

GETAWAY DRIVER

“Und now, is time to conclute our show.” Faustus proclaims, shuffling to the side of the stage with his slight stoop. He reaches off-stage and pulls out a black hula-hoop. “But first, one last trick.” The audience cheer at that. “We start Jackie, yes?” Again the audience roars its approval, filling the small theatre.

Jackie steps off her pedestal and pads over, rubbing her striped head against Faustus’ leg, a deep rumbling purr thrumming through the smoky air. Faustus holds out the hoop at shoulder height. “Jackie,” he pauses, a low drum roll coming from somewhere, “jump.” Jackie pads away from his side, crouches and leaps through the hoop. Nothing emerges from the other side. Faustus twirls the empty hoop and the audience clap.

“Thank you.” He bows slightly. “Samantha?”

Samantha steps forward, wrapped in a shadowy black cat suit, the stage half-visible through her.

Faustus places the hoop on the stage. “Please.” Samantha steps into the hoop. “Wave bye bye.” Still beaming, Samantha waves her translucent hand to the audience as Faustus raises the hoop. Below the hoop, Samantha vanishes. She gives the audience a shocked ‘oh’ of surprise as Faustus raises the hoop up her body.

“Bye all.” the hoop passes over her head and sweeps over her raised, still waving, hand.

“Petra.”

“Uhm, slight problem, boss.”

Faustus looks back and slaps his head as Petra and Zilvara take careful steps forward, their bodies joined together at the waist, forcing them to crab crawl along, their conjoined legs taking similarly sized steps. Faustus mutters in something that might be Polish. He lifts the conjoined body up, balancing them on Petra’s hands and holding Zilvara up as they handwalk into the hoop. “Balance, please.”

“Yeah, sure, bo...” Faustus pulls the hoop up and Petra goes quiet as her head disappears.

Faustus keeps raising the hoop until it is level with the joined sisters waist.

“Ok, what now?” Faustus smiles and yanks the hoop sideways, leaving Zilvara’s body floating on empty air. She looks down. “Uhm, aren’t you forgetting something?”

“Ach...” he lifts the legs up, standing them, very unsteadily, on Zilvara’s black heels. He brings the hoop down to the joined waist, wiping out Petra’s legs. He jerks it sideways and settles Zilvara’s body on her waist. She looks down at her butt, now directly under her navel, as the flesh fuses together.

“Boss...” Faustus drops the hoop over her, and Zilvara vanishes as it plunges around her, rattling on the stage.

“No backtalk.” He turns on the empty stage to the audience. “Thank you all, good night.” He picks up the hoop and walks off stage.

In his dressing room, a small white room the paint cracking along the walls, Faustus pulls off the old face, standing up straight. The door opens behind him, its bright red paint faded. In the doorway was Mr. Christian, the manager of the theatre, his thick cigar clamped in his jaws, one hand raised to knock. Mr

Christian fills the doorway, his suit crumpled but functional, wisps of his once thick brown hair stretched over his head, his dark eyes sunken behind his red jowls. “Well, my boy,” he started, as always, “quite a show tonight.”

“Thanks.”

“Still can’t see how you do it.” He shrugs, “But the punters seem to love you, so it really doesn’t matter.”

“Sorry, Mr. Christian, you know a magician can’t reveal his secrets.”

“I know, I know. I’ve worked with enough of you over the years. And, despite your peculiarities, I’ll admit you are one of the better-behaved ones.” Very reluctantly he reaches into his pocket, pulling out a roll of crumpled notes. With even more reluctance he begins to count them out, peeling the fee from the roll. “You sure you don’t want to…”

“Mr Christian, we’re fine. I’ve asked the girls, but they like living in the van.”

“Still don’t understand that. I mean, my place ain’t the Plaza, I know, but it ain’t near as expensive, either.”

“Well, Mr. Christian, even you’re very reasonable rates would put a serious bite on our finances. Off-strip isn’t exactly caning the money in, you know. And this sort of show costs.”

Mr Christian hands over the crumpled notes, “You don’t have to tell me that. You change your mind, you let me know, hear?”

“Yes, Mr Christian.”

“Good.” He smiles, “Good show tonight, my boy, good show.” He places the roll back in his pocket and walks out of the small room.

Paul checks the room, making sure he’s not leaving anything, slipping the hoop over his shoulder, “Uhm, Paul? We have a problem?”

Paul turns, Marcel filling the doorway as he stands out in the hallway. “They haven’t dropped one of the boxes again, have they?”

“No, no, the stuff on stage got moved no problem.” An unspoken ‘this time’ hangs in the air. “But, well, we can’t put them on the van. It’s gone.”

“What?!”

“The van’s gone. Vanished.”

“Vanished?”

“Driven off. No one saw or heard anything.”

“Shit! Shit! Shit! Shit!”

“Paul?”

“I sent the girl’s there. Shit!”

“Did you change them back before you sent them?”

“Shit! Shit! Shit!”

“That’s a no, isn’t it? So, what are we going to do? Call the police?”

“Yeah. You do that. I’m going to find the van.” He sits into the creaking wooden-folding chair, staring into the mirror.

“Right. I’ll sort out the cops. I’ll be with the gear; don’t want to leave stuff lying around too long around here.”

Aboard the Tardis, a tiger pads out of her room into the back of the van, feeling the engine rattling under her feet. She sniffs, getting mostly petrol fumes, a whiff of rubber and too many familiar scents to pick out the new one. Jackie growls softly as she pads towards the double doors. *We shouldn’t be moving. He wouldn’t just reappear us in our rooms while we were driving. Not his style. Reappear in pieces, maybe.* She snorts to herself, unable to smile.

The other girls emerge, Samantha walking straight through her door, her shadowy body ignoring the wooden barrier. Zilvara follows carefully, taking unsteady backwards steps in her bare feet. Petra emerges last, wearing a tight blue one-piece with an extra-thick belt around the waist to keep her together. “So, what’s going on? Paul?!”

“Who’s driving?”

The van takes a sharp left turn, rocking them about. “Definitely not Marcel driving.” Samantha notes as the floor tilts through her soles, “My sweetie would never do something that stupid.”

“Marcel drives like an old woman.” Zilvy murmurs under her breath.

“So who’s driving?” Petra repeats.

Jackie pads up to the front of the van, and sniffs, but steps back, her shoulder shrugging. “**Can’t smell anything. Too much petrol.**” She growls distastefully.

“Why would anyone want to steal the Tardis?” Zilvara asks, “I mean, if you don’t know about it, it’s hardly worth \$50. And that’s only if the tank’s full.”

“So someone knows?”

“Why else?”

“And we’re being taken along for the ride.”

“What’ll happen to us when we get to, well, wherever we’re going?”

“**Nothing good.**”

Zilvara nods, stepping back into her room and emerging with a gleaming katana. “We scare ‘em off.”

“We what? Sis, you’re out of you’re mind!”

“What? You want to sit back and let them steal us? Kidnap us? Not me.”

Jackie pats her with her paw and pads towards the door, lying with her head on her paws.

“She does have a point, Petra.”

“But, they could be armed!!”

“So’re we!” Zilvara lifts up the sword.

“I mean guns!”

“Hmmmmmm. We still scare ‘em.”

“Zilvy...”

“Uhm, we could use Marcel’s gun.”

“I thought he always carried that with him?”

“Well, he does.”

“So how does it...”

“But he keeps another one by the bed. Sort of a spare.”

“Marcel’s got a spare gun? That could be what we need. Where is it?”

“It’s in the drawer. I’ll get it.” She walks back through the door and then puts her head back. “Uhm, I can’t pick it up. I keep going through it.”

“Aww, that’s all right, hon. I’ll get it.” Petra opens the door through Samantha, who shivers.

“Ooooooh. Can we do that again later?”

Petra pulls the drawer open, reaching in to pick up the gun. To Marcel, it might be a small, backup gun, but it’s heavy. She holds it in both hands and raises it. “Go ahead, punk. Make my day.”

“Very classy, hon.”

Petra sticks her tongue out. They hear the brakes squeal. “It looks like we stopped. And I’m not armed!”

“Well, hon,” Petra tries to put her arm around Samantha and it slides through her shoulders, “it’s not like you could hold anything, is it?”

“Yeah, I,” Samantha beams, “I think I have an idea.” She reaches for Zilvara’s shadow and pulls the blade out of her shadow’s hand, holding a long, translucent black blade in her hand.

“Coooooooool!” Zilvara breathes.

“I’m not done yet. Petra, could you hold the gun out for me, please?”

“Oh, sure, hon.” Petra heaves the gun up and Samantha takes the shadow gun with her other hand.

“Aha, me hearties!” she brandishes the sword and gun.

“Watch it.”

“Whoops. Sorry, Zilvy.”

Zilvara glowers at her, replacing her hand on the end of her arm. Jackie growls, rising to her feet, her hackles rising.

“Showtime.” Zilvara grins, moonwalking forward.

Petra holds the gun in both hands, walking forward like she’s starring in a police show, the gun pointing at the floor.

The doors open and Jackie springs out with a roar.

“BANZAI!!!” Zilvara moves forward as Samantha runs through her and Petra raises the gun.

Dell sighs as the van’s engine dies. “Ok, Dad, you owe me big time for this one.” She mutters as she eases herself out of the cab. Her chestnut brown hair is tied back from her face, running through the back of her faded Lakers’ baseball cap. A black t-shirt hangs off her shoulders covering a chest she wished would develop at some point, tucked into her faded blue jeans. “Now, let’s see why you wanted me to take this junkpile. Hope it’s not too illegal this time. And your stupid job stopped me seeing the show today. And that Faustus guy’s pretty good to watch. Wish he did audience participation stunts. And that he’d pick me.” She opens the rear doors and screams as seven hundred pounds of roaring tiger leaps out at her. She hears someone shouting something, and then hits the floor with the tiger on top of her. The air rushes out of her lungs with a gasp. The tiger puts its paws on her shoulders, the huge weight sitting on her stomach. Its head tilts quizzically at her. She hears a gunshot, echoing in the warehouse and a brief yelp before she faints.

Dell slowly blinks her eyes open, feeling like someone’s rubbing wet sandpaper across her face. The tiger moves its face back from her face, regarding her with deep green eyes. Dell tries to sit up and immediately feels bands of metal around her wrists and neck, keeping her down. She tries moving her legs, but finds more bands around them and another crossing her waist. In all, she is fairly thoroughly stuck, and there’s a tiger right next to her. “Uhm, nice kitty. You’re not hungry, are you?” The tiger yawns, opening a mouth large enough to take Dell’s head in, and filled with long, sharp, pointy teeth. “Eeeps.”

“**Not really.**” The tiger growls, licking its lips.

“She’s awake?”

The tiger nods.

“The, the tiger…”

“Hmmm?”

“It talks!!!!”

“Jackie, I think you’re scaring her.” The tiger pads away.

“Good. She scared us.”

“Zilvy, that’s not very…”

“Don’t you tell me what’s nice. You almost killed me.”

"I didn't mean to. It was just so heavy it sort of, slipped."

"Will you two stop already? You've been going at it for more than an hour."

"She started it."

"I swear, sometimes you two act like you're eight years old."

"Yes, Aunt Samantha."

"And you can stop trying to be cute, Zilvy. She didn't come near you. You only got knocked over when her belt broke and she fell out. I was the one the bullet went through."

Zilvy pouts. "So, what are we going to do with her?"

"Well, we could just wait here until someone shows up, or we could try and call the cops, I suppose."

"Cops? You think they'll appreciate this bondage factory you've got going on here? This is unlawful detention."

"And you kidnapped us, and stole our van. We're four poor helpless women who need to protect themselves."

"I didn't. There was no one in the van when I took it!"

"We know that, an' you know that, but the cops don't, sweetness."

"And who's going to believe you as we clearly were in the van when you stopped. How'd we get there? Magic?"

"Hey! I know you! You're Faustus' assistants."

"Seems we're famous."

"Oh, jeez, I didn't know it was you. My Dad just told me to hide this van. Didn't tell me why. I thought maybe it was hot, till I saw it."

"Who's your Dad? And who are you, for that matter?"

"I'm Dell Christian. My dad runs..."

"The theatre."

"Yeah, guess you would know that already."

"So why'd he want to get rid of our van?"

"I don't know. He didn't say. He never does. It's better I don't know, apparently."

"So, back to the original question, what do we do with her?"

"I still say cops."

"Yeah, 'cause they'd really believe we live here, wouldn't they?"

"I guess."

“So, what do we do? We can’t just let her go.”

“Having fun?”

“Huh?” Dell tries to see, but can’t raise her head enough to get a view.

“Hi, boss.”

“Where are you? And who’s strapped down on the table?”

“Gimme a sec.” Samantha turns back to Dell, “Where are we?”

“I dunno.”

“Where’s the van, then?”

“It’s in a warehouse off Russell Road.”

“Fine. I’ll give Marcel the address. We’ll be over soon as we can.”

“What do we do with her?”

“We’ll think of something.”

“What do you mean ‘think of something’?”

“He won’t answer, hon. Faustus has left the building.”

“What did he mean, though?”

“Well, the boss tends to be creative when it comes to punishment. He’ll probably find some way for you to work off your sentence.”

“‘Work off’? What, like I’m your slave or something?”

“Well, maybe. But he’s generally more creative than that. I’m sure he’ll come up with something better.”

“Better for who?”

“Oh, stop worrying. You’ll love it.”

“**Eventually.**”

“The tiger’s really talking, isn’t it?”

“**Yes, she is.**”

“Sorry.” Dell tilts her head back a little to try and look at the tiger, the metal collar pressing on her throat.

“Well, why don’t we make a start on her punishment before he gets here?”

“What?!”

“What did you have in mind, hon?”

Zilvara undoes Dell’s trainers, levering them off her feet.

“Noooooooo!!!!” Dell shrieks as Zilvara strokes a finger up her sole. She thrashes around. At least tries to, but the metal shackles keep her in place, “Please!”

“Ooooooh! You’re ticklish, are you?” Zilvara purrs, her smile almost splitting her head open. “This’ll be fun.”

“Nooooo!!”

“Zilvy, stop that.”

“Awww...”

Dell breathes a sigh of relief as the tickling ends.

“You can’t hog all the fun.”

Dell screams as Jackie’s rough tongue licks over her soles.

“It’s getting a bit crowded around here.”

“Don’t worry, I got the perfect solution.” Zilvara smiles and moves into Dell’s tear-blurred vision, the light gleaming off her katana.

“W-what?” she tries to focus as Jackie stops torturing her feet.

“Don’t worry, hon. It won’t hurt.”

“What won’t?” she blinks, focusing on the blade.

“EE!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Get away from me!!!”

“No.” The blade whistles down, meeting the table with a clang that vibrates along Dell’s back and a brief flash of heat from her shoulder. She closes her eyes, waiting to feel the blood spurting out of her ruined shoulder, screaming the whole time.

“Zivly!”

“What? I’m just giving her a taster.” Dell feels the shackles around her wrist being removed.

“What have you done to me, you crazy psycho?!” She feels her arm being lifted up and looks over to see Petra holding her severed arm, stroking her hand along the inside of Dell’s arm. “You, you, you? What have you done to me?!”

“Calm down, Dell.”

“Calm down?! Calm down??!! I’ve just had me fucking arm amputated, you fucking bitch, so don’t tell me to...” she stops as she feels her fists clenching. “I can still feel it. But it’s, what, how, what’s going on? How are you doing that?”

“Just a bit of magic. Good, isn’t it?”

“It’s, it’s weird. I can still feel everything, but it’s not, not attached. Feels, eep!” she yelps as Zilvy severs her other arm, handing it to Samantha. Dell shivers as Sam’s shadowy fingers slide into her arm, points of cold inside her. “Will you stop doing that?!”

“Mmmmmm, nope.” She cuts down, severing Dell’s legs. She places the sword down, placing one leg in front of Jackie and taking the other herself. “Everybody got something? Good.” She upends Dell’s leg,

tickling the squirming foot.

Dell's body squirms in the bands, her limbs thrashing about, as she screams, crying with laughter.

Paul opens the doors to the van and climbs in, walking to a door that wasn't really there and walking in. He looks around: On the slab, a teenage girl's body writhes around, laughing, screaming and crying in equal measure; At one end of the table, Petra's torso cradles a slim, pale arm, stroking along it, while Samantha keep pushing her fingers into another arm, apparently trying to pick it up; At the other end, Zilvara is busy tickling the sole of a severed leg, while Jackie sits on the other thigh, holding the shin between her paws and licking the sole. Paul coughs, "Enjoying yourselves?"

Zilvara looks up, "Yeah."

"Well, I think you can stop now." He waves his hand. Dell yelps as her arms and legs vanish, gasping as they join back onto her body. "Now, who wants to explain what's been going on?"

"Well..."

"I meant, why doesn't our guest explain what happened?"

"Uhm, well, my Dad told me he wanted me to take this van and..."

"Who's Dad? And why did he tell you to..."

"My Dad's Ray Christian, and he didn't tell me why. Just promised me some extra spending money if I did it."

"So, you broke into the van?"

"Broke in? Hardly. The rustheap was practically unlocked. You need some serious security upgrades round here."

"Obviously. So you stole the van, and drove here?"

"That's it. Then I wanted to see what he wanted with it. I mean, he doesn't usually steal junk. And I opened the door and the talking tiger jumped me."

"Did you, Jackie?" the tiger nods and shrugs.

"I must have, sort of, passed out. When I woke up, I was here, tied up in this bondage torture chamber and she cut me up." She glares at Zilvy. "And they all had fun playing with me."

"Playing?"

"You saw, they were tickling and licking and..."

"I see. Anyone else want to comment?"

"Well, we just thought we'd get a head start on her sentence..." Zilvara shrugs.

"I see. Did you give her the choice?"

"What choice?" Dell asks, suddenly finding a glimmer of hope.

“Well, we can either turn you over to the police, for kidnapping, vehicle theft, dangerous driving, which carries a combined sentence of about 10 years,” Dell’s flickering hope begins to fade, “or you can serve a community sentence.”

“Which is?”

“Well, for one month, you’ll work for us, for nothing.”

“Doing what?”

“Well, I think we could do with a driver, and a spare.”

“A what?”

“Someone to try ideas out on. As you’ve no doubt noticed, we do this sort of thing for real, but we always need to make sure things will look good.”

“What sort of things?”

“Well, whatever we come up with. Although we’ll have to use someone else for the adult show ideas.” He looks around at the others, “Is that clear?”

“Why?”

“How old are you, Dell?”

“I’m 18.”

“Let’s try that again. How old are you, really?”

“I’m, 16.”

“Answer the question, Zil?”

“Yeah, I guess. We can’t keep her for a couple of years, can we?”

“No. Not unless she wants to stay, anyway.”

“So, my choices are: getting locked up in prison for the best part of my youth, or being your toy for a month?”

“Pretty much.”

“That’s not a choice, that’s, that’s like having to choose between getting beaten to death or listening to Celene Dion.”

“Just blame it on Joseph Heller and make your choice, Dell.”

Dell sighs, heavily. “Fine. You’ve got yourself a plaything.”

Note: There are quite a lot of inspirations for this story.

The magic act at the beginning was inspired by a Black Art magic act I saw on TV when I was a child, but I can’t remember who it was.

The plot line is borrowed from two sources: the Burglar by Vaughan, and one issue of the Scare Tactics comics from DC a few years ago (Nothing to do with the show on the SciFi channel).

And, of course, some of the assistants in the story are based on some of my cyber assistants.



This work by [Paul Watson](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial-No Derivative Works 2.0 UK: England & Wales License](#).

Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available at <mailto:magicbookshelf@blueyonder.co.uk>.