

THE
DOCTOR WHO
PROJECT

GENEVIEVE



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Published by Jigsaw Publications/The Doctor Who Project
Vancouver, BC, Canada

First Published September 2007

Genevieve

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A TDWP/Jigsaw Publications E-Book

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Typeset in Century Schoolbook

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Chapter 1

Mary Anne Thomas knelt down and started pulling the roach grass from around the gene modified potatoes growing in her garden. Autumn on Genevieve was roughly the same as old Earth; wet, misty and getting colder. Using the trowel she dug at the pernicious roots of the native grass, pulling the bright pink tubers from around the crisp white potatoes. Even with years of working the garden, it never became any easier. She pulled back and straightened up, wincing as her muscles protested at the abuse. She stayed upright for a moment, letting her back calm down before she leant on the stool to help her stand up. The trees rustled in the cool wind, slowly shedding leaves that spiralled to the ground.

Trees were the same the galaxy over. The most parallel evolution occurred in the plant world, rather than the animal world. A bush was a bush, a tree a tree. The leaves were different shapes, some had chlorophyll or the next best thing, but they all tended to be the same shape. Animals and insects, on the other hand, were completely different thought Mary as she swatted a piecel fly before it tried to take a bite out of her. The bumblebee-like predator bounced on the ground before dizzily buzzing off. Unlike Earth flies, piecel flies actually had a couple of brain cells and could work out when they were on to a loser.

Mary pushed herself upright, her knees now joining the new protests from her back. Brushing a silver lock of hair from her face, she took a deep breath and hefted the heavy basket of weeds over to the compost heap. She would have to do the carrots tomorrow, and the local caterpillars had been at the cabbages again. She sighed. It was so much more work since Dan had died last year. At least she didn't have any bills to pay, and her pickles and preserves were providing what money she needed for repairs to the power plant. It was hard for her to complain. On Earth she would have been wasting away in a small room, surrounded by people who didn't care. At least here she could be her own person, independent and breathing fresh air instead of that scrubbed muck they breathed on other, more industrialised, worlds. The pastoral Genevieve was the best place in the Galaxy, and she loved it as her home.

Lifting the lid of the compost bin, she dumped in the weeds and let it drop just as Mortimer jumped up. Purring loudly, the jet-black cat flashed his flecked amber eyes and promptly head butted her. Mary scratched his chin, and the purring deepened and doubled. Mortimer then decided that he'd had enough, and jumped down. Tail high in the air, he sauntered into the house. His, pink, rear paws disappearing through the cat flap in the back door. Mary shook her head, and followed the lord of the manor in for fish and a well-deserved cup of tea.

Eleanor screeched as Ginny chased her along the avenue of apple trees in the orchard. Giggling, Ginny grabbed for Eleanor and they both tumbled to the ground.

"It's mine!"

"No! It's mine now, you said!"

Eleanor managed to get a hand out from under her, and proceeded to tickle Ginny. This time it was Ginny's turn to screech, as she curled up into a ball.

"Okay! It's yours now." She yelled through the laughter.

Ginny got up off the ground, triumphantly holding the plush dogroth monster as Ginny's mother appeared from behind the tree.

"Oh my word! Look at you two! In. Now! Get cleaned up"

Ginny scowled, and brushed a few leaves from her dress.

“Aww, mum.”

It was Sarah’ turn to scowl.

“Don’t you ‘aww mum’ me Ginny Haverstock. Get inside now. You’re lucky your father isn’t the one who came to get you. You’re not going home in that state, inside. Now!” Hands on hips, Sarah watched her daughter and her best friend run screaming back to the house as they fought over the plushy doll. She shook her head and smiled, wishing her childhood had been filled with orchards and rolling hills rising out of autumnal mists, snowy winter evenings and warm summer nights. The Atlantis ecology on Earth had plenty of parks, but it wasn’t the same as this place. She certainly didn’t miss the perpetual smog and atmospheric particulates she thought as she took a deep breath of the musty smell of the orchard. Of course, this world had its hardships too. Without modern manufacturing units they had to go back to the basics of the late nineteenth and early twenty-first centuries. The town had a fusion plant, but it barely supplied enough electricity to the growing community. Bioengineering gave them basic plastics, oils and metals from the crops they had brought with them. It all had to be processed though, and suddenly they had all started learning skills that had not been used for centuries. She looked up at the darkening sky. Low on the horizon, just visible as a small blue disk, was Arthur; the Excalibur systems only gas giant. Far enough away to not drench Genevieve in lethal radiation, but close enough to protect their little blue-green world from comets and asteroids that still drifted through the inner reaches of the system like lost souls. Even after over ten years on Genevieve, she still looked for a non-existent moon. Part of her still ached for the reflected silver light, but Genevieve’s moon was in a retrograde orbit, and so appeared only during the day here. She realised that she was holding her breath, and let it out slowly; watching it condense in the cool autumn air. Time to take Ginny home; she thought to herself as she walked back to the house; enjoying the rustle of damp leaves beneath the soles of her shoes.

In the encompassing blackness that was Mary Anne’s garden, a dark shadow crept along the wall of the house. Slowly, stealthily, it moved, ghost-like to the potting shed where it slithered up on to the shed’s roof. Two, amber flecked, eyes glowed as they reflected the brilliant orange light from the fireball. It arched out of the west and plunged into the forest behind the house, without a sound. A momentary amusement for Mortimer’s evening delectation, but now it was time to get back to his nightly duties. He slunk to the edge of the roof, and let himself down. Only a set of damp paw prints were left to show that he had even been there.

There was a mushroom in the garden. In fact it looked very much like a large puffball, except for its mottled and bright red skin. It was very unusual, especially as Genevieve’s biosphere never actually evolved that particular branch of flora. Mary Anne walked over to the ball, and looked down. Clustered around the bottom of it were smaller versions of the larger one and what looked like the remains of a ship’s rat. She nudged the larger ball with her boot. Abruptly the thin skin over the top ruptured, releasing a cloud of spores right into her face. Momentarily shocked, she took a sharp intake of breath and sucked the spores down into her lungs. Coughing and spluttering she staggered away from the deflating ball.

Having been opened, the ball continued to spew spores into the air as it collapsed in on itself. Gagging for air, Mary Anne rushed to the house and filled a glass with water. As she slowly regained her composure her breathing came under control, and she rinsed out her mouth. It was black with spores. She gargled a few more mouthfuls and spat those out too until the water was clear. Then she realised that she was covered in the stuff. A shower took care of the rest, as the washing machine took care of the thick dust on her clothes. Finally she sat down and rang the village doctor. She knew she'd breathed in plenty of the cloud. And given how black she had been some had obviously got inside her lungs. Even now, the robot house cleaner she'd brought from Earth was sucking the microscopic grains from the kitchen. It had gotten everywhere. The doctors answer machine took a message, informing her that the doctor would be there first thing in the morning. She frowned. It was about lunchtime; the puffball had completely wrecked her morning, and she was beginning to feel tired. Not unusual in itself, she often had an afternoon nap these days. She went into the living room and sat in her favourite chair. Slowly she drifted into sleep. On the edge of her vague perception she could hear singing. It was far in the distance, sweet, coloured, chimes that seemed to dance and gyrate across the edge of her mind. She slowly drifted into unconsciousness.

Chapter 2

Nigel Cheam staggered out from the barn, his eyes burning as much as the stuff in his lungs. Wiping the black dust from his eyes he made his way into the house where he bumped into his daughter and wife as they were coming out with the washing. He pushed past them and, hand in front of him to make sure he didn't bump into a wall; he quickly made his way to the bathroom. Behind him came sounds of a washing basket being unceremoniously dumped on the floor, and the noise of a pretty little girl who's suddenly found herself covered in black dust.

"What the hell is going on?" Tracy's angry voice came from behind him as he washed the stuff off. Grainy, black, rivulets ran down into the sinkhole.

"I don't know." He sputtered through the clear water as he splashed it over his face. "There was a dead animal in the barn. It must have crawled in there and died sometime last night. I accidentally disturbed it when I was pulling one of the forks out to turn the vegetable plot over. Damn thing exploded! This black crap is all over the inside of the barn. It had these, lumps, all over it." He started stripping of his powder soaked clothes, and reached over to turn the shower on.

"Are you ok?"

"Yeah, I'll be fine once I shower and get this stuff off. Heaven knows what the hell it is, but I'd rather not find out." He dumped the clothes into the shower to dampen them down, and climbed in after them.

"Mummy? Is Daddy ok?" Tracy left the bathroom and pulled the door closed behind her. Inside came a hacking cough.

"Daddy got covered in something by accident." Tracy looked at her young daughter and smiled. "And it looks like he got us too. Come on, let's get you cleaned up." She looked back at the closed door as she led her daughter to the other shower. Instinct tickled at her consciousness, and a worried frown painted itself on her face as they walked away.

Later that afternoon Nigel sat in front of the fire reading the latest colony dispatch from Earth. After the dust had got everywhere, they all spent the rest of the day cleaning up by spraying all the dry surfaces and wiping them down. The stuff had proven to be as fine as flour, and although they'd managed to get most of it he was convinced that it was still floating around the house air currents. His throat felt raw, and he'd been stunned at how much he'd had to wash out of his nose, mouths and ears. Now, however, he was in front of the fire and for some strange reason feeling completely content. It was similar to the feeling he'd had back on Earth when their tickets to Genevieve had come up in the raffle. It was a weight that had been taken from him, the pressure of raising his yet unborn child in an over populated world with no real prospect of a good future. He remembered sitting down in the tiny living room, Tracy leaning against him and the tickets sitting on the coffee table in front of them - their tickets off Earth - clean open spaces where Elizabeth would be able to run in the sunlight and breathe real air. Musical chimes echoed through the air. No, wait. That wasn't a part of his memory. The tinkling chimes sang right on the edge of his hearing, and suddenly they were funny. He giggled to himself.

"Darling?"

He turned to Tracy and the sudden movement made the room spin as if he was drunk. He giggled again as Tracy appeared out of focus in his vision. She stood up.

"What's so funny?" She took the e-paper from him. On the page was an article about Earths current population growth rate and how the colonisation effort had reduced it to

barely above 18th century levels. She frowned as Nigel started giggling uncontrollably. Population statistics weren't that funny, even to a statistician.

"Elly! Can you bring me the phone please?" She shouted, as she propped up her chuckling husband as he started to slump in his chair.

"Ok mum!" Moments later Elly came into the room with the handset. "Why is Daddy giggling?"

"I don't know honey. I don't think he's feeling very well."

"If he doesn't feel well, why is it funny?"

"Darling, I don't know. I'm going to call Dr Livingstone ok? Now go to your room." Elly looked back at her father as he raised his hand and stared at it as if it was the most wonderful thing he'd ever seen.

The lights danced, flickering and wavering in front of the Spruce Tiger, one of Genevieve's largest land predators, the cat like mammal leapt and danced, chasing the pretty coloured lights. Around it swarmed bird song, the twittering and tweeting followed a melody it could never recognise, never understand but could hear clearly. Something ran across its vision, but the dancing lights held it in their grim fascination. Yowling and growling, it pounced on a light, only to look up and see another fluttering barely out of reach like a bejewelled butterfly from when it was a kitten.

Around it the humans jumped out of its way and others watched, slack jawed, as it pounced on another invisible light. It was oblivious to them, as it lay down in the middle of the street. Exhausted from its efforts it needed to sleep now. Purring gently it lay its huge head on its paws and drifted serenely into death.

The townsfolk at first ran from the huge, zigzag lined, Tiger as it came out of the woods and down the main street. Then they realised that there was something else happening. The huge animal was acting like a small kitten, pawing at the air and pouncing on things that only it could see. It was utterly oblivious to where it was, and what was surrounding it. The Tigers never, ever, came anywhere near the human settlement. And although they were seen as being extremely dangerous, they were such a rare sight that no one ever really worried about them. Then, as quickly as it had arrived, it had lain down in the middle of the street, purred loudly for a few moments and died. Just like that. Charlie Manson cautiously approached the animal. He could see that it had stopped breathing. The creature was about the same size as an Earth lion or Tiger would be. This one's thick fur was matted and what appeared to be boils at first glance covered its back. Its side had large, raw and open wounds that matched those on its belly where maybe there had been other boils that had been burst. Convinced that it was dead, twenty or thirty of the townsfolk gathered around it.

"What do you think killed it?"

"Looks like it was sick."

"What are those things on its back?"

"God! It smells awful!"

The questions started coming thick and fast, but of course there were no answers. Expecting it to be fluid filled, Charlie nudged the largest boil on its back. As his boot touched it, he realised that it didn't actually feel like it had fluid inside. It felt more like kicking a party balloon. He nudged it harder. With a loud, wet, pop, the blister exploded into a huge cloud of glistening black smoke-like dust. Around the animal the crowd that had gathered scattered in every direction coughing and spluttering as they ran. The fine,

black, spores followed in each persons wake like terrible and dark ghosts gripping onto their new hosts. One fell forward as he was pushed from behind and landed squarely onto the dead tiger, bursting the remaining cysts that turned the street into a darkly lit space of panic and desperate coughing. Spores flooded in through open doors and windows, puffing gently through gaps carried along with gentle drafts. Within moments, the whole of the main street was covered in a micrometer thick, black, shroud. The shocked silence was interspersed with fits of coughing as everyone milled around in confusion, wiping the obscene dust from their eyes and mouths.

“What were the colonies like?” Silver held up the book she was holding.

“First or second Diaspora?” The console muffled the Doctors voice. He was tinkering again, and currently all that was visible was a pair of long straight legs. Silver looked at the cover of the book.

“Err, first I think. Mankind’s first exploration phase.”

The Doctor shimmied out from underneath the console, and flicked a few switches.

“Do you want to go and have a look?”

“What, rather than just accidentally turn up somewhere?”

“I never turn up accidentally.”

“I know.” She smirked at the Doctors affront. She re-opened the book where her finger had saved her page. “Genevieve was the most Earth-like and also the farthest away at the time. How about there? It looks nice, I was just reading about it.” She turned the book to show the Doctor the page with a picture of a blue jewel of a world.

“Ah, I know. The Excalibur system; five worlds, two gas giants an Earth analogue, one burnt cinder and one large lump of ice.”

“Oh Doctor, you make it sound so romantic.”

“Genevieve it is then.”

“You still haven’t answered my question though.”

“The colonies were not always the nicest places to live.” He replied as he danced slowly around the console, flicking switches and pulling levers with one hand and twisting dials and typing coordinates with the other. “Genevieve was one of the nicer ones. A pastoral world with limited colonisation, although by then the human race was getting stretched a bit thin.”

“How long will it take us to get there?”

“Oh, about ten minutes. You will need to go and put something nice and warm on; it might be a bit chilly outside. The much of the northern hemisphere is temperate. Reminds me of New England in the autumn.”

A tracking bird cocked its head and flew into the sky at the trumpeting screech that heralded the arrival of the TARDIS. The blue police box gradually faded into view and then settled into the damp leaves with a heavy thud. After a few moments, Silver poked her head through the gap in the door.

“Are you sure this isn’t Earth?” She stepped from the doorway into the chill morning air of the alien world.

“Absolutely. Genevieve is an Earth analogue, although evolutionarily speaking it is a little backward. The local primate analogue is still in its early stages and it has not even

left the tropical regions of this world.” The Doctor frowned. “Now that is interesting.” Silver walked over.

“What?” The Doctor pointed at the small mushroom growing out of the leaf mulch.

“Genevieve doesn’t have a fungal or mold analogue. It never evolved one. Unless this is an Earth transplanted species, but I don’t recognise it. Strange...” He pursed his lips, and tapped his chin with his forefinger. “If I remember rightly, the town should be in that direction.” He pointed. “Come on!” Swiftly he strode into the woods at a seemingly random direction, Silver trailing behind as he moved effortlessly between the trees.

Chapter 3

Mortimer the cat yowled from the relative safety of the top of the potting shed. His mistress had died, and while his cat instincts automatically drove him on to find a new place to live his human genetic heritage mourned her passing desperately. And so he yowled and cried his pain into the dying world around him. Down on the ground, smooth tendrils of silver mucilage crept slowly, but perceptibly, across the turned earth. The creeping carpet was quickly consuming the garden. Silent in their death throes, the vegetables shrivelled and twisted into grotesque, silver-white, glistening parodies of them, as the fungus slid its glistening tendril into their hearts. Mortimer had known something was wrong when he had found a silver Styrrrel that morning. Fortunately for him, his genetic creators had blessed him with an immune system based on Earth crocodiles that was meant to protect him from all kinds of weird and wonderful infections that were found on colony worlds. The Styrrrel, on the other hand, didn't have his advantage and had succumbed during the night to the silver thing.

Just as his mistress had.

He crept to the edge of the shed and peered down. The silver carpet was beginning to creep up the wooden planks of the shed, and beneath him it made unfamiliar creaking noises. The time had come to move on and find a new home. If he had been human, he would have cried. He was certainly smart enough to understand the concept; again another legacy from his creators. Although he couldn't speak, he could certainly understand what was being said to him. His ears pricked at a sound coming from the woods to the side of the house. Getting louder, the sound of voices and the rustling of undergrowth approached.

"What is this stuff?"

"I'm not sure; for a mold it really does have an extreme growth rate."

"Will it do anything to us?"

"No. Haven't you wondered why the worst thing you may have caught on our travels is a cold? The more serious infections are managed by the TARDIS. Although, I will admit that it does not always work."

"Oh. Great. So can I expect to look like that giant squirrel we found back there?"

"Oh dear me no. It was probably already dead before the mold found it."

"Hey, is that a house through there?"

Mortimer adopted an air of sad disdain as the young human woman tramped out of the undergrowth.

"Wow, if this stuff was red it'd be like something out of the war of the worlds!"

"Mrroowl?"

"Hey there pussycat. What are you doing up there?" The woman approached the potting shed, stepping over the dead and shrivelled cabbages at her feet. Mortimer gauged the distance, wiggled his rump in preparation, and leapt. Tail weaving back and forth to maintain his balance and direction, he landed neatly on the young woman's chest, much to her surprise. As he had expected, her arms had automatically wrapped around to catch him so there was no need for claws. Humans really were so predictable. He started purring loudly, as the potting shed behind him collapsed in on itself, sending up a cloud of dust.

"Hello. Who do you have there?" The Doctor proffered the back of his hand, which Mortimer dutifully sniffed at and left a scent marker from a cheek gland. The one holding him was human, that was easy. This man though, he wasn't. A human would have described his scent as the smell of a warm apple pie that had too much cinnamon in it.

There certainly was no threat there. He draped himself over the back of the girls' neck. His customary position when his mistress was carrying him.

"Well, I do think that you have made a new friend there Silver. What do you think?"

"As long as he doesn't slobber in my ear." Mortimer gave her a foul look, and went back to purring. He hadn't even had to go looking for a new family, one had come to him, and he was almost certainly guaranteed all the attention he could want. A smooth skinned finger scratched him on the chin. Oh yes, this would be quite adequate.

The battery had died again. It wouldn't have been so bad if he had been on his own, but today was Ginny's Bi-Annual check up with Dr Livingstone to make sure that her anti-virals were still sufficiently active. As the Genevieve biosphere relied primarily on bacterial breakdown of organic matter, it was also a veritable breeding ground for some of the nastiest virii known to mankind. Twelve of the fifteen-discovery crew had died during the return journey to Earth. Three had survived only because they hadn't let the other twelve out of quarantine. It had taken twenty years to map the Genevieve viral gene pool, and ordinarily, it would have been left alone. The world was so heart-achingly like Earth though, that the effort had been made. The result was a set of gendered glands that were implanted within each colonist. Unfortunately, the technology couldn't be used on the children until they were in their teens and the rest of their glands were pumping out hormones like there was no tomorrow. As a result, the kids had to endure anti-virals for the first twelve to thirteen years of their lives. Luckily for them, the injections were painless and Dr Livingstone had brought a seemingly endless supply of lollypops with him. This was to be Ginny's last visit before she was given her own set of glands to defend her against Genevieve's cornucopia of sub-cellular life.

Marcus bit his tongue as Ginny complained for the umpteenth time. Sarah was also in a foul mood, which didn't help things. And, to top it off, the spare battery was still at the farm so he had to carry the main battery the remaining five miles into town. His back ached, his arms ached, his feet ached and his head ached from the moaning and arguments. It was not his fault that the main battery in the mule hadn't charged properly. The damn thing was nearing the end of its life and when they had bought it they'd expected the town to be producing new ones within fifteen years. As it was, the idiot who had the skill set to use the equipment to make new ones had not mentioned that he'd had a heart condition and died during the initial drop from cardiac failure. Not to mention it was all locked away in his drop cases, which were bio-locked and designed to be simply pushed out of the airlock in orbit to land at the designated coordinates. So even though they had the cases, they couldn't open the damn things and they were built to be impervious to every single cutting to they had available. So they had to wait the thirteen years it took to get to Genevieve from Earth with the new kit and someone to build it and start manufacturing.

"Daddy?"

"Yes darling, we're nearly there." Ginny scowled.

"No, Daddy. What's that man doing?" She pointed at the top of the hill where an old man was dancing in silence. Marcus recognised him from this distance, and sighed heavily. As if his day couldn't have got any worse, there was old Bill Tallin dancing away in a drunken stupor.

"If he comes near Ginny, you sort him out." Snarled Sarah, in his ear, as they trudged towards the old man. Bill Tallin was on the run from the taxman on Earth. The fact that Earth central probably knew where he was had completely passed him by. Not

that he actually cared any more. Bill had brought enough rolling cash with him to keep himself almost permanently smashed out of his brain for, not only the time it would take for Earth to send someone to arrest him, but for the rest of his life. Which, according to Dr Livingstone, wasn't going to be that much longer as his liver had passed the point of no return soon after he'd arrived.

"Daddy, doesn't mister Tallin usually have a bottle in his hand?" Marcus looked. She was right. It was unusual to see Bill far from a bottle. His gangling frame pranced as he gyrated to an unheard melody. You could also usually smell stale alcohol from a distance when Bill was around, but not this time. Maybe the old guy's pickled internal organs had finally gotten the better of him and refused to accept any more alcohol. They kept going past him, trying desperately not to catch the eye of the old drunk. He stopped dancing, and looked straight at them. Inside, Marcus groaned knowing what was coming next. He put the battery down.

"Now look Bill, I don't want any trouble. We're tired and we just need to get into town ok?" The silver bearded old man looked straight at him, mouth slightly agape as if he was utterly stunned to see them. "Bill? Can you hear me?"

"Are you angels?" Marcus blinked. This was a new one, even for Bill.

"No Bill. We're not angels."

"Why are you glowing?"

"Sorry? Bill. Do you recognise me?" Even when completely drunk, Bill had the unnerving knack of being able to recall every single colonist on sight. It made trying to get out of conversations with him difficult.

"Pretty!" Bill reached out, touching something that obviously only he could see. "Pretty colours! So pretty." Sarah sidled up behind Marcus.

"He's not right is he?"

"No. Something's wrong with him." Marcus reached out and gently took Bill's hand. "Bill, come with us and see Dr Livingstone. Alright?" Bill's eyes slowly focussed on him, and he giggled.

"You look really weird Marcus." Marcus glanced purposefully at Ginny.

"Sarah, take Ginny. We'll leave the battery here, and I'll come back and get it with Roger after I've brought Bill."

"Come on Ginny. Time to go." She held Ginny's wrist firmly and started walking.

"But Mummy!"

"Not now Ginny. Come on."

"This cat's really heavy you know." Silver grumbled as they finally outpaced the fungus that was coating everything with its fine silver threads. Mortimer took his cue, and clambered down Silvers' front, momentarily making sure that she was given a good view of his rear end as a sign of his displeasure of having to walk. "Anybody would think he could understand me."

"What makes you think it's a he?" Silver scowled.

"Well, he just shoved his bum in my face, and now he's sitting there smirking." Mortimer tilted his head.

"It's more than likely that he can understand you actually." The Doctor scratched Mortimer on the chin. "He's probably a star-pet. Genetically enhanced to survive harsh colony environments with the minimal of human intervention. He's probably got some crocodile DNA." Mortimer yawned, lazily, showing his needle sharp teeth.

“If he’s that souped up why has he spent the last hour sitting on my shoulders?”

“He is a cat after all Silver. He probably just didn’t want to walk. Come on, we should keep going. I’d prefer not to tempt fate with that fungus as far as our health is concerned.”

After another five minutes they reached the top of the small hill in front of them to look down onto a picturesque valley lined with well-tended orchards that were slowly turning a silvery white colour. The Doctor pointed at the farmhouse, and they proceeded on in silence.

“Mortimer!” A little girl ran towards them and managed to grab the large cat before he could get away. She hefted him into her arms, but she was finding it difficult to hold onto him as she disappeared beneath a mound of black fur. “Did the doctor send you to see my Daddy?” Silver started opening her mouth as the Doctor replied.

“And what is your name?”

“My name is Elly. Daddy’s really sick, can you help?”

“I think we need to find out what’s wrong with him first. This is Silver by the way; why don’t you give Mortimer to her and show me your Daddy?” Elly nodded and passed Mortimer over to Silver then took the Doctors’ hand and led them to the house.

“Who are you? Elly! What have I told you!”

“I am the Doctor, and this is Silver. Elly, here, tells me that your husband is not very well.”

“Did Dr Livingstone send you?”

“Err, not exactly. We’re just passing through.” Stammered Silver.

“That really is enough questions for the moment.” Said the Doctor. “Let’s see how your husband is, hmm?” Tracy reluctantly led them into the main bedroom where Nigel lay, covered in sweat and murmuring with a fever. Immediately the Doctor took control. “I’ll need as many blankets as you can get and lots of water for him to drink. Do you have any medication in the house? Have you taken his temperature?” Tracy blinked under the barrage of questions now coming her way.

“I.” She stammered. The Doctor placed his hand on Nigel’s forehead and took his pulse.

“His heart is racing, high fever...” He frowned, looking Nigel’s wrist. “Well, what do we have here?” Barely beneath the skin were thin white traceries spreading along his arm towards his hand. “Has he been exposed to anything recently?”

“There was an animal in the barn. Nigel said that it exploded when he accidentally touched it.”

“Can you show me?”

The barn had changed since the last time Tracy had seen it. It seemed... slumped, like a carcass left to dry in the desert sun. The wooden skin appeared to be shrinking back from the cross-members making it look a lot older than it was. The Doctor and his companion peered around the open door.

“Oh dear.”

“Oh dear what?” Tracy stomped over to the door and pulled at the edge, only for it to crumble in her hand as she fell backwards. “What the?” The thick wood was rotten through, and riddled with silver white filaments. Picking herself up off the floor, she looked inside.

Chapter 4

“Doctor, we have another call from the Worth’s.” Polly dropped the call sheet onto Dr. Livingstone’s desk.

For a quiet day, everything had suddenly turned into a nightmare as the entire township started acting like they were on LSD. Fortunately there hadn’t been any violence yet, but he was pretty sure that someone was going to have a bad experience at some point. Then something stupid would happen and everything would fall apart. Not that the sheriff cared at the moment, he was in the corridor chasing non-existent butterflies. The symptoms were ranging from minor euphoria, through a stupor and then onto high-fever. He was sure that it was a fungal infection of some sort after he had examined the remains of the spruce tiger in the main street. Even the Tigers’ corpse had quickly succumbed to the invading mold, and he had practically watched it turn silvery white and get absorbed as it sucked the fluids away. He also had plenty of spore samples. Too many really, and he was convinced that there was no one in the town that hadn’t been infected and that included himself and his staff.

Both Elizabeth and Polly were looking flushed, and the moment he had started giggling to himself he had immediately taken an anti-hallucinogen. Even that was wearing off now, as his vision seemed to be colouring everything in shades of glowing red and blue. Polly was subconsciously humming tunelessly to herself as well now, and Elizabeth was beginning to wheeze. The side effect of the drug he was using detached the user from emotion and reality, so he currently felt like a spectator at his own death.

He didn’t actually know what was worse. Being able to see it coming and not really care; or, like everyone else, enjoying every single minute of this thing that was eating them alive. He sighed, and made his way over to the secure cabinet in his office. Opening the door, he reached in and pulled out the Ahallazine phial. It was half empty, already. The music riffing through his head said that he would have to up the dosage if he was going to be able to think straight enough to find a solution to this thing. He loaded up the vapour-syringe with enough for three or four shots.

He was going to have to sacrifice Polly to the infection because he needed Elizabeth for her experience. A shiver ran down his spine. It stunned him that he could be so clinical. Polly was only twenty-two, and she most certainly didn’t deserve to be treated that way; but what could he do? Elizabeth had the research experience and Earth training. Elizabeth and multi-media courses had taught Polly on the job from Earth. She didn’t have the experience that Elizabeth had, it was that simple. Did it make it a fair justification for leaving her to be consumed alive, giggling quietly in a corner as she shrivelled and died?

His pocket computer pinged as it received a message from the DNA sequencer in their small lab. He stared impassionedly at the results. There was no DNA to sequence, just a series of loose-chain proteins. This was way beyond his capabilities. The thing had no DNA, so he couldn’t use the lab automated systems to synthesize a viral vector that could kill the thing off. He collapsed into his chair. They had all been working ceaselessly since the incident in the main street, only for him to find that he would need a full and cutting-edge lab to deal with this thing. He stared at the second phial on the desk. Maybe it was time to take a lethal dose after all, not that he’d need much of the pale blue liquid.

The Doctor hefted Nigel into the back of the family's multi-purpose utility vehicle. Pretty much all of the colonists used a mule to get around. The large vehicles were used to pull ploughs, as transport, mobile power units etc... This mule had a large pink flower painted on one side by Elly, but most of it was covered over by mud. Mortimer observed from Silver's shoulders. He could smell the thing from here, and he knew it was eating the humans except for his new ones. It was everywhere now; the taint was on the winds and there was no escape any more. He missed his old mistress. He brushed up against Silver's cheek, and was rewarded with a scratched chin.

The Doctor turned sharply, placing his intense gaze on Tracy who had just that moment started to giggle.

"How are you feeling?"

"Absolutely fantastic!" She turned to Silver and Mortimer. "Having a catnap Morty?" At which point she collapsed in a giggling heap next to the door to the open vehicle.

"Silver, put Mortimer and little Elly inside, I'll pick up Tracy."

"Is mummy alright mister? Daddy started giggling before he got sick." Silver helped her into the rear of the high-sided mule, putting Mortimer down next to her.

"She'll be fine. The Doctor will help her and your daddy."

"Daddy looks really sick."

"I know, but I'm sure we'll be able to do something when we get into town." The little girl looked her straight in the eye.

"I don't feel very well." She moaned. Silver put her hand on Elly's forehead and felt her temperature.

"Doctor, Elly's burning up as well." The Doctor finished propping a euphoric Tracy up in her seat and clicking home her seatbelt. He leant over to Elly, and placed his cool hand on her forehead.

"Do you feel happy Elly?"

"No. I just feel sick and very tired."

"When did you start feeling sick?"

"When mummy started giggling at things like daddy did."

"When your daddy came in from the barn, were you anywhere near him?"

"Me and mummy were taking the washing out when he came and covered us in dust from the barn. I had to have another shower." The Doctor nodded.

"If you feel sick, make sure that Silver knows, and we'll stop for you, but we have to try and get into town as quickly as we can. Do you know the way?" She pointed.

"The road goes all the way into town." The Doctor grinned, and placed a finger under her chin.

"Chin up; we'll get this sorted out as quickly as we can." His serious expression as he fired up the mule told a different story as they trundled down to the gate with the dirt track road.

"It's bad isn't it?" The Doctor's lips tightened, and that was enough to answer Silver's question. She reached out for Elly's hand and held it tightly, remembering her father as he disappeared in flames and fire. Instead, Elly was watching her parents succumb to something even more hideous and slow. In the back seat Tracy started to hum, tunelessly, as the Doctor drove on in silence.

"You can't do this! You have to give it to Polly!" Livingstone shook his head.

"Elizabeth. This is triage now. Do you really think I want to do this?"

“Give her mine then! She’s a young woman, she doesn’t deserve this!”

“You know I can’t! I need your experience and training. There’s barely enough for the next few hours. I’ve had to keep doubling the dosage with every single shot, and now I have to add anti-psychotics because it’s already past dangerous levels. Please Elizabeth, don’t argue with me. We just don’t have the time.”

Doctor Livingstone pressed the nearly lethal cocktail of drugs against Nurse Tyler’s carotid artery. He noted, with detachment, the thin white tendrils of the infection just beneath her skin.

“Doctor Livingstone?” Marcus Haverstock poked his head around the side of the office door.

“Marcus?”

“Hi doc. We found Bill Tallin on the outskirts of town dancing like a madman and brought him in. What’s happening?”

“Marcus? How do you feel? Are you infected?” Ginny and Sarah appeared behind the apparition in the doorway.

“Infected with what doc? What the hell is going on?” Ginny tugged at Marcus’s jacket.

“Daddy, is Doctor Livingstone sick as well?”

“Marcus, take your family and leave. Now! If you’re not infected, get out.” Nurse Tyler nodded.

“Take your family and leave right now Marcus. We don’t know if we can beat this thing.”

“What thing? Why is nobody telling me what’s happening? Why is the entire town rolling about the place like they’re high on something?”

“Because Marcus they are.” Livingstone rolled back his sleeve. Clearly visible beneath the skin were thick white tendrils that twitched and slid as they grew and interleaved. “This thing has infected the entire town, and I don’t have anything to fight it.”

“But you’re sounding fine?”

“That’s because I’ve been giving myself and the staff drugs to counter the effects of the fungus. It’s like a hallucinogen; you get high while it eats you alive. It’s affecting the animals differently to us. I don’t know what’s happening, but if you see a sick animal with large blisters over its body don’t go near it.”

“Doc, there is no where to go. Has anyone called Earth?”

“Good question.” Said the Doctor as he slid in past Marcus. Behind them Ginny squeaked as she hugged Elly.

“Who the bloody hell are you?” The Doctor held out a hand.

“Doctor Livingstone I presume?” He grinned as Livingstone scowled and Silver rolled her eyes at the poor joke. “It appears that we have a serious problem here, and to ask the young gentleman’s question again” He nodded at Marcus. “Has anyone made any attempt to contact Earth?” Nurse Tyler shook her head.

“The Tachyon transceiver operator is currently mumbling sweet nothings to a potted plant down the hallway. And none of us really know how to use it.”

“Nurse, do you know where it is?” She nodded.

“Good. Silver, stay here and help Elly and her family as much as you can. I’m going to go and send an S.O.S. thirteen years ago.” Silver nodded, and rolled up her purple crush sleeves. She looked at Dr Livingstone.

“Where do I start?”

Chapter 5

The town was quiet except for the fallow wind that blew gently down the main street. Around the Doctor and Nurse Hicks the fungus was beginning to make itself known as its silver threads spread across the ground and over buildings.

“We need to start moving your people away from here. The buildings will become unsafe.” Elizabeth stopped, and looked at him.

“We’re all dying.” The statement was cold, detached and hung in the air between them. A wisp of despair as ephemeral as any puff of smoke.

“I’ll do what I can. How many can we save? Do you know?”

“Just the Haverstock’s. The family you just met. Everyone else is too far-gone. The only reason they haven’t stopped moving yet is because they don’t even know they’re dead.”

“Maybe I should go back and...” Elizabeth grabbed the Doctor’s arm, her expression grim.

“It’s too late. Charles is a brilliant doctor, and he hasn’t been able to find a way to combat it. Can you save them?”

“I can add a temporal displacement to the tachyon emitter. Earth will get your distress call in time to send a navy vessel to pick up any survivors.” Elizabeth looked back at the hospital.

“That’s if there are any survivors.” She whispered.

Mortimer was enjoying a tin of tuna fish from Earth that Dr. Livingstone had pulled from his personal storage, and some creamy milk from the fridge. The humans were talking about medical things. Prionic polymers and spongiforms; complicated words for the dead, silver-white, thing that was eating everything and every one it came into contact with. Silver and Dr. Livingstone were talking about chemical blockers on... He spied a bone amongst the fish pieces and dutifully started crunching it, the fish oil dribbling down his chin. This was going to take some cleaning afterwards, but he hadn’t eaten in far too many hours and it was very good fish. His tongue rasped against the plate, scraping up the last of the tuna. Good food, a full stomach; now all he had to do was have a bit of a wash and then he could go and get a human to scratch that aggravating bit at the base of his neck where he couldn’t reach.

Something moved out of the corner of his eye, and he span round to spot the offending creature. Underneath the table a silver tendril had broken through at the edge where the floor met the wall. Threads were beginning to fan out and spread their way up the wall. It was that close! His hackles started to rise as he hissed at the fungus slowly spreading across the wall.

Silver heard hissing, and looked down at Mortimer. The fur on his back was standing on end, and his tail had fluffed itself out.

“What are you hissing at?” She leant over from the microscope and looked underneath the table. The wall was slowly turning silver white as the mucilage veins spread across it. “Oh damn!” She grabbed Mortimer. “Doc, it’s here. We have to leave.”

“What? No! Your prion hypotheses may be viable. All the equipment is here, we can’t leave.”

“We won’t have long. You know that.”

“If we don’t try, it won’t make any difference. We’re all dead if we leave now.”

“Look, I’m sure the Doctor can take some of you away.”

“Don’t be foolish. We have an entire township here. We’d need a starship to lift us off this world.”

“They can fit in the TARDIS.”

“Do you expect me to believe that a ship that carried two people here can accommodate an entire town? You must be infected. Don’t talk to me about this. It’s idiotic and I won’t hear another word of it. Your friend has gone to call Earth, and we have to try and rescue everyone here before they even arrive.” Silver looked at Livingstone, his face was flushed red and a fine patina of sweat shone in the fluorescent light.

“I’ll just go and see how Elly is feeling...”

The ward was eerily silent; the laboured breaths of the people in the beds was barely audible above the breeze coming from the air conditioning units. Occasional rustling noises came from the people on the floor, and all were covered from head to toe with white sheets. Elly’s bed was at the end of the ward next to her mother and father. Her boots squeaked as she stepped over a prone body. Something, an instinct, was telling her that this ward was rapidly turning into a morgue. The thought was making her skin crawl as she made her way to the far end of the room, stepping between the sheets and trying not to make a noise to disturb either the sleeping or the dead.

Elly’s father lay on the floor between the beds of his wife and daughter. He too was covered in a white sheet, his face invisible. Tracy moved as Silver approached the bed. Trembling slightly, not sure what she would find Silver pulled back the sheet from Tracy’s face.

“Tracy? How’re you feeling?” The sick woman tried to raise her head, moaning slightly with the effort. Silver reached out and touched her forehead. She was burning hot with fever. A whispered breath caught Silver’s attention.

“Tracy? Can you say that again?”

“Help. Help me.” She whispered and moaned as her right eye bulged and popped, spattering Silver’s face with milky white jelly. Silver sucked in air to scream wildly as a thick, translucent white, tendril flopped from the now empty socket and started to fan out across Tracy’s cheek. The woman shuddered and drew her last breath, blowing out a thick cloud of spores. Scrabbling at the gore that was spattered across her face, Silver staggered backwards.

Suddenly she was more than one person. Animal instinct scratched and tore at the remains of Tracy’s eye on her face. Unconscious horror let out scream after tearing scream, sucking in spore-laden air and blasting it out again and again. While an inhuman presence in her mind tried to calm her, nestling against her consciousness like a small frightened pet that doesn’t know what else to do.

The backs of her knees met the end of the bed opposite and silver found herself falling on top of another victim of the fungus. The body gave slightly underneath her weight, like a shell of light puff pastry it collapsed beneath her into a white spongy mass of the fungus that had been growing inside. Spores billowed out as she squashed the mass

flat. Coated in mucus, and a thick layer of spores her unconscious mind finally took over, and she ran, scraping at the stuff in her hair, on her face and in her clothes.

The Doctor snipped a few connections with a small Swiss-army knife pair of scissors from his pocket and placed the circuit board back into its slot at the base of the transmitter relay. "There, that should sort it out." He looked up. Elizabeth sat slumped in the corner, behind her the wall was covered in the silver white filaments from the fungus. They carried on growing as he watched. Two steps brought him to her, and he checked for a pulse. Her lone heart was pounding as if she were exercising, and yet her breathing was short and shallow. Beneath the near translucency of her skin the fungus could be seen pushing its way through her flesh, absorbing nutrients and fluids as it went. The Doctor gently brushed a lock of hair from her face, and kissed her lightly on the forehead. "Goodnight Elizabeth, I'll do my best to save them for you."

Standing, he noticed that she appeared to be attached to a thick tendril disappearing through the wall from her body. He felt around the spongy white tube where it left the small of her back and entered the morass of fungus that was absorbing every molecule of nourishment it could from the wooden panels behind her.

Outside, it was obvious where the tendril was going. At the rear of the transmitter shed there laid an enormous thread of the fungus. As thick as a tree-trunk, and visibly showing fluids being transported it joined an even thicker tendril farther up. In the distance the Doctor could make out the brilliant white of a huge puffball nestling in the crook of the mountain, and even from this distance he could see it expanding. "My word, you are impressive aren't you; and creative too, using the hearts of your victims as part of your pumping system. Water cohesion would never be enough to supply you that quickly with nutrients." He patted the trunk, noting it's cool, spongy feel. "A space fairing fungus, well I never. You can't possibly be able to achieve faster than light by launching your sporangium from a puffball. So you must be very old. Very, very old." He sighed. "Humanity can't tolerate you in its territory old chap, so I hope you've managed to colonise some other world. Then again, if you managed to get this far, I'm sure you've landed elsewhere too."

Chapter 6

Silver woke up. The memory of falling into the corpse of one of the towns-folk was still fresh and she tried to get up, only to find that there was a sheet of something over her. Panic gripped her again, as she tore at the sheet before she realised that it was just that, a simple sheet of hospital linen. She took a deep breath to calm herself down, before she shivered. She was still wet with mucus, and covered from head to foot in myriad sparkling spores.

“You have no trace of infection” Whispered Dr. Livingstone from the nearby desk. He looked around. His face was now a translucent white, as if all the blood had been drained from him. The fungus actively moved beneath his skin, invading cells, attaching itself to muscle and bone. His breath twinkled with spores that reflected in the light from the fluorescent tube above him. “Why? Why can’t this be killing you?” He turned slowly back to the computer screen on his desk. “I sampled your blood. There are, things. Things in it that I don’t understand.” He turned slowly back, the effort showed on his face. “What are you?”

“A time traveller.”

“Then you can warn us. Go back.” His voice was a monotone, stripped of any emotion by the overdose of drugs he had given himself to stay conscious.

The Doctor appeared at the doorway.

“We can’t.” He said. “When we arrived we became entangled in this part of the time stream. We cannot change it.” Silver turned to look at him.

“Did you know?”

“Yes. Yes I did Silver.”

“What! You knew, and you said nothing!”

“It was too late. You know that. We arrived after it did. We couldn’t have warned anyone if we had wanted to, other than Earth’s Navy of course, which I have. You saw what it did to Mortimer’s homestead, and the villagers were already infected by the time we got into town.”

“You brought me here to see this? Why? What could I learn from all these people dying?”

“No Silver. I brought you to see a colony, just as you asked. The galaxy is both a wondrous and dangerous place, and these colonists are the bravest members of your species. They strike out across the void to face the unknown head-on, and sometimes they fail.”

“But you knew!”

“Silver, you would have known as well, but you did not finish the chapter on Genevieve in the book.”

Livingstone looked up at the Doctor now standing over him.

“You speak of our world in past tense. Do we survive this?” The Doctor gently placed his hand on Livingstone’s shoulder.

“Three survive. And the prion inhibitor you’ve made from Silver’s blood is the thing that saves, them, and billions of others in the future. Oddly enough, it’s a technology that the human race has forgotten since the mid-twenty-first century. After this there are two famous Dr. Livingstone’s. One a famous Scottish Earth explorer, the other a frontier medical practitioner.” He sighed, and looked down at his feet. “And both with a tragic story.” Livingstone looked up at him, a final flicker of emotion flashed across his face.

“I can’t cry.” He said, before closing his eyes for the last time.

The Doctor and Silver helped the Haverstock family into a commandeered mule, stocking it with supplies and power cells that the Doctor seemed to be able to lift with ease. Finally they were packed, and ready to run from the high-pitched howling that was now coming down from the puffball in the mountains. Ginny clutched at Mortimer in the back seat, mourning her friends. The big black cat purred deeply as he was stroked, but they both knew that he couldn't go back to Earth, Ginny's mother had explained it to them. So Ginny sat there, and petted Mortimer before she had to leave him behind. The Doctor leaned in through the window.

"How are you feeling Ginny?"

"Ok I suppose." She replied sullenly.

"I need to do a swap with you. I have something very important for you to give to the captain of the starship that's arriving in orbit." He passed a small black plastic box through the window. "But I need something in return."

"I don't have anything."

"Well. Someone told me that they don't allow animals on starships. Well I do. So I'll take Mortimer with Silver and me. If you give this to the captain."

"Won't he make a mess on your spaceship?"

"Oh dear me no! I've had cats and dogs before, and he'll soon discover his favourite place in the TARDIS. And we can't leave him behind, because the Navy is going to have to do something really nasty to get rid of the fungus." Ginny gave Mortimer a last hug and handed him over to the Doctor.

"Goodbye Mortimer. Be nice." Mortimer meowed at Ginny as the Doctor's hand lifted him through the window. "What do I tell the captain about the box?"

"Just tell him that it's everything they need to know about what happened here. The box is very important and fragile, so you need to keep it safe alright?" She nodded, and clutched it close.

The Doctor and Silver stepped away, as Marcus and Sarah finished loading the mule.

"Are you sure this beacon is going to work Doctor?"

"I'm sure." He looked at his pocket watch. "The Agamemnon should be entering orbit in the next couple of hours." He looked up at the mountains. "Unfortunately our friend here is ready to start launching spore pods, which is probably where the noise is coming from." He looked back at Marcus. "Trust me; you don't want to be within earshot of that puffball when it starts firing. It's going to be launching pods into interstellar space, and it's going to be using some noisy ways of doing it."

"What's in the box you gave Ginny?"

"Dr. Livingstone's media diary, a copy of the data, with where he got it from stripped out. The data for recreating the prion inhibitor, the vial of inhibitor I used on you and finally the coordinates for every spore pod launched by the fungus. Oh, and a recommendation of what to do with this fruiting body." He glanced back up at the mountain, and the shrieking puffball. Marcus frowned.

"But it hasn't launched any spore pods yet."

"Don't worry about that; you should leave now. When you get beyond the edge of the fungus, keep going as far as you can and then wash thoroughly. You don't want this onboard a Navy starship. Your bodies will deal with the stuff in your lungs."

They finished waving as the mule disappeared off into the distance. The Doctor hefted Mortimer in his arms. "Right then puss. Let's introduce you to the TARDIS. And no shenanigans, K9 could be a royal pain in the neck and I'll not have the same from you." He scratched Mortimer under the chin, and was rewarded with a deep, throbbing, purr.

They commandeered another mule to take them back to the TARDIS. Silver felt sick at the sight of the fungus covering everything, and yet it looked like a blanket of fresh snow. There were no birds, and the trees were beginning to crumble underneath the weight of the invader and its horrific effects. The only sound left was the screeching wail of the main fruiting body, the puffball. The strange, white, globe clung to the side of the mountain like an enormous wart, or boil. She could just about make out what appeared to be flaps, or baffles. The Doctor handed her a spyglass from an inside pocket.

"Try this!" He shouted over the noise and wind.

Silver struggled to keep the eyeglass on the huge monstrosity as they bounced and jiggled over the, now spongy, road.

"Why is it making so much noise?" A smell of ozone was now becoming prevalent as they approached the screaming ball.

"I think it needs the static electricity! It's channelling the thermal updraft from the valleys into its internal chambers through the gill slits on the sides."

"Static electricity? What's it going to do with that?" Her voice was feeling sore, trying to make herself heard.

"Launch its spore pods!" The gale was now horrendous as they approached the octagonal box shape of the TARDIS. "It's probably got billions of giga joules of electricity stored up by now. It's probably leached enough conductive metal from the mountain to grow the biological equivalent of a magnetic accelerator!"

Ears ringing, they finally entered the cool quiet of the TARDIS after tearing the thick, mushroom textured fungus from around the door. Immediately Mortimer commenced wandering around the massive control room, quietly sniffing at columns, the floor and the console.

"Doctor, is the TARDIS always in your head?"

"Yes, pretty much. She's keeps me apprised of what's happening. Why?"

"I... Felt something in my head earlier, when I..." A tear came to her eye as she remembered. "It didn't know what to do. It was trying to keep me calm, I think." The Doctor nodded and silently carried on, his face grim and shadowy.

"You were probably about to suffer a dissociative identity fracture. Your personality couldn't cope with what happened to you, and started to come undone. The TARDIS wasn't about to let that happen." He looked up from the console, and smiled distantly. "You felt something only a Timelord would ever come across. You're very fortunate." He leaned over the console once more, the sad frown casting dark shadows across his face.

While the Doctor set the massive machine in motion, Silver picked up the book she had left and turned to the last page of the chapter on Genevieve, remembering what the Doctor had said earlier.

"Oh my God! You can't!" She cried, throwing the book to the floor. The Doctor stopped momentarily, hands gripping the edge of the console, head bowed.

"It's the only way." He whispered. "It's the only way to stop it from infecting the rest of human occupied space. It's a wonder of nature, but we can't allow it to be here." He looked across at her; the pain was evident in his eyes. "You know that. You know that this is the only way it can be..."

"I want to see it." She whispered, fighting the lump that was growing in her throat. He nodded, and activated the viewing screen.

Captain Anders looked down on the gem-like blue world from the pilot's station. Behind him stood the only survivors of something that was almost too incredible to believe if he hadn't seen the pods themselves leaving orbit at near superluminal speed. He felt a tug at his jacket.

"Mr Captain, the Doctor told me to give you this." Ginny proffered the small plastic box. Anders took it and opened the box. On top of a pile of media sticks and a small vial of pink fluid was a small note. He opened it and read the neat hand writing, his face turning sterner with every word. He put the note back in the box, and closed it.

"Computer. Verify code, alpha nine beta kappa foxtrot one."

"Code verified." Replied the disembodied voice. He sighed.

"Mr Jenson. Ready all tubes. On my mark."

Marcus frowned, and stepped forward. "What are you doing?"

"Exactly what this executive order says to do Mr Haverstock..." Replied Anders. "We will first sterilise the planet, and then the coordinate tracks for the spore pods of that monster will be transmitted to the naval fleet."

"What! You can't!" Two officers quickly grabbed Marcus to restrain him.

"I'm afraid that I am not employed for my imagination when executive orders are issued Mr. Haverstock. I am employed to carry them out... Helm, bring us about." Sarah grabbed Ginny, and held her tightly.

"Mummy, what's happening?"

"The captain has to do something very bad in order to make the fungus go away." Came the whispered reply. "Don't look bunny." Sobbed Sarah, as she turned Ginny away from the huge bridge windows and held her little girl tightly to her chest.

Silver watched as mushrooms of a different type started to flash and bloom over the surface of the planet. She held Mortimer close and cried as the flashes of a dying world reflected in his eyes. On the floor, the open book showed the dead husk that would be left from the onslaught. Stripped of its atmosphere and seas it was simply a dead, irradiated, rock floating in space.

The Doctor quietly flicked a switch and the view disappeared. He looked across at Silver as if to say something, and then stopped. Quietly he left the control room to the sounds of a grieving young woman.

THE DOCTOR WHO PROJECT

GENEVIEVE

JEFF TAYLOR



“What where the colonies like?”

Silver wants to visit one of Earth's first colonies.

Genevieve is the jewel in the First Earth Empire's crown. The blue, Earth analogue, world is home to a colony on the very edge of Earth controlled space.

A temperate world; where something ancient, and unearthly, has come calling that thrusts the Doctor and Silver into a tide of events that they are powerless to overcome by their wits alone.

The humans are not the only ones who have come to colonise Genevieve.



This is another in a series of original fan authored Doctor Who fiction published by The Doctor Who Project featuring the ninth Doctor as played by Anton Robbins

