

The Doctor blindly poked his left arm out of the TARDIS doors. While this looked, to Romana, to be a ridiculously pointless action, it was in fact the direct result of various complex thought processes that had occurred inside the Doctor's remarkable brain. His questionable logic wasn't immediately obvious to his companion, who watched with both amusement and irritation.

"Doctor, what *are* you doing?"

"Checking to see if there's anything out there," he replied matter-of-factly. The exasperated look on Romana's face seemed to encourage him to elaborate. "Scanner's on the blink again, and this is the best way to see if it's safe out there. If my arm isn't sliced off or shot at, we should be okay to have a wander around."

Romana smirked. "Silly me. How could I not have guessed that's what you were doing? It's completely obvious!"

The Doctor thought for a moment. "Sarcasm?"

"Indeed," nodded Romana.

The two of them waited in silence for a few moments, and were relieved to find that nothing happened. All was well, it seemed.

"Do you want to stay here, in the TARDIS?" he asked.

"Why?" replied Romana. "Would you prefer to be alone when you reunite with the Cavalier?" She loved teasing him.

He didn't love being teased. "Certainly not! I was thinking of you, that's all. Might be dangerous."

"Oh," said Romana, "I'm coming with you. Wouldn't miss this for the world."

"Why not?"

Romana smiled. "Might be dangerous."

"Good girl," the Doctor said warmly, smiling back at her.

They shared a moment--an odd, beautiful, terrifying moment--that seemed

to last for both a second and a lifetime all at once, in which the time-travellers from Gallifrey seemed to be looking right into each other's souls. Romana's hearts were beating faster than ever before, even more than when she had been running from Daleks or Mandrels or sentient security cameras. In times like these, she was reassured that beneath all the Doctor's snide comments or sarcastic putdowns, he really seemed to care about her. She wasn't sure if the same could be said about his relationship with K-9. She almost hoped not...

Out of embarrassment and unease from their meaningful glances, Romana looked away. She cast her eyes over the control console, wanting to look at something else--anything else. She was scared. She could understand the complex trans-temporal and dynamic spatial readouts of the TARDIS, but she didn't know her own hearts... Or *did* she, she wondered, and she just couldn't admit it? Why not? Was it more that she *wouldn't* admit it? And again: why not? There was no good reason for her silence. There was something there, between her and the Doctor, almost definitely. She cared for him, that strange, ridiculous, completely bonkers man, who was stood just a few feet away from her with his arm hanging out of a police box.

Finally, after far too long, she decided she was going to tell the Doctor how she felt--or at least how she *thought* she felt.

She looked up again. "Doctor, I need to tell you..."

But the Doctor was gone.

Romana just caught a glimpse of his scarf trailing behind him, as the Doctor tumbled out of the TARDIS, left arm first, as if he had been pulled outside by someone--or something. Either way, it couldn't have been good.

"Doctor!" she cried, as she hurried after him.

The Fear of All Sums

by Samuel Marks



Episode Three

A few minutes earlier, the Cavalier had been asleep. His mysterious captors had finally decided to stop torturing him and allow him to rest. He certainly needed it. It had been such an insane few hours, from a chase through the Time Vortex, to a trudge through the impenetrable environment of the Alps, to an encounter with not-quite-Ancient Rome. He had just drifted off and was dreaming of Gallifrey, and his old friends who had become his enemies simply because he wanted to be *different*, when he heard a noise--a familiar, beautiful, reassuring noise that woke him immediately.

The Cavalier shook off his sleepiness and sat bolt upright on the pathetic excuse for a bed, watching as a bright blue police box faded into existence. He knew it from the stories, the myths and legends on a thousand worlds right across the universe, which spoke of a mysterious and magical wanderer known only as the Doctor. Of course, the Cavalier knew his old friend by a dozen other names, but he understood why he had changed it. 'The Doctor' suited him much better. He always wanted to make people better, and from the stories the Cavalier had heard, it sounded like that was exactly what he'd been doing since leaving Gallifrey. And all those tales spoke of his police box, that rickety old TARDIS that he never fixed. The Cavalier laughed--that was very him.

But, he wondered, why had the Doctor come here? Was it random? Or had he really come looking for his old friend, the Cavalier, after all these years? He had thought that the Doctor must have forgotten him. But no, it seemed that he still thought about the Cavalier as much as he thought about the Doctor. They'd always vowed to remain friends, but then again people always did, usually right before they lost touch forever. But the Cavalier had always known that he and the Doctor shared a bond that was stronger than all of space-time. Nothing would tear them apart. But it seemed that it was more than that: now the universe had brought them together again.

He watched with bated breath for the moment when those TARDIS doors

would burst open and the Doctor, in a new body all these years later, the Cavalier suspected, would look upon his old friend and smile. The Cavalier straightened the Roman armour that he still had to wear because he had nothing else, and waited to see the Doctor again.

But all that came out of the TARDIS doors was an arm--a left one, by the looks of it. The Cavalier approached it cautiously, studying it, trying to work out why it was there. Was it the Doctor's arm? Probably, he decided. Not many people were mad enough to think sticking an arm out a time machine was a good idea.

The Cavalier thought for a moment. What was he supposed to do, just stand there and stare at the disembodied arm? But what if the TARDIS dematerialised without its occupants ever leaving the ship? If that *were* the Doctor, would the Cavalier just let himself stand there, dumbstruck, and give up the chance to see his old friend again after far too long?

"No," he decided aloud. He reached out and grabbed hold of the arm, pulling the body it was attached to out of the TARDIS and onto himself.

The two Time Lords landed in a heap on the floor.

"Hello, Doctor," said the Cavalier.

"Hello, Cavalier," said the Doctor.

Romana rushed out of the TARDIS just a few steps behind the Doctor, fearing for her friend's safety. Stepping out the police box, she found herself in a dark prison cell. But the environment didn't demand her attention so much as the two men lying on the floor did.

"What's going on?" she asked, in disbelief.

"Oh," said the Doctor casually, looking down at his old friend, "we were just getting reacquainted, weren't we?"

The Cavalier smiled. "It's been a long time, Doctor."

"Too long, old friend."

"Do you want to get up?" asked Romana, with her hands on her hips. She wasn't impressed.

"I suppose so," sighed the Doctor. "It's no use wasting two good legs, is it?"

The Doctor clambered up off the grubby floor, and the Cavalier did the same. He looked Romana up and down, almost suspicious of her, or at least curious. "Hello there," he said, flashing his dazzling smile. "I don't think we've met, have we? I think I'd remember you. They call me the Cavalier."

"My name is Romana," she replied formally, shaking the man's hand. "I'm a Time Lord, too. I've heard a lot about you."

"All good, I assume?"

The Doctor smirked. "I left out all the naughty bits. Just mentioned how you're not particularly fondly remembered, back on Gallifrey."

The Cavalier looked away in embarrassment. "They're not too fond of me, those stuffy old Time Lords."

"Far too serious, that lot," the Doctor said, nodding agreeably. "That's why we ran away, isn't that right, Cavalier?"

"And Romana, you've run away as well, yes?"

"Sort of," she said. "I like it out here in the universe. But I *could* go back, one day. I've not burned all my bridges like you two did."

"Oh, I'm not *that* bad," the Doctor replied defensively. He stood tall, throwing back his shoulders and sticking his nose in the air, and said, "You, Cavalier, are in the presence of Gallifrey's Lord President!"

The Cavalier hooted with laughter. "You? No way! That's so cool!"

"I know!" the Doctor grinned, dropping his stance of mock importance. "It's a laugh, I suppose. The other day, I sent a communication cube back to the Capitol, banning all those funny hats and demanding that everyone should wear

scarves like mine instead. I think they thought I was joking. I wasn't."

"Sorry about *these* clothes, by the way," said the Cavalier, drawing attention to his Roman uniform. "They're not mine, I had to borrow them. You see, I woke up naked this morning."

Romana rolled her eyes. "Oh, you are just ridiculous--"

"Intruders!" came a heavy, rasping voice from nearby.

The three Time Lords jumped in fright, and turned to face the source of the interruption. Barely visible in the shadows outside the cell door was a Zeronaught, tall and menacing in its jet-black armour. Its piercing red eyes that shone out from beneath the helmet spooked Romana, and it felt like her blood ran cold.

"What is that thing?" she asked.

"They're the ones who kidnapped me," said the Cavalier. "Well, they *have* kidnapped me. *Present* tense. I'm not free yet. Yes, that's a point. Doctor, why haven't we left already?"

"I don't know," the Doctor shrugged. "I don't even know where we are. Some sort of spaceship, I assume?"

"At the heart of the Accumulation's fleet, escorting the prisoner to our home world," said the Zeronaught. "We are the Zeronaughts, and we will destroy you."

The cell door swung open, and the Zeronaught stepped through. It raised a gloved hand that sparked with fiery red energy as it advanced upon the Time Lords.

"Stay back, you two," said the Cavalier confidently. "I'll handle this." He raised his own fist, which also began to glow brightly. Golden energy played around his hand, lighting up the darkness and cutting a trail through the air as he swung it towards the Zeronaught.

The knight in black armour staggered backwards, shaken by the blow, until

it tumbled onto the floor of the cell.

"Knocked him out cold!" the Doctor observed admiringly. "Nice work, Cavalier. How did you do that?"

"Used my residual regeneration energy to give it an extra kick. Well, an extra *punch*. But you know what I mean."

"You've recently regenerated, then?" asked the Doctor. "Congratulations!"

"Not exactly," said the Cavalier miserably. "It was my twelfth one. This is my thirteenth and final body." He looked himself up and down. "I know, I'm not exactly going out on a high, am I?"

"Oh, I wouldn't say that," said the Doctor, looking his old friend up and down. "I like it. I think it suits you."

By this point, Romana's eyes had been rolling almost constantly, so much so that her head started to ache. "Doctor, we've got to go," she urged.. "There must be more of those things."

"We're okay for a while," said the Doctor, kneeling down beside the unconscious figure. "Before we leave I have to find out some more about this lot."

"Yes, what are these so-called Zeronauts?" asked Romana. "Are they like astronauts?"

"Not really. They're explorers of the worlds of physics and mathematics, not the wonders of the universe. To them, reality has no beauty; it is merely a string of numbers. They see the great questions about life, the universe and everything not as enjoyable philosophical debates but as equations that need to be solved. That's their aim. That's what they do. They take the fun out of everything, balancing the problems of reality, reducing everything to zero."

"So why did they kidnap him?" Romana asked, gesturing towards the Cavalier.

"Good question," mused the Doctor.

"Oh, never mind that," said the Cavalier, with a dismissive wave of his hand. "I'm always getting kidnapped, it's nothing really. It's become a bit of a hobby, I suppose. A better question would be: why are they in these big scary suits?"

"Because it makes them look big and scary," said the Doctor simply. "They're only scientists, remember. And pompous brainboxes like the Zeronaughts frequently get picked on anyway. Imagine how many more people are going to picking on them when they tell them that they're trying to alter the fabric of reality. The suit is protection, keeping them alive."

The Doctor bent down over the body of the unconscious Zeronaught, and carefully removed its helmet. Beneath the protective mask was the face of an old man, withered and tired and wrinkled with age. He was still breathing, just about.

"He looks old," noted Romana.

"Yes," the Doctor replied, "but he's even older than he looks."

He reached into his pockets, rummaging around, searching for something. He seemed to come across several items that he didn't need, and casually passed them over to Romana and the Cavalier respectively, so he could keep looking. After apparently finding everything except what he was looking for--including a pocket watch, a whistle, and a half-eaten apple, which his companions were left holding--the Doctor eventually found his sonic screwdriver.

"The armour is infused with nanogene technology, preserving the body within indefinitely. This suit has been programmed to slow down the aging process, to keep the body alive for as long as possible with bio-enhancements." The Doctor was scanning the unconscious Zeronaught with his trusty gadget. "They're more machine now than man. They're basically immortal. The Zeronaughts can live for ever!"

"And that's bad, is it?" Romana asked.

The Doctor nodded.

"I can't help but think," said the Cavalier, "that for us--three Time Lords--to say that is perhaps just a *bit* hypocritical..."

"You mentioned altering the fabric of reality," said Romana. "Is that what they're trying to do?"

A dark expression fell across the Doctor's face. "Like any mad scientists, observing the world isn't enough. They've got to use their genius to change it, to manipulate it. There must be a secret--a machine or ability of some kind--that allows the Zeronauts to rearrange the building blocks of the universe. Given the time, and the solution to the equations, they can do anything!"

"And you've never thought about *stopping* them?" asked the Cavalier, confused. "I've heard all these legends of the magnificent Doctor, who saves the universe time and time again, yet you know all of this and allow it to go on?"

"They're an incredibly secretive community. I don't know, maybe they're shy. But I've only heard rumours, read eyewitness accounts of people who think they glimpsed a Zeronaut in the darkness. No one truly believes they exist. I'm the only one foolish enough, and it turns out I was right! Oh, that's a nice feeling."

"Yes, reality is in serious danger," Romana said sarcastically. "How wonderful that feels!"

"I got the sarcasm that time, and I've also got the Zeronauts' data now," said the Doctor, drawing their attention to the sonic screwdriver. "With it, I can find their planet and take them by surprise. This ship will be too well defended for a direct assault, and we'd stand no chance against the whole Accumulation at once. The element of surprise is always good."

The Doctor turned on his heels to retreat back into the safety of the TARDIS, but he quickly realised that the element of surprise was only good when you weren't on the receiving end of it. The harsh light of a teleport glow

illuminated a darkness of the cell, and the familiarly ridiculous sight of a Kuricam appeared.

"Oh, not you again!" cried Romana.

"What are *those* things?" asked the Cavalier.

"They're silly," said the Doctor. "They're self-important, bureaucratic, jumped-up little machines. And they're looking for *you*, Cavalier."

"Me? Why?"

The Kuricam took a few unsteady steps forward on its thin metal legs. "Crimes are too numerous to list. Battery life would not last long enough to recount them all."

The Doctor laughed. "And they run by battery, too! They really are absurd. The future of policing, eh? What a joke--"

But the moment was interrupted by a hum of power, as the Zeronought began to wake up. And when it did, it wouldn't be happy to see the prisoner escaping.

"Look," said the Doctor to the Kuricam, "we're in a bit of a rush, so if you could just let us go that would be great."

The Kuricam sparked with electricity, as it powered up its small but powerful weapons systems and prepared to fire, in an attempt to threaten the Time Lords. "Proposition rejected. The renegade known as the Cavalier has finally been located. He will now be apprehended. Justice will be swift."

"Oh, you're a real nuisance, you lot," said the Doctor. "So is this our choice? Stay here, arguing with you, and get caught by the Zeronoughts? Or hand over the Cavalier, when I've only just found him again after all these years, and get away scot free?"

The Kuricam seemed to think about this for a moment. Even its advanced circuitry struggled to keep up with the Doctor's fast mind and faster mouth. "Correct," it decided, finally.

"Hey, it's fine," said the Cavalier. "I'll go quietly. I don't mind moving from one cell to another. It must just be one of those days. But I hope you're better at hospitality than these Zeronaughts."

"You will be taken to the Visendi Detention Complex. Your fellow inmates handle hospitality," announced the Kuricam grimly.

The Cavalier looked worried. "Doctor, before I go--before this thing takes me away--I have to tell you something. I don't know if it's connected to the Zeronaughts... It might just be coincidence, or totally unconnected, I don't know... But something is wrong. Something has happened to Time itself."

"Something bad?"

"Something very, very bad. Ancient Rome is not so ancient any more. The real problem might be bigger than that, and Rome could be just a symptom of the illness, but it's a good place to start. I have the strangest feeling that the whole universe might be in very great danger. Solve this, Doctor. If anyone can, it's you. When I get out of jail, I want a universe to come back to."

The Doctor smiled reassuringly. "And I'll be waiting for you, too."

The Cavalier winked, and he and the Kuricam disappeared in a teleport glow.

Far across the universe, the Zeronaughts worked in secret. The planet where they had made their home went unnoticed by most space tourists. Their world was sandwiched between Planet of the Coffee Shops and Planet of the Shopping Malls, ensuring that nobody paid the slightest bit of attention to Planet of the Slightly Odd Physicists.

On the surface of the world that was hidden in plain sight, the Zeronaughts' top-secret fortress was tucked away. Inside, they worked tirelessly, day and night, to solve the questions of the universe. It was a mammoth task, a mighty undertaking, unimaginable in its scope and highly admirable in its

ambition. Finding the solutions to these problems was universally acknowledged to be completely impossible.

But the Zeronauts refused to accept that: they simply didn't do impossible.

With Nil the Calculator in charge of the Zeronauts' fleet, he had been forced to leave Zilch the Abacus in charge. It was a decision that both of them regretted almost immediately.

Zilch stood in the command centre of the Zeronauts' fortress, monitoring the computer screen that displayed the myriad rooms and the countless Zeronauts within them. He oversaw the Zeronauts celebrating at the end of a successful day solving the problems of the universe. Zilch had used his new level of authority to propose they all throw a massive party and dance the night away. But the other physicists had not been so keen. For the Zeronauts, a 'party' meant time spent doing slightly less challenging sums than normal, just for fun.

A *bleep-bleep-bleep* from the computer indicated an incoming message, and Nil the Calculator appeared on a video screen.

"Oh, hi," said Zilch. "How did the kidnapping thing go?"

"We found the Cavalier, but then he got away," hissed Nil angrily.

"Bad luck," Zilch said. "Was it the Doctor? Did he mess up our plans like we expected?"

Nil nodded. "Curse him!"

"Hey, calm down. We'll get him eventually. Don't worry about it. Just chill out, okay? Is he coming here? The Doctor?"

"If all goes to plan, yes," said Nil. "The fleet will be back in orbit shortly. We will ensure everything is prepared for the Doctor's arrival."

"Should I get some of the guys to organise a nice spread, then? With snacks and nibbles and some of those cupcakes with the little sprinkles on?"

What are they called, hundreds and thousands? That's numbers-related, isn't it? Seems very apt, I think. The Doctor might appreciate that."

Nil gave an impatient sigh. "Just leave everything to me. This is the most important day in our lives, Zilch. Everything the Accumulation has been working towards has led to the moment that is now on the horizon. Nothing can go wrong. Do you know what day it is, my friend?"

Zilch thought for a moment. "Friday?"

"No. That's not what I meant. And anyway, it's *Thursday*, you fool."

Zilch sighed heavily. "What, really? I thought I had a day off tomorrow. I've made plans and everything. I'll have to cancel my tickets to *Chitty Chitty Bang--*"

"Silence!" barked Nil. "You misunderstand me, Zilch. Today is no ordinary day. Today is the day the Doctor falls!" He began to laugh manically, throwing his head back, seemingly physically excited by the idea of murdering the Time Lord.

Zilch looked around awkwardly, wondering if perhaps he should join in.

He didn't.

The time rotor rose and fell hypnotically, as the TARDIS danced across the dimensions. The Doctor and Romana were working frantically at the controls.

"This must be why K-9 changed," Romana thought aloud. "These Zeronauts must've been behind it. What else have they been up to?"

"Let's find out," replied the Doctor, as he flicked a switch on the console. "I'm getting massive readings from Ancient Rome, just like the Cavalier said. Somehow, the Romans have got their hands on technology that is, for them, futuristic."

Romana studied a screen closer. "Did you see this? In 218 BC, there are aeroplanes in the sky, cars on the road, submarines underwater... There are reports here saying that the Empire is stretching out across the world at an incredible rate. This is impossible!"

The Doctor's eyes were even wider than usual, as if he'd just had a sudden thought. "That's it," he said cryptically. "Romana, as ever, you've cracked it, because as unlikely as this is, it's certainly not impossible. It's just *improbable*. The Zeronauts must be behind it, but how? *Why?*"

"Is it just Ancient Rome?" asked Romana. "Or are they corrupting other points in space-time, too?"

The Doctor immediately returned to the controls, flicking switches expertly. Romana stood back and let him continue alone. He knew his ship better than anyone else ever would. They worked together, in sync, more than any other pairing in the universe. She had forced herself to accept that long ago.

"I've got another trace," said the Doctor. "Oh, this is unbelievable. There are mobile phones in Ancient Egypt!"

"Oh my..." Romana didn't like this at all.

"No, no, no! I'm losing the signal. I'll try to follow it through Time, see if I can pick it up again at a later point. Hold on..." The Doctor reached under the console and found the TARDIS telephone. He dialled the number that was displayed on the screen. After a while, someone seemed to answer.

"Hello?" said the Doctor into the phone. "Who's this?" His brow furrowed. "It doesn't matter how I got this number, you'd never understand. Is Cleopatra there by any chance? Can I speak to her? We're old friends. Tell her it's the Doctor. Hello? Can you hear me? Hello!"

Frustrated, the Doctor hung up the phone. "Lost the signal," he said. "But at least we've learned that it's not just Ancient Rome. What else have you found?"

Romana was at the computer screen, scanning all of space-time for more anomalies. Her hearts skipped a beat every time she found further evidence that the universe was breaking down. There were countless corruptions in the timelines: spaceships launching from the 18th Century, explorers settling the

New World with clones, cyborgs in the Middle Ages... This was bigger than she had suspected.

"Romana, focus!" cried the Doctor, snapping her out of her worried trance. "Don't panic. Just talk to me. What have you found?"

"Yes, sorry," she replied. "Well, there are reports right across the universe, all rippling out of that one original corruption in Ancient Rome, like when you drop a stone in the water. We have to stop this, Doctor!"

"I know!" he bellowed, angry with himself more than anyone else. He was visibly struggling to think of a solution. "Look." He sighed. "We'll just have to go to the Zeronauts' planet and confront them. It's dangerous and stupid, yes... But it's the only plan I've got."

"We have to do this," said Romana simply. "The universe is in danger, and we have to save it."

The Doctor looked up at her, his worried expression falling away and becoming something warmer and more familiar, and if you were a Zeronaut, infinitely scarier.

The Doctor was smiling.

The Cavalier sat down on the bench of the prison cell. He let out a great sigh. He had to spend the next three-hundred years in this tiny room--only two-hundred if he was well behaved, but he knew that he wouldn't be--and worst of all, he had to spend all that time in a body that he didn't like. He was disappointed with his latest--and last--regeneration. He wanted to go out on a high, as some Adonis-like figure who could strut around and flex his muscles at random strangers without them becoming afraid, only impressed. Instead, he was stuck looking like a Maths teacher in a Roman fancy dress costume, and that was destined to be his appearance until the end of his days. The Cavalier would have to be careful, take no risks, stay out of any unnecessary danger.

He sighed again, thinking about the boring future that lay ahead of him. He was tired of this body already. Under his breath, he cursed the Time Lords and their silly old rules.

With a few centuries of solitary confinement ahead of him, the Cavalier searched through his pockets to see what he had in his possession to pass the time. Confident in the security features of the Visendi Detention Complex, the Kuricams had not taken the time to search the Cavalier at all. Or perhaps pride was only one explanation: it was more than a little tricky to conduct a full body search on prisoners when you didn't have any arms.

The Cavalier found his Micro-Matrix: a Time Lord device that allowed him remote access to the archives of Gallifrey. It was about the same size as a mobile phone, but could do so much more. In an instant, the Cavalier could bring up the entire records of the Sontaran/Rutan War, and learn the exact number of casualties down to the nearest half-batch of troops. Or he could track the timeline of any being in the universe, down to the tiniest details: he could pick a person, and discover the brand of toothpaste that they used on any given morning. In short, the Cavalier had in his possession a device that could tell him almost anything about everything that ever happened or ever would happen.

Instead, he watched cartoons.

As much as the Cavalier was enjoying the exploits of a pixelated boy and his talking goldfish, he was too distracted to truly pay attention to it. He was too occupied with recent events to think about anything else. The enigma of the Zeronauts puzzled him, with their mysterious and sinister belief that nothing was impossible. Could that possibly be true, or would the Doctor expose them as frauds? The Cavalier tried to think of any other explanation for the improbability of Ancient Rome discovering the secrets of advanced technology way ahead of their time, but couldn't. He shuddered at the thought of the Zeronauts' power.

Making further use of his Micro-Matrix, he checked the records of Ancient Rome. The screen flickered, and then the device turned itself off. Confused, the Cavalier tried again. There was still nothing, like the data couldn't be accessed. He found himself wondering if it the device was broken, but he knew that it wasn't; it was one of the most sophisticated pieces of technology in the universe. So if the Micro-Matrix wasn't at fault, then the records themselves were. The data had been corrupted, just like Ancient Rome itself. History was falling apart, and the Doctor was trying to repair it all on his own. The Cavalier refused to sit back and do nothing. He had to get back to his old friend and help in whatever way he could, but he was locked up and stuck in the cell.

He needed to think of a way out. Frustrated, he tucked the Micro-Matrix back in his pocket, and as he did so, he felt something else in there--something strange that he hadn't been expecting. He pulled it out and looked at it. It was a small, cylindrical device that the Cavalier didn't remember acquiring: it was a whistle.

The Cavalier eventually remembered the Doctor emptying his pockets in the frantic search for the sonic screwdriver, and handing various other items in his possession to his fellow Time Lord. In the confusion, the Cavalier must have pocketed the whistle absent-mindedly. With nothing else to occupy his time, he shrugged his shoulders and blew into the whistle. He was disappointed to find that it made no sound. He tried it again. Still nothing.

At that moment, much to the Cavalier's surprise, the back wall of the prison cell exploded, showering him with dust that swirled around the cramped space, pouring into his eyes and lungs. He coughed and spluttered, and tried to see again.

The Cavalier's vision began to clear, and he looked up. He saw, trundling out of the chaos, a small robotic dog. Smoke was still trickling out of the machine's recently fired gun, which quickly retracted back into its head. His ears

twitched nervously. "You called, Master?" he asked.

The Cavalier looked at the dog, then at the whistle--the *dog* whistle, he realised--and broke out into a huge grin. "Oh," he said, surprised and delighted all at once. "That was handy."

"You are not the Doctor-Master. Appearance correlates with that of the rogue Time Lord known as the Cavalier."

"My reputation precedes me, I suppose. Thanks for the rescue."

"I am K-9. I am at your service."

"We need to get out of here," said the Cavalier, "and return to the Doctor. He needs my help, I'm sure of it. I can't let him face this on his own."

K-9 began to wag his tail excitedly at the mention of his master's name. "Affirmative! I can manipulate the residual teleport energy that remains from the Kuricam's presence." There was a hint of pride in his voice, like he had been waiting for a moment to be the hero for far too long. "We can make one single trip across Time and Space. Would you like me to lock onto the Doctor-Master's location?"

"Do it, K-9!" cried the Cavalier.

A great whirring noise filled the air, as K-9 began to shake violently, glowing with a bright light. One moment he and the Cavalier were in the cell, and the next they had blinked out of existence.

A few seconds later, Camera 3-7-9, in charge of monitoring the condition of Prisoner Number One of Great Important Who Must Never Ever Be Allowed To Escape Under Any Circumstances Whatsoever, returned from its tea break.

It scanned the cell and found, much to its surprise and horror, that the one they called the Cavalier was gone. Thinking fast, it raised the alarm, but then suddenly realised that it would quite rightly be blamed. Its love of tea and biscuits would be its undoing, as it was always going to be.

So Camera 3-7-9 disappeared, to take early retirement.

The lamp atop the TARDIS lit up the darkness, as the police box faded into existence. The Doctor stepped out, followed by Romana. He reached into his pocket and retrieved two torches, one of which he threw to his companion. The beams of light sliced through the heavy blackness, though there was little of interest to see.

"What is this place?" asked Romana. It made her feel uneasy, and chilled her to her very core.

"We're on the Zeronauts' home world, in what appears to be a temple or fortress of some kind," the Doctor replied. "The heart of their empire. They built this place to work in secret, so the stories say. No one could find them here, or even suspect what they were doing. All this time, they were working to destabilise the universe. I only hope that we haven't left it too late."

Noticing his sadness, Romana took hold of his hand. "We can do this, Doctor," she said warmly. "Don't give up, not yet. First, we do our best to fix it."

The Doctor nodded. "Let's have a look around."

Their footsteps echoed around the stony halls of what appeared to be a crypt. The two of them climbed a staircase, of which one of steps crumbled beneath the Doctor's weight. Romana held him steady, and together they continued on.

In the darkness, the torchlight reflected off something shiny. The Doctor and Romana froze, spooked. Looking closer, they realised they were looking at a suit of armour, exactly as the Zeronaut they had previously encountered had wore, though this one was still, immobile. It was stood upright in a space in the rocky wall.

The Doctor cautiously approached it, urging Romana to stay back. He looked into the suit's dead eyes, and seemed relieved to get not reaction. He

tapped the armour and observed the hollow sound. Waving the sonic screwdriver over it, he broke into a smile.

"Diagnosis?" Romana asked.

"Defunct," the Doctor declared. "Out of action. Put aside for repairs, perhaps? Or waiting for a new occupant? Not sure, but either way it's no threat to us."

"Good," said Romana. "That's very good. *Extremely* really very good."

"Why?"

The Doctor turned as Romana shone her torch around the rest of the chamber. At least a dozen other suits--maybe more--lined the room. They were in a similar state to the one the Doctor had examined. He began to pace around the room, examining each of them in turn. Romana stood back, watching him.

"This is fascinating!" he said. "Oh, I could get some marvellous data from these, maybe even work out their Achilles' Heel..."

"Nice man, Achilles," said Romana.

The Doctor screwed his face up in disagreement. "A bit fictional for my liking."

Romana smirked at him. "Says the man who's friends with Sherlock Holmes."

"That's different!" cried the Doctor defensively. He thought for a moment. "I'm not sure *why*, but it probably is..." The Doctor patted himself, but seemingly couldn't find what he needed. "Romana, could you fetch me some equipment from the TARDIS? I'll need to run some tests on these suits here."

Romana nodded agreeably: anything, however slight or trivial, was better than staying in this crypt, surrounded by a dozen jet-black suits of armour. "What do you need?"

"The blue doo-dad, and the light-up flashing thingymajig."

His companion sighed. "Don't get too technical, will you, Doctor?"

Regardless, she headed off. It worried her slightly that she knew exactly what the Doctor was referring to. He was having a terribly detrimental effect on her thorough and lengthy education, she thought, as she wandered back to the TARDIS.

But it wasn't there.

Romana froze. "It's gone?" she muttered under her breath, unable to believe it. She opened her mouth to call up to the Doctor, but a panicked outcry, which she recognised as coming from him, interrupted her.

Turning on her heels, Romana ran to his aid. But in her haste, she forgot about the broken step. She tripped and landed flat on her face. Shaken, she tried to focus as she thought she heard footsteps, though she couldn't be certain. Her head was spinning, and she couldn't see straight. Sensing someone stood over her, she looked up and her vision began to clear.

Two Zeronauts were restraining the Doctor, holding him tightly. Unable to move, he gave a weak smile as he looked down at Romana.

Another two of the walking suits of armour appeared behind her, hauling Romana to her feet. "You said they were broken!" she cried, noticing that all the suits were very much *not* broken.

"They were. This whole thing--them coming back to life--is completely impossible..." The Doctor trailed off, thinking hard. "No. Oh, of *course* not. To these guys, nothing is impossible. Just improbable."

The Zeronauts led the Doctor and Romana into the darkness, into the unknown.