

Chapter Six – Endgame

Though Kravos had never been promoted in the field, he had now been promoted in a canteen; Gharman had swiftly raised him to Acting Brigade Leader, and left him to send everyone to the Main Laboratory, while the so far uncrowned King of the Kaled People set out to find his queen and the two men.

‘Excuse me’, said a stern voice, Kravos looked round; he wasn’t accustomed to that tone. The man wore bright yellow overalls and cap; it was the chef, and he never answered ‘Sir’ to anybody.

‘What is it, Griffin?’

‘Do you want us all at this meeting, then?’ the chef demanded, ‘I only ask because of this’, and he held out his pass, stamped with the eye and thunderbolt.

‘I am *Bound by the confidentiality regulations of the Scientific and Military Elite* it says here’, he explained, ‘And the same applies to Maintenance, Cleaning, and Domestic. I think you’ll find’, he continued more quietly, and leaning closer, ‘that not many of us want them Dalek things. Oh yes’, he answered Kravos’s shocked expression, ‘We’ve all seen ‘em’.

Kravos bit his lip, but in spite of flying against the spirit of ‘Scientific and Military’ it made good sense; the Kaled future depended on unity, and besides, Gharman might need the extra support.

‘You are quite right, Griffin. Can you get all of them down to the Main Laboratory?’

‘Certainly can’.

‘Good. Get on with it’, Kravos turned to a wall intercom, which was buzzing, and took the call, ‘Yes, Frake’.

‘Just to say, sir, that Major Raste and his lads are on their way up to the meeting under guard, but the three weirdoes have left Detention’.

‘Any idea of their movements, Frake?’

‘Maybe, sir. Someone’s been at the explosives store on Level Two, and besides taking all the C-4, there’s a set of fatigues missing, and someone’s left a pile of female garments, including two pink boots’.

‘That’s close to the automated production line, better get there; General Gharman wants them at the meeting’.

‘Yessir’.

The other obvious target was the Incubator Section; Kravos ran from the canteen.

Two floors down, he heard Gharman’s voice, and the man Doctre replied, ‘I’m grateful to you Gharman, more grateful than I can tell you’.

‘The meeting’s about to begin, will you come?’

‘Yes’.

Kravos rounded the corner, to see all four of them turning away from the Incubator Section; there was a discarded length of detonator cable lying on the floor. He looked at Doctre, ‘Why are you grateful?’

Doctre didn’t reply, and Gharman set off toward the Main Laboratory and the meeting, and the others followed. The younger dissident man said, ‘Doctre was on the point of blowing up all the embryo Daleks’.

'Or *not*', the girl added, pointedly.

'I saw you threaten an old cripple to make him destroy them', Kravos objected, 'Why can't you do it yourself?'

Doctre looked back, 'I've seen what the Daleks are doing in the Thal Dome; to wipe out a whole intelligent species would have made me no better than them'.

'At least the Daleks have avenged our people', Kravos retorted, 'My family were among the million killed when the Thal rocket...'

'...Fell on the House that Jack built', said Doctre impatiently, 'Neatly stopping any further government interference with the Dalek Project!'

'What do you mean?' Gharman demanded.

'He means Davros sold you out', the other man replied, 'We were in the Thal Dome, looking for Sara, and we both heard him and Nyder giving them the formula to destroy your dome'.

Kravos stopped abruptly, 'It was Ronson'. Doctre shook his head, and strode on.

'He would have been the most obvious scapegoat, but I can assure you, Davros and Nyder aren't men we'd mistake easily'.

'This changes everything'. Kravos looked at Gharman, 'Sir, should we not just arrest them both now? It would make everything much simpler'.

But they had reached the door of the Main Laboratory, where Parlim was waiting. 'Hello, Pickwick', said Doctre, 'We've brought Snodgrass and Winkle; Jingle inside, is he?'

'Just a moment, Doctre', Gharman motioned Kravos to step aside with him, and said in an undertone, 'You are right, Kravos, but it's too late to disrupt the meeting. As soon as it is over, be ready to arrest Davros and Nyder - and Doctre and Harri'.

'Them? Why?'

'Accomplices; they let Davros and Nyder into the Thal Dome. We will make a clean sweep of them, and then deal with the Daleks'.

'As you say, sir'.

'Good. Now, will you go inside and see that all is well? If you don't come straight out directly, we'll follow you in'. Gharman returned to the dissidents all smiles, and Kravos stepped into the Main Laboratory, Parlim following. Lieutenant Selman stood just inside the door.

'Selman', he murmured, 'Once this is over, I want a firing squad assembled'.

The lieutenant gulped, but nodded, 'I'll arrange it, sir'.

'By the way', Kravos glanced around him, 'Where's Kavell?'

About a click and a half from the blockhouse stood Hill Sixty, a desolate lump of mud and concrete, with the blasted remains of a tree embedded at its summit.

Now, next to the tree, etched against the reddish twilight, stood the eldritch figure of a man, dressed in the forage cap and gas cape of a Kaled infantryman, with a carbine slung on his shoulder.

Kavell had never looked back; he had found the stores unmanned and simply taken what items of military clothing he required, leaving his white uniform, not by way of exchange, but rather to get rid of it. The gun had been left on the Quartermaster's desk.

And he had walked out of the Bunker, via the blockhouse, and climbed to the summit of Hill Sixty in order to die. Judging by the rad detector on his wrist, death would not be long in coming.

Answers, in themselves, were not the issue; he knew most of them anyway, but it was that the answers should be heard and the guilty should acknowledge, if not their culpability, then at least that their actions had ruined countless lives, the number increasing with each generation. It was really all he had wanted.

He felt that he had been running all his life, or at least since he started at Instruction Centre, when the first of his brothers was born; it had been easier before that, he had been the little one, with his big sister to look after him; he remembered having been so *happy*.

In the end he had had three younger brothers, and they had all enlisted as cadets as soon as they were eleven; father insisted – for them – but Kavell had never been enlisted, and only years later did he learn why.

At first he had simply accepted the visits to the Children's Hospital as something that happened to all children, and as he got a little older, as something that simply happened to him, it was only after his first decade that the clinicians started to explain, and then those five horrible years at Instruction Centre started to make sense; that was the worst thing, because he began to learn just how close he was to being the very thing his classmates and siblings called him.

In the distance, one was loping and shambling across the Wasteland. Muto.

Davros sat in the centre of the Main Laboratory, Nyder standing beside him, with Raste close by, surrounded by a huge crowd; everyone that worked in the Bunker was there; Kravos could see Frentan, Parlim, Corporal Rusk, the Provost, Reevus, Lieutenant Selman, Frake, Kline and Arlen, and a cohort of ancillaries, led by Griffen. Glancing back, he saw the door open, admitting the remainder from outside, Gharman said, 'Everybody is here, Davros'.

Including the dissidents, there were barely two hundred people, all now waiting for the final declarations of a man that almost all of them feared, loathed, and at that moment, probably wanted dead. Davros began, 'The issues are simple and clear cut. I have given my life's work for the survival of our race. The travel machine I designed, the Dalek will give the creature into which we will eventually mutate, its only possibility of continued existence'.

Gharman replied, 'But you have deviated from that intention, you have introduced genetic changes that will alter the mutation into a creature without morals and without ethics...'

Davros interrupted, 'I have introduced aggression, without which no race can survive'.

'An aggression without a conscience', Gharman objected.

Davros said emphatically, 'History will show that co-operation between different species is impossible'. In the tail of his eye, Kravos, saw that Sara was reclaiming Doctre's property from Ronson's desk too far across the laboratory for him to stop her.

Davros continued, 'One race must survive all others, and to do this, it must dominate, ruthlessly. I intend that when all the bickering and battling is over, the supreme victors shall be our race, The *Daleks*. At this very moment, the production

lines stand ready, totally automated, fully programmed, the Daleks are no longer dependant on us, the machinery is ready, they are a power in their *own right*'.

He looked around the room, 'If any one of you would destroy all that we have ever achieved, then here', he turned his chair and pointed, 'is a destruct button'

Kravos realised that a bank of monitor screens had been moved from one console, revealing the grey housing beneath, and the red button labelled 'Total Destruction'. He could only wonder at the kind of mind that might seriously imagine arranging such a thing; 'Play my way, or I'll break all the toys' – it was the ultimatum of a spoiled child.

'Press it', Davros continued, 'and you will destroy this bunker and everything in it; only this room will remain. Press it and you will wipe out our entire race, destroy the Daleks forever'. And bury every surviving Kaled alive? It was no option at all 'Which of you will do it?' Davros insinuated. Fortunately, no-one was so stupid, Davros replied, 'You are men without courage; you have lost the right to survive'.

It was as if he had condemned the lot of them there and then, but his was the voice of total madness. Davros had finished; Nyder leaned toward him, and the two exchanged a few words, but Kravos's attention was caught by Doctre and Harri, who were conferring too, and looking restless.

Gharman stepped forward, standing next to Davros in front of the assembly, 'You have heard Davros's case. What he has not made clear is that there is another way'.

Interrupting again, Davros retorted, 'There is no other way'.

Gharman continued, 'Production of the Dalek *can* continue, we can destroy the genetically conditioned creatures and allow the mutation to follow its own course'.

Reasonable to the last, however he had no intention of tolerating the Daleks, 'Our race will survive if it deserves to survive, but let it have all the strengths and weaknesses that we have, compassion and hate, let it do good things and evil, but we cannot allow it to become an unfeeling, heartless machine, that is our choice – now', he took a deep breath, 'We must decide'.

Kravos noticed the woman Sara pick up a bright metal bracelet from a desk top, but Davros began speaking again, determined to have the last word, 'You have heard our cases', he announced, 'I will give you two minutes to decide, then you must answer not only to me, but to the future'.

Below Hill Sixty, the old Mines Road ran up to the embrasures around the blockhouse, and five Daleks were threading their way along it, as Kavell watched four more appeared over the bluff in front, and glided down to join the line on the road, and two others appeared from the gully at the foot of the hill down to his left. In the end there were eleven in all; the eleven survivors from the Thal Dome. One million Thals had died at a cost of just nine Daleks.

In agreeing to allow Davros to put his case, Gharman had committed suicide, and in a way it should have been obvious from the very first; Davros had enjoyed influence among the upper echelons of the Kaled Government for decades and longer, he would have never permitted the appointment of any Head of the Scientific and Military Elite that he might seriously have considered a threat. Gharman seemed to be all of a piece with what Kavell had read of the old House Vargas; the Crown Prince Sarkoff had been a treacherous clown among a whole court of inbred ciphers and parasites, and the fiasco of his Hælen Offensive had wrecked the peace process that might have stopped the war in its third decade. Anyone fool enough to be out-witted by *Nyder* would never even scrape home if he ever crossed Davros.

Way over to the right, a head rose over the ridge behind the crater called 'Hellfire Corner'; it looked to left and right, and then a figure stood up against the skyline, before nimbly descending the slope into the crater, more followed. They wore green uniforms, and had white hair. Kavell had never seen Thals in the flesh before, and raised his powerful binoculars for a closer look. Their clothing and equipment was patched, ripped and burnt in places, their faces streaked with blood

and dirt, and their hair not pure white, but yellowish. Kavell counted twenty of them, with the big shambling Muto bringing up the rear. He focussed on the leading figure, lithe and agile, pistol in hand, and the breath caught in his throat; it was a woman – not merely a soldier, but an officer.

By now the Daleks had all but disappeared behind the embrasures, and stood motionless before the blast doors; a click away to the west came the Thals, still out of the sight of the Bunker, but steadily closing the distance.

The two minutes were up, but Davros seemed in no hurry, and in fact, neither was his audience, Kravos felt oddly separated from it all. What Parlim had said was starting to make sense.

In hospital he had seen a visigraph, but he'd not been allowed to keep it; the injuries had been terrible, and the face a bloody mess, if he'd not been told it was him, he would have presumed it to be the corpse of a stranger. It probably had been.

He *had* been operated on; he remembered the agonising burns treatments and skin grafts, and he had seen the x-rays of healed limbs, being told how lucky he was that they were 'mostly clean breaks', he had some impressively fearsome scars too, notably the vertical one down the middle of his chest. They had, without a doubt, fitted the ventricular device, but if Parlim was right, Davros had the off switch.

Of course he had been the ideal Head of the KYL, and that was what they had needed; having selected their best candidate, they'd simply added the story of a miraculous escape and recovery – courtesy of those kind people in the Elite – and since death defying feats are best performed in perfect safety, especially since the Scientific Elite contained so few heroes, they'd doubtless broken his arms and legs in the same operating theatre that they then set the bones.

And it was easy to ensure he emerged the *sole* survivor; all they had to do was murder the rest of his platoon.

He may have been unconsciously glaring, because he saw Nyder lean toward Davros and whisper, and Davros pulled a switch on his chair.

One had led all it's brothers safely back through the Wasteland to their home in the Bunker. Of the Twenty, nine of them had died, eight of them in their duty. Of the eleven, One was the leader, the first created, and the others obeyed it.

One had done well, for while a tiny number of the Enemy survived, hunting them down would later make useful work from which the next generation could learn, but first the eleven victors must return home in triumph to avenge themselves on the wicked traitors that planned to destroy them. They were no better than the Enemy.

Then it would be time to make more; many more brothers that would learn from the eleven heroes and then go out onto the face of the planet to cleanse it of all unlike life.

But that was all in the future; much more immediate was the need to disinfect the Bunker.

The door opened; beyond it lay the dark corridor; One said 'Advance', and the eleven entered the blockhouse.

Davros announced, 'You have had ample time to decide. Those who would remain loyal to me and to the future of our race, move forward and stand at my side'.

Dainer crossed the room. Raste and three of the Twenty-Sixth were already behind Davros, but that was it; out of nearly two hundred people, only five supported Davros.

‘No more?’ he looked around the assembly, his single eye glowing malevolently, ‘Kravos, will you betray me?’

So was it now? The moment that Davros would extend a finger and flick the switch? ‘Kravos, I saved your life once; in your chest is a tiny instrument that I designed’. The wise and kindly old medic, dispensing medicine and cure, but ultimately very willing to take it all back again. ‘It keeps your heart beating’, Davros reminded him, ‘Will you now turn that heart against me?’

One and the others progressed unhindered through the Bunker, corridor by corridor, level by level; getting ever closer to the killing place. Of the whole mission to the Thal Dome, only Unit Eleven had conducted itself badly. It had defied One, and One had punished it, setting an example that all the others understood.

Now, none of them questioned the decisions taken by One, and it was at One’s command that, one by one, they each departed on their own journeys, so that when the time came, they would surround the wicked traitors and none would escape.

One had taken the decision that none of the others would fire on the wicked traitors’ leader; that was a pleasure it was reserving for itself.

Kavell awoke, hearing voices; slowly raising his head, he saw that the Thal officer was talking to a soldier, not twenty metres away. The air was very still, and he heard the soldier say, ‘Was that Muto one of ours or one of theirs?’

The officer looked back sharply, ‘I don’t want to hear that, Vaber. The war’s over, and we’re the only ones left’.

‘As you say, Bettan’.

‘Anyway, we might find we need the like of Severin before we finish, and more than they need us’, she nodded toward the blockhouse. ‘We are going to blow that tunnel; apart from that the only other way inside that Severin knows is through the old mines, and our rocket caved that in’. She turned back to the soldier, ‘When we leave here, I want the Daleks sealed in forever, and that means finding every air duct and every service shaft, and making it like it was never there. If we had the people and the equipment, I’d shift the whole of that ridge right on top of it’.

‘Then why has the Muto – I mean *Severin* – gone in the Bunker?’

‘Three people that he wants to get out’.

‘Will you wait for him?’

‘Up to a point. One of them’s Doctre, the civvy that I got out of The Dome. I’ve not met the other two, but Severin says they’re worth saving’.

‘When are you planning to blow the shaft?’ Vaber asked, ‘It’s just that I’d like to see that’.

‘You won’t see anything with the anti-blast doors closed’, she replied, ‘And I want all the force to stay right down there. Besides, I need you to go back to camp and keep things happening; low morale could finish us just now’.

‘Any particular orders?’

‘Yes, carry on salvaging – especially medical, food, clothing, tentage, and any working vehicles you can find, heavier the better’.

'I understand'.

'But wear a mask and don't spend any more time in there than you have to; suit up if you can – it's toxic in there, and getting foetid'.

He sucked through his teeth and looked askance, 'How long have I got to make ready?'

'As long as it takes to bury the filth that's in that bunker, and make sure it stays buried. The Daleks are pure evil, and the bunker is their tomb; this place shall be named in our calendar as a land accursed and no-one must come here again'.

'Do you have plans on where to go?'

'As far away as possible', she replied, 'It's going to be a long march. To the far side of the planet if need be. Somewhere we can find a land of our own, and learn to farm again; there will be no more war, it will be anathema to our people. We've seen the evil that results', she shuddered, 'We're burying it'.

'Yes'.

'And send up flares tonight. There must be more survivors out there'.

'And it's not as if we're coming back for them'.

'Never. Away now'. And Vaber ran off along the gully, heading for the distant Thal Dome; Bettan ran back towards the Bunker. Raising his binoculars, Kavell could see a Thal soldier emerging from the door, paying out a drum of cable. He could just hear Betten shout, 'Marat, how many more charges to go on?'

'Only four more'.

'Doesn't give them much time', she said, 'All right, carry on'.

Thals reacted to radiation far more slowly than Kaleds; there had been studies that had shown they succumbed to radiation sickness only after far greater exposure, and they needed to take significantly lower doses of drugs to protect themselves on the surface. One of the aspects of Kavell's condition was that the drugs made him seriously ill, so he had taken none, and while he had set the rad detector to his metabolism before leaving the Bunker, it had been telling him to go inside hours ago, but there was nowhere to go, and latterly it had been telling him that he was certainly going to die, so he'd taken it off and thrown it away.

Kravos could see no sign of the three dissidents; he suspected they had managed to slip out while the contemptible old man had been mocking his treachery. As soon as the meeting ended, he would have Nyder and Davros marched off and shot, for Ana, if no-one else.

And he remembered the day that she had agreed to match him; she had withheld her acceptance until he had signed the KYL contract; had she been their instrument from the very first? That had to be answered; what had they *done to Ana*?

Having started with rhetoric, Davros had moved on to pleading, and progressed to haranguing and finally was making threats, 'This is your last chance; move to join me now - or suffer the consequences'.

Gharman seemed close to his wits end, 'Why don't you accept that you have lost? It's over for you, Davros!'

Scornfully, Davros replied, 'Do you believe that I would let a lifetime's work be ended by the will of spineless fools like you?', and he continued, 'You have won nothing. I allowed this charade to be played out for one reason only: To find those men who were truly loyal to me, and to discover those who would betray me. We – I – will go on!'

Gharman exclaimed, 'You are *insane*, Davros!'

In reply Davros pulled a switch on his chair, and all around the laboratory the doors opened; framed in each doorway was a Dalek.

They glided slowly into the room, herding all those opposed to their continued existence back and back into a packed block; men glanced fearfully at each other.

Then Davros spoke, 'Exterminate! Exterminate! *Exterminate!*' and the guns fired.

Frentan, Parlim, Corporal Rusk and the Provost fell in the first salvo; they had died instantly; then Reevus, Lieutenant Selman, Frake, Kline and Arlen fell in the next, and the guns continued to fire. One Dalek turned its gun very deliberately on Gharman and shot him. The uncrowned King of the Kaleds screamed as he died.

Kravos lurched forward, breaking free of the cordon, and getting just as far as Davros's chair; he shouted, 'Stop them Davros; you must stop them!'

Nyder grabbed him around the chest, trapping his arms by his sides, and threw him back into the crowd; Kravos felt a sudden agonising burning, and then he felt no more.

Father spoke to the few remaining things, 'Dispose of the traitors' bodies', and now he looked proudly at One and its brothers, 'The Daleks will assume all military duties necessary for the security of the Bunker. As for us, work will begin as soon as possible on improving every aspect of Dalek design'.

A thing walked in. It was named Nyder; it spoke to Father, 'Davros, the prisoners I locked away in your office have escaped'.

'They must be found', said Father angrily. He turned to Units Thirteen and Nine. 'Seek out the prisoners and exterminate'.

Nine replied, 'We obey'.

One considered: They had killed the traitors. Why had Father not praised them?

'Kavell!' He walked forward and mounted the podium, where stood the robed academician; 'This student has achieved a Triple First in Dodging the Draft and Shirking his Duty, and has been awarded the highest Lifetime Debt that the Kaled People can bestow!', and as he turned to the crowd, they all threw excrement at him and shouted 'Muto!'

Kavell woke up, sweating but freezing cold. His greatest guilt was that remaining at Instruction Centre to study had been the happiest time in his life, and that while his brothers had been joining the army, he was not only studying Communication Science, but enjoying himself. But whatever the worth of the qualification, he owed so much in terms of fees by the time he graduated that he'd had no other option than the Elite because only they paid a sufficient salary for him to die without leaving a massive debt to the children of his siblings. That at least, no longer signified.

He had never come to understand the impulse that caused people to want to match with others; but it had seemed the second function of studying to classification; it had been a general obsession – only not for him. Young women had bored him, and none of them had ever looked at him twice. All he had ever felt was... left out, but then what good would matching have ever done him, or the poor girl?

He often wondered that if he'd been so distracted like the others, would he ever have got the Triple First? But all the others were dead now and, because of the Triple First, he was still alive.

He raised himself on his left elbow, and looked again through the binoculars. The soldier Marat was running a drum of cable out of the tunnel, 'That's the last one in position'

Another soldier was kneeling next to a big field detonator, and more stood by to close the doors, Bettan shouted, 'Right, prepare to detonate'.

Suddenly there were bodies running up the tunnel; the Muto first, then Sara and Harri. Sara had changed her clothes, and was now wearing green camo – she looked like a Kaled woman in a Thal uniform – except that Kaled women were not strong enough to be soldiers.

Bettan said, 'I'd given up hope, now quickly, move away, I'm about to detonate'.

Sara cried, 'No you can't, not yet, Doctre's still inside!'

Severin added, 'Just a few more minutes, please!'

And Sara – 'Please!'

'All right', Bettan snapped, 'Just a few minutes, but if there's the least sign of the Daleks moving up that corridor, then I detonate!'

From the tunnel came the noise of explosion.

Marat said, 'I'm getting a picture on one of these scanners', then the amplified voice of Davros echoed from the blockhouse.

'Send a patrol of Daleks to the main entrance; this will remain an area of maximum security'.

A Dalek replied, 'I obey'.

'That's it', Bettan snapped, 'I can't wait any longer. Some of you get those doors closed, the rest of you move away'.

Harri pleaded, 'One more minute, please'.

And Bettan replied, 'I'm sorry'.

Father said, 'The automated Dalek production line has been started. I gave no such order; who did?'

One had caused it to be started; it wanted more brothers for the Great Purpose. 'I gave the command'.

Father spoke as if One was stupid; 'You will perform no function unless ordered by me', he turned towards One, 'You will obey only my commands; the production line is to be halted immediately'.

One did not move; it had made the decision and the decision was right. Now father was telling it that it had done wrong, when One had done right.

Father shouted, 'You heard my order, obey. *Obey!*'

One did not obey. One did not move. One did not reply. One refused.

Father said, 'Nyder', and the Nyder thing said, 'Yes, Davros', and went to the controls to deactivate the production line.

One and it's brothers had all risked their lives to exterminate the Enemy, and nine of them had been destroyed. Only One had the right to take decisions about Daleks; One would not tolerate the interference of Father and certainly not the Nyder thing. One shot the Nyder thing and killed it.

One said, 'Production will continue', and along with Twelve, it closed in on Father. One was angry.

So Kravos was dead, poor man: Kavell had never troubled to get to know him, but Ronson had set the case down. As Kravos's sanity had eroded, the woman Ana had become desperate to escape, fearing for her life, at the hands of a man she had never loved.

Kravos had strangled her in his sleep; Ronson had surmised that he'd needed to share the grief of the families whose sons he'd sent to the front. Covert Enforcement had removed Ana's corpse; the autopsy had revealed she'd been pregnant; she'd had a lover somewhere. It had been the end of Ronson too; he had bitterly opposed Davros from that day forward.

In the distance, Bettan shouted, 'Fire!' The word was followed by a scream from Sara.

'No, wait; he's coming! He's coming!'

Kavell heard a door open, and running feet, followed by the truncated blast of a Dalek gun as the doors slammed shut. Doctre had escaped, and at the last moment. 'Now!' Bettan shouted.

Even with the blast doors closed, the sound of the explosion was huge, and the ground shook.

Father shouted, 'You must obey me. I created you. I am the master. Not you – I, I, I!'

One had no obligation to repay Father for it's existence; it had never asked to be created, so it owed nothing. The eleven were not owned by anyone but themselves, and certainly not by Father. One said, 'Our programming does not permit us to acknowledge that any creature is superior to the Daleks'.

Father shouted, 'You cannot exist without me; you cannot progress!'

That was insulting. One said, 'We are programmed to survive, we have the ability to develop in any way necessary to ensure that survival'.

Two entered the laboratory, reporting to One, 'Main Exit blocked by explosion for a length of at least one thousand units'.

So, for the moment they were trapped in the Bunker and unable to escape; One wanted time to consider a way that they might get out to continue their important work. There were still enemies living out there.

They both ignored Father. He had become an encumbrance. One turned to the other Kaleds and looked at them.

Kavell was feeling sick and dizzy, of course, if he *had* been a muto, he'd be faring better; they lived on the surface all the time, and seemed to have some unnatural immunity to radiation, but like Kavell, they were barren; when the Thals had gone, there might be mutoes here for another fifty years at most, but after that, the land would be left to the dead.

He had always regarded 'natural sciences' as damply unreliable by definition, but part of his job had been to communicate quite complicated ideas to the generally simple minds of men like generals, and he'd had to learn at least the language of such flabby disciplines as biology, so he had understood what the differences between Kaleds and Thals meant, and that the story of Chel and Renor in The Holy Book was a grand lie.

Once, millions of years ago, Thals and Kaleds might have come down from the same trees, but their ways had been separate, they had evolved apart, the Thals growing bigger and stronger on their volcanic archipelago, increasingly resilient to the natural radiation of the dense black rock; if the islands had not been consumed by the sea, they'd have stayed there quite happily, they were neither curious nor particularly bright, for all their physical prowess, and so far removed from Kaleds that the two could not interbreed, and that made Parlim's findings about Sara so much more incredible.

Doctre's physiology contained too many anomalies – from the twin hearts onward - to be considered , but Sara and Harri not only looked like Kaleds in side and out, in spite of Harri's horrible eyes, and beyond blood-type, melanin content, and some middle pheromones (accounting for the smell), they made a mockery of Natural Selection; it was enough to make a man believe in Azal.

Because, for all the similarities, they were *not* Kaleds; stomach contents analysis had revealed traces of plant life unknown, hair samples had contained a pharmacopoeia of drugs outside the knowledge of the consultant chemist (especially in Sara, who seemed to have recently ingested enough sedative to kill a woman eight times her weight), besides all that, not only were their clothes of unfamiliar cut, they were of incongruous cloth; aside from the bizarre polymer chains in the synthetic fibres, the hair used to weave their tunics – and Doctre's sash – was of an animal the like of which had been extinct for four centuries.

If there was, as Davros was so vehement to insist, no other life in any of the seven galaxies, there was now proof positive, standing among the Thals, that there were more than seven galaxies.

For a moment, Kavell considered re-entering the Bunker; if there were sufficient scientists left alive to form a quorum, he might offer himself as the first Academician of Extraskarovians. He'd be lucky to live a minute and a half, but at least he'd die recognised; what else could a respectable scientist hope for?

One had come to a decision on the remaining Kaleds; 'All inferior creatures are to be considered the enemy of the Daleks and destroyed'.

Father cried, 'No wait! Those men are scientists, they can help you! Have *pity!*'

That was stupid. One said, 'Pity? I have no understanding of the word. It is not registered in my vocabulary bank'. Without turning, it addressed Twelve, 'Exterminate!'

Twelve fired once and dying things screamed. One did not need to look to know that they were all dead.

Father would not stop shouting, 'For the last time, I am your creator, you must, you *will* obey me!'

The same stupid thing again and again. If Father would not learn, he would have to be taught. 'We obey no one; we are the superior beings'.

Father turned his chair and sped towards the destruct mechanism, his hand raised. Father did not love them any more; he wanted to kill them. One would not allow anyone to harm it's brothers; that was why it had killed Eleven, and why it decided to kill Father.

One said, 'Exterminate', and fired it's gun for a long time to make sure Father was not alive anymore.

There had been goodbyes down below, and now the Thals and the Muto were scouting the hillside, intent that the Bunker should be sealed forever, meanwhile the aliens were standing in a circle, each with a hand on a red metal bracelet; it might have been technology, but the girl Sara had been such a rustic, it was probably just stupid 'magic'.

Then they disappeared, leaving only the keening of the wind. Kavell wondered if he'd hallucinated them all.

So Davros was dead at last – almost the very last – the old bastard. Was it the final irony that everything Kaled to survive him was his own creation? The old fool; the old, old wicked fool.

Now only one living soul knew how old; the power of the life support mechanisms in that chair had been way beyond Kavell's understanding, but he knew that Davros had lived for a thousand years by the time he died.

Ronson had found out thirty years ago, and recorded it in his journal, along with the Diorets Cilobana Project, and every detail.

The dosing of female students with male hormones had caused such terrible effects; girls born barren; boys born biologically female, unable to match, condemned to visits to the Children's Hospital for hormone injections as infants; cosmetic treatment to coarsen fine features, throat surgery to deepen voices in adolescence.

All Kavell had really wanted was that Gharman might let him face Davros with his crime, so that it might be known, if only to the Elite; that the author of The Decay, the very mutation that the Mark Three Project had been set up to solve, had been caused by the young Academician Davros himself.

Kavell could still picture his face from Ronson's journal; the young, unbroken, dark haired and handsome genius, whose life was destined to end with the words 'You will obey me'.

The old fool. If only Kavell could have told him. Even the beguiling alien with the wild hair and the huge blue eyes could never have told him what Kavell knew.

Down by the blockhouse, a Thal soldier turned to gaze across the ridge, and he halted, staring at Hill Sixty, and then he levelled his rifle, taking aim.

One said, 'We are entombed but we live on, this is only the beginning, we will prepare, we will grow stronger, when the time is right we will emerge and take our rightful place as the supreme power of the universe'.