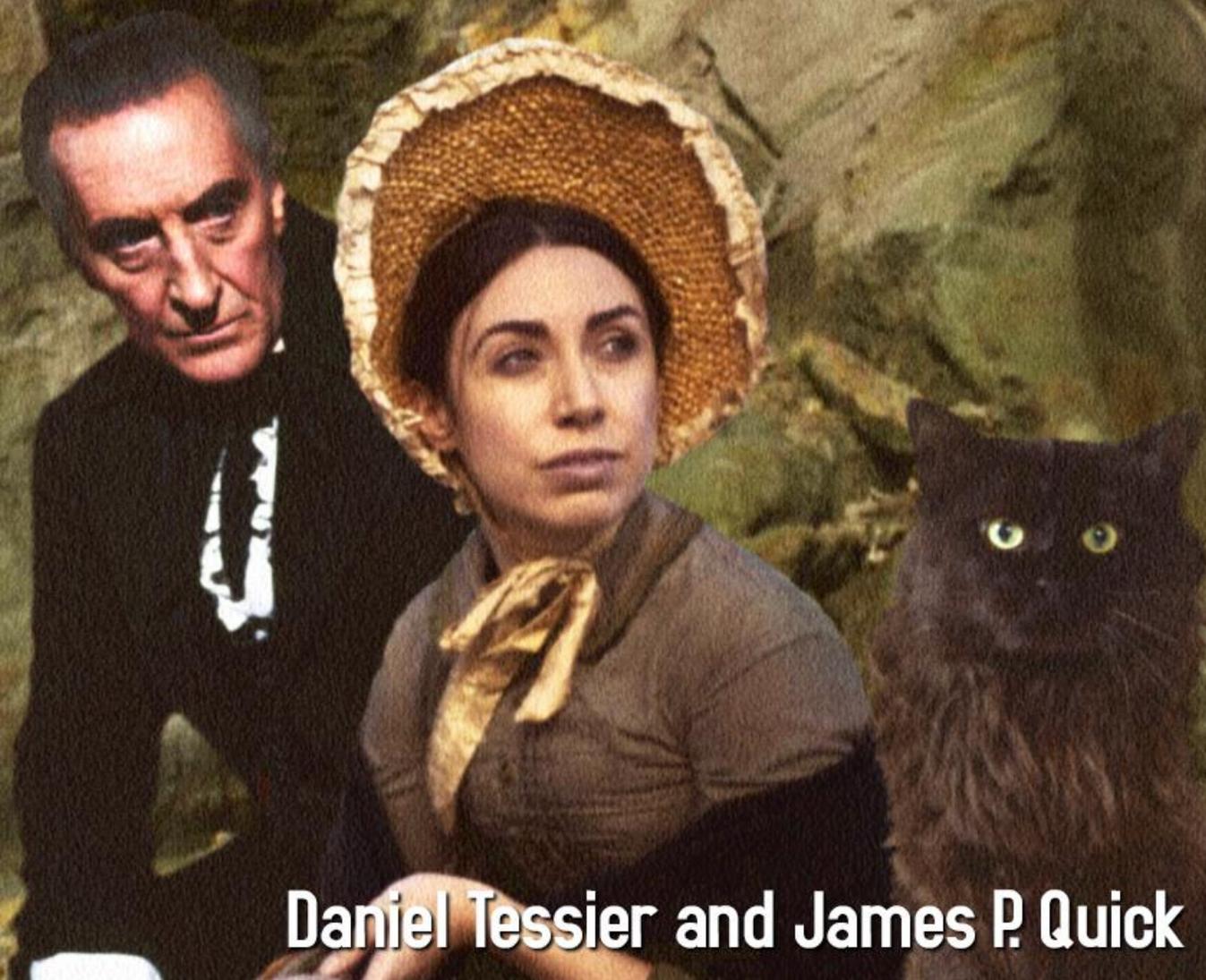


BRIEF ENCOUNTERS

THE FOSSILIST



Daniel Tessier and James P. Quick

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Editors Bob Furnell, Richard Peevers

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EPISODE ONE

As the mist was rising along the beach at Lyme Regis, the temperature was dropping. Mary pulled her shawl tighter over her shoulders and shivered. It was a Dorset summer if there ever was one, and the red, threadbare wool wasn't keeping her very warm. A gust of wind brought the weedy pong of the sea to her nostrils. Although she was used to it, the sudden smell took her aback. Her face screwed up in disgust and she sneezed.

Pushing her dark brown hair out of her eyes and back under her bonnet, the twelve-year-old put the smell out of her mind and looked mournfully at the meager collection of shells in her basket. She gave it a gentle shake, but there wasn't much rock clinking against the wicker. It had been a poor day for collecting. A couple of "thunderbolts"—pointed shellfish fossils—were about all she could expect to sell, and she knew she wouldn't get much for them.

The last couple of weeks had been dreadful hunting for her, and she was close to giving up. Her brother, Joseph, already had done so. He hadn't been to the shore with her for over a month. She was beginning to wonder if there were any treasures left to find or if she and her family had scoured the coast clean of them.

Just as she was about to turn around and head back up the beach, she spotted two figures striding through the mist.

"You're sure you got it right this time?" said a young woman, maybe five years older than Mary herself. It was odd to hear such a flat-sounding accent, but then, Americans were a queer lot.

"Now, now, Silver, I'm quite certain. I simply disabled the safeguards and let the TARDIS slide backwards along the timeline." This was clearly an older gentleman of some learning, with a rich, deep voice speaking the King's English.

"So what you're saying is that you put it in neutral and let it roll downhill."

"Well... so to speak, yes. Thankfully, I had more control over what was happening than that."

"You certainly were quick with that switch. A hand on the emergency brake?"

"Of course. One doesn't let a ship slip down the timelines willy-nilly."

It was as if they were materializing wholesale out of the mist. The man towered over Silver, dressed in a severe-looking black suit with a red interior lining. It had likely matched his hair until about several years prior. Grey had seeped in at his temples and was making its way back along his receding hairline. Gaunt cheeks under tin-opener cheekbones and a noble brow lent him a look not unlike that of a schoolmaster.

Silver was clearly related to him, Mary decided. A similar jawline, the same aquiline nose, and the beginnings of the distinctive cheekbones were all present and accounted for. Though how she got her hair such a color, Mary didn't know. Why she would want red and blue streaks in her hair was another question. Perhaps she was an artist of some kind? Or... what had been the word she'd heard that visiting Frenchman use? *Grisette*. Yes, that was it. Was this woman a grisette? Mary didn't know, but considering the tone the Frenchman had used, it was certainly not a polite term.

"Ship slip. Ship slip." Silver smiled. "Why is that so much fun to say?"

The man chuckled, revealing a warm smile that totally changed his face. "Now if only you were so easily amused by Justinian's humor."

"Him again? Ugh. There's a good reason for that."

"Oh?"

"The guy wasn't funny."

"Excuse me!" Mary called. These people were certainly strange, and she didn't really understand what either of them were talking about, but an opportunity was an opportunity. She might as well try to make a small sale before she went home. "Sir, miss, might you be interested in buying a seashell?"

The pair exchanged what appeared to be a knowing look, then the tall gentleman bounded up to her, crunching loudly on the pebbles underfoot.

"I would be most interested, young lady," he replied, smiling, before bending almost double to peer into her basket. "Ah, belemnites! Always a favorite of mine! I'll take the lot, thank you!"

The man rummaged in his waistcoat pocket, before bringing out a handful of change.

"Would, say, three shillings a shell be acceptable?"

"There's another one," Silver murmured to herself. "Shillings a shell..."

Mary's eyes widened. Fifteen shillings was more than her father had earned for a decent week's work.

"That would be most acceptable, sir. Thank you, sir," she managed to say, not quite believing her eyes as the man handed the coins over.

"No need to call me sir," he said. "Doctor will do."

"Doctor? Doctor who?" Mary asked.

The Doctor glanced back to Silver, who just grinned at him. He returned his gaze to Mary and muttered, "Er, yes, well... May I?"

The young girl handed him the basket. The Doctor carefully removed the shells, placing each one into a separate pocket of his jacket.

"Say, where are your parents?" asked Silver. "You're very brave to come out here all by yourself."

"My brother comes with me sometimes," said Mary, smiling at the compliment, "but he's been put off lately. Usually it's just me." She paused for a moment, her brow furrowing.

"Something wrong?"

"Oh, I apologize, miss, but your hair... it makes me wonder..."

"Wonder what?"

"Are you a grisette?"

The Doctor gave a surprised splutter that reminded Mary of a hound being woken from a nap. “Goodness gracious me, young lady! Wherever did you pick up such language!?”

Mary blushed. “I do apologize! I had heard it in town, and thought—”

“Well, I’m not,” Silver cut in. “Don’t worry about it. No harm done.”

“You’re sure?”

“Sure I’m sure. Now, I think the Doctor and I had better get going.”

“Indeed! Thank you again for the belemnites, Mary,” said the Doctor, handing back her basket. “Happy hunting! I’m certain you’ll find something that’s simply remarkable if you keep looking. Oh, and do bring your brother along—he might be quite helpful!” Then he turned on his heel and began marching off in the direction he came.

Silver shook her head.

“Bye, Mary,” she said, before dashing off after him. “Hey, wait up!”

“Goodbye!” Mary called after them.

It took her a moment after she’d turned to head back home again before she realized she’d never told them her name, nor that she had a brother. She frowned, looking back to find that the mist had swallowed the pair once more. Her plaintive “hello?” was drowned out by a bizarre trumpeting noise that split the air. It wasn’t long before it, in turn, was drowned out by the crashing of the waves along the beach.

Mary couldn’t be sure, but she had the distinct feeling that she had just met two ghosts.

The tide was coming in now, and there wasn’t much sense in continuing her hunt today. Mary pulled her shawl around her once more, turned into the wind, and began her trek back home. Even if those people had been ghosts, her family certainly wouldn’t turn their noses up at the fifteen shillings.

“My word, girl, where did you find these marvelous specimens?”

Mary looked up from the ledger that took up much of the counter. The gentleman’s attention was firmly upon the row of ichthyosaurian teeth that were displayed behind glass on the other side of the room, in one of the many oak cabinets that lined the walls. The room constituted her cramped little shop, which took up a full half of the limited space available in her house.

“The shore, sir, as I said last time. You remember?” More than twenty years of fossil collecting and supposedly knowledgeable men *still* couldn’t believe that she found these items herself. Mary would have despaired at this, but she wasn’t the type.

“Yes, yes, I remember, of course,” the man assured her. They had met before, six years prior, when he had purchased some of her finds for a museum. “Still, the Geological Society would be fascinated to see these, I’m sure.” The man’s voice betrayed the drifted accent of an Englishman who had spent time in the Americas.

“They generally are, sir,” she replied. “Would you be interested in making a purchase? They are the teeth of one of the larger sea dragons of the Jurassic Coast.”

“Oh, possibly, possibly,” he muttered, playing idly with his whiskers as he continued to peruse the fossils on display.

The doorbell gently tinkled as two more potential customers, a gentleman and a young woman, entered. Tray, Mary's scruffy black-and-white terrier, burst out from behind the counter to enthusiastically greet them. Mary herself greeted them dutifully before returning her attention to the brash gentleman.

"Do you not have such things in... what was it called? Schenectady?"

"It's pronounced sken-eck-tuh-dee," the man corrected her.

"Ah, thank you, sir."

"I've been there," the newly arrived girl whispered to her companion. Mary heard her only peripherally. "It's totally weird. Bedbugs everywhere and they built a shopping mall around one of their cemeteries! Who wants to pass by a cemetery on their way into T. J. Maxx?"

"I wouldn't know," her friend replied. "I don't shop at T. J. Maxx."

"Oh, we have all manner of fossils up and down the country, my girl," Mary's customer was saying, "but I haven't seen the like of these since I used to go hunting on the shores as a boy. Even then, I don't think I ever found so many well-preserved specimens." He examined them for a moment longer, before declaring, "Yes, I think I shall purchase an *Ichthyosaurus* tooth."

"Excellent, Mr. Featherstonhaugh. Would you care to select one?"

"George," the newcomer tutted, "that is an *Acamptonectes* tooth. For goodness' sake, man, use your eyes."

Featherstonhaugh raised his head from the display and looked at the man.

"Doctor!" he exclaimed, a look of recognition spreading across his face. "Why, I haven't seen you since that curious business with the mastodons in the nighttime! What on Earth are you doing here?"

"I might ask you the same," said the Doctor. "I thought you were working for the Topographical Bureau around now?"

The Doctor's female companion, until now focusing all her attention on the furiously wagging Tray, turned to the Doctor.

"Mastodons in the nighttime?"

"I'll explain later."

"You need to start actually following through on that. You still haven't explained why it's not *spelled* 'Fanshaw.'"

"It is!" said the Doctor and Featherstonhaugh in unison. The young woman sighed deeply.

"So, are you going to introduce me?"

"Right, yes." The Doctor turned to Featherstonhaugh. "Silver, this is my dear friend George William Featherstonhaugh: explorer, geologist, geographer, and Fellow of the Royal Society. George, this is my travelling companion, Silver."

"A pleasure, my dear," Featherstonhaugh said, taking Silver's hand and kissing it.

Silver nodded politely and retracted her hand. "Likewise."

"Whatever became of Miss Ace if you don't mind me asking, Doctor?"

"Well..." the Doctor began at length, rubbing his chin with his thumb and forefinger, "she has, ah, devoted her life to strategic maneuvers elsewhere, shall we say?"

"I see," Featherstonhaugh intoned. "I hope she's well. She *did* look right at home astride that bull mastodon."

"She did at that. Now, I hate to be rude, but we've come to see Miss Anning here," the Doctor replied. "I'll pop in to see you soon, though."

"Oh, of course! I look forward to it," Featherstonhaugh nodded. "But I haven't paid the young lady."

"I'll take care of it for you. Goodbye, George."

"Thank you, Doctor. Again, Miss Silver, a pleasure. Goodbye!"

"Charming fellow," the Doctor remarked as Featherstonhaugh departed.

"I wouldn't know. All he said to me was 'a pleasure,'" Silver replied with a shrug.

"Better than Justinian, I suppose."

"Ugh, *that guy*. If he laid another hand on me, either me or Theodora was gonna make sure he lost it."

Mary, who had been trying to get a word in edgewise since the first mention of mastodons, finally managed an "excuse me!"

The Doctor gave her a pleasant smile.

"Yes, Miss Anning?"

"Please, just who are you? You are, are you not, the same two people who I met on the beach, let me see... twenty-two years ago?"

"Um... did we?" replied Silver. In a more hushed tone to the Doctor, she added, "Did we *yet*?"

"I was twelve years old, and you both came walking along the beach towards me, looking exactly as you do now. You, Doctor, bought some belemnites from me."

"Oh, that does sound like me," admitted the Doctor. "I do love belemnites."

"Please explain to me what is going on, or I shall be forced to ask you to leave my shop!"

The three of them jumped as the doorbell rang again. They looked at the door and saw no one. Then they looked down to see a tremendously fluffy black cat of remarkable size pushing its way into the shop.

"Mortimer!" exclaimed Silver in surprise. "How did you get out of the TARDIS?"

Mortimer meowed at her and proceeded to rub against her legs in a figure-eight pattern as if that explained everything.

The Doctor looked amused. "I believe this is his way of telling us he's learned how to operate the door controls," he said.

Silver let out a breath. "Oh, *God help us*. That's just what we need. We'll be sitting there in the console room one minute, the next he'll have flung us all out into the vortex."

"Give him some credit, Silver. He's an intelligent cat."

"Believe me, I know."

Tray, who had been practically bouncing off the wall since a cat had dared to waltz right into his home as if it owned the place, had finally caught Mortimer's attention. The cat gave a low "mrow?" of interest and eeled his way over to the terrier, curling around him and purring loudly. He was ever-so-slightly larger than the little dog, who had stopped cold to stare at the cat. Apparently rather stunned, he looked over to Mary as if to say, "Mummy, help?"

If she didn't know better, Silver could have sworn that Mortimer looked highly amused.

Mary dashed over to calm Tray, coaxing him back behind the counter. He hid behind her skirts, sneaking the occasional look at the gigantic feline.

"If you don't mind, sir," said Mary to the Doctor, who was smiling happily as he browsed the fossils, "it's very nearly time for me to close."

The Doctor continued browsing, quietly identifying prehistoric flora and fauna.

"*Dimorphodon* teeth... *Squaloraja* fish skeleton... upper skull of *Anningasaura lymense*..."

"What was that last one?"

"Ah, erm, nothing important," muttered the Doctor. "Let's just call it *Plesiosaurus* and be done with it. Did you say it was closing time?"

"Yes, Doctor," said Silver, firmly. "She did."

"Of course, sorry to be keeping you," said the Doctor. "We do have a lot to be getting on with ourselves. Just couldn't resist the opportunity to meet you. I'll be back for some belemnites!" To Silver, he continued, "Now then, shall we go find George?"

The pair took their leave, the cat tagging along behind them. Mary's brow furrowed. She was sure they were the same pair from all those years ago. But how could they still look the same age? As she began to close for the day, she racked her brains for an answer but found none.

It was then she realized the Doctor had forgotten to pay her for Featherstonhaugh's purchase.

Mary started her fossil hunting early, right around daybreak. It was important for her to get down to the beach as soon as the light was good and make the effort to find something to replace anything she had sold the previous day. Most days she came back without anything particularly exciting, but every now and then, she found something that made the whole endeavor worthwhile. Some days, her good friend Elizabeth Philpot and her sisters would also head down. However, the Philpot sisters were indisposed this morning and weren't able to come along.

Instead, Mary found the Doctor and Silver.

She had been walking along the front, scouring the cliff face for the telltale edges of fossilized sea creatures—bones, shells, teeth. Over the years, she had trained herself to spot even the slightest difference in texture among the limestone and shale. Most people looked at the cliffs and saw plain, white, and grey stone. Mary saw a vista peppered with reds, browns, and greens, subtle changes in minerals with a variety of textures and holding hidden shapes. Tray ran happily between her feet, dashing back and forth between her and the shoreline, coming back with pebbles for her. Sometimes he would pick up something noteworthy, but mostly she just liked to have him along.

Standing in the shallow tide was the strange pair from the previous day. The Doctor had rolled his trousers up and was ankle deep in seawater. Silver, meanwhile, was holding onto the Doctor's shoes and making her best effort to avoid getting wet. The Doctor held some bizarre device in his hand, a fist-sized box topped by a metal rod that held a red orb pulsing with an inner light. It seemed to be making a strange chirping sound, although Mary couldn't imagine the mechanism.

Tray may have noticed the pair, but his attention was affixed on Mortimer, who was chasing sea slaters along the shore while trying, and mostly failing, to avoid getting his fur wet.

The dog once more took shelter behind his owner's legs before the cat gave any sign he had noticed Tray.

Although she was reluctant to speak to this strange duo again, having had quite enough of their inexplicable appearances already, Mary couldn't help but feel intensely curious about whatever it was they were doing.

"What on Earth is that contraption?" she asked, approaching them.

The Doctor and Silver turned round, startled. Their attention had clearly been fully on the mysterious device.

"It's a doohickey," said Silver. "The Doctor made it. It goes 'ding' when there's stuff."

The Doctor sighed deeply and ran a hand over his face. He cast a caustic look up to Silver. "How tremendously erudite of you."

Silver smirked and handed him his shoes back. "I try." The Doctor handed his companion the device, sat on a rock, and began to put his shoes back on.

Mary sighed with frustration. No question put to these two was met with any kind of sensible response. She had assumed that they were simply interested in the fossils she sold, but that didn't explain their impossible lack of ageing in the years since she had saw them last, nor what they were doing on the beach with such strange equipment. Nonetheless, she had more important things to do than idly wonder about two strangers.

"I see... Well, best of luck. I must be getting on. Good day." And with that, she moved to continue down the beach. She made it about ten steps before she turned back, remembering the outstanding sum they owed her. Turning round, she went to stride back to them, only to find herself toppling face first into the gravel with a shriek. The two strangers were helping her up almost at once. The Doctor steadied her and dusted off some of her dress.

"Are you alright?" he asked.

"I'm fine, yes. I merely tripped on my dress. Now, I—"

"You didn't trip on your dress," Silver interrupted.

"I beg your pardon?"

"You tripped on this!" She was pulling out a large, fossilized beak from the pebbles. Just the tip of it had been showing, and, Mary admitted, she likely would have missed it.

"My word, Mary!" laughed the Doctor. "You really are good at this."

Mortimer had curled around Silver's side, sniffing the beak. He wrinkled his nose at the smell, then ran off to resume haranguing the sea slaters. Mary knelt down to inspect the fossil. The Doctor leaned down, too, giving the find a suspicious look.

"May I?" Mary asked, and Silver handed it to her.

"I think it's from a turtle or something," Silver said.

"Or something," the Doctor murmured darkly. He seemed to recognize it.

"Hmm. Yes, Miss Silver, it does seem to be from some kind of gargantuan turtle. Fascinating!" Mary exclaimed, rubbing some dirt off the lower jaw. "I would like to examine this further and make some sketches. Perhaps they would allow me to name this. Hm. *Stupendochelys gargantua* has a certain ring to it."

Suddenly, the Doctor's contraption gave a shrill chirp and buzzed in his hand.

"Ah," he said, a look of mild consternation on his face. "That would appear to be—"

Before he could finish his sentence, a shimmering ripple of light enveloped them all—Mary, Silver, the Doctor, Tray, and Mortimer. Mary shielded her eyes, dazzled. When her vision cleared, she was no longer standing on the pebbled beach of Lyme Regis.

The first thing that struck her was the heat. It was clearly the height of summer, humid and oppressive, and even the air felt thicker than usual. The sun shone down upon them, not blindingly so, but bright enough that she found herself blinking as she looked out over the environment. Before her was a large prairie, but no grass could be seen. Instead, ferns dominated the landscape. Ginkgoes and conifers stood in small copses alongside the rivers that crisscrossed the area.

And then, a feathered monster leaped out at her.

It was the most terrifying thing she had ever seen. Six feet long and tall enough to take a bite out of her shoulder, it was like some kind of terrible bird, only in place of a beak it had a mouth bristling with viciously sharp teeth. The monster leaned in towards her, sniffing at her curiously. She could feel its hot breath on her skin as it drew closer.

The Doctor let out a shrill whistle. The creature snapped its head round to face him. Mary followed its predatory gaze.

The Doctor was holding a tin can.

“Hello, Mister Tyrannosaur,” he said in a sing-song tone. “I’ve got some lovely tuna here for you. Just give me a moment to find the tin opener...” He patted his many pockets furiously as he attempted to locate the tool. The tyrannosaur looked back to Mary. “Silver,” he added, “could you help Miss Anning while I check my back pockets, please?”

“What do you expect *me* to do?” asked Silver, eyeing the dinosaur warily.

“Distract it!” snapped the Doctor. “Use your imagination!”

“Oh, because it’s obviously worked so well for you...” Silver looked frantically around for something, anything, with which to grab the creature’s attention. She grabbed at her own pockets in desperation, before, sheepishly, pulling out the tin opener.

“Why do *you* have it?” asked the Doctor, breathlessly.

“Never mind that!” she said. “Do you want it or not?”

The dinosaur had now focused its eye on the glinting appliance Silver was frantically waving at the Doctor.

“Yes, throw it to me!”

Silver lobbed the opener at the Doctor, who caught it, almost dropped it, and caught it again. He hurriedly opened the tin can as quickly as he possibly could. The smell of tuna wafted out from the container.

The dinosaur lunged in to grab the fish, snapping the can right out of the Doctor’s hand. It greedily licked at the can, not really equipped for such packaging, before snapping its head back with a yelp. A trickle of red blood ran down out of its mouth.

Then, out of nowhere, Mortimer darted out, hissing and spitting. A flurry of paws smacked the tyrannosaur’s snout, much to its surprise. It stumbled back, snorting indignantly, and stared almost incredulously at the large cat. Mortimer gave it a low, dangerous growl in return.

After a moment, the creature shook its head in frustration, before taking a final look at the assembled travelers, a wary glance at the vindictive cat, and a distasteful once-over of the tuna can Mortimer was now guarding. Finally, it darted off into the distance, rubbing at its

mouth with one feathered arm, clearly deciding this dangerous piece of fish wasn't worth the effort right now.

Mary stood, stunned, watching the beast sprint away.

"What in heavens was that?" she managed to say.

"It was a dinosaur, of course," said Silver.

"That's not a term that has been coined in Miss Anning's time," said the Doctor. "She really is part of the very beginnings of palaeontology." He flashed Mary a kindly smile. "It's alright. That was an animal like any other, but of a kind long extinct in your time, just like the pterosaurs, ichthyosaurs and plesiosaurs you've studied."

"I see. But a 'dino-saur'... That would suggest some great or terrible lizard. The creature we just fended off looked more like some kind of monstrous bird."

"Yes, well, the understanding of these creatures will change and develop over time as more discoveries are made, but that 'monstrous bird' was of the same group of animals as your friend William Buckland's *Megalosaurus* and Mantell's *Iguanodon*."

"Didn't they rename some of those?" Silver asked.

"Well, yes. *Megalosaurus* became what will later be dubbed a 'wastebasket taxon,' including such species as *Dilophosaurus*, *Erectopus*, and *Allosaurus*."

"No, I meant *Iguanodon*," Silver replied.

"Oh, right, *that* whole business," the Doctor murmured. "Yes, the local variety has been redubbed *Mantellisaurus*, I believe. Or was it *Mantellodon*? Perhaps *Therosaurus*? Oh, I do wish they could keep it consistent."

"Anyway, how far back have we gone, Doctor?" asked Silver, piquing Mary's interest.

"Yes," said Mary. "I would quite like to know as well."

"It's hard to be exact, but given the intensity of the temporal distortion, and the *Eotyrannus* we just encountered, I would have to estimate about 125 million years."

Mary gasped. "*How long?*" It seemed almost too incredible. While some were saying that the Earth was far, far older than the 6,000 years as stated in the Bible—perhaps 75,000, if that—Mary hadn't heard of anyone saying millions—no one credible, anyway. Such a massive number was just too vast to be comprehended.

"Yes, the Earth is rather older than you have yet realized. Even the Geological Society of London haven't got that one pinned down yet."

"So much time..." breathed Mary. "And what of man?"

"Not even a twinkle in nature's eye," answered the Doctor. "A sobering thought, isn't it?"

"I... need to sit down," Mary muttered, putting a hand to her head and sitting down on a nearby rock. She didn't consider herself a weak or feeble sort in the slightest. On the contrary, she thought of herself as being quite strong. This, however, was an immense shock even to her.

The Doctor sat down next to her, crossing his gangly legs.

"There's a river down there," he said, pointing into the distance. "Let's take a walk, dip our toes in, and calm down a little. How does that sound?"

Mary considered it, then nodded. "Yes, that sounds lovely, Doctor."

"Good! Now, come along." He stood, and the three of them began a leisurely walk down to the riverbank, keeping their eyes open for any more aggressive local wildlife. Tray and Mortimer followed them, the dog happily circling the trio, quite at home in his new

surroundings, the cat cautious but confident. Above their heads, dark kite-like shapes swooped and whirled in the periwinkle sky.

“Those aren’t birds, are they Doctor?” asked Silver.

“Not those, no,” he replied, straining his eyes. “Those are—”

“Ptero-dactyles!” exclaimed Mary.

“You mean pterodactyls?” responded Silver, giving her a quizzical look.

“The terminology hasn’t quite been nailed down yet,” said the Doctor, “but yes, those are pterosaurs. Probably—”

“They are magnificent!” breathed Mary. “To think, one of those creatures might be one that I have uncovered... will uncover.” She turned to look to them. “How can you be so calm in the presence of such flying dragons?”

“We might be just a bit too well-traveled for our own good,” Silver replied.

“No such thing,” the Doctor sniffed, pushing through a thicket of ferns.

“So you found one of these?” asked Silver.

“*Dimorphodon*,” said Mary, with some pride. “Five years ago. The first such flying lizard found outside of Germany.”

“*Dimorphodon* wasn’t actually a pterodactyl—which is a rather narrow descriptor, somewhat like the word ‘bug’ is supposed to be,” the Doctor said. “Not that that takes anything away from your discovery. One of your most remarkable.”

“What else did you discover?” asked Silver.

“Oh, many of the sea dragons that once inhabited the Jurassic Coast,” Mary replied enthusiastically. “I found my first ichthyosaur the day after we first met.”

“Yeah, about that...” Silver began, only to feel the Doctor give her forearm a warning squeeze.

“I brought my brother Joseph along, as you had suggested. It had been a dry period, and he had almost given up on our hunts, but I persuaded him. And, lo and behold, he quite literally stumbled across the skull.” She laughed at the memory. “It took us days to excavate the rest of it, carrying it back piece by piece.”

“That’s really awesome!” Silver enthused.

“Ah, pardon?” Mary asked, head tilting in question at the unfamiliar language.

“I mean, that’s excellent,” she amended. “I’m happy for you.”

“Well, thank you kindly,” Mary said with a polite nod. “Our mother didn’t think so at first.” They both chuckled at that. “Then about ten years ago I found the first *Plesiosaurus*, a remarkable beast with a body like a turtle but a neck like a snake. I presented my description on Boxing Day. What a Christmas that was!”

“I’ll bet,” Silver replied.

A low, rumbling noise shook the Earth, and the group looked up from their vantage point on the hill. A collection of enormous, long-necked dinosaurs with tremendous bellies and legs like tree trunks were ambling towards the river. One stood more upright with enormous forelegs, having a dome-like skull and a dull grey color to its skin. Others, less upright but still enormous, had greenish skin, slimmer heads without the domes, and broad mouths filled with peg-like teeth. The last variety, smaller than both others and more horizontal in posture, was reddish with boxy skulls and light bony armor on their back. While some leaned down to drink,

the broad-mouthed variety reached into the horsetails along the bank and began to strip them, swallowing their bounty whole.

“Sauropods,” the Doctor identified as they made their way down to the river’s edge. “This fellow here is a *Pelorosaurus*—probably an old bull by the looks of him. Those tucking into the horsetails are *Ornithopsis*, early titanosaurs. And this lot with the armor here are *Chondrosteosaurus*.”

“What does something that huge need armor for?” boggled Silver.

“You haven’t seen the sorts of things that like to hunt them,” said the Doctor. “Though, even an *Altispinax* would think twice before attacking a healthy adult.”

They pushed through the ferns choking the bank, and the Doctor and Silver rolled up their pant legs before slipping their legs in. Mary sat on a rock, taking in the strange-yet-oddly-familiar world around her. Several frogs and toads eyed both them and the sauropods suspiciously, as did a salamander-like creature the Doctor identified as a *Wesserpeton*. Early mammals, looking indistinguishable to Silver and Mary from any other rat or shrew, squeaked as Mortimer and Tray sniffed them out. More dinosaurs could be seen in the distance, watching them and forming stories around their actions kept the group entertained.

“Are there any raptors here?” Silver asked after a while.

The Doctor sighed. “Oh yes, you are of the age to have seen *Jurassic Park*, aren’t you?”

“And the sequels,” Silver confirmed with a smile. The Doctor looked at her caustically. Silver gently pushed his shoulder. “Don’t get so bent out of shape. I know raptors are nothing like in the movies. Covered in feathers, unable to move their hands out of a side position. My dad was a scientist, remember.”

The Doctor smiled. “To answer your question Silver, yes, this area does have dromaeosaurs. I believe the local variety is *Ornithodesmus*.”

It was then that a deep, crocodile-like hiss rumbled out from the left. The sauropods’ necks whipped around to look so quickly that Silver was surprised they didn’t hurt themselves. Walking up through the water were two enormous creatures with heads and skin like crocodiles and slender-yet-solid bodies. Both had two powerful arms ending in hands that bore three claws like enormous fish hooks and a mouth filled with conical teeth. The sauropods took one look at the newcomers and turned tail. The predators didn’t seem especially interested in the sauropods anyhow, presumably thinking them too large to be worth the trouble. No, they only had eyes for the Doctor, Silver, Mary, and their startled pets.

“Those are, uh... uh... I forgot the name.” Silver didn’t dare move.

“*Baryonyx*,” the Doctor identified, his voice grave. He clutched Silver’s hand tightly. “Silver, grab Mortimer. Mary, get hold of Tray. When I say run...”

“Run!” shouted Silver, hoisting the hefty feline up in her arms and running full pelt in the opposite direction. Mary did the same with Tray, tucking him under one arm and lifting her skirts with the other as she too ran as fast as she could. The Doctor spun on his heels and sprinted after them, practically galloping on his long legs.

The monstrous reptiles let out a sound somewhere between a roar and a hiss and charged up the bank after them. While they were still some distance from the group, their enormous size and powerfully muscled legs allowed them to catch up quickly. The dinosaurs along the river took notice at once. A flock of downy *Hypsilophodon* ran screaming for cover. A low-slung *Polacanthus* hunkered down, letting any comers deal with its thick armor and wicked

spines. What Silver really noticed, however, was a stegosaur further along the bank. Sixteen sharp, triangular plates made two rows from its neck to its tail, but that wasn't what had Silver's attention. About eight inches past the plates on the tip of the tail were six nasty spikes. Each had to be three-and-a-half-feet long and no doubt exceptionally deadly. A crazy, desperate idea formed in her head. The others would hate it, but when needs must...

"There!" she cried, gesturing to Mary to follow her as she charged towards the animal.

"No!" the Doctor shouted, but they had already made a beeline for it, and he was obliged to follow lest he become lunch.

Silver called to Mary as the stegosaur noticed them and the two *Baryonyx*. "Duck down under the tail when I say so, okay? And tell the Doctor to do the same!"

"What!? Are you mad!?" Mary cried in shock.

"Yeah! Mad about not being eaten! *Do it!*"

Not seeing a better option, Mary did so. The Doctor's face paled, feeling he'd perhaps rubbed off on Silver a bit too much, but it didn't matter now. Confused and not terribly smart thanks to its exceptionally small brain, the stegosaur gave a high-pitched bugle of alarm and swung its tail.

"Duck!" Silver bellowed. The Doctor and Mary did so, and the tail whooshed over their heads. There was a wet thunk, a cracking sound like plastic being shattered, and one of the *Baryonyx* began to scream like the world was ending. Glancing back, they saw two spikes embedded deep in its left knee, blood gushing from the wound. It wailed and screamed in agony, as the stegosaur tried to pull its spikes free and only succeeded in further destroying the predator's knee. After a few good yanks, it finally ripped itself free, and the *Baryonyx* shrieked again before toppling forward to the ground, howling.

Its fellow had stopped short when the stegosaur had struck, then weaved around. It didn't bother with a second glance, ignoring the cries for help and continued the chase with renewed vigor. Soon, the fallen *Baryonyx* was left in the distance.

"I thought *Baryonyx* was a fish-eater!" Silver exclaimed.

"Well, evidently, either it had a taste for other things," Mary shouted back, "or this one has expanded its palate!"

"Regardless, it seems to be steering us towards the sea," remarked the Doctor. He gestured ahead of them, where they could see the shimmering sea along the horizon. The ground began to slope down towards a sandy beach.

As they approached, they could see large, dark bodies lying lifeless on the shore. Tiny pterosaurs wheeled in the sky, diving down to the carcasses, snatching mouthfuls of carrion.

"We're being herded," said Mary, horrified, "into its larder!"

As they came closer to view, she could make out the shapes of the carcasses—bloated from rot, they were still clearly shaped like fish or dolphins, but with wide, reptilian eyes.

"Ichthyosaurs," she gasped. "Oh, my poor sea dragons!"

"My poor *us!*" exclaimed Silver. "Where are we supposed to go?"

"*They're* exactly where we should go!" said the Doctor, triumphantly. "Silver, Mary, get in amongst those bodies. Get down on your knees, get right up inside them if you have to!"

"What?" cried Silver, reeling from the sight and smell of the decomposing mounds of flesh. "You can't be serious!" She'd done a lot of horrible things during her time with the

Doctor—hell, she'd even had to murder his previous incarnation to stop him turning into a werewolf—but frankly, she did have *some* limits.

"We can't outrun the beast, but we might be able to hide. Come on!"

The Doctor dived into the putrid flesh of the rotting fish-lizards, rolling into a ball, his head between his bony knees. Silver and Mary looked at each other, then back at the creature, and simultaneously came to the realization that this was their only chance. They threw themselves into the bodies, covering over their pets in an attempt to keep them still and calm.

"Urgh, Doctor, this stinks!" moaned Silver, slightly muffled by the blubbery flesh. She wondered if this was how Luke Skywalker felt when he'd climbed inside his tauntaun in *The Empire Strikes Back*.

"That's the idea!" said the Doctor.

"You think the beast hunts by smell?" said Mary from behind an ichthyosaur head. Tray wriggled in her arms, panicking in the wretched environment. Mary stroked his head gently, as much to calm herself as the dog. The entire situation was as exhilarating as it was horrifying.

"I certainly hope so," said the Doctor. "I've never had to put it to the test before." There was a wet popping sound, and the Doctor looked up. "Mary! What are you doing?" he hissed.

"I'm not passing up this opportunity," she whispered back, brandishing one of the ichthyosaur's teeth. "I simply want a keepsake. When else shall I see one of these in the flesh?"

"Now is *not* the time!" the Doctor said sharply, although he smiled as he said it.

The *Baryonyx* stomped closer, and Mary ducked down. It loomed over them, sniffing loudly. Tray began to whimper and whine. Mortimer managed to look aloof yet put out as if he had found nothing more serious than an empty milk bowl.

The dinosaur leaned in, eyes focusing on the Doctor, who held his breath and hoped for the best. And then, something unexpected occurred. A sharp whooshing noise filled the air, and the *Baryonyx* wailed in pain, stumbling to one side. Another sharp whoosh, another wail, and the dinosaur lurched towards the noise, crying out ferociously. A choked scream and the sound of bones and meat being ripped apart filled the air before the dinosaur wailed again amid a flurry of whooshes, then keeled over dead.

The trio looked up to see two tall, turtle-like beings clad in what appeared to be samurai armor standing amongst the carcasses. "We know you are there," one rasped. "You will come forth with your hands where we can see them. Now!"

Mary looked horrified. "What are these... these hideous creatures? More sea dragons?"

"No, not sea dragons," said the Doctor gravely as he crossed to help Silver up. "Those, Mary, are Sea Devils."

EPISODE TWO

“What do you mean, ‘Sea Devils’?” asked Mary after a tense pause.

“They’re one of the original intelligent lifeforms on this planet,” the Doctor explained, pulling Silver up. He gathered his companions close to him. “Sea Devil is the name given to them by a naval officer in the 1970s. I picked it up and, well, it caught on.” One of the Sea Devils stood over the body of the *Baryonyx*’s victim, who was missing the better part of its torso. “You see that poor fellow down there? I’d hazard a guess that he’s your find from earlier, in the flesh.”

“*Stupendochelys*...” Mary murmured.

“Funny, they’re not even turtles. Not really.”

“I will not say it again,” called the other Sea Devil. “You shall come to us, hands raised.”

“Doctor, I think we should do what he, er, she, uh... what *it* wants,” Silver said, stumbling a bit. She always felt awkward when she couldn’t discern something’s gender at a glance.

“Quite right, Silver,” he agreed. “Come along.” He raised his hands, and they followed suit. Tray needed some coercing from Mary, but Mortimer strolled right up to the Sea Devils, proudly presented his backside to them, then waited for the others to come up.

Bulging eyes scrutinized them as they went, and the only sounds they could hear aside from the crashing of the waves were their footsteps in the sand and the cries of the pterosaurs overhead. When they were roughly a meter away, the signal came for them to stop.

“What are you?” the chief Sea Devil demanded. Its weapon didn’t waver an inch.

“These two are human, from this planet’s future,” the Doctor answered. “And I am not of this planet at all.”

Mary’s eyes widened. “Why did he say that? Silver, what does he mean?” She hadn’t considered life from beyond the stars before; at least, not outside of fanciful stories. Life on this world had been quite strange and fascinating enough.

“I’ll explain later,” Silver assured her, knowing full well she wouldn’t and feeling more than a bit hypocritical. At least she hadn’t promised, which made her feel a little bit better.

The Sea Devils regarded the Doctor strangely. “You are clearly not alien filth from the Red Planet or Cythera. Where are you from?” asked the chief.

“Gallifrey,” the Doctor replied. “I’ve encountered your species before, in the future.”

“He knows of time travel?” asked the second Sea Devil. “The professor will want to speak to him. He may be of use.”

“I’m standing right here,” the Doctor cut in.

“Silence!” barked the chief. He turned to his subordinate. “You are quite correct, Zavodel. Bring Gilkron’s corpse, we shall give him a proper burial at the base. Quickly!”

“At once, sir!” Zavodel replied obediently. The younger Sea Devil saluted, crossing its arms in an X-shape over its chest, hands balled into fists to thump its shoulders. “Oh, and what of the predator?”

“Leave it for now, girl,” Denth said. “Another dead animal could hardly besmirch this area any further.” Zavodel nodded, then darted back over to Gilkron’s corpse and began to drag it towards the surf. Denth turned back to regard the group, gesturing with his weapon. “You aliens will accompany my subordinate and me. This is not open for discussion.”

“So we’re your prisoners, then?” Silver demanded.

“Correct.”

“Well, Doctor, I take back what I said on the beach,” she grumbled. “This *is* like any other Tuesday with you.”

The Doctor gave a wan smile. “Grin and bear it, Silver. Come along, ladies, let’s do what the man says.”

Mary looked affronted. “That thing is no man.”

“He’s a male,” the Doctor replied, “and there’s no need to be impolite.”

“But a man...” Mary trailed off. The sight of a sapient reptile seemed to crack her view of the world more than she initially thought. The prevailing view, for her time, was that God had created everything, with mankind being in his image. Even the most rational scientists believed this, Mary knew for a fact. The many fossilized creatures she and others had discovered had shown that the history of God’s creation was richer and stranger than anyone knew, but if there had been more intelligent species before, clearly on par with humanity and so far in the past that the world shouldn’t exist according to the Holy Bible... Mary rubbed her temples. This was a massive wealth of information to absorb. She remained silent as the Sea Devils herded them into a capsule strapped to the back of a domesticated ichthyosaur, its sleek reptilian bulk just visible under the surface of the water. She had much to think about.

Silver stood over the Doctor, who was sat on the floor of the capsule, the better to crane his neck and peer out of the narrow, membranous slits that served as windows to the vessel.

“Where do you think they’re taking us?” asked Silver

“No idea. These are meant to filter oxygen from the water,” deduced the Doctor, peering out, “and it’s pitch black out there anyway. I don’t know what I expected, really. We’re in the dark.”

“I’m certain we shall find out soon enough,” Mary said from her position next to the Doctor. Silver settled in next to them.

It was a surprisingly smooth ride, and the Doctor even commented that travel by ichthyosaur “second only to TARDIS as a pleasant conveyance.” Sitting in near-total darkness on the back of a huge fish lizard, thought Silver, might even be better than being thrown about aboard the Doctor’s erratic machine. Mary remained relatively silent, still digesting the world-shifting knowledge she now had.

“So, that stegosaur,” Silver began.

“Yes,” the Doctor said. “That was ridiculously foolhardy, Silver. You could have been killed, not to mention Mary and myself.”

Silver winced. “I know, I know. But, in my defense, it was a...” She trailed off, looking for the right phrase before finally it came to her. “It was a calculated risk.”

“If every calculated risk was like that,” Mary remarked, “mankind would never have made it into the Industrial Age.”

A gentle chuckle passed the Doctor’s lips. “That, my dear Silver, was rather like doing an equation utterly wrong, yet still getting the right answer.”

“Hey, I’ll take it.” They lapsed back into companionable silence before Silver spoke once more. “I just remembered that I actually had a point in bringing up the stegosaur.”

“Go on?”

“I’m no expert, but I do love dinosaurs, and I thought that whole group went extinct around the end of the Jurassic.”

“They managed to last into the Cretaceous, as we’ve seen,” the Doctor replied. “However, they’re a dying breed. As far as I’m aware, they don’t make it much further. If they do, they’re nowhere near as common as they were before.”

“Oh...” Silver frowned. “What species was that, anyway?”

“It probably never receives a name. These islands aren’t known for fossilizing large animals very well, and fossilization as a process is not a guarantee. It’s one of many millions of species that shall never be known to human science.”

“That’s so sad,” Silver said.

“Not every story can have a happy ending, Silver,” the Doctor intoned, not unkindly. He put a hand on her shoulder and gave it a gentle squeeze.

“Will ours?” she asked, voice uncertain but steady.

The Doctor didn’t meet her gaze. Perhaps he wouldn’t or couldn’t; Silver was a bit afraid to find out. For her, imagining life after the Doctor was akin to a child imagining what lay beyond the door during their first trip to the dentist. They had an inkling of what to expect, but nothing concrete; just an unfathomable unknown. That uncertainty discomfited her, and she decided to put her mind to other things.

Leaning forward to look at Mary on the Doctor’s other side, Silver asked, “Hey, how’re you feeling?”

“Still a little overwhelmed,” the other woman admitted. “However, I am curious to see more of this strange, antediluvian world.”

With a sudden jolt, the ichthyosaur-borne craft came to a halt. Light streamed into the capsule, dazzling the three prisoners as the shell cracked open. Their two Sea Devil captors strode in, grabbing the three of them aggressively by the arms and pulling them to their feet.

“Alright, we’re coming,” snapped Silver.

“Is this the part where you take us to your leader?” smiled the Doctor.

“Doctor,” gasped Mary, struggling in Denth’s iron grip, “how can you be so flippant with these creatures?”

“When you’ve been held captive as often as I have, Miss Anning, you’ll find this approach far more enjoyable than struggling. In any case, I *want* to meet their leader. I have questions.”

The creatures led them from the capsule out onto a pearlescent surface, cold and damp beneath their feet. The Doctor stepped out first, water pooling around his black wingtip shoes, before helping his two companions from the capsule.

“Not exactly dry land, but it’s certainly an improvement,” he said.

The three prisoners stood on the edge of a stony platform in a high cavern. Before them was a narrow walkway tunneled through the rock of the seabed. A steady blue glow emanated from the walls, to which the prisoners’ eyes slowly adjusted after their time in the darkness of the capsule. Growths of coral—yellow-white twisted around pink, blue, and seafoam green—emerged every dozen feet or so, holding the ceiling aloft.

There was a large pool of water behind them, and along the sides of the walkway were tethers for other domesticated reptiles—snake-necked elasmosaurs, crocodile-faced pliosaurs, and more fish-like ichthyosaurs. Other Sea Devils in black tunics were tending to them. They looked over to the newcomers and eyed the mammals with suspicion.

Relieved to have escaped the stuffiness of the capsule, Mary took in a deep breath. The air was thick with an algal smell. She sneezed. It smelled awfully like the tide pools at Lyme Regis, and she was hit by a sudden yearning for the familiarity of home.

“Where’s the light coming from?” asked Silver.

“Those mats of bioluminescent organisms coating the walls,” the Doctor identified, gesturing with his forefinger. “Environmentally friendly and decidedly efficient.”

Denthi led them along the narrow corridor for some ways before opening a sliding door embedded in the wall. The enormous reptile ordered them inside, then slammed the door shut. A slat in the door slid open, and his eye trained itself on them.

“You will remain here until we commence the interrogation,” he hissed. Then he slammed the slat shut once more.

Silver slumped against the rock wall, sliding down to sit on the floor. “Captured again,” she sighed. “Just another manic Monday.”

“It’s Tuesday,” Mary pointed out.

“Yeah, but ‘Just another manic Tuesday’ isn’t how the song goes.”

The door cracked open then, and a writhing sack was thrown in. “You may keep your lunch,” the Sea Devil informed them, then shut the door. Mortimer and Tray emerged, fighting like every clichéd turn of phrase on the tip of Silver’s tongue. The Doctor rolled his eyes and grabbed the cat, while the terrier retreated to Mary, whimpering.

“The nerve of that creature!” Mary grouched. “Implying we’d eat our pets!”

Tray sat in Mary’s lap, warily eyeing Mortimer. There was a scratch on his nose, no doubt caused by the cat’s claws when bundled together in the bag. Mary stroked the dog to calm him down, while the Doctor playfully petted Mortimer. Knowing the cat, Tray had been lucky to get out with such a minor scratch.

The three of them sat in silence for some time, save for the purring of Mortimer on the Doctor’s lap and the occasional snore from Tray, who had fallen asleep from exhaustion.

The Doctor lifted his fob watch from his waistcoat, peering at the intricate face.

“Oh, for mercy’s sake, how long are they going to keep us here? I’ve usually been roughed up by now.”

As if on cue, the cell door snapped open. Denthi stormed in, grasping the Doctor by his throat and lifting him into the air.

"I just had to say it, didn't I?" the Time Lord muttered.

"You will tell us how you came to be in this place," said the reptile, "or I will execute your companions." The Sea Devil lifted its weapon from its belt, comfortably holding the Doctor aloft with one scaly hand, and trained it on Silver. "Beginning with this one."

"Now, now, Denthi. Let's not be hasty!" the Doctor exclaimed, finding it a bit hard to breathe with the reptile's hand clenched around his throat. "Might I offer an alternative? You tell me how you've been manipulating time, and I'll tell you how I do the same."

"You are in no position to make demands," snarled Denthi, his webbed hand clenching harder on the weapon. His breath reeked of fish and squid—though the Doctor supposed the latter scent would actually be of belemnites. "Previous attempts at aggression by alien savages have been met with certain death. We have no wish to end our isolation and have no qualms about executing offworlders like the lot of you. Now, before I begin severing your limbs for sport, old man, explain how you came to be here."

"How... charmingly graphic," the Doctor remarked caustically. Denthi gave him a firm shake. "Alright, fine! If you must know, *you* brought us. At least, I think it was you. An equipment test perhaps? A dry run for whatever it is you're planning? Or perhaps things are malfunctioning?" Denthi remained silent, and the Doctor smiled. "I'd be happy to take a look at it and render any assistance I can. After all, if you're so ridiculously xenophobic that you'll go to all the effort of escaping through time instead of space, you'll need my help."

"Mind your tongue, foreigner. You will not be going anywhere near the equipment. Explain it to me, and I shall relay it to the scientists."

The Doctor shook his head. "Out of the question. There's no point in explaining my methods to you if you lack an in-depth understanding of temporal physics," he reasoned. "Demonstrate you have knowledge in the field, or take me to someone who does."

Denthi paused for a moment, then lowered the Doctor to the floor. He remained silent for another several moments, his weapon still trained on Silver. "Very well," he grunted stiffly. "Come with me."

"And my companions," added the Doctor.

"What did I just say about making demands?"

"My friends come with me, or I'll say nothing. Your choice."

Denthi ground his beak in fury. "Guards, bring the two smaller mammals."

"And our pets," the Doctor said with a smile.

The Sea Devil shook his head in quiet resignation. "Guards, bring the two *even smaller* mammals."

The group was led down the corridor to a laboratory.

"Doctor," Silver whispered, "you're not seriously helping them."

"Well of course not," the Doctor chuckled. "I just needed to get close to their equipment to inspect it."

"And disable it?" Mary chimed in.

"Mhm," the Doctor confirmed with a nod.

Denthi flicked a switch, and the laboratory door slid aside. Zavodel and another Sea Devil behind them ushered the group inside. As the door slid shut once more, metallic teeth began to grind as gears roared to life.

Mary looked around the room in which they found themselves. It was unlike any place she had seen before. Even the archaic wildness of the prehistoric beach had been something not entirely unfamiliar. This was something quite different, another world entirely. The entire room was metallic; a vision of many sharp-cornered polygonal shapes as opposed to the rough-hewn sea cave outside.

"This is a laboratory?" asked Mary, taking in the many devices that populated the room, devices whose functions she could not begin to imagine.

"I guess so," said Silver. She was reminded vaguely of her father's lab where he studied the Grabbers. She shuddered at the memories and held Mortimer a little tighter. The windows, revealing the inky blackness of the deep sea outside, did nothing to alleviate her unease.

"Goodness gracious me!" Mary exclaimed, looking around in wonderment. "What a marvel this place is!"

Denthi turned to the guards, bringing the new one with him and leaving Zavodel behind to observe.

"Yes, it rather is," the Doctor remarked, inspecting a nearby piece of machinery.

"Thank you," said an elderly Sea Devil who hobbled forth to meet them, supported by a cane. The badge it wore on its grey tunic seemed to be some sort of rank insignia, presumably related to the sciences thanks to its atom shape. Accompanying it was another, younger Sea Devil in similar clothing.

For their part, Mary and Silver seemed surprised to see such an infirm individual; everyone else had been the picture of health by comparison. This Sea Devil had the posture and demeanor of an arthritic old librarian. "I am Professor Numu," the reptile continued, "and this is my assistant, Kleskac."

"A pleasure to meet you, madam," the Doctor replied, shaking her webbed hand and nodding to her assistant. "I'm the Doctor, and these are my companions: Silver and Mary."

"Welcome," Numu said to them with a nod. The group returned it.

"You cannot bring food into the lab," Kleskac grunted, gesturing to Mortimer and Tray.

"They're our pets," Silver explained.

"You keep lesser mammals as pets? Fascinating." Numu held out a hand, and Kleskac handed her an electronic pad. The old woman hastily scribbled down a note, then handed the pad back. She cleared her throat and tapped her cane on the floor for attention. "Now, down to business. Captain Denthi informs me you wish to speak to me, Doctor?"

"Yes, actually," the Doctor replied. "One moment." He fished in his pockets for a second before retrieving the device he had used on the beach. He turned it on, and instead of chirping like it did on the beach, it now held the tone. Silver and Mary covered their ears. Tray began to howl. Mortimer hissed and struggled in Silver's arms.

"Turn it off!" she cried. The Doctor did so, tapping it gently. The animals settled down, though Mortimer had a thousand-yard stare and was breathing like he'd just run a mile; the women uncovered their ears.

"Just as I thought. The chronons in this area are being excited by your machinery in much the same way they would be by Yevnonian technology," the Doctor announced.

“Yevnonian?” Kleskac repeated, utterly lost.

“Individuals from the Princessipality of Yevnon,” the Doctor explained. “One of the handful of time-active races in the universe, other than my own.” He turned to Numu. “But that’s not the point. What I need to know is how you came to have this technology.” The old woman bristled, puffed out her bony chest as far as it would go, and opened her mouth to tell him off. “Oh, and please don’t patronize me by claiming you invented it yourself. I’m well aware you’re nowhere near close enough to such a breakthrough, professor, despite your isolation from the rest of your race and the universe at large.

“You clearly haven’t the resources, no doubt due in part to the fact you aren’t receiving shipments from the mining operation on Phobos. I believe your Silurian cousins operate that with the Martians, yes? Courtesy of an arrangement with her Imperial Majesty Vyaxka VII?”

Numu and Kleskac stared in shock, jaws slackening slightly. How could he have known any of that?

“Now, of course, I extrapolated that from the rather primitive technology outside, Denth’s brutal commentary, and, of course, that most Sea Devil women of your age, Numu, would have preserved Martian snowcap blooms as brooches.” There was a deafening pause, and Silver resisted the urge to applaud. It would just make the Doctor insufferable to live with for a week or two. “I apologize,” the Doctor said with an unapologetic smile, “but sometimes the truth hurts.”

The scientists stiffened, narrowing their eyes at him as their beaks snapped shut with two pointed clicks. “And who’s to say we’ll tell you anything?” Kleskac inquired.

“Oh, I don’t imagine you will.” The Doctor stepped past them and approached a tall metallic stack, topped with monitors and large buttons suited to broad, webbed hands. It hummed with electrical power. It was clearly a computer tower of some design. He ran his right forefinger along the sleek metal surface, producing a squeak. “But I’d hate to have to incapacitate you both and dismantle everything in here. That would no doubt set your cause back by decades, if not centuries.” He paused, catching Numu’s eye. He sighed, self-consciously breaking her gaze. “We all know that’s time you simply don’t have.” He looked up at the assembled reptiles and gave them a sad smile. Zavodel narrowed her eyes and tightened her grasp on her weapon. “So, about my question?”

Numu and Kleskac shared a look, then Kleskac sighed. “Sit down, professor. I’ll show him the device.” He waved Zavodel down. Walking over to meet the Doctor, he directed the Time Lord to a crucible at the back of the lab. Silver and Mary trailed behind.

A small box sat on a ledge in the crucible, shielded behind a partition of glass. Lights flickered at the sides. It was presumably linked into the system wirelessly. The Doctor let out a low “mhm” and tapped his chin. “Can you lower this glass, please?”

“As long as I am the one to handle the device,” Kleskac responded, eyeing the Doctor warily. The Time Lord frowned.

“What do you think I’m going to do?” he asked. “Smash it?”

“I simply wish to take no chances.” The Sea Devil clearly wouldn’t budge on this point, and the Doctor relented. Kleskac flipped a switch on the wall, and the partition rose into the ceiling. He gingerly retrieved the device from the crucible and brought it to a nearby table where Professor Numu was perched on a stool.

"It's connected to the rest of the machinery through a wireless system, correct?" the Doctor inquired.

"Yes," said the professor. "We have difficulties with it, but the maintenance crew is very obliging to our needs as we're the test case."

"Maintenance crew?" the Doctor asked. "I presume it's an out-of-house service, then?"

"Yes. It's here on the back," said Kleskac, turning the box around and tapping the bottom gently. The Doctor inspected it and sucked in a sharp breath.

"Oh no," he murmured, rubbing his temples. He sounded more annoyed than anything else.

"What's the matter?" Silver asked, setting Mortimer down and leaning over the Doctor's shoulder.

Mary did the same over his other shoulder and read the text aloud. "This experimental model is the intellectual property of Zodin Enterprises, LLC. All rights reserved. To contact maintenance services, set any appropriate signal array to the coordinates below."

"Let me just copy those down," the Doctor muttered, fetching a pad and pen from his pocket. "Infernal cheek..."

"Who are Zodin Enterprises?" Mary inquired.

"I can only presume that it's the company of the Terrible Zodin," the Doctor replied, putting the pad with the coordinates back in his pocket.

"The Terrible Zodin?" Silver asked. "You've mentioned her before. Who is she?"

"A hideous fiend possessing a singular guile and devilish cunning," he explained. "I first met her some centuries ago on Zymymys Midamor in some gambit involving... er, was it giant grasshoppers or mutant kangaroos? Might have been albino cannibal jackalopes. Either way, the last time we crossed paths, she was *not* in charge of any 'Zodin Enterprises'!"

"Quite the enterprising lady by the sounds of her," Mary remarked.

"You wouldn't be saying that if you'd met her as often as I have," the Doctor sighed. "Now, let me see here..." He ran his sonic screwdriver over the device, giving it a thorough inspection. "Interesting. It's shielded from sonic emissions." Another device was plucked from his pocket, which whirred and burbled as it scanned the box. After a moment, it dinged, and a screen on the top displayed the gathered data.

"Well?" Silver asked, sparing a glance to Numu and Kleskac. The two reptiles were eyeing the Doctor warily.

"It's the source of our anomaly," her companion confirmed. "It can transport matter through time and space. Rather like TOMTIT."

"Tom's tits? I beg your pardon!" Mary exclaimed, scandalized.

"TOMTIT is an acronym for 'Transmission of Matter Through Interstitial Time,'" the Doctor explained wearily. "I didn't come up with it. In any case, it's a ham-fisted form of time manipulation that can have all sorts of unforeseen consequences if used improperly."

Numu visibly bridled, her sagging fins quivering.

"Ham-fisted?" she snapped. "I'll have you know this is the most sophisticated, state-of-the-art technology on this planet!"

"Oh, I'm sure it is, but that's hardly saying much. In any case, I'm going to have to shut it all down."

"Doctor," whispered Silver, "are you sure that's the best thing to say right now?"

“You shall do no such thing!” Kleskac cried. “Zavodel, remove these mammals at once and return them to their cell where they belong. We’ll fetch them when we have use for them.”

“Don’t try anything,” the Doctor announced, brandishing his sonic screwdriver. “I can disable your equipment from here. I’d prefer not to make too much of a mess to your laboratory if I can help it, so it would be best if you just let me get on with it in peace.”

“I must insist that you stop!” Numu demanded, getting to her feet and hobbling over to the Doctor. “We are faced with extinction unless this operation succeeds! Surely, you must realize that some minor damage to time is outweighed by the survival of our people?”

“I apologize, but no, I don’t,” the Doctor replied, his tone sorrowful yet grave. He did seem genuinely sympathetic to the Sea Devils’ plight. “From our perspective, your people’s fate is prehistory. Altering events now would be catastrophic. The world you’re intruding upon has millions of years of its own history your presence threatens to disrupt.” He paused, before adding: “There’s also the fact that you’re a bunch of xenophobic racists and there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of other Sea Devil enclaves both on and off this planet.” The Doctor shook his head. “I don’t wish you any harm, but I cannot condone your methods or aims, and to be honest, you’re not engendering much sympathy.”

Blood rushed to Kleskac’s face, turning it an ugly shade of black. He shoved the Doctor to the ground with a shout of “No!” and turned to grab to the machine. Mortimer leapt in front of it, growling dangerously. When Kleskac attempted to grab the cat to throw him away, Mortimer took the chance and climbed up the reptile’s arm. “Get off!”

Mortimer didn’t listen, instead clambering up to Kleskac’s head. Hissing, spitting, and yowling, Mortimer began scratching at the Sea Devil’s bulging eyes. Screeching in pain, Kleskac writhed and struggled, trying to prize Mortimer off his head. Zavodel leapt into action, aiming her weapon at Mortimer. “Hold still, Kleskac! I shall remove the mammal, but I do not want you to be collateral damage!”

“Hey! Leave my cat alone!” Silver cried, lurching over from where she’d been trying to right the Doctor. She charged Zavodel, arms outstretched, ready to shove the Sea Devil away, but Zavodel grabbed her. The two fell to the ground, grappled together.

Numu saw her chance, hobbling over to the device as fast as her arthritic legs would carry her. As she began to tinker with the controls, she tapped her badge, which relayed her voice throughout the undersea habitat. “Attention all citizens! This is Chief Scientist Numu! The following order has priority over all others, including any from Lord Vasskor! Prepare for an emergency evacuation! Repeat, prepare for an emergency evacuation! We are initializing temporal transfer. The mission has been compromised!” She twisted a large dial on the device’s topmost panel. “Breach opening now!”

The device began to throb with a deep, sonorous hum as its power increased. The Doctor staggered to his feet, grabbing Numu by her shoulders and shoving her away.

“What have you done?” he cried, leaning over the table to grab the device.

The Sea Devil was stronger than she appeared, however, lurching back over and forcing the Doctor back away from the machine. She raised her cane and smacked him hard on the skull. With a loud thump and a cry of anguish, the Doctor fell to his knees once again, cradling his head in his hands.

“You will *not* interfere!” the scientist declared. “We *will* escape this doomed world and remake the future in our image!”

“Over my dead body!” the Doctor hissed back, trying to stop seeing double. He fell onto his hands, groaning in pain. Numu snarled in rage. While she was, generally, an intelligent and reasonable reptile, she would fight beak and claw for the survival of her people and their way of life, and no alien was going to stand in her way.

“That can be arranged!” Numu belted back. “But first, salvation...!” She cranked the dial even higher, and the hum became a low, ominous rumble...

George Featherstonhaugh was enjoying a post-lunch stroll back to his lodgings. The sea air was invigorating, helping him shake off the stupefying effects of a three-course afternoon meal. He glanced up at the sky, watching the seagulls swooping and squawking as they came inland.

“Blasted creatures,” he muttered to himself. “They make such a racket.”

It was only when one came to perch on the roof of the boarding house that he could see it clearly enough to notice that instead of feathers, it had scaly flesh covered in a short, fuzzy fur. Instead of a yellow beak, it had a long maw lined with sharp, jagged teeth. Its tail was long, reptilian, almost dragon-like.

“Pon my soul!” he bellowed, staggering backwards away from the hideous creature. He turned to flee, only to stop short. Ambling down the street was an enormous, twenty-foot-long reptile with dusky-tan scales and wicked-looking spikes for thumbs. Its horse-like head terminated in a blunt, rounded beak. It looked confused, unsure of where it was. It let out a loud, ringing honk, wondering where its herd had gone. Featherstonhaugh stared, agog. He had no idea what this creature was; no idea that dinosaurs were now abroad in Lyme Regis.

A loud, feminine scream came from a nearby alleyway, followed by an inhuman, almost bird-like shriek. Immediately, the local midwife ran out of the alley as if every demon in Hell was after her. Half a second later, Featherstonhaugh found that his assessment wasn't far off. The midwife was being pursued by the most demonic-looking bird the scientist had ever seen. Sickle-like claws raised up from its second toes, and in lieu of a beak, it had a maw filled with vicious-looking teeth. It cried out again as it leapt onto the midwife's back. People began to scream and run as more monsters emerged, fostering panic amongst the townsfolk.

“God preserve us!” bellowed one of the townsfolk. “All the demons of Hell itself have been unleashed!”

Featherstonhaugh was inclined to agree as he turned tail and retreated from the growing menagerie of beasts. The *Polacanthus* munching on a nearby hedge paid him no mind. It may have been somewhere utterly unfamiliar, but that didn't matter. After all, it was well protected, and there was still plenty to eat.

The walls of the laboratory began to fade as the two time zones overlapped. The shaking grew stronger as the temporal vibrations increased in intensity. Through the thinning barrier of the walls, the cliffs of the Blue Lias became visible as past and future mingled. The effect stunned everyone, including the animals, allowing Kleskac a window of opportunity to throw Mortimer off his face. The reptile then collapsed back to the floor, dazed and bloodied.

"It works! It works!" cried Numu triumphantly.

"It's my home!" gasped Mary. "The cliffs near Lyme Regis."

"Roughly the equivalent location in your time," said the Doctor, getting to his feet and rubbing his sore head. "After a few million years of seismic upheaval. Not that this is an exact science—especially after all the monkeying around this lot have done to the device."

"Not to be pedantic, but is it really 'monkeying around' with these guys?" she asked. "More like turtling around."

"They're not turtles, remember?"

"Definitely not monkeys, though!"

"Can we please focus!?" Mary cut in.

As the structure of the Sea Devils' realm began to fade, the Doctor and his friends could see throngs of Sea Devils massing on the beach. The warriors in their ornate armor led the way, with panicked civilians following.

"There must be hundreds of them!" gasped Silver, as she struggled free of Zavodel's grasp.

"And no doubt many more to follow," said the Doctor, gravely.

"No," said Mary. "I will not allow my world to become overrun with these creatures, no matter how remarkable they are."

While Numu was entranced by the sight of the future world, Mary lunged towards the machine. She reached into the pocket that fronted her dress, whipping out the ichthyosaur tooth she had secreted there at the beach. With a strength born of desperation, she plunged the tooth into the innards of the device, sending a shower of sparks bursting outward.

"Mary, get back!" cried Silver, grabbing the woman away from the discharging device.

"What have you done, you hairy beast?" cried Kleskac as he stood up. The vision of the English beach faded as the time zones disentangled once more—everything was in its rightful place... except for the time travelers. They were again enclosed within the metal walls of the laboratory. The device continued to rumble, the volume and intensity increasing.

"That was some quick thinking, Mary," the Doctor commended, "but I fear you may have damaged the sonic field generator—a very delicate piece of technology. The slightest touch can send it into total disarray. Of course, this means that disruption is now going to increase exponentially."

"We need to get out of here!" Silver cried as Mary scooped the terrified Tray into her arms.

"You are going nowhere," hissed Zavodel, raising her weapon.

A powerful tremor knocked the warrior to her feet. Numu collapsed while Kleskac grabbed hold of the wall. The Doctor and his companions held onto each other, Mortimer leaping onto the Doctor's back for safety.

The walls of the laboratory cracked open like an eggshell. From the rear of the room, water began pouring in, while to the front, the grand plaza of the Sea Devil city became visible. Huge coral pillars supported the central structure. Under the seismic disruption, they began to crack and crumble. Sea Devils ran panicking in all directions.

The sound of the temporal device intensified even further, becoming a harsh whine. While the Doctor and his friends shook their heads in discomfort, Mortimer, Tray, and the Sea

Devils were in clear pain. The dog yelped and the cat screeched. The reptiles cradled their heads in their webbed hands, paralyzed by the intense sonic disruption.

Unseen by any of them, the sound was affecting even the creatures in the seas outside. The flocks of tamed sea predators began to writhe in their harnesses. They had been securely contained for the transition; only the strongest could possibly break free.

The Doctor and his companions looked on in horror through the breaks in the lab wall as the hull was breached by a huge, blunt-ended snout. Water poured through in enormous quantities as the beast forced its way through, the metal screaming in protest the whole way. A gigantic pliosaur, its head over a meter long and all mouth, shoved through the breach in a final onslaught of seawater, its maw open as it hungrily eyed the immobilized and terrified Sea Devils.

The Doctor briefly made an attempt to identify the species before coming to his senses.

“This is our chance! Quickly, before the whole thing blows!” He pointed his sonic screwdriver at the violently vibrating temporal device. “Mary, Silver, hold onto me tight!”

The screwdriver emitted an ear-splitting shriek that beat even the time machine’s noise for sheer intensity. The walls of the laboratory, the chaos outside, the Sea Devils themselves began to fade from sight.

Silver thought she saw the Doctor’s lips moving but couldn’t make out what he was saying over the all-consuming din. And then, a bright flash consumed everything. The trio materialized on the Dorset beach at the foot of the Blue Lias cliffs. The time device spluttered into existence at the Doctor’s feet, giving out one last belch of sparks before dying completely.

“Shoddy craftsmanship,” he tutted. “I should have expected as much. They don’t call Zodin ‘Terrible’ for nothing.” He picked it up and handed it to Silver. She could tell he was trying to mask his true feelings with braggadocio just by the tightness in his shoulders. For her part, Silver felt an increasing numbness in her chest.

“Are we finally safe?” said Mary, releasing Tray onto the pebbles. The dog sniffed around cautiously for a moment, before pottering off towards the cliffs.

“I believe so,” said the Doctor, prizing Mortimer’s claws from his jacket and depositing the oversized feline onto the ground. “The device has given up the ghost, and time should be righting itself as we speak. Everything will be back in its rightful era.”

“What about the Sea Devils?” asked Silver.

The Doctor sighed. “They won’t be so lucky. The Earth was due to experience some increased volcanic activity. However, given that the Sea Devils and their land-based cousins have, in previous instances that I’ve encountered them, spoken of a planetoid approaching the Earth, well...”

“You’re not sure it was exactly natural volcanism,” Silver finished.

“Yes. There are many other enclaves of the reptiles around the world with other means of survival. I’m certain that the Sea Devils we just encountered will have some survivors—they are natural swimmers, after all. No doubt they have access to some of the same technology their fellows will use to wait out the millennia.” The Doctor was silent for a moment as if trying to make sure he had justified his actions well enough, perhaps more to himself than to his companions, then turned to Mary with a smile. “On a happier note, you were very brave today, Mary. Not many people from this day and age would apply themselves so readily in such a situation.”

Mary gave him a measured look. She was used to men patronizing her, but she had been taught that it wasn't a woman's place to make a scene. Instead, she replied with brittle, icy politeness: "Pardon me for saying so, but I feel you underestimate me, Doctor."

"Well, what I meant was—"

"However, most men make that mistake." That was, Mary thought, perhaps a little bold. But then, the Doctor wasn't as staunch as the men she dealt with on a daily basis, and today was a day for boldness if there ever was one.

Before the Doctor could reply, there was a slight rumble, and he looked up, eyes wide.

"What is it?" Silver asked.

"Temporal aftershocks," the Doctor replied, looking to the cliff face. Mary followed his eyes, then took off.

"Tray!" she cried.

Her dog yipped excitedly, but it was too late. The ground shook once more, the rocks shuddered, and the cliffside gave way. An avalanche of stone hurtled to the beach below and, with a desperate scream from Mary, covered Tray. Silver began to run over to help her new friend try and save the little terrier, but the Doctor held her back, his grip on her arm very firm.

"What's wrong with you!?" Silver demanded, aghast. "We have to help!"

"I'm afraid that he's beyond help," the Doctor murmured regretfully. "That right there, Silver—" He gestured to Mary, who had uncovered Tray and was cradling him in her arms, sobbing. "—is the only historical evidence that any of this ever occurred."

Silver was heartbroken, her face screwed up in anguish. Tears streamed down her cheeks. Even Mortimer looked sorrowful; as much as he'd tormented the dog, he hadn't disliked him in the least.

"I'm sorry," the Doctor said after a moment.

"Don't." Silver sniffled a bit. "Don't tell me. Tell her."

The Doctor, however, did not. Putting an arm around Silver's shoulders, he guided her back to the TARDIS, Mortimer following in their wake. As soon as the Doctor opened the door, the cat bounded inside and curled up atop the time rotor. He had done quite enough for one day, he'd decided, and deserved a long nap.

"Now what?" said Silver, placing the Terrible Zodin's machine onto an end table and wiping her eyes.

"Now we need to hop back to 1811," said the Doctor.

"Why?"

"You remember how Mary remembered us, despite the fact we'd never met her before?"

Silver nodded, then frowned. She could feel the enormity of what had transpired coming at her, and she didn't know if she could handle such a responsibility to time or anything else, right now. "Do we have to do it right this minute?"

"Of course not. Take your time."

Mary hugged Tray's limp, bludgeoned body close. He had been her most constant companion for so long, and now he was gone. Taken in an instant by forces beyond either of their understanding. It wasn't fair. Mary sobbed into his fur, wishing he would show some signs of life.

"Miss Anning?" came a voice. Mary looked up to see Featherstonhaugh coming up to her. When he saw Tray's body, he inhaled sharply and took off his top hat. "Oh no... Is the poor animal—"

"Dead, yes," Mary replied miserably.

"I'm so sorry, dear girl," he intoned. Stepping gingerly around the fallen rocks, he offered her his hand. "Let me walk you back to town, eh?"

The young woman took it gratefully, thanked him, and they set off. "I feel as though I've missed something," she said as they went.

Featherstonhaugh cleared his throat. "Dashed peculiar thing, actually," he replied. "Some kind of benighted fit spread throughout the town."

"Really?" Mary exclaimed. "What happened?"

"Everyone—myself included—saw giant beasts roaming the streets, dragons squawking on rooftops, spiked monsters munching on hedgerows, and bird demons like something out of an occultist's most fevered imaginings!" the elder fossilist explained. Mary's eyebrows began to ascend towards her hairline. "Myself and some others saw towering turtle men amassing on the beach, and then it all stopped as soon as it began! Several people perished during the whole insane affair. So, when I heard the landslide, I naturally rushed down to make sure there were no further casualties. I suppose you can guess the rest."

"That's quite the story, sir," Mary said after a measured pause. "If I didn't know any better, I'd almost say you were telling, ah, what do the Americans call them? Tall tales?"

"Quite so, dear girl, quite so..." Featherstonhaugh concurred.

"I do hope that you don't find me heartless," Mary replied.

"What? Well, I suppose a little. Though the story is perhaps a little hard to believe." He paused for a moment. "We do need help with the wounded and dead."

"Then I shall acquit myself to the best of my abilities, sir. Lead on."

Mary adjusted Tray's limp body in her arms, trying to swallow her grief. As much as she loved the little terrier, human lives were considered more important by society, for good or for ill. They carried on up to Lyme Regis in relative silence. The older man was ruminating on his ordeal, while the young woman was realizing that she now had a tremendous secret to keep. Not even Elizabeth and her sisters could know about this.

"This isn't 1811," Silver remarked as she and the Doctor exited the TARDIS. They were on a street that sloped down to the seaside. A nearby sign identified it as Broad Street. People were passing by, oblivious to both the TARDIS and her crew.

"What gave it away?" asked the Time Lord, shutting the door behind him. "Was it the iPhones or the Tesco Express across the street?"

"The cars, as a matter of fact."

"Yes, that would do it. We're actually in 2011."

“And why’s that?” Silver inquired. “I thought we had to go back and see Mary when she was younger?”

“Indeed we do,” said the Doctor, “but first I thought we’d make a stopover. I want to show you something.”

They made their way down Broad Street to the shore, through the occasional group of people, typically pensioners. After a quick jog across the road and a stroll down a footpath along the shore, they arrived at a stately-looking building of red brick.

“Welcome to the Lyme Regis Museum,” the Doctor announced.

“That’s... nice?” Silver said. “Why are we here?” She looked around. “Wait, isn’t this—”

“This spot is where Mary’s house used to be, yes,” her companion confirmed. “And if you’ll direct your attention to the blue plaque over there, you’ll see why we’ve come.”

Silver read the inscription aloud. “‘Mary Anning, 1799-1847. The famous fossilist was born here in a house on the site of the Lyme Regis Museum. The house was her home and her fossil shop...’ She’s still remembered after two hundred years?”

“And beyond, for her discoveries and her contribution to science. So is Tray, for that matter.”

“That’s amazing.” Silver inspected the plaque again and frowned. “She wasn’t very old when she died, though.”

“It was the nineteenth century, and she had little money. I’m afraid that sort of life expectancy wasn’t uncommon, especially if you developed breast cancer like she did,” the Doctor explained. “During her life, though, she made some of the most remarkable finds in palaeontological history. If she’d been a man, she would have been regarded as one of the greatest scientists of her time. She just had to wait a little longer for the recognition she truly deserved.”

“You’re right, she did deserve it. I’m glad at least the twenty-first century gets it, even if the nineteenth didn’t.”

The Doctor put his hand on her shoulder. “Come along now,” he said, smiling. “It’s time to go give young Mary the encouragement she needs.” As they walked back up the footpath, the Doctor began to sing softly. “She sells seashells on the seashore...”

“But are the shells she sells seashells?” recited Silver. “I’m not so sure.”

The pair exchanged a grin, then made their way back up to the TARDIS.

That evening, after helping clean up the damage and tend to the wounded and dying, Mary was exhausted. She had buried Tray in a quiet, private ceremony and was now slowly making her way home. On the way down, she passed a gentleman who nodded to her. He was scruffy-looking, with an unshaven face and flyaway hair moving back along a prominent forehead. He was as oddly dressed as Silver had been.

“Nice to see you again,” he said, before taking a sharp left into an alleyway.

Mary had no idea what to make of this, and even less of an idea what to think of the strange, unearthly trumpeting that filled the air afterward. She walked back and looked down the alley, only to find it empty. Confused, Mary hurried home, fully intent on heading straight to bed.

She was about halfway across her front room when she saw it. A pile of coins was sat upon the counter, a note laid gently next to it. Mary walked over and picked it up.

Mary,

Sorry it took so long to get this back to you, and I'm sorry about Tray. He was a good dog. I hope this is enough to cover the teeth.

Good hunting,

The Doctor

Mary read the note over several times, then smiled. The coins totaled exactly fifteen shillings. Yes, she thought, that would be more than enough.

APPENDIX

For the Ninth Doctor and Silver, this story occurs in Season 35, between *Doctor Who and the Curse of the Jade Skull* and *Strange Meeting*.

For the Tenth Doctor, this story occurs in Season 40, between *Cybercult* and *Final Reckoning: Part One*.

During planning, James and Dan made a loose list of dinosaurs to include in the ecosystem, and what the area's biome was. This is included at the end of the appendix. Picking dinosaurs proved somewhat difficult, due to the often scant remains and uncertain affinities of the species present.

Other things were cut from the story at various stages:

- There was a mention of Hex from Big Finish during the discussion of the Doctor's previous meeting with Featherstonhaugh. This was excised due to conflicting continuity (*The Cosmic Plot of Doctor Hu* is clear that Ace had never met the Toymaker prior to the flashbacks there, which is at odds with the events of audio story *The Magic Mousetrap*).
- During the walk to the river, the group was to encounter a flock of enantiornithine birds. Lack of suitable species known from England caused it to be removed.
- Originally, the sauropod sequence was to have included a crocodile trying to grab one of the pets (indeed, a species appears on the list below), but the story developed in a way that rendered it surplus. Indeed, many mentions of species were cut because it was felt the story was becoming less accessible to the average reader.
- At a storyline stage, the travelers strolled down the river's edge marveling at all the species, then happened upon a flock of *Istiodactylus* feasting on an ichthyosaur corpse on the beach. They were driven away by Mortimer and Tray; then the Sea Devils popped up out of nowhere after the Doctor noted the temporal energy was coming from the bottom of the sea. It was felt that this was too sedate and the story needed more incident. Before the *Baryonyx* chase was implemented, the group was driven to the beach by a starving *Altispinax* making a desperate attack on the sauropods.
- Initially, the travelers were to be interrogated by the lead scientist and the Sea Devil leader, Vasskor. At this stage, the lead scientist was unnamed and presumed male. The decision was made to shift the action to the lab instead.
- It was suggested that the Monk could be the Sea Devils' mysterious benefactor, but the Terrible Zodin proved more amusing.
- Featherstonhaugh's encounter with the prehistoric fauna was originally just going to be various scenes of townsfolk dealing with the sudden appearances.
- Mary's encounter with Featherstonhaugh following Tray's death and the trip to Lyme Regis to 2011 were late additions done at a writing stage to give Mary and Silver some closure following the events. This addition also prompted revisions to the opening dialogue between the Doctor and Silver.

- During final revisions, Elizabeth Philpot was noted and added to give Mary more grounding in fact and in her community.
- The ending was revised to give it more emotional authenticity.

In Dan's initial conception, this story featured the Fourth Doctor and Romana I (and most likely K-9, too). It was set between *The Armageddon Factor* and *Destiny of the Daleks*. The original blurb is included below.

The Fourth Doctor and Romana I arrive in Lyme Regis in 1811, encountering the twelve-year-old Mary Anning on the beach, looking for fossils. She had a poor few weeks hunting; her brother has given up, and she's close to doing the same. The Doctor buys a few shells off her and encourages her to keep her passion for fossil hunting; she's bound to find something remarkable if she keeps looking. "Oh, and do bring your brother along. You never know, he might be quite helpful."

Years later in 1833, Anning is running her own fossil shop from the fronting of her new home, having made her name and money from her sales of her remarkable finds. She's visited by many eccentric personalities, including George William Featherstonhaugh, and the Doctor and Romana. She remembers them from the beach, of course, but they have never met her before. The Doctor knows her by reputation, though, and is thoroughly pleased to meet her. They've arrived tracking a temporal anomaly that is bridging disparate points in the timeline. The next morning, they track the disturbance to the beach, where Anning is looking for fossils. They save her from being killed in a rockslide, before locating the breach in time, which leads back to the Jurassic period.

After exploring the past for a short time, the Doctor, Romana and Anning locate a group of Sea Devils who are trying to escape from the approach of the Moon into the future. The rift widens further, and the past and future begin to intermingle. The Doctor sabotages the Devils' device, with the three of them naturally phasing back to the present. The Doctor and Romana drop in on the younger Anning to encourage her in her endeavours.

The decision to write the story as featuring the Ninth Doctor, Silver, and Mortimer was initially proposed by Dan ("*Mary's dog is overwhelmed by the gigantic feline!*"). James was tickled by the notion and eagerly agreed.

Early Cretaceous England, circa 125 million years ago (mya)

Ecology: alluvial chaparral-like plain crisscrossed by a perennial river system. Lakes (especially oxbow lakes) and ponds present. Ginkgoes, conifers, ferns, and other such plants also present.

Dinosaurs

- *Polacanthus* – nodosaur
- *Valdoraptor* – presumed ornithomimosaur
- *Ornithodesmus* – dromaeosaur
- *Altispinax* – indeterminate theropod, similar to *Acrocanthosaurus*
- *Aristosuchus* – small coelurosaur
- *Mantellisaurus* – large ornithopod, originally a species of *Iguanodon* until a 2007 reassessment
- *Pelorosaurus* – brachiosaurid sauropod
- *Chondrosteosaurus* – eusauropod (similar to *Camarasaurus*)
- *Ornithopsis* – early titanosaur
- *Hypsilophodon* – the archetypal ornithopod, a lightly-feathered omnivore
- *Eotyrannus* – early tyrannosaur
- *Baryonyx* – spinosaur
- A late-surviving stegosaur descended from *Craterosaurus*; the Doctor notes that, due to the area's poor fossilization rate, it's never discovered or described by human science, which saddens Silver.

Ichthyosaurs

- *Acamptonectes* – ophthalmosaur, seen beached and dead, plus underwater
- A domesticated variety used by the Sea Devils for deep-sea exploration

Plesiosaurs

- Several unidentified elasmosaurid species, mostly domesticated by the Sea Devils
- An enormous leptocleidid pliosaur

Hybodont Sharks

- *Hybodus* – one of the longest-lived sharks, with species known from 260 to 65 mya

Crocodylians

- *Anteophthalmosuchus* – goniopholid mesoeucrocodylian

Amphibians

- *Wesserpeton* – albanerpetonid (a salamander-like group)
- Indeterminate species of frogs

Invertebrates

- *Cretamygale* – mygalomorph spider
- Various insects, including midges

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Daniel Tessier is a terrible geek who writes too much about old television and superhero movies. He runs his own blog, *Immaterial*, and has written reviews and articles for *Television Heaven*, *Whotopia* magazine, and *The History of the Doctor*. This is his fifth story for *The Doctor Who Project* and his second with James P. Quick. He has also had stories included in *Shelf Life*, *Myth Makers Presents: Golden Years*, *Time Shadows: Second Nature* and *Iris Wildthyme of Mars*. His favourite Doctor is Patrick Troughton, his favourite dinosaur is *Carnotaurus*, and his favourite star is Fomalhaut. He lives in Brighton, Sussex, and it's very nice there, thank you.

James P. Quick is a native of the United States and has had and quit a job since his last "About the Author" blurb. Long story. *The Fossilist* is his fourth story for The Doctor Who Project and his second Brief Encounter after *Shadow at the Heart*, which was also written with Daniel Tessier. It's also his first time writing for the Project's Ninth Doctor, Silver, and Mortimer. He's looking forward to continuing with this incarnation in his upcoming story *Purpose of the Daleks*, which will be this Doctor's first encounter with them. His favorite Doctor is Colin Baker, his favorite dinosaur is *Psittacosaurus*, and his favorite color is green. Additionally, he's the head of CP Studios, which produces fan audio dramas, including Doctor Who and Batman.

BRIEF ENCOUNTERS



When she was a little girl, Mary Anning hunted for fossils on the beach,
both for fun and to sell for a few extra pennies.
When she grew up, she became one of the best-known paleontologists
in the world—all from the rooms of her little fossil shop.

In a time when humanity is just beginning to learn of the vast prehistory of its own world,
Mary is swept up in an adventure with the Doctor and Silver.
One that takes her further into the past than she could ever have believed,
to meet creatures she could never have imagined.

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