

THE
DOCTOR WHO
PROJECT

DECEASED

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**THE LAST DOCTOR
PART ONE**

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PART ONE
WHO KILLED DOCTOR WHO?

Prologue

The Players

I think our past is about to catch up with us ... or maybe it's our future ...
—The Five Doctors

The two children were playing make-believe.

They weren't supposed to be. They were children of the planet Gallifrey, a place where people didn't approve of games. Perhaps this was a remnant of the shame they felt at their barbarous ancestors, who dragged other races with merciless abandon to the Death Zone to battle each other to death, and then those power-mad Time Lords who played to win (and lose) the Game of Rassilon. Nowadays the only types of play tolerated were for educational or strategic purposes. As such, these children were supposed to be immersed in a game of probability draughts, the rarefied exercise in temporal logic where the object was to win without moving any of the pieces.

The probability draughts board, however, lay neglected on the step beside them. Instead the pair had crudely carved dolls and were imagining a battle. The battle was the final stand between the universe's greatest hero and its most evil villains. To a child, that was the only type of battle worth fighting.

"Pow pow!" one exclaimed, miming blaster fire from the pepper-shaker-shaped toy in his hand.

"He ducked," the other player insisted. "Everyone knows the Daleks can't shoot straight at the Doctor."

"Well, *this* time they did."

"He didn't get hurt."

"All right." The player raised his voice to a shrill shriek in imitation of the universe's deadliest creature. "*Ex-ter-min-ate!*" He mimed the ray and prodded the other player's doll with it, knocking it to the cobbled street. "There. The Doctor's dead."

The other player's lip trembled. "Well ... well, he'll regenerate. Easy."

“Daleks know how to kill Time Lords. They’ve been fighting the Doctor for millennia. I think if one blasted him, he wouldn’t be regenerating.”

“The Doctor will live.”

“No he won’t. The Doctor will die!”

Back and forth the bickering continued. The boys did not even notice the robed figure, skirts bunched up around his knees, racing past them indignantly.

Chapter One

Affairs of State

The young Time Lord was late. It mortified him, but it was true. Such was his concern about this state of affairs that he even permitted himself to break into a brisk jog as he crossed the high, narrow alleys, suspended in mid-air, which bridged the Administrative Spires of the Panopticon block. Tearing across these solemn environs mortified him as well, but he considered it the lesser of two evils. For if there was one quality that the Cardinals of Gallifrey scorned above all others, it was tardiness.

He dashed up the spiralling staircase that ringed the upper turret, the skirts of his Arcalian robes threatening to catch underfoot and send him tumbling off the bridge toward his third regeneration. Such was his agitation that when he entered the Administrative Spire's vaulted Vestry Chambers, his electric blue tunic rode up, the creases down the fine silken fabric disgusting the waiting Cardinals more than a mere late arrival would have. Such was the nature of the Time Lords—there was no pleasing them. It was this kind of lofty, eternal displeasure that had compelled one of their number to reject their authority and go on the run in a rickety old TARDIS. But the young Time Lord currently bowing apologetically, straightening his tunic, and hoping desperately that he would stop blushing, was about as different from that well-known renegade as the Key of Rassilon was from the *Great* Key of Rassilon.

This young and tardy Time Lord in creased robes was known as the Waiter. The title was chosen with care; his work had required him to wait; to settle in assigned places and times and bide his own time until something happened. He had lately been tasked with researching a newly arrived people in this dimension, known colloquially as the Preservers (infuriatingly, all the Time Lords' research had failed to uncover a proper taxonomic designation, so they reluctantly adopted the colloquialism). The Preservers had made overtures of peace and friendship with the Time Lords, which were gratefully received. But the High Council were more unsettled by the Preservers' proactive approach to interference with the timelines. Even more unsettling was the Preservers' frank hostility to one particular Time Lord: the Doctor.

But though they publicly defended their own countryman, this hostility prompted some within the elite to voice their resentment of this second-rate Prydon College renegade who barely qualified as a Time Lord anyway. Who made him the standard-bearer for their people anyway? His first trial caused them to question their creed of non-interference, his actions threatened to warp the values that had kept them safe and secure at the top of the hierarchy of existence for ten million years. His second trial had been disrupted by an avatar of his own future, and ended with the deposal of the High Council! Gallifrey, accustomed to stasis and ordered calm, still felt the trauma from these terrible events. Even their attempts to clip his wings, to curb his relentless desire to meddle and interfere, had resulted in him meddling and interfering in their own society ... and they had willingly allowed the interference to take place!

Worse, it was observed that he seemed to invite chaos and mayhem to descend on the hallowed ground of Gallifrey itself. Shouldn't the Hand of Omega, the Demat Gun, the Palimpsest Weapon, and the Time Lords' supply of validium be safely in their keeping, instead of in his hands? Would Omega, the Master, and Borusa have foresworn their Time Lord oaths and exacted such deadly schemes were they not avenging themselves on the Doctor? Would the Sontarans and the Daleks be gunning for them if their favoured scion hadn't paved the way for aliens to try to topple them?

The Waiter was purely agnostic when it came to the Doctor. He believed the man was neither the reincarnation of Rassilon his admirers would claim, nor was he the Omega incarnate characterised by his detractors. It offended the Waiter to think that someone of the Doctor's meagre qualifications and status in Time Lord society could possibly have such an outsized impact on galactic affairs. Now the Waiter ... *he* was a true son of Gallifrey, a man who had spent his three incarnations and five hundred years ingratiating himself to the movers and shakers of their society. When it came to investigating the validity of the Preservers' plan, the Waiter made the Cardinals see that he was the logical choice. It was a difficult proposition given his youth—Time Lords were naturally inclined to distrust innovation and inexperience. But the Waiter had slowly brought them round to his way of thinking by sheer persistence, and by demonstrating he could be just as pugnacious and obstinate as any of them.

The Waiter had lived up to his title, waiting while the Preservers brought a captive Doctor to Telos, and ready to monitor the situation. But, it had all gone a bit wrong¹. He was now back on Gallifrey, having lost the trail of the Doctor and inspired new wrath in the renegade. As he explained to the Cardinals, it turned out the renegade resented his countrymen standing by while some of his greatest foes gathered to witness his being unravelled from time.

The Waiter thought this explanation would stand, and they could move on to other business. So as he stood before the Senior Administrative Cardinal, adjusting his stiff collar, the Waiter was hardly expecting his superiors' terse evaluation of his mission.

"Not only did you interfere, and reveal the Time Lords' hand in the affair on Telos, but you are personally responsible for renewing hostilities with the Doctor himself!"

The Waiter could not help rolling his eyes. 'The Doctor himself'. Who was he to be so venerated?

"My lords and ladies," he replied patiently, "as I believe my report made clear, the main lesson learned from my mission on Telos was the validity of the Preservers' claim. Not only are

¹ See *The Doctor Who Project: A Mild Curiosity in a Junkyard*.

they capable of the temporal reorganisation they promise ... but they are, in my opinion, entirely correct that the Doctor's removal will ease that reorganisation. Balance ... no, better still, *harmony*, is achievable!"

The eight Cardinals and Zero Nuns shifted in their high-backed thrones, all disconcerted by the Waiter's words.

He declared bluntly, "If I may speak candidly, I find your attitude confusing."

"I beg your pardon?" a Zero Nun protested.

"Why, my lords and ladies, does such an august body of Time Lords fear this ... this common Shebogan?"

More rumbles uttered from the quorum, prompting the Waiter to apologise for his bad language.

"Because, you young oik," the Zero Nun to the Senior's left grunted, "the Doctor has powers and abilities we all fear."

"Powers any sentient being would rightly fear!"

The Waiter balled a fist, choosing to ignore the veiled insult.

"We cannot afford to have him direct his ... interfering zeal and talent for anarchy upon us."

"He has proved he has cause to resent us, and no loyalty to his oaths."

"You fear him pitting his wits against the collective quorum of Time Lords? But why?"

"Because," the Nun intoned gravely, "*he ... might ... win.*"

The Waiter looked across at the quorum, all of whom nodded in decisive agreement. In that moment, sacrilege though it was to contemplate, the Waiter saw their society direly needed new blood. They did not know how fortunate they were to have someone of his calibre among them. He had never felt his presence was more necessary.

The Waiter looked from side to side, his eyes gleaming mutinously. "I beg you to heed my words. I may lack your experience, but I see what you may not fully appreciate. You cannot hold yourself hostage to the whims of one such as him. A traitor to our principles."

"What is our alternative? Bow to the Preservers?"

"The Preservers respect our sovereignty," the Waiter assured them breezily. "They would not dare ..."

"Oh, wouldn't they?"

"What are you talking about?" The Waiter knew from the Cardinals' silence that he had overstepped his mark. But the Zero Nun's next words surprised him.

"Oh, have you not kept up with external affairs?" She thrust a skeletal finger at the oaken table in the centre of the room. A four-dimensional map of the outer continuum conjured before them. "At the moment we have a problem with the time-space continuum." Her finger traced its way arthritically across the model's lateral and vertical extent. "What do you notice?"

The Waiter hardly believed what he saw. "It's ... shrunk?"

The Zero Nun turned to the Senior Administrative Cardinal. "Maybe this one is not so unpromising after all."

Chapter Two

Down Memory Lane

“Public Register Video?” Maggie asked. “What’s that, like PBS or something?”

It was a rhetorical question. The text scrolling across the console’s nearest screen did not seem like any public broadcaster Maggie had ever seen. It was ominous and in a viewer-unfriendly stylised Gothic script. Nevertheless, whatever response Maggie was expecting from the Doctor, it was not the one she got.

His eyes briefly widened, before he decisively clicked the screen off, filling it instead with an unpleasant white noise. “News from home,” he said sourly, whirling to the next panel.

“Definitely not where your hearts are anymore, eh Doc?”

“How well you know me, Maggie. When it comes to Gallifrey, no news is most certainly good news.” He shrugged, and reached in front of her to turn the screen back on.

She smirked as his face flashed across the screen, followed by ten others.

“Well, at least you’re not alone. There are also those other ten guys.”

He shook his head. “They’re all me too.”

“Seriously?” Maggie looked at the assortment of faces flashing on the screen. It was hard to imagine her Doctor being so old, then so young, still less having a beard or a Beatle haircut. “Even that guy?”

“*Especially* that guy.” He stroked his chin. “My word, they have me on the brain at the moment. I should be flattered.” He read the text scrolling vertically down the screen and listened to the intent debate of the three ancient-looking people in pointed hats arguing across it. Unusually, Maggie could not understand their conversation, which was issuing forth in a long-winded, Latin-like tongue: Gallifreyan, she imagined. She decided not to ask why whatever magical powers usually allowed her to understand alien languages was not working in this case. The Doctor gave his chin another worried scratch. “Another crisis at home, and as usual it’s my fault.”

“How so?”

“You remember that little bother that separated us a few months back?”

“That horrible old woman in the twinset? She wasn’t a Time Lord though ...”

“No. Someone worse, with whom the Time Lords are apparently conspiring to send me down the river.”

“That’s awful!”

“No worse than I expect from the pompous dotards.” With that, he firmly clicked the screen off. “Anyway, it appears the time/space continuum has contracted since, and apparently *that’s* my fault too.” He crossed the console and hammered at the nearby controls. “Hmm, they are on to something though. There is some ...”

“Shrinkage?”

“Contraction might be a better word. Aeons of time no longer accessible. Time rippling to a single fixed date.”

His features grew positively stormy when the digits appeared on the TARDIS Yearometer. After the Gallifreyan symbols, the display appeared in Arabic numerals: 23-11-2963.

And the Doctor backed away from the console, his hand at his temple.

“What is it, Doc?”

“But that never happened ... neither did that. Oh no. I’m gaining some unwelcome new memories. Three sets of them, in each of my three most recent lives.”

In ominous tandem with the Doctor’s pain, the trumpeting engines of the TARDIS sounded to signal they were landing.

As far as the eye could see, the planet of Xenophon Zeta was bubbling marsh below, mist at eye level, and a murky purple sky above. But there were no eyes to see this: the soft land and vast bubbling swamps grew nothing but seaweed and a few scrubby shrubs, and the atmosphere was too thin to invite land-based creatures. The depths of its luminous waters had weird and wonderful creatures swimming in them, but up here there was nothing. No birds flew, no lizards crawled, and no mammals trotted. As its Greek designation indicated, this planet was never one that garnered any interest: it was a point on a distant star chart, not a viable world for colonisation or research.

And yet in spite of that, Maggie did not find the expanse of mud and eerie-hued gas around her unremarkable. It was ugly ... but through another lens, it was beautiful. There was a serene but uncanny wonder heavy in the air, which suffused its isolation and its desolation. And how lucky she was to be able to witness it. It was a timely reminder that some places were better for not having people trample all over them. She took care to tread carefully.

She craned her neck back across this endless level terrain to stop at the TARDIS from which she had emerged. It seldom looked as out of place as it currently did, a bold and decisive blue against the smudgy purple haze, jutting tall and a little pompously against the all-encompassing flatness. Behind her, the Doctor staggered unsteadily out of the door and circled a spot of the marsh, pacing unsteadily in an attempt to clear his head.

She had mentioned her admiration for the scenery, and he smiled. “Not a view your people ever shared.”

“What about your people?”

He shrugged. "Not as far as I know. Still, it's always possible. There might be one or two slithering underwater."

"Just as well I'm wearing boots," she laughed.

She crossed back to him. He looked thinner than usual, swallowed in the overlarge folds of his bright green Raglan coat. He had the coat wrapped around himself and was hugging himself, as if he found it difficult to keep warm.

She knew he didn't want her to fuss over him, but his spinning on the spot was worrying her.

"I was in my eighth incarnation ... just finished battling the Toymaker ... found out what happened to Ace ... But that's not what happened. I went to Haiti in 1965²." His eyes met Maggie's, and he asked pleadingly, "Didn't I?"

She bit her lip. "Does the TARDIS keep a log?"

"All the landings are recorded, but we'd have several centuries to scroll through."

"Don't you keep a diary or something?"

"I used to ... never found the time."

She appreciated his problem. To him there was no present, no day after day, merely an unceasing now that could only be measured by fallible, mutable, and relative yardsticks. What value, for instance, was counting out time in increments of sixty seconds and twenty-four hours out this untold distance from the sun and planet whose rotation inspired those measures?

All he had were his memories. And now he couldn't trust them.

"But that was all centuries ago ... I'm a different man anyway ... what does it matter, right?" He clapped his hands together and looked around. "Now where are we, Mags?"

Maggie neared him. Surely everything was all right?

Hardly. For as soon as she neared him the Doctor pitched forward into her arms.

Maggie kept talking, hoping her words might pull the Doctor through his delirium as they seemed to have moments ago.

"The scanner said ... Xenophon Zeta?"

He wrinkled his nose. "Really? Are you sure?"

"How should I know?"

His eyes fluttered, but keeping them open seemed too much effort. "Not where I wanted to go ..." he muttered, as if drifting to sleep. "Aiming for Revelstoke ..."

She swallowed. "Revelstoke? Why?"

"After Soma ... after the succubus and the dead gods' carnival [UNCERTAIN FUTURE ADVENTURE] ... I'm becoming worried ..."

"Worried about what?"

His brown eyes watered as he met her forlorn gaze. "Worried I can't keep you safe."

"Be fair to me, Doc. How am I going to keep *you* safe if I'm not with you?" she asked. Maggie tried to keep her voice light, but his words hurt her. She deserved a choice in the matter. She deserved some consultation. It had been hard enough waiting for him the last time they were separated. The pain, the near-death, all that had been worth it. But not if he wanted to dump her at the first opportunity.

² See *The Doctor Who Project: The Cosmic Plot of Doctor Hu* and *The Doctor Who Project: Black Magic*.

She ignored this. They would definitely have words about this, but there wasn't time to focus on that now.

"Those memories," she pressed him. "Are you remembering anything significant?"

The memories peeled back. The several centuries of his present life unspooled ... even back beyond the hundred and eight years he spent as the humble fisherman Theo³.

After reliving the trauma of his tenth regeneration, he saw his immediate predecessor again, with the long windswept hair, those thin high cheekbones, and vaguely Gallic handsomeness. He relived that painful abandonment of Hannah Redfoot ... the repression and arrogance that sprang from guilt over the actions of his ninth self ... so much self-pity! His rebirth had put that weight behind him. Now, diving into the depths of his memories, he remembered how truly heavily it pressed his soul.

But he was not done. It was many decades before that. He was in his early thousands when it happened, early in his eighth incarnation, the one with the neat beard and the waistcoat with its ever-changing pattern ...

³ See *The Doctor Who Project: The 108-Year Hitch*.

Chapter Three

Past Lives

What was real?

“I don’t suppose I could persuade you to give me a slap?” the Doctor asked Tamara Scott.

The lissom young SIS agent looked from her hand to the Doctor’s bearded cheekbones.

“Serious?”

“Serious.”

“I should warn you, mate, I’m trained. I hit hard.”

“Perhaps not,” he agreed, rubbing his cheek in anticipation of Tamara’s violence. “It’s just the Toymaker. Visiting his realm makes one doubt things, lose sight of what’s real. The first time I went there was one of the first times I left my home planet. I nearly got trapped forever ...”

The Doctor was glad to shake off the unhappy memories and take in their surroundings. He and Tamara had left the TARDIS in a pantry and were prowling the corridors and staterooms of an empty stately home. For all its opulence, it had a counterfeit aura: likely a Victorian folly or worse, an American pastiche of English Jacobethan architecture.

“Could be Gillette Castle?” he mused.

“The best a man can get?” Tamara quipped.

The Doctor rubbed his beard and regarded her witheringly. “William Gillette? A well-known nineteenth century actor? He was the first actor to play Sherlock Holmes, in a play he wrote.”

Tamara nodded without concealing her disinterest. “He did well for himself, if he could shack up here.”

The time was late afternoon. The sunlight glinting through the mullioned windows was diffuse and weak, that of a cold late autumn. The gracious furniture and antiques were polished and dusted. Yet there wasn’t a soul about.

“Then there’s that smell ...”

She breathed in. “What smell?”

“Precisely. Where’s the musty old aroma that tells you of the history that’s unfolded in these walls? Nor does it smell fresh.” He sucked air in theatrically, slapping at his chest and frowning as he exhaled. “Like an airport. There isn’t any kind of smell at all.”

“You’re having a funny turn, aren’t you?” Tamara asked.

“Very perceptive ...” He had a dim view of another scene entirely and blinked dizzily. “The misty moors of Xenophon Zeta ...” he said aloud. “Whatever brought me there?”

“Looks like Sussex to me,” Tamara noted, tapping the mullioned window and gesturing to the countryside.

“No, it’s a memory. Will be a memory. From the future ...”

“Trust you to get ‘em in the wrong order.”

“My future self ... he’s trying to tell me this isn’t supposed to happen. I didn’t come here.”

“But you did. You are!”

He shook his head emphatically. “You and I aren’t supposed to be here, Tamara.”

“I can believe that. Looks like a National Trust property. I bet some guard’ll be in any moment to guide us to the other side of the velvet ropes.” She stepped nearer. “Do you want to get back to the TARDIS?”

“Definitely. I wonder what I’m trying to say?” he wondered.

To Maggie’s relief, the Doctor opened his eyes and his features relaxed. A vein of impatience crossed them.

“What an idiot I was,” he fumed. “I tried my best to contact the other fellow, but he didn’t heed the warning.”

“Well, don’t be too hard on yourself,” Maggie said.

“Hmm. Hard not to be sometimes. But maybe I can learn something from his memories. There was no one inside the house ... an empty house and here we are on an empty planet ... we’re outside the spatio-temporal contraction.”

“Shouldn’t there be nothing? Just a white void?”

“Give it time and there may be. But it may be significant that neither of us arrived on November 23, 2963. Do you remember that little invitation I got about a year ago?”

“Yes, in that white box⁴.”

“It had that same date, November 23, 2963, written on it. It confirms that the anomaly is no accident. It’s a trap, and I’m willing to bet it’s been laid for me.”

Another vision filled the Doctor’s mind: his ninth self ...

A stray hair had fallen over the Doctor’s noble brow. He set it back into place, straightened his knitted silk tie, and smoothed the creases of his tweed sack suit.

“Don’t know why I bothered,” he muttered to himself. “No one around here is likely to object to my appearance.”

⁴ See *The Doctor Who Project: M.O.A.B.*

He had found himself on a space freighter. Its abiding features were its frigid temperature and the heavy rust and metal fatigue in its internal structure. The shoddy workmanship suggested to him a construction period late in the stages of the Earth Empire. No doubt its *raison d'être* had been to haul some filthy and objectionable cargo to one of the thousand suns enslaved under their obscene banner. Perhaps its hold contained stolen treasures from a people they have conquered, perhaps synthetic narcotics to enslave a hapless population, perhaps criminals whose dissent had consigned them to be some benighted penal colony.

But the Doctor derived some relief from the fact that such cargo would never reach its destination. This freighter was far off course, and there was no one aboard.

He jumped, forgetting his height for a moment and nearly banging his head on a low sloping panel from the deck. "Peculiar that the gravity is still functional," he noted. "A breathable atmosphere as well ... albeit with perhaps a shade too much random deuterium floating about for comfortable inhalation."

It was just as well he was travelling alone these days. Tolerable though the atmosphere may have been, an aura of danger surrounded the vessel.

The Doctor trudged toward the bridge when he felt light-headed all of a sudden. He saw and innately recognised the future face, but the message was disorganised, a bombardment of haphazard details.

"My dear fellow, what are you trying to say?" he asked himself. "I'm never where I'm supposed to be, why should I be any more worried about that now than before?"

Did he see a shadow move on the far end of the corridor?

"I'm trying to remember which of those past selves was more pompous," the Doctor reflected. "I tell you Maggie, if you got a message from your future, wouldn't you heed it? Wouldn't you assume you might have reason to contact yourself?"

"Depends on the message."

"You're right ... and I have always distrusted listening to other people ..."

"Even yourself?"

"Especially myself. Now I'm seeing my last incarnation ... I stand corrected. Now *he* was the pompous type."

"Whereas you don't have *any* airs and graces, I suppose?"

The Doctor slapped the toque on top of his head. "Certainly not!"

Maggie looked around at the chilly, thin skyline. "Are you OK out here? Should we go back into the TARDIS?"

The Doctor's nostrils quivered as he breathed in the thin atmosphere. "I'm enjoying the fresh air ... it's giving my mind some focus ... helping me think ..."

"And let me guess, you're thinking of yourself ... well, not you you, but that other you ... out there in the past? The pompous one?"

"Yes. And he isn't where he's supposed to be either."

San Francisco, the Doctor considered, was not what it used to be.

Then again, the city was still above water, so one had to take the rough with the smooth.

He had tried to conceal his disappointment at the year they had arrived, but Hannah Redfoot was having none of it. She proved uniquely able to get under his skin, and as they walked through Chinatown, he finally admitted he was aiming for 1948.

“Oh, it’s not so bad, is it?” she coaxed.

“No, no,” he grumbled.

She looked around at the locals in their loose clothing and glowing sneakers. “I think I can tell *you* the year, for once. If those Hammer pants are anything to go by, some time during the Cola Wars, right?”

The reference left the Doctor cold. “Nineteen eighty-six, if that answers your question.”

“I suppose you’ve never had a cola. To be fair, you probably get enough caffeine from all that tea you drink,” Hannah joked.

“The other places were all deserted ...” he suddenly mumbled, the jumble of his other selves’ memories catching up with him.

But as he looked around, he saw that even the people here were becoming blurry and indistinct. Hannah noticed it too.

“That can’t be good,” she assessed.

“No it isn’t ...” He reached into the pocket of his long beige topcoat, desperately grasping at the sonic screwdriver.

One figure at the far end of the street was not moving with the others. He was in crystal clear focus.

He was small, the Doctor noticed. A boy.

And he knew him.

Chapter Four

A Nice Day

Every day is someone's best day and someone else's worst day. For every birthday and wedding day, for every Christmas and Galactic Olympics Opening Ceremony, there was someone on a deathbed breathing their last, others ending their love tearily and with hateful recriminations, others in agony mental or physical, unjustly killed, imprisoned, betrayed, or robbed ...

He knew that, and it sickened him. He liked to think he could do anything, but there was nothing he could do about that. Even at his most callous, he was never able to look past that knowledge. As a result of experiencing time out of order—not for him that dreary seven ceaseless days of twenty-four hours from Monday to Sunday—he became even more acutely aware that suffering and bitterness and evil were as perfidious and common around the universe as compassion, love, and community.

And that was right, he had always supposed. Perhaps not right, but ... it was necessary to have a kind of balance. If every single being in the universe was happy all the time, so the argument went, nothing would ever change, progress, develop. And in his experience, there was nothing worse than stasis ... except perhaps its inevitable structural bedfellow, entropy.

But what if he reached a point where he decided he didn't care about that? *Why should* he strive for balance if it caused some people to undeservedly suffer and others to benefit from that suffering? And suppose he *did* change things, suppose he did meddle and interfere to bring about the best outcome? If the decision was his and his alone, why should he not decide to do it? Who, realistically, was going to stop him?

Perhaps he had considered it earlier in his life. Toyed with the idea before backing away from it. Some outdated idea of responsibility or morality clung to his thinking. He had seen it go wrong too many times. But not anymore. Now ... he was finally someone who had so little care for the consequences, so narrow a perspective, that he would make it a reality.

And so he did something about it, and people were pretty happy. There was nothing but celebration these days. These days being November 23, 2963.

And it made sense that people would celebrate. They were better off now. There was no conflict, there was no strife. Daleks didn't conquer, Cybermen didn't convert. Sontarans and Rutans no longer waged war. All of their cruelty and tyranny was at an end—by his fiat. It was simple, really—much simpler than he ever thought possible. All the races of the universe—every menace he had fought and defeated in the past—now had no choice but to submit to his rule.

He never liked ruling before. But that was before he saw things this way. He had been ruled over by abstract philosophical concepts. Power was a different proposition, and while earlier he would never have enjoyed wielding it, he did now. And he saw its purpose. It was the only way to make sure everyone would be happy.

In the past, he might have cringed at the notion of being worshipped. An entire day celebrating him ... him moving into (where else?) Buckingham Palace and going out on the balcony and greeting the faithful ... why it would have been torture.

Not now, thought. So what if people cried out in joy, hailing their saviour, the Doctor? Maybe, he finally considered, he deserved it. Those other selves had been so modest, and where had it got them? It was nice to get a bit of recognition at long last.

It had taken him a long time to realise it, though. But then, he was the Last Doctor.

And it was better late than never.

Chapter Five

Deaths of the Doctor

To rule time, it was necessary to understand it. It was an essential part of every Time Lord's tutelage to grasp the moral and philosophical implications of their domain.

Those philosophical implications sometimes veered into deep waters—too deep, some might say. There was the commonly held belief that time was inherently 'soft', malleable, and only the act of time travel, only with a Time Lord observing history, set it. This naturally raised the moral dilemma—did the Time Lords have the right to fix time by their travel and observation?

The Waiter had never enjoyed those lectures, and his poor grasp of the issue made him feel that, for all his status and seniority in Time Lord society, he was still in many ways a youngster. This uncomfortable thought resurfaced at that contempt, or at best condescension, with which the Cardinals and Zero Nuns had treated him at that meeting.

But the notion newly fascinated him. Though widely discredited—the concept of 'Alternative Time' being no more than a Gallifreyan parlour trick and the computations of the Matrix ensuring the flow of time was uninterrupted and unchanging—this philosophy did raise the possibility that the Doctor's travels *did* pose a danger to the Time Lords' ideal of stasis.

He was currently studying some of the Time Lords' records of the Doctor's gaudy adventures. This time, though, alongside every biog-data extract, the Matrix prognostications were running, so he could see the alternatives, the way things *could* have gone ... and perhaps see if the Doctor's presence had made things better or worse.

It was amusing to see these adventures in space and time with the foresight of the Matrix acting as a commentary. Such early voyages as Quinnis in the Fourth Universe, and that early dabbling in Terran history in the time of King Henry VIII, seemed dangerous enough. But those august augurs in the Matrix had laid a high probability that the Doctor would not survive his visit to Skaro. Watching the incidents unfold, the Waiter could see why—as usual showing his ignorance, the Doctor did not even recognise the Daleks when they first met!

As his lives passed, and he grew more reckless and assured of his invulnerability, logically his chances of perishing out there, without regenerating, should have increased. But as the Doctors piled up, and won day after day despite the increasing scale of their opposition and the increasing stakes of their battles, the Matrix minds conceded (initially grudgingly, and then with an increasing and, to the Waiter, increasingly vulgar sense of admiration) that he was unlikely to be defeated.

But the Waiter's mind raced as he considered those other endings. The Doctor collapsing, dying of radiation poisoning, never even having regenerated. The Giant Spiders of Metebelis III ravaging his third body with their diabolical powers and him collapsing on Earth to his death, without his old mentor K'Anpo there to give the regeneration process a push. The mental duel with Skagra pushing his fourth self to its end ... Mawdryn successfully stealing his future regenerations and leaving him to die on their damned spacecraft ... the Valeyard living a paradoxical existence as the Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh, Twelfth, *and* Thirteenth Doctors ... the Master succeeding in knocking him off in a rather undignified motorcycle duel ... the Therianthropes polluting his bloodstream, Section Thirteen executing him, Count Wampyr feasting on his blood ...

Whether the Doctor knew it or had come to think himself bullet-proof, the fact was that his own life was as malleable as the timeline every time he recklessly opened the doors of the TARDIS. Each of his ten deaths to date could have been his last, and many hundreds of times between could have marked his final end.

It was beyond the Matrix's capacity to evaluate the alteration to temporal affairs by each respective death. And perhaps the sum total of deceased Time Lords were daring the Waiter to reach his own conclusions, decide for himself whether the Doctor had on balance been a force for good or evil in the universe.

Repeatedly, he sought their guidance, looked for some mathematical basis to make such a judgement. And repeatedly, his predecessors refused to crunch the numbers.

"Cowards!" he spat under his breath at the interface.

The Waiter jumped at the young gasp that uttered from the mouth of the technician standing behind him.

"Don't interrupt him," Rotilla warned Technician Entrar. "You know what he's like."

"I know," Entrar replied with a dreamy expression on his face. In truth, he had no idea what this firebrand new Time Lord was like, but if you wanted promotion around this place, it didn't do to argue.

Rotilla shrugged and swept away impatiently. "Oh well, I warned you."

And Entrar wanted to see what the Waiter was doing, what purpose lay behind his study of the Doctor. There were dark whisperings, and no topic could trigger bitter debate more rapidly than the Doctor. The heated argument for and against the renegade seemed to be emblematic of the division and discord that was pregnant in the air of Gallifrey these days.

Could this gawky, moustachioed youth be the hope that their planet needed? Entrar felt a dynamism about him, a quality most unlike the staid and sagacious Time Lords that usually

advanced. But he was old in his hearts, Entrar could tell. And that was a quality that Time Lords admired more than anything. Perhaps that would make up for his chronic tardiness.

At the moment the Waiter was wheeling his throne-like chair away from the *escritoire* and leaning back as suavely as he knew how, to make up for the earlier indignity of his start as Entrar snuck up on him. The technician bowed apologetically and cast his eyes down at the floor.

"That's all right, Technician," the Waiter said with unexpected gregariousness. "Perhaps you can help me." He tapped the watery display before the pair, and that old/young face in those *recherché* and primitive Earth clothes. Entrar knew enough about the Doctor to recognise it as his third incarnation. "What do you make of this one?"

"The Doctor, sir?"

"Yes. I'd be grateful to get a common Gallifreyan's view of the state of affairs. You must have heard of the situation that we're in, that seems to revolve around him and his rebuke of our society."

"I have heard, sir. It's ... caused quite a stir."

The Waiter laughed at the understatement. "The problem is we all thought we could apply our creed of non-interference. They say on that planet he's so fond of, 'live and let live'."

"Oh? I don't know much about Earth, sir."

"Neither do I. This Matrix recording was from his exile. Look at him!" The image showed a silver vehicle flying through a drizzly countryside as dinosaurs rampaged through the streets of one of the Earth cities. "You might think he'd learn his lesson, try to stay inconspicuous. You may not know much about Earth, but I'm sure you know that in their twentieth century, they did *not* have flying cars."

"No, indeed, sir." The technician was uncomfortable at the exchange, increasingly under the impression that the Waiter was merely pontificating aloud, and didn't actually want his input into his stream of thought.

"'When heroes do not exist, it is necessary to invent them,'" he quoted.

"Lord President Borusa, tenth regeneration?" Entrar identified.

"Very good, Technician," the Waiter said appreciatively. He turned back to the screen. "And if ever a man proved that barren philosophy, it was the Doctor. Now is the time for a different kind of hero."

"Indeed, sir."

"Do you not think I could be ...?" The Waiter broke off, stared at the floor himself. Entrar didn't dare suspect that he may be overcome with modesty himself.

"Oh, certainly, sir."

"Yes, yes I could, couldn't I? If that Doctor can, why can't I?" His fists balled up and his cheeks had turned a vivid red.

Technician Entrar forgot why he came into the Archive Chamber and wished he could think of an excuse to leave.

As he edged to the door, the images from out in linear space/time changed dramatically. No last stand against the Cybermen. No hanging from a radio telescope. No infection by Therianthrope. Doctor by Doctor, they were all vanishing from their allotted timestreams.

Entrar shook the Waiter from his torpor. Never mind the disrespect, this was serious. Even the Waiter seemed to think so, his pale grey eyes darting across the images as they vanished.

Before long, there was nothing but a silvery void, white clouds sifting and erupting within it, throbbing sinisterly back at them. There was no Doctor at all.

The Waiter moved to examine his instruments, but Entrar pointed at the screen again. A new face was filling it. It was the face of a boy.

Chapter Six

The Death of Doctor Who

Tamara Scott was tired of running in circles.

It was a perennial hazard of travelling with the Doctor. And to be sure, her SIS training kept her physically up to the challenge, as well as able to defend herself from most conventional enemies. But then there were the unconventional enemies. Talons and tentacles she could get used to, but what about formless beings that invaded the mind? All-powerful entities that could conjure up whole worlds from thin air, worlds that conformed to no sense or logic but the warped and childish limits of their malevolent minds?

Surely this house was such a place. It was as vast and sealed-off as the TARDIS itself. Each room led out to a corridor, which looped back to another identical room. They were tasteful and elegant bedrooms and sitting rooms and studies and libraries and billiard rooms. No personal touches, just sterile comfort and well-appointed good taste all the way around.

The stairs led down to other landings, but somehow she could never reach a front door. Every mullioned window she looked through had the same view: a rolling countryside, dappled in late-afternoon amber light. It could be England. It could be home. And yet it looked cold and remote at the same time. Possibly because there was no movement, no milk floats or carriages in the distance, no people, horses, or birds.

The colour of the sunlight was appropriate, Tamara considered. Amber. She felt she was caught in amber, stuck in something very sticky indeed with no way out.

And she had turned a dark corner and lost track of the Doctor. She called out to him, but disliked the desperate echo of her own voice so gave up and turned her mind instead to reasoning her way out of this place.

That included merely getting back to the TARDIS. But, typically, she had come to forget how far she had walked, how many rooms and halls she had walked through, how many staircases and landings she had descended. Wherever she was, she was no likelier to reach the top than the bottom.

She looked out. Same view, same angle. It didn't matter how high she climbed, it was as unchanging as a Constable landscape.

Tamara hoisted a handy Parson's chair above her head and threw it against the beautiful double-glazing. She wouldn't have cared if the damned thing shattered. But predictably, the chair bounced harmlessly off, skittering down the stairs and ending up on its side on the landing.

She scowled at this prison, and wearily took a seat on the stairs. The weariness was all in Tamara's mind. Her legs had no aches or stiffness, despite her walking for ... hours? Or was it only twenty minutes or so? She checked her watch, as if that would provide any answers.

She rubbed her temple. Her head didn't even have the decency to ache. She felt nothing at all.

This unpleasant thought shook Tamara for a moment, but she had only begun to contemplate its implications—that she was dead?—before she heard a blood-curdling scream rattle through the depths of the house.

It was the Doctor, screaming her name with more terror than she had ever heard him express.

Tamara was instantly on her feet, bounding toward the source of the voice. She knew from her training how to locate a voice based on its volume, echo, ambience, and acoustic qualities of the surroundings.

She kicked open a heavy oak door and saw the Doctor.

He was on his back. Nearly-black Time Lord blood was seeping through the luxurious white cotton of his shirt. He was coughing and choking up more blood.

She rushed to his side, squeezed his hand tightly.

"It wasn't supposed to end this way ..." he croaked.

Tamara caught sight of the Doctor's murderer. She had only a moment to take in his tiny stature, the untidy mop of hair, the unusual old-fashioned clothes.

It was a boy. He held a sword in his hand. Its hilt was unusually curved—curved, Tamara realised, in the shape of a question mark.

"You were good in your day, Doc," the boy told the Doctor as life drained from his body. "But it's time for someone new, innit?"

Tamara puzzled over the drawling Estuary accent.

The boy turned to her. "And you deserved better, Tamara Scott. Erased from time because of him and his bungling?" He tutted. "Not any more. Thanks to me. Back you go to live your life."

"Life?"

"Sure! Have a good 'un. It won't be exactly the same timeline as you're used to. Got a bit more compact. But it runs a lot more smoothly now."

"But who are you? Why did you kill the Doctor?"

"Kill the Doctor?" he cackled, a shrill and obnoxious cackle that echoed through the flimsy confines of this illusory house. "I *am* the Doctor! And once I'm done, I always will be!"

It was the last bizarre sight Tamara saw, before the whole space faded from her sight and she opened her eyes to see London. It was almost as it was when she left, but distorted somehow.

Tamara was convinced that this was far from over. And even more forlornly, she was convinced that there would be no Doctor to save it.

Aboard the freighter, the Doctor stroked his chin superciliously. He was more puzzled than alarmed by the small shape marching purposefully toward him.

“Are you in charge here?” he asked.

The figure remained silent.

“Well?” he snapped. “Answer me, boy!”

This brittle strain in his voice caused the figure to stop in his tracks. A stray shaft of garish floodlighting projected down like a spotlight, and the Doctor was able to take in the bizarre little fellow. He was dressed like a Dickensian schoolboy—a dignified plum-coloured tailcoat, a floral-patterned waistcoat, white breeches and riding boots, a high stiff-collared shirt with a dark flowing cravat tied around it. His untidy hair peeked out from under the brim of a tall, almost stovepipe-like hat.

It was an extraordinary enough costume if seen in its natural habitat. But this was far from nineteenth century London. It was as out of place as ... a police box ... or, the Doctor thought, looking down at his own attire, a tweed sack suit.

“Do I know you?” he asked the boy.

“Reckon you might,” the boy answered. His high and malign voice screamed London. The Doctor had always loved the city and its people, but for the first time heard it as a threatening and harsh dialect.

Threatening and harsh, perhaps, because of its familiarity.

“You can’t be...” the Doctor stammered, his mouth suddenly dry.

“What’s a-matta, Doctor? Cat got your tongue? Or can you work out who I am and why I’m here?”

“Who you are ... I dare not speculate. Why you’re here ... makes no sense. I can only deduce you mean some harm to me. But if you are who I think you are, any harm to me would also spell doom for you. Prevent you from coming to exist. Am I right ... Doctor?”

The boy’s dark eyes glinted in the freighter’s sodium lighting. “Right about the second part. I am the Doctor. The *last* Doctor, the only Doctor there will ever be after I get rid of you lot.”

“You lot?” repeated the Doctor, the colloquialism unfamiliar to him.

“Yeah, you other ten bozos. Much too disordered, all these different regenerations and personalities. Much better to have *one* life, one set of values, one purpose.”

Without turning from his earlier self, the boy tapped a sequence on a nearby wall.

The Doctor did not notice the bulkhead suddenly detach from its mate. By the time he noticed, a view of deep space had filled the surroundings, and a deadly wind filled the air around him. The vacuum of space was filling this tiny box of metal and would kill even him.

The boy waved, the only witness to this Doctor’s last moments.

Hannah ran after the Doctor, who had bounded so far ahead of her he was a flicker of beige cashmere several blocks ahead.

The boy had climbed aboard a tram. It was the only thing moving in the now-empty San Francisco street.

Now that Hannah thought about it, even when the city had seemed bustling and full of activity, everyone around her seemed ... limited, somehow. Flat, cardboard cut-outs animated but

with no depth. Dream figures conjured from her imagining. Or had that all been real? Had they started out in the real San Francisco but only now slipped into some funhouse mirror reconstruction of it ... or perhaps this person whose appearance had so rattled the Doctor had spirited them away ...

Hannah had no time to make any further deductions, focussing instead on keeping pace with her only friend in this suddenly hostile, nightmarish landscape.

The Doctor leapt forward head-first, grabbing at the railing. The tram seemed to be moving much faster than it should, and Hannah lost her breath as she followed his example. Strangely, she did not even feel winded as she landed inside, the whole dangerous move seeming almost like a video game character jumping across some pixelated canyon.

The inside of the trolley car rocked and jostled, but its interior had no grime and no signs of life. The inclining streets of San Francisco rolled past like an inferior blue-screen projection in an old movie.

The Doctor helped her up. "You might have slowed down," he told the tram's other passenger. "I only want a word."

"A word?" the boy squeaked, kicking the back of the nearest seat with his riding boots.

"The memories of my former selves have caught up with me."

"Funny how memory works for us, innit?" The boy cocked his top hat back on his head and stared at the tram's ceiling.

"Who is this boy, Doctor?" Hannah asked, trying to conceal her distaste for him. She had an innate revulsion, her skin crawling at the sight of him. Why? Aside from the unusual clothes, he seemed perfectly normal. And yet, there was something malevolent in his eyes, something that peered at the Doctor and her with such disdain, such outright hatred, that she trembled. She hoped he didn't see her doing so.

Her stomach lurched when her friend answered, "He is me. And I am he ..."

"Ah, my favourite Beatles," the boy sighed wistfully.

"Yes, but it's bad enough meeting your future self. You've taken it a step further. Even the Valeyard never travelled back with such abandon, killing his earlier selves over and over? He had the decency to rely on the Gallifreyan legal system to accomplish the task." The Doctor took a step closer. "That is who you are, isn't it? Not really me, but some avatar of my worst side?"

"Could be your best side, mate."

"My best side doesn't go around stabbing people or blowing them out of airlocks."

"Not people, mate." He tapped his forehead. "Haven't you sometimes, in your darkest moments, thought you deserved it?"

Hannah reached for the Doctor's hand, but it hung limply at his side. It felt already like the hand of a dead man. If he had this little fight in him, the boy wouldn't even have to try.

"You've had a particularly hard life, haven't you Doc?" the boy pressed. "I mean, *this* life, this version of you. Poor old Tom Brooker and Val Rossi ... the cosmos never gets any easier to live in either ... all those grim and desolate events ... they bring you down, don't they?"

The Doctor straightened his back. "It might bring *you* down. I have no time to feel sorry for myself. I learned long ago to ..."

"To what? Repress your feelings, lock all your doubts in a big old box and throw away the key? Aw, give over!" the boy continued. "I'm you, remember. I know you don't convince yourself with that guff, 'cos you don't convince me. All that cold alien stuff ... it's just posturing isn't it?"

Worse, you're infected with human neuroses, trying to behave like a human to ignore the real Time Lord within yourself. Be honest with yourself." The boy tapped his chest. "By this time you're ready to face the end, aren't you? If a Dalek turned round that corner, you'd welcome its blast."

"Never!" Why did his voice sound so hollow in protest?

"Except the universe won't let you go."

The Doctor's long hair clung to his skull limply, hanging over his handsome and bony face as if ready to muzzle him. But his eyes glinted through the tangle of hair. Even Hannah was suddenly alarmed at the fiery flare in his expression.

He chuckled, low and humourless. Hannah had never met his archenemy the Master, but that interstellar dastard couldn't have been more menacing on his worst day. The boy kept slouching in the tram's bench seat, but she could tell—or did she simply hope?—that he was succeeding in rattling this jumped-up little intruder.

"You really are very stupid," he told the boy. "Killing me in this order was a mistake. And a violation of causality."

The boy yawned. "Time Lord's prerogative, I reckon."

"That prerogative has accomplished nothing except to help me. It has allowed me to see it coming, allowed me to remember and use the knowledge." He stepped forward. "But then, if you're anything like me, and if you feel even an echo of what you claim is paralysing me into a death wish, then perhaps you're willingly opening the door to your own defeat."

"We'll see about that."

Suddenly the whole tram slammed to a still. The force of the vehicle whipped the Doctor back, sending him crashing through the window.

Hannah thought it was all over in seconds, but truthfully she didn't see the end with her own eyes. In the blink of an eye, she was back outside her gift shop in Wyoming.

In the real sequence of events, Hannah had been abandoned here by the TARDIS due to the attack upon it that coincided with the Doctor's tenth regeneration⁵. This version of Hannah felt an echo of the betrayal and the hurt that she felt that day—along with the aching uncertainty of where the Doctor was and how the hell he would get out of his present predicament.

She only had those last words—that unexpected glimmer of confidence in his future self—to reassure her that somehow, it would work out.

⁵ See *The Doctor Who Project: Infection Vector*.

Chapter Seven

Storm Over Acheron

The end is the beginning.

Sir Gawain and his weary steed marched through the chill glade, and these words kept him company. He rolled them in his head, extending each syllable to remember the wise man who had said them. But in truth, it had been so long since Gawain had heard them actually spoken, and they had echoed around his thoughts so many times in the interim, that the voice and the face had almost totally faded.

“The end is the beginning,” he parroted, but as he expected, the wizardly authority entirely vanished when he spoke aloud. In Merlin’s mouth it seemed less advice than mystical incantation. He certainly lacked that gift. He was a man of flesh and blood, all too obviously. “Oh Merlin ...” he sighed wistfully. “Why did you have to desert us when we needed you most?”

And yet as was typical of the elderly mage, Merlin had left them with enough foresight of the future to predict what would come next.

His horse whinnied, and he realised he had been so lost in his thoughts he nearly trotted right by the place he was headed toward. He gave his mount an affectionate pat, congratulating her for picking up where he had fallen short.

There was a lot on his shoulders, and his alone. Perhaps Nimue might be seen eventually, but of the other Knights of the Round Table, there was scant sign. His own life had been too unnaturally extended. Wizards may have been intended to live forever, but mortal men were not so designed, and Gawain was feeling worn out, past his best, longing for the end. Only the grand purpose, to which he and the other Knights had sworn their oaths, kept him from the grave these days.

He looked out over the hill. Ill times were ahead, and if he did not already have that foretaste of the future, the air around him would have warned him. The eternal summer that seemed to envelop their idyll had firmly ended. He clapped his gauntlets to warm his aching

fingers, hugged his green cape around himself to stave off the bite of winter. No, something beyond winter; something longer lasting and more dreadful in what it portended.

His only hope was the dead Merlin, that he was not so dead as he last appeared. Or that his earlier selves might come at this, the hour that England—no, perhaps a broader realm than that—needed him most.

He kept a lookout for the familiar chariot—a blue box with Pagan script scrawled upon it.

Chapter Eight

Present from the Future

Maggie Weitz sat in the shadow of the TARDIS, cradling the unconscious Doctor. She had paced around for a while, but the thin air of Xenophon Zeta had started to make her light-headed. She wanted to go back inside, but he seemed so frail that she didn't want to move him. Instead, she rested his head on her lap, stroking the spiky stubble on his head in the hope that he felt something from it.

She started when his eyes popped open, staring intensely ahead. This was not the unfocused and watery gaze he had fixed her with when he was staggering around the planet babbling about new memories that didn't belong. He was alert, alive, and filled with a boost of energy.

He beamed at her. "I think it'll be all right!" His booming laughter echoed through the air, and he grabbed her hands in his own, before righting himself and pulling them both to their feet. "What a bonehead, to think three of me had to die to learn enough to fight back. But why only those three and not the other seven? Never mind, I'll figure that out later. The most important point, Maggie, is that he's shown his hand ... I've shown my hand ... vanity ... always was a terrible weakness of mine. Maybe I'll learn from this ..."

"Learn from what?"

He clapped decisively. "Assuming I can deal with him when I face him, that leaves the only pressing matter the unnatural contraction of time and space."

"Oh, is that all?" Maggie asked. That light-headed feeling was returning, and it had nothing to do with the planet's atmosphere. "And let me guess, we're the only people in the universe who can do anything about it?"

"You bet we are!" He took her hands again. "It's not going to be easy, but it *is* possible. There's hope. Hope is the most valuable thing anyone can have on their side. I think I can reason out the problem, Maggie. There's always a solution, if you just think it through." He tapped his forehead hopefully. "Was there anything else you wanted to see on Xenophon Zeta?"

She looked away, and then back at her friend. "You know what? I think I'm good. It was lovely. But perhaps we can come back when you're a bit better."

"Yes indeed. We have other pressing matters to attend to. And it's going to be dangerous."

He pushed open the police box door, and was doing his usual circuit of the console when Maggie slunk in beside him.

"We, eh? So you're not taking me back to Revelstoke?"

He stopped, his hands resting on the hard metal angles of the console. "Would that I could, Maggie. But I think there's only one place we *can* go at the moment."

"November 23, 2963?"

They shared a wicked grin. "It's a date!"

Maggie's heart skipped a beat as he activated the controls and the TARDIS's ancient engines filled the room. She knew the Doctor felt the same way.

Epilogue

Tomorrow Never Knows

This wasn't how November 23, 2963, usually ended, he thought.

The Last Doctor looked out of his window at sleeping London, the sleeping world, and the sleeping universe beyond. A consequence of this greater order in the universe was that everything seemed to happen at the same time. Everyone was asleep, the contented sleep of having lived a perfect day. Everyone except him.

He thought he would feel better with three of *them* dead. It would make him feel more whole. None of those other selves diminishing him, taking his sense of self away. But even without them, somehow their voices still rang in his ears, they remained a part of him.

Worst of all, he hadn't got rid of all of them. He felt the one coming for him. Another earlier self, who had learned from those three deaths and would not let the grass grow under his feet.

As if that wasn't bad enough, he felt *another*, even earlier self, also headed his way. Two Doctors headed to deal with him. And the boy knew that the Doctor was always at his most dangerous when the odds were most utterly against him.

To be concluded in
The Last Doctor: Part Two – All Is True

Also Available from The Doctor Who Project

DEAD GODS' CARNIVAL: PART ONE

Miles Reid-Lobatto

Once, Baston H. Wheldrake was the galaxy's most notorious wordsmith, renowned across the Earth Empire for his chilling true-life tale *Dead Gods' Carnival*. Years later, haunted by his success, Wheldrake is tempted back to Prospero's Folly, the planet where the terrible events he chronicled took place. It seems that his host, galactic plutocrat Sebastian Ventallier, intends to re-enact the gruesome rituals from Wheldrake's book—and the Doctor and Maggie are trapped with them.

DEAD GODS' CARNIVAL: PART TWO

Miles Reid-Lobatto

Sebastian Ventallier's ritual was a success. The Dead Gods—the eldritch beings from Baston H. Wheldrake's blockbusting 30th century horror novel—have arrived on Prospero's Folly, hungry for souls to bring back to their own realm. Can the Doctor stop this damage, and will Wheldrake live to tell the tale?

THE OAKWOOD HOUSE VISITATION

Richard Michaels

One day in 1874, in the forbidding Maine mansion Oakwood House, the orphan Elise Marchwood vanished without a trace. Seventy-one years later, Oakwood has become a rest home for the elderly. Yet the staff and residents are plagued by nightmares and visions—and whatever is trying to contact them has an unusual interest in the new arrival in the town, the Doctor.

EXPIRATION DATE

R. Morgan Crihfield

A man going nowhere in life crashes into a party where he finds the love of his life, but at what cost? When his future wife and child go missing the man turns to the outlandish Sheriff Cecil Kotto for answers he may not comprehend. The Doctor and Maggie arrive to investigate, but are haunted by faces from their own past. A tale that spans a lifetime begs the question: is the Doctor too late?

THE DOCTOR WHO PROJECT

Something is rotten in the state of Gallifrey. The Time Lords are contemplating an alliance with the Preservers, a sinister race from a higher plane of existence with vast knowledge of the multiverse. The condition of this union is the total removal of the Doctor from the timelines, undoing all his centuries of good work. The Waiter, a radical young Time Lord, strongly supports this plan.

On Earth, it's the 23rd of November 2963, and a mysterious boy presides over a harmonious empire, while he waits for the Doctor to arrive.

Fleeing from his own people and trying to evade his date with destiny, the Doctor learns that time and space are contracting, and finds new and unwelcome memories over-writing his last three regenerations: all three Doctors lured from their rightful place in the time/space continuum to be brutally assassinated. The paradox may eradicate the present Doctor before he is even born.

Only as his past melts away does the Doctor begin to comprehend the true threat that outweighs all others: his own future, which threatens to end his adventures once and for all.

.....

This story features the Eleventh Doctor as played by Winston Adderly

