

CELESTIAL INTERVENTION

'The Doctor did it – somehow,' Damon looked up from his computer console, smiling as he did, 'The anti-matter source is gone. Omega must have been destroyed.'

'Unfortunate, wretched creature,' Borusa sighed. 'My only hope is that he has found peace at last.'

A deep brooding silence set up residence in the Gallifreyan computer room. All eyes went to the President as he sat, staring into an unimaginable distance as he saw the inevitable unfold before his eyes. Borusa watched, a helpless spectator, watched as he saw the end of his planet, courtesy of the Matrix. The vision left him, but the President still did not move. He sat, silently planning to save his planet from its fate. Borusa's eyes burned with determination. He knew what he must do.

He rose quickly, and the others mimicked the action respectfully, concern in their eyes.

The President paced towards the door, and turned to face the Castellan before he reached it.

'Find Maxil,' the President ordered and the Castellan bowed slightly, showing his understanding. 'Bring him to me. I shall be in my quarters. I need time to think.'

Borusa left the computer room, hastily followed by the Castellan.

Damon went back to his computer as Thalia and Zorac looked at each other in wonder.

Borusa tried to think, but he could see no other answers. The same problems kept arising to every solution he tried to find, save for two. For the sake of all Gallifrey he must try. He knew he could not fail, not only for the sake of his planet but for his own sake. His body was old and weak, and failure could destroy it.

There was a knock at the door.

'Enter!'

The door slid open with mechanical speed and Commander Maxil entered, snapping to attention as soon as he was through the door.

'Commander Maxil, reporting as ordered, my Lord.'

'Be seated,' the President gestured to a chair in front of his desk and watched without any trace of amusement as Maxil tried to sit to attention.

Borusa studied the Commander as he sat rigid in the chair before him.

He was perfectly efficient and blindly loyal to the state, and he, Lord President Borusa, represented the tip of the political iceberg. Maxil would do anything he asked, and his Data Extract suggested he was best for the mission Borusa had in mind. But his DE would not tell him what he needed to know.

‘What do you know of our history, Maxil?’

The Commander was caught off guard by the unexpected question, but answered quickly: ‘I had the best education our family could afford, my Lord.’

‘We were once a great race, Maxil! We mastered the power of a black hole and broke through the barrier of Time,’ the President said, his eyes glinting fire, his voice filled with emotion. ‘Now we are reduced to a planet of renegades and politicians!’

‘My Lord!’ what Maxil had heard was akin to blasphemy, a slur against the great Gallifreyan people.

‘You are a good Time Lord, Maxil,’ the President slumped wearily back into his chair, ‘but I have seen the end of all Gallifrey. Would you give your life to forestall that time?’

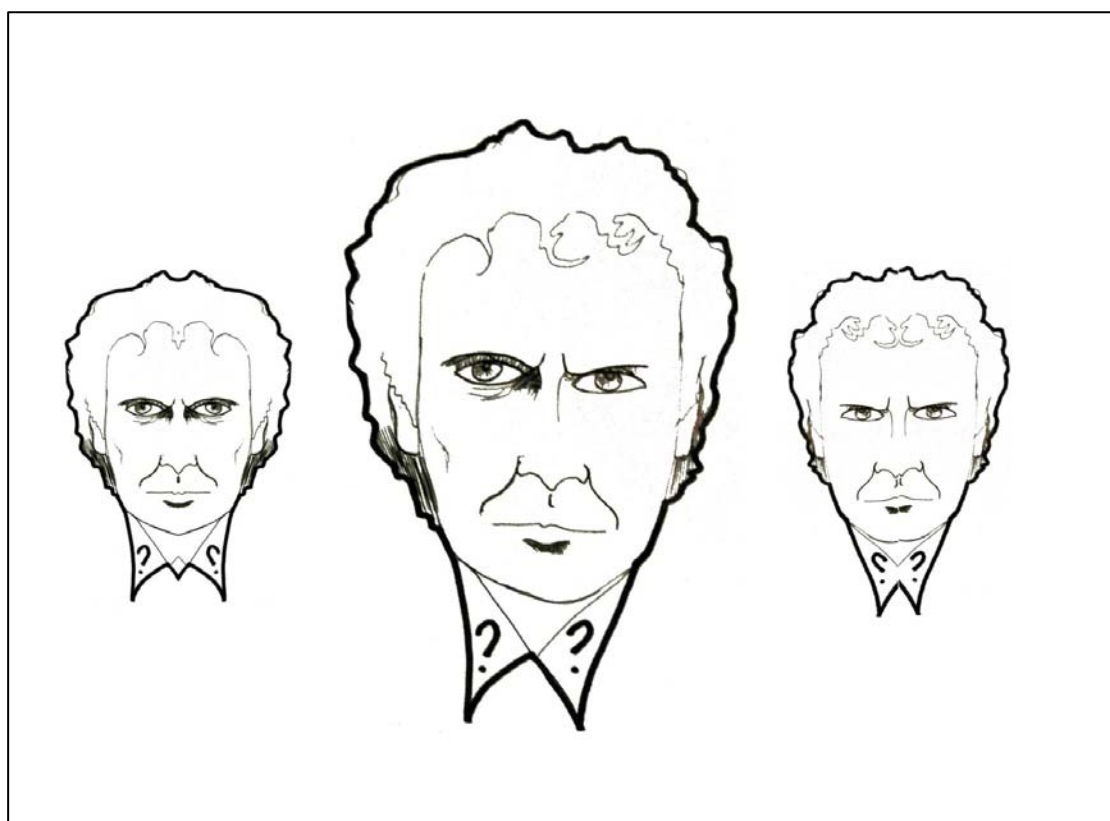
Maxil did not hesitate: ‘Yes, my Lord.’

Borusa treated the soldier to a thin smile, a smile that told of pain and suffering and torment. He rose from his seat, and Maxil followed suit. The President walked around his desk, moving over to an ornate golden harp that sat in one corner of the room and played a short tune.

Gears ground and, to Maxil's evident amazement, a panel slid aside revealing a hidden room.

The President ushered Maxil inside.

'Do you know what it is?' Borusa asked, waving his hands around the room in an all encompassing gesture. He did not wait for the obvious answer. 'Of course you could not. It is the Time Scoop. With this, I can assure Gallifrey a future.'



'What must I do?' Maxil asked with crisp military precision.

'What do you think of the Doctor?' Borusa asked as he began to power up the machinery.

'Subversive,' Maxil was beginning to get used to unexpected questions and answered quickly, 'disrespectful, unreliable.'

‘Yes, he is all of those things,’ the President turned to Maxil, his eyes cold and set. ‘And yet he defeated Omega, and the Master and the Sontarans.’

‘He is effective,’ Maxil conceded.

‘He is vital to our future,’ Borusa said. ‘Only he, among us all, has the potential to save our planet. But he will not.’

‘He must!’

‘He is too stubborn, too independent,’ Borusa answered. ‘When the time comes, he ignores our summons. He thinks he can handle the situation without our help. But you, Maxil, would not.’

Borusa walked over to a panel in the wall and pulled it away from its housing, revealing several glass filaments. The president selected a handful and closed his eyes in concentration. A picture appeared on one of the walls, a picture of a young, blond haired Doctor half-crawling into his TARDIS with a young girl in his arms. Borusa concentrated again and a clear cabinet appeared with an unlit neon light above it.

The President ushered Maxil into it.

‘The Doctor is the best agent this planet ever had,’ the President told Maxil as he connected him up to the equipment, ‘but he will not do as we order. He resents us.’

‘What must I do?’ repeated Maxil.

‘You will merge with the Doctor; guide him,’ Borusa explained as he closed the clear door, locking Maxil inside. ‘When we command, you will make him obey.’

Borusa took another handful of filaments and concentrated again. Maxil tried to say 'I understand' but found he had no physical form to speak with. Maxil's body disappeared from the cubicle, slowly disintegrating.

The neon light glowed green.

On the wall, the young Doctor lay on the floor, his face beginning to melt, giving off a brilliant white light.

Borusa closed his eyes, a mental command speeding down the filaments like a tank. The neon light went out. Maxil, or what was once Maxil, was beamed across the distance between stars and realities, Time no longer a barrier. On the wall the new Doctor sat up as the features of the old lay on the floor, fading, dying. The head that adorned the new body was Maxil's.

Borusa opened his eyes, hearing the silence in the TARDIS. The link was made.

'Maxil?' Borusa asked frantically, but the Time Lord's eyes burned defiantly back at the President, and his hearts raced, two stampeding elephants in his weak chest. 'No! It is still the Doctor!'

'You were expecting someone else?' the Doctor said as the President slid to the floor, his face glowing white.