

MOONLIGHT: PART ONE

Written by: Jack Rees

Additional Material by Samantha Warner

Season 35 ▪ Story 10L

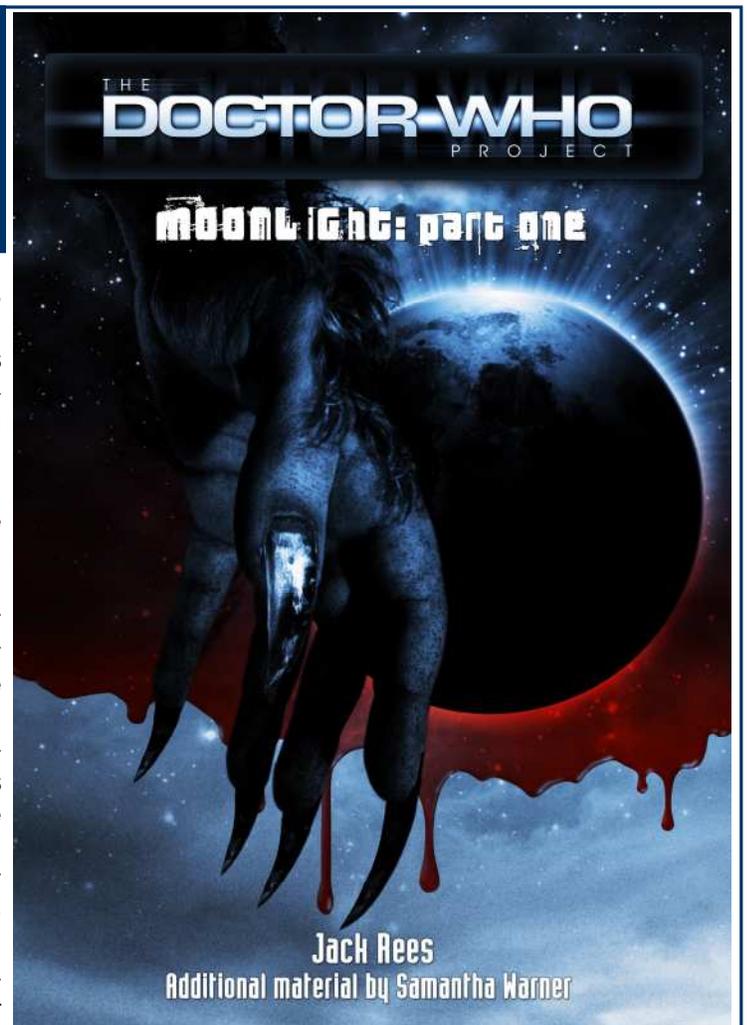
Reviewed by Jez Strickley

As characters go Rachel 'Silver' Silverstein must rate as one of the *TDWP*'s best companion creations to date. Since her début midway through Season 33 she has gone from strength to strength, battling bug-eyed monsters across space and time and growing up into a well balanced young woman in the process. In Jack Rees' two-part season opener *Moonlight* we find Silver occupying a pivotal role, and her CV gathering evermore momentum in the process.

An intriguing prologue sets the scene as NASA's latest moon landing goes awry, raising the question of what nasty piece of work is lurking on the dark side of the moon. When the story proper kicks off it doesn't waste any time in embroiling the Doctor and Silver in a world-wide conspiracy, involving the dark and mysterious Pentacle Corporation: a particularly chilling enterprise which proves to be at the heart of this dark tale. With the Doctor jet-setting around the world in an attempt to get to the bottom of it all, Rees makes a bold move in having Silver go it alone on the investigation front. This proves to be a shrewd choice, and gives the Doctor's feisty sidekick a prime opportunity to prove just how much she has learnt under his tutelage.

Silver's inquiries centre upon a children's foster home in Connecticut, from which a mysterious alien power source emanates. Soon she befriends Seth, a young man adrift from society and in serious need of some stability in his life. Their relationship quickly becomes crucial as events rapidly overtake them, leaving the young pair facing an uncertain future. Silver's arrival in the home also triggers an unusually shy reaction from one of the other children, Lucy. In short, Lucy can't get away from the new girl fast enough. Given the subsequent revelation regarding Lucy's identity this reaction is hardly surprising, but for the time being the reader's curiosity is heightened and the story gathers an additional air of mystery about it.

In the meantime the Doctor has a near-death experience in a Buddhist monastery in China, whilst in pursuit of a mysterious casket. The casket in question is of signal importance to the Pentacle Corporation. Its content, a dagger, is the key – in more ways than one – to the corporation's ambitions and its members have pursued all manner of schemes in order to retrieve it. Having unexpectedly lost the casket due to an apparent



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case of teleportation the Doctor meets Siren, head of the Pentacle Corporation and a man ruthlessly intent upon locating the casket. Avoiding a Siren-inspired attempt on his life the Doctor travels to London, side-steps another plan to kill him and finally manages to meet up once again with Silver. Steps to unravel the machinations of Siren and his cohort then take-off as the Doctor, Silver and Seth confront the real face of the Pentacle Corporation. The climatic cliffhanger ending which follows sees all hell break loose, and Silver quite possibly left Doctor-less in a pretty serious kind of way.

For those fans of *TDWP* who enjoyed the adventures of its Eighth Doctor it will come as no surprise that the wolfish element of this tale is due to none other than the return of the Therianthropes. And, beyond the charac-

ter of Seth, it is the villainous leader of the Therianthropes, Lord Siren, who really stands out. Although hardly unique in his unpleasant ambitions Siren's shape-shifting antics may well raise the odd goosebump amongst some readers, and if you're a fan of John Landis' 1981 cult classic *An American Werewolf in London* you'll have no problems in conjuring up the sort of humanoid-lupine transfigurations which Siren undergoes.

On the whole, *Moonlight Part One* delivers what you would expect in the first half of an adventure: the main guest characters are established, the plot threads are laid out and a terrible scheme is triggered which leaves our heroes facing almost certain doom. The scale and sweep of the cliffhanger is not so dissimilar to the penultimate episode endings of the current television series, and in this sense Rees' effort is in good company. Of particular note is the caging of the moon, courtesy of a colossal metallic prison constructed by the Therianthropes. This moon-enveloping gaol starves the Earth of its satellite's reflective light, light which has helped to trap an age-old Therianthrope called Lucius. In revisit-

ing this old enemy there are new developments for the fans to pore over; and it's interesting to note that *TDWP* isn't averse to cherry picking from its own growing back catalogue of monsters – and with such a good range of nasties to draw upon there seems no reason why not.

Finally, the various snapshots of the Therianthropes' ancient past, and the all too brief historical interludes – courtesy of one Lupus Banderjax and the *Intergalactic Encyclopaedia* – are nice touches that add to the substance of this carefully woven piece of story telling. Whether these slices of history are down to Rees or Samantha Warner, who provided additional material for this story, is hard to tell. Suffice it to say that the final product makes for an action-packed opening instalment to Season 35 and a cracking good yarn in itself. Here's to *Moonlight Part Two*.

Rating: 8/10