

Proposal for a *Doctor Who* novel featuring
the eighth Doctor, Fitz, and Compassion

“FRONTIER WORLDS”

by Peter Anghelides

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Second Draft

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Frontier Worlds

Proposal for an 85,000-word *Doctor Who* novel by Peter Anghelides

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The planet **Drebnar** is one of a number of frontier worlds settled by humans in the future. Drebnar is a rare find - a planet with substantial areas of fertile land, no intelligent life forms, and stable tectonics. At this stage in its history, with the planet being ground-broken by exploratory Earth corporations, it has a population of only about five million. (This will seem a lot to Fitz - it's more people than live in the London of his era.). The planet has become the breadbasket of the array of nearby planets.

This is a story about genetically-modified organisms, and an attempt by a group of humans to extend their lives by adopting a plant-like regenerative cycle. There is, of course, a pleasant irony that this mirrors not only the Doctor's regenerative abilities but also the way that Fitz (Kode) and Compassion were repeatedly regenerated in the Remembrance Tanks (in *Interference*).

However, there are no dependencies on other Eight Doctor novels or previous *Doctor Who* continuity - despite a couple of nonessential references to *Alien Bodies* and *Interference*. As third in the five-book arc, it does introduce further evidence of Compassion's continuing slow evolution into a TARDIS, but the idea is that you don't need to know that... it's just nice for regular readers if they notice it.

Other books in the story sequence seem to separate Fitz and Compassion, so I have kept them together in this book. This also plays to the Doctor's agenda for Compassion.

Opening sequence (Doctor's POV)

The Doctor is on the very edge of a research station, which is perched on a craggy outcrop of a snow-covered mountain-top. The Doctor is trying to persuade a man, **Dewfurth**, out of throwing himself

to his death on the rocks below. The Doctor fails, and Dewfurth vanishes onto the jagged rocks below. The Doctor then hurries away to join Fitz, and the two of them start fleeing from some unnamed pursuers from the research station.

During the chase, we learn something about what they're doing - investigating a research corporation called **Frontier Worlds**, which is involved in dubious research on the planet Drebnar. The TARDIS was drawn here by odd fluctuations, which may have come from the Weather Control Platform above them. (This is a crude arrangement - a huge football-field-sized atmospheric balloon tethered by giant hawsers, holding up what is effectively a low-orbit satellite. Cheap, ugly, nasty, efficient.) Fitz and Compassion have been trying to break into Frontier Worlds Corporation, while the Doctor has been investigating a similar biodiversity company called Reddenblak elsewhere on the planet. His investigations at Reddenblak's Market Intelligence group led him to this Frontier Worlds facility, and contact with Dewfurth who wanted to sell out to the rival Corporation - hence this rendezvous.

At one stage during the ensuing chase, the Doctor and Fitz are forced to flee towards a Lake of Ice, as they attempt to get round a convoy of big green loaded motorised sleds. Fitz strays on to the ice, but the Doctor draws him back - below the ice are weird piranha-like creatures, who can track sound above the ice and break through the thinnest parts to devour unwary prey. (We see a local animal being dragged to its death this way.)

The Doctor points out that their pursuers are only aware that he was in the research station - Fitz should try to get back down the mountain to Compassion, while the Doctor draws them away. (As it's the Doctor's POV, we can learn that this is still part of his plan to have Fitz and Compassion spend time together to "humanise" her). Don't worry, says the Doctor, I'll e-mail you instructions. Fitz reluctantly agrees, though he's only just getting to grips with this new electronic communications stuff: "The e-mail of the species is more deadly than the mail," he observes.

Unseen now by Fitz, the Doctor races off - across the ice! Behind him, the pursuers halt by the

edge of the lake, take aim, and fire weapons at the Doctor. The Doctor is shot, but struggles to the side of the lake and into rough undergrowth.

While hiding, the Doctor sees the pursuers stop. Their leader, **Temmm Sempiter**, has found the Doctor's fresh blood in the snow. Sempiter scoops up a handful in a curious gesture... even if he gets away, they can track him down. He taps his foot in the snow in a characteristic, impatient gesture.

Second sequence

We're in first-person narration by a man called Frank. Frank has worked on Drebnar for the Frontier Worlds Corporation for two months. We get a distinct, somewhat cruel perspective on Frank's colleagues at Frontier Worlds, the dull days, his network of friends, his main squeeze **Alura Trebul**, and his sister Nancy. Eventually, we'll twig that Frank and Nancy Sinatra are actually Fitz and Compassion; Fitz is livening up his undercover work in the way only he can. he's quite fond of quoting Sinatra lyrics in conversation, explaining that he is descended from King Elvis, fully aware that the other workers don't get the gag.

Fitz and Compassion have already been working in Frontier Worlds HQ for about two months. (When Fitz asked why he wasn't working with them at Frontier Worlds, the Doctor alleges that he somehow failed the job interview.) After obtaining some information about the mountainside research centre Fitz had gone to join the Doctor on their earlier rendezvous (previous sequence). After their close escape, and with the Doctor still not in contact, Fitz has returned to his undercover work.

To one side of the Frontier Worlds HQ is the mountain, to the other is forest and jungle, and beyond that are supposed to be further Frontier Worlds facilities.

So Fitz is working as personal assistant and dogsbody to **Griz Ellis**, a huge and grubby man who is conducting research at HQ into the effects of electromagnetic forces on plant life. Fitz has been inoculated - but isn't sure whether this is to protect him from research accidents or from Ellis's dubious

personal hygiene. Ellis drives Fitz mad with his pedantic corrections and unwelcome advice about everything: “You’re doing it that way? Oh, big mistake. And that way too? Big mistake. Mega mistake.” And his constant harping on about how he wished he could go back to Earth where he was a biologist - “back to the land, putting down some roots”. It’s all talk - he’s doing nothing about it.

Fitz originally established a relationship with **Hannaw Applin**, who is executive secretary to their main boss, Temm Sempiter. Hannaw likes a good gossip, and although they’re no longer seeing each other, she will call Fitz up during the day (on his mobile phone, which is in a headset with speaker and ear piece) to bleat at him about her problems and then, when she’s dumped on him, let him talk; Fitz can tell she’s not listening after this point, because he can hear her typing in the background and the sound of her having a sneaky ciggie. Applin does reveal information to him about Frontier Worlds’ big rival company, the **Reddenblak Corporation**, who also have research facilities on Drebnar.

Compassion, in comparison, is working as a humble data entry clerk. The Doctor wangled them accreditation when they joined the Corporation (though they still had to provide the usual - ugh! - tissue samples when joining a food company). After this, the Doctor had left in the TARDIS - Compassion can sense that it is no longer nearby. She loves to get plugged into the Frontier Worlds planetary network (though is constantly frustrated by their security measures and company firewall). Compassion’s brain, like the TARDIS, is self-teaching, self-repairing, ever-evolving. Cut off from the TARDIS and unable to absorb information from there, she spends long periods attached to the Frontier Worlds systems, devouring what information she can.

Fitz is a bit worried about this obsession, particularly since they haven’t heard recently from the Doctor. Compassion is beginning to receive data from the newly-formed and still-growing parts of her own mind (these are the scaled-down versions of the TARDIS’ block transfer systems developing right there inside her own head), but she thinks she’s getting instructions and directions from the distant TARDIS. (The Doctor will later tell her that this is impossible.) This all comes out in a conversation with

Fitz about how he can understand the alien tongues on this planet.

Since Compassion seems preoccupied with her work, however, Fitz spends more time getting familiar with Alura Trebul's alien tongue. Alura is amused by Fitz's apparent paranoia about his apartment being bugged. We know, from his own narrative, why he's worried about being caught as a spy. He doesn't let her into any of his spying secrets.

Compassion's colleagues include **Natalie Alder**, a rather dim office worker who strikes up an unlikely friendship. Natalie used to have a "thing" with Ellis, they were practically married, but he's gone all distant and strange recently.

Before all this office intrigue gets a bit too dull, you'll be pleased to hear, Compassion uses a cipher than Fitz has managed to get out of Ellis, and discovers that there are genetic experiments happening on Level X of the building. She's also discovered one of the samples that they're experimenting on... a DNA sample which she recognises as the Doctor's. (Reference to the 69 chromosomes divided into 23 homogenous triads, mentioned in *Interference*.)

Fitz goes to investigate Level X, using Ellis's authority pass which he has appropriated. He meets an ill-looking Sempiter in the lift, bumping into him by accident; Fitz bumbles about with an apology, saying that he was going to deliver a printed report to Sempiter. Sempiter mumbles back that Fitz should e-mail it to him. "The e-mail of the species is more deadly than the mail," Fitz says, and hurries away. Sempiter still looks a bit groggy, so Fitz leaves him to it.

While looking around Level X, Fitz is surprised when Sempiter coming in after him! Sempiter doesn't notice him, and looks pretty grim and grey, tapping his foot rhythmically as usual. Sempiter takes a swig of baby bio, slumps in a chair, and appears to drop dead. Then, worse, he shrugs off his outer "skin", and a wrinkly new Sempiter slumps forward onto the desk. Fitz throws up in a bin and leaves before the new Sempiter opens his pruney new eyelids and sees him, but bumps into Ellis on the way out. Ellis doesn't realise that Fitz has been in the room, so Fitz gives him his authority pass back (as

though he'd just dropped it when they collided). Ellis is distracted because he's telling Sempiter that two visitors from Reddenblak have arrived. Sempiter groans - Ellis will have to deal with it, he needs to get to the mountainside research centre - his assistant Applin has his car ready.

Compassion was unable to join Fitz on his investigation, because just as she was setting off she was assigned to chaperone a couple of customer visitors to a meeting. She explains all this to Fitz when they meet up: she was puzzled by the request, and a bit suspicious, because she's supposed to be a data entry clerk. But, she explains, she went along anyway - the two customers had come to find out about the wonderful new foodstuff that Frontier Worlds has created, a genetically-modified crop called "Darkling" (because it grows throughout the night as well as the day).

Compassion is unnerved by this visit - not because she recognised them (she didn't), but because she can't understand how they knew about the Top Secret Darkling Project that she'd just unearthed on the computer system. Suspecting it must be a test of her loyalty, she warns Fitz that they may have been rumbled. Did they show on the planetary records, asks Fitz? No, says Compassion, they were off-worlders. Their names were **Mr Homunculette** and **Ms Marie**.

The twist here is that regular readers (only) will recognise these characters, and expect them to play an important part in the novel. But we know that they're just there to monitor Compassion's development, and they won't play any further part in the novel, so it will be doubly unnerving... first that they appear here in the first place, and secondly that, by the end of the novel, they haven't reappeared... so what's going on? Casual readers will assume that the point is that Fitz and Compassion have been rumbled, and later that the two customers really work for Reddenblak.

Third sequence (Doctor's POV)

The Doctor has been hiding out in the mountains, having survived his gunshot wound. He is surprised to

stumble across Dewfurth again, who miraculously survived his fall - he is half-naked, and the Doctor discovers him near to the shrugged-off remains of his previous body. Dewfurth is in despair - he can't even kill himself!

The Doctor comforts the distraught man. Dewfurth reveals how he had been experimenting with fast-yield crops which could better exploit the very fertile land which covers much of Drebnar. The other two majority shareholders in the company were an engineer, developing machinery to expedite crop production, and a physicist, developing a weather control system. But they soon realised that none of them would live long enough to enjoy the results of their lives' work. Then the engineer, Sempiter, discovered that he was dying from a wasting disease. He tried to develop a mechanical device, a robot to continue his work in his likeness, but that failed because he couldn't find a suitable fast-growing synthetic flesh. And then they discovered an extraordinary source of alien tissue on a mountainside site near their research facility...

Dewfurth takes the Doctor to the site. The Doctor is amazed to see the decaying corpse of a long-dead Raab, a huge plant creature the size of a blue whale, smashed into the mountainside. Raab travel for hundreds or thousands of years through space, absorbing the minute amounts of energy and sustenance as they travel between planets, and usually land heavily on barren asteroids or small moons; the impact spreads their seeds all over the immediate area. A handful of the many billions of seeds will make it through the rest of the cycle: growing with dramatic speed (mere months) as they absorb hugely greater amounts of sustenance than they did in space, until they're large enough to be able to spring their small new shoots from the asteroid, and continue to grow over the next hundreds of years in space as the cycle starts again - searching for another asteroid. What could have brought it into the gravity well of this planet?

What could have brought both of them, asks Dewfurth. *Both* of them, repeats the Doctor? And then he discovers that, just over the hill, there is another Raab, which is still just alive, and being guarded

by Frontier Worlds security. The Raab has been so confused by the signals that it wasn't prepared for impact, and its huge seed load is still contained inside its tough outer husk.

Both Raab are being guarded because they're being exploited by Frontier Worlds. More horribly, they're being gouged into chunks and fed into portable shredders carried by the security guards; the chunks are then being carted back to the research centre in the convoy of big green loaded motorised sleds that we saw at the start of the novel. Dewfurth says he helped to conduct the first Raab analysis, and he and his fellow scientists were able to change the DNA of some fish (which reproduced quickly, and showed early results). Then the scientists changed their own DNA by using the same invasive tissue from the Raab. Then they discovered that it was changing the fish - they are the piranha creatures in the Lake of Ice.

Sempiter still thinks it's a triumph, and now wants to extend the methodology to more conventional foodstuffs. Dewfurth knows what he has surrendered of himself to achieve this kind of immortality... the Raab element grows stronger with every "rebirth" that they endure, and although they only change annually, or when they are fatally injured, that's still too fast to stay at all human. That's why Dewfurth tried to kill himself when the Doctor tracked him down: he is responsible for the DNA changes, and he will be responsible for what happens to the rest of the planet when Frontier Worlds succeeds in growing its first crop of Darkling.

The Doctor is alarmed by this, but Dewfurth has finally gone over the edge. He stumbles off towards the Lake of Ice. The Doctor struggles with Dewfurth, fighting to prevent him going onto the ice as he becomes more delirious, seizing him by his torn jacket. What's bringing the Raab here? What is the Darkling crop, and where is it? Dewfurth looks to the skies, and while the Doctor is distracted by this gesture, slips out of his jacket and stumbles off towards the Raab crash site. The Doctor is unable to reach him before he throws himself at one of the security guards' shredders (yuk).

The Doctor reasons to himself that the Raab must be crashing unwillingly to their doom, drawn

off course by the climate control system. And that control system is housed beneath the huge tethered balloon in the distance. In the torn jacket, the Doctor finds Dewfurth's personal authority card.

The Doctor uses the authority card to get up to the Weather Control Platform beneath the atmospheric balloon, using a cable car attached to one of the giant hawsers. Up there, he sabotages the mechanics which are both controlling the weather and drawing the Raab creatures off course and to their doom on the mountainside. He also hunts out some information about Darkling, and learns about the Reddenblak Corporation. Reddenblak are looking to increase their market share by a strategy of: diversify, embrace, extinguish. (This is the same method that the Raab would use, unwittingly, if the seed load scattered on this fertile planet - with no way for the new seedlings to escape from the planet's gravity.) The Doctor makes some changes to the computer systems and the company firewall, but when he tries to contact Fitz and Compassion he realises he's been discovered and captured. Captured, in fact, by a robot guard which behaves uncannily like Temm Sempiter, right down to the impatiently tapping foot. As the conversation proceeds, the robot starts to pick up characteristics of the Doctor's.

The Doctor is put into a cable car, which makes its way down one of the huge hawsers towards the mountainside research station. He is frustrated to find that he can't get out, but notices an escape glider attached to the side of the balloon (also frustratingly unreachable).

When the cable car touches ground, the Doctor is taken to see Sempiter, who is present at the mountainside research centre. Sempiter is looking a lot fresher than when we last saw him. (He's also, bizarrely, brought with him his pet budgie in a cage. It's a robot bird.) As the Doctor is hustled into the room, he can overhear an argument that Sempiter is having with Ellis (who is still back at Frontier Worlds HQ, at the base of the mountain).

Ellis is explaining that representatives of the Reddenblak Corporation have asked to meet the Frontier Worlds board to offer an agreed buyout of the company. Ellis thinks they should sell up, accusing Sempiter of being a control freak - they could still carry on their research, while letting

Reddenblak take the strain of the day-to-day business; but Sempiter refuses, and is furious when he realises that the Reddenblak people obviously know about the top secret Darkling crop. Who could have leaked the information? A check on all outgoing e-mail reveals it was Dewfurth. But Dewfurth killed himself, surely? And the last person seen with him was... that intruder (the Doctor) at the research station! A search of the Doctor reveals that he has Dewfurth's authority card.

They take the Doctor to a laboratory, where they plan to investigate his DNA, which has intrigued them since they got the tiniest sample from his blood earlier. Sempiter notes that the Doctor's gunshot wound seems to be healing remarkably quickly - in fact, the ordered nature of his unusual DNA suggests that he could be even more useful than anything they've found on this planet so far (reference again to the triple-helix mentioned in *Interference* - these are the results that Compassion recognised earlier on in her database search).

Sempiter also wants to know who the Doctor was trying to contact in Frontier Worlds HQ just before he was captured - could there be others like him? Sempiter gets his assistant, Applin, to instigate a search of employee DNA sample while he gets on undisturbed with taking a larger DNA sample from the Doctor. A fairly substantial sample in fact... not something he's likely to survive.

The Doctor stalls the experiment by exploiting what he's learned from the late Dewfurth, quizzing Sempiter about the Raab, explaining how terribly risky it is to use the Raab corpses, and discovering (to his horror) what Sempiter is now doing. Sempiter reveals he and his research colleagues have changed their own DNA to prolong their lives, using Raab tissue. Now he is extending this to natural foodstuffs, and has created the Darkling wheat crop on the fertile ground of this frontier world - and what's more, he's fertilising it still more with the Raab mulch (ikk!). This will get around the problems they currently have with the altered DNA, which requires a painful annual "shedding" of their outer layer to survive. It is also a more subtle way of extending the programme to the rest of the population and, eventually, other frontier worlds who will be dependent on the output of Drebnar.

The Doctor tells him that this help the Raab wipe out the human race on all the frontier worlds. Sempiter seems strangely unmoved by this intelligence. Besides, Sempiter and the Doctor seem very much alike - they both have tissue-deep regenerative abilities. The Doctor manages to escape his shackles in a neat feat of escapology, and locks Sempiter in the laboratory. There's no way that Sempiter can contact anyone while he's locked in here, says the Doctor. To demonstrate this, he pulls the wires out of the wall to disable the intercomms system: "The e-mail of the species is more deadly than the mail," he tells Sempiter. Then he waves something at Sempiter and vanishes.

Short fourth sequence

This is Sempiter's POV, for the first time in the novel). Thirty minutes later, Applin comes to see how Sempiter is getting on with his dissection. Sempiter recognised the Doctor's comment about e-mail, because Fitz used the same phrase to him earlier in the Frontier Worlds HQ. Sempiter tells Applin to search out the specific DNA samples for Frank Sinatra, and anyone hired about the same time. Applin says no need - that must be his sister, Nancy. (And to think she once fancied him, the traitorous git.) Sempiter sees the DNA results for "Frank" and "Nancy", and realises that they have regenerative qualities in their tissue. "Nancy" is particularly interesting.

Applin says that she will call Fitz and activate his phone headset, then keep busy while the guards move in. They can then recapture the Doctor when he tries to contact or reach his associates. Sempiter makes a call of his own. Then he decides to go back to the HQ for himself - and realises that what the Doctor was waving at him when he left were the keys to his flyer, pick-pocketed from him.

Fifth sequence (Fitz's first-person narration)

In Fitz's apartment: Alura is quizzing Fitz about his career plans again. Fitz fobs off her growing suspicions with a metaphor from his days on Earth, which he's never told anyone else... how in another

life he could have been Franz-Joachim Kreiner, if his father had made a different choice. Alura (who thinks that Fitz is called Frank Sinatra of course) confesses that she's found who she wants to be; she's exactly the Alura Trebul she wants to be, now that she's with him. (Ahhh!).

Fitz and Compassion discover lots of dreadful genetic experimental horrors, lashing around on Level X. Compassion has mysteriously been able to tap into the computer network and get them unlimited access (what is this strange power she has?).

Fitz takes a call from Applin. He suspects that she's trying to keep him occupied, find out where he is - because she's not talking about herself, and he can't hear her having her sneaky ciggie and tapping on her keyboard. He makes an excuse to pause the conversation, and tells Compassion that they've been rumbled. Compassion wants to escape immediately, but Fitz wants to go back to the apartment to take Alura - she's waiting at home for him, but he cannot get through on the phone to her. Compassion isn't convinced, but reluctantly goes with him. Fitz leaves his mobile phone headset behind, leaving the line to Applin open.

They find the apartment is wrecked, and Alura (waiting at home for Fitz) has been murdered, and the phone is off the hook - connected to the security services! Alura must have been calling the cops, but was killed. As Fitz and Compassion make this horrible discovery, the cops arrive - except that they're really Frontier Worlds security staff! Fitz and Compassion flee out the back way. As they're leaving, they run into Griz Ellis in the street. He says he's come to find Fitz - he's discovered the experiments on Level X, and is shocked and surprised by them, Sempiter's been keeping things from him! Ellis flees with them, much to their disgust - otherwise he'll take the rap for the experiments.

Making the best of it, Compassion gets Ellis to let them use his company short-range flyer, planning to get them to the mountain and search for the Doctor and the TARDIS. But they are pursued by the security staff. Ellis infuriates Compassion with his unwanted advice ("not a good idea"/"Bad move"/"Big mistake"/"Mega mistake etc.).

Compassion steers the craft on a collision course with the pursuing craft, and the chicken run results in a collision. The other flyer is destroyed in mid-air, while their flyer plunges into the jungle far beyond the HQ. Compassion is hurt, Fitz is remarkably unscathed, and Ellis is knocked out. Compassion takes an axe from the wreckage, and they start to hack their way through the jungle. She also persuades a reluctant Fitz to leave the unconscious Ellis behind.

In the jungle, it's going to be a long trek to the other side of the jungle - where they will find the Darkling facility (and perhaps a way of escaping). Compassion doesn't want to eat, so Fitz guzzles what rations they've taken (He's wildly overloaded, of course, having overestimated what he can carry on their trek. Compassion takes the pack off him, and carries it effortlessly for him.

Fitz worries about sleeping in the jungle. In fact, he's worried about what he will dream. Compassion will not be drawn on what she dreams about, but Fitz explains to her that he's worried about how he's been remembered by the Faction; usually, you worry about how you will be remembered in the future (posterity) - he's worried about how he was remembered in the past. Are his dreams really his? Some nights, he's frightened to sleep. The TARDIS was supposed to bring him back to his previous self - but has it changed him?

They are surprised when Ellis catches up with them. They struggle on until they choose a spot to camp for the night. Overnight, they leave him again - Compassion seems to need no sleep, much to Fitz's tired disbelief.

Despite her injuries in the crash, Compassion's body seems to be slowly reconstructing itself, piece by piece (as though concentrating on one injury at a time). She seems to have a high pain threshold. Fitz is beginning to despair, so she gets him focused again by boosting his morale about his role with the Doctor, etc. He believes her, and they get going again.

Then Ellis catches up with them again, full of his usual irritating confidence ("You're doing such-and-such. Oh, big mistake." etc.). In a quiet moment, Compassion reveals to Fitz that she can

detect faint transmissions - even without her ear piece in (how odd, Fitz thinks). They set off without Ellis once more, but Compassion gets them to double back so that Ellis is ahead of them. Then she examines Fitz, and discovers that he has a bug under the skin of his upper arm, where he was “inoculated” by the Corporation when they joined. She removes the bug - somehow displacing it, but she can’t explain how any more than she can explain how Fitz can sing in tune and she cannot. Ellis turns up again, having doubled back himself. In the ensuing conversation, Ellis asks Fitz whether he knows of an employee called Franz-Joachim Kreiner. Fitz realises Ellis can only have heard that from Alura - and at the apartment that morning. There’s a struggle, and within moments Ellis is holding Fitz and Compassion at gun point. And yes, he’s been using the “bug” in Fitz’s arm to track them at close range.

Ellis had hoped that they would lead them to their accomplice, or that their accomplice would come to him. Before she died, Alura had muttered only the name “Franz-Joachim Kreiner” (who Ellis had assumed to be their accomplice). Ellis was aware of the Level X experiments all along, of course, and what’s more he was aware of the unique properties of Fitz’s DNA ever since he joined the company (how else would a complete newcomer get a job as his personal assistant?). But Ellis doesn’t trust Sempiter any more; he thinks that he can do a deal with the Reddenblak Corporation to offer them his own research, including Fitz as research material - he’ll just have to do without the accomplice now. Sadly, Ellis adds, he will also have to do without Compassion as well - he can only manhandle one hostage with him. He seizes the exhausted Fitz, and aims the gun at Compassion. Compassion flings the axe at him with unerring accuracy, and slices his head open. “Big mistake,” she tells his corpse. “Mega mistake.”

Fitz insists that they rest. He’s exhausted, and rather shaken by Compassion’s risky rescue. He sleeps for a while, and Compassion wakes him when they hear a noise nearby. To their horror, they find that it’s Ellis - through the wound in his head, a newly-growing head is emerging. Ellis is another of the DNA-modified scientists. Compassion takes the axe and dispatches him for good. Fitz, of course, is

appalled by this. It's an example of Compassion's dispassionate, amoral approach - she can kill without compunction, because that's what she must do to survive. While she's at it, she also takes Ellis's authority card.

Eventually, Fitz and Compassion get out of the jungle, and find themselves at a small anonymous research facility where the darkling crop is being grown. They realise that, unlike the jungle, this whole site is unnaturally quiet - no insects, no birdsong, just the sound of the wind through the crop. (This is the "silent spring" element of the novel - Frontier Worlds are disrupting the food chain, and by making crops insect-resistant they're killing the insects; no insects means no birds; no birds means no birdsong; no birdsong means a silent spring.)

Fitz and Compassion break into the facility, and set fire to the entire 100-acre field. At which point the Doctor turns up, furious with them - they think they've sabotaged the Frontier Worlds Corp. plan, but actually what they're doing is scattering the delicate seeds all over this extremely fertile planet! They watch glumly as the flames lick out of control, hot air rising and carrying seeds into the night sky.

(This is also the point where we realise that Fitz's first-person narration has been to "you", where "you" turns out to be the Doctor... "That was the point, of course, when you finally showed up" sort of thing.)

Sixth sequence (Doctor's POV)

The Doctor has an idea (pew). He could use the Weather Control Platform to get things sorted out. Meanwhile, Fitz and Compassion had better get to the HQ and destroy the genetic experiments there. What with, they ask. Weed-killer, explains the Doctor.

On the Weather Control Platform, the Doctor programs the whole area for torrential rain, to force the seeds out of the atmosphere and drench them in so much water that they will not grow. He has to fight off Sempiter's robot guard, arguing about what Sempiter's plans are - what the dangers are to

the whole planet, and can't the robot see that logically? However, in the struggle the controls for the cable car are damaged. The Doctor flees for the roof, trying to reach the emergency escape glider, but the robot pursues him, denying the Doctor's lies about Sempiter. They fight on the roof, and in the struggle the robot slips, clutching at the balloon hawsers which become detached. The Weather Control Platform starts to drop. The Doctor clammers into the escape glider, and manoeuvres it to safety. But it has no power...

Seventh sequence (Fitz's first-person narration)

Fitz and Compassion have been dropped off by the Doctor at Frontier Worlds HQ. They get in using Ellis' identity card, and shut down the genetic experiments, but are unable to escape - they are confronted by Sempiter and his guards. An attempt to spray Sempiter with Roundup is not a great success, he just stands there tapping his foot in his usual infuriating manner. They try to pull rank, saying that they now have Ellis's authority (and produce his authority card as proof). Sempiter points out that actually Ellis's estate goes to his former main squeeze, the delightful Natalie Allder. Natalie turns up, and is given the authority card.

Just as Fitz and Compassion are being escorted from the building, the Reddenblak party arrive again. They confront Sempiter in the main reception, and inform him that their take-over has been approved. They will buy Frontier Worlds and shut it down, because they have their own food crop - the Darkling crop would be too successful, and would put them out of business (like Philips faced with the prospect of an everlasting light bulb). They're here to complete the transaction, as they now have a majority voting for the merger.

Sempiter doesn't believe them (and he's looking a bit grey around the gills by this point). They point out that the votes of Natalie Allder and the Doctor (who currently owns Dewfurth's share) outvote Sempiter's. In fact, it was the Doctor who originally contacted them about this take-over plan - where is

he? At this point, there's a terrible crash as a glider smacks straight into the building's foyer.

The Doctor steps out, and shows his authority card to the Reddenblak purchasers. He tells Fitz and Compassion that they must now go back to the mountainside and ensure that the corpses of the Raab are destroyed. Sempiter is naturally a bit put out by this, and lunges at them with a machine gun snatched from a guard. Fortunately, another guard shoot him down, smashing him out into the muddy street and the drenching rain. But he gets up anyway, and makes a run for his flyer, shouting that he will free the Raab.

The Doctor, Fitz, and Compassion decide they must go after him to stop him - because he is now mostly Raab himself, he can fertilise the dying Raab and destroy the planet. They collect enough of the weed killer from Level X, and then take a company vehicle up the mountain.

On the way, Compassion scorns the Doctor for throwing her and Fitz together - she's "learned" nothing from her experience (which the Doctor had hoped), and she used Fitz when she needed to (e.g. the morale boost in the jungle). The Doctor thinks there has been some change in her. She says it's just more information, more data.

Fitz argues with her - he tells her she has changed. She's even harder than she was when they first met. He reminds her of her behaviour in the jungle, of his human concerns about his dreams, how the Faction may have mis-remembered him. Whereas she has evolved over years and years, and seems less human than ever. Whereas he was changed back into his frail human self by the TARDIS (at the end of *Interference*). How can Compassion know what it's like to be changed like that, he sneers? "We're all evolving, Fitz," she says.

They're travelling out to the Lake of Ice in the rain, which is finally easing off. The Doctor and Fitz make towards the Raab remains, while Compassion goes to search for Sempiter. Just as Fitz and the Doctor are about to hose down the huge Raab, Sempiter staggers out and confronts them. Beside him is Compassion, who is being held in a fierce grip by the battered but functional Sempiter-robot,

which survived its fall from the falling satellite.

The “real” Sempiter’s wounds from the attack at Frontier Worlds HQ are healing swiftly; in fact, he’s now a rather gruesome-looking naked creature, half-man and half-Raab, and brandishing a flare gun. He’s going to graft himself onto the dying Raab on the mountainside, and get it to explode its spores into the atmosphere, suitably affected by his genetically-modified DNA.

The Doctor tries to reason with him, pointing out that he’s no longer human, that he’s endangering the whole planet, that his original aspirations have been perverted - just look at what his experimentation did to the insects and birds in the Darkling zone, what it did to the piranha-fish. Sempiter, he says, doesn’t understand the value of life... you could see that from the way he ignores it, preferring to create and control robotic creations like the bird - and even that is still caged.

Fitz realises that the Doctor’s actually addressing all this to the Sempiter-robot, which is obviously moved by the Doctor's reasoning, releases Compassion and seizes Sempiter. The robot carries the wildly-struggling half-man half-Raab across the Lake of Ice. It stops in the centre, tapping its foot imperiously like Sempiter did, but also cocking its head to one side in a Doctor-like gesture. The piranha creatures break through the ice, and Sempiter and his robot plunge through to their doom.

As they finish their gruesome task of dispersing the remains of the dead Raab, Fitz says he isn’t worried about dreams any more - now he’s more likely to have nightmares! What does Compassion dream of, he persists? She says: “The Time Vortex” .That sounds like a cue for us to leave, says the Doctor, and they make their way to the TARDIS. What does the Doctor dream of? “A nice cup of Earl Grey tea.”

The End