**Tegan and Mrs Neele – Part Two**

Tegan almost forgot that there was a deadly alien menace somewhere in Harrogate as she and Theresa shopped for clothes, hats, shoes, nightwear, everything that the distraught Mrs Christie had left behind in her flight from an unhappy home. Tegan bought a new hat and handbag, even though she wasn’t short of either and, the rest of their purchases sent to the Hydro, they found a fashionable café for lunch.

Bettys had been founded by a Swiss emigrant in 1919, and was by now the place to go in Harrogate. Even in December, long outside the tourist season, it was busy. They nevertheless got a table for two near the window and placed their orders with a trimly dressed waitress.

“May I ask you something,” Theresa ventured as they finished a delicate watercress soup and waited for the quiche and salad main course. “The Doctor… is he… some sort of private detective or investigator or… or something?”

“Good heavens, no,” Tegan reassured her quickly. “What made you think such a thing?”

“Something about the way he watches everyone and everything so intently. Either he is a detective or….”

Theresa laughed a little nervously. “Perhaps he’s a writer… watching people and thinking up characters and plots around them.”

“How did you guess?” Tegan answered, seizing on a simple explanation for The Doctor’s behaviour. She was impressed that Theresa had worked it out in such a way. What a sharp mind Agatha Christie had. “Don’t tell anyone, will you? He likes to be incognito.”

That was a dangerous thing to say, and Tegan noticed Theresa’s expression flicker for a moment before she recovered her poise.

Their main course was served, giving both of them a few moments to think about what they had been saying.

“Of course, I won’t say anything,” Theresa promised. “Everyone is entitled to a private life. Everyone….”

Of course, she must have been thinking about her own situation. Tegan wondered if it was possible to tell her that she knew the truth. Then she would be able to talk about what troubled her so much that she caught a train to a town hundreds of miles from her home to get a brief respite from it all.

“Do you help with his work then? Typing… research….”

Of course, that was the sort of job a respectable woman could do in this era. She had checked and found out that her real job, as an air hostess, didn’t really exist in this time. Passenger airlines were becoming established, but it was male stewards who brought coffee and snacks to the travellers. It was not yet considered a suitable job for the ‘fair sex’.

“Yes, I do help in various ways,” she admitted. It was the truth, more or less, just as the things Theresa revealed about herself were partially true. They were both covering up their real lives, one for the sake of avoiding publicity, the other because her story was too incredible to be believed.

“Oh!” Theresa exclaimed. “Look. It’s Mrs Waddington. She’s coming in here.”

Tegan watched as their fellow hotel guest pushed open the door and squeezed into the café. Well, not exactly ‘squeezed’, but it was a close thing, and as she moved between tables she had to turn sideways.

“Good afternoon, ladies,” she said to Tegan and Theresa as she recognised them both. “You’ve been shopping?”

Since Theresa was wearing a trim new skirt and blouse and new hat from the last boutique that was quite obvious

“Yes,” Tegan answered. “After lunch we’re going to try out the spa again.”

They weren’t. The plan had been to explore the town and perhaps do a little souvenir shopping, but Tegan felt she wanted to put Mrs Waddington on the wrong track. She couldn’t have explained why, but she felt she wanted to be anywhere that woman wasn’t.

Apart from anything else, she DID smell strange. As she moved away and the odour went with her, Tegan wondered what it was. It wasn’t just body odour of the usual kind, the result of uncleanliness. It was something unpleasant, but she couldn’t put her finger on what exactly it was.

Mrs Waddington was still eating when they left Bettys. They didn’t expect to see her again that afternoon.

But as they walked around the regency streets, exploring antique shops and fashionable jewellers, they spotted her at least four times, sometimes behind them, waddling along the pavement, sometimes passing the shop windows as they ducked behind the displays to avoid being seen.

“She can’t be doing it deliberately?” Tegan queried. “It must be just coincidence.”

“There’s no harm in her, I suppose,” Theresa admitted. “But… I just don’t really want her company right now.”

“Let’s go in here,” Tegan suggested. They were by the Edwardian foyer of the Royal Hall Theatre. The matinee performance of a ‘review’ show was starting in a few minutes.

It was as good a way as any to spend an afternoon. They paid for circle seats and a box of chocolates to share and settled down for two and a half hours of music, dancing and comedy routines.

It was during the interval, when Tegan took a quick bathroom break, that she noticed Mrs Waddington in the foyer, buying sweets.

She had come to the theatre, too?

Was it another coincidence or some sort of bad joke?

Or something more sinister?

Tegan hurried back to her seat where Theresa was looking disconcerted.

“That dreadful woman is here. I saw her follow you out of the auditorium. It is quite insane.”

“I know. I saw her, too. But she can’t really be following us. She must have decided to see the show just like we did.”

She hoped that was true, anyway. The nagging doubt rather spoilt the second half of the show for her. She was glad when it was over and they headed back to the Hydro.

They ordered a tea to be served in the third floor suite’s drawing room, one place they could be sure of avoiding Mrs Waddington.

When The Doctor came in, they told him about Mrs Waddington’s strange obsession with them. He gave it serious thought but could think of no reason to be concerned.

“If you feel you’ve had enough of her, I could order dinner sent up here and you could have a quiet evening. There’s the gramophone over in the corner and a selection of records.”

“I think that would be a fine idea, thank you,” Theresa agreed. Tegan wondered if her relief was as much about avoiding Mrs Waddington as avoiding anyone who might have read the newspapers today. After a weekend of police activity the story of Agatha Christie’s disappearance was surely a news story by now.

“If you still want to get away from Mrs Waddington tomorrow,” The Doctor further suggested. “I could order a picnic basket and we could all wander up to the Pinewoods. It is mostly uphill from here and she doesn’t look like much of a country rambler to me.”

That idea also appealed to Theresa. Perhaps it, again, took her away from newspaper readers. Since it also allowed The Doctor to fully protect her, the idea suited them all.

They set out after breakfast, dressed in warm outdoor clothes since this picnic was taking place in December. It was a bright but cold day, the sun disappearing occasionally behind pearly white clouds. But there was no likelihood of rain.

A short walk through the Georgian streets of Low Harrogate brought them to the elegant Regency gates of Valley Gardens, next to the domed Pump House where the waters used in the spa baths was distributed. The public park was open all year round, though the café and other amenities that would do great trade in summer were closed and shuttered in December.

The formal gardens were hardly at their best at this time of year, but it was easy enough to imagine the beds overflowing with colour. Even on this morning a pair of gardeners were at work preparing the ground for the spring displays.

Even without seasonal flowers it was a pleasant walk that brought them, in turn, to a place called Bogs Field. It was, of course, a field or meadow with a slight incline. It was distinctive because of several dozen curious metal circles set into the ground.

“These are the springs that first made Harrogate popular with the Georgian upper crust,” The Doctor explained. “Capped by these manhole covers and piped down to the Pump House.”

“I never would have guessed,” Tegan remarked. The covers had various designs and on a warmer day they might be worth examining. But Bogs Field felt too exposed to linger. The Pinewoods further up the slope were a better prospect.

Like the field, Pinewoods needed no explanation. It was several acres of mature evergreen trees. There were walking paths, some of them wide enough and straight enough for bathchairs, fresh air being deemed good for the infirm.

They took one of the wider paths, shielded from the wintry wind but enjoying the dappled sunlight when it broke through the clouds and filtered through the trees. Birdsong accompanied their walk and they even caught sight of an industrious squirrel.

Then the idyll was disturbed by a cry for help and they were surprised to see Mrs Carrey stumbling towards them.

“Oh, thank goodness you’re here,” she gasped as The Doctor gripped her arms to steady her. “Mr Carrey has fallen... His leg... I think it might be broken.”

“All right, show me,” The Doctor said calmly. The shaking woman pointed up a narrow path that split from the main one. She mumbled something about birds but nobody was really listening.

Mr Carrey was lying in the leaf litter with his leg twisted and the pain evident on his face. The Doctor knelt to examine him.

“Yes, it is broken,” he confirmed. “All right... Turlough, as fast as you can, run and get help. Tegan, Theresa... See if you can find a couple of straight branches I can fashion a rudimentary splint out of. Mrs Carrey, don’t fret. It's all going to be just fine.”

“It was silly of us to leave the main path,” she said as The Doctor gently straightened her husband's leg and did what he could to make him comfortable. All he could do without revealing his extraterrestrial abilities, anyway. With Mrs Carrey fussing about he couldn’t fuse the broken bones with telekinetic power or draw off the pain with mental projection. He could do no more than any human with basic first aid skills.

Something Mrs Carrey said made him look up at her.

“What was that about Mrs Waddington?”

“She told us there were rare birds nests up this path.”

“Its December. Birds, rare or otherwise, aren’t nesting. And what does Mrs Waddington know about them, anyway?”

“I don’t know,” Mrs Carrey admitted. “But we saw her just half an hour ago. I thought it was odd that she was so far ahead of us when she was still having breakfast when we set off from the hotel.”

The Doctor thought it was odd, too. He stood up, slowly and deliberately.

“I'm just going to check on the ladies. We don’t want any more accidents. You stay right there with your husband.”

He tried not to look anxious as he moved down the path, but he was. How COULD Mrs Waddington have got ahead of any of them? She was hardly an uphill runner. Something wasn’t right about all this.

He got to the place where the smaller path met the wider one. There he was startled to see Tegan wielding a length of tree branch at Mrs Waddington. Theresa was swooning unsteadily against a tree. The reason wasn’t feminine fragility. The psychic energy exuding from the terrifying woman was palpable.

“It’s her,” Tegan gasped, waving her branch again. “It IS her, Doctor. She's doing something to our heads. I feel like she's trying to drag my thoughts out of my brain.

“Somehow that fits, completely,” The Doctor said, moving slowly closer. “The stalking behaviour, the aborted attempt in the sauna... Even the funny smell on her sheets. She’s the Deccima Traitor, absolutely. “

“Who are you?” Mrs Waddington demanded in a voice that didn’t sound at all like a middle-class Englishwoman. “What do you know of Deccima?”

“I'm The Doctor, obviously,” he answered. He wasn’t just being obtruse. He was desperately playing for time. He had no weapons except his wits to tackle a being that could extract minds by telekinesis. He was slowly edging himself between Tegan and the alien, protecting her and Theresa with his own body. It was the best he could do. It might mean his life, but so be it. The freedom of the universe was at stake.

He felt the pressure on his mind at once. But his mind was strong. He fought back. He held the threat at bay, at least for a little while.

“Doctor... What is she doing?” Tegan asked.

“I’m not sure....” The Doctor answered. The woman was behaving oddly, even for an alien traitor. Her huge body was trembling so hard that it blurred in front of The Doctor's eyes. Her face was turning deep purple and her eyes a flaming red.

Then her body split apart, straight down the middle from head to toe. The parts fell away and crumpled on the ground. A skinny green creature stepped out of the fake body.

“What is THAT” Tegan asked, revulsion shaking her voice.

“It’s very dangerous,” The Doctor answered. He took one quick glance and saw that Theresa had fainted completely. How much she saw before she was unconscious he would worry about later.

If there was a later for him. Unencumbered by the flashy disguise the mental assault was even more intense. The Doctor reeled with the mental assault and almost fell. He rallied his mental strength desperately. If he succumbed, Tegan and Theresa would be easy prey.

And then the universe itself would be at its mercy.

He had almost steeled himself for ignominious failure when the Traitor gave a shrill squeal and collapsed, a smoking hole through its skinny abdomen.

“What...!” The Doctor turned in astonishment, half expecting to see Tegan wielding a blast weapon, but she was still clinging to her piece of tree branch. Behind her, on the wide path, Mr Englewood and Mr Dalton were running towards the scene, futuristic weapons in hand.

“Who are you?” The Doctor demanded as Mr Engrlwood fired at the alien body and then at the wobbly adipose remains of the fake Mrs Waddington, turning them both into ashes that melted into the leaf litter. At the same time, Mr Dalton bent over Theresa and applied something with a bright blue light to her head.

“What are you doing to her?” Tegan demanded. “Stop it.”

“It’s just a short term memory modifier,” Mr Dalton assured her. Mr Englewood pulled an identification tag from inside his coat.

“We're from the Deccidoma Protectorate,” he explained. “The Time Lords are respected throughout the known galaxies, but the Protectorate didn’t think sending a pacifist to do the job was an entirely good idea. We were... your back up, as they say on this world.”

The Doctor didn’t look entirely pleased by that explanation.

“You came just at the right time,” Tegan told them. Don’t you think so, Doctor?”

“Yes.... Yes, I suppose so. Put your blasters away, now. Somebody is coming.”

It was Turlough, accompanied by the two gardeners who brought with them, from goodness knows where, a stretcher for Mr Carrey.

“There's an ambulance coming,” Turlough explained a little breathlessly. “But it can't get much further than the park gates. We’ve all got to walk back. “

“Then we’ll do that,” The Doctor answered. “How is Theresa?”

“Coming round,” Tegan answered. She helped her friend to her feet.

“What happened?” she asked.

“You tripped and banged your head,” Tegan told her. “Knocked yourself out for a few minutes. But everything is fine now. We're going back to the hotel. We can have our picnic in the suite.”

“Funny....” Theresa said as she took in Mr Englewood and Mr Dalton and then the party bringing Mr Carrey in the stretcher, his wife by his side. “I thought Mrs Waddington was here, too.”

“She wouldn’t walk this far uphill,” Tegan reminded her.

“No... I suppose not. I must have imagined her. What a person to imagine. I should do better than that, in future.”

They walked down hill through the woods, field and park to where the ambulance was waiting for Mr and Mrs Carrey. The Doctor took it upon himself to thank the gardeners and tip them handsomely, then they returned to the hotel.

Theresa recovered her spirits in the course of the drawing room picnic. So did Tegan. In the fake Mrs Waddington’s strange demise she had seen one of the oddest things she had ever seen, even in The Doctor’s company. It was an image that was going to stay in her mind for a long time.

She was, at least, reassured that it was all over. The traitor was dead. Theresa was safe.

As much as she enjoyed Theresa’s company, Tegan was glad when she left them to lie down in her own room for a few hours. At last they could fill Turlough in on what had happened and talk freely about it all.

“Mrs Waddington, after all!” Turlough mused. “Who would have guessed?”

“We should have, really,” Tegan answered him. “The clues were there. We should have been like Monsieur Poirot and thought it through. She was there when we were attacked in the sauna. Only Mrs Carrey getting involved saved us that time. She was everywhere yesterday. Today.. she must have deliberately sent Mr and Mrs Carrey up the dangerous path to keep them out of the way. We should have suspected her from the start. We thought we were just being uncharitable because she was so fat and repulsive.”

“There’s a lesson, there,” The Doctor said. “But I'm not quite sure what it is, exactly.”

“Tell you what,” Turlough said. “The opera singers being extraterrestrial agents. Poirot wouldn’t have spotted that.”

“Agatha wouldn’t have had characters like that,” Tegan pointed out.” They call that Deus ex machina. It is bad writing. Agatha is better than that.”

“Quite right,” The Doctor agreed. “I must say it is a bit galling to have the cavalry turn up at the last minute… but it WAS the last minute, so all’s well, as it were. Later, I should talk to those two about tying up loose ends… packing up Mrs Waddington’s room, paying her bill, sending her bags to the station.”

“Poirot would be onto that,” Tegan remarked. “Classic way of making somebody disappear.”

Of course, Theresa’s Harrogate adventure wasn’t over, yet. That much was plain the next morning. At breakfast Turlough laid out all of the more sensationalist newspapers. Their front pages were covered in pictures of Agatha Christie, the missing authoress, along with lurid details of what was very nearly a murder investigation with Colonel Archibald Christie, her husband, as chief suspect.

Tegan studied the pictures carefully. It was a matter of historical fact that Agatha stayed incognito for eleven days before the banjo player from the hotel band recognised her and called the authorities.

And that even with her image on all of these newspapers! Tegan looked at one of the pictures carefully. It was Agatha and her daughter in a carefully posed portrait photograph. Agatha looked like a Hollywood star with cosmetics and hair absolutely exquisite.

But Theresa had only worn very light make-up and her hair was far less professionally coiffured. She really didn’t look very much like this picture. None of the other pictures were much better, not even a full length shot of her with her husband in South Africa a few years ago.

“Still, people around here must be a bit unobservant,” she concluded. She looked again at the picture with the little girl, Rosalind. ‘I wonder if she’s missing her daughter? That’s the sad bit of it all, I suppose.”

She paused and looked at her two companions, especially The Doctor.

“That’s why I want to stay a bit longer, even though we’ve done what the Time Lords wanted. I’m her only real friend, here. I should be around when it all falls apart.”

The Doctor nodded and smiled reassuringly.

“Yes, we can do that,” he agreed.

