

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Doctor Who: Trading Futures

Lance Parkin

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About the Book

'Welcome to the future.'

The early decades of the twenty-first century.
All the wars have been won. There are no rogue states.
The secret services of the world keep the planet electronically monitored, safe from all threat. There is no one left for the United States and the Eurozone to fight. Except each other.

A mysterious time traveller offers a better future - he has a time machine, and with it, humanity could reach the next stage of evolution, they could share its secrets and become the new Lords of Time . . .

. . . either that, or someone could keep the technology for themselves and use it to fight the ultimate war.

This is another in the series of original adventures for the Eighth Doctor.

DOCTOR WHO: TRADING FUTURES

Lance Parkin



Prologue

The Banquo Legacy

Now Baskerville mentioned it, the night was getting cold.

They stood at the side of the road. Cosgrove took in the scene, savoured it like an '07 Tattler. The water in the loch was glittering, almost purple. The scent of heather filled the air. It was so quiet – no cars and lorries trundling in the distance, no aircraft scoring a line through the sky. Everything was so sharp, so well-defined. He didn't know what he was expecting, but this felt almost more than real. Hyper-real.

Baskerville looked distinctly bored. He was leaning against a tree, checking his nails. He was the younger man here, in his sixties, with thin white hair. He had an aquiline nose, a high forehead. Cosgrove studied the face, for future reference.

'Have you seen enough yet, Mr Cosgrove?' Baskerville asked.

'Don't use my name,' he snapped. They'd agreed that from the start. No names.

'My dear Cosgrove, no one is listening in.'

It was a liberating thought. When was the last time Cosgrove had known for certain that he was having a private conversation? He'd almost forgotten what it felt like to speak without assuming that someone, somewhere, was recording it and filing it away. No concealed microphones, or phone or data taps, no lasers on his windows, registering every vibration in the air. He was in unmonitored territory here, for the first time in years.

There was more, though. He was beyond the law here. He could kill Baskerville where he stood, leave him lying at the side of the road. And no one would ever know. The thought

of killing someone without having to do any paperwork was a refreshing one.

'Can I walk around?' Cosgrove asked, looking back at the loch.

'You can do what you want. How about you walk towards the forest, there?'

He hadn't noticed the forest. Cosgrove found himself nodding, then decided against it, in case it was a trick. 'No - the other way.'

Baskerville smiled. 'Of course. Lead on.'

Cosgrove stepped back up on to the road. 'And this is the year . . .?'

'1040, as requested.'

'You can prove that?'

'I'm not sure I can. Look around, though, there could be some evidence. Judging by the hoof prints, this road is a busy one.'

Cosgrove found something after a few minutes. An arrowhead, dropped in the mud. He examined it.

'Keep it,' Baskerville suggested. 'Give it to your people for analysis. That should be your proof. Wait! Can you hear the horses?'

He could, but only just. Baskerville had keen senses.

'Do you think it's them?'

'Yes. We're in the right time and place. It's why we are here, after all.'

'But the witches should be here -'

'They aren't. You remember what the witches said?'

'Of course. Don't you?'

'I don't have the benefit of a classical education. If you remember what was said, then say it.'

'But we're not witches. There aren't even three of us.'

'My dear fellow, Shakespeare was a writer, a maker of fictions. You don't think he let his research get in the way of a good story, do you? You think when he said a man "takes off his helmet" that he'd have found an old book and

thought, “yes, the helmet would be similar to those of Norman design, but with a nasal reinforce bar integral with the skull, cheek plates, and a nape plate”?”

‘No.’

‘No - he thought of a nice dramatic opening, something to intrigue his audience. Nothing like this. I suggest that there are no witches here because there’s no such thing as witches. So it falls to you to understudy.’

There were two of them, they were exactly how Cosgrove pictured them.

‘Terrible weather,’ the taller of the two said, in an accent so thick it was practically another language.

‘How far is it, now? Wait! Who are you?’

Cosgrove took a deep breath.

‘Speak, if you can.’

‘All hail Macbeth, hail to thee, Thane of Glamis! All hail Macbeth, hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor! All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be King hereafter.’

The smaller man pushed his way forward while his master absorbed that announcement.

‘You have the sight? You can see the seeds of the future in the here and now? You’ve told mac-Bethad. Now tell me my fate.’

‘Lesser than Macbeth, and greater. Not so happy, yet much happier. Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none. Banquo and Macbeth all hail!’

The two men leant in to confer.

Baskerville took a step towards Cosgrove. ‘Excellent. Now, I suggest we get going, before there are too many awkward supplementary questions.’

Cosgrove clutched the arrowhead.

‘I think you’ve made your case, Baskerville. But next time, I want to bring a scientist to look at the machine.’

The mists were growing thick. Reality was swirling away. Baskerville’s voice persisted, seemed to echo.

'Very well. But no more than two of you, unarmed, no recording devices or communications equipment. I'll arrange the meeting. You know my price. Tell your masters that it is non-negotiable, tell them that they must decide quickly. And tell them that it is no exaggeration to say that if they don't listen to my warnings, then this whole planet will be destroyed.'

Chapter One

Friendly Fire

The hydrofoil was something secret, something not of the everyday world. Its design embodied a contradiction, revelled in it.

The boat was invisible, with camouflage that went far deeper than its black paintwork. The hull was coated in rounded and smoothed thermoplastic, so radar beams just slid off it. The hydroplanes themselves were designed so that the boat barely disturbed the water it was slicing through. The motors were electric, all but silent, but were muffled anyway. On a night like this, you could stand twenty feet from the hydrofoil as it passed you and you couldn't be sure that it had.

Despite being invisible, it was also evil-looking. That was the contradiction. It glistened, it looked more like an ocean predator such as a ray or a shark than a piece of military hardware. The fact that the gun ports and missile tubes were hidden behind radar shielding just made it look more sinister - who knew what weapons it had, where they were concealed? If you did happen to see it, you'd rather wish you hadn't.

The incursion began at 23:11.

Unaware of it for the moment, Cosgrove sat at the back of the cabin. It was three hours since he'd left Baskerville. He still felt dizzy - a little lagged from his journey. He refused to believe it was his age: he was as fit as most men half as old. He felt excited, too - a thrill and anticipation that he'd not felt for far too long. That may have been because he was out here in the field again. He'd missed this. It had been too long, he'd begun to grow soft. Out here anything could happen. The boat could be in someone's sights, there could be a bomb on board.

At least he could trust the two others here, they were both men he'd hand-picked. Even so, they didn't know why he was here, they thought they were taking him to a rendezvous, not away from one. For the moment, all three of them sat in comfortable padded seats, facing forward. The boat didn't have a windscreen or portholes, although there was a plasma screen pasted round the front bulkhead which simulated one. The picture enhanced the available light, extrapolated colour, made it look like midday outside.

The soldier, King, was alert, the pilot was busy managing her navigation software. Neither spoke, or had brought anything to read. Cosgrove found himself growing steadily more bored. The briefcase was heavy on his lap. There was little engine noise, barely a hum.

Cosgrove took two painkillers. There had been a time when he'd had nothing to do with them. They dull the senses, as well as the pain. They blunt a man's edge. But the nagging headache, the one that hadn't gone away for weeks, the dizziness, the ache in his shoulder that was there all the time, now . . . the edge was already a little blunt. He remembered the words of Churchill's doctor - he'd inherited good health, but by now much of that was spent.

They all heard something drop on to the deck, then footsteps above them.

King looked up, puzzled.

'What is it?'

'A wave?'

'The sea's flat.'

'Go and check,' Cosgrove ordered King.

'It's nothing.'

'Go and check.'

There was a man standing on the deck. He watched King clamber out through the hatch with nothing more than mild curiosity.

King raised his gun, aimed a shot at him, but the pistol's software overrode him. The man was unarmed, and tagged as a civilian. You couldn't shoot civilians without special orders.

'Could you help me with this?' the man asked. He was holding a great bundle of white material - a parachute, King realised.

'Wait, I . . .'

'Here,' the man said, pushing the parachute into his arms.

'You can't . . .'

The man yanked the material up, until it was a hood over the soldier's head.

The heads-up display in King's helmet was flashing a number of warnings now. One advised that the civilian had been reclassified as a threat. The second warned him not to take another step back. The last told him of an imminent physical contact. It came moments before he was gently tipped over the rail that ran along the side of the boat.

His life jacket automatically inflated on contact with the water, restricting his arms and legs, swathing him in bullet-proof fabric. His pistol was floating just out of reach.

By the time King had pulled himself free of the parachute, and he'd splashed around to face the boat, it was several hundred yards away. There was no sign of the civilian, and the hatch had been shut.

Cosgrove had put his helmet on, and it had already told him about the intruder.

The briefcase remained cuffed to his wrist. It was an obvious encumbrance, so Cosgrove opted for the element of surprise. He took his position behind the hatch, lodged in place, waiting until the intruder was on board. The intruder took his time. Cosgrove got a good look at him. He was a Caucasian male, about forty, not moving like he was combat trained. Not moving with any urgency at all.

He had something in his hand. A grenade? No, a rubber ball.

The pilot turned in her chair, covered the intruder with her pistol.

'Hello there,' the intruder said.

'Drop that,' the pilot ordered.

The ball slipped from his hand, bounced and hit the control panel.

The roof blew off, and the pilot's ejector seat fired. The idiot squealed as she flew off, up and over the boat. The boat was already powering down.

'As a security precaution, the auto destruct sequence has been engaged. Sixty seconds.' The voice was synthesised, disjointed. Cosgrove could override it, but he'd need to get to the controls.

It didn't trouble the intruder, who retrieved the rubber ball, before stopping at the water cooler that sat opposite the hatch and pouring himself a drink of water. His hair flapped in the breeze.

There was plenty of time for Cosgrove to target him – the crosshairs in the helmet display narrowed over the intruder's back. One through the heart.

'Stay where you are,' Cosgrove ordered.

The intruder did as he was told.

'Are you armed?' The helmet's display had already given him the answer, but he liked to hear it from the intruder himself.

'I have a glass of water. Well, not a glass. Plastic. I have a plastic of water.'

'Hardly a weapon.'

'Well . . . no. But it's enough to overpower you. If that's all right.'

Cosgrove laughed. 'Turn around.'

The civilian did as he said.

'If you're going to overpower me, you have –'

'Forty seconds,' the computer supplied.

'Forty seconds. You'd better hurry.'

The civilian smiled. 'I thought you'd never ask.'

He tipped the water over Cosgrove's shoulder, and ducked out the way as the lifejacket automatically inflated, splaying his arms, lodging him in the doorway.

'Who sent you?' Cosgrove shouted, trying to wriggle free.

The intruder looked at him thoughtfully, slipping some sort of tool from his pocket. 'Who do you think?'

'How did -' he asked as the handcuff fell away from the briefcase handle.

The control panel started buzzing. The intruder stepped over to it, sat down in one of the remaining chairs, rested the briefcase in his lap.

'Appalling layout,' he said. 'Nothing's where you need it to be.'

'You have to deactivate the self-destruct. We'll be killed.'

'You'll be safe in that lifejacket of yours.'

'You won't. You'll be killed.'

The intruder shook his head.

He tugged at the control that fired his ejector seat, and launched into the night sky.

And he was waving goodbye, with a grin on his face, as he went.

A couple of grey-haired lesbians were telling the people on the next table that they'd come to San Antonio every year since they were teenagers back in the nineties. An hour before, the cabaret singer had started singing *Smack My Bitch Up* and the other diners started cooing about the golden oldies and asking if anyone else remembered Compact Discs.

Welcome to the future, Anji Kapoor.

Before she had met the Doctor and she'd become a time traveller, Anji had been starting to feel a little old - she was twenty-seven, she had a real career, her student loan was all but paid off, she was in a steady relationship, and Friday

nights had come to mean *Changing Rooms* and *Frasier*. Now she was surrounded by people pushing pensionable age who she could have been to school with. People who still came to Ibiza on holiday, but who only popped vitamin pills. Or would do, if the EZ hadn't banned them. Ecstasy, on the other hand, wasn't just legal, it was on the restaurant's dessert menu.

Before, when they'd landed in the future, it had almost always been the far future - on space colonies with flying cars and cyborgs. That was easy to cope with, it was just like being a character in a science-fiction novel. But this was weird - she just had no idea if she was meant to feel very, very old or very, very young.

It was strange to think that her dinner companion was only a couple of years older than her, but also almost too old to be her dad. Fitz had been born before the Second World War, and the Doctor had picked him up in the nineteen-sixties. His sense of time lag must be even more acute, he must find this place even more disturbing.

Anji looked up to see Fitz giggling at the menu.

Three hours or so ago, Anji had been impressed, too. After sitting them down, the waiter had handed them both what looked like a small piece of laminated card, but which had turned out to be some sort of liquid crystal screen with an interactive menu. If you tapped at it, it showed you pictures of the dishes, it gave you a detailed description, it showed you the ingredients and nutritional information, it even gave you a restaurant critic's opinion. You could scroll off in any direction, and it never seemed to end.

A logical extension of technology. Anji was starting to piece together a bit of future history. She was a futures trader. It had been - still was? - her job to spot trends, see patterns. So, this menu was a step up from the Psion organiser in her bag, the one she'd been so impressed with in the shop, but centuries less advanced than the library

she'd seen on Hitchemus, which was positively Neanderthal compared with the technology Silver had operated in Hope.

The menu was guilty of all the worst sins of bad website design back home - doing things simply because it could, piling information on information, it was designed to actively - interactively - get in the way of simply ordering a meal.

Fitz had insisted on keeping the menu even after they'd ordered, and had played with it through each of the four courses, leaving Anji to play with her food.

The view was spectacular. The Mediterranean, on a beautiful summer's evening, now a beautiful summer's night. There were flaming torches on the beach, and some sort of party going on down there. Anji's fellow diners glanced out every so often, but now the singer had gone, most were looking at the vast wall-mounted TV screens. A soccer game between the Eurozone national team and Brazil was getting underway. Every few minutes play would stop for an ad break, which ended with a short news bulletin.

There was trouble in North Africa - Anji tried to get the context from the tiny snatches of news and a few images - gleaming tanks with EZ flags nudging past bemused Arab onlookers. The tanks were chrome, the shape of tortoiseshells. Sci-fi weapons. Cut to a White House spokesman in jeans and T-shirt, with the anchorwoman talking over him, saying class twos had been deployed, purely in a peacekeeping capacity. Hyperlinks swarmed uselessly around the pictures.

Then back to the soccer game. The referee started the second ninth as soon it was clear the ad break was over.

'Where is he?' she asked.

Fitz looked up. 'The Doctor? He said wait here. He'll be here.'

'Have you any idea how we're meant to pay for this meal?'

'It says they take any IFEC card.'

'And do you have an IFEC card?'

'No.'

'Do you even know what one is?'

'Back in my day,' Fitz said, changing the subject, 'if you couldn't pay, you had to do the washing up. I suppose they've got robots to do all that now.'

'I'm sure the waiter's giving us a funny look.'

'Relax. We're the customers. Just keep ordering coffee. They've got different types, you can mix and match. Look. Decaffaraspberchino.' He waved the menu at her, before returning his attention to it. 'You can get it to do different languages. What do your lot speak?'

'English.'

'No . . . ah, there we go. Hindu.'

'Hindi.'

'Look at it.'

'I know what a cup of coffee looks like.'

'This is coffee of the future. Look, the last couple of places we've been, the coffee wasn't up to much. Enjoy it while you can.'

There was an explosion out at sea. Just a flash of orange light. The other diners, and the waiters, hurried over to the window. Which was almost certainly exactly the wrong thing to do in the circumstances. Anji remembered when a few IRA bombs had gone off in the City. There had been an email circulated about it - if a bomb goes off, stay away from the windows. Glass shatters. Shattered glass does nasty things to your eyes if it gets into them.

'Could it be terrorists?' one of the tourists said.

'There aren't terrorists,' the other one reminded her. 'Not any more.'

'But this might be some sort of comeback. There was an article about neo-terrorism last week and -'

Fitz looked up from his menu.

There was something burning on the horizon. A black shape, surrounded with flame. So how far was that? A mile?

No, more than that.

'It could be nothing. A coincidence,' Anji suggested.

'Yeah, right. Coincidence. Like every single time we land somewhere there's a big coincidence. Before you met the Doctor, did things ever explode?'

'As a matter of fact -'

'Hey, look at that,' Fitz was saying.

She realised, with a start, that they'd interrupted the soccer match on TV to report the explosion. An aerial shot - some news channel's helicopter, already on the scene.

Anji was more interested in the man who'd just walked in through the door. He was in his early forties, apparently at least, and wore a long black coat.

'Doctor!'

'Hello there.'

Fitz turned at the sound of the familiar voice.

He was carrying a briefcase, a small, silver one. Very expensive. His hair was wet.

'You have a fish in your pocket,' Fitz observed.

The Doctor handed it over to him. 'So I do. Have you eaten?'

Chapter Two

A Case for the Doctor

The jet-black Saab had abandoned any pretence that it was just happening to be passing along the same mountain road. Now it was in pursuit.

Malady pulled her Ford Panther down a gear and squeezed another ten kilometres an hour from it. From a few glances in her mirror over the last few minutes, she'd worked out there were two men in the car, both of them made from the same mould - heavy-set, unsmiling, straight from central casting.

Her passenger, Garvin, was looking nervous, he was clutching his laptop. 'They're on to us,' he whispered.

'Don't worry, that's what I'm here for. You concentrate on enhancing that image.'

The driver of the Saab was good, though, and she was surprised the EZ could still make cars like that. Perhaps it was just prejudice, but she thought a generation of safety legislation had emasculated European cars, made them into little more than shopping trolleys with lawnmower engines.

'How did the EZ know we were watching them? How did they get a car out here so fast? They probably think we sunk that Manta.'

'They aren't the EZ. The Union are more efficient than this.'

There were a lot of talented people in the Union, and they'd always been careful to have enough 'hotspots' to act as training grounds for their military. If she'd been marked by the EZ, she'd have been picked off by some Kosovan sniper, or some Frenchman or Irishman would have stuck a bomb under her car. Was it one of the various Mafias? The Russians were keeping their gangs out of the EZ at the

moment. The Italians were meant to be too busy fighting each other.

‘So who is it?’

‘It could be any number of people. It could even be someone on our side who doesn’t realise we’re the good guys. I’m not going to stop to ask.’

The Saab was lurching forwards.

‘They’re making their move.’

It was inches away from her rear bumper.

She picked up speed. Her car ought to be faster, and she was confident she was the better driver.

Her eyephones were ringing. She used one hand to take them out of her shirt pocket and slip them on, keeping the other hand clamped to the steering wheel.

There was a click from inside the arm, and the retinal scanner whirred into life. She let it read her.

The CIA seal flickered up, only partially blocking the view of the curve in the road ahead. She had both hands back on the wheel, but the distraction had cost her a little time.

‘Go ahead,’ said a computerised voice, an autosec by the sound of it.

The man at the other end of the line didn’t waste any time. ‘CNN are reporting an EZ patrol boat just exploded five miles from your position, Malady.’

‘It wasn’t a patrol boat, it was a Manta. And it was nothing to do with me, Control.’

‘No? I’m tempted to ask why not.’

‘Jonah Cosgrove was in the boat, sir.’

A pause.

‘And is my opposite number . . .’ He was clearly struggling for the euphemism. You’d think they’d come more easily. ‘. . . inoperative?’

‘I don’t know, sir. They had a man overboard, then the pilot ejected, then the boat self-destructed. No sign of Cosgrove. They were attacked.’

Another pause. ‘Not by us.’

'Sir, if it was us, we probably just started World War -'

'Not by us,' Control repeated firmly. 'You and Garvin are the only two people on the island.'

Hard left. The Saab was still almost on top of them.

'Have you been able to track their course?'

'Of course not.'

'Find Cosgrove. Find out what he was doing here. He's not left his desk in London for nearly twenty years. Jonah is one of the most shadowy of the European shadow government. He's involved in something big. Find out what, Malady.'

'Understood.'

The eyephone screen faded.

'Problem?' Garvin asked.

'Not the sort of thing a techie can deal with. How's that image?'

'It's kinda difficult to concentrate.'

The back axle buckled.

It had been hit, Malady realised. As she struggled with the wheel, she could tell the axle had been sliced apart. She couldn't think of a weapon that could do that, and she was damn sure it wasn't something she'd hit on the road.

She also knew that she had other priorities.

She quickly brought the car under control, slowing it, managing to swerve it so that the rear driver door was facing the Saab. There wasn't time to get out, though.

Malady braced herself, turned to watch the Saab hit her. The driver and passenger sat impassive, letting it happen.

Her car was shunted along, spun a couple of degrees.

Garvin had hit his head on the dashboard. He was unconscious, possibly worse.

Malady grabbed his laptop, and was out of the driver's door. She kept low, using the car as cover. The computer was the important thing here.

She heard the Saab's doors open. Both doors - she'd hoped one of them would have been incapacitated, or at least trapped in the car.

One of them pulled open the passenger door, she heard him moving in to get a look at Garvin.

Her pistol was in her hand. She popped up, fired two shots, dropped back to a crouch. The larger man fell, blood sprayed from his head, he twisted slightly, looked surprised.

And then there was the light.

A pencil-thin beam of light sizzled past her. A thin white line, perfectly straight.

The other one was firing some sort of ray gun.

She barely registered the sound of the felled tree behind her. The second beam was even closer, it scored a line in the tarmac of the road.

Her side had nothing like that - nothing handheld, anyway.

A cutting beam. Something that could slice through anything. It must have been what had smashed her axle. A deadly weapon.

But it had a disadvantage. With a bullet, you could get only a rough bearing on the man firing on you from the sound, or you might spot the muzzle flashing. This weapon drew a straight line back to the person holding it, and even lit up the surroundings. Every time he fired, it was as if he was pointing a giant luminous arrow at himself.

Malady stood, fired three shots, watched one of them catch his shoulder, one catch his chest, the last catch the gun itself.

He didn't make a sound.

The gun exploded, a burst of white light, like it had been loaded full of rays. She saw him in silhouette, pure black against pure white. The blast took his arm off, at the elbow. As he fell, he seemed to grow larger, became twisted. His head seemed to grow longer.

He grew horns.

Malady watched, as he fell apart.

A moment later, it was dark again. And there was no sign of either of the bodies.

Malady picked up the laptop, silently scolding herself for dropping it in the first place. She stepped back over to the cars. The men had disintegrated, there was no trace of them.

And so had their Saab. There was the wreck of her Panther, Garvin was dead, but there was no sign of the car that had hit it.

Those people weren't EZ.

Malady wasn't convinced they'd been people.

The laptop beeped at her. She looked at the display. The computer had finished enhancing the image of the man who'd blown up the EZ Manta, and possibly assassinated the head of the EZ secret service.

His long face was oval, with an aristocratic nose and a full mouth. He had a high forehead, framed with long brown hair. He wore a long, dark coat. He had blue eyes, with traces of crow's-feet around them.

Malady had no idea who he was, but he'd triggered a diplomatic incident, possibly a World War.

She couldn't wait to meet him.

The morning before, it had become obvious that the TARDIS was up to something.

The air was full of bad mood. At first, Fitz assumed the Doctor and Anji had had a row. He'd heard them together in the control room, discussing something, and had stayed out of their way for an hour or two. In the end, he'd gone in - and was bemused to find them smiling, puzzling over some problem. The Doctor was standing over the control console, tapping his lip thoughtfully. Anji stood opposite, studying his expression. Neither of them had noticed Fitz arrive.

'Look!' the Doctor said suddenly, waving a finger at one of the displays.

'It's moving again.'

'Yes.'

'And you didn't touch it?'

'No. You were watching me. We've changed course again.'

'Could you have started a pre-set sequence running or something like that? Like a washing machine?'

The Doctor scowled at her. 'A washing machine? You're comparing the TARDIS to a washing machine?'

'Yes,' Anji insisted. 'Look, it's possible, isn't it? You could have switched on the autopilot, or the cruise control, or accidentally programmed it to do whatever it's doing at a set time. I mean you don't really understand how the TARDIS -'

A glare from the Doctor had shut her up. He didn't like to admit that his piloting of his time machine was essentially a series of educated guesses. And Fitz and Anji certainly didn't like to think about that. So there was an unspoken pact that no one ever said it out loud.

The Doctor turned to see Fitz, noticing him for the first time. 'You've not touched the controls?'

'No,' Fitz told them.

'Neither have I,' the Doctor said thoughtfully.

'So where are we heading now?' Fitz asked.

The Doctor studied the readings, appeared to do some mental arithmetic. 'We're heading out,' he said.

'Out?'

'The far future?' Anji asked. 'Or out of the galaxy?'

'Both,' the Doctor said, after a moment's consideration. 'I'm sorry Anji, but I won't be taking you home to the twenty-first century today. We are travelling into unknown realms. We have already left the universe with which we are familiar. The journey will be a long one. Hours at least, maybe days. We should all get some sleep while we have the chance.'

The TARDIS had landed on a beach full of sunbathing tourists before they'd reached their bedrooms.

The Doctor had spent a little while insisting that this was merely a simulacrum of Earth, like Earth World had been. He stayed in the TARDIS to calibrate the instruments, to work

out their exact location in time and space. Fitz and Anji had popped out to buy ice creams.

They'd worked out roughly where and when they were almost before they'd stepped from the ship. The hotels and shops were in familiar styles, give or take, but the fashions – what there were of them on the beach – the electric buses and the animated billboards all provided evidence that they were a few years after Anji's time.

When they'd got back to the TARDIS, they handed the Doctor a copy of *The Times*, with the date on it, which they'd found at a small newsstand. The Doctor had held up his notebook, and told them that the equations he'd scrawled down led him to the exact same conclusion, although he'd flipped it closed when Anji asked to see that for herself. The Doctor had gone on to say that there was a time machine in operation in the area. He produced some sort of portable oscilloscope as evidence. He'd seen the same patterns before, and it meant displacement in the time field, which, in his experience, invariably meant trouble.

The Doctor headed for the door, suggesting they explore and try to find the time machine. His plans didn't extend past that. Anji had tried to pin him down, to focus a bit more on specific objectives. She'd got it into her head that there was a pattern to their travels, that there was a bigger picture they were all missing. She didn't go on about it this time, but she'd mentioned her theory to Fitz a few times, and from the glazed look in the Doctor's eye, he'd copped for the same conversation, too.

Fitz had his own theory, and he was the last to leave.

Something was nagging at him.

He told the others he'd left his red suede jacket in his room. Once he was sure he was alone, he went to the back of the TARDIS, the point furthest from the door. It was through a couple of doors, at the end of the corridor that didn't lead anywhere.

He'd heard something scratching against the other side of this wall once, like a wild animal trying to get out. The TARDIS had once been bigger than this. Infinite, according to the Doctor. Perhaps the rest of the ship was still there, trapped behind doorless walls. Perhaps there were other things trapped there, too.

'*They* didn't like people time travelling, did they?' he asked the wall.

No answer.

'The people that created you? The Doctor's people? I . . . think I remember what happened to them. If it ever happened. It happened to me, it happened to the Doctor. So it's got to count. Hasn't it? Just because I don't remember all of it doesn't mean it doesn't count.'

No answer.

'They didn't like other people time travelling. They tracked them down, punished them. Probably for all the right reasons, don't get me wrong. I do get it, you know - I do understand that if those . . . laws . . . hadn't been enforced, then everything we know could have come crashing down. There would be anarchy. We got a glimpse of it, remember. It was madness. But now *they've* gone. Everything they stood for is gone. Their time has passed. You do know that? There's no law, no order, not now. You're a police box, but there aren't any policemen left.'

There was a rumble, something echoing deep, deep below his feet.

'I wish that I was wrong,' Fitz said softly. 'But I'm not. It's just us, now.'

Fitz had left the ship to consider that, emerging into the sunshine and joining his friends.

Twenty four hours later, they were back on the beach. The TARDIS stood there as if it always had. The Doctor, Fitz and Anji sat nearby.

'Aren't you hot in that coat?'

Anji was hot in her bikini, even covered in the cooling suncream she'd bought ('Now with telomere fray protection', according to the bottle). The Doctor hadn't even taken off his jacket. The three of them sat on a large beach towel in the shade of the TARDIS, the Doctor intently examining the briefcase, Anji watching the Doctor, Fitz trying so hard not to look like he was ogling the sunbathing women.

'I suppose you're just trying to blend in. All the teenagers are wearing suits.'

'So?' Fitz and the Doctor asked.

'It's just odd.'

'Not particularly. Teddy boys wore suits, the mods wore suits,' Fitz reminded her. Anji hadn't really thought of it like that, but it was true. The ska bands, or whatever they'd been called, wore suits, too. It was one of those things that came around.

'The Beatles started off in suits,' she said.

'Well, they didn't start off like that,' the Doctor said, taking a small black box out of his pocket. 'But they took the suggestion well, I have to say.'

The fashion seemed to be unisex, and it was almost an eighties look - baggy and with shoulder pads. None of the natives, men or women, were wearing anything underneath their jackets, but they were wearing ties. Most had a metal lapel badge, a stylised monogram - R:C.

'Rebel: Conform,' the Doctor said. 'The children of this generation realised that the best way to worry their parents was to pass exams, become teetotal and settle down in a steady job.'

'It doesn't sound much fun.'

'Precisely. Their parents, who are your generation, after all, don't understand it, so it really worries them.'

Anji wondered how someone who'd lived for over a hundred years could make her feel so old.

'You still look worried, Anji,' the Doctor noticed.