

The Fear of All Sums

by Samuel Marks



Episode Four

The Doctor and Romana were forcefully escorted into a huge chamber, the walls of which were lined with computer terminals, displaying seemingly endless strings of numbers and complicated equations--they were so difficult to understand, in fact, that it took Romana a few more seconds than usual to solve them. Zeronaughts sat at each terminal, staring intently at their own personal screens, typing rapidly on their computer keyboards.

"Welcome to our home, time-travellers," began the Zeronaught that stood at the head of the crowd. He looked to be the one in charge. "I am Nil the Calculator."

"And I'm Zilch," said a second Zeronaught brightly. "Hello!"

"Not now," hissed Nil. He cleared his throat. "Tell me, Doctor, what do you think of our base of operations?"

"Impressive," said the Doctor admiringly. Romana noted that his appreciation seemed genuine, and not like the false niceties that he displayed to most of the evil geniuses that they encountered on their travels.

"No doubt you've heard the legends of our people," said Nil the Calculator, standing face to face with his restrained prisoners. "How do we measure up against the stories? Do we exceed your expectations?"

"Almost," the Doctor replied, gazing around casually, "but I was expecting some sort of welcome party, and a few nibbles wouldn't have gone amiss. I do love those little cupcakes with sprinkles on."

Zilch leaned in close to his boss. "I told you," he whispered.

Nil waved his hand dismissively. "You can see, Doctor, how we work to solve the greatest problems in the universe. Assigning everything a numerical value, transforming all of creation into equations, we can reach the answers that philosophers have bickered over for centuries. We laugh at men like Aristotle and Descartes!"

"So did we," said Romana, "but then again, they were incredibly witty."

"Let me show you, Time Lords, something that will *really* impress you..."

The Zeronauts that held the Doctor and Romana firmly by the shoulders forced them to the centre of the chamber, where a mighty machine was brought to their attention. Wires and cables connected the base of the device to every computer bank in the room, and atop the machine was an enormous lever.

"That's a big one," said the Doctor, "isn't it, Romana?"

"Huge," the Time Lady agreed. "What does it do?"

Nil gave a deep, booming laugh from within his suit. "Everything."

"Don't be *too* specific, will you?"

"It's true, though. This is the heart of the Zeronaut Accumulation. It can do anything and everything--whatever we want it to. It can achieve the impossible."

"Yes, we noticed," said the Doctor. "Guns in Ancient Rome, and similar effects right across the universe, all echoing out of that original corruption in Time. Do you have any idea what you've done?"

"Indeed," replied Nil, "but the question is, Doctor, do you have any idea *how* we did it?"

The Doctor screwed his face up, as he thought hard. "Of course I do. But, umm, while don't you tell me, just to be sure, and I can check if I was right?"

"We, the Zeronauts, are the greatest minds in the universe. Expert physicists. Skilled mathematicians. All-round brainboxes. We can work out, for instance, the probability of anything happening. What are the chances of advanced technology being developed in Rome? Only we know. But what, you may ask, is the use of that information? That is why we created the machine you see before you. We feed the numbers into this marvellous invention, and the code is transmitted across all of Time and Space."

"You'd need to unravel the base code of the universe or solve the Skasis Paradigm in order to do that!" cried Romana, horrified.

"Oh, we figured out those simple sums ages ago," said Nil. "Didn't we mention? We're *very* good."

"Why?" asked the Doctor. Romana noted a dark look fall across his face.

"Because we're really clever--"

"No. No. Why do you want to change the universe in this way? What do you get from it, eh? Is it all just a bit of fun to you?"

Nil sighed, the sound echoing out of his suit like a terrible winter's breeze blowing through the chamber. Romana shivered.

"We *know* everything," Nil said. "Nothing is a mystery to us any more. The Zeronaut Accumulation has achieved its aims. Our pursuit of knowledge has ended. Now we desire a new universe, one infinitely stranger than this one, with new problems to solve! "

"So you don't care what happens to this one?" asked the Doctor. "You don't think about the consequences of your experiments? How selfish! I happen to be rather fond of this particular reality, thank you very much. But if you're as powerful as you say, and you want to bring about an end to this universe, why haven't you done it already? I mean, I'm not complaining or anything..."

"There is, reluctantly, one thing standing in our way. In our world, nothing is impossible. We could make anything happen. We brought peace to the war-torn world of Zarathstra! We gave single-celled organisms the means to develop faster than light travel! We even got the human known by all as Weird Steve a girlfriend of reasonable attractiveness! But we encountered a problem. In our search for the likelihood of this universe suddenly ending, and a new one taking its place, we found something we never suspected. A reading on our computers that we never dreamed existed."

"What was it?"

"Such a thing was, apparently, genuinely *impossible*."

"Why is it impossible for the universe to cease to exist?" asked the Doctor.

"Because of *you*," hissed Nil. "You, Doctor, are the saviour of worlds, the bringer of peace, the harbinger of joy and prosperity. Records indicate that you would never, ever allow the universe that you adore--and that adores you in return--to be destroyed."

A huge grin broke out across the Doctor's face. "Well, I'm flattered. It's always nice to get some positive feedback, isn't it?"

Romana began to work everything out in her head. "So," she deduced aloud, "that's why we're here. You needed to get the Doctor here, to your home, in order to kill him. If you remove him from the equation--literally, in this case--then your plan can advance. That's why you kidnapped the Cavalier, to get our attention, to put us on your trail. You lured us here, and we've ended up right in the middle of your trap."

"And that is also why we reached out and changed your beloved dog," the Zeronaught went on. "But you seemed relatively unconcerned by that, so we turned our attention to your old friend instead."

"If you wanted me," said the Doctor, "you should've kidnapped Romana instead. I'd have dropped everything to come and rescue her in a heartbeat."

Despite everything, Romana felt a smile breaking out. "Doctor, I'm touched, really..."

"I mean, she's got a TARDIS key. Can't have that falling into the wrong hands."

Romana tried to wrestle free from her captors in order to give the Doctor the great whack on the arm that he deserved. "You *have* to go and ruin it, don't you?"

The Doctor shrugged, oblivious, as the Zeronaughts held his companion back.

"You are complicated, Doctor, I'll give you that," said Nil, who took to pacing around the chamber.

"Oh, you sound just like my therapist!" said the Doctor, keeping his steely gaze fixed upon the Zeronaught leader. "I told him, time and time again, I said, Sigmund, don't keep overanalysing my dreams. The Time Vortex isn't *at all* symbolic, I tried to reassure him, but he wouldn't listen. You see, in Freudian analysis, a tunnel like that would represent a--"

"Are you capable of being silent for a moment?" asked an exasperated Nil.

"I have no idea. I've never really tried."

"What I meant was, you are a complicated event in space-time, immune to the effects of our machine. So are your companions and your TARDIS. That's why we couldn't affect you directly, rather annoyingly for us. Is there anything you can't do?"

"I'm terrible at making desserts," he admitted. "My meringues, in particular, are frankly a bit rubbish. But I really don't think it's worth killing me over that, do you?"

"There is another option, Time Lord and Time Lady," Nil went on tantalisingly. Romana could feel his cold breath against the back of her neck as he paced around her.

"We're listening," Romana said, shivering.

"There is no denying that your minds are great. We observed what you accomplished in primitive Paris, with remarkable Time experiments. Not to mention that business on Earth, in the dwelling known as Cambridge." He paused, taking a deep, mechanical breath. "Join us. Become a part of the Zeronaught Accumulation. Wear our armour with pride! You will live for ever!"

"And you get a free pen, too," added Zilch, holding up a cheap biro.

"Consider our offer," Nil urged. "You do not have to die. You must simply agree not to stand in our way."

The Doctor laughed. "I'll never join you."

Romana nodded in agreement. She and the Doctor stood firm, together.

Until the end.

"Then I'm afraid, children of Gallifrey, you must die." Nil raised his mechanical hand, which began to glow with fiery energy. Romana could feel its warm glow across her face as he moved it towards her, ready to end her life. "You will stand and watch, Doctor, helpless to prevent the death of your closest friend. Before your own end, your hearts must break." The Zeronaut broke into a terrible laugh.

Romana looked over at the Doctor, for what she supposed would be the very last time. She hoped that he would speak what was in his hearts, though she knew that she couldn't bring herself to say how she truly felt either.

They would die never knowing, she reasoned sadly, if the other felt the same way. But then she allowed herself a smile: no, they both knew.

Romana closed her eyes. She waited for death to come.

Instead, the TARDIS came.

The lamp atop of the police box glowed brighter than ever before, flashing with pure white-hot intensity as the TARDIS faded into existence nearby. The Zeronauts restraining the Doctor and Romana released the prisoners from their grip in order to shield their eyes.

"W-what?" muttered Nil, his concentration broken; the light around his hand dissipated.

"*What?*" Romana said, allowing herself to open her eyes again to gaze upon the wondrous sight.

"*WHAT?*" cried the Doctor. His eyes were wide.

For the first time, even the Zeronauts at their workstations looked around, amazed at the situation. No one could quite believe it.

"This is impossible!" Nil said.

The TARDIS doors creaked open, and a man stepped out, backlit by a magical white light, causing him to become little more than a powerful,

intimidating silhouette.

"Impossible?" repeated the man. "Nah! Like you lot keep going on about, nothing's impossible." The man stepped forward, into the chamber.

"Just *improbable*," finished the man--the Cavalier.

Romana looked over at the Doctor, who seemed so delighted. This time she wasn't at all jealous, because she was just as happy to see their new friend.

K-9 followed behind a few moments later, the TARDIS doors swinging shut as he rolled over the threshold.

"Cavalier!" cried the Doctor, grinning. The Zeronauts held him back, stopping him from running over to his old friend, which he clearly desperately wanted to do. "You're here! Romana, look--it's the Cavalier!"

"And me, Master," added K-9 feebly.

"What?" The Doctor only just seemed to notice the dog. "Oh. Yes. Hi there, K-9."

"You stole the TARDIS!" wondered Romana aloud, looking over at the Cavalier. "Why? Where did you go? Do you have a plan?"

"Bit of a plan," mumbled the Cavalier. "But you might not like it."

"Why? What have you done?"

In an instant, Romana worked it out and, judging by the worried look on the Doctor's face, he had too.

"Oh, you haven't done *that*, have you?" the Doctor asked.

The Cavalier nodded nervously.

"It's risky," Romana said when the Cavalier looked away, perhaps worried that he had made the wrong decision, "but it just might work."

Nil and the other Zeronauts looked between them, completely baffled. "Will someone *please* explain to me what you are talking about?"

The Doctor clapped his hands together decisively, taking control of the situation. "Okay, listen up, you lot," he said to the Zeronauts. He strode

confidently around the room, staring at each and every one of the black-clad knights, and all they could do was wait to see what he would do. His manner, his confidence--it scared them. They couldn't begin to guess what he was planning, but they guessed that it wouldn't be good. They were right.

"You think you're making progress," the Doctor continued, "but it's all so derivative, reducing everything to zero, thinking only in numbers. What must that be like? Hell, I think. You see reality merely as strings of numbers, statistics, rather than what it actually is. And the universe is beautiful without you messing with it, you improbable astronauts. But you just can't help but interfere, can you? Take Ancient Rome, for instance. A magnificent civilisation, remembered for centuries for all the right reasons. And then you went and changed everything about it, advancing them, giving them superior technology. Which, of course, just meant that they only created bigger and more powerful *guns*. Now I reckon, as you see everything as numbers, you've forgotten what guns can do, haven't you? Well, let me jog your memories." The Doctor flashed a manic smile. "Guns can do *this*."

At that moment, everything went to hell. The roof of the Zeronauts' temple was destroyed in one almighty blast. Romana, the Cavalier, K-9 and the Zeronauts all looked up, in awe. A dozen jet fighters streaked across the sky, leaving a trail of smoke behind them. The Doctor, however, kept his steely gaze firmly fixed on Nil the Calculator. His smile had fallen away and Romana thought that the Time Lord had never looked more serious.

A chunk of rubble tumbled downwards, landing on top of the Zeronauts' precious device in the centre of the room. Sparks exploded out of it, and it made a whining, straining noise.

"The universe that you corrupted," the Doctor said, demanding Nil's attention as he mourned his device, "is fighting back to destroy you. They realised what you did, how you changed them, and they weren't happy about it

at all. The Zeronaught Accumulation is a plague upon reality. A virus, a disease! But I've got the cure. Well, of course I have...

"I'm the Doctor!"

There was another explosion nearby, and this time one of the walls of the temple was blown inwards. A dozen Roman soldiers strode in through the smoke, led by General Titus. On his shoulder stood a single Kuricam, like a pirate and his parrot.

Titus drew his sword and held it at the Doctor's throat. "You are scum," sneered the general, "and you will be annihilated."

"No, no," said the Cavalier nervously. "Not him. The ones in the mechanical armour--*they're* the bad guys."

Titus cleared his throat. "Sorry, sir." He swung his sword away from the Doctor, and instead aimed it at Nil. "You are scum," he repeated, "and you will be annihilated."

"You are under arrest for temporal disturbances," said the Kuricam. "Justice will be swift."

"Do you surrender?" asked the Doctor. "I would if I were you."

Nil thought about this for a moment. Then, deciding, he cried, "Never!"

His hand glowed with blood-red energy, and he swiped at General Titus. The Roman blocked with his sword, and steel clanged against steel. The two of them were locked in battle: Nil was forcing his hand down upon Titus while he held him off with his sword braced against the Zeronaught's forearm.

Nil gave an animalistic growl that echoed and reverberated from within his protective suit, and broke through General Titus's defence, breaking the man's sword in half, and sending the Roman flying across the chamber. He landed at the feet of his men. The other Romans looked upon the body of their leader--crumpled, broken, defeated--and a look of determination fell across all their faces. They loved him, and they would die for him, as he had done for them; that

much was clear.

The Kuricam fell to the floor, and as it picked itself up, Romana noticed a crack right across its lens. Its legs were shaking more than ever--with anger now, not just at the weight of its body. "Resistance will *not* be tolerated," it said defiantly.

A young female Roman soldier bent down and searched Titus' body. Eventually, her hand found his radio. She spoke into it: "Bomber Command, do you read me? General Titus has fallen. The manipulators of reality will pay for this outrage." She paused, taking a deep breath.

The Doctor, as if suddenly realising she was about to do, rushed over to her. Hands outstretched, he tried to grab the radio from her. But he wasn't fast enough. "No, wait--"

"Bring this place down," finished the Roman. "Leave nothing standing, and no one alive."

"Don't!" cried the Doctor angrily.

Romana rushed over to join him. "Why would you do that?" she asked the female soldier. "We can end this peacefully, not with bloodshed!"

"From the moment the Cavalier came to us for aid," the Roman soldier explained, "we knew that were destined to die. As he explained, our existence is *wrong*. The Zeronauts have warped and twisted us for their own ill purpose. We are willing to give our lives to end theirs. Now, soldiers, charge! For Rome!"

"For Rome!" the soldiers echoed in a mighty roar.

The Romans moved forward as a unit, pushing past the Doctor and Romana, drawing their swords, ready for battle.

The single Kuricam--bureaucratic and ridiculous yet undeniably brave--jumped up onto the woman's shoulder. Its broken lens glowed with a blue light, as it readied itself to re-join the battle.

The Zeronauts advanced as well, leaving their workstations for the first

time to defend their place of work--their home. Their clenched fists glowed with improbably potent energy. Nil stood firm at the front, while Zilch cowered at the back. He was only a scientist; he had never signed on for this.

The Doctor, Romana, the Cavalier and K-9 all dived out of the way as the two armies clashed. The clang of steel against metal sliced through the air, while distant, terrible rumbles could be heard from outside.

"Please, all of you, listen to us!" cried Romana, shouting to be heard over the chaos. "Stop this! We have to leave *now*, or we'll all be killed!"

K-9's ears twitched nervously.

"It's all right, boy," said the Doctor reassuringly. "Even if no one else is, we are leaving." Apparently noticing the look of horror on Romana's face, he continued, "There's nothing else we can do. I'm sorry. Everyone, to the TARDIS!"

The Doctor led his friends across the chamber, dodging rubble that fell from the ceiling, swords that were thrust out of the crowd, and bursts of energy that flew past them. The battle raged all around.

He fumbled for the TARDIS key, eventually finding it. K-9 trundled in first as the door was unlocked. But when the Doctor looked around for the Cavalier, he was nowhere to be seen.

"Cavalier?" cried the Doctor.

"Where are you?" asked Romana.

They watched as, out of the chaos, Nil the Calculator stepped forwards, with the Cavalier in his grasp. The Zeronaut's hand shone with a terrible light: he was going to kill the Time Lord.

"Hand him over," said the Doctor. "There's no need to kill him."

"You brought down our empire," said Nil, "and this man helped you. Together, you challenged us. There is *every* need to kill him."

The Doctor's steely façade cracked. "Please. Don't, I beg you. Just don't."

The Zeronaut held his glowing hand against the Cavalier's hearts, and the Time Lord cried out in pain. Nil chuckled at the screams, and then decided to stop torturing his prisoner. He seemed to have more to say.

"Our machine lies in ruins, as everything we have ever worked for crumbles around it--around us. Tell me, Doctor, what happens when it completely shuts down?"

"The Zeronauts' hold on reality is broken. Time snaps back into place. Everything you wronged will be righted. Rome becomes ancient again, and all the other changes that rippled out of that are undone. It's as simple as that. If a stone is never dropped into the water, there aren't any ripples. Normality resumes."

"And we die," finished the Zeronaut grimly.

The Doctor nodded sadly. "I'm sorry. You were brilliant men. You could've done wonders for the universe. You just chose the wrong path, that's all. It's all about decisions. Please, as your last act, don't make another bad one. Let the Cavalier go."

Reluctantly, Nil threw the Cavalier forward, into the Doctor's arms. The Cavalier could barely support the weight of his own body; his legs buckled beneath him.

"Into the TARDIS, you two," the Doctor ordered.

Romana helped the injured Cavalier inside. He was still wincing, as if the pain had never stopped, even when the Zeronaut had released him.

"I may be willing to let your friends live," said Nil, as his fist glowed brighter, "but you, Doctor, destroyed everything we have worked so hard for. You cannot survive past this day. Say your prayers."

The Doctor smiled darkly. "You worked out all the answers to the big questions. You know the secrets of the universe, the truth about the Creators

and the Destroyers, and God himself... Why would I pray?"

The Zeronaught raised his hand, ready to kill.

The Doctor closed his eyes, ready to die. "My friends are safe," he said. "And you are not. At the end, then, I can be happy."

But suddenly, a harsh white light hit Nil the Calculator from behind, killing the glow of his hand and knocking him to the floor. The Doctor squeezed an eye open, daring to look.

The Kuricam leapt up onto Nil's back, and nodded at the Doctor. "He will be arrested and punished. Justice will be swift. We will take him from this place. Death is not a valid excuse."

The Doctor smiled and nodded back. "Quite right too."

"Curse you, Doctor!" cried Nil, unable to move. "But know this: soon-- sooner than you think, Time Lord--*you will fall*."

"I understand. Everything ends." The Doctor looked at his own hands. They were not as young as they once were; he saw that they were old man's hands, and suddenly he became aware that he was looking at them out of old man's eyes. "Yes, I suppose... It's about time."

With that, he Kuricam and the Zeronaught disappeared in the blink of an eye.

The Doctor took a final look at the chaos, and the few remaining Romans who still fought against the black-clad scientists. He glanced over at the Zeronaughts' machine, as it shook violently and smoke poured out of it. It was broken, useless, failing.

He gave a sigh of relief: this was all going to end. The false reality that the Zeronaughts' had created would buckle under the weight of its own improbability without the machine in place to sustain it. Time would revert back to how it should be. Technologies would return to their own time, and all would be well once again.

The Doctor stepped inside the TARDIS.

In the control room, the Doctor was surprised to see the Cavalier on the floor, clutching his chest in agony. Romana was knelt down, examining him. The Doctor joined her.

"What happened?" he asked, alarmed.

"I think that Zeronauts' energy," Romana said, "had already started to kill him. A lot of damage was already done to his hearts. Maybe *enough* damage to--"

"No!" said the Doctor, grief-stricken. "Cavalier, hold on! Do you hear me? What can we do? Romana, help me! What do we need?"

"I need..." said the Cavalier, like it was painful to even talk. "I need, Doctor... to go home. To see it, one last time, before I--"

"Don't say it," said the Doctor.

"Nothing lasts for ever." The Cavalier winced. "It all ends."

"But not this," the Doctor replied. "Not *us*..."

Romana was at the console, programming in co-ordinates. It was clear that she didn't want to go back, but they had to. Though the Doctor might refuse to admit it, this was to Cavalier's final wish--his last request.

"To Gallifrey," she said sadly, under her breath.

Romana watched with tears in her eyes as the Doctor carried his old friend, the Cavalier, out of the TARDIS. As if sensing that something was wrong, the time machine had been strangely compliant during the flight, and had brought them to Gallifrey with no turbulence, no delays, no complications.

K-9 remained inside the police box, now wired up to the console to restore his power after recent events had left him weak. He would be back to normal in no time at all. The same could not, however, be said of the Cavalier.

The TARDIS had landed at the summit of the snowy Mount Solitude. Snowflakes tumbled majestically out of the sky, already beginning to settle on the roof of the police box. The Doctor placed the Cavalier down on the snow-capped field of deep red grass. Romana knelt down beside him and checked his condition. Despite the warmth in the air, as the first sun was setting and the second was rising in the south, the Cavalier was shivering; his hearts were beating rapidly, trying to keep his body going, desperately clinging onto life.

He didn't want to die. But then again, no one ever did.

The Doctor hadn't spoken in a long while. Romana looked up at him, but didn't expect to see a tear run down his cheek. He so rarely told her what he was really feeling that it unsettled her to see such an open display of emotion. He usually acted so strong and tough. But it was exactly that: an act.

While Romana felt terribly sad at the death of the Cavalier--a great man whom she had only met that day--she supposed that the Doctor must have been feeling a hundred times worse than her. This was, after all, one of his oldest and closest friends. He may not have spoken to him, or even *about* him, in a very long time, but Romana could still picture the look of delight on the Doctor face when his friend's name had been mentioned, when he thought that he might get to see him again.

The Cavalier summoned just enough strength to turn his head to the side. Between this mountain and Mount Solace in the distance was the Citadel of the Time Lords. A smile crept out across his face. Though they had expelled him and forced him to live a life of exile, it seemed that the Cavalier was still happy to be near to his people in his final moments.

Finally, the Doctor spoke out. "Don't die," he said, as his voice cracked. "Can you remember all those days we spent together in our youth? We were only a few decades old. Hold on to those memories. Sitting on these hills, in the shadow of the Citadel, you and me and the rest of the gang. The Corsair!

Remember him? And *her*, sometimes? And the Master, always causing trouble! Some things never change, eh?" He smiled at the beautiful, distant memories. "We dreamed of this life, Cavalier, to go sailing out among the stars, to see the great wide universe in all its majesty. And we made it. We lived the dream. Don't wake up now, not yet. Stay with me."

"You know the rules, Doctor," replied the Cavalier. "Those silly old rules. Thirteen lives, and that's your lot."

The Doctor looked over at Romana. He seemed so lost, so helpless. He seemed expectant, like he was waiting for her to speak up, to confirm what he was thinking. They were so in sync, and were having the same thoughts, coming up with the same ridiculous plan.

"I think... It's not a biological restraint," Romana said, trying to sound confident when she really wasn't. But it was what the Doctor wanted to hear-- what he *needed* to hear. "Your body *could* survive indefinitely. The limit is imposed and maintained by the Time Lords. Without them there to monitor the changes, to uphold the rules of regeneration, then you could, in theory, live for ever."

The tears began to clear from the Doctor's eyes, as hope filled his face. "Hear that?" he said to the Cavalier. "I could talk to the others at the Citadel. They'd listen to me--I'm the Lord President! They might let me make an exception, for you."

The Cavalier winced in pain. Romana took hold of his hand, willing him to fight it, to stay strong. "I'm an exile, Doctor. As far as they're concerned, I'm already dead."

"Let me *try*!" the Doctor said desperately.

The Cavalier shook his head. He cried out in pain--such terrible pain.

Suddenly, Romana pulled her hand away, as the Cavalier's skin burnt hers. He was hot to the touch. A warm glow illuminated his skin, as an intense

white light shone out from beneath his skin, from deep within. His body was capable of saving itself, and it was determined not to relinquish its hold on life.

But the Time Lords had other ideas: in an instant, the light died away. The Doctor stared down at the lifeless body of his friend. Romana wiped the tears from her face, only for them to be replaced seconds later.

The Cavalier was dead.

"The regeneration was beginning," said the Doctor, not taking his eyes off the body. "The process had started, before it was cut short. He could have saved himself. He could have lived again. A fourteenth body and so many others afterwards..."

He looked up at Romana, and his face was streaked with tears. "He's dead because of *them*." He jabbed a finger in the direction of the Citadel. "You see now why I left? You see why we're never coming back? They think they have the right to control life and death, to decide who lives and who dies. And that's *wrong*!"

Romana reached out and took the Doctor's hand. They both held onto each other, so tight.

"It's just you and me, Romana," said the Doctor, forcing a sad smile. He looked so old and tired, and so alone. He let go of her hand. Romana opened her mouth to say something--anything that she thought might comfort her friend--but the Doctor spoke up again first.

"Can you get the TARDIS ready?" he asked, regaining his composure. "We'll be leaving in a moment. I want a few minutes alone with the Cavalier. Is that okay?"

Romana wouldn't refuse. She nodded, picked herself up off the grass, and headed towards the TARDIS. When she reached the doors of the police box, she turned around and saw the Doctor sobbing gently over the Cavalier's body. She didn't hear what he was saying, and she respected his wishes enough not

to ask. If he wanted her to know, he would tell her.

He never did.

Romana had busied herself at the console, waiting for the Doctor to return. He was gone for some time. Hearing the creak of the door, she looked up and saw the Doctor, covered in snow, wandering back into the control room. He seemed to be deliberately avoiding eye contact with her.

He absent-mindedly flicked a random switch on the console, and exhaled loudly, as if that might relieve the tension and the pressure. Romana thought about making the first move, wondering if she should speak up. But she struggled to think of what she should say--what she *could* say--to a man who was still emotionally raw from a tragic loss.

"K-9's in the games room," she said feebly. "He's waiting for you. He said, after the day you've had, he might even go easy on you."

The Doctor smiled, though it was tainted by sadness.

"Are we just going to leave the Cavalier out there?" asked Romana. It was indiscreet, but she couldn't contain her worries any longer.

"The snow will bury him. His body will become part of the natural world, part of the magical landscape of Gallifrey itself. Untainted. Uncorrupted. It's better than handing him over to the Time Lords. Where he is, he can rest in peace."

The Doctor threw a lever, and the scanner screen peeled away to reveal to view outside, of the Cavalier's body now half-buried in the snow.

"This view," he said. "I'll never forget it."

Romana just nodded. He may always remember it, but it would be for the wrong reason, forever reminding him of the death of his friend.

The Doctor bowed his head again, seemingly overcome by the sadness. Noticing this, Romana reached across, flicked the lever the other way, closing

the scanner. The image slowly disappeared, until the Cavalier was gone.

Romana clapped her hands together decisively, trying to snap the Doctor out of his stupor. "So," she said, "where next? We can take this old TARDIS anywhere you like. What do you think, Doctor?"

"I think," the Doctor replied, "that you should take over flying for a while." He headed for the corridor to the rest of the TARDIS.

Before he disappeared into the deep darkness of the rest of the ship, Romana called out to him. "It'll be okay, Doctor," she said reassuringly. "You'll get past this."

"Oh, Romana," he said. "Of all the things we've seen today, that's the only thing that's truly impossible."

He turned a corner, and then he was gone. Romana looked up at the time rotor, as it began its steady rise and fall. She started to cry again, and knew in her hearts that the Doctor was doing the same.

Zilch found himself lying flat on his face in the thick snow. He tried to clamber to his feet, which wasn't easy and took several attempts, as he was within the confines of his heavy mechanical suit, and his hands were bound in cuffs. Eventually he stood up, knee-deep in snow, and looked around.

"I did it!" he cried out, laughing excitedly. "I actually did it! Even without our machine, I worked out the equation to get us to Gallifrey!"

By his side, a Kuricam appeared in a teleport glow. "Your assistance is appreciated," it said, as it began to trudge through the snow. Its thin, mechanical legs struggled to carry it across the wintry landscape. "Keep up, prisoner."

Zilch nodded, and followed the Kuricam. "I knew I could do it. Everyone always said I was stupid, that I was always so easily distracted, but--oh, it's snowing!"

"The target is nearby," declared the Kuricam.

"I *am* good, though," Zilch went on. "I'm smarter than anyone ever gave me credit for--" Suddenly Zilch tripped over his own feet and collapsed onto the snow again.

"You are quite the genius indeed," the Kuricam replied, its tinny voice dripping artificial sarcasm. "Scan beginning in five, four, three, two, one..."

Zilch picked himself up, again with great difficulty, and turned his attention to the Kuricam.

The Kuricam channelled all its power to its laser circuitry. It strained as it extrapolated its body heat and radiated energy outwards. Its body sparked with electricity, as it used all its back-up power and emergency resources to melt the surrounding snow.

A body began to reveal itself, still and lifeless, but every inch the person that the Kuricam had been searching for.

"It's him! That's the Cavalier!" Zilch realised. He approached the man's body, and knelt down beside it. "He's dead," he announced gravely. "No regeneration. He's gone."

"Death is not a valid excuse. The Cavalier must be punished for his crimes." A light exploded out from the Kuricam's lens, as it scanned the lifeless body once again. "Capacity for regeneration still exists."

"So I brought you here like you asked, but why? What are you lot planning?"

"Justice will be swift," the Kuricam said. "Resurrection may take longer."

ARCHAEOLOGIST'S DISCOVERY LEADS TO FAME AND FORTUNE declared the newspaper headline. Romana smiled to herself, as history was back on track. She continued to flick through the paper, while people played and frolicked in the park around her.

The sun was hidden behind a thick layer of cloud, but the air seemed cool

and pleasant. It had been raining recently, and would no doubt rain again, but everyone was enjoying the brief moment of calm.

Romana sighed contently. "This is nice," she said to herself. As a tennis ball came hurtling towards her head, she reached out and caught it without looking.

"Nice catch!" shouted the Doctor. He made his way over to her, and sat down beside her on the bench.

Romana handed him the tennis ball. "I don't know why you're bothering," she said. "He's back to his old self, and he'll never change again."

"More's the pity," replied the Doctor miserably. "We can't do any throwing and catching games now. Watch this."

The Doctor hurled the ball across the park towards K-9, who was parked, still and motionless. The robot dog didn't react at all when the tennis ball hit him in the side with a great metallic thump.

"He can't even move on the grass." The Doctor chuckled to himself, and then noticed what Romana was reading. He indicated the paper. "Any news?"

"Nothing bad," she replied. "Nothing that breaks the laws of physics. Everything's like it used to be." She hoped so, anyway.

"That's a bit of a shame," sighed the Doctor. "It's quiet. Far too quiet for me."

"Gives you plenty of time to be alone with your thoughts."

"Exactly." There was a sad look in the Doctor's eyes. Suddenly, he stood up and stared across the park. "Is that...?"

Romana didn't look up from the newspaper. "What's wrong?"

"N-nothing," the Doctor replied. His voice was shaky, uncertain. "Nothing's *wrong*, exactly. Romana, look!"

She did as she was told, and looked to where the Doctor was pointing. Between the trees, cloaked in shadow, she saw a man. He began to walk

towards them, and as he got closer, Romana could just about make out his face.
His eyes were so familiar.

"That's impossible," Romana said.

The Doctor wore the biggest grin. "No. Just improbable."

THE END