

# Doctor Who Restoration

By Stephen M. Wolterstorff

## Episode One

He was no longer aware of anything but the pain. Blinded by the pressure in his head, he stumbled about, unaware of his location and where he was headed.

After a moment, he realized he had somehow left the area of safety. Twisting, trying to return, the pain reached a crescendo, filling every part of him. He collapsed roughly to the ground.

Fire seemed to overwhelm him, ripping apart muscles and bones. Just when he thought he could stand no more, the pain left him. A soft release of air eased past his lips and unconsciousness overtook him.

Harriet liked the city, although she had a healthy fear of it. She was mildly afraid of being out on the street at this time of night, but she didn't let it consume her. Her fear kept her alert, not overly anxious. Gently hugging her bag of groceries, she hurried back to her apartment.

Normally she wouldn't even be this afraid. The north side of Milwaukee was the rougher, more dangerous side of town. The south was the oldest part of the city, where most of the descendants of the original German settlers still lived. The west was the side of town that expanded the most and was quieter due to its relative newness. The east side is where Harriet lived. The east side was the one crammed up against Lake Michigan. It was small, cramped in areas. Weirdoes and college kids that didn't want to live in dorms lived around here because the colleges were nearby. This was the east east side; a bit more north or south and you hit the rich folk. So, like she originally thought: normally she wouldn't have been this afraid, except something was in the air.

Harriet felt she didn't fit into the main crowds on the east side; she considered herself a wanna be. She didn't have the cash for college nor was she particularly odd. When you're twenty with a job in a mall, no scholarships or parents willing to put you in school, it was impossible to consider college.

The apartment and surviving were hard enough.

Harriet was a highly attractive young lady with long brown hair piled atop her head and deep blue eyes stuck inside it. Her clothing was not fancy but well suited her body and her general style. Young men tended to stare at her. She didn't always like it.

While she considered herself a humanitarian, she wasn't nuts. She may well be a sucker for panhandlers, but she wouldn't invite them in her apartment. Usually.

When she first saw him staggering around, she immediately thought he was drunk. After a bit more staggering, she realized the shadowy figure in the alley was much worse off than that. As she debated whether to see if he was okay or not, something happened that decided for her. He fell to the ground and glowed. Briefly. And then all was dark.

"What the heck?" she murmured. Quickly she jogged to the fallen man's side, observing that the street was almost empty apart from herself and him. "Great," she thought, "if he's the next Jeffrey Dahmer leading me to a trap, I won't have a chance." Once she stopped, she looked down at him.

The man looked to be in his early to mid twenties and he appeared to be of average height, well, at the moment, length. His hair was short and dark. His clothes were dirty and were too small for him. Harriet wasn't sure what to make of him. Then, his eyes opened. A tired pleading shone from them. Although part of her mind argued against the action she was about to take, she knew she wouldn't be able to live with herself if she didn't. "If I helped you, do you think you could walk?" He barely moved, but appeared to try and get up. She put her bag down and helped him to his feet. He leaned heavily upon her as she dragged him two buildings down the block to her place. Luckily, she lived on the first floor. Balancing him on her shoulder, she unlocked the door and helped him to the couch. Then she hurried back for her groceries.

By the time she returned, she felt more confident that her decision was the right one. In the light of her lamp, she could see how ill

he looked. "I'll call you an ambulance," she announced as she deposited her bag on her kitchen table. Was he awake enough to hear?

Considering he answered, he must have been, she thought. "No. No hospital," he croaked with an English accent. "Just need to rest. Rest." With that, he seemed to go under again.

She sighed and wondered what she was getting herself into. After fetching a pillow and blanket, she removed his extremely tight shoes, jacket, sweater and hat. Then, she stretched him out and tucked him in, making him as comfortable as possible. She looked at him and sighed again. Then she went to get ready for bed.

Some blocks away, another young lady was also walking home, a gentle and proper fear upon her. Liz always knew it was wise to keep an eye out for someone who was a bit too eager for some cash or a wrestle in the bushes. She wasn't keen on giving out either.

As she approached the back door of her building, she noted, with a certain frustration, that the back light was out again, leaving the area in near total darkness. In the black, she searched for the doorknob so she could unlock the door.

She became aware of a horrid stench. Nose wrinkling, she turned, trying to discover the direction of the smell. "Tom," she joked, "is that you?" A slurping noise answered her. While fear began to creep up on her, a wet thick mass covered her face. She panicked, unable to scream or breathe. The mass began coating her entire body. The blackness became absolute.

Sunlight shone from the direction of the lake and a new day struggled for life. Harriet entered her normal routine. The young man on the couch was still asleep. When she departed for work, she left him a note and let him continue at his slumber. He seemed to need it.

At nine, she was at work in the mall, in a clothing boutique. She liked the store. Harriet felt it was always a bonus to work at a place you would shop. Assuming of course you had to work in a shop of some sort. Gives you an extra interest in your work. Upon entering, she immediately came across her best friend Julie, or, when trying to irritate her, Juliana. "Hi Julie." Julie was a cute young lady who

looked much younger than her twenty years. She'd long blonde hair that shone with a healthy glow beneath the shop's lights. Her attractive outfit complimented her flashing blue eyes and her slight figure.

"Hi." Julie turned from her price tagging and had a brief glance at her friend. "What happened?"

"What do you mean 'what happened'?"

"You get the same look every time you have a thought that gets stuck in the back of your mind. You've got it now. What happened?"

"I have a guy in my apartment."

"Your brother come back already?"

"No, and he still hasn't picked up the rest of his junk yet." Harriet paused briefly and realigned her thought processes after her expression of irritation. "I brought a guy into my apartment last night."

"I thought you weren't that kind of girl."

"I'm not." Harriet allowed herself to be mildly and jokingly indignant. "He was hurt. I let him rest on my couch. I don't know why."

"And you are still wondering why?" Julie saw Harriet nod. "That's good. I'm wondering too. You let a perfect stranger into your place to crash. That's weird. I wouldn't have." Suddenly, an impish grin grew on her face. "Is he cute?"

A slight frown wrinkled Harriet's brow. "I don't know. I never thought to look at him like that." The frown deepened as she thought harder, trying to coalesce feelings into words. "I don't quite understand why. I saw he was hurt and went to help him. For some reason, I felt I could trust him."

"A guy who you trust upon looking at him?" Julie questioned. "This I got to see. Can I come over tonight?"

"Might as well, you come over often enough. I left him a note for when he wakes up, asking him to stick around so I can talk to him. Somehow I think he will."

"Good." Julie handed Harriet some jeans. "Rack these, we'll talk more later."

It kept to shadows, away from the sunlight which threatened to dry its skin so. The sun caused pain, both physical and mental. Too much sun and its skin would dry completely and death would claim it. That could not be allowed to happen for the mission must be completed.

It shifted position and made itself more comfortable. Although night was not far off, it still had to wait. Wait until the darkness had reclaimed the land and it could once again collect. It sighed and rested.

Upon getting freed from their daily imprisonment, Harriet and Julie hopped on a bus that seemed to be waiting just for them and headed for the apartment. Although the time they spent riding the two buses they needed to take was relatively short, it seemed like an eternity while curiosity played as the feature player in their minds.

Eventually, by their internal clocks, they arrived at Harriet's apartment. Upon entering, they found that the young man was asleep. Harriet's note was untouched. "Do you think he's been awake?" Julie asked.

"It doesn't seem like it," Harriet said, sounding gently puzzled, "but why would he sleep all day?"

"I'd at least have a brief snack and bathroom break," quipped Julie. She stared at his face while Harriet busied herself in the kitchen, trying to locate a bunch of grapes she was keen on eating. "Harriet?" A muffled expression answered her, advocating her continuing. "He's cute."

Harriet swallowed, having found her grapes. "Now that you've decided that, you're happy, aren't you?"

"Pretty much." She sat down in a chair near the couch and continued to gaze upon the young man. "You're right, he does look trustworthy."

"I'm beginning to feel like Einstein with all this correctness." Harriet walked into the living room, which, from the kitchen, was all of five steps, with a look of puzzled thoughtfulness on her face. "Is correctness a word?"

Julie gave her a funny look while she thought about that. "I think so, but I'm not sure."

"I guess it doesn't matter much."

"Not really. So, what are we going to do with him?"

Suddenly, he moved.

There was this odd, low, gently painful sound that he could hear. After a moment, he realized he was making the noise and

stopped. His muscles stretched and felt grateful for the gentle pull he'd placed on them. That was better.

With all that done, he opened his eyes. He began realizing things. One was that he was not alone. Another was that he was in more trouble than he knew.

The young man on the couch began to stretch and stir. Both Harriet and Julie hopped in close to welcome him back to consciousness. Slowly, his eyelids rose, revealing his dark brown eyes. He blinked once or twice at them and then smiled. "Hello," he said politely in a distinctly English accent.

"Hello," they replied in their distinctly Milwaukee accent.

"Where am I?" asked the young man, gentle confusion and puzzlement mingling in his speech.

"My apartment," Harriet answered.

"Where's that?"

"Farwell, just south of Brady."

"Unfortunately that doesn't help me much. Could you get less specific?"

"City of Milwaukee," Julie helped.

"Please continue."

"Um, state of Wisconsin," Harriet added.

This information obviously meant little to Harriet's guest. "Getting there," he said, trying to sound encouraging.

"The United States of America, North America," Julie continued. Then, as a gag, she tacked on "The planet Earth."

Quite seriously, he smiled a bit and said "Now that part I recognize. What's today's date?"

Harriet came up with that one for him. "April seventeenth, nineteen hundred and ninety seven."

"Good, good," he murmured. "This next one might be a bit tricky." He paused, collected his thoughts, and spoke. "Who am I?"

The smell of death surrounded the creature. Fortunately for it, its sense of smell was rudimentary and the powerful stench its body emitted affected it little. Others were not as lucky.

It shuffled toward the lone male who was walking causally through a dark alley. The

creature had learnt the difference between the males and females of these animals soon after it had arrived on this planet. The females had bumps. As the male passed by the dumpster, the creature tripped it and then watched it fall.

The male made a number of loud expressions. Before he could rise, it grabbed hold of his legs. The male twisted suddenly and viewed the thing that held him. He screamed. The scream ended suddenly.

No one saw a thing.

"Actually, we were hoping you'd tell us that," Harriet commented.

"You don't know me?" He sounded surprised. They shook their heads no. "Hmph. Interesting. And you brought me in. That seems a bit unusual."

"Well, we're glad you agree," Julie commented. "She's still trying to figure out why she brought you in."

"I'm having difficulties understanding it," he stated. After a moment, he looked up at Harriet and said, rather sincerely, "Thank you."

"Oh, well, you're welcome." Harriet was a bit flustered.

He concentrated a bit. "I don't know. Some things are extremely clear, other things I can feel they're there but," he gestured, displaying his frustration, "I just can't grab hold of them."

"Including your name?" Harriet checked.

"Especially my blinking name," he grumbled.

"Perhaps this has something to do with the fall I saw you take," Harriet mused. After a moment's think, she said, with a note of determination in her voice, "Well, I think you should go wash up, have a shower. My brother left some of his clothes behind when he left, you look to be pretty close to his size. I'll get you something a bit more comfortable to wear."

He looked down at his ill fitting clothing. "I can't really argue there. Thanks. And, uh, thanks for not, well, being so forward to remove anything else."

"Oh, sure. No problem."

"Direct me to the shower then."

Harriet showed him to the bathroom and some of the cleaning supplies he could use. The young man thanked her again and entered the bathroom. The sound of the

shower could soon be heard. While Harriet started picking clothes out of the boxes that she had stored them in, Julie slipped up next to her. "I wouldn't have minded helping him shower," she said with a twinkle in her eye.

"Well, you should have said something to him, shouldn't you?" Julie just smiled mischievously.

"Geez Marty, look at that." The Milwaukee Police Department, although probably not the best in the world, were not total idiots either. The brief scream had attracted some attention and someone had called the fuzz. When the squad had arrived some minutes later, all that was left for them to find was a rapidly solidifying pool of liquid, a severed human hand and a hideous smell.

"This is weird Stan. One hand? I'm calling for backup; we might have another loony on the loose."

Once Harriet had chosen some clothes, she opened the bathroom door a crack and deposited them inside. Then she joined Julie in the living room and watched some television until the bathroom door opened again.

The clothes fit him well. A slightly battered pair of dark coloured jeans covered his lower half. A tidy looking shirt that asked 'Are You Normal?' in red letters peeked out from behind a gray coloured combination flannel and sweatshirt. "It's very comfortable. Thank you."

"No sweat. My brother owes me money so he can't complain."

"I realized over the course of my shower that we haven't been properly introduced. I'd lead off with my own name, but I'm afraid it's still lost to me."

"I'm sorry, we should have done that before. I'm Harriet Summers. This is my friend Juliana McCoy."

Julie cleared her throat loudly. "I prefer Julie."

"As you say, Juliana." The young man grinned gently, obviously teasing.

Despite her gentle irritation with him, Julie continued to speak with him. "We need to come up with a name for you. We can't just keep calling you 'dude' until you remember your name."

"Have anything you'd like to be called?"

"Nothing comes to mind unfortunately."

Harriet glanced around the room, seeking inspiration. Her eyes came across her small collection of books and one author's name caught her attention. "How about Steve?"

"Steve Smith," Julie suggested.

The young man thought about that. "Steve Smith," he echoed. "It's mildly alliterative. Sure, why not?"

"Steve Smith it is then," Harriet stated happily.

"Right. As it's late and I don't know my way around, would it be okay if I stayed here tonight?"

"Certainly. You can stay here as long as you need to and as long as you behave yourself. The couch is yours."

"Thanks. I came across this in my old pants pocket, and I'd like you to have it, especially if I'm going to be here awhile. I should lend a hand." Steve handed her a hundred dollar bill.

Awe displayed itself on Harriet's face. "You don't have to."

"But I will," he declared firmly. "You've done so much for me already, it's the least I can do."

"For that you should let him sleep in the bed," Julie joked.

Steve flushed a gentle red. "That's not necessary. I don't know either of you that well."

"That's not what I meant."

"Oh. Sorry. Have any tea?"

The area was roped off. The hand had been removed and a chalk outline surrounded the place where it had been. The press were investigating.

"One hand?" Cameras from the four major local stations filmed the sight, in the event this was the beginning of a rash of hand findings. A reporter, the story didn't warrant more than one yet, from the daily papers spoke to one of the officers.

"Yep, one hand." The officer kept one eye on the reporter from the weekly paper, the Sheepshead Express, who was prowling near the 'Police Line – Do Not Cross' markers. For some reason, he looked suspicious.

"Apart from it only being a hand, was there anything else unusual about it?"

"Not really," the officer said, with a certain

hesitance. "Nothing conclusive yet."

The reporter from the weekly paper stepped over closer to them. "What do you mean by that?"

"Well," the officer began, sounding a bit reluctant to speak, "this is not official information, but," he cleared his throat and wondered once again why he was going to say this, "it is the opinion of myself and some of the other officers that this hand was not cut off."

Most of the reporters gave him a bland 'Oh right' look and felt free to ignore most of the rest of his information. A couple continued to listen. "The stump was too . . . ragged to have been cut. Perhaps sawed off."

"Or ripped maybe?" suggested the reporter from the Sheepshead.

"Perhaps. Not of this has been confirmed yet, it's only a lead we're following." Not too many cared either way. The Sheepshead reporter made sure to get it down. What had been said, had been said, whether official or not.

Steve made everyone a smooth tasting cup of tea from some tea bags Harriet had gotten a while back as a gift and forgotten about. After that, he sat and peacefully watched television, half hoping that not concentrating on remembering things would help him remember. Julie sat next to him on the couch. She had intended to go home as she had things to do, but the gentle consuming warmth of the tea had made her drowsy. She dozed, using Steve's shoulder as a pillow. He didn't seem to notice. Harriet sat in a chair nearby, half awake, gently hypnotized by the flashing box. A solitary lamp worked to light the room but failed, meaning the television provided the primary light source for the room.

Growing bored with television as the show was uninteresting and he still hadn't remembered anything, Steve spoke. "Tell me something about yourself."

The words acted like someone shaking her awake. "Hmm? Like what?"

"Well, how did you come to live here? What do you do with yourself?"

Harriet stretched for a bit, yawned and tried to decide where to begin. "I had just turned eighteen when I graduated high school. My mom had moved out of the house at that age,

and she'd told me for years that I'd do the same. I did, cause she threw me out as soon as I could get somewhere to stay. She said it was good for her and it would be good for me but I think she got sick of having me around."

"What did your dad have to say about all this?"

"Him and mom got divorced when I was ten. He moved out to California and now he's living with a beach bimbo that's only a few years older than me." She paused and then added, "He gets me some nice presents now and then to help me out, so I can't complain too much."

"What about the guy who's clothes I'm wearing?"

"My younger brother Jim?" She snorted violently through her nose, causing Julie to grunt softly and readjust her position against Steve. "He got sick of mom after I moved out and left home a few months ago. I was between roommates at the time, so, like a nice sister, I let him move in with me for awhile. The rat moved in with a bunch of his buddies two weeks ago, left most of his stuff here, and he owes me a hundred bucks."

"Nice. Charming family."

"Thanks," she replied indignantly.

"Sorry, I didn't really mean it that way."

"It's okay, I feel the same way sometimes. I just felt the need to defend them."

"Oh. Well, what's Juliet's story then?"

"Julie."

"Juliana, whatever."

Harriet smiled slightly at his playful irritation. "I've known Julie since we were in the third grade together. Her parents died when we started middle school. Car accident. She was sent to live with her aunt, but they never got along very well, so she moved out as soon as she could. She gets an allowance every month from a trust fund."

"How come she doesn't live with you then, seeing as how you're such good friends?"

"Julie is very self-willed; she likes to accomplish as much as she can on her own. Living is one of those things she does on her own. She considers surviving a sort of test."

Steve grunted in reply. "Somehow that strikes a chord within me."

"Really?" Harriet said, a drop of excitement in her voice. "Revive any memories?"

A frown marred his features. "Not really."

Exasperated, he exhaled loudly and slapped his leg with his hand, causing Julie to stir. "It stirs a reaction, a feeling even, but nothing concrete. Nothing definite; no clear, precise memories."

Julie sat up slightly, blinking. "Hmm?"

Steve turned to her. "Sorry, don't worry about it. Go back to sleep."

"Hmm, I should be going." She sat up and stretched a bit.

"Well, the upside of this is that it shows a bit of your personality. You may not remember anything about your history, but your brain apparently remembers who you are."

"I guess that makes sense." He rubbed his chin a bit as he briefly pondered this thought. Then he smiled. "Nice to know I still exist, whomever I might be."

Julie smiled as she drew herself into wakefulness. "What time is it?"

Harriet glanced at her watch. "About ten."

"Should be getting home."

"If you insist."

She rose. Steve did as well. "Live far?"

"Not very."

"Need a walking companion?"

Julie smiled an extremely warm smile. "I'd love one." Julie said her goodbye to Harriet and Steve added that he wouldn't be long after he managed to get on some shoes that she tossed in his direction. Harriet just smiled as they left. "A gentleman as well," she noted aloud. "Interesting."

It slid about cautiously, keeping to the darker areas of the city, mostly alleyways. The dark did not bother it any as it lived its life in the dark. Its eyes were made for the dark. It was the light that it couldn't stand.

The noises that the primitives made began again. Thoughtfully, it poked a visual organ around the corner of the building it was beside. A male and a female were walking away from its position. It waited to see what would happen.

"A musician?" Steve was saying, genuine interest in his voice, "how interesting."

"It's the job I want to have," Julie explained. "I play guitar and sing reasonably well. I've got a couple guys that make up a band with me. I'm just waiting for us to get a break."

"As yes, the big break. I find that concept very familiar."

Julie wondered what he meant by that. She decided not to worry about it. "Well, good. I'm performing Saturday. Harriet's promised to come, like she usually does. Do you think you might come?" She smiled a heart warming smile to butter him up. Impatiently, she wished for a positive answer.

"Well, considering I don't remember if I had anything on my calendar, I probably will. If Harriet's going, I'll have her take me."

Julie didn't care for the way he'd phrased that, but doubted he meant anything by it. "Great." She stopped. "This is my building." It was an unimpressive box like structure. Steve cast an eye over it, but did not comment. "Would you like to come up and see my place?"

Julie beamed up at him while a distinctly thoughtful expression overwhelmed Steve's face. "As delightful as I find your invitation and as much as I am interested in seeing your apartment, I'd just as soon leave something new for me to see tomorrow. I don't wish to overload my clogged neural net. Tomorrow maybe?" His eyes shone with a strange sort of hopefulness that wouldn't allow Julie to feel disappointed for some reason. While it wasn't too outrageous a thing to ask him, she could understand his reasoning. Except maybe that neural net thing. "That would be fine," she assured. "We want you to remember who you are, not clog your neural net further." She hoped she sounded like she knew what she was talking about because she didn't really.

He smiled warmly. "Tomorrow then."

She took a step towards the stairs leading to the front door and then spun to face him, not really sure how to close the conversation properly and yet wanting to do more than manners for the time they'd known each other allowed. Slapping her legs out of a need for action more than anything else, she laughed briefly as said "Good night," as she bobbed up and down.

"Good night. I look forward to seeing you tomorrow . . . Juliana." The grin on his face and the pause he left before saying her proper name indicated her was teasing. Knowing he meant only to mentally nudge her in the ribs, she gave him a playfully dirty look that deteriorated into an intense smile and then she bounded up the stairs before heading

inside.

Steve turned away, a strange, yet very pleasant, feeling of exhilaration overwhelming him. He enjoyed his friendly little taunts and the response they received. His subconscious mind ticked this down as another aspect of his personality. His conscious mind was enjoying himself too much to care.

As he stepped away, he became aware of a distinct scent. It was strong and powerful and bad. His nose wrinkled, as did his whole forehead, in an expression of distaste.

A few steps later, as he grew close to the alleyway, the foul smelling thing slithered out towards him. Steve stopped in his tracks as it oozed out. It was about five feet high and maybe two feet across as well as deep. Essentially, it was a large, mucus covered, gray blob. And it was approaching him in the most menacing way that a large, mucus covered, gray blob could.

-To be continued-

## Episode Two

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Steve scanned the areas of his memory that still worked to try and identify the creature that was approaching him. After a few seconds, he abandoned this line of thought due to the fact that he didn't know what it was and it was getting closer. He tried checking for 'things to do when a blob is coming at you', but that memory, if it ever existed, was gone or blocked off. With no known experience at this sort of thing, he began to improvise, backing away from the thing. As he did, he wondered briefly if these things were common around these parts. He hoped not.

After a few seconds of backing away, Steve realized further action was needed; the backing away by itself was not sufficient. The blob could move surprisingly fast and Steve became of the belief that it could keep this up far longer than he could. Besides, they'd soon be out the dim influence of the street lamp, which was farther away than it should be Steve felt, where, presumably, the blob would have another advantage over him. Immediate action was necessary. Steve cleared his throat and, as politely as possible, said "Hello."

The blob continued to move towards him, as he continued to move away from the blob. The blob grunted. "The noises these creatures make," it gurgled, intending for only itself to hear.

A frown crossed Steve's face. "I don't see how saying 'hello' can be made out as some sort of strange noise," he announced.

Abruptly, the blob halted and, once he realized the blob's lack of motion, Steve stopped as well. There was a distinct pause during which Steve could swear the blob was looking at him and then the blob oozed off, quick as it could. As speedily as Steve had been menaced, he suddenly wasn't again.

In all honesty, Steve had no idea what to make of what had happened to him. He stood and tried to puzzle through the events for a few moments, but he really didn't get anywhere. A few voices off in the distance awoke him from his trance and he guiltily made for Harriet's apartment. He'd promised he wouldn't be long. Didn't wish to upset his new friend so quickly.

It got a few blocks away before it stopped and tried to deal with the thoughts it now had. That primitive creature spoke to it and it understood what he said! As if it had some degree of intelligence!

It shivered and set off for the remains of the ship. This event required some deep thought and/or meditation. It oozed off.

Harriet was just getting to the final stages of her mental discussion concerning the fact that it was about time she got to bed when Steve returned, a puzzled look on his face. She watched him as he entered and sat on the couch, his visible display of concentration not fading a bit. "Five foot high bad smelling gray blobs aren't common around here, are they?" he asked suddenly.

She paused as the sheer oddness of the question temporarily stunned her brain. "No."

"Good. Just checking." And with that, he was done.

Five minutes later, Steve had said nothing further. Harriet rose. "I'm going to bed," she announced.

"Right-ho," Steve replied. He leaned forward and turned down the sound so it would be less likely to disturb her. "Enjoy your rest."

A few minutes later, in the bathroom, she was being cross with herself. Part of her brain was still thrashing about the fact that Steve was here and that she was letting a perfect stranger, a rather charming and interesting stranger mind, but a perfect stranger nonetheless, stay in her apartment. He must have touched on her maternal instincts somehow; the helplessness she had seen in his eyes must have affected the way she was reacting to him now. She sighed mentally.

While those thoughts flowed through her mind, she was also quite aware of the fact that she agreed with Julie, she thought Steve was cute as well. There was a certain charm about

him and his manner, and there was a strangely pleasant way that his features were arraigned in, yet none of this was what interested her. She found his eyes nice. And the whole idea bothered her. Due to his amnesia, she didn't feel it right to try and interest him. He'd enough to worry about at the moment.

She was also a bit bothered at the way Julie was going after him. It didn't seem right somehow to be flirting with him so obviously. This led her to ponder whether she was upset because Julie was going after him or because she hadn't thought to try first. After another moment or two, she decided to go back to just being cross. She shut off the light, exited the bathroom and went off to bed, where she dreamt of Steve, Julie, weddings, and a murderous pair of pants. It was a very strange dream.

It didn't take very long for Steve to grow somewhat tired of watching television. Much of it was incredibly repetitive and unimaginative. Figuring out what was going to happen next and being right soon lost its thrill. He began searching his malfunctioning brain for things to do.

Inspiration struck. He should go through the pockets of his old clothing. He hadn't found any identification when he'd looked before but, if he was lucky, perhaps something he had would trigger a memory. He felt highly foolish for not thinking of this earlier. Quietly, he slipped into the room that Harriet's brother had been staying in and collected his old clothes from the table they'd been placed on. He returned to the couch in the living room and examined his catch.

What he had was a rather dirty collection of clothes. There was a scruffy little Panama hat that may have been a light tan or even white once, but was a muddy brown now. He felt similarly about the shirt. The pants were encrusted with a rather nasty substance, the exact identity of which he was probably better off not knowing. The pants pockets yielded him nothing but money, all sorts of money. Some of it, a sufficient amount, was American, but the majority was British. There was some yen, some marks, some dollarpounds, a gronk or two, and a few souns. While this didn't cause him to recall anything, it did help him reason that he must be a traveler of some sort or another. It would explain all the different

currencies and the fact that his accent was different from Harriet's and Julie's. Considering the large number of British pounds that he had, he must spend a lot of time in Britain. He stuffed the money in his new pockets and moved on.

He spent little time examining the suspenders, as they in no way displayed themselves to be anything but ordinary suspenders totally incapable of awakening buried memories. As suspenders of character, they were lacking. As interesting items of apparel, they failed. After a moment's glance, he tossed them aside.

The shoes were leather, well worn, highly battered, and covered in the same sort of goop that the pants were. He checked to see if something had been hidden in them. Rather disappointedly, he discovered nothing. This seemed strange as one's shoes seemed a logical place to store something away. With a sigh, he placed them off to the side.

His enthusiasm waning, he turned his attention to the sweater, which was as filthy as most of the garments on the pile. It was probably a very nice, maybe even soft, sweater at one point, but it was now a dirty, encrusted, stiff mass of wool. He looked it over with sad eyes and he tried to remove some of the gunk to try and examine the pattern that faintly showed itself through the substance. A moment later, a dirty red question mark was staring back at him.

He spent some time looking at the red question mark. A little piece at the back of his mind seemed to call to the piece of punctuation, but why, he wasn't sure. "Questions. All I've got are questions. Where am I from? How did I get here? Why am I here?" He paused and inhaled before his biggest question.

"Who am I?"

With the greater portion of its mass heaving in some sort of fear, the large gray blob slipped back into its headquarters. It quickly made its way to its mucus bath and slid into the waiting ooze. After a moment or two in there, relaxation came.

In this new state of mind, it was easier to sort through one's thoughts and the blob readily did so. After a few minutes of deep breathing and enjoying the comforting warmth of its bath, a course of action readily came to

mind. Experimentation was needed. Quite simply, it would go out and attempt speech with another of the creatures. If it did not answer intelligently, then obviously the speech tonight had been imagined, or perhaps only a select few of these creatures had intelligence. None of those would be taken. If it did answer intelligently . . . well, that could be worried about if it happened.

The blob also decided that this could all wait until the next night cycle. The plan would not be significantly delayed if the rest of this night period was spent recovering from the shock that had been experienced. Next night cycle then.

After being distracted briefly by a commercial for a sixties revival tape set (Mmm, 'Wipeout' . . .), Steve turned his attention to the last bit of clothing which could be of any use (he decided to skip his socks and stuff like that), his jacket. His jacket, as most of his old clothing, was dirty and, he suddenly realised, much too small for him. He'd have to be a few inches shorter to be comfortable in this lot. On a sudden impulse he tried it on. It was, as he suspected, uncomfortably tight. When he moved to take it off, he found to his horror that he was stuck inside it. He gasped slightly as he fought to release himself from his cloth prison. "Bugger the luck," he mumbled as he twisted and bent trying to get the item of clothing removed. He sucked in as far as he'd go and managed to free himself. He let out a deep sigh of relief and gave the offending article a hard stare.

All this sent more questions through his head. Harriet said this was his jacket and she'd pulled it off him. So why had he been wearing it? It obviously didn't fit him at all. Why?

He sighed tiredly and added the question to a long list in his head. That done, he tried to ignore the list and he began cleaning out the pockets to the jacket. He was hoping for an answer or two. He expected more questions.

Five minutes later, he had a nice little pile of things set on the table before him and he wasn't sure he'd gotten everything. There was a lot of pockets in that thing and they all appeared to hold much more than they looked like they could hold. He glanced over some of the more prominent items in the pile. A yo-yo was hiding beneath a paper bag filled with sweets, they looked like they could be babies

perhaps. Ah! With a surge of pride he realised his brain had actually answered a question he'd thrown at it. The sweets were called jelly babies. He tried a red one and enjoyed it.

Steve hummed a bit and looked about a bit more. There were some long bits of string on that side. A few shiny bits of metal were underneath the string. A fountain pen lay next to a large piece of crystal. He pushed aside a large folded handkerchief and discovered . . . . . a key.

The key captured his full attention. Why, he wasn't sure. He pictured it up, held it in his hand, and stared at it furiously. His mind tingled as he examined the thing. It was obvious that this key was important to him, but the why of its importance was lost to him. His moment of pride was washed away by a flood of frustration. Gar! He had a key but no lock! For all the questions he had, the one 'answer' he did have, he'd no 'question' to. Could be a car key or a house key or a locker key or, well, a key to just about anything.

He made a noise indicating his disgust and wound up, preparing to fling the key away from him. Before he did, he stopped. One, the noise of the key hitting whatever could wake Harriet and that would be most impolite. Two, if this key was as important as he felt it was, the possibility of losing it made throwing it away a very stupid idea. He looked at it once more and then slipped it into one of the pockets in the jeans he was wearing. Once again, he returned his attention to the rest of his stuff.

Sunlight trickled in through the blinds in Harriet's bedroom. Before long, the light had focused itself in her eyes and she slowly woke up. Once awake, she groaned once she remembered it was Friday and she had to work today. After a few minutes of lying about and wishing she could stay there all day, she dragged herself up and shuffled out, headed for the bathroom.

Once she actually exited her room and took a few steps, she remembered the other thing she'd been trying to recall; she'd a guest. Suddenly, she turned and looked at Steve, who was once again watching television. He didn't appear to have turned to look at her, which she didn't mind as she was only wearing a long shirt. "Hi," Steve said, concentrating on the tv.

"Hi." She scampered back into her room.

Two minutes later, she reappeared, now wearing a pair of jeans and carrying some clothing in her hands. She walked without fear towards the bathroom again. "You would have been a bit bothered had I looked at you before, wouldn't you?" asked Steve, still tv watching.

"Just a little."

"Thought as much." And then he was silent.

Pleasantly befuddled, Harriet entered the bathroom. Steve sat peacefully, unbothered by whatever had happened. He had worse problems.

A few minutes later, there was a knock on the door. Steve rose, walking backwards to the door, his eyes never leaving the television screen. Standing before the door, he chuckled slightly and opened the door. It was Julie that had knocked, but Steve seemed unaware of that. He returned to his place on the couch, laughing quietly as he advanced. "Steve, where's Harriet?"

"Bathroom," he grunted.

She nodded and sat down next to him. He didn't seem to notice. "What are you watching?"

"A rather delightful cartoon that appears to be entitled 'Muppet Babies'. Rather enjoyable. Did you know that these children are taken care of by Beaver's mom? Strange, isn't it?"

"I didn't know. You know who the actress that played Beaver's mom is?" Had part of his memory, a mildly useless part but part nonetheless, returned?

"Yes. I watched an episode of that programme last night. Television is not perpetually interesting, but it does grasp the attention occasionally."

She nodded understandingly, but, again, he was unaware of her action. Glancing at him, she took in the visible concentration on his face. After a brief mental struggle, she decided not to continue trying to have a conversation with him and just watched the cartoon. It wasn't bad.

A few minutes later, at the commercial break, Harriet emerged from the bathroom, fully dressed and looking almost ready to tackle the day. "Good morning Harriet," Steve declared, now turning his attention to her, eyes and all. "You're looking very nice today. Are you now ready for conversation?"

"Yes thank you." As she walked past them on her way to the kitchen, Harriet gave Julie an oddish look. "Why are you here?"

"I start work the same time as you today, remember?"

Harriet opened the refrigerator door and nodded. "I remember now."

Steve hummed. "I hope I'm not contagious."

"I agree. So," Harriet sought to change the subject, "have you remembered anything at all?"

Steve sighed. "Nothing definite. Just bits and pieces of things. I know they fit together somehow and lead to larger discoveries, but I don't know how yet."

"Anything you think we might be able to help with?" Julie questioned.

Steve thought briefly. "Maybe." He went for his pocket and then paused. "Harriet, those dirty clothes on the table in your brother's old room, they were mine?"

Harriet nodded as she swallowed her orange juice. "Peeled some of them off you myself."

"They don't fit; they're too small for me."

"I noticed."

Steve thought some more, shook his head, and then retrieved the key from his pocket. Holding it so that they could easily view it, he asked "Might either of you know what this is for?"

"It's a key," Julie answered rather automatically.

"Thank you, but I had actually remembered that much. I meant, do you know what this might unlock?"

They looked at it for awhile. "It might be a house key," Harriet commented after another swallow, "but it looks odd. Not quite right."

"I feel, if I can figure out this key, I'll be able to remember the rest. Somehow, this key will unlock me."

A phone rang. "Hello, Milwaukee Police Department, Officer Smedley here, how may I help you?"

"I have a complaint," informed the voice on the other end.

Officer Smedley reached about for the appropriate forms and a pen while he trapped the phone between his ear and shoulder. "Okay, just a moment." When all the ingredients for success in this undertaking

were before him, he continued. "May I have your name sir?"

"Barthson, Samuel J. Barthson."

"And what is the nature of your complaint Mr. Barthson?"

"Apparently, the police have seen fit to use my driveway as a storage facility. I don't like it."

Officer Smedley was silent for a noticeable amount of time. "I'm afraid I don't understand what you mean Mr. Barthson."

"I was gone on a business trip for about a week," Barthson attempted to explain, "and I only got back into town an hour or so ago. I stopped for lunch and then headed home. When I attempted to put my car in my garage, I found that I was unable to do so because there is a police box directly in front of my garage, blocking my way."

Smedley did not respond immediately. "Police box?" he questioned, a note of confusion in his voice.

"Yes, police box. It's about nine or ten feet tall, maybe, oh, four or five feet wide all around, blue, and a sign on each side reads 'Police Public Call Box'. That's what led me to believe it was yours. I'd have used the phone inside to call you, as another sign directs me to do, but I couldn't get inside. It appears to be locked."

Smedley was totally befuddled. It didn't sound like the gentleman was drunk or crazy and if he was playing a prank, he was doing a fine job acting. "Mr. Barthson, I'll send someone out to have a look at the box."

"I'd prefer you'd take it away, not look at it."

"Ah yes. Well, we will remove it as soon as possible sir. If I may have your address?" It was given to him.

Barthson sighed. "Please do. Thank you."

"Not at all sir." And their conversation ended.

About a half hour or so later, a squad car pulled up outside Barthson's house on Farwell, just a little south of Brady. Two officers of the law, Officers Mith and Swesson, exited the car and slowly, in a classic police officer's walk, approached the front door of the house. It was a patient stride they had, almost a march or a swagger even.

Mith rang the bell and they removed their mirrored sunglasses as they waited for

someone to answer. Mith was of average height and was thin, his short dark hair combed firmly in place to help disguise his small and slowly spreading bald spot. His partner, Swesson, on the other hand, was a few inches taller and had a pronounced belly, the result of too many donuts and beers, not consumed at the same time obviously as that would be sickening. Swesson's patch of black hair was unruly and uncombable. Worse, although it was his real hair, it looked false. Mith whistled softly while they waited.

A minute or two passed before Barthson answered the door. He was a short, thin man with longish gray hair, a nose which dominated his facial features, and a small stud earring in his left ear. "Ah, good afternoon officers."

"You called about a box?" Swesson always did most, if not all, the talking. It was assumed by both men that he was in charge whenever they went anywhere, although neither of them knew why.

"Yes I did." Barthson exited his home. "This way please." He led them around to the alley at the back of his house. As he had informed Smedley, in front of his garage door, blocking his way, was a tall blue box with signs proclaiming it as a 'Police Public Call Box'. "This is the box in question. Why is it here and what are you going to do with it?"

Swesson began slowly walking around the box and Mith followed closely behind him. They examined the box. They stared at the peeling blue paint. They studied the signs atop the box. They attempted to peer into the windows that were about at eye level in the front of the box, the side which had the doors. They read the sign on the front door which explained the box was for public use if they required police help and all that was needed was for them to pull open the door. They rattled the door when it refused to open for them.

After this long involved project, Swesson returned his attention to Mr. Barthson. "It says its a police box."

"I had noticed that. It was the reason I called you in the first place. Why is it here?"

Swesson shrugged his shoulders. "Dunno."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"Dunno," accompanied another shrug. He glanced back at the box. "Never seen one of them before."

"Are they new?"

"This one sure ain't. Paints peeling off, handles are rusty. Looks like its been around for awhile."

"But it hasn't been. It wasn't here when I left a week ago."

Swesson thought awhile. "We'll call headquarters and have them send out a truck. We'll examine it more at base."

"How long will it take for the truck to get here?"

Shrug. "Dunno."

Barthson considered tears.

Time flies when you're busy. It seemed like only a few minutes had passed since Harriet and Julie had left for work when they had returned, when it had actually been nine hours. Steve was on the couch watching Star Trek : The Next Generation. Harriet dragged her tired self over to her favourite chair and collapsed in it. "Have you been watching television all day?" she asked him while Julie got comfortable next to Steve.

Steve's response was a suitable answer in itself. "You two back already?"

Harriet sighed.

Steve laughed, and reasonably hard at that. "What's so funny?" Julie asked, having missed the joke.

Steve wiped at his eye. "Oh, is this really what people think space travel is like?"

"Well, I doubt people think its incredibly accurate. It's not like its supposed to be a documentary or something."

"Good." He smiled and tried to keep his laughter to a minimum. "I'd hate to be trapped on a vessel with most of those people. Not only are half of them incredibly irritating, but they couldn't deal with truly aggressive race if they had too." He snickered again as Julie and Harriet gave each other looks that were mixes of concern, fear, and confusion.

An hour or two later, the truck from the police station arrived outside Barthson's house. Slowly, holding up traffic as it did, it backed into the alleyway, positioning the back of the truck, the part which had a small winch attached, as close to the police box as possible. These tasks took about fifteen minutes for the driver, whose jacket identified him as 'Clem', to accomplish. Barthson

watched him do all this, suffering through different stages of irritation as he did so. Once Clem turned off his vehicle and exited it, Sam Barthson approached him. "I assume you are here to remove this box from my property."

Clem was too busy examining the box to look at Barthson. "Yep, that's me." Clem was a man of few words.

There were a few moments of silence while Barthson expected information from Clem. When he received none, he grew upset. "Well, are you going to do it now?"

"In a minute." Finally satisfied he'd figured out how to position all the straps, he gathered them from the back of the truck and got to work.

With surprising speed and ability, Clem wrapped some holding straps around the box; one around the middle, one near the base, and one vertical strap on each side of the box that linked the horizontal pair. This done, he got the hook in the ring of the upper strap, checked everything was tight and then prepared to lift the box up, up and away. He started the machinery, let it tick over for a few moments, and then pushed the level that would lift it. The engine strained to lift the box, but was unable to shift it. Clem increased the power. The box remained on the ground as if it were bolted to the concrete. Full power was applied. The cable on the machine snapped and Clem hurriedly shut it down. He dismounted the platform that the controls were on. "Well?" insisted Barthson, "what happened?"

"Cable broke. This is heavier than it looks."

"So, what are you going to do about it?"

"Have to get the cable replaced."

"How long will that take?"

"A day or two."

"A day or two?"

"At least."

"At least?"

"Yup." Clem began removing the straps and packing them away. Barthson sputtered behind him. "Well, where am I gonna park until then?"

Clem looked at him for the first time, his eyes half open in a lazy stare. "On the street I guess." He tossed the last of the straps in the back and got in the truck, ignoring Barthson's requests for further conversation and his insults. Clem calmly drove off.

Stan was walking home. To save a moment or two, he cut through the alley. The darkness was deep and covering. It didn't bother him as he was busily concentrating on listening to the music piping through his Walkman. He danced about a bit and swung his head, slamming a bit to the music.

He soon became aware of a bad smell, but he didn't react to it at first because it wasn't bad enough to disrupt his groove. His nose crinkled and he stopped bouncing to give a good look to what was around him, but he never stopped walking. Suddenly, there was a blob, a great big gray one.

Stan's eyes widened. Surprise kept him rooted to the ground and his Walkman kept him from hearing the noises the blob was making to try and communicate. After a minute or so of Stan staring at it in terror and awe, the blob decided these creatures must be stupid as it wasn't even trying to communicate and it engulfed him. So much for these things being intelligent; must have been hallucinating. The blob slid off.

Time passed rather rapidly as everyone was busy for the next day or so. Julie spent Friday evening practising for her show Saturday night and spent most of Saturday getting things prepared. She was therefore unable to try to chat Steve up any further. Harriet, on the other hand, got to spend a lot of time with him Saturday, doing laundry. She protested that he need not help, but he rather persuasively insisted he be of assistance. She'd agreed and then noted with fear that the load she'd given him to sort included her underwear. To her surprise, he made no comment about them the whole of the time he dealt with them. He didn't say "My, these are a bit big, aren't they?" and then flick the elastic in her panties, but by the same token he didn't say "Mmm, these must look really nice on you" and then growl. She wasn't sure if she should be offended or not.

At any rate, at about eight thirty p.m. that Saturday, Steve and Harriet began making their way to the club where Julie was playing. Luckily for them, it was only a block down the street. Before they went, Harriet had garbage to take out. Steve kindly carried it down to the containers behind the building, Harriet with him. "Hmm, getting dark, isn't it?" Steve noted.

"Yes. If you look through the buildings just right, you can just catch a faint glimpse of the very end of the sunset."

Steve smiled although she couldn't see it. He was about to open the garbage container when a shape caught the corner of his eye and he turned to examine it. He was sure that down the alley there was a box, but he couldn't be sure. A faint tingle sounded in his head, but he ignored it. If the street lights were on now, he'd be able to see whatever it was fine and he wouldn't have to think twice about it. As it was, it was so hard to see at the moment that it was his skill and a bit of luck that had guided him to the bin where he was. He lifted the lid as he heard Harriet call out from the back steps. "Find it okay?"

"Yep." He deposited his bag inside and realised the scent in the air was not coming from the plastic garbage container like he'd imagined. He closed the lid and sniffed a bit, his nose wrinkling in dismay and gentle disgust. Still, the scent, awful as it was, smelled familiar. Could Steve see better, he would have been able to notice the large gray blob sliding towards him from the opposite side of the garbage containers.

-To be continued-

## Episode Three

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A distinct crease made itself known in Steve's forehead. Why was that smell so familiar? He took a few brief sniffs, disliked the air intensely, and decided the work of remembering wasn't worth the effort. He turned to return to the porch and Harriet.

The gray mass slid closer. Just had to get around that bush . . .

The air hummed gently. With a slight crackle, a faint light began to pervade the area. The blob froze in place as light began to pour into the area. Steve blinked as his eyes adjusted to the change. As the light went from dim to bright, providing full visibility, the blob slid back to the shadows. The light had caught it too much by surprise. It couldn't stand light.

The smile flickered back onto Steve's face. "All I had to do was wait a minute and this could have been done with the benefit of the street lights." He sighed in a staged manner and walked back to the porch, completely unaware of what could have happened. Politely, he offered his arm to Harriet, who smiled rather warmly at him, and they walked down the block to the club.

Farwell is, for most of its existence, a one way street. About three or four blocks of Brady, it decides that one way is boring and it

goes to two way. Another two blocks down, it runs into Prospect Avenue and disappears into it. Such is life for those angled streets.

On the corner where Farwell goes two way, sits a smallish gray structure about the size of a normal house, except more boxlike and it hasn't got an upper floor. Next to it is a small gravel lot used for parking. Such is the excitement that is the exterior of the club to which Steve and Harriet were headed toward.

Steve squinted slightly as they got in visual range of the large sign that hung on the front of the building. After a few steps, he'd read the name of the place. "Spank Hall?" he questioned. His right eyebrow raised itself, emphasizing the curiosity he was feeling.

Harriet found herself blushing slightly, as if she'd been caught doing something she shouldn't. "Well, the owner named it after this part in a movie." She was finding it difficult to look him in the face, even though their arms were linked.

"Oh." Steve's face reflected satisfied curiosity. "Sounds reasonable to me." Suddenly, Harriet found herself giving Steve a strange look. Her mild embarrassment was gone. They soon joined the queue that had formed outside the club and stood there waiting, arm in arm.

Steve was smiling in a way which seemed to indicate a certain lack of mental energy. Still, it was a friendly smile and he was directing it towards anyone and everyone. He smiled at the young men with the short dark hair and thick glasses. He smiled at the young ladies with the short clipped purple dyed hair and the rings up their ears and the one in their noses. He smiled at the young ladies with the long, long dark hair with their young men with the long, long hair. Steve managed to look pleasantly insane.

After a few minutes of waiting, smiling, and the occasional bit of chatting, the doors of the establishment were opened and the queue slowly began inching forward. "This is enthralling, isn't it?" Steve mumbled. Harriet barely controlled a giggle.

In time, Steve and Harriet made their way up to the doors. Steve paid the five dollar admission for himself and also Harriet, and they stepped from the short hallway into the club proper. While Harriet was very familiar with the interior of the place, Steve was seeing it with fresh eyes. The club was a long, wide

room with a bar on one end and a stage on the other. About halfway back, on the left side as you entered the building, were the ladies and gentlemen's bathrooms. A fire exit or two dotted the walls as did some wallpaper that was barely noticeable in the dim light level that the club was kept. A pair of doors by the stage led to different areas backstage. Already, the air had a gentle smokiness to it, causing the dim light to be muted even further.

After they'd strolled into the still increasing crowd a bit, Harriet glanced at Steve and saw his eyes moving about, taking in every bit of information possible. "Well, what do you think?" she asked.

A faint smile played about his lips. "It's very cozy in a way. I don't like the cigarette smoke, but it's still a very nice place." He sniffed briefly. "I hope that's only cigarette smoke."

Harriet found that a relaxed smile had manifested itself on her face. When one is showing one's haunts to a new friend, one hopes that they'll be impressed. If not impressed, one hopes they won't say something like "And you come here often?" It's hard on the emotions. "I'm glad you like it; I've been to some great concerts here."

"I'm unfamiliar with the format. What's going to happen next?"

"Well, while the club will hopefully fill up some more, they'll play some music over the speaker system. At about half past, Julie and her band will come out and perform for a half hour, maybe a little more. When they've finished, there'll be a break for about ten or fifteen minutes while they get things ready for the next band and they'll play a tape while that's going on. Then the next band comes out and plays. If there was another opening act, and tonight there isn't, they'll do the same as Julie's band. Since there's only the one opening act, the headlining band will come out second and play for an hour, maybe an hour and a half. When they've finished, everyone leaves. That's the end."

Steve was silent for a few moments after she'd finished. He needed this time to fully digest all she had told him; he hadn't expected such a torrent of information. "So who is the headlining band then?" He rather hoped this was a simple question.

"It's a kind of funky rock band. They're called the Big Red Crispy Stuff."

"Ah." There was another pause. "They any good?"

"I like them."

"Well, that's a start anyway. So when does this piped in music begin?" As if in answer to his query, some incredibly loud rock song came pounding through the speakers. A strange look of surprise crossed Steve's face, almost what one might expect 'eek' to look like if it were a facial expression and not a verbal one. "Nevermind," he shouted once his face was once again his own.

Harriet looked at him curiously, wincing slightly due to being unused to the volume. "What?!?" Steve shook his head and mouthed very slowly and clearly "Nevermind." She nodded in understanding. There was little point in conversing unless they had to; they couldn't really hear one another anyway. They just stood patiently as music roared about them, not all of it bad, and people drifted into the place. Occasionally someone would smile and wave at Harriet as if to say "I'd say 'hello' but you wouldn't hear me, friend." Harriet would smile once she'd managed to recognize them in the dimness and wave back. Steve did a good job of looking gently lost and smiling a lot, no matter who it was. He was back to being crazed and friendly again.

After fifteen or twenty minutes that were spent doing far too little, someone came on stage and sat behind the drums. The taped music came to an abrupt end and half of the sizable crowd cheered wildly. The drummer briefly examined his drum set and then picked up his sticks. He looked out at the audience, smiled, and began a rhythm. It was a catchy beat and those in the audience that recognized it began to cheer all the more loudly.

Another young man stepped out onto the stage. He waved once as he crossed the stage, headed for a bass guitar. Once he reached it, he picked it up and joined the beat the drummer had started.

A few moments later, just long enough for the bassist to really get going and everyone to get used to the song as it was now, the already smiling Julie stepped out on stage, hitched up her guitar and joined in. Very soon, the pleasantly catchy song was complete, apart from the singing.

"I've had some good times

I've had some bad times

I can take any kinda time  
With a friend like you."

Steve stood there and listened. The lyrics were gently silly, but it didn't seem to matter. Julie sang them nicely and the song was so pleasant sounding that the actual words didn't matter. He smiled and enjoyed himself.

He also came to a conclusion. Up there, with the lights in her hair, her eyes flashing and her face lit with joy, Julie was a very attractive young lady. However, he was sure that this thought should come with different reactions, different chemical patterns within him. At least that's what he'd gleaned from television, as faulty a guide as it might be. He'd come to this conclusion, but it was almost a mechanical process, more logical than emotional. There was no stirring in his chest, no warm encompassing feeling that struck logic to the four winds and made him weak at the knees. He'd thought it and gone 'Yes, you're right' to himself. Briefly, he wondered why.

The room suddenly blurred around him. He felt staggered. A scene played itself out in his head and he was helpless to stop it. Not that he really wanted it to stop.

A dark haired girl with an elven cuteness to her was looking up at him. She was sitting on the floor (a floor? where was this floor?) next to an old fashioned record player and some 45s. "There's nothing wrong with it Grandfather." (Grandfather? Grandfather!?)

He heard himself speak. His voice sounded strange. Different. "I don't see why you feel the need to use this . . . this antiquated machine to play this loud noise you refer to as music." He humphed forcefully to reinforce his point.

The young lady drew breath and looked as if she were going to argue back. She then exhaled as if in defeat and smiled up. "All right Grandfather. I'll turn down the volume, would that be all right?"

"If you must continue, then do so." He exited the room and paused outside the door as a catchy Beatles tune faintly filtered through the door. He found himself humming the tune. "She got a ticket to ride," he mumbled with the tune. He smiled and stamped off.

The interior of Spank Hall refocused before his tired eyes. Harriet was looking at him with worried eyes. He smiled down at her enough

until she smiled back and they returned their attention to the concert. Discussions could be held later.

It moved slowly. The experience with the sudden light had frightened it badly and finding a good dark place to go hide and relax had not been easy. Finally, after many minutes, a location was found and resting began.

From where the blob was hiding, a loud almost continuous noise was easily heard. Once it was significantly courageous again, it decided to investigate the noise. It well knew the old adage which stated curiosity had killed the zeltf, but it couldn't help itself. It extended a visual organ up to a small window and viewed what was inside the noisy building. A large group of the young creatures were assembled inside, bounding about hither and yon.

After a brief think, it decided to hang about here for awhile. The amount of material that was needed was almost filled, so perhaps circumstances would be kind to it. It lost itself in dreams of a plan completed and the honour associated with it. They were warm, happy thoughts.

"Thank you everyone. Good night to all you funky styled people." The lead singer of the Big Red Crispy Stuff smiled and waved briefly as he and his band left the stage to a loud chorus of applause and yelling.

Harriet found Steve by the wall near the bathroom, taping his ears. They'd been separated some minutes before when Steve had left the throng of people bouncing about. "So, what did you think?" she asked.

Steve was still examining his ears. "I think I'm deaf."

"Huh?"

Steve spoke up. "I think I'm deaf."

"It'll go away. Did you enjoy the concert?"

Steve nodded. Nodding was much easier than talking.

Julie poked her head out of the door near the stage that happened to be on the same side of the hall as Steve and Harriet. She gestured until Harriet saw her. "Come on," said she. Harriet tapped Steve and gestured once she had his attention. They walked toward backstage, Steve still checking his ears.

The room backstage that they entered was comfortably sized for the twenty or thirty people that were there. The walls were a dirty white, turned a gentle gray by cigarette smoke. Steve walked in and quickly located himself a chair. He was still playing with his ears. "You okay Steve?" Julie asked. The concern was evident in her voice.

"Probably not."

"Oh, what's wrong?" She stepped up next to him, placing a comforting hand on his shoulder. She looked very worried.

"You seemed to go a bit funny before," Harriet recalled, trying to ignore Julie's 'subtlety'. "What was that all about?"

"I seemed to . . . remember something," he muttered, a bright idea considering all the noise still floating in the air. "But it didn't seem right."

"What didn't seem right about it?" Harriet's original curiosity of the event began to return.

"It felt like it was me, but, at the same time, it wasn't. I was . . . older. Like seventyish."

"You don't look seventyish," Julie joked.

Steve was concentrating and the effort was displaying itself on his face. "There was a young girl . . ."

"Dirty old man."

". . . Susan? Her name was Susan!" A smile of delight lit his face briefly before it disappeared down to a slight frown. "I can't remember who she is though."

"At least you're remembering something," Julie noted.

"Someone's memories are locked in there," Harriet spoke. "How can you have the memories of an old man?"

"Seventy isn't old," Steve snapped suddenly. "I've known plenty of people older than that."

There was a brief pause in the conversation. "Where did that come from?" Harriet asked.

The brief flare of uptightness that had gone across Steve's person had totally disappeared. A calm and almost lost expression dominated his features. "I don't know." He shrugged his shoulders.

Two young men approached the group, they being the bassist and drummer of Julie's band. The bassist was a tall thin young man with gently long sandy blonde hair and a craggy complexion. The drummer was a few inches shorter than the bassist, in height and hair length. His dark brown hair was distinctly

shorter and his gentle pudginess made him look even shorter than his friend. "Hey Julie," started the tall one, "is this the guy you were telling us about?"

She smiled at them. "Yes he is. Steve, these are my bandmates. The tall one is Bob and the not as tall one is Brian." They shook hands and greeted one another as men do. "So," Julie continued, "are you coming with us Bob?"

Bob immediately began to look sheepish. "No. Deb just got off work and she wants to see me."

"So? She can come along. We made enough for six tonight, plus some."

Steve tugged on Harriet's untucked in shirt. "Where are they talking about going?"

"Out to eat. Customarily we go out to eat after a concert and they pay."

"You never told me that."

"Didn't think to. Sorry."

"Is okay. Not like I'd anything else lined up." They turned their attention to Bob's response.

"You haven't quite grasped her point. She wants to see me."

"And only you," Julie concluded.

As Bob nodded, Brian grinned. "Why, we don't know." Bob shoved him, but he smiled as he did it.

"Oh well," Harriet said, "no Bob at dinner. Guess that means no flying peas, huh?"

"Not from me."

"Are flying peas another of your post concert customs?" Steve questioned. "I could give some peas flight if necessary."

"No, just teasing Bob," Julie told him gently.

"Oh. Messy eater?"

"He has to wear a bib," Brian informed.

"Hey!" Bob was indignant at this bit of friendly slander and shoved Brian again. "I don't have to stay here and take this."

"No, you can go by Deb's and get it worse, eh?" Julie smiled as she spoke.

"A sharp weapon wielded by a skilled operator." Steve added his two cents.

"You guys can be so cruel," he replied with a mock anger. Bob smiled again. "I've gotta go. I'll see you soon." He waved, goodbyes were cheered and Bob departed.

"I like him," Steve declared once Bob was gone. "Plays a good bass too."

Brian clapped his hands together loudly. "Well, shall we go eat then?"

"You are the eating king, aren't you?"  
Harriet joked.

"I will be someday. Until then, I must practice, mustn't I?"

"Right then." Steve stood up. "I am a bit peckish, so I shall agree with Brian. Let us be off." So they exited, Harriet on Steve's left arm, and Julie on his right. Brian followed behind looking a bit jealous.

They exited via a back door with a single small light above it, offering a murky puddle of light. Steve was smiling cheerfully, as was Julie and Harriet. Brian was only smirking. "Now then, which way is this deathtrap Brian calls a car?"

A loud gurgle answered his question. "Brian, tell your stomach to pipe down," Julie joked.

"That wasn't me," Brian replied. He sounded a bit curious as to the real source of the noise.

"I'd a grandmother that made noise like that," Harriet said, trying to keep the mood light. The dark, the noise and the increasingly foul odor in the air batted her joke around like a cat with a catnip mouse, finally chewing it to death.

Another gurgle filled the air. Steve turned left, looking past Harriet and into the gloom enveloping the alleyway. Sliding towards them was the grayish blob. Unless he was mistaken, it was the same blob he'd seen the other night. As it approached, he untangled himself from his female friends. He stood before the group, the others behind him, frozen in their positions.

The blob grew ever closer. The stench grew ever thicker and more difficult to bear. "They are not running or making noise," the blob noted aloud. "How very curious."

"If you prefer," Steve replied, "we can work up something. Some terror perhaps?"

The blob stopped. "I am ill," it said after a noticeable pause. "I have spent too long on this primitive planet and I am hallucinating the creature who speaks to me."

"I assure you that I am quite real," assured Steve. He stepped forward and gently touched the side of the blob. "See? Or actually feel, but why get picky, eh?" In terror, the blob slid away at top speed. Seconds later, only a scent and a slime trail remained.

There was a long pause. Steve was the first to begin moving again. "Let's go eat."

It paused after it had slid to relative safety. The blob's surface rippled madly in a display of nervous energy. Twice! The creature had appeared twice to it! It spoke!

Had madness finally overwhelmed its purpose? Was it destined to fail in its purpose? Yet it was so close.

It wavered in panic, desperately trying to make sense of it all. Especially the creature that spoke.

"I still think we should tell someone," Julie was continuing to argue as they entered the restaurant of their choice.

Pa Fisher's was a truck stop at one point, a place where third shift workers could go and get a good meal after work. Some years ago, the place had been fixed up, and classed up. Nowadays the people in suits ate next to the young people in flannel shirts next to the third shift workers in their grubby work clothes. It was a very relaxed place in its own way. The food and prices were pretty good too.

"Tell who what?" Brian questioned. "We go to the police and tell them we saw a large gray blob?" He paused to let the thought sink in. "They'll check us for drugs."

"I know. Still, it doesn't seem right."

"I agree with both of you," Harriet informed. "That's my problem."

Steve was absorbing information on their location again. "Mmm. Chrome."

"You'll like this place," Julie told him, "its got style in a relaxed sort of way."

"Relaxed? It's got chrome on the walls." Steve smiled. "Chrome's neat."

"I'm glad you're pleased." Julie's attention was suddenly diverted as they passed through the foyer by a small metal shelf piled with newspapers. "Ooh. The new Sheepshead Express is out." The Sheepshead, as the weekly paper was often referred to, was often a strange collection of articles offering a different perspective on events. Therefore, it was a popular read on the East Side of town, especially amongst the college students and weirdoes. Julie grabbed one and was glancing at the front page article as they entered the restaurant proper.

The waitress, her nametag read 'Dorothy', that met them inside was familiar with the group, apart from Steve. "Hi guys, table for

four?" Dorothy was a pleasant looking young lady with a smile that had more sincerity than it showed. Once a positive response had been given to her question, she led them to the corner booth by the windows, a booth of honour in all eyes. "Who's your new friend?" she asked the group as they sat down. Steve introduced himself and they exchanged a handshake and smile. "Steve eh? I knew a Steve once. He looked a bit like you too."

"Really?" responded Steve. "What happened to him?"

"Moved to Ireland."

"Probably wasn't me then."

"Yeah, well, I didn't think it was. I'll come back in a few minutes to take your order." She stepped away to attend to other duties.

"Nice young lady," Steve said as he turned his attention to the menu, like Harriet and Brian already had. Julie was still reading her Sheephead. "Mmm. Waffles."

There were a few minutes of silence while they pondered between their choices. Julie broke that silence. "Seems the police found a severed human hand not far from here earlier in the week."

"Do they know who's hand it is?" Harriet asked idly, not fully paying attention to Julie.

"The article doesn't say." Three seconds after the completion of her statement, the paper disappeared from before her. Surprise on her face, she looked up to see Steve focused on the article. She gave him a nasty look for what he'd done, but he was too engrossed to notice.

"Yes, it could be. Could very well be," Steve mused aloud. "The mucus . . . yes . . . it fits . . ." Heavy thoughts were obviously traveling through his brain.

Julie snatched her paper back. "What could be?" she asked as she regained her position in the article.

Steve reacquired the paper. "I believe our blobby friend may have had something to do with this business."

Julie took the paper from him. She was about to say something when Harriet took it from her and sat on it. "Quit that," she idly informed them.

Dorothy chose this moment to return. "Ready to order now?"

"Are you still serving breakfast?" Steve inquired.

"Yup, serve it all day. What would you like?"

"Belgian waffle with fruit on it. And some orange juice. Oh, and a large milk."

"What fruit would you like atop your waffle?"

"What fruit have you?"

"Strawberry, raspberry, blueberry, peach, and," she added her last word with a slight chuckle, "pineapple."

Steve considered his options. "Pineapple sounds good."

Dorothy smiled wide. "No, really."

Sincerity overwhelmed his face. "Really, pineapple."

"Okay." She noted it on her pad.

"Why, what's wrong with pineapple?"

"Nothing, pineapple's just not a common choice, that's all."

"I'm not a common sort of person."

Harriet chuckled slightly. "This is true."

Steve sulked briefly. "Nothing wrong with pineapple."

"Course not. You just eat it up like a good little boy when it comes." Steve stuck his tongue out at Harriet. She just smiled at him.

Some hours later, after the clocks had given up and started over, they began dragging themselves home. Brian was obviously a bit tired, doing his best to concentrate on his driving. Harriet was half dozing in the back seat, leaning against Steve, who was in the middle of the seat. Julie sat on Steve's other side, doing her best to look mildly alert. Steve, as said, was in the middle of the back seat and was irritatingly awake. "Those were good waffles," said he. "The pineapple got a bit extra soggy in the syrup, but it still tasted excellent."

"Almost wish I'd had some too now," Julie responded. After which, she inhaled deeply and shook herself awake. She had things to do yet tonight.

"Your spaghetti looked tasty."

"It was."

"Good."

The car slowed as Brian pulled up in front of Harriet's apartment building. "Well, here ya go." There was little energy left in Brian's voice and he sounded mildly hoarse.

Steve gently nudged Harriet awake. She stirred, blinked and looked about. "Oh. Okay. Bye guys." She unlocked the door and then

opened it.

"Bye," responded Brian and Julie as Harriet made her exit from the car. Harriet made some sort of noise in response.

Steve's smile hadn't faded. "Well, it was nice meeting you Brian. I had a lot of fun tonight." He extended his hand over the seat and, after a moment, Brian noticed and they shook hands.

"See you later Julie. Thanks for dinner." He gave her an extra big grin and made for the open door.

Julie forced herself into action. She was suddenly fully awake, her heart pounding in her chest. "Steve."

He was half out of the door when he stopped. "Yes?" He sat on the edge of the seat and turned to face her.

She'd moved over, closer to him. He sat looking at her as she gathered nerve. She leaned forward and he stared mildly blankly at her. She kissed him.

She pulled back from him, her heart skipping. He hadn't reacted. He hadn't joined in and kissed back. He hadn't pulled away in horror. He'd just sat there and experienced it. "See you later Steve." Her heart sank in terror and fear. She'd already defined herself a fool for her rash action.

He sounded no less cheery, but perhaps a tad confused. "Later then." He left.

She flopped limply back onto the seat. "Home Jeeves." If Brian had noticed her activity, he didn't say. He put the car in gear and drove off.

Harriet dragged herself inside the apartment. She was tired and looking forward to passing out on her bed. Steve followed her in, a puzzled expression on his face. He had much to think about and his recent experience with Julie wasn't helping him any. "Whatever you do," Harriet mumbled at him, "don't wake me up."

"Righto." She staggered into her bedroom; he sat on the couch and turned on the television, the volume set very low.

Five minutes later, they were both asleep.

The next morning, Steve wandered outside, careful not to make a great deal of noise as he departed. With a gentle feel of excitement within him, he set out on his first solo

excursion since his awakening. He walked up the street three buildings to the music store. On the corner, two more buildings up, was another music store, but Steve decided he wanted to go in this one. It was bigger and therefore more likely to have what he wanted. He passed through a couple sets of doors and then he was inside.

He was right, this store was bigger. Displays of compact disks were set up in aisles almost from where he was standing to the back of the store. A case of cassette tapes which stood about chest high ran along the length of the one wall, extending about fifty feet. Posters hung from walls. A tshirt display sat near a headphone and blank cassette display near him on his right. To his far left were the cash registers. He stood for a few minutes just staring at the store.

One of the young gentlemen working this Sunday morning left his position behind the counter and approached Steve. He'd long brown hair and dark eyes. In ways, he was dressed in a fashion similar to Steve; battered jeans, a band tshirt covered by a loose fitting flannel shirt and a brand new pair of basketball shoes. "Can I help you find something?"

Steve popped out of his trance and gave the young man a friendly smile. "Actually you probably can. I'd like some music."

"That shouldn't be hard," was the reply, "we are a music store."

"Yes, quite."

"What kind of music had you in mind?"

"Er, no particular kind, actually." The young man did his best to hide it, but he was obviously puzzled. "I'm starting a collection; I want a variety of styles. A couple of this, a couple of that."

"I see. And you want me to help you choose what to buy?" Steve nodded. The young man thought of his commission and smiled. "CD or cassette?"

Julie was a bit nervous about seeing Steve again, but she felt she had to. At the very least, part of her argued, she should apologize for her action, but she hoped she wouldn't have to do so. She had to know what he thought of her now and for that she needed to see him. She needed to see his body language to know what he felt for real, no matter what he might say.

She stepped up to the apartment door. On impulse, she tried the knob. It turned. She shrugged her shoulders and entered.

Steve was sitting on the couch. He had a couple of newspapers spread around him on the couch and a section laid open on the table in front of him. A large bag from the music store up the street was propped up against the couch. Steve was wearing a pair of headphones, obviously listening to one of his purchases. She considered tapping him on the shoulder, but that involved touching him, and she wasn't comfortable enough to do that again yet. Instead, she got in his line of sight and waved until he smiled and shut off his Walkman. "Hullo Julie," said he quietly. "What brings you here?"

"My feet," she said so that she didn't have to say 'you'. "What are you up to here?"

"Where shall I start?"

"The bag maybe?"

"Okay." He reached down and opened the bag so that she could see inside. A number of cassettes lie inside, probably about twenty. Beethoven's 5th sat next to the Beatles, They Might Be Giants were side by side with Therapy?, the Ramones were neighbours to Kenny Rogers, Johnny Cash next to Chuck Berry. "I enjoyed the concert last night," he informed, "so I decided to start a collection." He frowned. "Assuming I get my memory back at some point, I hope I don't already have these albums."

"What are you listening to now?"

He checked the case to be sure of what it was. "A band called 'The Rolling Stones'. Ever heard of them?"

"Once or twice."

"They're very enjoyable to listen to."

"Glad you think so."

Harriet stepped out of her bedroom, still dressed in her clothes from yesterday. She looked very tired. "Hello," she mumbled. She walked into the bathroom.

"She just waking up now?"

"To the best of my knowledge."

She exited a few minutes later. "Do I have any coffee? I need some coffee with my breakfast."

"It's one o'clock in the afternoon, do you often eat breakfast this late?"

"Only after concerts when we're out late," Julie pointed out.

Harriet ughed. "No more coffee."

"What about tea?" Steve checked.

"No tea."

A horrified look came across Steve's face. He looked at Julie. He would have looked at Harriet, but he didn't dare. "Must go shopping."

"Grocery store's just down the block."

Steve stood up and adjusted his flannel. He looked mildly determined. "Let's go."

Less than five minutes later, Steve was bouncing out of the apartment building. Julie was following and Harriet staggered out after her. Steve whirled around wildly, as if checking the street for something, but doing it in a very silly manner.

Once he reached the sidewalk, he looked about again. He gestured. "That way?"

"Yes."

"Right." He began walking, determination in his step.

When he reached the alleyway, he stopped. He hadn't been this way during the daylight until now and his attention had been grasped. He'd seen . . . something. He suddenly began walking down the alley. Julie called out to him. "You're going the wrong way." He didn't turn around. She decided to follow him and see what was up with him. Harriet followed, not completely aware of where they were going.

She found him in a driveway, staring at a tall blue box. A sign on it declared 'Police Public Call Box'. While Julie gave him a funny look, a gear seemed to shift in Steve's brain. While his eyes were fixated on the box's sign, his hands searched his pockets with a vigorous energy. His expression was blank. "Steve, what's wrong?" He didn't answer; he kept staring.

His searching suddenly stopped. A smile slowly spread over his face. His right hand slowly extracted itself from his jeans pocket. Trapped between his fingers was a key on a chain. The key. The key that he'd puzzled over so long. He'd found his lock.

He placed the key in the lock on the box's door. It fit. He unlocked the door. He opened it. As he placed a foot in the door, Julie stopped him. "Why are you going inside? Do you expect to find something in there?"

He looked at her and, with a strange seriousness, said "Yes. Me." He entered the

box. After a moment, he emerged and gestured for them to enter. Hesitantly, Julie directed Harriet inside and then she followed.

Julie expected to be crammed into this small looking box for a moment or two, they'd all have a laugh, and then they'd go buy coffee. Oh, and tea. After stepping into the dark interior of the box (from the outside, it'd looked black), she experienced a moment of total blackness. Then her foot landed. She gazed at her surroundings in amazement. She also noticed that Harriet was much more alert now and she was examining their surroundings as well.

It should have been a small area inside a box. It was a large circular area with walls that curved up to a round light in the ceiling. The walls were dotted with circles in a regular pattern. Across from them, embedded in the wall was a flat area, what it was Julie didn't know. Near it in the wall was a door. In the centre of this circular room was a technological device that seemed to sprout from the floor. It reminded gently of a mushroom, a strange high tech mushroom. The stem grew from the floor and the head of it was covered in controls. At its centre was a cylinder that was rotating. Inside the cylinder was a glowing red sculpture.

He was staring at one section that contained, amongst other things, two round metal plates. Harriet found her voice first. "What is this? Where are we?"

"Home. The pieces are falling into place." Rather suddenly, he placed his hands on the metal plates, palms down. His body went rigid for a moment and then he went a bit limp. He groaned slightly.

"What's going on?" Julie cried.

In the wall, the flat area developed a crack and, with a soft hum, it broke into two pieces and slid open. A screen became visible from behind it. On the screen was the room they were in. In the room was a shortish man with dirty clothes, and an expression of great pain on his face. Harriet well recognized the clothes, she'd pulled them off him after she'd found him that first night. The cylinder stopped moving up and down and the doors that they had entered through, opened. Holding his head, obviously in great pain, he staggered about, finally ending up exiting.

"Who was that? Those were the clothes I

found you in," Harriet reported.

"What is going on?" Julie requested.

He smiled and straightened up. His accented voice rang out through the room with pride. He extended a hand in greeting. "Allow me to introduce myself. I am the Doctor."

-To be continued-

## Episode Four

He smiled and straightened up. His accented voice rang out through the room with pride. He extended a hand in greeting. "Allow me to introduce myself. I am the Doctor."

"You've got your memory back?" Julie noted excitedly.

"Yes," he said happily. Then, his smile faded briefly. "Well, most of it anyway."

"Congratulations then."

Harriet smiled her best wishes. "What kind of name is 'the Doctor'?"

"It's mine," he said sincerely, as if it were the simplest thing in the universe to understand.

"Well then Steve," Julie began. A pained expression crossed the Doctor's face and Julie quickly corrected herself. "Doctor, since you know what's going on with yourself again, do you mind letting us know a few things?"

The Doctor rested one hand on the nearby console. "I guess information isn't hard to come by anymore. Where would you like me to start?"

That slowed them down a little. "Where are we?" Harriet asked.

"You, Julie, and myself are located in the console room of my TARDIS," he replied. Excited emotion overflowed from him. "Oooh, it's so much fun being able to answer questions like that again. Go on, ask me another one."

"What's a TARDIS then?" Harriet continued.

The Doctor pointed at her. "Very good question," he informed. "TARDIS is taken from the initials of Time And Relative Dimensions In Space. Very simply, the TARDIS is a machine capable of traveling through Time and Space."

Harriet's brow furrowed after taking in this information. "Okay, let me get this straight. A box, in an alleyway, here in Milwaukee, is actually a machine that can go anywhere in Time and Space?"

"Quite."

"I'm sorry, but I'm finding this a bit hard to take." She reflected briefly. "I know; I'm still dreaming. That's it. I'm still in bed dreaming that the strange young man that I collected the other day has a time machine that looks like a police box." She looked gently crazed. The Doctor pinched her arm. Harriet yelped.

"Hey, what'd you do . . ." She trailed off once she realized what her feeling that pinch meant. Mildly softly she said, "I think I need to lie down now."

Julie had wandered over to the door on the other side of the room. Upon opening it she'd discovered a long hallway with doors visibly breaking up the pattern of circles that covered the walls. She quickly decided having a look around would take much, much too long. "How big is this place anyway? No, better yet, how come this place is so big? How come it's bigger on the inside than it is on the outside?"

This question made the Doctor smile. "The police box you saw outside is a shell, a gateway if you will. As you pass through the door, you pass into another dimension, the dimension that is the TARDIS interior." He made it sound so simple, Julie reflected. "The interior is big. It's not infinite, but it's as good as."

"Neat trick."

"I've always thought so." The Doctor itched his head. "Well, if Q and A time is done, I have work that needs doing. I've a blob, of possible non Terrian origins, to try and deal with in some way."

"Non Terrian? Alien?" Harriet asked in surprise and slight delight. "You mean the blob we saw last night might have a spaceship and be from another planet?"

"Possibly," the Doctor said slowly, a bit put back by her mild enthusiasm.

Both Harriet and Julie were in front of him, looking firm and dangerous. They glanced at each other, exchanging looks of determination. Then they looked at the Doctor. "We want to come along."

"It could very well be dangerous," he warned. He didn't sound quite as discouraging as he had a moment ago. "I mean I've done this sort of thing before, I've an idea of what I'm doing, whereas you . . ." He left the sentence to dangle.

"If it wasn't for us," Julie informed, "you may not have made it back to your TARDIS." Harriet coughed loudly. "Well, Harriet at least."

"You owe us something," Harriet declared.

"Oh, all right," the Doctor conceded. "I suppose. We'll have to stop back at the apartment. There is some information in those news articles that I need to review and you should see." He started for the door. They followed. He stopped suddenly. "Wait!"

"What, what is it?"

"I've just remembered."

"What else?"

"We need tea first. It's good for the thought processes." They exited the TARDIS.

Ten minutes later, the trio was sitting around the table in Harriet's living room, sipping hot tea. An expression of pure delight cascaded over the Doctor's face. "It's not the best, but it'll do."

"So, what have you to show us?" Julie questioned as she tried to keep her mouth from being scorched.

While he took another sip of tea, the Doctor flipped open the copy of the Sheepshead Express that he'd gotten himself earlier than day. "Here," said he, gesturing at a specific paragraph in the article, "is the information that is missing from the other articles I've read. They all speak of strange odours and strange pools of fluid. However, only the Sheepshead makes note that an officer on the street mentioned the fact that the hand may have been ripped off. Not cut, not sawn, ripped off. The Sheepshead is also the only of the papers that offers the suggestion that the being that severed the hand may not be human."

"I thought we knew that already, we were reading that at the restaurant," Julie noted.

"Yes, but that's the point. We agree with them because we believe it the blob. No one else agrees with us."

"And we are right, aren't we?" Harriet responded with a certain nervous sarcasm.

If the Doctor noticed the cut, he did a good job of ignoring it. "Well, at least this time we are," responded he with sincerity.

"So, what do we know that makes us believe the blob killed somebody?" Julie questioned.

The Doctor, while taking in more tea, flipped open more sections of newspaper. Once he'd swallowed, he was ready to speak again. "Now that there was an announcement of strange fluids in the papers, others have come forward with their tales of ooze." He took in another swallow of tea. "All these reports originate within a ten block radius of one another."

"So we've got an area to work in," Julie surmised.

"I believe so."

"So, now that we have an area and a potential criminal," Harriet reflected, "now what do we do?"

The Doctor gulped down the last of his tea. "I think it's time we take a walk."

Last eve, it had managed to drag itself back to safety. Sloshing into its craft, it made its way to its resting chamber and passed out from sheer emotional overload.

This morn, consciousness once again claimed it. Long minutes were spent wondering what to do. It examined itself in the ship's barely functional medical scan unit. It showed nothing abnormal of mind or body despite a great deal of stress.

So, wherein lied its madness? The creature had quite clearly spoken to it. None of the other creatures had made any sounds of intelligence nor shown any other less vocal displays of intelligence that dragged them up past insect level. Why did this creature have voice?

It decided to search out this creature once night fell. This situation needed to be resolved. This madness would be confronted and dealt with. Yes, that sounded good and heroic. It rested and thought of ways to trace the creature.

The sun played down on the city, imbuing it with the gentle warmth of spring. The Doctor in particular was enjoying the feel of the sun on him and would occasionally close his eyes and raise his face to the sky, allowing the star a better target to hit. A deeply satisfied smile usually accompanied the end of this action as did Harriet's and Julie's need to keep him from bumping into people as they walked. "I'm still not clear what we're looking for exactly," Harriet informed after narrowly managing to steer the Doctor away from a particularly rotund middle aged man.

"We are looking for evidence of the blob's presence," the Doctor reinforced. "Also anything abnormal or something normal that looks new or different. I am of the opinion that, if this blob is not of this island Earth, it arrived here recently."

They passed by Julie's apartment building and rounded the corner. Once they reached the block behind Julie's building, the Doctor spoke again. "What is being done in the vacant lot there?"

"Sewer work, or so they told me," was Julie's reply.

The Doctor stopped walking and stared at the barricades and motionless digging equipment. His left hand rubbed his chin while he thought. "They haven't been doing much work on this recently, have they?"

"No. There's been a strike," Harriet reported.

"Oh yes, a strike. I remember the headline now."

"Why are you interested in our hole in the ground?" Julie was curious to know.

"Well, I was considering where a large, foul smelling, slimy blob might want to hide and not easily be found, especially one that seems to be attempting to keep from the public eye. The sewer seemed an ideal place."

"Oh yeah. I feel stupid for not thinking of it myself," observed Julie.

"Practice makes perfect. Now, how are we to get down there?" He began looking for a manhole cover.

"We're going into the sewer?" Julie sounded less than enthusiastic over the idea.

"Easiest way to check if our blob buddy is down there is to have a look," replied the Doctor as he approached a manhole cover across the street. It did not surprise him much that the manhole was located almost directly in front of the large, blocked off, access denied hole in the ground.

"I'm not looking forward to this," Harriet informed as the Doctor looked for handholds on the heavy circular cover.

He looked up at Harriet, smile on his face and sarcasm in his tone. "But Doctor, take us with you. You owe us. We want to see the alien and the spaceship." He lost his mocking tone and attempt at Harriet's voice. "Not like you've never seen an alien craft before."

"Well, I haven't," Harriet responded, still not looking too pleased over the idea of going into the sewers. "Just because you've probably seen them before is no reason to go 'oh, you wouldn't like it, let's do something else'. I want to see an alien ship. Since there's one around, that isn't too much to ask, is it?"

"And what exactly is the TARDIS? A plain police box?" He briefly got lost in thought. "Hang on, occasionally it is."

"But you're not alien," Julie responded. "You look like us. You may not talk all that much

like us, but being British isn't as alien as being a different species from another planet."

He looked up from the manhole yet again. "I am a different species from another planet."

They gazed down upon him in shock after he'd said this. They were struck mildly speechless. Julie managed a lame sounding "You, you look human."

"Do you think all non Terrains are green with five eyes and three arms?" He questioned. "I've seen plenty of races that could pass for human in a pinch."

"So, you're not human," Harriet said, managing to still sound surprised.

"Rather. Remember, those clothes fit me at one point." He pulled and managed to shift the extremely heavy manhole cover up. Quickly readjusting his position, he got a better grip on it and continued to lift. Straining visibly, he managed to remove the cover and deposit it just next to the hole. He fought to regain his breath. "I'm an 'alien'. Shall I go first?" Without waiting for an answer, he located the ladder and carefully maneuvered himself into the hole. He began climbing down.

Julie and Harriet looked at one another. "He's an alien," Harriet stated. "It explains stuff."

"We trusted him when we didn't know him and we trusted him when he woke up and interacted with us. We should stop trusting him now that we know what he is?"

"Are you coming or not?" echoed a voice from the hole. Harriet began climbing down. Julie followed.

The sewers were dark and icky. The young ladies found themselves in a tunnel large enough so that the only side they absolutely needed to touch was the floor. Water dripped from the ceiling and ran as a small river on the floor. Luckily for them it hadn't rained recently. Even without the wet and damp, the scent was enough to gag the strongest constitution. Gagging and choking were high on the list of things that Harriet and Julie were doing. "This is incredibly gross," Harriet choked.

"I'm glad these aren't new shoes," Julie commented while she held her nose. Her voice sounded comically nasal.

The Doctor's upper half appeared from around the junction behind them. He just

leaned out, smile radiating in the darkness. "Mine are borrowed; I'll dangerously assume that they're not new." After they'd turned to look at him, he widened his eyes and gestured 'come here' with his finger, looking rather like the host of a horror show as he did so. "This way."

They caught up with him around the corner. He was there, staring at a wall of a slimy ooze. Was it ooze? It was definitely slimy looking, they reflected, but it's exact composition eluded them. "What is this stuff Doctor?" asked Julie, her nose still being held.

"I don't know yet," he said, adding a shrug of his shoulders to emphasize the point.

"Oh. I thought you were well versed in matters such as these," Harriet teased. After awhile, you got used to the smell. It wasn't so bad now. That, Harriet reflected, was a frightening thought.

The Doctor rubbed his chin as he continued to examine the wall of matter. "The Universe is a large diverse place. It's a bit tricky to know everything." He paused. "I'm close." He reached out and touched the wall on a small section that was a bit lighter coloured than the rest. His hand slowly sank below the surface and, despite a bothered a look on his face, he didn't fight what was happening. After his arm up to his elbow was in the mass, it stopped pulling at him. He wriggled his hand about, hoping to do something useful. Suddenly, a door, if you could call a section of the ooze moving to the side a door, opened and the Doctor's arm was freed. "Shall we?" They entered the craft.

The floor was gooey, not unlike the floor of a movie theatre. Shapes similar to tables and displays were formed from the mass. They were surprising clear cut and dry despite their being gray bits of matter. From their surroundings, the Doctor, Julie and Harriet all felt they were in some sort of control centre. The Doctor looked around, obviously fascinated, while Harriet and Julie looked around with looks of 'yuck'. "I think this was grown," the Doctor said. He touched a display and he felt it spring to life beneath his fingers. "It's alive in a way, interesting . . ." Information was being transmitted through his fingers somehow. Electrical impulses through the nervous system that were translated by the brain perhaps?

A shape moved towards them from a

hallway. "What is going on?" gurgled the blob in shock. Visitors were not expected.

The Doctor removed himself from the console and turned to face the creature. Julie and Harriet tried not to look noticeable. "Greetings. I am the Doctor, Time Lord from the planet Gallifrey. May I ask your identity and race?" He sounded ever so polite.

"A Time Lord?" The blob's colour grew healthier. "That explains your ability to communicate with me. What a relief."

The Doctor tried to look modest. "We're good at things like that. Easy once you get the hang of it."

The blob gathered itself into a more formal position. "I am (gurgle) of the Klack'tu." Both its name and the beginning of its race's name were more sounds than words; its name sounding like an upset stomach and the 'Klack' of 'Klack'tu' sounding like the snapping of a human tongue. Harriet felt the blob was looking at Julie and herself. She definitely didn't like it. "Are these creatures for me, Lord of Time? You truly are wise; they look like they will suit my purposes admirably."

"Pardon?" This threw the Doctor slightly. "This may lower your opinion of my intelligence, but I haven't divined your purposes yet, nor are my companions mine to give. I came here to see if your were responsible for killing some humans."

"Not really killing, more like putting their primitive flesh to better use."

"Primitive?" The Doctor at least pretended to be a bit surprised. "care to explain that reasoning?"

The Doctor seemed sure the Klack'tu was giving him a curious look, a look that meant 'what do you mean what do I mean?' It went on to explain : "They have no means of true communication, only grunts and squeaks, they are unorganized, destructive, their planet is polluted, they're wasteful, uncultured." It paused. "I could go on, but I believe you get the idea."

The Doctor was rubbing his chin again. "Well, when you put it like that, they do seem rather primitive, don't they?"

Astonishment overtook the previously silent young ladies. Together, they exclaimed, rather disapprovingly, "Doctor!"

The Klack'tu moved violently, as if trying to jump back but being unable to due to its mass. "You've trained these creatures well

Lord of Time. It's almost as if they can speak."

"I didn't train them, I met them like this."

Julie had a sudden brainstorm. She had been slowly making her way to the Doctor's side and she'd succeeded just after he'd spoke. "I've got an idea," she whispered to him, "but I need to go get something."

"So long as it's not a weapon." She nodded and left.

"Where is that one going?"

"To retrieve something. Do not worry."

Harriet began moving closer to the Doctor as well, primarily to feel safer. "I find it difficult to believe these creatures can be this useful," said (gurgle) after a moment. It sounded as if it were trying to convince itself of the statement more than anyone else.

"Well, we may not be the most advanced species around," Harriet said, sounding as nervous as she felt, "but we're not that bad. I mean, we try anyway."

The Klack'tu's surface rippled agitatedly. "No, please. They cannot be intelligent, they can't be." It would have been crying had it tear ducts.

The Doctor's voice was calm and filled with comprehension. "If humans are intelligent, it makes you a murderer, doesn't it?"

"Yes. It does, yes," choked the Klack'tu.

Julie chose this moment to return. She was out of breath from running all the way to her apartment and back. In her hands was her acoustic guitar. She managed a smile as Harriet and the Doctor looked at her. Then, after catching her breath, she began to play.

"There are things in this life  
we cannot understand,  
There are feelings in this life  
we cannot stand,  
But every time the sun rises in the sky,  
We're given another chance to give it a try."

The melody was beautiful, the words were mildly intelligent. The Klack'tu cried through the whole song. Well, it tried. It still didn't have tear ducts. After a few moments, the Klack'tu stopped moaning in pain. "I beg forgiveness Time Lord. I-I did not know. Allow me to make reparations in some way. Please. I am so sorry."

The Doctor gave Julie a brief smile of 'well done' and gave Harriet's hand a reassuring squeeze before he stepped forward and rested

a comforting hand on the Klack'tu's side. "Just relax. We'll work it out. Now, tell us what your problem is, hmm? Why have you needed these humans?" Actually, the Doctor had a pretty good idea what was going on, but he wanted his theories confirmed. Besides, it didn't look good if he did all the talking.

(gurgle) made some assorted noises for another minute or two and then tried telling its story. "I was making a survey of this system for Klack'tu records. I was coming out of orbit from the fourth planet, the red one, when I turned and suddenly I was hit by a large asteroid, it came from nowhere! Guidance shorted out. I drifted for awhile, doing my best to affect repairs, when I was caught up in the gravitational pull of this planet. With what little control I had left. I fought to land my ship safely. I survived, but my ship was heavily damaged as it crashed down here. I was lucky; down this hole, I went unnoticed.

After checking how extensive the damage to my ship was, I determined how much material I would need and compared that to the information from the scan I'd made two months ago which managed to survive the crash. Due to their possessing more brain material than most other creatures and because I believed them to be unintelligent at the time, I chose to gather the humans."

Julie cleared her throat loudly. "Pardon me for interrupting sir, but why is brain material valuable to your ship?"

"My ship is alive, although quite probably not in the way you are used to thinking of alive. My ship's computer is composed of brain cells. As my computer was damaged in the crash, replacing those cells was a priority for me. Had I known what I was doing!" The blob sunk back into vocal despair.

The Doctor sighed and then progressed the explanation a bit. "The ship is composed of a sort of flesh. Therefore, the brains were important to the computer and what was left was useful as material to repair some of the ship's physical structure."

Harriet shuddered. "That's a horrible thought."

"To you maybe. Our friend (gurgle) here finds it quite natural."

(gurgle) sobbed again. "Please forgive my outbursts. Now that I realise what I was doing, I am filled with guilt."

The Doctor tried to be soothing. "Don't

worry, we shall work it out. Now, was it necessary to use humans?"

"No. I only gathered humans as they best suited my needs. Most living creatures would satisfy my needs."

"Reasonably anything animal."

"Correct."

"And how much material do you need?"

"Not a great deal. I'd calculated I needed about two humans worth." The Klack'tu blubbered again briefly.

"I think I can help you without causing the death of any more humans."

(gurgle) stopped its weeping. "Lord of Time, you truly are wise. I shall do whatever you command of me. Your assistance is greatly welcomed."

"Good, glad to hear it." He turned to Julie and Harriet. "I'd like you to go back to Harriet's apartment and stay there until I come for you."

They were not pleased with this idea. They were just getting comfortable around the Klack'tu and now they were being told to go away. "Why should we?" Julie questioned.

"All of a sudden we're in your way, is that it?" Harriet asked with no little amount of anger in her voice.

A firm but friendly look was fixated on them. "Allow me to explain it in this manner : I have a plan. I'm not sure I like it, but it works and there's nothing truly wrong with it. I know neither of you will care for it."

Julie fixed an equally firm look back on him. "How do you know we won't care for it?"

He tried to conceal an exasperated sigh with a friendly smile and only partially succeeded. He let the charm flow from him like water flows over Niagara Falls. "Trust me this time. You'd prefer not knowing my plan. I mean, I've thought through both scenarios and both of you are much happier not knowing."

Harriet and Julie exchanged glances. "Okay, but we do so under protest." They began walking out. Harriet paused as she passed the Doctor. "I expect to see you soon. Explanations are not complete from you."

"Most certainly." They left.

The Klack'tu approached him. "I await the outpouring of your plan, Lord of Time."

"You said animal flesh was what you required, correct?" the Doctor checked.

"Correct."

"Well, here's what I'm going to do . . ."

Boredom covered the face of Christine. She rested her head in her hands and did her best not to fall asleep. She had been here since eight this morning and had been sitting here almost continually since then, waiting to be of assistance to people who never showed. It was nearly two o'clock, nearly time to close up. Boredom was an annoying thing. She stood up and brushed her long black hair from her face. Won't be long now.

An electronic chime sounded as the door opened and a young man entered the building. Christine watched him enter. He looked around at his surroundings as if everything he found fascinated him. He looked normal in a gently abnormal way. Even so, there was a distinct feel of differentness that she could detect as he approached her. "Good afternoon sir, how can I help you?"

"Yes, well, I'd like to start with a question."

"Go right ahead. I'll do my best to answer."

"Here at the animal shelter, you're forced to destroy animals that are not claimed in three days, correct?"

Christine smiled. "Well, yes and no. We wait five days before we destroy any animals."

"Oh, I see." Under his breath, the young man mumbled something to himself and appeared to be calculating. "May I inquire how many will have their time come due today?"

"Give me a moment and I can have that information." Christine briefly attacked the computer and caused it to cough up the information that was required. "Three dogs and four cats will have to be put down according to our rules."

He began calculating again. "May I see them?"

"I'd be glad to show them to you, especially if you can save one of these animals. I always enjoy matching an animal with a new owner."

He smiled. "I'll do my best to make you happy."

A half hour later, the Doctor exited the shelter with three dogs and four cats on leashes, directing them to a sewer project.

"Let me tell you (gurgle), it wasn't easy getting this lot down through the sewer hole."

The Doctor was smiling and was ever so gently flushed from the exertion.

(gurgle) looked down at the animals, radiating pleasure as the dogs sniffed at him and the cats lay about regarding everything with lazy eyes. "These will do wonderfully. And you say they aren't intelligent?"

The Doctor tried not to spoil the general air of happiness. Under the circumstances, he felt sure this was the only way to handle things. "Nowhere near the level that you or the humans are at. They respond to emotion well, but that's about it," he reassured.

"Thank you ever so much. You are sure that there is nothing else I can do to repay the humans? Nothing more substantial?"

The Doctor shook his head. "Under the circumstances, you've done plenty. The humans aren't truly ready for visitors yet; it'll be best if you just return home."

"You are here and you are a visitor."

"Yes, but at least I almost look like I fit it. If you wish to get picky, they're not ready for me either."

"As you say, Lord of Time."

"Well, I'll leave you to the finalities. Good luck and safe travel."

"Safe travel Doctor. Thank you." The Doctor left and (gurgle) gave his pets a good look before he did anything.

As soon as the Doctor entered the apartment, the young ladies were on the attack. "So, what's the deal?" Julie snapped.

"What's old tummy trouble up to?" Harriet fired.

The Doctor calmly walked through their barricade and sat on the couch. "I arraigned for (gurgle) to get the last of the material it required without using humans. In recompense, while I was gone, (gurgle) finished the hole the sewer lads were working on. All they need to do now is lay their pipes. It should be headed back to Klack anytime now."

"You let it go?" Harriet asked incredulously.

"Yes." His eyes displayed the thought 'why shouldn't I have?'

"It killed," Julie quickly calculated in her head, "at least one person, and you let it go?"

A completely passive look covered his face. "What would you have liked me to do?"

"Well, it killed someone, it has to be

punished for it."

"It was punished by its conscience; you were even there to see it. What else should I have done? Called the police? Put it on trial?" The Doctor shook his head. "The human race as a whole is not ready for alien contact and the Klack'tu did not get off scot free as you seem to feel. Not everything is quite so black and white."

There was a silence while they mulled these thoughts over. As an attempt as a defense, Harriet said "You're an alien."

"And the human race as a whole isn't ready for me either," he managed to say without a trace of ego. "Besides, I'm not dealing with the human race as a whole here." He smiled charmingly. "I'm dealing with two highly intelligent, exceptionally attractive young ladies who are capable of handling an alien like me." Harriet and Julie began to smile back at him. "Barely." He got punched playfully.

"Before we get too distracted," Harriet began as she and Julie sat down on the couch, one on each side of the Doctor, "how did those clothes fit you at one point? Who was the little man on the screen in your TARDIS?"

"I am a Time Lord," started his reply. "In times of great physical duress or when our bodies grow too old to survive, we have the ability to renew ourselves, to regenerate our body. Our cells are rejuvenated and renewed. As part of the process, our appearance changes, as mine did. That 'little man' was my previous appearance, the way I looked just before I regenerated and lost my memory."

"Have you 'regenerated' before?" Julie asked.

"A few times. I'd say I'm getting used to it, but it's not something you get used to. It's something you survive. Rather like most of the things I do." He paused and took in their expressions. "Understand at all?"

They nodded. "So, what happens now?" Julie asked.

"Well, let's see. I've regained most of my memory, dealt with an errant visitor to the planet, hmm. Time I was leaving actually."

"Leaving?" Their reaction was simultaneous.

"There are other people to help, other planets in danger, other invasions to foil. I work at that sort of thing. It's a hobby." He inhaled sharply. "I should be gone already. Normally I disappear once my work is done, but I couldn't leave without thanking you two for your help and trust in me." He took a turn

smiling at one lady and then the other. The smile was warm and friendly. "Thank you."

Julie smiled back in a friendly manner while Harriet smiled somewhat shyly in return. "You're welcome Doctor," Harriet said. "Glad to have been of help."

"Glad to hear it." Despite his calm nature, he was obviously itching to get moving. He stood up. "I've really got to be going."

"Where will you go?" Julie asked.

"I don't know." He shrugged his shoulders. "I'll let the TARDIS decide. She seems to have a knack for taking me where I'm need most." His smile grew mildly wistful. "Well, time I was off."

"You need anything for your trip?" Harriet checked.

"Not really."

"We'll walk you to the TARDIS."

"All right."

They walked slowly out of Harriet's building and they dragged themselves towards the TARDIS. Silence overwhelmed the group. Their conversation had grown strained before leaving and silence was the next logical step. No one quite knew what to say now.

The Doctor approached the TARDIS and unlocked the door. He then turned to Harriet and Julie. "Well, bye I guess. It's been very pleasant."

Harriet looked a bit teary and extended her arms in a manner that was impossible not to understand. The Doctor stepped forward and hugged her as she wished. "You take care of yourself Doctor."

"I'll try. You take care too." They separated. He turned to Julie. Her eyes were shining. "Doctor, can I go with you?"

He looked at her without any emotion on his face apart from one eyebrow that was raised well above its normal position. "That might explain why you brought your guitar along. Are you sure you want to come? It'll be very dangerous at times."

She nodded. "I want to travel with you."

He smiled. "Okay then."

Harriet was really fighting back the tears as she hugged Julie. "You ever coming back?"

"I think that's more up to the Doctor than me." She hugged a bit tighter. "I'll try. Eventually I'll try. I'll miss you."

"Me too."

The Doctor cleared his throat loudly as the friends broke apart. "You could come too Harriet," he noted. "There's plenty of room."

She shook her head as she wiped a tear from her eye. "Thank you, but I just can't. I'd love to be with you two but I just can't do this sort of thing all the time."

"I understand," said the Doctor. "Thanks. Bye." He ushered Julie and her guitar inside as she waved goodbye. The door slammed shut.

A few moments later, the light atop the box began to flash. A grinding, scraping noise began, as if the machinery of the TARDIS was fighting to drag itself into gear. Slowly, before Harriet's amazed eyes, the TARDIS disappeared from view; box, noise and all. She nodded to herself; somehow this was an incredibly appropriate way for the Doctor to leave.

After a minute of staring at empty space, Harriet headed for her apartment. She now fit in to her peer group. She'd hung out with an alien for a few days, that definitely made her weird.

She smiled a bit for awhile before she wondered "What will I tell everyone?"

Before she could escape the alley, a man with a graying ponytail bounded from a nearby house. Harriet remembered seeing him before, but had never really spoken to him previously. The man looked about madly, smiling widely once he realized the police box was gone. He looked at Harriet, who was giving him a curious look. "It's unreal how much you have to complain in order to get anything done in this country." He snorted. "It's about time they got rid of the damned thing, irresponsible police, you'd think it was a fascist country . . ." He continued to mumble to himself as he returned to his house.

Harriet just laughed. Life was delightfully odd.

-Fin-

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