

Chapter Five – The King's Gambit

Kravos awoke drenched and shaking; he leapt from the bed and was across the room before realising where he was. Shuddering, he drew a cup of water from the faucet.

At the height of his illness, he had lain down to sleep next to Ana, and woken alone in the morning. He had never seen her again; his beautiful wife, who had cast such a spell over him, had slipped away from him in the night to go to the arms of another man, and now both of them were dead. His hands were still shaking as he went for a wash.

He was not feeling remotely rested, though he had gone to sleep directly after leaving Gharman. The interrogation had clearly been productive, as he had not been woken for eight whole hours - when the nightmare had plunged him into purgatory. He put on his uniform and marched off to the lift.

As the doors opened, he heard voices, '...believe he'd *betray* us like that...' '...it's not about *us* anymore...' but the speakers – both scientists – fell silent on seeing him, and remained so for the whole trip to Level Three, giving off conspiracy in waves of defiant silence.

When he reached Davros's office, he found Raste waiting for Nyder. 'The interrogation is over', the major told him, 'Apparently, it went very well. The Security Commander will be up here presently'.

The screen showed a line of exhausted Thal survivors stumbling across the Wasteland; females and young, and the old and crippled, carrying what little they could to make some kind of life in the wilderness. As Kravos watched, Units Four and Seven glided into view and opened fire, killing the refugees outright.

'I've just been glowered at by a microbiologist and an organic chemist in the lift', he told Raste.

'I was snubbed by two of 'em', Raste rejoined, 'In the canteen, just now. Feeling against Davros is rising fast; against us too'.

'They owe Davros their lives', Kravos said bitterly.

'Especially now', Raste replied, 'but they feel misled about their work. One day a man is a respectable scientist, devising the machine that will save us all – something to tell your grandchildren – the next day, the machine is avenging the deaths of those very grandchildren', he raised an eyebrow, 'Quite enough to upset any civilian'. He had sneered the last word.

'Thank you, Major; most helpful'.

Nyder marched in, ignoring their salutes and going straight to the safe; reaching up, he spun the dial back and forth, pulled open the door, deposited a reel of tape inside and then locked the door, before turning to Raste. 'Well?'

Raste replied, 'Sir, many of the Scientific Corps are openly speaking against Davros', he looked straight ahead, 'Even some of the military are joining them'.

'Very well', Nyder purred, 'Assemble a squad of Elite men we can trust; when I get the word from Davros, wipe out the leaders'.

'Yessir', Raste clicked his heels, and departed.

Nyder sat down, and motioned that Kravos should follow. 'Colonel, I want you to understand that I deeply regret having manhandled you earlier; I was under a great deal of strain, you understand. You will accept my most sincere apologies?'

Kravos knew perfectly well he had no choice. 'Naturally, sir; no harm done, I assure you, and it will go no further'. That was the required assurance, for while it was entirely expected for sergeants to thump fractious recruits, it was very much against Regulations for an officer to strike a subordinate; in the ordinary way, Nyder could have lost his commission.

Nyder opened a desk drawer and produced a flask and cup. He poured a measure and sipped it, 'That was a long night, but two of the prisoners are locked up now, and Davros is speaking to the third', he held out the flask, 'You will join me?'

'That's very kind, sir'.

Kavell stood in the descending lift, inwardly furious; the ten hours since Gharman's arrest had been the most frustrating he could remember. With Davros and Nyder occupied, Kavell had insisted it was imperative to release Gharman, who could more easily influence the military – most of whom were still obeying Major Raste – but while Parlim was broadly in favour, he was long winded, and more interested in recruiting scientists, and Frentan's chief talent seemed to lie in proposing a reasonably practical idea and then arguing passionately against it.

Now Kavell had decided unilateral action and, with the interrogation over, there was a plausible pretext. The lift door opened, and he stepped out onto the Detention Level.

The guard swung round, aiming his machine gun at Kavell's heart. 'Halt; state your business'.

'I wish to question the prisoners'.

'No-one is allowed to question the prisoners unless they have a pass signed by Davros'.

Kavell felt his empty pockets, edging closer, but the guard snarled, 'Stay where you are!'

Gulping his fear, Kavell lied, 'I seem to have mislaid it. I'll come back later', he turned away.

But he heard the guard turn too, and with that slid the truncheon out of his sleeve, spun round and swung; the impact against skull jarred his arm – and the guard fell like a corpse. Kavell snatched the keys and opened the door, inside Gharman was sharing with a girl and a young man, who needed no telling to help drag the guard inside. Gharman pulled the door closed as Kavell fell against the wall panting and trembling. The man and girl smelled strange; Gharman gave their names.

'Sara, Harri; this is Kavell, my right hand man'.

'Oh, well - pleased to meet you', said the young man with a brief smile – he had the most repulsive blue-coloured eyes, like a Thal - 'Give us a hand; we'll get this blighter's uniform off', he glanced at the girl, 'Sara, could you oblige with a boot?'

She wrinkled her nose, 'Thanks a bunch!', but she began to unlace the nearest boot with some dexterity, Kavell suppressed a smirk.

Harri had his jacket and shirt off and was pulling on the guard's tunic. 'When you've got the boots, I'll have the trousers', he said tersely, 'Though I can't say it's a uniform I'm going to be proud to wear...'

'What are you planning?' Gharman asked.

'To guard the door until they bring Doctre down here; then, with any luck, I can thump the guard, and we'll have two guns', he took the trousers from Kavell, and started pulling them on, muttering, 'If it turns out to be the one that looks like Himmler, so much the better'. He sat down on the floor, reaching for a boot. 'Is there a regulation way to lace these things?'

‘Not in the Bunker’, said Gharman, ‘but I can tell you’re a soldier’.

‘Surgeon Lieutenant RN’, Harri replied, ‘How do I look?’

‘Try not to look anyone in the eye, and you might pass’, Kavell told him tartly.

Harri searched the pockets of his new trousers, ‘I’ll leave you inside with these gentlemen, Sara, but if anything’s amiss, I’ll be right outside the door, old thing’. He produced a pair of handcuffs. ‘You’d better tie him up; he’ll be coming round’.

In Davros’s Office, the screen still showed the Main Laboratory and the Chairman still disputing with the prisoner; the sound was turned down.

‘If I had an issue’, said Kravos, ‘It would be that our people have produced some very fine artists, poets, architects, but I don’t see any of that in the Daleks; military prowess, certainly, practicality without doubt, logic... but if that is all we can leave to posterity, will posterity thank us, sir?’

Nyder seemed to acknowledge the point, but added, ‘However, if future warring races perceive a stronger one and make peace as a result then, in the Daleks we leave posterity a great deal to be thankful for. I cannot think of a happier future’. He glanced at the screen; Davros was holding up his hand, as if gripping a single vial. Nyder turned on the sound.

‘... to know that the tiny pressure of my thumb, enough to break the glass, would end *everything*’, Davros snapped his fingers closed, continuing at a shout, ‘That power would set me up among the gods – and through the Daleks, *I shall have that power!*’

At once, the prisoner had grabbed Davros by the wrist. Nyder shouted ‘Hell!’ jumped up and ran from the room. It seemed too late; the assassin had switched off the Chairman’s life support – but then he re-activated it, adding ‘I warn you Davros, the next time I press that switch, it stays pressed, now give the order!’

Kravos drew his pistol, checked the magazine, and headed for the lift. Before he reached it, the amplified voice echoed from the tannoy, ‘This is Davros; Elite Unit Seven will go to the Incubation Section immediately and destroy all Dalek creatures. All work on the Dalek Project is to be destroyed’.

From a distance came the sound of a cheer, then the tannoy again ‘This order cannot be...’, and then abruptly it cut off, only to return a moment later, Davros now practically gabbling ‘*This is Davros, this is Davros*’, the lift opened, ‘*My last order is cancelled, repeat cancelled*’, three scientists rushed out, ‘*No action is to be taken!*’ the scientists ran on, regardless.

‘Halt!’ Kravos shouted, and fired a shot into the ceiling. At once they rounded on him, ‘Good job you shot, sir’, one shouted, ‘I’m deaf you know!’

‘We’re only obeying orders’, added another manically, ‘But we’re rather absent minded, being scientists!’

The third was Parlim, grinning gleefully, ‘Are you going to shoot us, Colonel?’

‘Get back to your work!’ Kravos shouted.

‘Oh, yes!’ Parlim beamed, ‘Back to our work! I’m sure the young Colonel will understand exactly what we’re up to!’ and they ran on, laughing madly.

Kravos ran back to Davros's Office; the big screen still showed the Main Laboratory, with Davros unharmed but the assassin unconscious; Nyder dragged the prisoner upright, 'On your feet!, and he marched him away.

Davros depressed a switch on his chair, 'All Dalek units; all Dalek units...'

Total Extermination of The Enemy had moved on to another stage, and Squad Jast had been searching the ruins, section by section, looking for groups of survivors hiding in wrecked buildings or cellars.

Once a group had been found, Unit Seventeen, whose gun also worked as a flame thrower, would issue the ultimatum; 'All Thal survivors will line up for extermination, or burn to death in hiding'.

Then they would emerge, and they would be led to the killing ground, then made to line up, facing away from their killers, and then they would be shot. Then the next line would be made to run up and replace them, and then they would be shot too.

But now, One had ordered Squad Jast to desist and withdraw; it made it sad to know that there were Enemy still alive, but they would wait until later.

Now One had to find Squad Sec, and this was more difficult, because Squad Sec's job was to find those still hiding that Squad Jast had missed; generally this meant Enemy hiding alone and trying to keep very still and quiet, but by listening very hard, Squad Sec was discovering them and killing every one.

One suddenly saw an enemy soldier, staggering towards it; maybe it was ill or suffering from poison. At that moment, Unit Twenty appeared, and shot the soldier. It fell, clutching its head.

One said, 'Davros has commanded all Dalek units to disengage and return to The Bunker immediately'.

Twenty said, 'I obey'.

They were wasting time; Harri and Sara could wait for Doctre (or whatever he was called) perfectly well on their own, but Gharman was insisting on listening to the girl. Kavell was trying to ignore her.

'It's a remarkable story', Gharman exclaimed, 'I had no idea that such things were possible!'

'Before not so very long ago, nor did I', said the girl, 'If you want explanations, it's really Doctre you should be asking'.

'Not at all', said Gharman, 'But you have been sent here to rid the future of the Daleks?'

'Yes, I said; by the Time Lords'.

'And these are *highly powerful* figures; almost akin to gods, I suppose?'

She smiled, 'That's a very good analogy; yes, I suppose they are'.

'It's absolutely incredible', Gharman murmured, 'I had no idea that we stood on such a promontory of history. You are right, the Daleks must be stopped; you have brought a great deal of hope to our people, you know'.

She smiled politely, 'Thank you'.

And from outside, Nyder's voice, 'Open up!'

The door hissed open, but as it did so, Kavell saw Nyder recognise Harri and throw the stumbling Doctre onto him, before running away. Harri, heaved his friend into Kavell's arms and gave chase. With Sara's help, Kavell deposited his charge in the corner, then Harri returned looking annoyed.

'Not exactly as planned, Sara', he went over to the tall man slumped against the cell wall. 'Doctre?' He looked more closely at his friend. 'He's a bit groggy, but he'll be all right'.

Gharman made for the door, 'Come on Kavell; we've a lot to do'.

This was more like business; 'What about the guards?' Kavell asked briskly, 'What if they won't come over to our side?'

'They'll be disarmed', Gharman replied, 'and held in custody until we've presented our ultimatum to Davros'.

The stricken Doctre raised his head, 'No, wait. Davros knows what you're planning, I heard him talking to Nyder'.

Gharman looked impatient, 'Well if he knows, why hasn't he taken action against us?'

'Perhaps because he knows it's futile', Kavell urged, 'There are too many of us'.

'No, it's not that', Doctre was clearly the worse for his interrogation, 'I don't know what he's got prepared for you but believe me', he drew breath, 'he's ready'.

Gharman was now in a hurry; 'But even so, there'll still be too many for him'.

'Just be careful', said Doctre, 'be careful',

'I think we can take care of things. Thanks for the warning', and Gharman led the way out of the cell, Kavell followed, hearing Sara say, 'There's no point telling you to rest, I suppose?'

In the lift, Gharman asked, 'How many scientists are still for Davros?'

'About ten', Kavell replied, 'Dainer is the ideologue among them'.

'And among the military – apart from Nyder?'

'Raste'.

'Neither of them towering intellectuals', Gharman murmured, 'I think we might do very well'. The lift reached the canteen; as the doors opened, Frentan and Parlim came bustling up, looking pleased with themselves. 'I think we have the majority of the Science Division now', said Frentan, 'but half the military are still for Davros; Major Raste particularly; if we could liquidate him...'

'Our intention is to make a bloodless revolution', Gharman replied, 'We resort to violence only if there is no other way'.

'Very sensible', said Parlim, 'Since most of us aren't very good at it'.

'But we must arm ourselves, simply for self-defence; Frentan, will you come with me, and bring Kline. We must get weapons from the armoury', he turned to Parlim, 'I need you to examine the biocheck done on Sara'.

'That *woman*?' said Parlim, 'I can't see why you'd be interested in her, Gharman'.

Gharman scowled, 'Frentan and Kline, wait for me by the lift on Level Two; Kavell, I think we have soldiers looking to join us', he nodded to a knot of black-uniformed men, who had just entered through a side-door, and were looking doubtful, 'Can I count on you to reassure them?' Kavell nodded and headed off, as Gharman continued, 'First, it is still *General* Gharman, Parlim, and secondly, I do not ask without good reason...'

The six soldiers were now grinning at Parlim's expense. 'Good old General Gharman, eh?' said one, 'We was afraid you might all be bound for ruin, but not with him in charge, eh lads?'

The other five soldiers nodded and said things like 'That's right' and 'Can't go wrong with him'. Kavell asked, 'What's your name?'

'Frake, sir', came the reply.

'And what do you want?'

Frake put his head on one side, 'Fact is, sir, we swore to protect the Kaled Republic; none of us signed up for them Dalek things, and none of us sees much future in 'em. Not for us anyway'.

'But you are for General Gharman?'

'That's right, sir', Frake pulled his nose, 'Not meaning disrespect, sir, but he's an officer, and one you can look up to; always fair, but you'd expect that from his family, and he led the Ninth before he come here. Not all can say that of themselves, sir'.

Kavell kept his face straight, 'You mean, Nyder?'

'That's putting his name in my mouth, sir, but yes', said Frake bluntly, 'Looks smart enough in his uniform, sir, but I understand he was Pay Corps before he came here. Not the same, is it, sir? Might have made a good transport controller'.

'And then the transports would've run on time', said another soldier. They all laughed.

'Very well; good to have your support', Kavell said, 'Take your orders from Corporal Rusk, if you please'.

'You can rely on us, sir'.

Kavell went to the serving area and got a meal. He found a vacant seat, put down the tray, and took Ronson's journal from his inside pocket; he could decode *and* enjoy his food - but it was not to be – 'Kavell, I must ask you...'

From the interruption of his first mouthful, he could not concentrate to taste a scrap, nor decrypt a word; those that didn't have news wanted advice. After half an hour, he pocketed the journal, and pushed back his tray. 'Arlen, will you come with me? I need to find Gharman.'

The burly lab technician followed him out of the canteen; technicians were used to doing as scientists told them, besides Kavell couldn't trust a *military* escort not to shoot him in the back. He saw Nyder and Raste as people that only war *could* advance; they would be useless in peacetime. His chief anxiety was that Gharman too had been schooled in a barracks, not a laboratory.

When they got to the armoury locker, Kline was pinioning a guard, and another lay dead on the floor. Gharman was handing guns to Frentan. Kavell reported, 'Gharman, they are coming over to our side in droves; we've the backing of a good eighty per cent'.

'Good', said Gharman, 'Good. What about the hardcore Davros people?'

'They've all been rounded up', Kavell felt so proud he might burst, 'We're winning, Gharman, we're winning'.

Gharman set his jaw, 'Then let's finish it off'.

There was machine gun fire within the Bunker; Kravos could still hear it even though he had locked and bolted the door of Davros's office.

The intercom crackled, 'Is this thing working?' said Raste's voice.

'Yes, Major; loud and clear'.

'Thank goodness. One of the men believed the swots would fritz the entire network, just for spite'.

'Seems not', Kravos replied, 'Anything to report, Major?'

'We're still holed up in Section Nine. We can hear shooting, but we've no idea if anyone's hurt. I'd defy most scientists to load a weapon, let alone fire one'.

Kravos sighed, 'No casualties, yet, Major, but I account that to luck; we have the makings of a first class bloodbath on our hands'.

'Yes sir, that's why we're holding fire', Raste replied, 'We're ready to come out shooting, but if we do it will get very messy. The men here are all ex-Twenty-Sixth, and unused to taking prisoners'.

'I do understand', Kravos replied. 'Your restraint is commendable, Major'. Nyder thought of the Twenty Sixth as 'crack men'; Kravos had always considered them homicidal maniacs. 'I'm sure we all want to avoid precipitate action'.

He wasn't sure of that at all; Nyder, for instance foresaw the Bunker falling to the rebels within an hour unless there was blood and lots of it – reducing the somewhat depleted ranks of the Kaled People even further – he was with Davros now, presumably begging for permission to order Raste into action against the unspeakable Gharman, but the bloody irony was that Gharman was right; the killing had to stop.

'Just a moment Major, I think news is here'. Kravos flicked a switch, and Nyder's voice came through.

'Kravos, I have just received the order to surrender unconditionally. I am now going to seek out General Gharman and arrange a meeting between him and Davros. I want you to network the order that all members of the Military Elite should place themselves under General Gharman's orders'.

'Directly, sir'.

'You may add that Davros has taken this decision to avoid bloodshed'.

'Yes, sir'.

He switched over to the Bunker tannoy. 'Message from Security Commander Nyder to all Military Elite...'

It suddenly seemed utterly bizarre that Nyder was ordering people to obey Gharman – Gharman was the Head of the Scientific and Military Elite, while Nyder was a glorified guard, even Davros was no more than an ancient (if gifted) academic, who should have had the decency to retire (or die) years ago.

And why did a brigade leader get to have a sub colonel as his ADC? Kravos sat for about five minutes, as if looking at the realities of life in the Bunker for the first time; of course Gharman was in command – the only madness was that Davros and Nyder had ever assumed such authority in the first place.

It was with the sense that the inverted world around him had abruptly righted itself, that Kravos stepped out of the office and found himself staring at a machine gun.

‘Come along, Captain Kravos. It’s all over’.

The meeting between Gharman and Davros was arranged. Nyder led the way into the Main Laboratory; along with Gharman and Kavell were Frentan and Arlen, all carried guns. Otherwise the room was deserted.

Gharman looked around him, ‘Where is Davros?’

Kavell added, ‘You said he’d agreed to meet us here’.

‘He’ll be here’, Nyder replied coldly.

Then a door opened, Davros’s chair glided into the room, and the Chairman demanded, ‘You have something to say to me?’

Gharman and the others turned to face him, ‘Davros, we wish to make our views known concerning our work here’.

Davros’s voice was silky, ‘With what authority do you speak? With whose backing?’

And Gharman’s blunt, ‘We speak with the full authority of the Elite Scientific Corps. We represent the majority’.

The reply: ‘Very well; continue’, an order as ever, not a request.

Gharman drew himself up, ‘Nobody doubts that in the past, under your leadership, we have made great progress in many fields of science...’

Davros cut him off, ‘You did not come here to flatter me; you came here to offer an ultimatum’, he continued more levelly, ‘Confine yourselves to the terms of that ultimatum’.

‘Very well’, Gharman replied, equally level, ‘The aim of the Dalek Project was to build a travel machine to house the form that we know our race will ultimately evolve into...’

Davros interrupted again, ‘You disapprove of that?’

‘No, but’, Gharman paused, ‘we believe that that aim has been perverted; you have tampered with the genetic structure of the creature to create a ruthless power for evil’, he seemed to weigh his words, ‘We cannot permit this to continue’.

If Davros was angry at this display of authority, he didn’t show it, ‘Then what do you suggest?’

Gharman explained, ‘All work on the Dalek Project is to cease immediately, the creatures that have been conditioned and programmed are to be destroyed’ he added, ‘If these terms are met, we will be happy to work under your guidance for the re-building of our society’.

Stonily, Davros asked, ‘And if I refuse?’

'If you refuse', Gharman paused, 'You will be placed under arrest. The Daleks will be destroyed, and our work will continue under a new, *democratically elected* leader'.

And Davros asked, with such faint contempt, 'Have you finished?'

Gharman nodded, 'Well?'

Davros said quietly, 'You might at least do me the courtesy of allowing me time to consider', and with that he turned away.

Kravos sat in the canteen with a mug of army ky; in the absence of any of Gharman's close supporters, he had formally handed his pistol to a senior engineer, who had noted his name and quite informally returned the pistol; apparently Kravos wasn't 'on the list'. It all felt rather disappointing.

If it reminded him of anything, it would be his last day at Instruction Centre; a gleeful euphoria reigned, scientists chattering about trivia, and nearby a trooper was playing a syrx. There was laughter; not the cynical, shifty, world-weary scoffs Kravos had grown used to, but genuinely happy, and utterly alien to the Bunker. It was as if, with the fall of Davros, the Elite had woken from a collective nightmare.

And here he was drinking ky, alone; none of them seemed to know what to do with him, and the only immediate friendly face was Lieutenant Selman, and he would only make inane remarks. Raste was isolated in the Detention Level, along with a handful of others, whose style of negotiation was considered too volatile to be for immediate address.

Even now Kravos was still thinking in euphemisms.

'All alone, Colonel? This should be a celebration!'

Kravos looked up with resignation: It was Parlim, looking smug. 'Should I be happy?' Kravos asked.

'May I sit down?'

'If you want to'. Kravos sighed as Parlim sat. 'One of my lieutenants asked me what we were going to do next; I told him not to be impertinent'.

'Shame on you, Colonel', Parlim chuckled, 'If you can put your glooms to one side – and it's better you do, I think – there is much for a young man of your capabilities to look forward to'.

'Oh?'

'Ah, now. Let's see a smile' Parlim beamed, 'I've been doing a little research that seems to shed a whole new light on the future of our people. A very bright new light'.

'Does this mean the Daleks?'

'Them? No', Parlim's eyes twinkled behind the spectacles, and he tapped the sealed file he had been carrying. 'All in here, and for General Gharman's eyes only, but very, very important – it's the breakthrough that we've needed to solve The Decay...'

Kravos sat bolt upright. '*The Decay* – you can't mean it!'

'Oh but I do', Parlim chuckled, 'And I can assure you of one thing, Colonel – though I'm sure your elevation to a higher title is only a step away – I can promise you that those Mark Three abortions are finished. The day of the Daleks is over, and I also think it is high time you were told the truth'.

‘What truth?’

‘My boy, I am no psychiatrist’, said Parlim, ‘but the cerebral event you suffered is no surprise to me at all, after the way that you’ve been treated’.

Kravos frowned, ‘You mean the treatment I received after being wounded on Zukan Ridge?’

‘I mean the treatment you received after they stopped you *ever going* to Zukan Ridge’.

‘But, they re-built me, saved my life’, Kravos protested, ‘I saw pictures of myself on the stretcher’.

Parlim shook his head, ‘No. You didn’t’.

‘I saw...’

It wasn’t my project’, said Parlim, getting up, ‘So I don’t have the exact details. Ronson designed the programme, and he’s dead of course’, he smiled conspiratorially, ‘but I understand Kavell has his notes’.

Davros turned back to face his accusers, ‘I have made my decision. I accept your ultimatum’, he paused slightly, ‘On one condition’.

Gharman said suspiciously, ‘Go on’.

‘That you allow me to speak to a full meeting of the Elite’, Davros proposed, ‘Both Scientific and Military, anyone you elect may speak against me. After this a vote will be taken; I will abide by the decision of the majority’.

Kavell’s instinct at that moment was to put bullets into both Davros and the spectacled streak of misery at his side, he heard Gharman say, ‘You already know the decision. You will *lose*, Davros’.

Davros’s reply was urbane and curiously light, ‘With such confidence, you can hardly refuse my request’, and there was just a shade of mockery, ‘It was you that introduced the word *democracy*’.

Gharman leaned over and murmured to Kavell, ‘We would win the vote?’

‘By a landslide’.

And now he said to Davros, ‘Very well, it’s agreed’.

The reply was another order; the old tyrant standing on authority he no longer had, ‘The meeting will take place one hour from now. Arrange it’, and he had the gall to actually dismiss them, ‘You may go’.

‘Death to the Daleks!’

When they heard the news, the scientists in the canteen cheered loudly, but all the journey back, Kavell had been nursing growing doubts, and he desperately wanted to share them with Gharman, but the general addressed the assembly and told them at once of Davros’s ‘terms’, and his own view that the old scientist should be honoured (or humoured), and that all preparations should be made to get everyone to the Main Laboratory in a little under an hour.

He was very buoyant, dangerously so to Kavell's thinking; once tasks had been allotted, he tried to get Gharman's undivided attention, but Parlim bustled up, and anyway Gharman was too excited to listen.

'Arlen, will you ask Sub Colonel Kravos to join us please?' he asked. As Arlen nodded and went off, Gharman turned to Parlim, 'What did you find out?'

Parlim glowed, 'She's all that we hoped and better! The girl is eminently compatible'.

'What do you mean?' Kavell asked.

'Biologically compatible with us' Parlim explained, 'In fact our two species have a great deal in common, most importantly that if she is matched with a Kaled man, she will *produce*'.

'Wonderful', Gharman beamed, 'Now our race can have a future; we have no further need of the Daleks'.

'It gets better', said Parlim, 'The Decay is caused by several recessive genes, but if the girl's genetic material is introduced into our gene pool, it will certainly replace those genes, producing a stronger, better, more vigorous race of Kaleds'.

'Excellent', Gharman rubbed his hands, 'I am going to need the loyal support of you all in these early days in order to avoid the toxic effects of division. I mean to appoint Kravos as my general, and Kavell as my chamberlain'.

Kavell's jaw dropped. 'What about the democratic election of a leader?'

'I will be elected', Gharman replied simply, 'Who else? My family are derived from the House Vargas; the blood in my veins is Royal. When I am matched with the woman Sara, the saviour of our people, sent by Almighty Azal to destroy the Daleks, no-one will be able to oppose me, and I shall sire the Kaled Race to come'.

'This is all wrong', Kavell gasped.

'No', said Gharman, 'Before Parlim's findings, we had no future; democracy would do for impending extinction, but now we can survive, and for that – to make our way on a ruined world – we need strong leadership, but not a dictator, we've had enough of that; once more the Kaled People shall have a king, and we shall stand tall on our beautiful planet once more'.

'I'm afraid I have to agree', said Parlim, 'Everything has changed now, and monarchy seems to be the best way'.

'I appreciate your support', Gharman told him. 'Now, where is the girl, and her two friends? They must be found at once, and treated well; they must suspect nothing, and there must be no disruptions in advance of the meeting with Davros'.

'What is your intention?' Kavell asked.

'Once deposed, Davros and Nyder must be liquidated', Gharman paused, 'Then the two men, Harri and Doctre; I will not allow them to threaten my matching the girl'. He glanced over his shoulder. 'Kravos, come and join us; I have some happy news for you'.

Kavell turned his back and slowly walked away.