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*The  
Principality  
of  
Prome*

*Fan Fiction By Ian Shimwell*

**Doctor Who**

*The*

*Principality*

*of*

*Prome*

**By**  
*Ian Shimwell*

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## PART ONE

The darkness was absolute, that was until a tiny light appeared - a faint flicker from an old rusty lantern. It grudgingly revealed very little of the cave system. The walls glistened ever so slightly as the man, holding the lantern, walked by.

With sadness, Digger surveyed his excavation; his mine; his sheer hard work. His ragged hands touched the side of the cavern and his thickset fingers scrambled some soot-like substance from the wall.

"Coal," Digger proudly nodded to himself. He was the one who had found the caves; surveyed and discovered that it was rich in coal. He had organised the Provants - an ungrateful lot who are supposed to work for a living. He was a Promord, a notch above the peasant riffraff. Despite this, he had not been afraid to dirty his hands. Looking at his rough-skinned fingers, he knew they told a story of hard work - of mining coal.

Slowly his trusty lamp became redundant, as Digger emerged into the sunlight of Prome. He wasn't quite as tall as his contemporaries. In fact his long, greying, soot-filled beard made him look more like a Provant. His heavily wrinkled face squinted in the sunlight and he turned round and looked back into the darkness. Most of his life was down there. He had achieved an awful lot and had gathered an awful lot of coal - all for Prince Prome. He was not sorry in the slightest.

Melancholy deadening his weight, Digger moved towards the stone wall that surrounded the Coal Caves. The gate creaked open, and with a heavy heart, Digger closed it for what he knew would be the very last time. Try as he might, that was one thing that he still could not understand. The mine was in its prime. Coal was virtually the only fuel used on Prome. Properly managed, the Coal Caves would have provided Prince Prome's Principality with this valuable resource for generations to come.

With a sigh, Digger finally clinked the old padlock into place, locking the wooden gate solidly. A black cloud enveloped the sun causing it to be suddenly quite dark. Ironically it was precisely then a cloud was inexplicably lifted from his mind. He remembered something. The closing of the mine. Could it have anything to do with..? Repressing a shiver, Digger sensed that there was something behind him. A glimpse of irrational fear entered the old man's eyes. He turned round slowly, but immediately relaxed. His wrinkled face smiled with kindness.

"Why dear friend, what in Prome are you doing here? Come to make sure the old fool really has closed the mine the mine this time?" The creature's eyes though were uncharacteristically cold. Its expression odd. Quite suddenly, Digger knew what was about to happen but still could not believe it. His eyes stared in horror.

The creature's mouth opened wide. Dozens of razor sharp teeth sprang from its gums. With sickening speed, the creature lurched forward and tore the petrified miner to pieces.

The tall blue box was almost hidden by the undergrowth. The Doctor looked back at it, unable to hide his affection. He wore an elegant, long frock coat and fancy striped trousers. A fresh stick of celery sprouted from his lapel. His fair hair framed a youthful and alert face. He had take-in-everything blue eyes.

Adric looked at the Doctor curiously. He was much more than what he seemed or was he less? The Doctor was surely an enigma, he decided. The bright sunlight caught Adric's eyes and he shielded them with his hand. He surveyed the beautiful forest around him. It reminded him so much of his home planet.

"So what are we going to do Doctor, just have a walk in the woods? Adric was feeling a little bit fed up and he wasn't attempting to hide it.

The Doctor strode forward purposefully. "Why not? It's a beautiful day after all." He looked back at Adric. A young boy close to manhood. His shoulders were slumped depressingly. "Oh come on Adric, at least make an effort or even pretend you're enjoying yourself."

The young Alzarian took a deep breath to try and breathe some enthusiasm into him. He attempted a smile.

The Doctor beamed. "That's better Adric. Anyway you should be pleased. This time it's going to be just you and me. We'll be able to have some quality time together - as Tegan puts it. Do some male-bonding, that sort of thing."

"That's what worries me." The Doctor's face immediately dropped so Adric smiled to convey that he only teasing. "But why aren't the girls joining us?"

"As you well know, Nyssa and Tegan picked up a nasty dose of influenza on our last trip. George Cranleigh has a lot to answer for. They'll be in bed for at least a week." The Doctor said as he began to examine a nearby tree.

Adric shook his head of thick black hair and said with exasperation: "I do actually know that Doctor, but the TARDIS must contain a variety of advanced medicines. You probably have them on their feet in a couple of hours."

The Doctor scratched the surface of the tree trunk with his fingernails. It seemed perfectly normal. Stubbornly, he moved on to the next tree. "That's as maybe Adric," he called back. "But sometimes it is best to let nature take its course. Builds up the bodies' defences and so on."

"Tegan's going to kill you," smiled Adric.

The Doctor had disappeared from sight but could still be heard. "She probably will and even Nyssa may be a bit cross too," the Doctor grinned delightfully, "but, as I said, this will give us a chance to..."

There was a loud snapping noise, a thud and the Doctor cried out in pain.

"Doctor," Adric cried, concerned - and rushed behind a leafy shrub. The Doctor was sat on the ground and guiltily holding an enormous branch. Why did he look like a naughty schoolboy?

Dropping the branch, the Doctor stood up and rubbed his behind tenderly. "At least those twigs broke my fall."

"Doctor, what were you doing up there, trying to steal the local riverfruit?" Wasn't he the one who was supposed to be immature? Not that he was, of course.

Looking as dignified as he could muster, the Doctor said rather stubbornly, as he dusted himself down: "Scientific experimentation. The gravity on this planet is roughly similar to Earth - or Alzarius for that matter."

"Yes very interesting." Adric looked around him. He still could only see the luscious forest enlightened and bedazzled by the sun. "And which planet are we on? Where exactly are we?"

Side by side, the two companions began to walk, venturing deeper into the alien forest.

"For once I'm not quite sure. I've rarely visited the outer galaxies before and have certainly never been remotely near this solar system. I couldn't even find any star-chart references in the TARDIS. We are exploring uncharted territories," the Doctor added grandly.

"Yes and straight into danger - and the usual terrifying adventure."

"Come now Adric, that's not fair. This 'adventure' will be perfectly peaceful." Catching Adric's doubting expression, the Doctor continued, "All right - for a change." He had now stopped walking in a small area free from trees. His hand flashed out to halt Adric.

"Behind you Adric, the Doctor said just a bit too carefully.

Adric looked, caught his breath and edged nearer to the Doctor's side. "I knew it," he groaned.

A pack of fearsome wolves slowly advanced upon the travellers. Their jaws stretched revealing huge and deadly fangs. They seemed poised for the kill. Ready to pounce at any second...

The long velvet blood-red curtain was drawn aside. The darkened figure entered his sanctuary. Shining from an unknown source was an ethereal moving picture. The figure looked through it. He witnessed a group of wolves - and beyond them a frightened pair who's dress was not of this land.

"The Stranger and his Knave, how very interesting..." the sickly voice chuckled softly.

The huge Throne Room was a magnificent spectacle. Glorious, extravagant tapestries adorned the stone walls and a richly woven carpet covered the cold floor. The grandiose throne itself dominated the chamber. The brass and gold exquisitely, yet terrifyingly entwined in the shape of wolves' heads.

The room was empty until the great double doors burst open and a young woman swept inside, whose long, flowing dark hair, that almost reached her waste, glided behind. Her dark hair contrasted stunningly with her soft, pale complexion and her luminant white full-length dress.

Princess Prome was very upset. She ran up to the vacant throne and collapsed melodramatically on the few steps before it. Her hand covered her brow but the tears flowed freely - and with a passion.

The red-cloaked Prince waltzed silently into his chamber. "Oh sister, do compose yourself. Your beloved will be with you soon," he smiled slyly, "and besides you are wetting the carpet!"

"Never, never, never, never," sobbed the Princess with ever increasing force. "I will never marry that animal, the King's so called champion."

"You are quite wrong, my lady." A huge monster of a man strode into view. Dressed in black furs, his garments were studded with gleaming metal. Together with his bushy black beard and determined expression he was truly an imposing figure. His name was Swordhawk, he was the King's Champion - and knew it. He gestured to the Prince. "His Majesty has kindly ordered our betrothal. You must accept the fact that we are to be wed. It is Prome law."

The Princess rubbed her reddening eyes. "Swordhawk, you are an ugly beast. I should not even touch, never mind marry you. And you are far too old, ancient I believe."

"Silence," shrieked the Prince, "you will show no disrespect to Prome's glorious Champion."

The weeping girl lifted herself to her feet and stood face to face, barely inches from the Prince. Her furious expression almost growled at him. If looks could kill... "Then, dear brother, I disrespect you." She spat on his cheek and angrily stormed out of the room.

Swordhawk laughed thunderously - a great big belly laugh. "Do not worry your Majesty. I will bend her to my will." He suddenly stopped laughing. His huge rough-skinned hands reared up to simulate some kind of strangulation. "If not, I will break her."

A sudden cloud of worry passed over the Prince. Clearing the cloud away he said, "You will marry my sister. She will share your bed - you have my word."

Swordhawk nodded, satisfied. "Then I will lead my - I mean your - men to victory," he shouted that loud the very Palace almost shook.

Prince Prome slowly sat down on his throne. "Then we are agreed, Swordhawk." Leaning forward he said, "I command you to take a group of your best men and take the land by the southern mountains."

The King's Champion grandly bowed before the Prince. "Your Majesty commands, your loyal servant obeys."

As Swordhawk began to leave, the Prince said quietly, "One more matter. Pass by the Coal Caves on your way."

"Why?" questioned Swordhawk as he rubbed his mighty beard.

"Because, because..." For the royal life of him, Prome could not think of a reason. "To make sure old Digger really has locked up the mine," he added lamely.

"As you wish." The swordsman swept round to reach the door but fell over something beneath his feet. He landed embarrassingly on all fours.

A very small man scuttled from beneath him. His deformed face wasn't helped by his humped back. He wore the clothes of a joker; complete with a bright pointed red and yellow hat with tiny bells on each tip. He was a midget.

"Me very sorry, you good sir," whimpered the Jester.

"Oh, don't be," cried the Prince laughing, "for once, you pathetic miserable creature, you have amused me."

The hungry-looking wolves had now completely encircled the Doctor and Adric.

"When I say run," the Doctor whispered urgently, "we must run in opposite directions - at least create some confusion."

"They're not confused, Doctor. Unfortunately they know exactly what they are going to do," Adric shivered.

The slaving wolves' jaws roared but then, strangely, instead of attacking they simply howled - and whimpered. Then they ran off like frightened puppies.

A relieved Doctor said, "They must have been put off by your aftershave, Adric."

Adric's pained smile didn't hide his annoyance, but then cried out in shock as a huge creature lumbered behind the Doctor.

The Time Lord span round. "How absolutely fascinating - a super-gigantic tortoise."

"A super-gigantic tortoise?" repeated Adric in wonder. He studied this unusual new life form. It almost reached his height and was at least twice as long. A huge thick crusty shell covered most of its body. Adric could see only its spur-thighed claw-like 'legs' and its thick-skinned head with big bulbous black eyes. Perhaps attracted by yellow, the tortoise walked towards Adric.

"I said super," continued the Doctor, "because this dear fellows carapace is much larger than the ones found on the Gallipoli Islands on Earth."

The tortoise's head extended out further nearer to Adric. He recoiled.

"Don't be afraid boy - try stroking the dear old thing's chin," he suggested.

Tentatively Adric did and the tortoise responded by making a contented purring sound - and the corner of its mouth twitched upwards.

"He likes it," declared Adric joyously, "and he's even smiling."

The tortoise moved away slightly and tried to reach a branch. Adric joined him and pulled the branch down. The reptile swiftly devoured the leaves from it. "Do you think these are the dominant life-forms on this planet Doctor?"

"An enchanting thought but I don't think so." The Doctor pointed to the far side of the clearing. "As clever as tortoises undoubtedly are, I suggest they are not yet capable of chopping down trees."

Adric saw the tree stump and sighed. Why couldn't he sometimes look and think before speaking?

Becoming restless, the Doctor marched forward and encouraged Adric to join him. Adric caught up and turned round. The tortoises' head had slumped. He appeared to be sulking.

"Come on then Smiler - join us," shouted Adric.

Head and long neck now erect, Smiler smiled and eagerly raced after his two new friends.

"Smiler" the Doctor said to himself, shaking his head in exasperation.

After a while, the forest was thinning out. The strange threesome stopped as the Doctor surveyed the landscape. On one side he could just make out a wall; on the other, the shores of a nearby lake - and beyond that a mountain range.

Taking the initiative, the gigantic tortoise lurched towards the water.

"I think Smiler wants a drink," suggested Adric happily. "I'd better make sure he's all right." He began to follow the tortoise.

"I'm just going to investigate something further ahead. I'll join you at the lake in a short while."

They went their separate ways and the Doctor looked back at the unlikely figures of Adric and 'Smiler'. He was becoming quite attached to his new-found friend.

After several minutes or so, the Doctor had made it to the wall, which mainly consisted of huge blocks of stone placed on top of each other. He could only see the top of various rock formations behind the barrier. A cave system perhaps, valuable minerals? Turning a corner, the Doctor saw a locked and bolted gate - and something on the ground before it. He bent down to examine the huddled form and with sadness discovered, amongst the dirt and mud, the remains of a body that had been horrifically savaged.

"Take him!" a thunderous voice shouted.

Two black-clad guards hauled the Doctor to his feet, hurting his arms.

Holding a long, gleaming, brass and steel broadsword before him; his black furs and beard heaved menacingly as he approached the Doctor.

"Oh come now - you can't think that I have anything to do with that," the Doctor said reasonably.

"I am the King's Champion, Swordhawk. Outside the Palace, my word is law. You are not one of us, therefore you must be of enemy kin."

Impeccable logic thought the Doctor.

"And you have slain a faithful servant of the Prince."

"I did no such thing," the Doctor said indignantly. "Anyway how could I possibly cause such wounds?"

"Maybe the Death Demon helped you," said one of the guards helpfully.

"No such matter," shrieked Swordhawk. "You will die for your terrible crimes. Execution immediate."

"Now old chap, let's not do anything too hasty."

The Doctor's only answer was seeing Swordhawk's manic, unreasoning eyes as the great sword came crashing down upon him.



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