

The Feast of St. Crispin Crispianus  
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# Chapter 1

## The Feast of St. Crispin Crispianus

### A Doctor Who Short Story

It was a winter night when he fell to Earth. The enforcer was hot on the heels of the fugitive. He was driven by a determination to catch his quarry that had led him out on a limb far beyond the reaches on any backup he might once have been able to call upon. The chase had taken him years, sifting through a hundred strange cultures to find his prey and now, finally, the villain was in his sights. His mind was filled with his obsession; the violent one would not escape him. The two of them raced through the galaxies far beyond the centres of civilisation out into a spiral arm and there the quarry, the last of the fuel enabling his flight burned out, turned at bay on the one planet with life.

The fugitive fell to Earth in London near the developing Palace of Whitehall and headed within with justice on his heels. In a narrow and deserted corridor he finally turned. His journey through the civilisations and cultures of the spiral arm had not been without benefits. He had amassed knowledge and skills undreamed of by his compatriots. It had not all be planned with intricate precision but nevertheless it had been planned. The fugitive had foreseen the possibility of this circumstance and he had planned for it. As the enforcer rounded the corner at the top of the staircase the fugitive unleashed a burst of energy, a massive spike of electricity. His pursuer screamed in the energy burst as it overloaded his internal matrix. His problem was solved. The fugitive halted. He heard voices coming up the passage. The stolen details of this world he had purchased far away allowed him to translate:

“This English King, will he come to France?”

“I would imagine that is certain now.”

As the two men rounded the far corner the fugitive surged forward towards the

first of them.

“Ah!”

“What is it, Mountjoy? Are you hurt?”

“No. No, I’m fine. I felt a tingling sensation, like you sometimes get when you pick up a weapon or armour. Only stronger.”

“I know the feeling, but there is no metal here. These English are not practicing some witchcraft are they? I hear the King is well learned.”

“I doubt it. This King is a devout Christian. Well, whatever sorcery it was, it has passed now.”

The men moved on.

Sometime later the King and his entourage followed down the same dimly lit corridor. Their footsteps echoed round the walls of the castle and down the corridors. The sound announced that the King had left the deliberations of the council chamber. Everyone in the palace knew they had been debating whether to go to war with France. The decision had presumably been taken.

“We sail for France in the spring,” said the King as he walked over the point where the enforcer had last stood. “S’blood!” he exclaimed.

“What is it sire?” his brother Bedford was at his side in seconds.

“I don’t know, I felt as if... I don’t know. We are King. It was nothing.” He straightened his shoulders and they continued on.

Autumn was coming on apace. The men who crouched round the campfires near the walls of the besieged town knew this. There was a chill in the air. The siege could not continue for much longer, not if the army was to be in safe territory behind secure supply lines when winter set in. It was going badly. The siege had taken too long and the soldiers hoped that the King would not continue it into a wet autumn or even try to push further into unwelcoming France before the cold set in.

A small and select gathering had collected around one fire. The men hunched uneasily and presented a cold, unwelcoming face to any strangers who approached them. They were all foot soldiers or archers. Their clothing and armour was

unadorned and minimal compared to that of the nobility. They spoke little except to grumble about the lateness of the year and the length of the siege.

“It’s that Sir Lawrence,” said one man, spitting after the name. “My Lord Gloucester tells me that the King prefers his council to all the grey beards of England and that Sir Lawrence is for continuing the siege.”

There was a murmur of assent around the fire. They were Gloucester’s men at heart and while they might privately doubt the veracity of his words it was clear that Gloucester was for turning back and that he wanted Lawrence out of the way. They cared nothing for the fortunes of Sir Lawrence but looked forward to Calais and the possibility of return to England.

“I’m looking for Jack Miller,” said a voice. It was softly spoken but an edge of steel lurked beneath the tone.

“Who’s asking?”

A tall man stepped into the firelight. He had striking features that could have been crudely carved from rock. In the firelight his hair looked a washed out, light grey. It was probably brown in colour and was cut short, though longer than was the fashion. He had an air of calm. “My name is Lytton,” he said.

The men looked to their spokesman, “Aye, my lord Gloucester has mentioned you,” he said. “He told me you have no love of Sir Lawrence.”

*Somewhere in the floors deep below him he heard the sound of an explosion. He looked up feeling servos cranking in his neck, straightening his artificial and apparently undamaged spine. The TARDIS had gone. In minutes the fires from the explosion would reach the control room.*

“I have an old score to settle,” said Lytton. “He once left me to die.”

“I’m Jack Miller,” said the man, “and you’re welcome here.”

Lytton stepped into the ring, men making their way for him. He sat down with his back against a log and sank into the relaxed pose of an old soldier who knows this is as comfortable as he’s going to get for a while.

Jack Miller looked round the ring of faces, “I think we’re all here and there’s no one here who shouldn’t be. Let’s be straight about this. We’re here because of Sir Lawrence. We’re here because a jumped up squire of no family has got above himself and got so far into the King’s affections that he can set the course of the war and that war is going ill for us.”

“Not to mention the 30 marks you promised us to help get rid of him,” said a wiry man with a scar above his eye who was seated across from Jack.

Several of the men laughed. “You’ll get paid well enough, Nym,” said Jack. “I just wanted it clear what this is about.”

“I don’t know Jack,” said an older man in his forties. “I’ve served Gloucester many years and my father before me but murder is a grave matter. It won’t go well with God, I’m thinking.”

“Don’t you worry about God,” said Jack. “They all say the King loves Sir Lawrence like a brother. Some say more than a brother. Weigh the treatment of Sir Lawrence and of Gloucester. Those closest to the King say Sir Lawrence has led him from God’s law. You take a good look, next time you chance to see the two of them about the camp, and you tell me whether you think Sir Lawrence looks at the King right or not.”

“But Jack you’re not saying the King is a sodomite, are you?” asked a large blonde man.

“I’m not saying anything against the King, but if you look at that Sir Lawrence with his smooth skin and his talk of gentleness and mercy. Take a good look at him and then come and tell me he’s not a danger to the King’s soul that God would thank us to remove.

“Gloucester says this? That it’s God’s will?” asked the older man, pushing for confirmation.

“Aye, he says so. You can ask him yourself if you like.”

“No Jack. You and Gloucester have always been straight with me and mine. If it’s his orders that Sir Lawrence be killed and it’s his opinion that he poses a threat to the King’s soul then I’m satisfied that God will judge me by my obedience and Gloucester by the truth of his saying.”

“Good man, John. What say you Lytton? You’ve been quiet through all this.”

“I’ve not much to say. I do this for my own reasons. I care not for the money and I’m not worried about my soul. I only care that this thing is done and done well.”

“Then we are agreed. Sir Lawrence has gone on an errand to Rouen and is expected back some time tomorrow. Apparently he refused all companions and is travelling alone. Like as not he’s spying for the French. We all know their court is holed up in Rouen. If he doesn’t make it back then all our problems are solved. We will wait for him on the road.”

There was one of the foremost alchemists of France. Which is not to say that he was any closer to turning lead into gold than the rest of his trade, but he had skills in the working of metal and the use of chemicals possessed by few others. His

reputation for occult knowledge had earned him respect and fame so he was not altogether surprised to have a visit from an English nobleman.

They kept his shop in what later centuries would call a picturesque state. He kept the shutters closed letting in as little light as possible and instead wasted wood and candle on lighting the interior. He kept a small forge in one corner with a selection of strange implements scattered around it. He had crammed his shelves with clay pots and curios, desiccated and stuffed creatures, cured pieces of body and trinkets from far lands.

The nobleman was little more than a boy. He had a slight, delicate frame and fine features. Black hair, close-cropped to the length of a monk's tonsure as was the fashion, revealed an elfin face but he moved and spoke with the confidence of someone accustomed to being treated as an equal and to having his orders obeyed.

"A glass jar, silvered within and without?" queried They, checking he had the details correct.

"That's right. With an iron bar extending from the inside above the rim and a top that can close off the lot." This Sir Lawrence leaned on one hand on the counter, his fingers tapping the diagram he had placed on the wooden surface. "I hear you're skilled at such things so I came here rather than attempting it myself over a forge."

"Of course, Sir! May I ask what it's for?"

"I need a Leyden jar to contain an electric field, if you must know."

"Really sir? I.. err.." The young man frowned impatiently at him and They decided not to push the point any further and risk losing the business. The man was right; anyone could probably do the same with a blacksmith's forge though it was an unusual skill for a nobleman to practice. "It'll take a few hours," said They.

"I'll wait," said Sir Lawrence.

There were five of them in all when they reached the place picked for the ambush. It was well chosen. The road took a sudden dip into a shallow valley and for five hundred yards or so it was completely concealed from anyone who might be ahead or behind the traveller. Lytton was there alongside Jack Miller, John, Nym and the blonde man who was called Matthew.

Lytton had waited this long before acting for precisely the same reasons the men had chosen the spot. He took out Jack Miller first. That was easy; a simple

chop was enough to break his neck. The others were still too shocked to move when he grabbed Matthew and snapped his neck as well. But they didn't pause beyond that. Nym attacked him with the blunt slab of metal that served him as a sword. Lytton twisted as he came in so the point hit one of the heavily armoured sections. He then grabbed the blade in his hands and snapped it, feeling the servos grind in his arm. Nym's mouth dropped open. Lytton rammed the broken point of the sword through into his brain.

John had done nothing. He was holding his sword, but staring at Lytton dumbfounded.

"Why are you protecting Sir Lawrence?" he asked finally as Lytton held his head ready to snap the spine.

*Lytton's memories were hazy from the time after the TARDIS left. He remembered the sound of its return, staggering towards its solidifying form and tumbling in before the final explosions tore apart the base. He remembered someone gasping and hands dragging him into the interior, the sensations that come from heavy doses of pain-killers and then the final struggle into consciousness. There was a brisk form examining the monitors by his bed.*

*"Who are you?" he asked, staring at the strange sight of tail coat and skin-tight leggings in knee length boots.*

*"I'm the Doctor. I've regenerated a couple of times since you last met me."*

*"But..."*

*"Just don't say it! OK!"*

*"Because I owe her a favour."*

Lytton was waiting in the road when the Doctor came past.

"Lytton! What on Earth are you doing here?"

The day was drawing into dusk and it cast long shadows across the way. It made her indistinct as she approached. In silhouette as she came over the ridge she was much like any other knight. Lytton could only be sure it was her as she approached, thought the slightness of her body made him suspect her identity. She'd made a convincing squire but a less convincing knight. She'd cropped her

normal pageboy cut even shorter and her movements, unsurprisingly, had the brisk ease and certainty of someone who'd never been constrained by skirts or trains. But her features were pretty and her skin smooth so that try as she might she couldn't manage to appear more than adolescent.

"Gloucester is moving against you."

"Well it's to be expected. The man cares more for glory than the lives of his men. He gets in the way."

"You are getting too close to the King," said Lytton. His face was carefully expressionless.

"I'm over 900 years old, Lytton. If you think I'm going to do something stupid you can think again."

"Nevertheless..."

"Nevertheless nothing. I have to be close to the King. You know that as well as I do," she frowned. "You didn't come out here just to berate me about the King though. What's going on?"

"Gloucester has been plotting in your absence. There may be trouble once you reach camp."

"Really?" she said suspiciously. "You've not been trying to 'protect' me again, have you?"

"You take risks too easily."

"And you take lives too easily," she snapped. "When I said no more deaths I meant it."

"You should trust me, you know."

"And you should trust me." Without another word she spurred her horse and galloped towards the camp.

Lytton was left to bury the dead. He did not much care whether she had approved of his actions. He had always regarded the Doctor as an improviser. A man, and now woman, who succeeded more by luck than judgment. He had studied the Doctor when he first took employment with the Daleks in the sure knowledge that their paths would cross. He had never predicted the manner in which their meeting would end but though he owed the Doctor his life he had no intention of falling in with the Doctor's slap-dash methods.

The army marched north to Calais through the driving autumn rains. It was a grim autumn. Already the cold was sharp in the air between the storms. The paths were

knee deep in mud. Wet and cold combined to ensure that, once wet, cloth never dried. The soldiers shivered and cursed, caught the ague and died.

The King rode in the column with the Doctor beside him while Gloucester lurked sulkily in their wake. He was aware of the condition of the army, as was she. As, they both knew, were the French. In the King's mind it was a matter of reaching Calais in time or else finding the right patch of ground on which to meet the French.

"Will Exeter hold the bridge?" asked the King.

"You shouldn't ask me things like that, you know."

"Men may die, Doctor."

"Men are going to die whatever," said the Doctor grimly.

A faint crackle of electricity flickered around the King, interpretable only by the Doctor.

"Yes, Holmes, you will have your chance against the French," she said wearily.

"I wish he wouldn't do that," complained the King. "I look forward to being rid of my unwanted companion."

"You're lucky he hasn't sought to control you," said the Doctor. "He's more than capable of it by now. He'll be strong enough to jump bodies before long."

"While it please me to know that my war is for the benefit of the world and not just my rightful claims, I still find this presence within me irksome."

The Doctor made no comment just stared ahead into the rain. It dripped down into her eyes so she had to blink to clear them. The King observed her minutely. He knew by now that what she did not say was often more important than what she did.

"You know Doctor, I have discussed literature and theology and finance with you for hours. But whenever I bring up the war or the planned crusade you fall silent. I take it you do not approve. This is a just war. You know that."

"No war is just. Least of all one for territorial and dynastic ambition," said the Doctor bitterly. "If I had my way I would not be a part of this, but I can not leave a Morasian loose upon your world and so perforce I must be involved in this grubby little war of ours."

"Have a care, Doctor," growled the King dangerously. "Regaining my French inheritance is my foremost project."

"I know," said the Doctor softly.

The King watched her through the rain, her hair plastered flat and her face set in an expression that was old for her years. He reached out and took her hand bringing it to his lips.

“Well, for all your disapproval, I have been glad of your companionship these past months.”

*“I do confess my fault, and do submit me to your Highness’ mercy.”*

*And in the sudden violence that had followed he had seen the kick from Scroop that should have felled the squire, Lawrence Skrimshaw, but didn’t. As the squire punched the man away, the King’s eyes had met hers. His face must have betrayed his astonishment and sudden realisation for she smiled cheekily and winked.*

*Afterwards he summoned her to his presence in the throne room. He had contrived to be alone in the echoing chamber. It had daunted ambassadors and courtiers but Lawrence Skrimshaw could have been standing in a crowded tavern for all the effect it had on her. She’d stood formally with the appropriate respect but she’d had an easy smile on her face.*

*“You did good service today, whoever you may be. But I am not taking a lady to France.”*

*“What makes you think I’m a lady?” She was still smiling though he had thought there was a flicker behind her eyes which suggested she was thinking fast.*

*“You are no common whore and that is enough for me. You remain behind. Who are your family?”*

*She paused. “You’re a Morasian aren’t you? An energy creature, which normally lives in symbiosis with the Darons.”*

*He was startled by her strange words but before he could respond the blue fire, which he had half seen a hundred times that Spring, suddenly crackled around him. She looked him in the eye.*

*“That is why I must come to France with you. That thin should not be here and it should be watched.”*

*He did not, for a moment, doubt the truth of her words. In a minute she had transformed from a cheeky squire to a commander of men. “This is magic,” he said as the blue fire crackled again.*

*“Don’t be silly,” she said and the squire was back.*

He looked down at the hand he was still holding and then up to her. She reacted as she always did to familiarities, which was to say not at all. He could never make up his mind whether she was simply unaware of his attentions or studiously ignoring them. When he touched her, took her hand or touched her face there was no yielding as with most women nor any sign of drawing back as there was with a few. Once or twice she had caught his eye and smiled but she had always then dropped the hand or removed the touch. He believed in her companionship but her reactions at a deeper level than both mystified and fascinated him. Once more the air around him sparked in the rain.

“What’s he saying now?” asked the King irritably.

“He says he can manage the apprehension of his Moriarty just fine without my help,” the Doctor smiled slightly.

“Is he right?”

The Doctor squeezed his hand. “Maybe, but I’m not prepared to take the chance.”

Behind them Gloucester coughed. The King dropped her hand with a smile. Gloucester’s jealousy and his dread suspicion amused him. One day he would tell Gloucester the secret but for now he preferred to have him in the dark.

Mountjoy the herald came to the King just before the bridge and stood beneath the hanged man. The herald was older than the King. He looked like he had an expressive face though he kept it well under control as he delivered his message. It was difficult to read his expressionless features, but Lytton suspected that he respected the King and sympathised with the plight of his soldiers. Lytton worked his way through the press until he stood just behind the Doctor. Mountjoy delivered his ransom demand and Lytton observed the faint crackle of electricity around him and the answering spark from the King.

“My ransom is this frail and worthless trunk,” the King was saying. He ignored the faint fizzle in the damp air. Lytton marvelled anew at his youth. The man was not yet 30 and yet he led his army with extreme confidence. He had classically handsome features; his hair brown and cut in the seemingly ubiquitous monk-like style. He was softly spoken but he had an unmistakable strength and regality in both tone and bearing. In a crowd the eye would be drawn to him.

The King and Mountjoy were a score of yards from each other. Either could cross the distance in moments. Lytton reached for his sword at his belt but he felt the Doctor's restraining hand on his arm.

"He will make no move in this company. There are too many of us."

"Don't count on it," murmured Lytton.

The Doctor's grip on his arm tightened, "Killing the host serves no purpose and you can not damage the creature with a sword."

Lytton carefully relaxed and felt the Doctor's grip relax at the same time but she didn't let go.

"Violence will solve nothing in this situation," she said in a low voice.

"Massive and sudden trauma to the body will dissipate it. You said so yourself," he said.

"The rules of war forbid you from attacking a Herald. You'd be dead before you could administer your massive and sudden trauma. Only if the Herald attacks first could you hope to succeed. Besides I want to apprehend this criminal of Holmes' without the killing of any hosts."

"Very well," he said. She knew more of the period than did he. He took his hand off the pommel of his sword. Only then did the light touch lift from his arm.

"They outnumber us five to one you now," the King watched the Doctor carefully in the firelight. She was gazing into the flames which sent an orange glow across her face. In the half light he couldn't see her eyes properly which gave her a strange distant look, even more so than usual. In his fancies he half thought she was one of the fey for she was in so many ways so very strange. He was feeling his way through this conversation for he did not wish to arouse her ire.

"I know," she said.

He took a deep breath and then risked his wish, "Doctor, I would that you were not on the battlefield tomorrow." She looked up then but said nothing. He pushed on, "I will be the happier for knowing you are safe and you have a revulsion for fighting. Don't deny it Doctor. I have seen you use both sword and shield as competently as any Knight in the training yard but I have never seen you use them in anger. You even managed to 'forget' them when you entered the breach at Harfleur."

"I find I survive better without weaponry."

“What you did at Harfleur was remarkable but the fact remains; the battlefield is not your place.”

She sighed in the darkness, “You are right. I do not belong there not even remotely. I can spend my time more usefully hunting Moriarty. I suspect it will try something during the battle.”

“There is no shame, Doctor, in sitting out the fight. You are a woman. No man will think the worse of you if you are not there.”

“Do not worry about my pride, my liege. I do what must be done not what makes me look good.”

“Hunting for Moriarty will bring you dangerously close to the field I should think and you will forget your sword again I warrant.”

She smiled ruefully at him across the firelight.

“I begin to think you know me too well.”

“Stay among the baggage train with the boys, Doctor. You will be safe there.”

To his surprise she laughed. A hard and bitter laugh it was. Then she sighed again. “No sire. I think I will hunt Moriarty but I will promise you that I will do nothing of exceptional danger.”

The careful way she had chosen the words told him that her idea of exceptional danger did not match with his.

“I forbid you to make this attempt, Doctor. No,” he said as she opened her mouth, “do not argue with me. You want to negotiate with the creature.”

“I will make it an offer, yes,” she interrupted, “but I’m not relying on it accepting.”

“E’en so. You are going to take a risk. It would be simpler to kill the thing than to set elaborate traps.”

She looked angrier than he’d ever seen her then, “Oh!” she said, “and this battle you will fight tomorrow is not an elaborate trap.”

“I would not fight this battle tomorrow had I a choice.”

“I believe you, but you would not give up France to obtain a peace. Your choices are limited by your ambition.”

“Right now I would be pleased to reach Calais unmolested, Doctor. It is not easily I risk the lives of these men.”

She opened her mouth and then closed it again. “Let’s not argue. Do not prevent my quest tomorrow, lord. I will not stop your fighting your battle, do not you stop me seeking this creature.”

The King watching her suddenly had not doubt that, should she choose, there would be no battle tomorrow and he feared that would be the worse for the English. He did not know how but there was a hidden force behind the Doctor’s actions

as if the human form concealed something far more powerful. He suddenly found he was afraid to oppose that force in its full fury.

“Come!” he stood up and offered her his hand. “We should hear mass and last rites. There will be no time tomorrow.”

She took it and hauled herself upright. Her head reached no higher than his shoulder. She glanced across at the French camp with a strange look on her face almost as though she could not decide upon something.

“Few of them are hearing the mass,” she said at last and then, faintly, under her breath he heard her say, “the poor fools.”

Later, alone, the King sat beside a deserted campfire. Most of his men had finally gone to what rest they could manage though sentries still patrolled the boundaries. Over the other side of the field he could still hear the noise and shouting from the French camp. He drew his borrowed cloak about him and shivered. He hoped that he had not led his army to disaster as the French seemed to believe and as many of his followers also believed but that his planning for this eventuality would pay off. He had had no success in extracting a promise from the Doctor to stay in the safety of the baggage train and had had to content himself with her promise to steer clear of the battle if at all possible. Gradually he realised his right hand was tapping in the dirt. He looked down and it jerked into life of its own accord and began to scratch in the dirt. Three words.

HUNT ALONE MORNING

He spoke quietly, “you think we should seek Moriarty before the battle, without the Doctor.”

The hand scrawled again.

NO TALK KILL

Holmes’ thought was clear enough. The Doctor wished to negotiate in some way with the creature. She talked of capturing it but the King could not see how you could capture and hold the blue fire of these things. Holmes disagreed and it would be easiest to do this alone without the Doctor to get in the way and attempt to save Moriarty. If the Doctor were bypassed tomorrow morning and the thing bought to its end there would be nothing left to do. She could remain safe among the luggage.

Early in the morning, only a short while after dawn, the King went to survey the enemy battle lines. They stood far enough from the French for the King himself to be unrecognisable. He didn't want to draw any attention except that of the Herald. Holmes sparked in the morning air. The King presumed he was signalling in some way to gain Mountjoy's attention.

But, "My Lord!" the Doctor was marching towards them, her man Lytton only a few steps behind. They both had looks of grim purpose. The King noted that while she was armoured she had once more neglected to bring a weapon.

Her man was unarmed too. Lytton, as always, wore only a studded leather jerkin over his clothes.

"What are you doing?" she asked, as if she did not know.

"We know which body Moriarty inhabits," replied the King. "Now is the time to strike before he changes. Before he moves on to someone more powerful and begins his reign of terror."

"Those are Holmes' words," she said.

"I agree with his assessment," said Lytton suddenly. "It would be better to have this thing over and done with quickly and cleanly. The creature is too much of a threat to this world. Incarceration is too risky."

The King agreed, "As a woman I can't say that you might not have the stomach for this."

"Poppycock!" said the Doctor. "Any attempt to kill the host will be as messy and uncertain as other means. You are just too much the soldier to realise it."

"I'm so glad someone feels that way," said a voice suddenly. A form emerged from a pile of leaves by the Doctor's feet. A scruffy, wiry man with a grubby face and the air of a footpad grabbed her neck and held a dagger to her throat. The air crackled. "Now let's everyone be calm, or the pretty lady gets it."

The Doctor rolled her eyes with impatience, "Now I know how my companions feel," she grumbled.

"Let her go," said the King.

"I don't think so. Not until I can get a good shot at you. So if the soldier here will just move away slowly. That's good," he said as Lytton backed off like a cat. "And if you, my Lord, could just step closer."

"I think not," said the Doctor. She reached up and grabbed her assailant's arm and then bent forward throwing him easily over her shoulder. She held onto the arm and twisted the dagger out of his grip. The man cried out. The King judged that his arm had probably been broken by the manoeuvre.

“I’m not saying,” she said as she stepped back, “that violence should never be used. Just that it should be a last recourse. Lytton! No!”

But Lytton was already thundering past her towards the prone man. He leapt upon the body and began throttling it. The man reached up and grabbed Lytton’s head. Suddenly blue sparks started to flame and crackle round Lytton’s body and to the ground. The Doctor had explained that these sparks could be deadly. Almost without thought the King leapt in, trying to drag Lytton clear. He felt a sudden jolt through his body as his hands closed on Lytton’s shoulders. Then everything went black.

Lytton felt the hands on his shoulders and cursed. There was little he could do. Some of the insulation in his arms had burnt through and his muscles had spasmed making it impossible to release his grip on the man’s neck. Most of his internals were still adequately protected but the insulation could not last forever. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the Doctor taking a run up and then she jumped at the King, feet first. Her momentum knocked the King aside out of the flow of the current. Lytton hoped she’d have the sense not to try the same with him. With his arms locked solid there was no hope of her body weight dislodging him.

“...not concern,” he heard the King’s voice say in a stilted tone behind him, “Have heart, lungs work. Will survive.”

He felt something inside him fizzle. The insulation was giving way. A sword suddenly appeared; the King’s. The Doctor must have thrown it so it landed with its tip embedded in the ground. Its pommel wavered close to his head and the electricity from the man’s hands arced to the sword and into the Earth. Free of the current, Lytton managed to force his hands open and staggered off the body. He lay on the ground a moment while the Cybermen’s system pumped drugs around his body and healed the burns. He looked back and saw a streak of electricity run from the tip of the sword along the ground and away.

When he sat up the Doctor was kneeling over the cutthroat’s body pumping his chest, trying to start his heart after the shock. “Lytton! See to the King,” she said.

He walked over to the King’s body. His eyes flickered open. “I can keep body alive,” he rasped slowly, “but will die if leave it. I think is unconscious perhaps.”

He helped the man up. The Doctor remained over the other body. Lytton helped the King sit and they watched sceptically while the Doctor worked.

“He’d already jumped,” said Lytton.

“Yes,” agreed the creature in the King, “and escaped again. Left before the body died. In woods somewhere.”

It was fifteen minutes before the Doctor gave up.

The creature in the King’s body fretted as they returned to camp.

“Doctor, no time for this. Should be hunting.”

“If you leave this body it will die. It suffered too much trauma in the blast.”

“What is King to me?”

“The battle begins soon and without him it is already lost. You only have to remain until his natural healing ability takes over. You have the muscles spasming and the nervous system under control. Once he wakes up he’ll be right as rain... probably.”

“Moriarty. Getting away.”

“I don’t think so. Expending so much energy trying to kill Lytton will have weakened him. He be looked for another body. You may be able to survive long periods outside of them, but you are naturally symbiots. He’ll be looking for a partner.”

“More reason why should be looking. Able to siphon off enough current when King attempted to aid companion. Healed fully. Best him now.”

“No. He may die if you leave the body now, as will his men. If you do this you are no better than Moriarty. You will effectively have killed him because he was in the way. You say that there is a difference between the two of you. Prove it to me! There will be time to hunt your criminal after the battle.”

“Very well Doctor, trust you. But can not speak. What say to troops?” This was true, Holmes had rapidly lost the rasping tone and his words had started to come faster. But he was clearly struggling with the language.

“I have thought of that,” said the Doctor. “You are going to have to give a speech,” she thrust a paper of hurriedly scrawled notes into his hands. “You start her ‘If we are mark’d to die, we are enow to do our country loss; and if to live, the fewer men, the greater share of honour...’. You had better practice it.”

Lytton caught up with the Doctor as she was struggling into a suit of chainmail. He was surprised; she had worn nothing tougher than leather all campaign. She complained she couldn't move fast enough in chain or plate.

"You are going to fight in the battle?" he asked in surprise.

She gave him a sour look, "I'm going to have to hold Holmes' hand until the King awakes. I can't risk him being found out."

"I'll come with you."

"No, I need you to do something else. The history books can occasionally be wrong. I want you to be with the baggage train. Get the boys into the woods and get them hidden."

Lytton nodded carefully. He had no intention of staying to help the boys. The Doctor was a consummate liar but Lytton had studied the Doctor with interest in the past. She was going to seize the opportunity presented by the battle to hunt the fugitive on her own terms. Like Holmes he was deeply sceptical of the Doctor's plans to negotiate with Moriarty. But he knew there was no persuading her that the soldier's way was best. He resolved to follow.

The sounds of the battle drifted up from the field below. The Doctor winced in distaste; glad not to be a party to the slaughter history told her was happening on the field of Agincourt. She walked through one of the woods that flanked the English position. The woods that protected the archers from flanking by the French cavalry. Somewhere in here was the creature, Moriarty. Behind her, silent, crept Lytton. As always, he was watching her back.

"Come on Moriarty!" shouted the Doctor, "I know you're here somewhere!"

There can a crackling in the undergrowth. Very few people could have picked out the language and form within that noise.

"I'm not built to communicate in your fashion though I understand your speech. Moriarty seemed as good a name as any, given you plans."

Once again there was a crackling sound. Blue fire appeared round the edge of a tree, sparking up into the branches and around the roots.

"I can make a good guess. I imagine petty warlord would suite you. You can keep a human body alive much longer than its natural span. You can help

it survive disease and violence. You could become very powerful with the right host.”

Once more blue lightening writhed and crackled. Lytton, observing from the bushes, marvelled at the Doctor’s ability to get even a spark of electricity to gloat.

“Well they haven’t evolved in symbiosis with you so its hardly surprising that they have no defences against your total control is it?”

The creature moved from the tree and began to circle round the Doctor. It spread itself thin but the Doctor was ringed with pale fire.

“I propose a trade. This world is too young to cope with you but also too primitive to satisfy you. I’m offering you a lift out.”

It flared a challenge at her.

“A King of backward planet in a galatic backwater? Hardly making an impact I should say. I’m a Time Lord. Think on that Moriarty. I can take you to any time and place you choose. Somewhere in the future if you dislike the present.”

The creature pulled itself back into itself. It became a towering flame of charge. The menace was palpable. To Lytton it was clear she had misjudged the situation. It was not going to accept her offer.

A look of concern crossed the Doctor’s face, “Do not try to take me over. I am not so easily controlled as humans.” She began to back away from the haze of electrical energy.

The blue fire surged forward towards the Doctor. Lytton charged from the undergrowth.

“Lytton! get back!” she shouted but he had already interposed himself between her and the electrical being. His body convulsed as he fought the control. Sparks began to coruscate over his surface as muscle and servo fought to resist the currents Moriarty sparked through them. He could almost feel the creature exploring the new body, experimenting with the systems, firing the muscles to see what they did. He started locking down what he could. He was determined not to become the Doctor’s executioner but even as he did so he realised this was only a temporary measure. He was using electrical signals to set the locks. Sooner or later Moriarty would work out the signal to unlock them again. As he stood with his muscles twitching he saw the Doctor hauling the Leyden jar towards him. She grabbed a hold of the front of his tunic, holding the jar in her other hand. He saw the muscles contract so the fist closed tight, holding the front of his jerkin. But the charge did not earth itself or transfer to a new host. Moriarty had doubtless realised the advantages of this augmented body the Cybermen had cursed him with.

“The chainmail will act as a conductor,” the Doctor shouted. “Lytton shut

down as much as you can, force it to me.”

Lytton began the internal hibernation process. He shut down circuits and controls, the mechanics that ran his heart and lungs. The world began to fade as the lack of oxygen affected his brain. Before it all went black he saw a sudden spark and heard the Doctor cry out as if from far away. Then he passed out.

When he came to she was knelt across his chest. His front panel was open and she was twisting wires together.

“What happened?” he asked.

“I jump started you,” she said, “I’m not sure you’re going to be able to switch yourself off again. Just as well probably. Since all the mechanics in your brain have been disconnected, there was no way your body could keep it alive once the heart and lungs were shut down.”

“I owe you my life again.”

“I know,” she said dryly. “It’s a burden for both of us.”

When they returned to camp a sight of carnage met their eyes. The boys in the baggage train had all been slaughtered. One last, desperate, act of revenge by the French had seen a small cavalry unit enter the undefended camp. The bodies of the young men lay scattered through the camp amid the burning remains of tents and broken carts. There was a suppressed air of anger among the muddy soldiery. Life went on though. Already the first numbness of the shock had worn off and men were starting to gather together the dead and lay them out.

“History said this would happen,” said Lytton.

“History can be wrong,” she said. “I’ve seen it often enough. I would have saved these children.” There was anger in her voice, “I told you to save them.”

“You lied to me about your intentions.”

“Not well enough clearly. I knew you did not trust me with Moriarty and would not let me go alone. I was right.”

Ahead of them they saw the King. He was covered in the mud and blood of the battlefield and he looked both full of rage and full of weariness. When he saw them approach he stopped frighteningly still as if he was storing up energy against

their meeting. "I was not angry," he said once they stood before him, "since I came to France until this instant."

The Doctor bit her lip, "You're back to yourself again then."

"I regained my senses on the battlefield. 'Twas as well though this creature fared none too badly as a general," he brushed this aside. "Doctor, did you know this would happen?"

"I would have prevented it if I could."

"But you were bound by history," his voice was bitter.

The Doctor looked away and would not meet his eye.

"I thought you were soft and gentle, Doctor, but now I see that you are ruthless. You condemn me for waging a war against grown men and yet you let these innocents die."

The Doctor placed the Leyden jar she was carrying on the ground. "I have Moriarty," she said. She stood up and then held out a hand. "Goodbye my liege, I shall be on my way now."

His mouth set into a hard line, but he took her hand. There was a crackle and blue fire sparked between them.

"Goodbye Doctor," he said. Their hands parted. She picked up the bottle and walked away, Lytton at her side.

Behind them the King's voice suddenly carried on the air, "God guide you and keep you Doctor." Her lips twitched into a smile as they carried on.

"You could have told him it was my fault," said Lytton.

She shook her head, "What would have been the point? He is a man of war Lytton. We got on well enough while we avoided that point but it is fundamental to his nature and, that being the case, we could never have been more than fleeting friends. It is better this way."

"But I thought..."

"I never thought I would have a companion who thought too much. But it seems I should have been more careful what I wished for."

"I am also a man of war," said Lytton.

She nodded, not meeting his eye, "I realise that," she said carefully.

"Any yet, you let me stay with you."

"Did I have a choice?"

Lytton smiled, "Not much."

"Besides you are a soldier not a man of war. It is an important distinction."

Lytton surveyed the death around him and beyond in the mud-clogged battlefield. "This killing of the boys was not well done," he conceded finally. "I should have been here."

She looked up at him and smiled slightly, “You have to learn to trust me if you wish to be my companion.”

“I know,” he said. “I apologise.”

“Apology accepted,” she said.

Together they left the battlefield.