

CHANGE

By Nathan Ivery

The Wind was crisp, and the river was that delightful ocean blue and emerald, tinge that looked dangerously inviting. Tempted by this, The Doctor tentatively dipped a toe into the water before recoiling with shock. "Even for my Time Lord sensibilities, this is far too cold." He said with a scowl. "I shall admire the wonderous and no doubt magnificent mysteries of the riverbed from the comfort of the bank."

It was strange to land on a planet where there was no immediate danger, he knew something was off when after 5 minutes he had failed to be captured. They were usually very punctual, but he got the picture after about an hour. By this time, he had usually met the insane despot, hell-bent on universal domination and stopped him in the same amount of time that one might listen to an episode of the Archers. He plonked himself down with an almighty thud, with the weight of a man not used to standing still.

He never liked to dwell on the past, he had always strived to keep moving forward and to never look back. He never stayed in one place. That was just who he was. Something was nagging in the back of his mind though. Something that he kept trying to hold back.

Being an explorer had always been in the Doctor's blood, he was frequently in trouble with his tutor Berusa who always managed to catch him just as he managed to sneak out of the capitol grounds. The few times he did manage to slip under his eagle eyes, it would often be days before his return. Much like the rest of his classmates, the Time Lords were so wrapped up in the web of time and their self-importance, that they failed to notice The Doctor was staring up at the stars.

As he sat there looking out at the twin mountains standing there perfectly imperfect as the planet's three suns sunk lower into the horizon, the whole landscape was bathed in a warm golden hue. How many sunsets had he seen now? How many worlds?

So many places and yet there was still so much to see. He smiled to himself, after 700 years of non-stop time and space travel he never forgot that exciting buzz he got when the doors of The TARDIS opened, revealing a brand-new world, with a brand-new adventure. As the suns finally set, he took in a lungful of air and breathed an ancient sigh. "I should do this more often."

All in all, it had been a rather pleasant afternoon. Whilst following the riverbank he stumbled upon some rather nice frogs who kindly invited him in for some afternoon tea. Before sending him away with his pockets full and his hat filled with freshly picked fruits and vegetables.

Several days ago, he had dropped Ace and Mel off at the pleasure planet in the tranquillity Spiral. "A Spar planet? That hardly seems like your cuppa tea Professor!" Ace had exclaimed at his suggestion. The doctor grinned impishly. It's not, that's why I'm dropping you both off, I need some time to think.

“Well, I for one think it’s a great idea. It's been too long since we had a decent breather.” Mel had countered. Besides if the Doctor has made his mind up, there really is little point in arguing with him.

Ace took a lot more convincing, but. What sold her on the idea was that as part of the leisure planets facilities, there was the option to live out your stay in the total immersion simulations, which let the user live out their wildest fantasies, in meticulous detail.

The Doctor smiled as he thought of Mel lounging around in one of the observation decks enjoying a bottle of expensive Zargonian wine with a good book, whilst Ace ran around a fictional world, where she saved the day from alien bog monsters and hung out with Sooty and Sweep backstage at a Joy Division concert.

The reason for his visit was to clear his head, since his regeneration he had felt rather off-kilter. It wasn't uncommon for this to occur during regeneration, there had been several times when he had been out of “action”, and his last change into his 6th body had been extremely jarring. Even having a sudden burst of physic imbalance and tried to strangle poor Peri half to dea...

He stopped dead in his tracks, a mere feet away from the battered doors of the police box. The grief was almost too much as he mused over that name. Perpugilliam Brown. He never did tell her how beautiful he found that name. According to Cardinal Darkel, Peri had been saved by King Yrcanos, but something told him it was a cheap lie to appease her guilt. Even if she had survived, what would he say? How could he ever look her in the eye again? He should have been there to stop Kiv. Her last memory before being transplanted into the brain of that pitiful creature, must have been utter despair and heartbreak. She believed The Doctor, her best friend. Had utterly betrayed her and abandoned her.

He'd like to blame the Timelords for this, just another casualty in the Valeyard's personal crusade against him. But ultimately, he could only blame himself. He always assumed he was of greater intelligence than anybody else in the room, and most of the time, it was true. But he shouldn't have put Peri in direct harm's way. But before he could reveal his cunning plans and save the day, he was recalled by the Timelords.

Being forced to see the damage he had done to this poor girl whilst the Timelords looked on in cold and calculated detachment left him helpless. He never really got to mourn. It had been a rather busy day. The fate of the universe had been at stake. But now as he stood bathed in the beautiful light of the shining suns he finally allowed himself to remember that amazing woman, with so much talent and wide-eyed wonder, that he had let down.

The Doctor had seen so much death, Peri was regrettably not the first. He remembered all of his companions, but he never forgot the ones whom he had lost along the way. Adric, Katarina, Sarah Kingdom all of them were so very brave. But it shouldn't have been them. It was his responsibility; he had a duty of care.

From now on he would not let chance play a part in the events of his life or any others. If he truly was times champion then he must prepare to protect her at all cost. Having a time machine had so many advantages. And it's never linear. So, who is to say he couldn't cut a few corners? Like oh, I don't know? Popping back a week or so early and leaving certain doors

open for himself? Or tampering with tiny insignificant details which at the time is meaningless. But ultimately ensure his absolute victory? of course, he would have to be extremely careful. The web of time was a fragile thing. But surely he could bend them a little to ensure they weren't broken. The Time Lords would thank him for it even if their pompous self-righteous indignation stopped them from saying it to his face.

The Doctor knew that something needed to change. If he was going to travel with Ace and Mel, he was going to have to make them tougher. The universe was a dangerous place and if he wanted them to survive, he would need them to be more than just human. He was aware of something bubbling under the surface great forces were beginning to amass and the threat of war was in the Air.

This was an inevitability hundreds of years in the making. Prophesied by the Time Lords 3 lifetimes ago and planned by the Daleks from the moment of birth. He had heard the news of the Dalek's advancements with time travel technology, unchecked it could even rival the Might of Galifrey. Whilst the Old Gods began to stir from their slumber. As usual, The Time Lords were living in blissful ignorance.

As the self-appointed saviour of the universe and Time's Champion, The Doctor decided it was time to move his pieces on the board, he could no longer fumble around the universe he needed to be one step ahead of all of them.

His mind turned to Ace, he had not long known the loudmouth cockney, he had offered to take her with him before taking her back to Perivale. But he noticed that there was more to her than met the eye, deep inside there was a frightened little girl in need of someone to guide her. She was exceedingly bright with a spirit that rivalled the Doctor's own.

But if she was going to survive what was coming next, she was going to have to be prepared. She would not end up like Peri. That he was certain of.

He pushed open the door of the TARDIS and gave one last look out at the setting suns. "I'm doing this for you Peri. I'm doing this for all of you." His face became darkened by the shadow growing across the riverbank. He closed the doors behind him, and the familiar groans of the blue box dematerialising wheezed in and out of reality. The universe didn't know it yet. But everything was about to change.

There's work to be done.