

The End

©2003 Peter Labrow
peter@labrow.com

1

His words had echoed in her mind for over eighty years, but he'd never come back as he had promised.

She had seen him; met him again, once, it was true. She'd been snatched through time and taken back to her home planet. She'd been with him for just a few hours, and had even met four of his future selves. His first life had been so long, but the other four incarnations - so young, even the oldest. How had his regenerations been spent so easily? She could only guess - they hadn't had enough time to talk.

She'd been returned back to her own time as quickly as she'd been torn away - but she hadn't really wanted to go back. Worse, she returned to find that David had died, been killed in an accident, during the brief time that she'd been away. David: for whom her grandfather had sacrificed their relationship. She felt deeply guilty, as though her desire to stay with her grandfather had itself resulted in David's death.

The pain had eased a little after many years, but it was replaced by loneliness. She tried to believe that perhaps he had been right; that she needed to live her own life. But that should have been her decision to make, not his. He always thought he knew best. Alone now for nearly fifty years, she knew that he had been wrong.

He said he would come back. She knew that he had always been forgetful, careless, selfish - even thoughtless. But he had said he'd return; his words echoed in her mind. "One day, I shall come back. Yes, I shall come back. Until then, there must be no regrets; no tears; no anxieties. Just go forward in all your beliefs, and prove to me that I am not mistaken in mine. Goodbye Susan. Goodbye my dear."

A fine speech, but he had been wrong. She had been eaten by regrets, filled with tears and weighed down by anxieties. She'd loved David, and wanted to stay, but now she was so alone. He said he would come back. Why had he not?

"Loose ends, Doctor; nothing more. But who knows where they might lead?"

The Doctor slowly rubbed his temples. He was tired. He rested his hands, palms flat, on the TARDIS's console, letting his arms support his weight, and stared, over the slowly rising and falling time rotor, at his unexpected visitor. His gaze was steady. "I think we're talking about far more than loose ends. If you're right, that is. And as to where they might lead, you should have a far better idea than I."

His visitor gave a dismissive wave. "Perhaps," she said. "We think that they are loose ends, hopefully nothing more. We're just being cautious. You always tend to take the more - dramatic - perspective."

The Doctor shook his head. "I'm sorry, but I don't believe it. I've been asked to help the Time Lords many times before. Frankly, some times I haven't even been asked, I've just been - well, press-ganged. But I've never been sent anywhere on a whim."

"Oh, it's not a whim Doctor, although these far-future timelines are a long way from being certain. There are too many variables. But in several of the timelines, Gallifrey is no more."

"And these changes to the timeline are new?"

"Watch." His visitor pointed an elegant hand toward the viewer. The Doctor turned to see images of the Daleks, familiar images. He did not notice his visitor press her hands firmly to the console's telepathic circuit and concentrate hard.

"Over several hundred years, many timeline probabilities have changed in the Daleks' favour. We saw this, when you were sent back to Skaro - to destroy the Daleks at the point of their creation. Your intervention initially seemed to slow their progress, yet it actually made them stronger. We sent you to Spiridon - at your request, I might add - and again it looked as though you had slowed them. But adversity has again added to their strength."

"And me?" The Doctor's question floated on the air. "Do you see these changes as my fault? As a failure on my part? Something that only I can put right?"

"Doctor." She smiled at last. It was the smile of a friend - not just the superior smirk of someone sent by the High Council. "No one has done more than you. No one knows the Daleks better than you. There's only one reason we ask this: because it gives us our biggest chance of success. And Earth - we both know what it means to you. Earth in the far future belongs to the Daleks. That much has moved out of probability and into certainty. With Skaro destroyed, they created outposts in all sectors of the galaxy. Earth fell quickly. Few humans survived. The Daleks' might has multiplied and vast armies pour out of incubation factories. Doctor, the probability is growing that the future - all futures - belong to the Daleks. Something has changed. Something has given them more power - altered their fortunes."

"You ask too much. My thirteenth life: I have no more chances."

"You're right," she said, "we do ask too much. But, nonetheless, we ask."

He sighed. "Yes, you have to ask. And you know me, perhaps too well. You know that I have to accept."

A hint of sadness crept into her smile. "We all have our fates, Doctor."

It was his turn to smile. "Yes, and yours was to become the President of the High Council of Time Lords. I think I'd rather have my fate than yours."

She was already fading. "Goodbye Doctor. And - good luck."

He waved, but she was gone. "Goodbye, Romana," he said, into the empty air. He smiled to himself. "You were the noblest Romana of them all."

There had been one question he wanted to ask, but hadn't had time.

3

It was alone, but felt nothing. It knew that it couldn't leave, but it had a perspective of time that was different to that of the humans whose planet it was now stranded on. It could wait; would wait. The time would come. Every few years it would move around, to stop the self-charging nuclear battery from draining. But, apart from that, it simply waited, scanning for a specific non-human life signature.

4

She had gone down to the Thames, to the place where they had landed so many years ago. She seemed drawn there.

Susan had two options. Both seemed desperate and neither seemed likely to succeed - though one was more likely to succeed than the other, it was an option which seemed like failure. She would not lightly go back home in disgrace. She toyed with the six black flat squares and again considered using them. No, she thought, that's the final option. She put them away in her pocket. They were all she had of her former life, apart from her TARDIS key, which she had later recovered from the rubble, despite having dropped it as useless when her grandfather, Ian and Barbara had left.

Her telepathy was unusually strong. Though she had not been trained in its use, she had been more than a match for the telepathically gifted Sensorites. She closed her eyes and concentrated. This was no time for subtlety. He could be anywhere in space and time, and the chances of reaching him were slim. She gathered her energies and then let her mind scream as loud as it could, the scream of a child in agony: "Grandfather! Doctor!"

The words rippled backwards and forwards in time and out through space like an invisible shockwave. Susan fell forward and dropped from consciousness, unaware of the metal creature observing her.

It wasn't far to the TARDIS. The Doctor ran as hard as he could, through the deserted city streets, with its buildings of steel and glass towering over him. Discarded paper was blown around his feet, by the wind. His heavy footsteps and laboured breathing were the only sounds in his ears - but he knew that he wouldn't be alone for long. They couldn't be far behind him.

How could Earth have come to this? The Earth was a world that had survived against all the odds, repopulated by the survivors of space station Nerva after thousands of years of devastation from solar flares. It had been several more tens of thousands of years before the Earth became the centre of a huge galactic empire - and now all of that was lost. Lost, perhaps because of events that he had set in motion.

He skidded to a halt and looked around him. Which way? The air rippled around him. Five Daleks materialised from nowhere, their approach silent.

He was surrounded. No plan; no companions - and no more regenerations. This time he'd overplayed his hand. He was a Time Lord who had run out of time. "You always were an arrogant fool," he thought.

There was always hope. They'd capture and question him. He'd find a way.

"Sensor scans show that you are not human! You are a Time Lord and an enemy of the Daleks!"

He faced them, shoulders straight. So many times he'd been close to this moment.

"EXTERMINATE! EXTERMINATE! EXTERMINATE!"

The world exploded around him. Excruciating pain surged through his body. He was on fire. He felt a cold blackness rush up to meet him - and then - nothing.

6

Susan was deeply unconscious for many hours, in the regenerative coma that enabled her people to quickly repair serious damage to mind and body. K9 slid forward, careful to remain unseen and unheard – it had to be sure - and extended a sensor. Vital signs were low - too low for human life. Two heartbeats. And the DNA was unmistakable. Not an exact match, but close. This girl was not only part of the same race as his master, but part of the same gene pool.

K9 had been in hiding for over a century, when Susan's cry had rippled back the few years through time to when and where he was waiting. It was faint, but recognisable - and strong enough to home in on. Like most creatures, K9 could only travel in time one way - and at a fixed speed. It was fortunate then, that the signal was in the future. All K9 had to do was wait until the right moment and then make his way to the source of the signal - travelling slowly to avoid drawing attention to himself. K9 was equally careful not to reveal itself until after the girl had signalled - avoiding the temporal paradox that would be created by finding the girl before she called for help.

K9 waited for her to recover.

7

He was sure that nowhere in the Universe was there a colder planet. It would be a grim place to live for a few days - never mind many centuries. The years passed and hope of rescue faded from his mind - and was replaced by the fear that survival might not be possible. He'd always been of good nature, but the years turned him bitter.

When finally he was rescued, he genuinely believed that he had forgotten what it was to feel warm. A planetary geological survey team had happened on him by chance - and he was grateful. They exchanged his rags for warm clothes.

"They look like the robes of a holy man," the survey team's captain had said.

He had nodded, and answered, "I was known as such, once, long ago, before I was abandoned here."

The captain shook his head. "Who would abandon a monk out here, alone?"

The Monk did not answer the question - he was distracted. He felt a wave pass through him, very light and very gentle. He doubted that anyone else would have noticed or been aware of it. It had once been a scream, but it came to him as the faintest of whispers. He was tuned to it: he knew exactly for whom it was intended - and, most importantly, when and where it originated. Who sent it was a mystery, but, given the strength of the cry, and the pain it contained, he was sure that the Doctor would respond to it.

He looked up, smiled, and asked, "Perchance, does your route take you anywhere close to Kasterborus? I could do with a ride. I have - ahem - some matters to attend to."

He was dying; he didn't know why he wasn't dead already.

He was in agony, burns covering his body, his skin leaving his flesh in many places. His right forearm was a deep open wound, a violent burn, exposing muscle and bone to the air. He could only see from one eye.

He had no idea how long he had been unconscious. It could have been days, but he doubted it. He felt sure that the Daleks or their slaves would have returned to dispose of his body. He had been left for dead.

Somehow he had crawled back to the TARDIS. It had taken him more than a day to crawl a few thousand yards. Fortunately the TARDIS was well-hidden, though he was sure that the Daleks would be searching for it.

With a great deal of effort, he got to his feet, but was unable to stand straight. He fumbled for the key in his pocket, dropping debris to the floor: a yo-yo, no longer used, but a reminder of a previous self; his sonic screwdriver. It was agony to bend again, but he couldn't leave them.

Finally, after what seemed like hours of fumbling, he slid the key into the lock and entered the TARDIS, its warm hum welcoming him. He stumbled to the console and closed the door, drawing deep but unsteady breaths. He was shaking. His remaining time might be counted in minutes, or a few hours if he was lucky, but the end was inevitable now.

His mind struggled to focus, his life force slipping away. There was always a way, surely?

He placed his hands on the TARDIS's telepathic circuits. Whatever happened to him, the Time Lords needed to know what he'd found on Earth. He concentrated as hard as he could. His mind swam; he became dizzy. He was slumped over the console. Had he sent the message? He couldn't tell. He didn't have the energy to try again.

Survival. It all boils down to that one thing. At any cost: survival. He worked his way around the control of the TARDIS, murmuring to himself. His mind wandered, but somehow his hands knew what to do. He set a temporal stasis field inside the TARDIS and a protective field outside, and then lowered the life support and operation settings to conserve power: all set to kick in automatically in five minutes.

He made his way slowly to the Cloister Room, stumbling often, finding his way by fumbling along the walls.

9

K9's databanks were extensive, though Susan found no information after her grandfather's fourth incarnation. Still, it took several long days for K9 to give Susan even a brief overview of the Doctor's life after his departure from Earth.

K9 had first-hand experience of many of her grandfather's adventures and extensive knowledge of his experiences prior to that. She was pleased to find that Barbara and Ian had finally been returned to their own time on Earth, though it distressed her to learn that her grandfather had subsequently become even more meddlesome, his curiosity resulting in the rapid use of his available regenerations. She could only guess how many regenerations he had used, or indeed even if he was still alive.

But she took comfort in the fact that he had been an incredible force for good, and was sure that the histories of many galaxies were richer for his life.

Even so, he hadn't answered her call.

10

The Doctor dropped to the floor, next to the Eye of Harmony. His breathing faltered and then, after one final exhale, stopped. Around him, the TARDIS was automatically powering down.

Susan and K9 discussed their options, which seemed limited. Susan could attempt to call for him again telepathically, but it didn't seem likely to work and the cost to her could be high. K9 could signal, but his beacon was limited to one time zone and the immediate solar system.

It seemed that there was only one option left. She took out the black squares and laid them on the floor, beginning to arrange them. She'd never done this, but, like all Time Lords, knew how it was done.

She had arranged only two squares when K9 signalled an alert. "Warning, Mistress. Gallifreyan life form detected in close proximity. Life form was not present moments ago - suggests arrival of TARDIS."

Her heart leapt. He had heard her! "Where is he K9 - which direction?"

"Seven hundred yards southwest and approaching slowly."

She jumped to her feet. "Come on, K9 - let's go to meet him."

"Warning Mistress. The life sign is not that of the Doctor."

Susan froze and looked at the black squares on the floor. She hadn't called for help yet - how could it be another Time Lord?

"Mistress. I suggest concealing ourselves until we can confirm the identity of the life form."

Susan nodded and looked around.

"Mistress: life form is one hundred yards and closing." She could see a shape now, moving between the bushes.

"K9 - whoever he or she is knows that we are here. Hiding won't help."

He drew closer, a well-fed man wrapped in the robes of a Monk. He pulled down his cowl.

She exclaimed, backing away: "Who are you?"

"Hello, my dear. I'm sorry to startle you. Don't be afraid - you can trust me."

The Time Meddler dropped his monk's robes to the ground. Under them were the robes of a member of the High Council - and the golden sash of Rassilon.

Susan sighed in relief.

The Time Lord's body had disappeared, but the Daleks had located his TARDIS. It was a blue Police Box, which made the identity of the Time Lord certain - and his apprehension critical.

The Daleks were positive that the Doctor had been killed. Perhaps someone or some creature had taken his body. There were still some slythers around - and they liked human flesh. It was also possible that the Doctor had in some way come back to life - it was known that Time Lords could do this a limited number of times.

They found the TARDIS, but found that they could not approach it. It had a mild force field surrounding it, which seem to affect only them. They posted guards, and began the process of trying to enter it.

The Daleks were nothing if not persistent. Again and again, Daleks would arrive with new tools, guns, weapons, cutters and even bombs. None succeeded.

Around the TARDIS, the city became a jungle, slowly but surely, year on year. Millennia passed. It became clear that the Doctor was indeed dead and his TARDIS an empty relic.

The Daleks stopped trying to enter the TARDIS. Eventually, even the guards were withdrawn, leaving behind only automatic sensors, to measure the decay of the force field.

"But my dear, I know exactly where - and when - he is. We can go to him now, but it won't be without danger."

"Tell me."

"Prepare yourself my dear. He's in the far future and all but dead. In real time, his body has perhaps an hour to live, no more."

Susan felt tears building up inside of her.

"He has been shot, by the Daleks. He made it back to the TARDIS and protected himself with a temporal stasis field, before withdrawing into a regenerative coma. He has spent his final regeneration. The coma cannot save him, but he has lain there for many thousands of years, on the verge of death. Perhaps he would lie there forever, if left undisturbed. But there is no hope of life."

Susan was openly crying.

"Come now my dear. He's had a good life. Our journey won't take long, but you'll have time to examine some of his achievements. I've downloaded many files relating to him, from the Time Lord's archives."

Susan shook her head. "But why go? What's the point?"

The Monk smiled. "To release him - and you. He needs to die - and you need to say goodbye. Don't you, my dear?"

Susan nodded and cried again. The Monk pulled her close, to comfort her, smiling to himself.

If K9 hadn't caught the slight glint in the Monk's eye, the information he had provided would have been verified. As it was, something was not quite right. Quietly, K9 worked backwards through its databanks again, searching for a connection. It had to go a long way back, drawing information from the old databanks of the TARDIS, way before the incarnation of the Doctor it knew, before it found what the laws of probability told it would be there.

If this Time Lord was the same one, he was dangerous, but K9 would have to be careful: if his story was correct, he currently provided the only means of reaching the Doctor. In any case, he currently provided the only means of leaving Earth.

"Come on, let me show you my TARDIS," said the Monk, warmly, keeping his arm around her shoulders. Susan nodded, and K9 responded, "Affirmative, master".

In the central control room of the Dalek city, a small and almost forgotten warning light began to flash. The three Daleks on monitoring duty had to check the database several times before it was confirmed which monitoring system the warning light related to.

"Special instructions exist from the Supreme Emperor! Priority one!"

The Daleks examined the available data. Under most circumstances, the most likely probabilities were that the power of the TARDIS had failed totally, after so many thousand years, or that one of the post-human creatures (there were now many in the jungle, but without organisation or language, they posed little threat) had destroyed the sensor. Even so, the Daleks would never ignore even a trivial sensor. But this sensor was different. Orders of the highest importance had stood for thousands of years.

"Sector seven! Time Lord travel device! Force field has been deactivated! Investigate! Priority one!"

An investigation team of five Daleks left the city, and headed towards the TARDIS. As was standard operating procedure outside the city, they cloaked, and then hovered above the ground, moving invisibly and almost silently through the jungle.

15

The Console Room was empty, dark and dusty. It smelt stale. Susan flicked the switch and the doors closed behind them. The familiar hum of the TARDIS was missing, but there was just enough power for essential systems. She put the TARDIS key back around her neck, instinctively putting it under her clothes, out of sight.

"You know," said the Monk, "without your key, we'd never have got in. We couldn't have even reached the spare."

Susan looked puzzled. "The spare?"

"Oh yes, didn't you know?"

She shook her head, and wandered around. It seemed so long ago. The Console Room had changed in design, as it sometimes did. Her grandfather was fond of change. "Where is he?"

The Monk idly flipped switches on the console, glancing at Susan. "Let's get the power back on, erm, here we are, life support, main power." The TARDIS hummed back to life. The Monk flicked a couple more switches, put his arm around her shoulder, and then waved his other arm. "Let's look around, Susan, and see if we can find him. K9, you stay here."

"Yes master."

Susan and the Monk left the Console Room, and, without waiting, K9 moved forward to the central console and extended his probe, quickly interfacing with the TARDIS databanks. More information was needed - but there was more there than could have been predicted. Had K9 been capable of surprise, what it found there would have been astonishing.

16

"Are you sure he's alive? Even after all this time?" Susan knelt beside the Doctor and touched him. He was icy. She listened to his hearts. Nothing.

His skin was terribly scarred.

"Quite sure, my dear. And with a little help from the TARDIS, we can bring him back. For a short while. Long enough to say goodbye and long enough for him to know that you are here. I'll need your help, just a little, to open the Eye of Harmony, briefly."

"Doctor, this is Romana. If you can hear this message then the timelines have been changed and the most likely probability is that I am dead. This message was bound to my life force, to be released when you return to the TARDIS. If this is the case, then it may already be too late to save the Universe."

K9's antenna twitched.

"We didn't deliberately withhold information, but changes to the timeline have been happening so rapidly that it was impossible to provide a clear picture. Although the Daleks have had the power to travel in time, it has always been limited. Clearly, the Daleks have somehow learnt to move freely in space and time and have been moving quickly to rewrite their own destiny. We have not been able to pinpoint all of the timeline changes, but I have downloaded as much information as we have. I hope that you never hear this message, but if you do, you may be the last Time Lord alive. Ignore our rules of non-interference. If you can identify the cause of these changes, you **MUST** do whatever you can to reverse them. If I am dead, then the probability is that Gallifrey is fallen."

While listening to Romana, K9 was downloading and processing the information, trying to cross-reference it, trying to make sense of it.

"Doctor. One more thing. I could tell that you wanted to ask. K9 is fine. I fixed him - I brought him back with me when I left the Tharils."

K9's antenna stopped twitching. "Curious."

"Doctor, I have to go. I said I wanted to be my own Romana, but you were such a large part of making me so. I know you need help now, so I've left someone behind. Goodbye."

Behind K9, a storage door opened. From out of it came K9.

18

Susan looked into the light, and the Eye of Harmony opened slowly. She pulled away. The Eye stopped and remained partway open. She turned to the Monk. "Enough?"

He nodded. "More than enough." Susan turned to look at the Doctor. A sharp pain exploded in the back of her head and she felt herself thrown forward to the ground.

"More than enough," said the Monk, kicking her, where she lay unconscious.

19

The door to the TARDIS opened, and five Daleks glided inside. K9's agitation was immediate and obvious. "Master? What are you doing?"

The Monk smiled as the Daleks surrounded him. "Your response is timely. But I have matters under control. You may go outside and guard the TARDIS."

The Daleks moved backwards. "We obey, Supreme Emperor!" The Monk raised his hand - "No, wait." He pointed at K9. "Destroy it."

"EX-TER-MIN-ATE!" The Dalek gun fired, blowing K9 into hundreds of pieces.

The Monk laughed. Never had he had so much fun.

The Daleks left the TARDIS and the Monk closed the door behind them. "And now, the foolish girl."

A golden misty wave floated from the Eye of Harmony and was absorbed into the Doctor. With a gasp, his breathing returned. His head swam. He opened his eyes, but couldn't see anything other than a blur of light.

"Doctor, so glad you're awake. You've no idea what I've had to do to be here at this moment. I've moved Heaven and Earth. Almost literally."

The Doctor shook his head. The pain was unbelievable. "And just who are you?"

"You don't recognise me? Well, it has been a long time. For both of us. But time has not been so good to you."

The Doctor peered towards the blurry shape, but couldn't make out any features.

"So many enemies, I guess, Doctor. So many enemies to choose from, eh? And which one would be there at the end? Laughing. And it is the end. I've taken you from your slumber, just to let you die - such is my power. But before you die, there's someone you should meet."

The Doctor heard a sharp slap. "Wake up, girl. He's awake now."

"Grandfather?"

"Susan!"

"Good," said the Monk. "That's one introduction over. Do you remember when we first met, Doctor? Susan wasn't with you then. You left me stranded on Earth. One of two times you have left me stranded."

"You!"

"Ah, recognition at last. That's all I wanted. And now - time to die."

21

K9's blaster wasn't as powerful as a Dalek's - but it was sufficient. The Monk crumpled to the ground, unconscious.

The Doctor, still unable to see, moved his head around, trying to understand what had happened.

"Time Lord incapacitated, master."

"K9! What are you doing here? Romana - ?"

"Negative master. Romana's K9 has been destroyed."

It was all too much. The Doctor slumped and faded from consciousness.

"Hurry, mistress. There is not much time. And this will take a lot of effort."

22

The Doctor awoke, but not fully. He was tired. Dying. His body felt like lead. His arms were restrained, above his head, which seemed to be encased in a cold metal harness. Spikes dug into his skin and his eyes were forced open wide. He still couldn't see.

"No - "

It was like déjà vu. The Monk? He felt Susan's arms around him. Tears from her eyes wet his face. "Grandfather. There isn't time to explain. K9 - found this in the databanks."

The Doctor tried to understand. The Monk must be forcing her. He coughed. "You can't - I have no more lives. There's nothing to take."

She squeezed him. "No one's taking anything. You've given so much. It's payback time."

He shook his head. "No. Please."

"Grandfather. You told me to go forward with my beliefs, and prove to you that you are not mistaken in yours. Trust me." She kissed him. She squeezed him, gently. "I have to rush, there's so little time."

The Doctor screamed as loud as he could, "No! It's wrong. Leave him. I can't take his lives!" But she was gone.

23

He felt whole again, strong. The last hour was a blur. He pulled himself up and took the weight off his arms, and found that the restraints were easily removed. He looked around.

The Eye of Harmony was open. By its side lay the Monk, firmly tied up. He looked over to the other balcony, to where he thought the Monk would be -

"No!"

24

He held Susan in his arms. She felt so small, so familiar. He kissed her. "Why?"

She smiled up at him. "It was my decision to make. There's work to do, and I can't do it. K9 says that Romana has left a message for you - an important message. Read the telepathic circuits of the console."

The Doctor sensed her tone. "I don't want you to go."

She smiled again, a pained smile. "You said you would come back. You didn't."

He picked her up and held her small frame easily in his arms. He carried her down the stairs and laid her beside the Eye of Harmony. He went to check the Monk, who was still unconscious.

Susan raised her hand towards the Eye, as a golden cloud came down to her. She absorbed it. The Eye closed.

The Doctor knelt down beside her and stoked her hair. "I don't know whether that is luck, or fate, or the order of things. You've been given a life - but just one, perhaps not even a whole one. You'd need to be careful."

Susan struggled to pull herself up. "I don't need a whole life. Just a few years, with you again."

25

"And you," the Doctor said to the Monk. "What are we to do with you?"

The Monk, tied to a chair, squirmed. "I suppose you'll leave me alone on some miserable distant planet, won't you?"

The Doctor shook his head. "No. That won't do. Too much of a - loose end. And there's so much to put right. I need to know what you did."

The Monk laughed. "And do you think I'd tell you?"

The Doctor held his stare. "K9. Show him."

K9 moved forward and advanced his probe until it touched the skin of the Monk. Then he discharged 50,000 volts. The Monk's body danced. K9 withdrew.

"I have a lot to put right and very little patience. I can do it with or without you. Frankly I don't care. But you won't be given as easy a punishment as exile."

"You won't succeed Doctor."

"I will, I assure you. K9?" K9 moved forward again. The Monk panicked.

"Alright, alright. I'll tell you." He looked at the Doctor. "But I want my freedom."

The Doctor shook his head. "You have nothing to bargain with. Your knowledge will make things easier for me, nothing more. I will still succeed."

The Monk sighed. "It's simple, really. I just followed you around. Most of your Dalek encounters. From Skaro to Spiridon to Exxilon. After you'd gone, I gave things a little push. Especially at their creation. I re-engineered them. I killed Davros. Davros held them back: I allowed them to fulfil their potential. I destroyed the Movellans. I took away the barriers to the Daleks' destiny. Not many things - just enough. But most were your fault. You always leave loose ends Doctor."

The Doctor shuddered. "Never again." He flipped a switch on the console and the time rotor began to rise and fall. "Never again." He seemed deep in thought. "We've got work to do. A lot of work."

26

The Dalek guards turned as the TARDIS unexpectedly disappeared. "Dalek patrol to Dalek command! Time Lord travel device has dematerialised! Alert!"

©2003 Peter Labrow
peter@labrow.com