

“The air is disgusting!” Donna said, turning to face the Doctor. The words reverberated off his ears; he was staring at the poison sky over her shoulder, his mind scrambling --

No. Order. Discipline. Donna, beginning to blink, faded into the distance as he receded into his mindscape, a TARDIS-shaped palace of organized ideas and memories. The console, covered with an intricate fractal groove, thrummed with irregular pulse as the cloister bell intoned from deep inside a distant corridor. With a thought, the Doctor was in its chamber, watching it sway back and forth. (It was his mind palace, after all; physical limitations needn't apply.) He reached out to steady it, but it resisted his touch.

Order, he repeated. It stopped mid-swing.

Now, to think. The Doctor was back in his console room. *What do I have?* Tiny figures floated across his consciousness, lining themselves neatly on his console.

- Donna
- a Sontaran clone of Martha
 - with high-level UNIT access
 - Martha trapped by Sontarans nearby
 - basement?
 - Sontaran teleport within?
- TARDIS
 - likely Sontaran target
- UNIT (uncooperative)
 - will launch attack on Sontarans

What do I want?

- Earth safe
 - from Sontarans
 - no nuclear attack
 - from Luke Rattigan

And how do I use what I have to get what I want?

The Time Lord brain has an amazing power: that of running very accurate simulations, extremely quickly. It evolved this power over centuries of competitive engineering in the highly rigid social structure of native Gallifreyan society. While mere humans needed to use

mathematics and other such models to understand complex physical phenomena, Time Lords have direct intuition for even the trickiest of relativistic mechanics and quantum behavior. And these intuitions are also very, very good for modelling behavior. Human, or otherwise.

Beneath the surface of his consciousness, synapses interacted and stretched, flicking through simulation after extrapolated simulation in mere milliseconds. Finally, he latched onto a certain plan: every step engineered, every word and action calculated. It appeared like a little maze in the air, then slotting into place in the groove on the console: just another twist in the infinite map of space and time, the centillions of recursive plots hatching throughout the galaxies, set into motion by a hidden hand aeons ago ...

Leaping out the doors of his mindscape and back to reality, the Doctor stared into Donna's eyes, still mid-blink. "Oh, Donna," he said. "It's not so bad for me. Go on, get inside the TARDIS. Surely much cleaner in there."

As she nodded her agreement, a grin split his face. *All according to plan.*