**Jury Duty**

“You know, Doctor, I never quite believed all that I was told about the TARDIS… about what it could do….”

The Doctor looked over the top of the TARDIS console at the sceptical officer in charge of the only section of Earth’s armies trained and ready to fight alien invasions. This was his first time in the TARDIS, his first time in space, orbiting Earth at a leisurely pace as The Doctor tested the temporal-spatial circuits.

‘Until my people gave me back the knowledge, I very nearly stopped believing it myself.”

“Amazing,” Lethbridge-Stewart said in a half dream, barely taking in what The Doctor was saying. And was that surprising? There he was standing at the TARDIS door, a containment field keeping the air breathable in front of him as he looked down on planet Earth from a dizzy height just above the range of the various artificial satellites humans had launched since the nineteen-fifties.

“Amazing,” he said again as the Middle East drifted by and he recalled his days as a young subaltern in yellow-hazed desert zones trying to maintain world peace.

Then the TARDIS lurched and he fell backwards, saving himself from injury only by employing the sort of skills that had got him across many an army assault course in his rather younger days. The door slammed shut as he turned to see The Doctor standing away from the console with his hands outstretched to indicate that he had touched nothing to cause the sudden movement.

“The TARDIS is under automatic recall,” he said. “It must be the Time Lords.... Damn their impudence.”

“The Time Lords.... Your people?” The Brigadier queried. “The people who sent you to Earth as a punishment. Now they want you back?”

“It would seem so.”

“Well, I’ve had some peremptory orders from head office in my time, but your lot take the biscuit.”

“Time Lords don’t just take the biscuit, they take the whole tin,” The Doctor remarked dryly.

“And I suppose dropping me of at UNIT HQ first is out of the question?”

“We're already in the Time Vortex. I’m afraid you’re along for the ride.”

“What do you suppose it might be all about?”

“Who knows,” The Doctor answered gloomily. “After the Omega business I thought they were going to leave me in peace, but when they can summon me on a whim....”

He paused and looked carefully at the screen in front of him.

“Odd….”

“What’s odd?” The Brigadier asked.

“These aren’t the co-ordinates for Gallifrey…. My planet.”

“Are you sure?”

“My dear Brigadier,” The Doctor responded. “I think you can assume I know the space-time co-ordinates for my home planet.”

“I don’t see why? I don’t know mine.”

But The Doctor wasn’t listening to him. He was frowning so deeply his eyebrows were getting closer together.

“So where ARE we going?” The Brigadier asked.

“Zenobia.”

“Come again?”

“Zenobia… Space Station Zenobia. It is run by the Celestial Intervention Agency… as a court, a prison… sometimes as a place of execution.”

“All in one? Judge, jury, executioners. That sounds a bit draconian to me.”

“The Draconians are a very noble and upstanding people,” The Doctor replied. “Though, admittedly, compared to Draconian justice… which tends to assume everyone is guilty… we’re quite enlightened. The Inquisitors do attempt to agree on a just verdict.”

“Inquisitors?”

“No, not like the Spanish Inquisition. It’s just the word we use for a judge. and generally they ARE expected.” The Doctor looked at the console again and a worried frown crossed his face. “I just hope I’m not the subject of the inquiry. After all, the old stuff is nebulae over the event horizon by now - or water under the bridge as humans say.”

The Brigadier realised he wasn’t really part of the conversation The Doctor was having with himself.

An alarm on the communications panel brought his one-man discussion to an abrupt halt.

“Proximity alarm,” he stated. “There’s Zenobia.”

The Brigadier looked up at the wide viewscreen and saw something that he guessed had to be impossibly huge – several miles across, perhaps – though there was no way to guess its scale as it hung in space with all the elegance of a brick.

It was more interesting than a brick, resembling a gunmetal grey lily pad with a budding flower at the centre. That was an appealing, even beautiful, way of seeing it, but The Brigadier felt a certain foreboding, reminding him of a time when he, as a captain, had escorted a couple of troublemakers to the military prison at Colchester. Even though he was only the escort he had felt the walls closing in as he passed through the gatehouse.

The Doctor must have been having similar thoughts, he noted from his friend’s tense, drawn expression.

“Awful place,” he said as the TARDIS was caught in a ray of blinding white light that couldn’t have been called anything other than a ‘tractor beam’ even at risk of a copyright infringement. The sensation of being pulled down, the darkening of the screen, then the artificial light outside when the movement just as suddenly stopped told The Brigadier that they had arrived inside Zenobia.

“Hah! The Chancellery Guard,” The Doctor added, with reference to the phalanx of men in an absurd but vaguely military uniform of shiny breastplate, red pants, helmets of the same red, and an impractical cape took up two rows outside the TARDIS door.

Honour guard or arresting party? The Doctor looked as if he wasn’t quite sure, but there was nothing for it but to square his shoulders and open the doors.

It seemed to be the first, anyway. The men all saluted as The Doctor and The Brigadier stepped out. The salute WAS for The Doctor. The Brigadier felt curiously invisible as they stepped towards a senior officer with a fresh shine to his breastplate and feathers on his helmet.

“My Lord….” the officer began.

“One moment, Commander,” The Doctor said. “This is Brigadier Alastair Gordon Lethbridge-Stewart. He ranks higher than you in the army he serves.”

The Commander didn’t argue. He snapped off a salute. So did the men.

“Yes… very good,” The Brigadier said, returning the salute with a smart touch to his cap with the general staff badge polished up by a subaltern earlier in the day.

“My Lord… Brigadier….” the Commander began again. “The trial is about to begin. We have been awaiting you… to take your place as Second Inquisitor.”

“Ah,” The Doctor replied with barely disguised relief. “Lead on.”

“Second inquisitor?” The Brigadier asked as the Commander guided them along a corridor guarded by more men in the same faintly silly uniform. They all had what Lethbridge-Stewart was mentally calling ‘ray guns’ and he didn’t doubt that the facility was well guarded.

“It appears that I have been recalled for what you might call jury service,” The Doctor explained. ‘Except there is no jury, only three inquisitors, of which I am the second in seniority.”

“More like a field court-martial, then,” The Brigadier answered, nodding as if it was all making some sort of sense. “This is obviously a very senior court. Somebody must stand accused of something VERY serious.”

“Best not to speculate,” The Doctor said. “All will become clear. They’ll be bringing me to the Inquisitor’s Chambers, I expect. You won’t be allowed in there. But I’ll make sure you’re looked after.”

Generally, speaking, The Brigadier looked after himself in most situations, but he’d never been in an alien justice facility before and though these guards had been made to understand his rank he felt just a little overwhelmed.

Sure enough, The Doctor was brought to a double door with two guards in purple rather than red uniforms, the significance of which was not obvious.

“Commander, would you see that my friend Lethbridge-Stewart has some comfort and refreshments, then make sure he has a place in the public gallery for the proceedings.”

“Of course, my Lord. Come this way, Sir.”

The honour guard peeled away at this point. The Commander took personal charge of his guest, introducing himself as Valzor, though whether that was a first or second name, or if such distinction existed in The Doctor’s home society, The Brigadier did not know.

“We didn’t know that The Doctor was going to be accompanied by an independent witness,” Valzor admitted with a hint of apology in his tone.

“Neither did he,” The Brigadier replied. “We were both shanghaied into this.”

Valzor looked blank. Obviously, the term ‘shanghaied’ meant nothing to him. The Brigadier explained about the TARDIS test orbit which had been interrupted by the summons allowing him no opportunity to return to base.

“Then I should apologise on behalf of the Inquisition for the inconvenience to you, Sir,” Valzor replied. “Be assured you will be treated with all honour. Zenobia is somewhat outside the Laws of Time. It is not subject to the ordinances preventing unauthorised aliens on Gallifrey itself.”

‘Ah… good,” The Brigadier managed.

He was brought to a quiet, comfortably appointed room where food and drink were brought for him. It was strange food and drink but tasty all the same and helped to pass the time until Valzor received a message on his wrist held communicator that the proceedings were due to begin.

The Brigadier hadn’t been sure what to expect of the courtroom – would it be something like the gowns and wigs of the British High Court or more like the severity of a military court. Despite the men in martial red uniforms, this seemed to lean towards the former. The elaborate gowns and stiff headdresses worn by the inquisitors certainly seemed as pointlessly traditional.

And he had to force himself not to stare at The Doctor dressed that way as he took his seat, one of two slightly further back but somewhat lower than the one occupied by a severe looking elderly woman with silver-grey hair. She was obviously First Inquisitor and the other man on her right hand side the Third of the three.

They all looked thoroughly aristocratic. Lethbridge-Stewart realised that he had never really thought about the title of ‘Time Lord’ in those terms before, perhaps because the only two he had ever met were The Doctor and The Master and though both were infuriatingly arrogant they didn’t really exhibit aristocratic bearing in the way he understood it.

Thinking about that Time Lord criminal made him wonder briefly if it was The Master being put on trial. If so, it probably wasn’t right to have The Doctor as one of the judges since they knew each other from long before either had arrived on Earth.

But it wasn’t. After some formalities as seemingly archaic as the costumes, the defendants were brought from somewhere below the court into the ‘dock’. The Brigadier was surprised to see that there were twelve of them – nine men and three women of various ages and physical characteristics. Two of the women were middle aged by Lethbridge-Stewart’s reckoning. One looked younger. The plain grey robe, presumably prison issue, moulded to her body like a fine silk evening gown and in her bearing and deportment as she walked to her place she seemed to wear it as if it were just that. Lethbridge-Stewart reminded himself firmly that she was a criminal and not to empathise just because she was attractive.

All twelve had hard, steely expressions on their faces. Defiant, Lethbridge-Stewart thought. Whatever they had done, they were quite unrepentant.

A man whose job seemed to be something like bailiff of the court stepped in front of them and ordered them to stand even though they had just sat down. They did so, glaring around the court with undisguised contempt for everyone in their sight, judges, lawyers, observers.

“Azzordanakinospana Corven, commonly known as Corazon, you are accused of High Treason in that you tried to take over the High Council of Gallifrey by force, attempted murder of Lord High President Lundar, wilful and unlawful murder of five officers of the presidential guard, namely Ceres Longarkolodath, Migia Androtarathkeldriilka, Saran Androtarathkeldriilka, Villa Ronixsaguariiana and Rylar Drayliadathkolonynda, unlawful wounding of thirty two other officers and men and divers infractions of the Laws of Time. How do you plead?”

The Twelve all turned to look at the three Inquisitors with malevolence written on their faces.

One of the men made a contemptuous sound in his throat before speaking.

“I refuse to recognise the authority of this court,” he said.

The Third Inquisitor beckoned to the bailiff and spoke quietly to him for a few seconds.

“I am directed to enter a plea of Not Guilty on behalf of the defendant,” the bailiff announced. To one side a court recorder entered the plea on a computerised stenography machine.

Everyone was allowed to sit. A man stepped forward to bring the case for the prosecution.

The Brigadier was quite surprised to see how the evidence was presented – not by witnesses relating what they saw, but by witnesses sitting in a rather sinister looking chair while electrodes were attached to their temples. When they were ‘comfortable’, a large screen flashed on over their heads, and the prosecutor asked a series of questions apparently just to focus the mind. The witnesses didn’t answer in words, but in their actual thoughts reproduced on the screen like a documentary film.

What almost all the witnesses remembered was sitting in a huge room with tiered balconies – the Panopticon, or the Time Lord parliament where the High Council sat under the leadership of a Lord High President.

This Lethbridge-Stewart gleaned from what he saw. It wasn’t what he called democracy, but it wasn’t a tyranny, either. Laws for the betterment of the people were being made.

At least until a small army broke into the Panopticon. They shot any of the men in purple uniforms who were inside the chamber and surrounded the High Councillors. The President, an elderly man with white hair and beard, wearing a long, silvery robe, was forced to kneel on the dais where he had been sitting in State. It was very clear even though people were doing a lot of shouting that the President was going to be executed by the Revolutionary Army of Free Gallifrey.

“Free Gallifrey!” Around the public gallery there were murmurings of discontent and outright anger from people who clearly felt that Gallifrey was free enough before this attempted revolution. When the man identified as Corazon started making a long, tedious speech on screen the public gallery’s noise level increased.

“Order!” the First Inquisitor demanded and the crowd settled. “I think we can dispense with the speechmaking.”

“On the contrary,” The Doctor spoke up. “Let his words be known. The people of Gallifrey may decide for themselves if they have any validity.”

“Doctor….” The First Inquisitor raised a warning hand. “You have been away from Gallifrey for many years. You don’t understand the mind of the people. These events caused upset enough without allowing this traitor to spread his polemic any further.”

“Yet, if it is suppressed, more people might wonder if he said anything of note. Suspicion may grow that the government sought to shut him up.”

The Brigadier smiled. It looked like that was exactly what the government wanted. Any government, anywhere, would want the ramblings of a would be revolutionary censured.

There was a three-way debate between the Inquisitors before The Doctor had his way. The speech continued upon the screen. It was long-winded and The Brigadier wondered if any of the claims of suppression were true or not. After a while he felt he didn’t even care if only the man would shut up.

When he did finish his speech, to The Doctor’s satisfaction, the witness was released from the chair.

“Your Lords Inquisitors,” said the Prosecutor. “The next witness statement is not in person. The man was a servant in Corazon’s household and fears for his life. After he made his deposition, he was granted safe passage to a distant planet and a new life.”

“Objection!” cried the stylish female of the twelve accused. “This testimony was extracted from a servant using bribery. A servant who is not available to be cross-examined. It cannot be admissible.”

“Such absentee testimony has been used in many past cases,” said the Third Inquisitor. “And witness protection in such circumstances is not unusual or unprecedented.”

“I agree,” The Doctor said.

“So do I,” the First Inquisitor said. “Continue.”

The scene was a large dining room, finely decorated with dark wood sideboards and a chandelier over the table. The twelve defendants sat around the table, cutting and eating fruit with small sharp knives, the final part of a sumptuous meal. They were deep into a lively discussion.

A discussion about the assassination of the Lord High President.

They were all clearly agreed that the man had to die, though The Brigadier, listening carefully, wondered just why they thought it had to be done. They never discussed the reason at all, only the method.

The three women all favoured murdering him in his bed, at night. Four of the men wanted to kidnap the President on his way to the Panopticon and torture him for several days before finally killing him. Others suggested a sniper shooting from the roof of the Opera House and other venues.

The one who seemed to be the leader scotched all of the suggestions. It would be done, he said, openly, in front of the High Council, in the Panopticon.

“But… we’ll be caught,” protested the eldest of the women. “The Presidential Guard will slaughter us before we get a chance….”

“No, we won’t. Because WE will be the President and the Presidential Guard will obey us.”

The Brigadier was puzzled by the pronouns used by the leader of this odd revolutionary group. What did he mean by ‘we will be the President?’ Was it some variation of the ‘Royal We’ that the British monarchy used. In any case, how did killing the President make him the next President? He’d heard of ‘dead men’s shoes’ as a way of promotion, but you weren’t supposed to empty the shoes yourself.

‘All lies,” Corazon insisted when the testimony of the absent servant was complete. “Lies, fabrication, intended to blacken my name. The cause of Free Gallifrey is not mere political assassination. It is a movement to replace the moribund High Council with forward thinking people with the best interests of our world at hearts.”

“It is nothing of the sort,” the Prosecutor retorted. “You simply sought power that was not yours to take. The President was ready to deny you your only chance and you sought to kill him... an act not only of Treason, but in defiance of the Laws of Time. Laws which your very existence here controvert.”

“Only because fools and cowards made those laws to prevent Time Lords from achieving ultimate power, true lordship over lesser races…. Our proper and rightful place in the universe… our…..”

“Enough,” the First Inquisitor snapped, cutting off Corazon’s speech. “Is there any further prosecution evidence to be heard?”

“No, My Lady,” the Prosecutor replied. “The case is perfectly clear from the evidence presented.”

“Then as it is already the thirteenth hour, we will adjourn for lunch. The session will resume in two hours’ time to consider any possible defence the accused has to offer in light of these damning witness transcripts.”

The Brigadier was not the only one who thought it was high time for a break. His head was spinning as he thought about what he had seen in that courtroom.

He wasn’t allowed to see The Doctor, of course. The three Inquisitors were sequestered in their own chamber where food and drink was brought to them. The lawyers had their own place. Somewhere, Lethbridge-Stewart thought, the prisoners must be given a meal, too, though not in such pleasant surroundings as the refectory Valzor brought him to.

“Unusual food,” he said about the meat and salad vegetables he was presented with, none of which resembled anything from Earth either in taste, texture or colour. “Tasty, though. Do I want to know what the meat is?”

“It is synthesised from a nut,” Valzor answered. “In the city, at least, we do not eat animal flesh if we can help it. Some rural dwellers catch fish and game, but we have no food livestock.”

Lethbridge-Stewart thought about the brilliant young Welshman who had taken Jo Grant on a mad search up the Amazon for a protein rich fungus. He would be impressed by Gallifreyan cuisine.

“What do you think of our justice system?” Valzor asked when the subject of food was exhausted.

“I’m not sure what to make of it,” The Brigadier answered. “This lot look thoroughly guilty on the face of it. That method of showing witness memories on the screen… certainly seems damming. But… couldn’t it be corrupted… I’ve seen people hypnotised into doing crazy things… couldn’t they be made to remember things that weren’t real?”

“The machine is calibrated to detect false memories,” Valzor answered. “The possibility of manipulation was considered many decades ago. We are as certain as it is possible to be that the evidence is true.”

“And if they can’t put up any defence… I can’t see how they could…. Treason, murder…. You have a death penalty?”

“Yes. But only in the most extreme cases. There is also a cryogenic prison planet… Shada. Many of our criminals are sent there.”

The Brigadier had a vague idea what cryogenic meant. He decided not to ask for any more details. He did wonder which punishment was most likely for the twelve conspirators.

“It is well known that your friend, The Doctor, abhors the death penalty. He may persuade the other Inquisitors to consider the merciful option. There are some who wondered why he was summoned to take his part in this trial. The fact that he might prove sympathetic to their cause has been subject of speculation.”

“The Doctor will do the right thing,” The Brigadier said with absolute certainty. “I’m sure of that, if I was ever sure of anything.”

“You and he are good friends, then?” Valzor asked. “Your faith in him is unshakeable.”

The Brigadier smiled wryly. He and The Doctor argued about everything. As a soldier and a scientist they were polar opposites in every way. But they trusted each other with their lives and had reason to do so on more occasions than he could count. Good friends didn’t go far enough in describing their relationship. But it would do.

The court reconvened at the appointed hour. When the public gallery was quiet and the three Inquisitors had taken their places along with the bailiff and lawyers and the guards on all exits, the Twelve were brought back to the dock. All but one had defiant expressions, walking with heads held high. The one exception was the young woman. She walked with her head bowed and her face covered by her hands. Lethbridge-Stewart was reminded of a painting called something like ‘The Penitent Magdalene’ that he had seen in a gallery Doris had made him visit. Was this a sign that one of the defendants was not as determined to flout the law as the others?

This seemed to be the case. The defence lawyer stepped forward as soon as the session was formally opened. He first announced that there WAS no defence offered. The prisoners had refused to recognise the court and therefore they would not answer the charge.

“However,” he continued quickly. “Defendant Twelve has spoken to me during the recess. She has presented a defence for herself alone…. Separate to the… others.”

There was a susurration around the public gallery. The three Inquisitors bent towards each other to consider this new development, and in the dock there was a barrage of invective aimed at the woman before the guards silenced them.

“What defence is offered?” the First Inquisitor demanded.

“She claims that she was forced to take part in the plot against her will and committed no act of violence against any person.”

“She was fully complicit in the plotting witnessed by the servant,” The Doctor pointed out.

“She now claims that this was merely a front… to prevent the others from seeing her misgivings.”

“Words are easily spoken,” the Second Inquisitor said as if in dismissal of the claim. “Especially in hindsight.”

The court was silent then as the Inquisitors went into a huddle to discuss this new development. The Brigadier looked from them to the defendants thoughtfully. He had presumed that the Twelve were brought to court together on a Gallifreyan version of ‘Joint Enterprise’, the mechanism in British law whereby, for example, gang members involved in a robbery that leads to murder might all be prosecuted for the murder even if only one did the actual killing. It had been a controversial practice when the death penalty was in use, but nobody minded so much when it just meant packing them off to jail.

But what if one of the gang wanted to change her story? This was clearly a problem for the Inquisitors. Their discussion was becoming very animated, though their voices were low. The Doctor had a lot to say about the matter. Whether his wisdom was holding sway, or even which way he would go on the matter was impossible to tell from their faces.

Finally, the three sat back in their seats and, if it were at all possible, the silence deepened, as if everyone was holding their breaths.

The First Inquisitor stood up.

“No,” she said. “The individual defence is denied. It is a mere ploy. The defendant knows full well that the charge is against all twelve. All twelve must be found guilty or found innocent. No separate defence can be made by any one party.”

The woman raised her head and dropped her hands. A sly smile crossed her face, followed by an expression of defiance matching the others.

The Brigadier understood what it meant. Ploy was the correct word, and it had failed. She had accepted the failure with alacrity.

“Since there is no defence offered, we shall retire to consider our verdict,” the First Inquisitor announced. The three rose and turned towards their chamber door which was opened by the bailiff.

The consideration was obviously not meant to take long. Everyone else stayed in the court. The defendants were told they could sit, but they remained standing, still defiant, still refusing to recognise the court, even its seating arrangements.

Twenty minutes later, the Inquisitors returned. Their faces were inscrutable. Nobody could guess what their decision might be.

All three stood as the First Inquisitor delivered the verdict.

“Guilty!”

There could be no other decision. The Brigadier was not the only one in agreement. The whisperings around the public gallery were almost entirely favourable.

There was a further hush as the sentence was passed.

Ten thousand years in cryogenic prison on Shada. The Brigadier smiled and wondered if sentences like that would reduce crime on Earth! One or two people near to him in the gallery seemed to think it was too lenient. A longer sentence, or atomisation would have been preferred.

The prisoners were led away. The leader tried to make a speech, but nobody was listening. The Inquisitors returned again to their chamber. The spectators filed out of the gallery.

This time Valzor brought Lethbridge-Stewart to the private room where the three Inquisitors were drinking a sort of herbal tea. They were both invited to sit. The Brigadier didn’t think much of the tea. He could have done with a glass of single malt, but they probably didn’t have that on Gallifrey.

“What did you think of it all, Brigadier?” The Doctor asked. “As an outsider.”

“Yes, indeed,” said the First Inquisitor. “I would be interested in your thoughts, too. It is rare for a non-Gallifreyan to witness an inquisition.”

“I… thought the judgement was the right one,” he assured them all. “The evidence was overwhelming. I was a little puzzled about the ‘all guilty or all innocent’ bit, though I agree it was just a bit of malarkey.”

Malarkey was obviously a word that didn’t translate into Gallifreyan. The Doctor whispered an explanation to his companions.

“I see you didn’t get the main point about the Twelve,” The Doctor added. “They are NOT a group of individuals involved in a conspiracy. They are one Time Lord.”

“They… what?” The Brigadier was puzzled. Then he remembered the Omega incident when he had been faced with three Doctors, one of them fortunately appearing only on a conference screen but the other two giving him quite enough grief.

“That’s right,” The Doctor said. “On that occasion the Time Lords allowed my former selves to be brought from their proper timestreams. Corazon pulled eleven of his former selves into his own time in direct contradiction of the protocols. His own time, incidentally, is nearly two thousand years in the future of Gallifrey. He broke another protocol to travel back to this time with his former selves and a mercenary army he used to attack the Panopticon.”

“Why?” The Brigadier asked.

“To kill his first incarnation, the Lord High President,” said the First Inquisitor.

The Brigadier opened his mouth to speak. Then he closed it again. He couldn’t think of anything to say.

“Lord High President Corven…. Also known as The Corazon, has been a good, even handed and popular president,” the First Inquisitor continued. “He recently announced his intention to retire, naming his successor from a shortlist of candidates. Bear in mind, that a president of Gallifrey, once elected, may stay in office for life….”

“For ALL his or her lives,” The Doctor added. “Even if a future incarnation has become corrupt to criminal and murderous levels.” The Brigadier looked at him in astonishment. “Yes… it can happen. I promise I will do my best not to turn rogue on you should I regenerate in the course of our acquaintance.”

“I never even considered....” The Brigadier assured him, though for a mere second the thought flitted across his mind.

“It is unusual,” the Second Inquisitor said. “The Twelve were all interrogated by the Celestial Intervention Agency. It seems that Corazon’s fortunes, both politically and financially, deteriorated in his fourth and fifth incarnations. By the last, the bitterness and resentment had taken over what had once been a good man, a great Time Lord. He came to believe that his troubles dated from when his first incarnation retired from the Presidency. He plotted with the others to execute his own first life before the retirement and succession announcement. When he regenerated, he could then continue to be President and change his own history.”

“Good God!” The Brigadier exclaimed. “Would that even work? Surely….”

“It probably wouldn’t have worked,” The Doctor answered him. “It was an insane plot. Nevertheless it WAS attempted.”

“Utterly insane,” said the First Inquisitor. “By rights we should have declared all twelve of them mentally unfit to stand trial, but the relatives of the murdered Presidential Guards demanded justice.”

“As they should,” The Brigadier agreed. “So… that’s that, is it? The trial is over. They’ re going to jail until their names are forgotten, let alone their deeds, and your President will definitely resign, now. He knows he can’t risk staying in charge.”

“It is over,” The Doctor said. “Madame Inquisitor has invited us to dine with her tonight, in her private apartment with a view of the Castaneda Nebula from the window. After that, we can head back to Earth.”

The Brigadier enjoyed being the guest of the First Inquisitor. He enjoyed the dinner and the view of the Castaneda Nebula, whatever that was. Even so, he wasn’t sorry when he and The Doctor returned to the TARDIS, with an honour guard led by Valzor and plenty of mutual salutes.

When they were, according to The Doctor, only half an hour from Earth, Lethbridge-Stewart thought of something that still puzzled him.

“The Twelve… were all regenerations of one Time Lord.”

“Yes.”

“But… three of them were women.”

“Yes.”

“The three of you I’ve met were all men. But…. Does this mean that… in the future… if you regenerate… you might….”

The Doctor didn’t say anything, but his manly eyebrows lifted.

“Well… that might be interesting,” The Brigadier concluded. “Very interesting, indeed.”