

Tears, Sarah Jane
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Chapter 1

Tears, Sarah Jane

A Doctor Who Story

Sarah watched in horror as the two guards dragged the Doctor's body away. Someone in the crowd tugged at her sleeve.

"Sarah? We are in great danger. We must get away from here."

"What?.. Oh! yes."

Tarron led her through the twisting back alleys of the shanty town. She stumbled along behind the woman, unaware of everything, her mind incessantly playing over the scene she'd just witnessed.

The guards had been about to lead away the young man. He was chosen as the ritual sacrifice and was to be taken to the Queen. Then the Doctor had stepped forward. "You can't do this, it is inhuman!"

And then... and then one guard had swung round and blasted a hole through the Doctor and he had crumpled up like a burst balloon.

Tarron unlatched the door to a small house in a dark street overshadowed by the looming buildings. Inside was a small dark room lit by a large open fire.

"Kate!" called Tarron, "Kate where are you?"

A Pale girl appeared out of the shadows. She had delicately carved features and light copper-coloured hair which hung loose round her shoulders. She would have been pretty but for a sort of limpid blandness which rested in her looks and bearing.

"Kate, look after Sarah. The guards have just killed a friend of hers."

The girl sighed, then she took hold of Sarah's hand and led her to a chair by the fire. Sarah now noticed a large cooking pot over it. Kate leaned over and ladled some sort of broth into a bowl which she handed to Sarah.

"It will do you good to eat."

Sarah nodded and spooned the tasteless mixture into her mouth.

“Was he a close friend?”

“Yes, he was the best friend I had.”

“We will mourn together. It was my brother they took as a sacrifice.”

Sarah gave her a look of horror. The girl seemed to exude a sort of sorrowful, yet complacent, smugness.

“Don’t you want to do something about it? Stop this queen of yours from demanding sacrifices?”

“There is nothing we can do. We can only mourn.” It was not smugness but a complacent resignation. Sarah thought it almost as bad.

“There is always something you can do, the Doctor...” Sarah choked on the words and she felt tears welling up in her eyes. She could see him, determined and resolute, passionately defying injustice wherever he went. She heard his voice, fond and faintly mocking, “Tears, Sarah Jane?” She looked up dashing the tears from her eyes, half expecting to see him standing there. He had come back from the dead so many times.

“The Doctor never gave up hope,” she whispered.

“Then he was a fool.” There was something almost shrewish in the reply.

“Yes, he was a fool.”

A fool in shining armour, ready to save the universe if called upon, your arch-idealist, a galactic King Arthur.

“Miss Smith! Come and meet your namesake.”

She remembered Rubeish’s introduction, his old-fashioned courtesy and there had stood the Doctor, tall, arrogant and flamboyant, prepared to take on anything whether it be ruthless Daleks or officious civil servants.

She looked at the pale girl. “So am I, and I will fight!”

“Well-spoken, Sarah!” Tarron had re-entered the room.

She was dressed like someone out of the middle-ages in a short tunic, breeches and knee-length boots. A small dagger was tucked in her belt, her dark hair swept up into a pony-tail.

“Cathal was my brother, too, and I mean to avenge him.”

She picked up a short cloak and swung it around her shoulders.

“I will find a guard and enter the Queen’s palace.”

“I’m coming with you!” said Sarah, putting aside the barely touched meal. “I have someone to avenge too.”

Tarron eyed her for a moment then nodded slightly and handed her another cloak.

“Come!” she said.

It wasn't hard to find a lone guard whom Tarron dispatched efficiently with her dagger.

"They don't expect resistance," she explained to the horrified Sarah. "That's why he was out on a lone patrol." She smiled. "Now we have a blaster."

Minutes later they came to the edge of the town. Before them was the awesome skeleton of the crashed spaceship.

"What's that?" Sarah stared at it in amazement.

"The Queen's Carriage. It brought her to our land many generations ago."

"It's a rocket."

"The guards have taken most of it away to the palace. There is nothing left there now. Come on."

Sarah followed her, looking back at the strange, desolate wreck outlined against the darkening sunset.

It was practically night when they reached the palace. But it was not so dark that Sarah couldn't make out its shape through the gloom. It was built with the tall sleek lines of another rocket. But an incomplete rocket, up at the top only the basic framework existed. Sarah wondered how a people apparently living in the middle-ages could have built such an edifice. With the sort of tools they possessed it would have taken years.

"Did you say the Queen came generations ago?"

"Yes. She first arrived in the time of my great great grandfather."

Sarah looked at the rocket. "That's a long time."

"The Queen is immortal," said Tarron as if it explained everything.

A quick inspection proved that there was no way of getting into the rocket. The hatch was shut and firmly secured. Sarah kicked it angrily, but it didn't even make a sound.

"Sarah, look!"

Tarron was pointing to the scaffold beside the rocket and the ladder set into it.

"We can climb up there and get into the palace through the top."

"I can't go up there. I get vertigo."

"What?"

Sarah gulped. "Never mind. Let's get going."

Without letting herself think she marched over to the ladder and began to climb up. It wouldn't be too bad, she decided, as long as she didn't look down.

She had nearly reached the unfinished section when a lone patrol, or something, returned and spotted them clinging on. Suddenly blasts from his gun were exploding all round them. They scrambled upwards, shouts floating up to them from the ground.

Then Tarron gave a small gasp. Sarah stopped climbing and she heard her voice whisper.

“I’ve been hit. Sarah! take the gun.”

She handed the blaster up to her. It had a strap attached and so she was able to sling it over her shoulder and still have two hands free to climb.

“Now! go on!”

Sarah had climbed up only a little more when she heard a cry. Instinctively she looked down. Far below Tarron lay sprawled on the ground. Sarah felt herself rocking and she clutched onto the ladder, her eyes tightly closed, as waves of nausea washed over her.

She forced herself to open her eyes and mercifully spotted a gangway leading across to the first opening just next to her. Slowly she climbed onto it and staring straight at the opening she worked her way across holding on tightly to the rails. Then with a gasp of relief she found herself within the rocket.

Sarah leaned against a wall, took deep gulping breaths and tried to stop her limbs from shaking. She realised she would have to find somewhere to hide for guards were bound to come to find her. She spotted a grille in the wall and almost laughed aloud: the air ducts. The grille hinged open and she crawled in, letting it shut behind her.

Some hours later she was crouched in an alcove outside what she judged to be the throne room. At least it was the room at the centre of the habitable parts of the rocket and it was permanently guarded. She had been watching it for some time, wondering how she would get into it.

A guard emerged from the room and addressed the two outside.

“The queen has ordered me to take you two to help in the search for the intruder.”

Sarah blinked incredulously as he led them away. Then, with an inward shrug, she approached the doors. She pushed one open and peered inside. The room was high and lined with computer banks which flickered and whirred, but she could see no queen.

“Ah! Miss Smith, I have been looking forward to seeing you so much!” purred a low female voice, full of satisfaction.

Sarah glanced round but saw no one. “You’re a computer!” she said in surprise.

“Yes, I’m a small part of Homeworld central computer. I was linked directly,” continued the voice sadly, “but somehow the link was destroyed in the crash. I have built this rocket so I may return to Homeworld. You will make that possible.”

“How?”

“It will be necessary for me to refuel on the way, given the present circumstances Earth would seem to be the best place to do so. You are known to Earth authorities and could arrange for that refueling to take place.”

“And what make’s you think I’ll do that?”

“I do,” said a voice behind her and whirling round she saw the Doctor, looking as good as new, no burn marks or anything.

Sarah gasped in shock.

The Doctor advanced towards her his hands open, welcoming. Quite unconsciously she backed away.

“How?” she asked explosively. “How?” her voice sank to a whisper.

“It was perfectly simple,” said the computer. “I have the facility to absorb minds, and thoughts. I absorbed the Doctor’s. I have complete conscious control and his body has remarkable powers of healing which I was able to activate. It’s perfectly simple.”

“Well if you can absorb minds and take over people’s bodies why do you need my help?”

“I can only control people within a close radius. Once outside they fight free of my influence,” explained the Doctor.

Sarah shivered and wrapped her arms tightly around herself.

“Once you have completed you task,” continued the computer. “I would relinquish all control of the Doctor and set him free.”

“You would set all your slaves free?”

“No, I need them to do menial tasks on the ship.”

“What would you do with them when you get back to Homeworld?”

“They are not important. Why do you ask about them?”

“Just answer!”

“When I am linked to central computer once more all the minds will be added to our sum store of knowledge to make us more wise. They will join together into one united being.”

“But what about the people themselves?”

“I have told you they will become part of our higher purpose.”

“Why did you come here?” Sarah changed tack. She knew she didn’t trust the computer and wanted to find out why exactly.

“It is my function. To gather alien minds to add to my consciousness.”

Suddenly it struck Sarah. “You would gather minds from Earth! Why would you give up the Doctor’s once you had refueled?... You don’t need to refuel at all! You just want to collect more minds!”

“Sarah, you are getting hysterical” said the Doctor sharply.

“No, I’m not. You, you and that computer, you are... I don’t know! You can’t go around appropriating people’s minds!”

Without any clear idea of what she intended Sarah unslung the blaster. Then with a desperate resolve she fired at the nearest computer bank. The Doctor screamed and sank to his knees clutching his head.

“Don’t do that!” cried the computer. “If you destroy me the Doctor will die too because he is linked to me!”

Sarah gritted her teeth and fired again. The Doctor cried out a second time. Tears began to run down her cheeks. Suddenly an intense pain began to fill her mind.

“Oh, no, you don’t,” she muttered grimly.

She kept on firing though she could hardly see for the pain and the tears.

Then the pain stopped, and the screaming cut out as if someone had thrown a switch. There was complete silence. All the lights faded and went out. In the gloom Sarah collapsed in a heap and began to sob.

“Tears, Sarah Jane?”

She looked up startled.

“But the computer said...”

“I don’t think the computer really knew what she was talking about.” He smiled benignly. “Shall we go?”