

THE
DOCTOR WHO
PROJECT

**And the child shall
lead them**



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*“Even a good man sees evil days so long as his good deed does not ripen;
but when his good deed ripens, then does the good man see good things.”*

– The Wisdom of the Buddha

Strange music drifted through the hallway as Finn'tan made her way to her friend's office. Many of the people that passed the slender woman greeted her warmly. Some even bowed their heads slightly, as they bustled around carrying out various tasks. Many were in a rush to finish their duties so that they may have time to go home and prepare themselves for the upcoming holiday.

This was Finn's favorite time of the year. While everyone who lived on Kalen were, on the whole, nice people, this holiday season brought out the absolute best in everyone. And even though it was against her religious training, as a member of the Religious Order of P'al, she still got a little bit of glee out of the extra respect she was shown during this time of year. *Oh dear*, she thought to herself, *I shall have to offer up an extra prayer for pride this evening* But the corner of her eyes still had a slight smile crease.

Chela Dros, secretary of the Council of Kalen, smiled as Finn approached her desk. “Greetings of the season, Cara Finn'tan.”

“And to you, Chela.” Finn smiled as Chela rose slowly from behind her desk, her pregnant belly coming into view. “And when is the babe to come?”

Chela groaned. “It seems I have been pregnant for an eternity now! But the doctor said within the month.”

“And do you know what it shall be?”

“No, we have decided to let it be a surprise, a late Esh'Ri'Ul present for us both.”

Finn laughed. “Well, please pass along my best wishes of the season to your husband and...”

Suddenly the strange music that had been filling the long hallway increased in volume. Finn looked to Chela, her brown eyes inquisitive.

Chela shrugged as she collected her belongings. "Do not ask me. That noise has been coming out of that office for the last two hours. I have no idea what she is up to this year."

"Her poor parents. Well," she said as she offered Chela her bags, "you had best be off to your family for the holiday. And again, have a Happy Esh'Ri'Ul."

Chela slung her bags over her shoulder and turned to leave. "And you, Cara Finnt'an." She suddenly turned back, yelling, "And do not let her talk you into another of her crazy plans!"

Finn laughed as she approached the large, heavy wooden door; the plate on it read *Emmiaryssa Trakvoir. Translator/Customs Diplomat- Council of Kalen*. As she pushed open the door, the music became deafening. Finn winced as she scanned the room for her oldest friend. The office was in its normal state; it looked like a battlefield. Dozens of huge wooden bookcases vomited books and papers of every size, shape, color and texture. Notebooks full of hand written notes and passages sat open at different intervals throughout the office. Finn finally located the source of the noise. It was coming from an antiquated piece of Earth technology that she believed was called a 'gramophone'. All this chaos and no sign of its ringleader. "Mia!"

Suddenly a head popped up from underneath a large wooden desk, light brown hair sticking out in all directions. "Yes?"

Finn pointed to the gramophone, twirled her wrist around and mouthed, "Can you turn this down?"

Mia glanced, confused, from her friend to the object she was indicating. "Oh!" She jumped up, scattering numerous papers in the process, and ran to the object. She grabbed the large spindle and removed it from the spinning black plate that lay beneath. "I am sorry! I did not realize how loud it was."

"I am not surprised being trapped under your desk like that." Finn looked around for an uncluttered place to sit down. Not finding one, she decided to make her own. She swept her robe, a shade of brown slightly lighter than her skin, behind her as she sat in a small armchair. "What was that noise anyway?"

Mia looked up, hurt. "It is not noise! It is a piece of music from another planet."

"Earth, I expect."

"Of course! It is a hobby of mine after all." She lifted the plate from the turning circle of the gramophone and gently placed it back into a large, white folded sheet of paper. "It is from a composer named Beethoven. The piece is entitled '*The Ode to Joy*'. I thought it would be a nice addition to our family's Esh'Ri'Ul celebration tonight." Her blue-green eyes were practically dancing with glee.

"I believe your mother will have something to say about that," she laughed. "Why that particular piece?"

"It is Beethoven's musical representation of Universal Brotherhood. I thought it an appropriate message for the holiday." She turned and smiled at her friend. "Do you not agree, Cara Finnt'an?"

Finn smiled. "Yes of course, my child," her voice dripping with sarcasm, "quite an appropriate message indeed."

"Do not let the Maistir Cara see that smirk on your face. He might send you on another walkabout for purity."

"Uh, I could not stand another walkabout. I still have blisters from the last time." Finn looked at her timepiece. "When is your family expecting you?"

"In the fifth night hour."

She smiled. "So you intend to make it half way across the district in five minutes?"

"What?" Mia ran across the room, grabbing Finn's timepiece. "Oh no! Father will kill me!" She ran back to her desk and began to throw books and papers into a bag.

Finn vacated her chair, mostly due to a fear that she would be impaled by a rogue Earth antique. "Is Jolar's family going to be in attendance?"

Mia stopped cold. "I believe so." She returned to her collection.

"Mia, I know you do not want to marry him..."

"Finn, I cannot stand the man! He has the personality and imagination of... a Dern bug! There is nothing to him but math and statistics."

"Well, I think..."

Finn was cut off as Mia's office shook slightly. As they looked at each other, another vibration, more violent this time, rocked the small space. Books threw themselves off shelves, various antiques swayed into their nearest neighbors.

Mia turned to grab the gramophone. "What in the..."

An ear shattering thud pierced though the space, causing both women to drop to their knees. The room was shaking uncontrollably this time; chairs overturning, glasses crashing to the floor and shattering into uncountable pieces. Mia reached her hand to Finn and pulled her under the large desk. After a few mind numbing moments, the shaking began to slow.

Finn carefully poked her head out from under the desk, calling back, "Are you all right?"

"I think so. What was that?" Mia crawled out from the back end of the desk.

"I do not know. Come; let us see if anyone is hurt."

Mia and Finn pulled open the office door to find the hallway in as bad a state as the office they had just left. A few people were still in the halls, dazed looks on their faces, glancing around to see if everyone else has just had the same experience. As Finn bent down to help a man who has been hit by a piece of falling wall, a scream pierced the air.

"The sky! Look at the sky!"

Mia ran to the woman at the window, grabbing her shoulders. "What is this now? What are you talking about?"

The woman soundlessly pointed outside.

Mia looked up.

And all she saw was the color of blood running across her once blue-green world.

The gentle hum of the TARDIS was not comforting. The Doctor twisted a few knobs and dials. Seeing his face reflected in the glass surrounding the column, he was shocked by the darkness he saw in and under his eyes. "Alone again," he whispered. Then louder he called to the TARDIS, "Just you and I girl, and the wide universe." The TARDIS didn't answer him. She never did these days. She was getting old. *And so am I.*

"I don't know why I even bother. Things never get any better. It's always death, death, death... No one ever learns, and nothing ever changes." The Doctor flipped a few more switches idly not really effecting flight, just needing to do something with his hands. A stray thought came into his head. "I need a rest. What about you, eh? We could lie on the shores of the Bedouin Beaches near the Eye of Orion. I could relearn to fish. You could... well, sit there getting bombarded by positive ions."

The lights dimmed slightly in the control room and the Doctor took that as a sign of consent. Flipping dials and switches in earnest now, he programmed in the coordinates for the Eye of Orion, carefully planning his trip around the last time he was there. No sense in running into yourself when you were already in a foul mood. It wasn't as if he wanted to bring himself down or anything. Once the date, time and spatial coordinates were entered, some of the tension left his body. "Yes," he said aloud, "what I need is a good long rest."

Locking the TARDIS into autopilot, he left the console room for a lie down. It would take a few hours to reach his destination. He planned to have a cup of chamomile, get into pajamas for once and have a proper rest. As the control room doors closed behind him the console lit up with particles of gold TARDIS energy. The numbers and dials on the TARDIS spun to a new date, time and spatial coordinates. If anyone had been there to hear it, they would have heard a very self satisfied hum coming from the old Type 40.

The green gaseous halls of the ship glowed with the ready lights. Four billowing violet cloaks hovered around controls turning steadily from amber to magenta. Hands more bone than flesh made minor adjustments to dials. The tallest cloaked figure stirred, his

eyes glowing deep within the cloak. When it spoke its voice was whispery silk. "Population?"

"Twenty-thousand in this hemisphere alone," one of the figures responded in the same light tones. "Ssseelen has fired the softening rounds. The cattle are panicking as expected."

"Excellent. Take an extraction team to the surface. Begin with the Capital buildings. Once their leaders are gone, the people will panic. Then we will target the cities. Ready the rockets. Fire more volleys into the buildings. The taste of fear always improves the meat, don't you think?"

The cloaked figures hissed in appreciation before releasing several volleys. The rockets crashed down on the Capital like a destructive rain. On screen the bipeds screamed and raced around having no idea of the further horrors awaiting them.

The TARDIS landed with a gentle bump. The Doctor was still in his silk pajamas. Dropping the Dorothy Parker novel he had been reading he popped up gleefully. "We're here! That was a very nice landing. Maybe the old girl's still got some life in her yet. Well let's see the gentle rolling fields of the Eye of Orion!" Flipping the dial he had designated for the scanner screen this week, he watched the image form and turn immediately to interference. "Or maybe not."

Irritated, the Doctor left the control room to change, returning a few minutes later fully dressed and with a hammer. Giving the console a love tap, he watched the screen hopefully. Again he was disappointed. "Oh well, I guess I'll just have to do things the old fashioned way."

He opened the doors and walked out, not into the peaceful rolling lawns and gently lapping oceans of the Eye of Orion but chaos. Frustrated he stepped out into billowing orange smoke, the acrid scent of laser beam discharge and the sight of people rushing around. "Oh, come along now, old girl! We're supposed to be on holiday!"

A large cloaked figured skittered through the hallway stirring up a distant memory in the Doctor's brain. "I know you," he whispered Pressing himself up against a wall he watched the figure holding a small wand approach an unconscious woman. Before the Doctor could blink the cloaked monster placed a skeletal hand on the woman's face. Even unconscious the scream she managed tore holes in the Doctor's hearts. He must have screamed as well because the creature turned baleful gold eyes to stare at him and the memory popped to the surface like a ping pong ball. "Skelexols. You're a Skelexol."

Out of the smoke beyond the monster, a girl waved at him. He hollered at her, "Run you stupid human! Run!"

“You run! This part of the building is collapsing! You will be killed,” she shouted angrily. The Skelexol turned his attention to her. The Doctor raced forward and three things happened at once; the girl began to run, the ceiling did indeed begin to collapse and the Doctor tackled the cloaked monster. As he smashed the Skelexol to the ground, careful to only be touching the cloak, a chunk of masonry crushed the thing’s head, missing the Doctor’s by a hair’s breath. He rocked back on his haunches in time for a much smaller piece of ceiling to knock him quietly into oblivion.

The electro whips licked out green and menacing above the Kalen people. All were dressed in holiday finery and if it weren’t for the violet robed figures with their hands like Death, it would have resembled the parade set for the second day of feasting. But instead the demons were herding group after terrified group up ramps into a dark blood mist. People clung to one another as they vanish into the ship’s maws. A tiny girl tripped and the Skelexol nearest her shot her. She screamed once, high pitched and pathetic, before she disintegrated.

Ten ships in the background sat among the smoke and building ruins beyond the flagship. The bloody sky gave everything a dreamlike atmosphere. If her family hadn’t just seen their daughter evaporated, they would have thought themselves in a nightmare. The demons didn’t even give them a chance to react but shoved them forcefully up the ramp and into the unknown. The Skelexols cracked their whips and weeping mothers lifted their children up so they would not fall to the ground, so they would remain safe for a few seconds longer.

“Pelca, more cloth! Quickly!” Mia tore at her over-skirt, creating strips to bandage around the woman lying in front of her. “Does anyone know this woman?” Blood was pouring from a gash in the woman’s side.

Pelca, a message runner for the Senate, came to Mia’s side “I found as much as I could, Mistress Trakvir. I took a knife to my own coat; many of the others are doing the same.” He looked at the woman lying before them on the ground. “I believe her name is Tashel. I have seen her at many of the meetings of the Health Council.”

Mia sighed and wiped her forehead. She left a streak of bright red blood in its wake, a stark contrast to her porcelain skin. “Wonderful. The only medical person we have been able to find and she is bleeding to death.” She took one of the strips from her over-skirt and tied back her unruly waist length hair. She took a second strip, wrapped it around Tashel’s ribcage and pressed down hard. Tashel moaned, but didn’t open her

eyes. "Pelca, have you been able to establish communication with anyone else? Any of the Councils or outside districts?"

"No, Mistress. Power seems to be shutting down throughout the whole of the district. Communication links are down, many doors will not open without force and the lights are going out everywhere." He sighed. "Even the sun seems to have abandoned us."

Mia placed her hand over Pelca's and gave it a small squeeze. "Peace Pelca. We will find a way through this."

He smiled faintly and nodded. "Yes Mistress." Dropping the cloth before her, he stood with a renewed energy. "Some of the men are attempting to open the doors to the rest of the Capital. Hopefully we will find more able-bodied people than injured."

"One can hope. Thank you Pelca."

Pelca bowed his head. "Mistress." With that, he turned on his heel and jogged down the hallway.

Chela walked past Pelca quickly and approached Mia, defeat written all over her face. "No luck."

Mia pulled more cloth from the pile and wrapped it around Tashel's chest. "There are no rooms that are not damaged?"

"Nothing safe enough to harbor the injured in. Most of the walls are cracked, if not fallen away completely. These ceilings will give way soon."

Mia sat back on her haunches and sighed. "What of the... affected?"

Chela visibly shivered. "No change. It is... it is as if their very souls have been removed. They are lifeless, yet still breathe. Their eyes are hollow, they will not speak. It is as if those," her voice caught, "those things burrowed into them and took their life force!"

"Chela, I..." Mia stopped and gasped.

"Mia? What is the matter?"

"Burrowed! My Grand-dame used to tell me stories about the old times of Kalen. Generations ago there was a plague that ravaged the planet. The Health Council built tunnels under the Capital to house them so as not to infect the rest of the population as they were being treated!" She jumped to her feet. "Chela, see to this woman. We believe her name is Tashel. I shall return soon!"

Finn raised her head slowly as she heard the sound of footsteps close by. *Please, if you are going to kill me, do so quickly.* The rubble from the nearby wall had trapped her beneath, not crushing her legs but pinning them so she could not raise herself.

"I know it is here somewhere, if only..." The voice stopped.

Finn attempted to turn her head. "Who is that?"

“Finn!” The footsteps approached at a running pace. Finally Mia’s face appeared before her. “Thank all that is above you are all right.”

“Mia! Ha! Of all people, I knew it would be you who found me. Can you help me out?”

Grabbing the section of wall, Mia lifted it just enough for Finn to slip out from beneath.

Finn brushed herself off and checked for injury. Finding none, she turned to her friend. “Mia! You are bleeding!” Finn went to touch her forehead.

“No, my friend. It is not mine. There are many injured. I am trying to find a place to keep them safe. Grand-dame used to...”

She put up a hand. “If your old Grand-dame said so, I believe you. You look for whatever you need; I am going to find that man.”

Mia began checking the walls. “What man?”

“The one who appeared and began to yell at those creatures. I tried to warn him about the ceiling, but he must not have heard me.”

Mia ran her hands along the side of the decorative wall columns that dotted the hallway. “What do you mean...? Ah! Here it is!” Mia’s hand found a small switch. She turned it and stood back. The column swung away from her like a door. “Plague tunnels. We must try to bring as many people in as we can. We need supplies...”

Finn kicked at the nearest piece of masonry at her feet. “Why are we not fighting back?”

“First we must see how many and what we have left. Then, we fight.”

Finn kicked away another piece of wall. A hand lay beneath. “Mia! I think I found him!”

As Mia came to help her, something out of the corner of her eye caught her attention. “Finn, where did you say this man came from?”

Finn was tearing away hunks of wall and objects. “I do not know! He came from one of the hallways.” She threw another piece and found the head of the man. He was covered heavily in dust; a small patch of dried blood was over his eyebrows. “It is him! Help me with him.” When no one appeared at her side, she spun around to where she heard Mia’s voice. “What are you staring at?”

“A blue box. A blue police box.”

“Ssseelen!”

The Skelexol gunner turned and leapt to his feet, his head bowed to the tall Skelexol standing in the middle of the battle bridge. “Yes, Mighty Leader?”

“Bring me one of the cattle. I hunger.”

Ssseelen brought his fist to his chest and bowed again. "At once, Mighty Leader. Have you a preference?"

The Leader paused for a moment, a sickening smile pulling at the edges of his bone-like jaw. "Something... young and fresh."

"At once." With his head still bowed, Ssseelen turned on his heel and went to choose a meal for his leader.

"Doctor," a young male voice whispered "Can you hear me?"

The Doctor was in a long white expanse. No fog, no light but ambient, it was just a plane where he walked...where he had always walked. The voice was familiar, heartbreakingly so. "I hear you."

"Oh, yes, Doctor." A shadow appeared in the whiteness. "I see you now too." The dark haired boy wore a yellow and green jumpsuit with a familiar badge for mathematics pinned to the chest. "Are you dead then too?"

"Adric..." The young boy, whose death brought about the destruction of the dinosaurs on Earth, stared at him with eyes black as pitch. Behind him more shapes loomed, swirled and took shape. A dust solidly formed into an old woman then aged backwards into a lovely young girl. She stepped forward angrily. "Have you killed them all yet, Doctor?"

"Who?" The Doctor asked as his mind placed her. Her name was Sara Kingdom. Another human who died because she wasn't like him, wasn't a Time Lord able to withstand the effects of Time.

"The Daleks? Did you kill them yet or is my death still in vain? Am I avenged? Am I?" Sara pulled a ray gun from her jacket and aimed it at his chest. But before she could move forward more shapes became humans and others: Vervoids, Cybermen, Cheetah People, Zygons, Ice Warriors and fellow Time Lords came pouring into the white expanse. All of their hands were reaching for him, grabbing at him. The Doctor fell beneath them screaming, "I'm sorry! I'm sorry. I only did what I thought was right! I'm sorry...."

"No!"

Finn caught the Doctor as he sat up quickly. "Peace sir! You are all right."

"I... what?" The Doctor raised a hand to head and winced as he touched the gash.

"You were hit by a piece of the falling ceiling."

The Doctor took in the girl's face slowly. She was covered in dust, her once immaculately braided black hair was in disarray and her hands were tingled with a red

color that long experience told him was the remnants of washed away blood. "You tried to warn me."

"Yes. I am Cara Finn'tan. I am of P'al. I do not believe I know you, sir. Are you new to Kalen?"

"Yes, I only... recently arrived. I'm known as the Doctor."

Finn stared at him for a moment before continuing. "Doctor, are you here for the holiday?"

"Holiday? Well, I was trying to take a holiday. But Time and Fate, cruel mistresses that they are, had other plans for me it seems." He sighed. "I'm sorry Cara..."

"You may call me Finn, Doctor. Cara is merely a title."

"Finn, where are we exactly?"

"My friend Mia tells me they are plague tunnels from an older time in Kalen's history. She knows more about this me. Let me fetch her. Will you be all right if I leave you for a moment?"

The Doctor rubbed the back of his head. "I'm not sure. Is it my eyes or is it very dark in here?"

"No, it is not your sight. There is very little power down here. Just enough light along the tunnels to get you through them, but not much else. Those that are able are fetching supplies and bringing down the injured." She sighed and rubbed her hands together. "I fear that there are not many of us down here and most that are come across are either dead or... affected." Before the Doctor could ask what she meant, she jumped to her feet. "Let me fetch Mia to you."

"Yes. Thank you, Finn."

"Doctor." She bowed to him slightly and went off down the dark tunnel.

"Master Loe'ten? Loe, can you hear me?" Mia waved her hand in front of the man's face.

Dark, lifeless eyes stared out from a newly hooded brow. The man's face was sunken in like a skinless skull, his hair had turned completely white and his skin was shriveled and as dry as paper.

Tears stung the corners of Mia's eyes. This man, who appeared to be in his eightieth year, was actually twenty-four, two years her junior. She took his face into her hands and turned it towards her own. "We will find a way to make you well again. I promise you."

"Mia?" Finn approached her softly. "Mia, you need to come with me."

Mia wiped her face and stood, turning towards her friend. "Yes?"

Finn closed the gap between them and gently placed her hand on Mia's arm. "You need to go see him."

"Is it...?"

"Yes, it is him."

The door to the battle bridge swung open. Ssseelen walked in, smugness written over his face. "Mighty Leader." He bowed his head.

Sssaldor, the warlord of all Skelexol, turned to his soldier. "Ah, Ssseelen. What have you brought for me?"

Ssseelen stepped to the side and clapped his hands. Two Skelexol soldiers entered dragging a young Kalen boy between them. "No please! Do not hurt me! Mum! Mum, where are you?"

The soldiers dropped the boy at Sssaldor's feet, then turned away.

Sssaldor took a step forward. "Who are you, boy?"

The boy looked up, his blond hair matted to his forehead with sweat and dirt. "My... my name is Veriten. Please, I was looking for my mother. Please, do not hurt me."

Sssaldor looked over the boy, assessing him carefully. "How old are you, boy?"

Veriten sniffed and wiped his nose with his sleeve. "Ten years, sir."

Sssaldor looked over to Ssseelen. "An excellent choice." Sssaldor lowered himself down onto the floor, his eyes almost on level with Veriten's. "Now boy, you were looking for your mother? Look at me."

Veriten raised his head to look directly at Sssaldor, his green eyes full of hope.

With almost impossible speed, Sssaldor's boney hand shot out and grabbed Veriten's throat. "Look upon the last thing your mother ever saw." With his opposite hand, Sssaldor threw back his hood. A hollow, tumorous and malformed skull stared back at Veriten. Its eyes were dark, yet full of a malevolent fire, its breath a putrid mix of rotten flesh and cinders.

Veriten's mouth fell open, yet no sound came out.

Sssaldor, still holding Veriten's neck with one hand, placed his opposite hand on the boy's skull and lowered his mouth closer to his face. A blood colored vapor curled from Sssaldor's mouth and flooded into Veriten's body.

Then the boy began to scream.

The vapor rushed out of Veriten's mouth and back into Sssaldor's. The boy's body began to shrivel and collapse in on itself, his skin turning white and tightening across his bones. When the last of the vapor left his body, and with nothing left but a strangled cry, Sssaldor released the boy's head and neck. Veriten's body hit the battle bridge floor with a sickening thump, his eyes still wide open, his jaw moving slowly up and down as if trying to form sound.

Sssaldor stood and turned to his gunner. "A very excellent choice, Ssseelen."

Ssseelen bowed. "Mighty Leader."

Sssaldor turned his attention back to the view screen. "Now, get rid of the husk before it starts to stink."

Mia took a deep breath as she approached where the Doctor was sitting. She stopped as she took in his appearance. The man that sat on the floor before her was not the man she had been expecting. From all the stories she had heard, she expected a vibrant, hearty young man. But instead all she saw was a thin and defeated looking old man, his shoulders slumped with what looked like the weight of the whole universe. "Doctor?"

The Doctor raised his head slightly. "Yes?"

"I..." She caught her breath and sat down in front of him. "My name is Emmiaryssa Trakvir."

The Doctor stared at her for a moment. "Yes?"

"Well, most people call me Mia. My friend..."

"Yes! Of course, your friend Finn told me..." He stopped himself and stared into Mia's eyes. "I'm sorry, my dear. My mind seems to be wandering. Have... have we met before?"

"Ah, no. No, we have never met before. To be honest, I was not sure whether I should speak to you or not."

The Doctor sighed. "I suppose my reputation has reached this planet as well. The Doctor, bringer of death, chaos and destruction."

"Oh no Doctor! Far from it. My... my Grand-dame, my mother's mother, used to speak of you often. She had a deep respect for you." Mia pulled a large locket from beneath her shirt and unfastened it. "We were quite close. I would spend hours sitting at her feet while she told me the most fantastic stories." She opened the locket and passed it to the Doctor. "She's the older woman sitting in the middle."

The Doctor looked at the picture of the large family waiting for his rattled brain to make a connection. "I'm sorry, I don't..." The Doctor looked at Mia again and then turned his gaze back to the picture. It was her eyes that gave her away, those innocent eyes that beheld so much death and sadness, yet remained strong, hopeful and brave. They were same eyes Mia now had. "Good heavens..."

Mia smiled, a single tear sliding down her cheek. "My Grand-dame. Nyssa of Traken."

“Quickly now! Move those people into the tunnels.” Finn stood at the column-cum-doorway and directed the uninjured Kalens as they carried children, supplies and injured people to safety.

“Cara Finn’tan!” Pelca came running from one of the darkened hallways.

“What have you found?”

Pelca stood gasping, trying to catch his breath. “We have found some food stock and a little water. A number of the Council Guard are bringing them now. A few of the women are bringing blankets from the Health Center along with all the medical supplies they can carry.”

“We will have to make more than one trip for...”

“No Cara, we cannot! That is what I came to tell you as well. Those creatures have left their ships again and are moving through the halls.”

“Great P’al...”

“They will surely find us!”

Finn closed her eyes for a moment. “Pelca, tell the Guard to be as quick as they can. I will ask some of the uninjured to return and start blocking the doors. We will continue to collect as much as we can until it becomes unsafe. When the women return from the Health Center, we will use them as spotters in the halls. We must not leave any trail leading to the tunnels. We must be done in,” Finn looked to her timepiece, “ten minutes. No longer.” She held out the timepiece to the younger man.

Pelca nodded and took the time piece. “Ten minutes, I understand. Pray P’al we are done in time.” Pelca turned as he heard approaching footsteps. A small group of women, arms full to bursting with blankets and boxes, came to a sudden halt before them.

“Cara Finn’ tan, we have bandages, medicine and blankets. We shall return for...”

“No,” Pelca interrupted, “the creatures are returning. Leave those things here, I have another task for you.”

“You’re Nyssa’s granddaughter?”

“Yes Doctor. She spoke so highly of you.”

The Doctor smiled as he closed the locket. “A brave girl. She was very dear to me.” Suddenly, panic crossed the Doctor’s face. “Is she here? I mean, have you been able to find her...”

“Doctor,” Mia cut him off, “she is not here. She... she passed from this life three months ago.”

The Doctor’s body sagged. “Oh Nyssa,” he whispered.

Mia gently took the Doctor's hand. "She was at peace, Doctor. She lived a full and rich life. She had no complaints. Although I must admit," she said, wiping the tears from her cheek, "I would dearly love to see her again."

"You were very close?"

Mia laughed through her tears. "My mother would say we were inseparable. There were days when I would tuck myself under the desk in her office reading a book from Earth or some other planet while she worked, just so I could be close to her." She sighed and took the locket from the Doctor, re-clasping it around her neck. "But no matter how much I miss her, I would not wish her to see this destruction, not on a place she loved so much."

"Mia!"

Mia and the Doctor turned to see Finn entering into the tunnels, her arms overflowing with blankets.

"We were able to find some blankets as well as food and water. We have also found some candles in one of the offices. I believe they were for the Esh'Ri'Ul celebrations." Finn dropped the blankets into a pile and sat on the floor, sweat dripping from her brow.

Mia nodded. "Very good. We must make sure the injured get the provisions first. What of these creatures?"

"Skelexol," the Doctor growled.

"Do you know them," Finn asked.

"Of them, yes. Evil creatures from the darkest corners of the universe. They crawl throughout the galaxy existing on the life force of other creatures. They're parasites. They do not create, only destroy, leaving a trail of death and desolation in their wake."

"But why have they come here," Finn asked. "We are a peaceful people!"

"Exactly," the Doctor said jumping to his feet. "The most vibrant and filling life forces come from peaceful, content people. You live longer, you're happier, you have the most to live for. The sounds of peace are the ringing of a dinner gong to these creatures!"

Mia got to her feet as well. "Do you know how to stop them?"

The Doctor rubbed his chin. "I have heard rumors, but to be honest..." He turned to her, "I'm not sure."

Finn rose angrily to her feet. "But they are returning! Even now they are roaming the halls above." She turned to the older gentlemen. "You are the Doctor! This is what you do! All those stories Mia told me...how can you not know..."

Mia rushed to her friend. "Finn, please. Peace. We are all exhausted. We should see to the wounded." She hugged her friend gently. "We will get through this, you will see."

Finn returned her friends embrace, then pulled away. "I will help Pelca and the others take stock of what we have."

"Thank you, my friend."

Finn nodded and made her way down the dark corridor.

The Skelexol floated throughout the hallways of the Kalen Capital buildings, their small dispersal rods at the ready. "Should we expect trouble more from the cattle, sir," one of the creatures asked.

Sssbartol, Captain of the Skelexol guard, hissed a whispery laugh "Peaceful people are hardly ever trouble, Sssterex. These sheep will bend to us like a reed to a forceful breeze. Those who are at peace don't know how to fight back. They cry, they plead and they try to bargain. But they never fight. And those few who do," he raised his dispersal rod, "are easily dealt with. And make a fine example to the rest as well."

At a crossing in the hallway, Sssbartol slowed. "Sssterex, take your flank to the right. I shall go left. Bring any of the cattle you find remaining to the flagship. Once we have cleared this place, we will move to the next city.

Sssterex hissed in delight. "Yes sir!"

"Please Doctor, you must forgive Finn. She can be very highly strung sometimes."

"Considering what's happening to her planet, I'm more than inclined to forgive her for being a bit brusque."

Mia sighed, running her hands over her face, then turned to face him.

The Doctor took Mia by the arm and guided her to another portion of the tunnel. "You should sit down, you look as if you're about to drop." Once he had her seated, he continued. "Now, what was this celebration Finn was talking about? Ishreal?"

"Esh'Ri'Ul. It is our highest holiday. I believe I remember the entire story." Mia moved over on the fallen piece of masonry and invited the Doctor to sit next to her.

"In the times of old, the great god P'al and his wife Ry'ma looked upon their universe and saw that they had made good things. The people were happy and peace reigned. P'al and Ry'ma then left their universe to search for others of their kind. After a millennia, P'al and Ry'ma returned to find that a great shadow had fallen over their universe, their people were living in misery and death. So, to aid them, P'al sent his only son Ji'chre. He arrived on Kalen, but the planet was cold and dark, the people starved for warmth and light. The sun was unable to pierce through the thick shadow that covered the planet. So Ji'chre used all of his power to fly through the sky, pierce through the shadow and head straight into Kalen's sun. His body burned, but it

increased the rays of the sun and they burned away the shadows throughout Kalen's universe.

"Once a year the people of Kalen remember the sacrifice of Ji'chre by gathering as a family by the light of one candle and remembering all those who have done honor to the family or the planet. They stay together until the sun rises and the darkness has melted away and then they go outside and rejoice with foods, drink, music, dance and gifts. Of course there is always a place set at the celebratory table for Ji'chre."

The Doctor waited in silence for a moment. "A beautiful story."

Mia laughed hollowly. "Not that it is of much help right now." She sighed, then continued. "But it was a wonderful time, Doctor. Every family gathers together with their white candle. Then they carve the name of someone who they want to remember or honor, usually someone who has passed from this life. Then a red wax is melted and poured into the carved name. After it cools, the candle is then lit. We have our evening meal by that candlelight and a toast is raised to the person who is being remembered. As the evening continues, the candle continues to burn until it goes out on its own. The next day all of the un-melted wax is collected and re-melted together into one new candle and that is burned the next time a new member of the family is born."

"A way to keep the family together. Very symbolic."

"Yes." Mia lowered her head. "Doctor, will you be able to help us?"

The Doctor wrapped his arm around the young woman's shoulder. "I certainly hope so, my dear." After a moment, he stood up. "I need some time to think and you all need to eat and rest. Why don't you gather everyone you can together and have your ceremony?"

"Do you think we should? I mean, with all that has happened..."

"Mia," the Doctor knelt in front of her, "that's precisely why you should do it. Because of everything that's happened, your people need to be one. You were one in peace, you must be one in war."

Mia stared at the Doctor, then nodded. "I understand, Doctor." She stood, with the Doctor's help, and walked to the end of the tunnel. "You will join us, will you not?"

"I would be honored to."

Finn held the small cup to the young girl's mouth. "Slowly now."

The girl swallowed down the liquid and coughed. "Thank you, Cara."

"Now," Finn said as she tucked the thin blanket over her shoulders, "try to rest. Can you do that?"

"I think so." She closed her eyes and sighed.

Mia stepped softly to the bed. "How is she?"

Finn wiped her hands on her robe and stood. "A few cuts and bruises. Her father," Finn motioned with her head to the other side of the room, "was not so lucky."

Mia turned to the area Finn had indicated. The girl's father had been attacked by the Skelexol, left a hollow, lifeless husk like all the rest. "He is one of the Council Guards, Sem'fal if I am remembering correctly."

Finn threw down the rag in her hand and turned to her oldest friend, her eyes blazing. "How can you be so calm and cold?"

"Cold?"

"You speak as though none of this affects you! You do not have any way of knowing whether your parents are alive or dead. You do not know if these creatures will find us. How can you be this way?"

Mia, her ire raised, pointed to the young girl in the bed. "She is the reason I am so calm! Yes, I have no way of knowing if my mother or father live. I pray to all above that they are. I am terrified that I will be the only one of my family left alive! But if I were to do nothing but sit and wonder or cry and scream, what would happen to this child? Or to any of the injured?" Mia sighed and reached out to her friend. "We must be strong for those that live, strong to find a way of defeating these creatures, finding our loved ones and rebuilding. Please, my friend, will you help me?"

After a moment, Finn took her friend's hand. "I always help you in your crazy plans. That is why we are such good friends."

Mia laughed and squeezed her hand. After a moment, she continued. "Talking of crazy plans..."

The Doctor paced the corridor, demanding his idle brain to work.

"The stories speak of Skelexol as scavengers, parasites... Was it biological? No, no, not every civilization is as equally advanced in medicine. Why can't I remember what it is? What does every story have in common? Different planets, different life forms... What is it?"

"Doctor?" Mia peeked her head around the corner.

"Hmm?" He turned to the hallway. "Oh, yes. I'm sorry, my dear, I was... thinking."

"Out loud," she asked, smiling.

"Yes well, sometimes it works best that way."

"Did it help this time?"

He sighed. "Sadly no."

"Well," she said, offering the Doctor her arm, "perhaps some food will help."

"Yes," he said, tucking her arm under his, "perhaps it will."

"My friends," Finn said, a single lit candle in her hand, "we gather together tonight, in this time of adversity, to gain solace from each other."

The small room was full of people in various states of health; some baring scratches, some with bandaged limbs. But all looked to comfort and be comforted by those around them. There were plates and boards with bits of food, small bowls and medical bottles that held water. In the center of the room was a collection of candles waiting to be lit.

"We also look to each other and to our ancestors to gain strength to face the battle that we know must come. But for now," Finn knelt in front of the candles and began to light them, "let us eat and remember those who have done us honor." Finn raised a large bottle of water. "I honor with memory my parents and those who passed from this life today." She drank and passed the bottle to a small woman sitting next to her.

"I honor with memory my Grand-sire..."

"I honor my daughter, Adresh..."

"I honor those lost to us today..."

"I honor with memory my fellow Guards..."

Pelca raised the bottle in the air. "I honor with memory my sister, Grela, who passed from this life in the summer season." He drank from the bottle and passed it to the Doctor.

The Doctor paused, looked to Mia and tried to pass the bottle to her. "I don't..."

Mia pressed the bottle back to him. "Doctor, remember someone, anyone that meant something to you, someone that you wish to honor with memory whether they are alive or have passed from life."

The Doctor paused, his eyes tightly closed, and then, with resolve in his eyes, stood. "I wish to honor with memory... my companions. I honor Susan, Ian, Barbara, Vicki, Steven, and Katarina. I honor Sara Kingdom, Dodo, Ben, Polly, Jamie, Victoria, and Zoe. I honor Liz, the Brigadier, Sergeant Benton, Captain Yates, Jo, Sarah Jane, Harry and Romana... both of her. I honor Leela, K9, Adric..." he paused and turned to Mia, "I honor Nyssa of Traken." Mia smiled as the Doctor continued. "I honor Tegan, Turlough, Kamelion, Peri, Mel and Ace. And I honor Tamara, Grae, Taryn, Silver and Mortimer." With that, the Doctor drank from the bottle and sat down, passing the bottle to Mia.

Mia looked at the bottle, then over to Finn. "I wish... I do not know who to honor. Sadly, there are too many." Mia stood and looked around the room. "I found a song, an old Earth song that I had planned to use with my family tonight. Tonight you, everyone in this room, you are my family." Mia closed her eyes and began to sing.

"Oh friends, no more of these tones! /Let us sing more cheerful songs, /More joyful. /Joy! Joy! /Joy, beautiful spark of divinity, /Daughter of Elysium! /We tread fire-inspired, /Heavenly one, your sanctuary. /Your magic's again bind /what custom has divided. /All men become brothers, /under the sway of your gentle wing."

The Doctor stared as this young woman, who had never been off of her own planet, sang the *'The Ode to Joy'*. As she continued, the Doctor heard a scraping noise coming from somewhere in the room. He looked to every corner and finally found the source. One of the victims of the Skelexols was dragging himself into the room, right towards Mia.

"Mia! Look!" The Doctor jumped to his feet and rushed over to the man.

Mia turned and joined him. "Doctor? What is happening?"

The Doctor dropped to his knees, cradling the man's head in his lap. "Something is drawing him to this room. Something..."

Mia knelt at the Doctor side, Finn walking behind her. "I do not believe it was my singing that brought Sem'fal here," Mia said. She ran her hand over his forehead.

Sem'fal reached out past Mia for something.

"Perhaps it is the water?"

"No," Finn said scanning the room, "there was water in his..." She looked to where his arm was pointing and stopped. "The light."

"What," Mia asked.

Finn ran to the center of the room and grabbed one of the candles "It looks as if he were pointing to the light of the candles!" She dropped to her ground in front of the prostrate man, the candle in her hand.

Sem'fal's face suddenly smoothed and a slight sigh escaped his lips.

"All that is above..." Mia started.

"He looks almost content." Finn said staring at the man's face.

"That's it," the Doctor shouted. "Mia, please," he motioned to the man's head.

Mia moved and took the man's head from the Doctor's lap and laid it back onto her own. "Doctor, what is it? The candlelight?"

"Not quite, my dear. Do you remember earlier, you told me that your holiday story wasn't much use to you today?"

"Yes, but..."

"You were wrong, quite wrong! It's perfect!" He jumped to his feet. "What was one of the first things that the Skelexol did after firing upon the Capital?"

"They began to collect the people," Finn said.

"No," Mia said. "No, that woman at the window, she said 'Look at the sky'. And there was something running over the skyline, it looked like blood. It was blocking out the sun."

"And in the story you said that a great shadow had fallen over the universe and Kalen was cold and dark because there was no light."

“And Ji’chre pierced through the shadow to increase the rays of the sun and burn away the shadows,” Mia said.

“The Skelexols created panic, then darkness!”

“But Doctor,” Finn said, “that is just a story, an allegory to explain religious teachings!”

“But some religious stories are based on fact! What if your story is based on the fact that the Skelexols have been to Kalen before?” He looked her in the eye, smiling. “And that you defeated them!”

Finn nodded slowly. “So how do we bring the sunlight back? For myself, I do not have the ability to fly.”

“Finn, that really doesn’t help,” the Doctor chided.

“Rockets,” Mia yelled.

“Rockets?” Finn and the Doctor asked.

“Our Scientific Division has a stockpile of research rockets that have been sent into the atmosphere for various plant experiments.”

The Doctor paced. “The rockets themselves wouldn’t be enough to break through. But if...,” he trailed off deep in thought. Suddenly he spun around, his eyes wide. “Yes! I believe we can do it!” He turned again. “Mia, Finn, I’m going to need your help.” Then he turned and raised his voice to the whole room. “I am going to need all of you to help! We know what these creatures are. And we know how to defeat them. But I’m going to need you, all of you, to defeat them. Please know, this will be dangerous. You will be risking your lives. But you will be risking your lives for your planet, your people and countless others throughout the universe.”

“Of course, Doctor,” Mia called from the floor. “What would you have us do?”

“We have to get the lights working again. My... transport is not far from here. We can collect small energy generators to attach to the lights. That will give us an advantage. We can also use some hand-held torches. Now,” the Doctor continued, “these lights will cause them pain and disorientate them, but they won’t be enough. It’s the ultra-violet rays of the sun that will destroy them. We can fit your research rockets with a compacted amount of ultra-violet light. When they impact the shell, it will let the sun’s ultra-violet rays through...”

“Causing the cracks to get bigger until it shatters,” Finn said.

“Exactly,” the Doctor replied. “Now, we will need different teams of people. We must do this quickly and quietly. Mia, I will need your help in the TARDIS to put together the items we need. Finn, I need you to coordinate the lighting. Choose some people to help you.”

“I will assist you, Cara.” A young man, battered and bloodstained, rose slowly.

Finn smiled. “Thank you, Mertale.”

“Good,” the Doctor said. “Now, have we any scientist here?”

“Here sir,” an older man stood up. “My name is Whentin.”

"Whentin, excellent! You will need people to take with you and help assemble and program the rockets. Do you understand what I have in mind?"

"I believe so, Doctor."

"Thank you. Now, we need the rest of the Kalen people out of the ships."

Another man stood, the remnants of a uniform pulled about him. "I am Erontis of the Council Guard, Doctor. I shall take that charge."

"Good man. Whoever is able, we will need your help. We will need some people to stay behind to keep an eye on the wounded. Erontis, can I leave you in charge of arranging that as well?"

"Of course, Doctor."

The Doctor sighed and looked around the room. "Thank you, all of you. Let's get to work."

"Mighty leader," Sssbartol said as he entered the battle bridge.

"Your report, Sssbartol," Sssaldor said, his eyes never leaving the view screen.

"We have finished the search of the Capital. There are no living cattle left there. All of the remaining beasts we have found are already dead or drained and not worth recapturing."

"You have searched everywhere?"

"Yes, Mighty Leader."

Sssaldor spun on his heel, his eyes staring. "You are telling me that ten ships of Skelexol, nearly two hundred of you, have found every single living creature in this Capital? And that there can be no others?"

Sssbartol hesitated. "Y... yes, Mighty Leader."

"And you would be willing to stake your life on this?"

"Yes, Mighty Leader." Sssbartol straightened himself to his full height.

Sssaldor nodded. "Good." He then turned to the two crew members seated before the view screen. "Ssseelen, show him." The gunner turned a few dials. The view screen went black for a moment, then a small collection of red dots nestled together began to form.

"Wh... what is that, Mighty Leader," Sssbartol asked.

Sssaldor's hand shot out and punched into Sssbartol robes. "I ordered you to search everywhere. That includes beneath the ground!" He found the organ he was looking for and began to squeeze. "These cattle have an amazing capacity for self preservation. It seems that they are smarter than you, Sssbartol." Sssaldor gave the organ one final crush. When he removed his hand, Sssbartol's robe fell to the floor, empty except for a small pile of dust.

Sssaldor snarled as he wiped the dust off of his hands. "Sssterex!"

The guard came slowly before his leader, head bowed. "Mighty Leader."

"I expect my new guard Captain to be able to follow orders."

"Yes, Mighty Leader."

"Go and flush those cattle from their gutters."

"Yes, Mighty Leader."

The Doctor slowly opened the tunnel door and leaned his head out slightly. Seeing no one in the hallways and the TARDIS standing quietly one corridor away, he opened the door further.

"Now, follow very closely behind me," he whispered to Mia. Then, to the small group of people standing behind her, he said, "Remember, when you see the door open I want one person to collect everything they need. Then you go out as a group to your assigned task. Agreed?"

The small band nodded.

"And good luck to us all." The Doctor motioned for Mia to follow him. They skirted around the masonry cluttered hallways until they reached the TARDIS. As quickly as he could, the Doctor inserted the TARDIS key, unlocked the door and ushered the young woman inside.

"All that is above..." Mia stared in wonderment at the TARDIS interior.

The Doctor had to smile. "Is it how you imagined?"

"No... it is better!" After a moment, she turned to the Doctor. "Perhaps I may look around later. But for now, back to the job in hand."

"Follow me, the laboratory is right down the hall."

Finn paced in the small space in front of the tunnel doorway. Every few seconds she would pause to gaze through the small opening to see if the TARDIS doors had opened. She had stopped counting how many times she paused after she reached two hundred. Finally she saw movement a hand was beckoning her to come to the TARDIS door. With a deep breath, she slowly opened the door, checking for any of the creatures in the halls. Seeing none, she turned to Erontis standing directly behind her. "Close this door behind me and have Mertale get my team ready to leave as soon as I give the signal."

"Yes, Cara Finn' tan." Erontis crept to take Finn's position as she slipped outside and across the hall.

Mia threw open the TARDIS door entirely as Finn rushed through. "Are the people ready?"

"As ever."

Mia nodded and opened the large bag in front of her. "These are the devices that will give energy to the lights." She picked up a silver palm-sized half sphere and showed it to her friend. "This device has two buttons. The green will turn it on immediately. The red will put it on standby." She then pulled out a small black box and handed it to Finn. "This is a remote. Place as many of the spheres as you are able, pushing the red button to set them. As soon as you are finished, press the green switch on the remote device and it will activate all of the spheres at once." She closed the bag tightly and handed it to Finn.

Finn slung the bag over her shoulder and tucked the remote device into her belt. She then embraced her friend. "Good luck to you."

Mia returned the hug. "And to you. And be careful!"

The Doctor worked furiously to get everything finished. The hand-held UV torches were ready to be distributed as soon as Mia returned to the lab. He had begun work on the rocket capsules, taking particles of UV light and injecting them into Nuritanium spheres which would increase the area of dispersal upon explosion.

Mia ran into the room and grabbed the box containing the UV torches.

"Remember," the Doctor said, "to tell Erontis to wait until he sees the first rocket launch before attempting to go to the ships. Hopefully that will distract the Skelexols while they sneak onboard."

"Yes Doctor."

Mia watched silently as Erontis and his team ran down the hallway, UV torches at the ready in case they met any Skelexols in their travels.

"Is Whentin ready?" The Doctor asked as he entered the consol room, a small box in his hands.

"Yes Doctor, he is at the door."

"Good. Now," he said, taking a UV torch from his coat pocket, "I want you to take this. Just in case."

Mia took the torch and tucked it into her skirt belt. "Of course. To which area would you like me to go?"

"My dear, I want you to stay here."

Mia paused, not understanding him. "You... you wish me to stay in the TARDIS? But Doctor, I wish to help!"

"Yes, but I..." he sighed. "I want you to be safe, if not for your own sake then for the sake of your Grandmother."

"Doctor, I think that sitting in this box like a coward while my friends and my people go out and risk their lives would be more of a disservice to her memory than my death."

After a moment, the Doctor nodded. "Very well. But I do want you to do something for me." He reached into his pocket and took out the TARDIS key. "If our plan doesn't work, I want you to come back to the TARDIS and get as many of your people in here as you can."

"Yes Doctor."

"Right. Off we go then."

"Hurry," Finn yelled. "We must get all of the lights in the hallways surrounding the tunnel entrance. Mertale, take two people and start down the left hall. And remember, the red button!"

Mia crept along the hall until she came to the indoor garden center. There, she saw Erontis, Pelca and many others gathered, hiding behind plants that stood before shattered windows. They were all staring at the sky, waiting for the rockets to launch and their signal to free their people from the ships.

"Erontis," she called quietly.

"Mistress Trakvir? What are you doing here?" The man moved aside as Mia crouched down next to him.

"The same as you. Waiting to free our people."

"You will please stay beside me, Mistress, so I may..."

"Keep an eye on me," Mia asked.

"As you say, Mistress."

Mia snickered. "P'al save me from over-protective men."

The Doctor closed the top of the rocket and moved onto the next in the line. "How many does that make, Whentin?"

"Six, Doctor. The first two are being moved into place, I must go and program the launch sequence."

"As fast as you can, Whentin. As fast as you can!"

Finn laid her bag on the ground, taking one last look around the hall. Her eye fell upon a light that had no generator. *I will need to stand on something to get to that one*, she thought. Seeing a large piece of fallen-away wall nearby, she jumped onto it quickly. Steadying herself with her left hand, she reached high to position the generator.

“There,” a loud whisper echoed through the hall.

Finn turned just in time to see one of the Skelexol aiming a small silver rod at her. Before she could move, it fired. The beam was too high, hitting the generator rather than Finn herself. The generator sphere exploded, sending sparks out in all directions. The bulk of the flames landed on Finn’s right hand causing her to jolt and lose her balance, sending her falling hard to the floor below. The Skelexol re-aimed its weapon at her. Struggling, Finn pulled the small black remote box from her robe belt and pressed the green button.

Suddenly the room was full of bright, white light. The creature before Finn screamed, a soul shattering, piercing cry for mercy. From all of the hallways surrounding them, the same scream could be heard. The Skelexol standing in front of Finn tried to shield its face from the light and ran to the tunnel opening. The Skelexol pounded the door’s surface with the entire weight of its body. Finn thought the door would collapse under the creature’s fierce beatings. After a moment, the door did fall away, but it was not to the creature’s benefit.

Chela stood on the doorway steps, a UV torch in her hands. She turned it on and directed the light directly at the Skelexol’s face. Instantly the creature let out a single scream; it began to smoke and, after taking a few steps away, it dissipated into a cloud of dust, its robe falling empty to the ground.

Sssaldor stared at the screen, his fury released on the Skelexols around him. “What is the meaning of this?”

The Doctor looked up as he saw an immense wave of light coming from the other side of the Capital. “Whentin...”

“Launch in five, four, three, two, one.” Whentin slapped a large green button on the desktop before him.

“The signal,” Erontis whispered. He turned to his group. “Torches on,” then stood and yelled, “Attack!”

Mia jumped to her feet and began to run with the crowd as they exited the garden center and entered the courtyard. Suddenly she heard a yell from behind. She turned. The Skelexol were fleeing from the light and heading right towards them. She was about to warn the others when she saw Pelca trip and land on the ground, his UV torch rolling away from him. "Pelca!" She began to run toward him.

"No, please!" The Skelexol bent over and grabbed Pelca with his hand. As quick as the space between two breaths, Pelca was shriveling to nothing, then turned to a cloud of dust.

"No," Mia screamed. She picked up the UV torch Pelca had dropped and turned it on along with her own. She shone the light beams at each of the fleeing Skelexols watching as one by one they began to explode into dust.

"Whentin, how long until impact?"

"Approximately one minute, Doctor."

"Right. I'm going to go out and help Erontis get the people away."

Mia continued her mad twirling, UV torches in both hands, shining it at every Skelexol she could see. She stopped as she turned to face the ships, seeing Erontis and his men running up the ramps. Suddenly a blow from behind caught Mia in the back of the head. She fell face first onto the ground, the UV torches rolling away from her.

"Insolent cow," a voice hissed.

Mia, head still reeling, turned herself over. A Skelexol was standing over her, its hand reaching for her. Mia scrambled on her hands and knees toward the nearest torch. A hand's reach away, a boney foot kicked it in the opposite direction. Mia looked up as another Skelexol began to bear down on her. Looking around quickly, Mia got half to her feet and ran toward the second torch. Again, another Skelexol came and kicked it out of reach. Mia's knees gave out from beneath her and she collapsed onto her backside.

"It is scared. They taste so much better that way," the nearest Skelexol hissed to its brethren.

Mia crawled backwards trying to get away, but only ended backing herself into the corner of the garden center walls.

The Skelexols left some space between themselves and their prey. "Should we let it run and chase it? Or should we feast now?"

"Mia!" The Doctor rounded the courtyard corner and saw the young woman crouched against the wall.

“Doctor!”

As the Doctor fumbled to get the UV torch from his jacket pocket, there was an ear splitting series of explosions from just above. Every creature stopped and stared at the sky as spidery cracks began to form across the blood red shell. Thin lines of light began to form along the cracks.

Sssaldor slammed his fist into the view screen in front of him. “What is happening Ssseelen?”

The frightened gunner rechecked his instruments. “Mighty Leader, it appears that the Sun Shield is... collapsing.

“How is this possible?”

“Mighty Leader,” a voice called from a nearby com system.

Ssseelen pressed the button next to the speaker. “Flagship responding.”

“They are gone, Mighty Leader! The cattle are fleeing from the ships!”

“What?”

“The beasts came armed with rods of light. It destroys! The cattle are running free!”

Sssaldor ripped the com speaker from its moorings and threw it across the room. After a moment, his breath rattling, he sat upon his battle throne. “Prepare the flagship for departure.”

Ssseelen couldn’t believe his ears. “Mighty Leader?”

“Do as I say cretin!”

“At once, Mighty Leader.”

The Skelexol closest to Mia turned back to her, its eyes blazing. “What have you done?” As it sped towards her, another explosion ripped through the sky. A beam of sunlight arched down and landed almost at Mia’s feet. The creature attempted to stop, but hit the light at full speed. With a single scream, it exploded instantly into a cloud of black smoke.

The Doctor shielded his eyes as more rays of sunlight began to break through the shell. Hearing a series of loud voices, the Doctor turned his attention to the ships. It was a mass of confusion. The Skelexols looked as if they were fleeing to their ships, but they were being met along the way by the escaping Kalens.

Mia took the opportunity of the distraction. She got to her feet and ran to the nearest UV torch. As she was about to aim it at the small circle of creatures that stood in

her way, the sound of engines reached her. "Doctor," she yelled. "The flagship! It's trying to leave!"

More sunlight began to break through the cracks. One large section fell away and light fell onto a number of the Skelexol ships. As the creature continued to explode into smoke, the ships themselves began to spark and burst into flames.

Erontis, UV torch in hand, came running toward the Doctor with a mass of people behind him. "Doctor!"

"Erontis, did you get everyone?"

"I believe so, Doctor."

Huge chunks of the Sun Shield fell away, disappearing into oblivion as it was consumed by the light it was designed to keep out. The flagship lifted off of the ground and started its ascent into the upper atmosphere.

"Mighty Leader," Ssseelen said. "There is... a difficulty."

Sssaldor snarled at his gunner. "What is it?"

"The ship's sun filter, it will not engage." Ssseelen's hands danced across the board, trying every way he could think of to engage the equipment they would need to escape this forsaken world. The panel began to spark around him.

"Raise the sun filter! Raise it!"

Ssseelen's hands burned as he continued to try and carry out his orders. "I can't Mighty Leader! I..."

The Doctor ran down the small hill through the garden. "Mia!"

The woman began to run to meet him halfway, trying to avoid the many piles of dust and ash around her feet. "What about the large ship?" As the words came from her lips, the flagship cracked into a million tracks of light. It struggled to continue its ascent, but one final hit from a ray of bright sunlight caused it to split apart and shower to the ground like the tail of a firework.

The Doctor patted the face of the TARDIS gently. "Made it through another scrape, eh old girl?" He placed his forehead gently against her wooden surface, the gentle hum of energy barely perceptible to anyone but himself and those who traveled with him.

"Doctor? Are you all right?"

The Doctor turned and saw Mia and Finn walking toward him, their bodies covered in scratches and blood stains. "Yes, my dear. I'm fine."

"Doctor," Finn said, "what of the affected? Will they ever recover?"

"I believe they will. It will not happen overnight, mind you. It will take time. But with a lot of care and," the Doctor pointed out the window, "a lot of sun, I believe they will recover."

Finn smiled as she stepped toward him and extended an uninjured hand, "Thank you for all you have done for us."

The Doctor smiled and shook her hand. "Thank you, Cara Finnt'an. Your people are lucky to have you."

"Doctor." She bowed and, squeezing her friend's hand, left down the hallway toward a group of injured Kalens.

The Doctor lowered his head. "Mia, would...", he sighed and raised his head, his eyes full of sadness, "would you like to come with me?"

Mia smiled sadly, tears forming in her eyes. "Doctor, I would love nothing more in the world than to travel with you. But," she swept her hand around the room, the hallways littered with masonry and injured people, "my people need me."

The Doctor chuckled. "Yes my dear, I know. I knew your answer even before I asked." He walked forward and embraced her. "Your Grandmother would be proud of you."

Mia returned the embrace. "Maybe... after everything has settled down..."

"I'll come back."

Mia gently pulled away from the Doctor's embrace. "Your key," she said pulling the TARDIS key from her pocket. "And this." She again unlatched the large locket from around her neck and placed them both lovingly in the Doctor's hand. "Grand-dame wanted you to have this. She said there was something special about it that only you can see, but you must wait until you leave to find it." She curled her hand around his and kissed him gently on the cheek. "Thank you, for everything."

The Doctor embraced her again, then turned and entered the TARDIS.

Mia watched as the TARDIS, wheezing and groaning, disappeared from the hallway. "Until we meet again," she whispered. As she walked down the halls, the sun shining brightly, the birds back in the sky and the people talking warmly to each other, she could not but sing to herself. *"Be embraced, you millions!! This kiss for the whole world!! Brothers, beyond the star-canopy/ Must a loving Father dwell. /Do you bow down, you millions?/ Do you sense the Creator, world?/ Seek Him beyond the star-canopy!! Beyond the stars must He dwell!"*

The Doctor gently laid the locket on the TARDIS console and sighed. "What do you think, old girl?"

Silently, as the Doctor walked around the console, the TARDIS dials and switches turned themselves to a new destination, the Bedouin Beaches near the Eye of Orion.

The Doctor smirked. "A sense of accomplishment I take it?"

As the central console began to rise and fall, a strange noise filled the room.

"Is that you, old girl?" The Doctor looked around the room trying to find the source of the sound. Finally he rounded to the side of the console where he had placed the locket that Mia had given to him. As he picked it up, a gold-green light emanated from it forming into a hologlyph of a person. It was an old woman, her hair white as snow, her eyes shining through a wrinkled brow. As she smiled, the Doctor recognized her.

"Nyssa?"

"Hello Doctor. It seems that one of my descendants has finally found you. I hope this message finds you well. I can only imagine what number regeneration you must be on by now."

The Doctor laughed.

"I wanted to record this message for you, to let you know how grateful I am. You have no idea what my life has been like since we parted on Terminus. There is so much to tell you. This locket is a copy of my journal. I know some of the entries may seem boring..."

"Never," the Doctor said.

"But I wanted you to know what I was able to accomplish. After you, Tegan and Turlough left Terminus, I along with the Garm, Olvir & the rest of the Vanir spent nearly two years perfecting the cure for Lazar's disease. Once it was found, our findings were released to the public. Terminus became a working, viable hospital.

"After another two years of successful work, I was approached by the government of the nearby planet Kalen, who had been one of the hardest hit by the disease, to offer me the position of Minister for Scientific Research. As Lazar's disease was now treatable and preventable, I decided to leave the running of Terminus to our group of doctors and research scientists. Before leaving," she smiled, "Olvir asked me to marry him and I accepted."

The Doctor shook his head, smiling. "Olvir, of all people."

"After the Lazar's was contained, we decided to stay on Kalen. It reminded me so much of Traken. Olvir and I had nine children and, as of this recording, I have seventeen grandchildren."

"Amazing," the Doctor whispered.

"I left this locket originally with my oldest granddaughter, Mia. Oh, I do hope you get to meet her." The holo-Nyssa laughed. "She reminds me of myself when I

traveled with you. She's so bright. She also has a habit of getting herself into trouble. I suppose she inherited that from me as well."

"Well Doctor, I must go. But please know that I and my family will always be grateful for everything you have done for me. And I hope that this message brings you some peace of mind. Goodbye Doctor."

With that, the hologlyph faded and the room was plunged into darkness.

The Doctor tightened his hand around the locket. "Peace of mind." He slid the locket into his pocket and patted it gently. With a renewed energy, he slapped a switch on the console. The TARDIS' interior lights clicked on. The Doctor turned dials and pressed switches at an inhuman speed. "No time for sandy beaches, old girl! We have work to do!"

The Doctor stared into the scanner, his eyes bright. "Well, Time and Fate? What do you have in store for me next, eh?"



The Doctor arrives on the planet Kalen,
where the people are at peace.
Everyone is gathering for their highest holiday,
a celebration of light, family and honour.
But on the very eve of the festivities, their peace is broken by a race of
creatures that seem to resemble Death itself.

The Doctor, heartsick with past events,
decides that it's time for a long rest, but it seems fate has
other plans for him.

Rather than finding himself in a peaceful setting,
he's thrust headlong into Kalen's troubles.
Who are the alien invaders?
Will the Doctor be able to pierce through the falling shadows?
And, who is the young woman that seems to know all about the Doctor?

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