

Twas the night before Christmas, on one particular satellite,
Not a prisoner was stirring, much to the night watcher's delight.
The hourly reports were recorded with care,
In case the warden might show up out of nowhere.

The day guards were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of Sontarans marched in their heads.
And River wrote in her diary, then set it in her lap,
waiting in Stormcage to be sprung from that trap.

When outside her cell, there arose such a clatter,
She lifted her head to see what was the matter.
Out of thin air with a groan and a flash,
The TARDIS materialized, all covered in ash.

The ship wheezed and shuddered and glowed brightly blue.
All signs of content, as River well knew.
The door swung open and who else should come out,
But the Doctor himself, for there was no doubt.

He took his sonic screwdriver, and gave it a flick.
River wasted no time when she heard the lock click.
He told her to get changed as he threw her a dress,
and said "We'll be late to the party!" in response to her protest.

"Now old girl! Let's send the man off proper,"
He shouted while hitting the transmittal switch hopper.
Despite The Doctor's rule about "do-overs", tonight was one exception.
He was not about to miss an old companion's reception.

The TARDIS soon landed not far from their destination.
They arrived and the Doctor knocked with slight hesitation.
A face familiar to him answered, yet the Doctor's was unknown.
He flashed the psychic paper... and in they were shown.

The reception hall was covered from floor to ceiling
In extravagant decor, not gaudy, but appealing.
River was curious and looked interestedly around.
The Doctor fidgeted nervously with a piece of tinsel he had found.

Sighing in exasperation, River snatched the tinsel away.
She pointedly asked, "Why are we here today?"
The Doctor gave her a sad sort of smile
As he nodded towards a man he had not seen in a while.

The man wore dark dressy pants and coat made of tweed.
He had an air of confidence and smarts; a man born to lead.
"It's Christmas Eve, River, of 1981.
This is the wedding of Doris and Sir Alistair Gordon."

"An old soldier friend?" River inquired.
The Brigadier's days at UNIT were over; he had long since retired.
"A very old friend," he said watching the groom and his mates.
He smiled once more at the sight of Benton and Yates.

River cautiously said, "You still haven't told me 'why'."
The Doctor responded, "I've come to say good-bye."
"Oh it'll be 20 years, he's got a fair amount of time yet.
I just wanted him to know that I would never forget."

The crowd around Sir Lethbridge-Stewart slowly dispersed.
He noticed one couple with whom he had not yet conversed.
"Forgive me, you look rather familiar but try as I might,
I don't recall meeting you," he said, not wanting to be impolite.

"Oh we're friends of a friend. We just wanted to wish you both the best.
It's an honor to meet you, To be in your presence, we feel rather blessed."
The Doctor gave him a salute and told him, "Sorry but we really must go.
Please take care of yourself, Brigadier. You mean a lot to many people, you
know."

The newly-wed groom held out his hand to shake the younger man's.
"Thank you for coming. I hope the weather doesn't hinder your plans."
They both shook hands firmly and strong as a withe.
"Have a very good night, Mister, ahh...?" "Smith."

The Doctor and River left without another word.
Doris looked at Alistair's face and wondered what had occurred.

"Who was that man?" she asked him as she smoothed out a hem.
"A wonderful chap," the Brigadier told her. "All of them."