect,' Ian said to Louise.

'I just said he's sort of interesting,' she said. She froze, as if she'd given too much away. 'I mean... if I weren't spoken for. Which I guess I'm not.'

'You don't have to be embarrassed,' said Ian. He winked at Barbara. 'I think Susan's rather taken with him, too.'

'You don't really think so?' said Louise. The alley led them into the street, St Paul's towering at one end.

'Oh yes,' agreed Barbara. 'She's quite smitten.'

'But he can't feel the same way about her,' said Louise. 'I mean, she's just too young for him...'

Ian continued to tease her about Griffiths. The more Louise denied it, the more entangled she got. They followed the road round the side of St Paul's, back to the exact spot where they'd left the Doctor and the others. There was no one waiting for them. Barbara saw Bamford glance quickly at her watch. The others were late.

'We shouldn't stay out in the open,' said Ian. Louise, too, was all seriousness.

'We can't hang around for them, either,' she said. 'If they've run into trouble, they might have given away our position...'

'The Doctor would never betray us!' said Barbara.

Across the street, car headlights flicked on. The light was blinding in the dark, and they all had to look away. The car sped towards them, gears seething at the effort.

'Damn,' said Louise. 'Want to run for it?'

'There's no point,' said Ian grimly. 'We've nowhere to run to, now.'

'I guess a cell is at least a bed for the night,' nodded Louise.

'We don't know we're being arrested,' said Barbara. 'But if the Doctor and the others were late for their rendezvous then something must have gone horribly wrong.'

'Have you young people been drinking?' The Doctor's sharp tone cut into the night. He was leaning from the driving seat of the car. 'We've been waiting hours for you.' Amazed, delighted, Barbara could only shake her head.

'It's only just after midnight,' said Ian.

'We thought something had happened to you,' muttered the Doctor as he climbed from the car, his bad temper masking his genuine concern for them.

'We're fine,' Barbara told him. 'Louise has just had a bit of a shock, that's all...'

'Louise?'

'That's me,' said Louise.

The Doctor glared first at her, then at Barbara and Ian.

Barbara couldn't meet his gaze. She felt so wretched, the way he looked at her.

'What have you done to her?' he asked.

'I'm a different person now,' Louise told him proudly.

'I can see that, young lady,' he said, aghast. His attention was still fixed on Ian and Barbara. 'What have you two fools done?'

'What is it, Doctor?' asked Griffiths, emerging from the passenger-side door. Susan was close behind him, eager to see what the shouting was about.

'They,' said the Doctor, shaking a finger at his friends. 'They...' It was terrible to see him lost for words.

'We'll never find the TARDIS now,' said Susan, her eyes on Louise. 'Bamford was our only hope.' Barbara turned to Louise, but she had no idea what she was being accused of, either. 'You didn't find the Ship?' asked Ian.

'No,' said the Doctor, more wearily than Barbara had ever known him. 'They weren't using it, they didn't have it. We dealt with what they did have.'

'The time experiments are over,' said Griffiths.

'That's good though, isn't it?' said Barbara. 'It's what you had to do.'

'But it means we're stranded here now,' said Susan. 'We won't ever find the Ship again.'

'We'll just have to make do here,' said Griffiths. 'We can make something better than the future we've all seen.'

The Doctor sighed. 'I admire your intentions, young man, I do. And we should be grateful for what has been achieved. But, you see, the Ship is part of me and without it...'

'We'll get it back,' said Susan. 'Somehow, we'll think of something.'

The Doctor patted her hands. 'It could be anywhere,' he said. 'It could have arrived at any time...'

'But you thought I was going to lead you there...' said Louise.

'There was a chance, yes,' said the Doctor.

'You thought I had it... in the future.'

'Yes,' said the Doctor. 'Evidently.'

Barbara, though, could see what Louise was getting at. 'We didn't tell you we'd met your future self,' she said. 'We met you in thirty years' time, after this, after tonight, and long after you must have discovered about your mother...'

'What exactly, about her mother?' asked the Doctor.

'I never existed,' Louise told him flatly. 'The experiment wrote me out of time.'

'I'm sure that can't -' the Doctor began.

'Vagrants killed my mum before she'd even met my dad. That's going to nix things.'

The Doctor took a step forward. 'I'm sorry,' he said, and clearly he meant it. His thoughts for himself were all forgotten. 'Time is in flux,' he said, 'changing every second. Nothing is safe, nothing.' Barbara saw how his heart went out to her, and she understood. Louise was an exile in time, cut off from everything she had known. She was like the Doctor now.

'But where did Bamford find the TARDIS?' asked Susan. It seemed strange now, to hear Louise called by her surname.

'I can't think what would have become of me if you'd not come to find me,' said Louise. It clearly didn't matter to her why they had done so, she was still grateful.

'But where would you have gone?' Susan persisted.

'I've no idea,' shrugged Louise. 'There's nothing anywhere here for me...'

'You couldn't have stayed out in the cold,' said Ian.

'No.' said Louise. 'I'd have probably looked for shelter. Like those poor people on...' she stopped short, her eyes wide. 'On the Isle of Dogs.'

'Oh,' said Susan.

'I know that "oh",' said the Doctor, rounding on her. 'What have you done, child?'

'I've already told you!' she protested. 'When we first arrived, when we went to find a phone to tell them... It was there, by the traffic-light tree!' Susan was nearly in tears as she tried to get the words out. Ian finished her sentence for her.

'We found a police box,' he said.

Bamford had been given the front seat so she would have the best view as the Doctor drove them back to Canary Wharf. Griffiths sat in the back, squished next to Susan, Barbara and Ian. Susan couldn't sit still, and kept pushing forward to see better or to interrupt the Doctor's conversation. She still hadn't forgiven Griffiths for how rough he'd been with Kelly before, and when he asked her to sit still or to stop bashing him with her elbows, she'd affected not to hear.

'But it wasn't like the TARDIS,' she insisted. 'I couldn't have

recognised it. It was bigger, different. It didn't feel alive...' The Doctor eased onto Commercial Road, taking the corner carefully because of the weight of the car. 'If the Ship had been neglected such a long time,' he said, 'it would have fended for itself. It would shut down systems, update its appearance, try to pass unnoticed. You know it would rather that than be found by anyone, hmm? Especially when it had lost us...' 'But it's still a police box!' said Susan.

'Yes,' said the Doctor. 'Dear, dear, I'd hoped that given enough time it would have worked out how to fix that itself.' Griffiths had seen too much in the last few days to be surprised by the thought of a police box changing its shape. 'So you think it could be the TARDIS?' Susan continued.

'It might be, child, it might be. We will have to see. But you shouldn't get your hopes up. We might still be stuck here for good.'

'But it's not so terrible here,' said Louise. 'We've met good people, and we've only got in trouble where people have been desperate...'

'They're lacking leadership,' Griffiths called from the back. 'Direction,' Louise corrected him. 'That's what they're after.'

'And you think you might be the person to give them that?' The Doctor placed the words carefully, Griffiths noted. He was testing Louise - concerned she might yet still become the old battleaxe they had met before.

'Maybe,' she said. 'It's just frustrating seeing the city in ruins. If we could only get people working for something better...'

'Something better, yes,' said the Doctor.

'But you want to be careful about how you make them work,' said Griffiths. 'You can't just order them about.'

'No,' said Louise. 'But you could play to their aspirations, offer them a better world.'

'That sounds a little fascist; warned Barbara. She obviously saw shades of the future Bamford in this conversation, Bamford the dictator.

'Strength doesn't need to be vicious,' said Louise. 'We should play to their better sides, not to their fears and suspicions.' 'You could make a difference; mused the Doctor, nodding. They were all quiet, as if his approval was all that really mattered. He understood what Louise was proposing, and that it wasn't in any way the same as what General Bamford had been about. She

really was a different person now.

'We can help people; said Griffiths. And he found he was looking forward to it. To build a better world... that was, after all, what he had been fighting for all these long years.

'Yes,' said the Doctor. 'Fear isn't any strength at all. It's weakness. You could give them something better, though. You could use what you know about the future to make something better.' He sounded almost envious of the prospect. 'You could give them hope.'

They continued on, Commercial Road leading them ever nearer to the Isle of Dogs. Eventually they could see the turnoff, onto Westferry Road.

'It was at the next roundabout,' squealed Susan, again jabbing elbows into Griffiths's side. They all craned forward to see.

But there was no traffic-light tree to be seen, only rubbish and ruin. The traffic lights had yet to be built, and there was no sign of any police box.

The Doctor eased the car to a halt at the side of the road. The night was silent around them.

'Maybe we could just have a look round,' he said, utterly bereft. Griffiths could see the toll this disappointment had taken on him. He uncurled himself from the car, and the others spilled out beside him. The night was cool after the enforced snugness of the journey. The Thames shooshed quietly by, while black-on-black silhouettes of buildings suggested phantoms and dangers if they strayed from where they stood. There was no one about. Griffiths was thankful. Susan had taken the Doctor's arm.

'I can almost feel its proximity,' said the Doctor. 'I'm sure the Ship can't be far...'

But there was nothing to be seen. Nobody said it, nobody would say it, but the police box could have arrived decades ago. It could have been taken by anyone. The vagrants could have claimed it, recognising it from their trip through time. They could have carted it off, or dropped it into the Thames. There were no clues left. The Doctor and his friends were prisoners of this time now. Griffiths was glad of it. He and Louise would need allies to help them build their new world.

They stretched their legs, keeping each other in sight at all times. The Doctor and Susan wandered away from the others, down the hill.

I'm sorry,' the Doctor told his granddaughter. 'But perhaps it

better this way. You need a life somewhere.'

They hugged. Griffiths turned away, allowing them privacy. stalked up the road to where Louise and the others were. They were looking across the road and down between dark buildings to West India Quay, where they had all arrived them-Eves. A shabby figure, a man just visible on the quayside had en them. The vagrant now hobbled their way.

'Who is he?' asked Louise.

'I've no idea,' said Ian. 'We don't know anyone here.'

They stood where they were, letting the figure get slowly closer. He was mostly kept hidden by the shadows of warehouses, and he looked used to keeping himself out of sight. His shaven head and shaggy beard gleamed white where they caught moonlight between the buildings. He was old, Griffiths could tell, perhaps in his seventies, though he must have lived rough for a long time.

He reached the last of the buildings, now directly across the road from them, and paused. His clothes were shabby and didn't quite fit, but Griffiths could see the effort he'd made with his appearance. The clothes were clean for all they were ragged. He even wore a tie.

For a moment, Griffiths thought he might be an Andrews, other parody of the one he himself had known. But no, it is clear he wasn't Andrews.

'It's the man who attacked Susan,' said Barbara. 'He's come back.'

The man started across the road towards them. His eyes ere staring.

We'll hold him off,' said Ian, stepping past Barbara off down to the Doctor and Susan. Griffiths, beside squared his shoulders.

'Keep away!' he roared. He wouldn't kill the tramp. He had learnt better than that. Had he not, the man would be dead already. But he would protect the others.

The man kept coming, and Griffiths found himself angry at being forced to tackle him. He resented having to fight. 'We don't want to hurt you.'

The man wavered, considering. He took another step forward. Griffiths took a step forward too. He would let the man strike first, sure he'd be quicker and able to dodge. Suddenly, Susan leapt in front of him.

'Don't hurt him!' she begged.

'But Susan,' began Ian, reaching to drag her out of the way.

‘Don’t you see?’ wailed the girl. ‘Can’t you see who he is?’ She took Ian’s arms, staring up into his face.

‘He’s you!’

Chapter Thirteen

14 July, 1948

There's just time to gasp air before you crash down into the water. It tastes of oil, and industry, and, for all your limbs are thrashing, you cannot get afloat. You're drowning, senses numbing, and it's a glorious relief after your fall through time. As life seeps from you, a vision of the TARDIS still haunts your mind.

Something pats against your head. A pole prods blindly your way again, and you grab it before you've even thought what you're doing. The water clings, but you are heaved to the surface, and then there are workmen lifting you back onto the quayside. They shout words at you, but your head is full of water. You retch grey-green muck across the kerbstones, and the men all leap back. They say you must have just materialised in mid-air. And they're right. You're lucky to be alive, they tell you.

Sudden reality batters your senses, and you can't keep it out. All around you the docks are busy, ships filling the waterways, vast crates of cargo moving here and there on chains. Industry stinks - of fuel and spice and sweat. It's a hot summer's day, and you're allowed space to rest, to dry out, while people work around you. They even bring you food. And they ask no questions.

You find a newspaper, a date, and for a long time you can't believe it.

You walk. You've nowhere to go, but you walk.

17 July, 1948

Their patience is wearing thin, too busy with their work to worry about you. It's like being invisible.

The others haven't come for you, but they will. The Doctor will find a way... He's just running late. Believe that. They've got to come get you, if only for what you've found.

Hunger gnaws the inside of your body. The work never stops, so you have to grab scraps where you see them. The dockers know what you're about now, and some throw things. Sometimes

it's food, but often it's stones, anything to get rid of you.

It's not easy, staying by the quayside with everyone working here. People have started asking questions. Who are you? Where are you from? What do you want here?

You can't possibly answer them. The others had better come soon. They have to.

29 September, 1948

Food. That's all you can think about. Every day, that's all that matters.

You know it's just you now. They're not coming, they can't be coming. The Doctor didn't see you escaping execution, he saw you running away...

It fills you with horror to think of them, stuck in that world. They were going to kill you. Would they have shot Barbara, too? Even now, all those years in the future, is she dead?

And was the Doctor really helping the scientists? You can't stop the questions, the anxiety. You're probably talking to yourself, and even your waking hours are beset with nightmares. You can't get the TARDIS out of your head, the police box hidden in the murk, lost in time and space and pulling your thoughts inside out. You're losing your wits. You know it, and you can't stop it. Maybe all you need is a proper meal, a bath, a change of clothes.

Or maybe your journey through time has destroyed you.

14 May, 1954

The light is too bright and your clothes scratchy and ill-fitting. As you duck through the little door, a well-meaning officer wishes you luck. He calls you 'John' - the name on your papers, the name they made up for you. It's who you are now. Just a made-up name on a piece of paper, the prison your only history.

The case officer says release is a chance to start again. It's wretched having to surrender everything you once were, but it's the only way forward. That's what they tell you.

You think of the treasure. With the money you've been given for this brand new life, you can afford to check it's still there. You

have to know. You have to know if you've missed them.

11 October, 1962

Shoreditch has lured you back. You wander streets you used to know, exactly how you remember them. It's you that's different, old now and weary of it all. You've nothing to show for your long life but the paltry collection of coins in your pocket.

You wander this way because of the work. They said they had work here, and you've come hoping against hope there'll be something for a former convict with no past before his arrest.

But there never is. There's only squeamish apology, a polite, tight-lipped ejection back onto the street. And then the trudge back to Canary Wharf, where the clamour and noise of the quayside have become home.

'Sorry,' says the young man you nearly crash into. You rarely look where you're going these days, but you spin round to growl at him. Whoever he is, he acknowledged you. You exist.

The young man looks at you and you see the pity in his eyes. And it's like looking in a mirror. He's you. He's what you once were, immaculate in his suit, on his way to another day's schooling.

You want to tell him. Not to go, not to do anything. Your voice cracks, and all you can do is hiss at him. You almost burst with rage and misery.

'Sorry,' he says again, and he obviously means it. Then he's gone, and you know you're already forgotten because you don't recall this moment yourself. You can't bear ever to let him see you again.

No. There's someone else you can tell, who can change everything. There's someone else who will understand what's become of you, and what can be done to change it. You just have to wait for him.

1 November, 1963

The smog. Hungry. Cold. You can't remember what date you disappeared on, but it was around this time of year. You stand outside the junkyard, waiting for him to turn up. You've been

here a few nights now, and it's not easy considering what you look like. People tend to call the police when they see you hanging about.

You see the Doctor. He strides along, muttering to himself, scarf wrapped tight under his chin. He looks younger than you do. You're paralysed with fear.

You go to him. As you approach, he raises his head defiantly, refusing to be afraid. You're the one who's terrified. You have to ask him, though. Can he undo this?

'Well?' he says. You hate the way he peers at you. You'd tower over him if you could only stand up straight.

You stutter. The words won't come out right, and it's all just noise. It's been a long time since you tried a conversation. He looks at you, and he smiles like he understands. It's all going to be all right. Tears prick at your eyes. You almost want to throw your arms around him.

The Doctor fishes in his pocket, then holds out some coins to you.

You're too appalled, too embarrassed, too desperately in need of the money, to refuse. And you slink away again into the night, knowing that you've failed.

16 March, 1964

One of the workmen crosses the road, and your first instinct is just to run away. But the man's smiling, and he's holding out a sandwich. You snatch the food from his hand, but let him sit on the wall beside you. The sandwich is cheese and pickles, an explosion of wondrous flavour. You grunt your thanks.

'Know the bloke, did you?' the man says.

You shake your head. Of course not.

'Bit of a rogue, they're saying,' says the man. 'Schoolteacher. Ran off with a woman he worked with. And one of their pupils!' He hacks and spits onto the pavement. 'You work it out,' he says.

The man offers you a cigarette, and you both sit smoking, watching the man's colleagues load your old possessions into a van. Each item triggers a dim memory. You had a life once, you were happy.

There's no one here you recognise. None of your friends or family have come to see this. When the men drop a cardboard

box, scattering books all across the street, there's no one to care or complain.

You'd have been better off dead. They would show more respect.

28 July, 1966

People are leaving London. The ones the Machine hasn't taken over are pouring from the city, carrying their lives on their backs. You're one of them now, no dirtier or worse off. In fact, you're better practised at living rough, at scavenging. You can help them.

The future you've seen is catching up with you now. You've avoided television and radio, and you've survived. You've seen what it's done to some of them, the poor undead, no control of their limbs, smashing up the city as the Machine commands. No one knows what they'll do to fight back.

But you know they'll find something. You've seen it, and you'll help them. For the first time in years you have a purpose.

16 September, 1967

'It's never going to be okay,' you say. 'She's never coming back to us.'

Joan stares at you. In the weeks and hours you planned this conversation, prepared every word you would say, she always responded differently. She got angry, or she laughed, or she broke down and wept. But now, playing it out for real, Barbara's mother just sits and stares at you. It's you who is the mess of emotions, wanting both to laugh and cry at once. You can see Barbara in her face, worn and grey like your own reflection.

'Tell me everything,' says Joan, simply. And you do.

18 April, 1971

'You're a good man, Ian,' she wheezes, saliva dribbling from the corner of her mouth. You wipe it away with your handkerchief, wishing you knew what else to do. Her body's been broken by the

effort of the last years. You hold her hand.

‘I ran away,’ you say. ‘I left them there.’

She forces a smile, and you know that time is short. She’s fading away from you.

‘No,’ she says. That’s all. An hour later, she’s dead.

18 October, 1972

You curse yourself for your cowardice, but the shock was just too great. The delight at seeing Susan, and just as you remembered her. And then the horror of yourself being there too. The younger you, like the man you bumped into before.

It has taken a night’s discussion with yourself to fathom the sense of it. But you get there by mid-morning. The hoop must have copied you, like what-was-his-name and the others. That’s why they never came looking for you. They didn’t desert you, they just didn’t know. It’s brilliant and terrible, your whole life just some ghastly misunderstanding.

You search for them, and you find the room where they’ve been staying. A woman downstairs tells you that you’re too late, though. They’ve left again, trooped off with some woman they’ve met.

No! You’ve lost them again!

But you know they’ll have to come back for you. They’ll have to. Because of what you’ve found. It still sits there, unclaimed. You’ll wait for them. They won’t be gone long, and you’ve learnt to be patient.

Barbara didn’t know what to think. She could see for herself who the man was. Despite how skinny he was, despite the ragged, grey beard and the skinhead, and despite the wildness of his eyes, yes, he was Ian. This sad creature was the same man she had fallen in love with.

‘It’s going to be all right,’ said the Doctor, approaching. He took the man’s hands, the sort of thing a nurse might do with an over-anxious patient.

Barbara looked to Ian, her Ian. His face was pale, and when she touched his arm he seemed not to notice.

‘It is going to be all right,’ she told him.

‘You came,’ said this other Ian to the Doctor, his voice gruff and uneven. ‘I knew you’d have to.’

'Yes,' said the Doctor. 'I'm afraid it took us longer than we meant.'

'He's been here decades!' said Griffiths.

'But how's it even possible?' asked Louise, glancing from the man to his younger self.

'Now, now,' snapped the Doctor, never taking his eyes from the older Ian. 'Don't talk about Chesterton as if he isn't here.'

The older Ian withdrew his hand, standing up tall as if to prove to them that he was still a force to be reckoned with. He must have seen their horror at the state he was in.

'I know what you're looking for,' he said, struggling to sound calm. Barbara realised he wouldn't look at her. She could hardly imagine what he'd been through. It was horrifying.

The Doctor narrowed his eyes. 'You've found the Ship, haven't you, Ian?'

The old Ian bobbed his head, his matted beard shaking around him. He was like some tribal shaman, thought Barbara, a man both crazed and wise. Realising they were waiting for him, he turned and pointed back to the quayside, back to the kerbstones where they'd all arrived.

'It's in the water,' he said. 'I've seen it there.'

'Of course!' said the younger Ian. 'That's why we landed where we did! The TARDIS in the water drew us from the lab and over to the quayside.'

'Yes!' nodded his older self. 'It's acted like a lodestone.'

'Everyone who has stepped through the hoop,' said the Doctor, 'has been drawn to the TARDIS. It would be a better anchor than anything the portal could come up with.'

'But there are two TARDISES!' said the younger Ian. 'One here, in the water, and the other in 2006.'

'And everyone's been landing somewhere between them,' said Susan. 'All those branches of time, and all ending up in the same world. Because of the Ship.'

'Because of the Ship,' agreed the older Ian. He turned away from them, looking back over at the quay. 'It's done all of this.'

'And you've guarded it, knowing we'd return,' the Doctor said, the relief evident in his words. 'You're a good man, Chesterton, a good man.'

Old Ian didn't turn back to them, but Barbara could tell he was crying.

Barbara was woken early by Griffiths, and she dumbly nodded acknowledgement and picked herself up off the floor. Their room overlooking the quay had been undisturbed, even the cooking pots and pans had been waiting for them. Sleep had been easy after the long day's walking.

The younger Ian was stood guard, but the others were still all asleep. Barbara and Griffiths made their way outside. The morning had a wintry chill about it as they ventured through the streets. The Isle of Dogs was quiet, dead at this hour. Barbara could hear snoring in some of the dilapidated buildings they passed.

They did not speak; there was nothing to say, and besides it would have spoilt the freshness of the morning air. Turning a corner, they were suddenly caught up in a throng of people. The market had just begun.

Again, Barbara was amazed by the bustle and noise, people clamouring round the small boats, themselves crowded onto the shore. It was far busier than when they had visited three days before, but then they were here earlier, and there were bargains still to be had. As they got closer, Barbara's stomach turned somersaults at the smell of fish, and meats and spices. Bright colours of cloth caught her eye, and she even spied a small basket of oranges, jealously guarded by the sailors who'd brought them.

'A fiver?' scoffed Griffiths, turning his nose up at the joints of meat. 'You're not serious.'

Everyone turned to look at him, a sudden quiet at the disturbance. Griffiths ignored them. He held the gaze of the burly man behind the counter.

'You don't have to buy anything,' said the man.

'I'm sure it's all excellent,' agreed Griffiths. 'But it's not worth what you're asking.'

'You gotta factor in what it takes to get it here.'

'Oh, I am, I am,' said Griffiths, gripping the lapels of his coat.

Barbara suddenly realised what he was up to. He was playing at being the Doctor.

In front of him, the would-be buyers whispered to each other, the value of the goods now up in the air. The burly man saw their debate and rushed forward, arms out.

'There's nothing wrong with my stock,' he assured them. It

sounded like panic. In an instant, price was in freefall. Customers bid under each other, so that a joint was four pounds, then three-and-ten, three-and-five... Neighbouring sellers tried to weigh in, to profit from the burly man's disadvantage. But the shoppers had learnt how to play the game now, and soon the whole market was crashing. Just a few days before, the money Barbara and Griffiths had on them had only bought scraps. Now they bought up as much as they could carry; meats, vegetables, eggs, even the basket of oranges.

'That was incredible,' said Barbara as they trudged back to the quayside with their haul.

'Nothing to it,' grinned Griffiths. 'Just economics. Lack of confidence from the buyer...'

Something had changed in him, she could see. Oh, he still played off different factions to get his own way. And yet she could see something different in his eyes. There was a light there, where before she'd thought him cold and callous. He had regarded the people around him with warmth, not detachment. And he was having fun - as, she realised, was she.

Once breakfast was cooking, it became easy to garner support. Even as Ian talked to one pair of vagrants about what was wanted, another group offered to help. You could tell they had all once been scientists, he thought. The promise of a project to work on, a theory to test, was almost as alluring as the promise of a proper meal. They were a motley bunch, wretched and wild-eyed. At least three of them were Andrews; Ian couldn't identify the rest.

While Barbara and Griffiths handed out sausage and eggs to the newly appointed crew, the Doctor explained what was wanted. It was almost like a question in an O-level exam, thought Ian. A cuboid of particular dimensions and mass was submerged at an angle to the quayside, and some kind of system was required to extract it.

'So how are we going to do it?' asked Louise, ever the practical one.

The Doctor considered, then looked over the dozen raggedy people assembled before him, like a schoolroom for tramps.

'Does anyone have a suggestion?' he asked. Of course, the Doctor would already have devised a solution himself, Ian knew. But he was showing a more impressive sort of cunning now. By

asking the question, he involved the new recruits, and for the first time in who knew how long, he had got these people thinking. They had all been scientists once, test pilots from different branches of the future. They could be scientists again.

‘Yes?’ prompted the Doctor, as a man who might once have been an Andrews raised his hand.

‘A pulley?’ suggested the man.

‘Good, yes,’ said the Doctor. ‘But what sort of pulley?’

‘A pivot?’ said another of the vagrants - a woman Ian didn’t recognise. They were struggling. Beside the Doctor, Susan was sitting on her hands, forcing herself not to shout out the answers. She had changed, too, Ian thought, grown up since her days in his classroom.

‘We could always just heave the thing out by brute force,’ suggested Griffiths, doling out the last of the fried eggs. As he had no doubt intended, his proposal earned him a rueful laugh. The crew needed something more scientific, more elegant. Yes, thought Ian, they were all a team now.

‘H-how about...’ said a hoarse voice from the back of the group. They all turned to look. Ian’s older, shabbier self seemed petrified by the attention.

‘Go on, sir,’ prompted the Doctor.

Ian watched his other self concentrate. ‘I thought,’ he said, ‘we could use an A-frame.’

The Doctor clapped his hands together. ‘That’s exactly it,’ he exclaimed. The others were soon helping him agree the details, but Ian had stopped listening to them. He was intent on his other self, sat at the back of, the group and ignored by the ongoing debate. The man was grinning, amazed at getting the right answer.

By mid-afternoon, the A-frame had been built. The Isle of Dogs was scattered about with abandoned warehouses and supply buildings, so the timber and rope had been easy to come by. The Doctor had kept well back, letting Louise and Susan supervise the construction. The women were good at organising, and at filtering everyone’s ideas into clear objectives. They got both Ians to help with the knots.

It took six of them to stand the A-frame, and it towered thirty feet, high over their heads. The two legs, strapped together at the top, might once have been telegraph poles, Ian thought.

‘Someone’s going to have to get into the water,’ said Susan. ‘To tie the ropes round the Ship.’

Nobody volunteered themselves. The water looked dank and dirty, and anyway it was mid-October. They nudged their neighbours, teasing each other. One man suggested Louise should be the one to go swimming. Yes, the men were regaining their old, army humour.

‘I’ll do it,’ said Ian, because no one else was going to.

‘I’ll help,’ said Griffiths. They stripped down to shorts and vests, and Griffiths sat on the quayside and dangled his legs over into the water.

‘It’s fine,’ he said, and eased himself down. Brown water slapped around his shoulders.

Ian clambered over the edge of the quay. Griffiths had lied: it was freezing. The crew laughed at his cry of dismay. He trod water, his whole body reeling against the oily cold all round him. Yet there could be no backing out now, not with Barbara watching him.

There was something else about the water, and something more unsettling than the temperature. It wasn’t just the cold that was making his skin tingle. There was a vibration. ‘I can feel it,’ he said. ‘I can feel the Ship down beneath us.’ They threw him the ends of the rope. It was as thick as his wrist and hard to work with, grazing the skin from his fingers. There was little point delaying; he took a deep breath and plunged himself down into the deep. The water was impenetrably dark. If he held an arm out in front of him, the hand was lost in the murk. Ian swam, kicking his legs hard behind him, hating the feel of dank water in his nostrils and ears. He hated to think what diseases he risked catching; as a child he’d been warned about swimming in the Thames.

Yet he was drawn onward and down. For all he could not see, he could feel the direction to swim in. The rope paid out behind his legs as he descended. The water grew darker and darker, gradually blinding him.

There was light. Eerie in the green-brown murk, a light bulged towards him. He swam nearer. Askew on the floor of the quay stood the TARDIS. The lantern on its roof shone brightly, and there was light from behind the frosted windowpanes.

Ian swam round it, looping the rope. His hands were clumsy, the thickness of the rope hard to manage. He was also short on

air. But pride wouldn't let him leave this job to Griffiths. His older self has spent his life guarding the Ship here, and Ian felt if he owed it to the man to get it out of the water himself. The rope scoured his hands raw, but he managed something like a reef knot, and wedged the rope up, under the lintel at the top of the TARDIS doors. He hoped that would be enough to hold it for the journey to the surface. Then, giddy from exertion, he kicked off from the roof of the police box. His lungs clenched as he fought his way to the surface, and for a moment he thought he wouldn't last.

He exploded out, into the afternoon, whooping and hacking as he breathed again. Hands reached for him. He was dimly aware of Griffiths, helping him climb from the water, and he was grateful. There was a blanket around his shoulders, and there were congratulations. And Barbara was with him.

'There's nothing so satisfying as a bit of manual labour,' said the Doctor.

'No,' said Ian. 'Or a good meal.'

The two old men had dished out the food, letting the workers enjoy themselves. Ian also wanted to keep his distance from his younger self. And from Barbara. He couldn't bear the thought of speaking to her, terrified of what he might say.

The TARDIS stood dripping on the quayside, the rope still around it. It had taken them longer than they'd expected, so dinner was ready and waiting by the time the task was complete. The crew were tired, yet exhilarated. They chatted, compared notes on what they could have done better, or just told stories and jokes. Barbara's stew had gone down well, and now there was a jubilant, party atmosphere. Yet, watching people chat and laugh, Ian felt somehow apart from it all. He knew that the Doctor would be leaving soon.

'I don't know what I'd have done if you'd never come back,' said Ian.

'Louise would have found you,' replied the Doctor simply. 'She would have been on her own, angry and confused, and you would have shown her where the Ship was.'

'I would never have -'

'Yes you would, Chesterton,' said the Doctor. 'If nothing else, she would have made you. She had to find it somehow, to have had it locked away in the future. You had a part to play in

making her the woman we saw her become, and in the future she created.'

'She would have killed me.'

'Possibly.'

'She's not going to kill me now.'

'No.'

Ian looked over at the Doctor, wanting to argue about the unfairness of it all. The Doctor was gazing wistfully at the TARDIS.

'You want to go look her over, don't you?' said Ian.

'The TARDIS has been waiting a long time,' said the Doctor. 'I can't help but feel -'

'I'd like to come with you,' said Ian.

The Doctor regarded him. After a moment's thought, he said, 'Come along then.'

They got to their feet. It seemed strange, being as old and creaky as the Doctor. They sidled around the edge of the young people, and reached the door of the Ship. The Doctor fussed in his waistcoat pocket for the key.

'Don't go anywhere without us!' called Barbara, cheerily. The Doctor waved her away, then bobbed his head under the thick rope, and went in. Ian followed close behind him.

The Ship was just as he remembered from the quarter of a century since he had last been inside it. Immaculate, alien, at once soothing and unsettling. Ian took his old place, next to the Doctor at the console, watching the not-so-old man checking over the controls. It was almost as if he had never been away. The Ship really did exist outside of time. 'I thought one day,' said Ian, 'that I'd understand all this. That you'd teach us how it worked.'

'Really?' asked the Doctor, turning to him. 'You had only to have asked! This panel is how we know how the TARDIS is feeling.' He clicked some buttons. 'These, if they worked, would change the outside appearance. We've not always been a police box, you know. There was a Corinthian column, and a Christmas tree and -'

'Doctor,' said Ian, 'I think it's too late to teach me now.'

'Nonsense!' the Doctor said, patting his shoulder affectionately. 'It's never too late to learn anything. Even at my age - which is considerably more than yours, even now - there's a universe of wonders still to find out about.'

Ian nodded. 'I know,' he said. 'But I'm not coming with you.'

The Doctor sighed. 'You think you'll be in the other one's way?'

'He *can* make Barbara happy.'

'Yes,' said the Doctor. 'Yes, I think he can. You're a good man, Chesterton. You've taught me a great deal in the time we've been together and I'm grateful to you. Yes, I'm grateful.'

'Thank you, Doctor.'

'And it looks like you'll have people here to help build something. A better world than the one we saw.'

Ian grinned. 'We can change history, then?' he said.

'Of course we can! And you don't need a time machine to do it, either. We only have to choose to make things different. That's all.'

'Bamford has chosen, hasn't she?'

'Yes, I rather think she has.'

'What happened to her?'

'She's discovered she was never born in this world. Vagrants killed her mother, people from round here.'

'You mean... people like me and Andrews and the others.'

'Yes, I'm afraid so. Desperate people, without hope. It rather explains her behaviour in the future.'

'I suppose so.'

'But whereas there she had been on her own to deal with that discovery, this time she was with your younger self. He and Barbara helped her through the shock, they helped her to deal with it.'

'They took her to the pub, didn't they?'

'Yes, they did,' laughed the Doctor. 'It doesn't need to be a great change to make things different. Just an act of kindness, just the effort of will.' He turned to Ian, and took him by the hand. 'I am sorry to lose you, Ian Chesterton,' he said. 'But I think you've made the right decision, and the brave one. The future will be very different. Just you see.'

'You seem pleased. You've made things better than they were, but what about the importance of not changing history?'

'That's all very well,' said the Doctor. He looked at Ian and his eyes twinkled. But, after all we've been through together now, I should say some things are worth fighting for, don't you?'

Barbara watched them emerge from the TARDIS, lugging a wooden box between them, and she knew. The older Ian would remain behind. She knew better than to speak to him about it,

too. He had kept away from her, and she had to respect that. She had to respect what he was giving her, and how difficult it must be for him to do so. Speaking to him would only make it harder.

A cheer went up as the wooden box was opened. The Doctor had brought them a case of wine. He produced a corkscrew from his pocket, and soon open bottles were being passed round to swig from. The Doctor also had two glasses, and he and Barbara drank their wine from those. They sat together by her makeshift stove, watching the others as the meal became a party. Other vagrants had arrived, cautious at first, but then keen to join in. They brought their own food, and one even had a guitar. There was music. Griffiths led a team chopping up the A-frame, and they soon had a campfire going. It seemed the right way to see off their day's efforts. The older Ian was at the heart of the party, forcing himself to have a good time.

'He's not coming with us,' said Barbara to the Doctor. 'It's his decision, my dear.'

'Yes.' said Barbara. 'But what did he say to you?'

'Nothing you don't already know.'

Ian - her Ian - came over. 'You've been tinkering with the Ship.' he said. 'The windows are open!'

They looked. The frosted glass had hinged backwards, as if to let in the air. The Doctor shook his head sadly.

'Is that all it did? You'd be looking at some dockside equipment, not a police box, if only the TARDIS was working.' he said. 'I meant to show your other self the controls. Something he'd always meant to ask for. Do you know, Chesterton, I had no idea of your aspirations to fly my Ship.'

'Don't worry' said Ian. 'We're just passengers.'

'Well, I hope you're more than that!' He took a sip of wine. 'You're thinking about getting home, aren't you?'

Ian looked to Barbara, as if for help. 'We could stay here, you know,' he said. 'It's not far from where we left off.'

'Barbara?' asked the Doctor. Barbara looked away, not knowing what she wanted. She watched the party. Louise and Griffiths were dancing arm in arm, the people around them clapping in time to the music. People told stories, vagrants who until today had never spoken to each other sharing the lives they had known. They were all different, and yet each future could have been improved. This party was a celebration for recovering lost lives, but it was also about a renewed sense of purpose.

Tomorrow, they were going to change the world.

Susan came over to them, offering Ian a half-bottle of wine. Her cheeks were flushed where she, too, had been drinking. The Doctor put his arm around her waist, indulging her this once.

‘We’ll be going soon, I suppose?’ she said.

‘Yes,’ said Barbara, her mind made up. ‘Let’s leave them to it.’

‘You don’t want to stay?’ the Doctor asked Susan. She turned to face him, amazed. The Doctor held her gaze. ‘What we’ve done here,’ he said levelly, ‘will be noticed. We might not be safe any more.’

Susan threw her arms around him. ‘I’ll never leave you!’

He relented, patting her back. ‘I know you won’t,’ he said into her ear. ‘I know.’ It didn’t seem possible they could ever be parted, and yet the Doctor’s eyes were on Barbara. She could see how pained he was, how much his need to protect his granddaughter tore against his need to keep her close. She wondered again what the old man was afraid of. Who would be watching out for them - his own people, maybe? The Doctor wasn’t saying.

‘I think we’ll try to get you home,’ he said.

‘Us?’ said Ian, glancing quickly at Barbara. ‘You really think you can do that?’

‘You doubt me, young man?’

‘Of course not, Doctor.’ smiled Ian. ‘If you say you can do it...’

‘We’re close to your own time here. It’s merely a question of adjusting the date, and travelling in time but not space.’

Susan pulled back from him. ‘It’s not that easy,’ she said. Barbara was less worried about his ability to steer the Ship than the others. Another question seemed more pressing. ‘If you can get us home,’ she said. ‘Knowing what we do, can we change what we’ve seen from happening?’

The Doctor regarded her gravely. ‘You mustn’t interfere with history,’ he said.

‘But you can’t tell us that now!’ laughed Ian. ‘We already know we change history every time we step out of the Ship.’

‘Yes!’ snapped the Doctor. ‘And that’s what gets us into so much hot water!’

Ian looked to Barbara. She took his hand. Was it possible? Could the Doctor get them home? She didn’t want to get her own hopes up - and she knew from experience the Doctor was less in control of his Ship than he let on. But to get back home, to see

her mother, to be back where she belonged...

'Yes, please,' she said. 'If you can, then take us home.'

The Doctor nodded. He led them round the dancing, singing revelry and over to the Ship. As she reached the doorway, Barbara glanced back. Louise and Griffiths were still together, too wrapped up in each other to notice. It would only cause a fuss to say goodbye. The vagrants - no, the test pilots - were laughing and singing and alive.

'Some rest, a change of clothes, and then 1963,' said the Doctor as he opened the door to the Ship. The others trooped in behind him. Barbara paused in the doorway.

Only one person met her eye. The old Ian watched her. He smiled, sadly, letting her go. Barbara nodded, and followed her friends into the Ship.

Epilogue

26 June, 1965

The bus conductor regarded them coolly. 'Where've you been, on the moon?'

Ian grinned. 'No, but you're getting warm.'

Barbara prodded him in the arm. 'Shh!' she said, and then started laughing. Ian laughed with her. After all their time with the Doctor, they were home.

The conductor, though, was clearly in no mood for a couple of jokers. Ian sat forward again, wiping a tear from his eye. He rummaged in the pocket of his cream trousers, and found the envelope of money the Doctor had given him.

'How much to King's Cross, then?' he asked.

'Two sixes,' said the man. Ian rifled through the envelope of notes and coins. It meant nothing to him. There were ones and twos and twenty-pound notes, but all of a kind he didn't recognise. A clipped 'twenty pence' coin said it had been minted in 1982, while a shilling had a man's face on it where the Queen ought to have been. The profile was not of her son.

He held the money out in his cupped hands, and the conductor took what he wanted. Ian thanked him for the paper ticket, and he and Barbara sat back to enjoy the ride. He again thumbed his way through the money he'd been given.

'You know what this is?' he asked Barbara. She was too busy lazing out of the window 'It's the money from the future. You remember Colonel Andrews?'

Barbara turned. 'Yes,' she said. 'I was thinking about him. was thinking about them all.'

A chill ran through Ian. They had seen the future, they knew what was coming. He took Barbara's hand. Outside, London bustled as it always had, and just as he remembered it. Making heir way through the city, sat on a Routemaster, even the route it took from town... everything was so familiar to him. He had to repeat the words to himself, over and over. They really had got back home.

At King's Cross, they had to run to catch up with the 214, leaping up onto the step as it pulled away. Once they had taken their seats, the conductor ambled over, and this time Ian knew to ask for two sixes. Apart from some pennies, they were now out of

legitimate currency. They got off the bus at Old Street. A ten-minute walk down Great Eastern Street would lead them back to Shoreditch.

They walked down the street, smiling, laughing and holding hands. Small things had changed. Some shops were different. 'There are fewer men wearing ties,' said Barbara.

'And the skirts are shorter,' grinned Ian.

'It's different.'

'The Doctor said it would be,' said Ian.

They stopped at the corner of Holywell Lane, the cut-through to the area where they'd both worked and lived. Barbara seemed hesitant to go on.

'What is it?' he asked her.

'What if we can't change things?' she said. 'What if the Machine still takes over?'

Ian considered. 'Then we'll make the most of what time we *do* have,' he said. 'However long that may be.'

Barbara nodded. Then she leaned forward and kissed him squarely on the mouth. Ian put his arms around her and kissed back. Somewhere down the street, a passer-by wolf-whistled. Barbara, still kissing him, laughed.

'Come on,' she said. 'There's somebody waiting for us.'

She led him down Redchurch Street, and then left towards Arnold Circus. They stopped outside a simple, unremarkable house, and Barbara squeezed his hand. She rang the bell. After a moment, a small, elderly woman opened the door. She peered up at them, and her mouth fell open.

Barbara held the woman in her arms tightly. Ian stood back, giving them space. After a long time, the women withdrew, both holding onto each other, both weeping with joy. The old woman regarded Ian, and he could see Barbara's face in her features.

'You're the one who took her from me?' she said.

Barbara interceded. 'He's the one who brought me back,' she said, taking Ian's hand again. Her smile was contagious, and even the old woman couldn't resist. Smiling she took Ian's other hand and shook it.

'How do you do?' she said.

'Mum,' said Barbara. 'This is Ian. He's brought me home.'

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About the Author

Simon Guerrier is a freelance writer. He lives in London with a bright wife and a dim cat. This is his first novel.