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PROJECT

moonlight: part one

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Prologue

‘Mission Control, this is Zeus 1. We will attain touchdown in 5...’

Jesus! How cold is this coffee?

Sophie threw the polystyrene cup into the bin, and tried to focus on the mess of numbers that scrolled up the page of her screen.

You’d think that working from some big business like NASA, you would at least get you a decent cup of coffee. They even have the nerve to charge for it! This isn’t quite the life of gadgets and gizmos I had in mind.

‘...4...’

In the control area around her, dozens of co-workers dressed in their perfectly ironed shirts and perfectly straight ties watched the video link in anticipation. The four astronauts braced themselves for touchdown. It was to be the first moon landing since the 60’s, and hopefully it would put an end to any conspiracy geeks trying to bring down NASA.

‘...3...’

All the other guys love this. All their hard work is paying off and they can go home stress free. But do I get to go home? No, I still have the back log of work the boss shoved on to me. All I need is for this stupid moon landing to be over and done with, and then maybe I can have a normal family meal with Dave and Sarah. But I know where it’ll end, Dave will shout at me and Sarah will shut herself in her room.

Sophie sighed and rested against the desk, running a hand through her red spiky hair that had become greasy through laziness. She liked her hair. It seemed rebellious compared to the combed-back-cuts her co-workers had. Then there was James, who everyone picked on for his bowl-cut. She cringed every time she saw it. Her overtime at work had had bad effects physically: her eyes were constantly plagued with dark bags and she was getting tubby.

‘...2...’

Of course, it had to be me that got the blame for the loss of contact with the Africa satellite. I was the one given the task of working overtime to re-establish contact. I was the one that the boss shouted at when I told him it was impossible. Bloody typical. Now everyone’s hit the roof since it’s obvious that the satellite must have been destroyed, so everyone’s looking for someone to blame: Muslim terrorists, global warming, even UFO’s.

There are rumours that Mr. Stevenson is covering up information, and that radar signals have detected a large object hovering near the satellite’s position. I usually love a bit of office scandal, like when Kirsty was cheating on Daniel. That kept me happy for weeks, but with all the crap going on in my life, I really don’t care. I’ve got my priorities. I’ve gotta get home and have dinner with my family, and maybe save us from divorce.

‘...1. Houston, we have-’

Sophie rose to grab another drink from the coffee machine, using the last quarter in her pocket. As she pressed the button for “Black”, the visual link up with Zeus 1 went dead. Her last chance of getting home early, her last chance of having dinner, was gone. ’

* * * * *

‘When NASA goes into chaos, when the technicians start checking the ship’s blueprints, and when the IT guys search the computer systems, no one ever suspects what else might be up there causing the problem, up there in the darkness of space. No one suspects a time traveller - don’t laugh, just trust me on this. His name is the Doctor, and if I’m right, he’s

behind this. He's come down to our small little planet to save us again, bringing hell on his tail.

'Just out of sight, something large, something fierce, something immovable is waiting. It's watching a toddler make its first steps in Southern California. It's watching a 16 year old boy nervously kiss his first girlfriend in Tokyo. It's watching a business meeting, 23 floors up in an office block in Berlin.

'It's watching you. Because something wicked this way comes...'

* * * * *

Moonlight

Part 1: Something Wicked This Way Comes...

'Can I get you anything else?' asked the waitress as she collected Silver's plate.

'No thanks.'

She noticed that the waitress was staring at her strangely as she reached over to take her empty coffee mug.

'Do I know you from somewhere?' she asked, straining to remember Silver's face.

'I don't think so.' Silver let out a deep sigh as the waitress left to serve other customers.

See you, Jen. The waitress, Jennifer, had been a friend of her Dad's and was once a upon a time Silver's babysitter.

'It's definitely some kind of alien power source. I've pin pointed the location exactly, ready for you to snoop around,' said the Doctor gleefully, while racing around the console.

So it's just me now, on my own. Still, I always fancied the idea of being a secret agent. I've even got the fake identity with me: "Rachel Freeman", orphan of Chrissie and John, who recently passed away in a plane crash. With my experience, playing an orphan is gonna be easy. No need for the Doctor, he was glad to get the hell out of this boring city straight away. He's off doing the real work. All I've got is a suitcase full of clothes and the address of the foster house I'll be staying in. Oh, and a Dan Brown novel, just in case things get desperate.

* * * * *

'I know it can be pretty nerve wracking moving into a new place, believe me, honey, I've seen it all before. Most kids end up wetting the bed on the first night. I hope you've got better bladder control,' said Liza over the husky voice of the radio presenter. He was debating about the loss of contact with the space shuttle Zeus 1, or something dull like that.

'I'm fine really,' assured Silver. She rested her head against the car window and watched the traffic shoot past, reminding herself to pick up some sun cream as the summertime was fast approaching.

Liza was a slim, pretty woman in her late forties. She had a friendly face and a great sense of humour which was a relief as they introduced themselves in the coffee house earlier. Silver had imagined foster mothers to be strict, elderly women who caned innocent kids. Liza had loaded her suitcase into her car and they were presently on their way to the foster house.

'I've got three other's staying with me at the moment. One of them is your age, so you won't be surrounded by screaming kids... much. I tell ya, Lucy, the youngest, she'll be the death of me. And whatever you do, don't let her near any crayons.'

'Are they all temporary?'

'Yep, I'm just the service station, honey. I look after the kids till a permanent home can be arranged for them. I must have taken in over 50 kids by now.'

'You got any of your own?'

'Nope. Ah, here we are, home sweet home- well, for now.'

The car pulled up at a small terraced house. Silver surveyed the place where she'd be spending the next few days. *Detective Inspector Silverstein*, it had a nifty ring to it.

* * * * *

This place is like the TARDIS, bigger on the inside, but with a dozen more bathrooms.

Silver looked around the hallway as Liza gave her the guided tour. Scattered along every wall and door were beautiful, framed, chalk pastel portraits of various people. Each had intricate, detailed features, but over the faces and bodies were beautiful rainbows of colour, some gently emanated from the persons outline while others appeared in random shapes and brightness.

'Wow, these are great. Did you do them?' she asked while studying the nearest portrait of an elderly African woman.

'Sure did. I'm not just a bossy mom you know, I'm really into spiritualism and all that jazz. In my spare time I do aura portraits.'

'Cool.'

'You look like a bit of a spiritualist yourself,' she said while glancing at Silver's necklaces, rings and pendants.

'You mean I look like a grunge girl that listens to Slipknot on full blast?'

She laughed. 'No, I mean you've got that Wiccan look about you. I could do a portrait for you if you'd like.'

'Yeah, I'd like that.'

Liza led her to the last room at the end of the ground floor hallway. It was a messy living room with TV listings and gossip magazines littered across the floor, with headlines such as "*Sex Scandal Exposed*" and "*How I lost \$3 million in 3 seconds*". The room led through to the dining room which in turn led back out into the hallway. Sitting cross legged in front of a TV was an innocent little girl with curly, blonde hair.

'Meet Lucy, the youngest of the troops. Lucy, this is Rachel.'

The little girl turned her head away from '*Spongebob Squarepants*' to see who was talking. With one glance at Silver, she ran into the dining room, out into the hallway and up the stairs. Silver couldn't help but feel awkward.

'Funny, she isn't usually this shy,' said Liza as she switched off the TV and tidied the place up.

'How old is she,' she asked, desperate to cover up her awkwardness.

'Seven, a right little loud mouth she is too. I'll have a word with her in a bit. Anyway, I'll show you the rest of the house.'

The two of them made their way up the stairs where the walls were yet again smothered in aura portraits. Liza pushed open the first door which opened onto a cramped, clutter strewn room. An indie band blazed away on a stereo in the corner while movie posters and blu-tac covered the walls. Sitting on the edge of an unmade bed was a teenage boy lifting weights. He had jet black, gelled, spiky hair and a fierce yet sad face.

Upon seeing Silver and Liza enter, he rested the set of weights on the floor and turned down the volume on the stereo.

'Seth, this is Rachel, Rachel-Seth.'

He ain't bad looking, she thought, but I look like crap. Still, his music taste needs a bit of work.

'You're both the same age, so play nice. I've got enough stuff on at the moment-' Liza stopped after seeing a cigarette resting in an ashtray on the window ledge. 'What have I told you about smoking in the house, Seth?' She stubbed out the cigarette.

'Come on, Lizzy, I had the window open so it won't stink the place out!'

'Yeah, and its Liza to you, prince charming.'

Wow, it's been a while since I saw anything like this, thought Silver. This makes a change from alien scientists arguing about the fate of the universe. I never thought I'd see anything like this again.

‘Right, I’ll show you to your room, Rachel. We’ll leave little Arnold Schwarzenegger to lift his weights.’

* * * * *

Italian lasagne, with smooth cream cheese, chopped green salad and warm bread, sprinkled with herbs- oh god, now I remember why the TARDIS food machine was so rubbish.

The household settled down for dinner, where Silver was introduced to the last orphan staying with Liza: a shy, red head boy called Gregg. Rachel noticed that Lucy was deliberately avoiding her for some reason, and the little girl never spoke a word throughout dinner.

‘So where did you grow up, Rachel?’ asked Liza attempting to get a conversation going.

‘DC actually. I’ve been, err- travelling, for the past year or so.’

‘Use your knife and fork Gregg,’ ordered Liza. ‘Sorry Rachel, some people in this house have no manners,’ she grinned. Gregg stuck his tongue out at her and proceeded to mutilate the lasagne.

Seth’s being pretty quiet. He probably thinks I’m a freak- I really need to tone down some of the make-up. Still, this place is pretty cool. Liza seems nice. It’s just a bit, well, normal. Shouldn’t a monster have come crashing through the window by now? Still, I better make the most of this. I’m having a normal family meal with normal people, and I’m enjoying it. It won’t last.

‘You said you went travelling, who with? Some activity group was it?’ asked Liza.

‘No, just with my friend, the Doctor.’ *I’d nearly forgotten about him. I gotta stay focused.*

‘Doctor? Is he a psychiatrist or something?’

Rachel laughed. ‘No, just a friend.’

Wherever he is...

* * * * *

The Doctor held up his arm to protect himself as the fiery debris plummeted from the roof.

The ancient monastery screamed out in pain as the flames lashed out through its body. The wooden bones that held it together groaned and creaked as the fire expanded, swallowing everything in its way. The prayer mats, the golden statues of Buddha, the finely threaded tapestries, even the remaining monks trapped within their rooms, all were consumed in the inferno.

Peace, simplicity, tranquillity. That was the life that the founders of the monastery had aimed for secluded within the ripe mountain tops of China, in order to pursue a spiritual path of meditation and prayer. Their centuries of hard work were now being reduced to ashes in mere minutes, as the surviving monks that had managed to escape fled to the nearby village.

The Doctor made his way through to the entrance hall as the flames spat out like dragon tongues intent on swallowing him whole. Within his arms he desperately clutched onto a small golden casket: the fruits of his mission.

The doors that led out onto the mountainside were in sight. They stood wide open but much of the debris was falling and blocking the way. His time was running out, there was enough smoke in this place to fill both his hearts full to the brim. He took in a deep breath and tightened his grip on the casket a little more.

Don't fail me now, legs, he thought. I didn't buy lunch for that chap, Sotomayor, for nothing. Charming fellow. That reminds me, I still haven't given him his medal back. I really must find my diary again-

Before he knew it, his feeble legs began to move until he broke out into a full length run, the scorching wind hitting his face whilst his eyes clamped shut. He was through the hall and before he knew it, he was floating through the air, his legs still moving, leaping over the torched debris that lay beneath. He never felt so alive in all his life, and in that moment, with the fire raging, the wind blowing, and his body flying, he remembered why he did what he did. He remembered why he was the Doctor.

He crash landed onto the cool, lush, green grass. The sky above was a dark blue as the day was within its first few hours of life. As far as he could see, there was nothing but the gentle rise of mountains giving birth to the flow of waterfalls, with the silent trees acting as witnesses.

He made his way to a small area of grass in the courtyard, away from the heat of the monastery. He gently laid the casket down to study it. It was no larger than a shoe box but weighed down by the gold metal from which it was made. Engraved into each side were a series of strange carvings that he couldn't decipher. At a guess they were either Venusians or Welsh.

He reached out to open the lid and see what lay inside. His fingers were nearly upon it when the casket faded out of sight and vanished, leaving nothing but a patch of squashed grass.

'That wasn't supposed to happen.'

Neither was the butt of the pistol as it smashed against the back of his skull. The Doctor fell forward, unconscious.

* * * * *

Silver stepped out into the cold night air of Liza's backyard. The buzzing sound of the mosquito zapper filled the silence and cast a blue light over Seth. He was sitting on the terrace steps, smoking a cigarette away from Liza's protests. She went over to join him in as casual a way as possible. It was time to act the detective.

'Look, this is my last one and I ain't givin' up one drag.'

'Relax, I gave up ages ago.'

'Yeah, well Goth girls usually nag all day for a smoke.'

She didn't know whether to be offended or laugh. 'You're calling me a Goth?'

'You're saying you're not,' he smirked. 'Come on, messy dyed hair, blood red nails and way too much eyeliner.'

He laughed. Silver pushed him back playfully. The mosquito zapper kept on buzzing.

'Yeah, well at least I'm not trying to act like the hard gangster.'

'You what?'

'Come on, weight lifting, smoking, typical rebellious problem child. I bet you call this place the ghetto.'

They both grinned. She was beginning to forget why she was here again, but quickly realized that the tension was broken and she could move in for the kill.

'With Liza being into all this spiritual stuff, you'd expect her to be fostering ghosts as well. Anything weird like that happen around here?'

'Nope, it's as plain and boring as you can get.'

'How long you been here then?'

'About 3 weeks now, and I guess I'll be here for a lot longer.'

'Huh?'

'No one wants me in their homes. I've been through about 8 foster homes now. I got a reputation.'

'Tough guy. So how did you end up an orphan?'

'The normal way.' The mosquito zapper kept on buzzing. It was growing louder.

'Which would be?' It was growing brighter.

'Hey, just 'cos were stuck in the same house doesn't mean you can stick your nose in my business. You just keep your mouth shut and you'll be gone within the week.'

The light of the mosquito zapper shattered. A thousand tiny pieces sprinkled over the lawn. Seth swore and ran inside. Silver remained calm and stayed outside a little longer, staring into the orange glow of Seth's cigarette for comfort.

* * * * *

'Being pistol whipped has got to be the most embarrassing thing I've ever had the misfortune to experience.'

'Well there was that time in Edinburgh with Tommy Cooper.'

'Never mind that, we've got important things to do. Wake up!'

'Yes, you're right, I always am.'

'Oh, and, Doctor?'

'Yes?'

'Stop talking to yourself.'

'OK. Right, it's show time.'

The Doctor's eyes snapped open.

He was sitting in the backseat of a car. It looked expensive, leather seats, perhaps a Bentley? He wasn't sure; he'd only watched *Top Gear* once. He looked out the window and saw the sun creeping up into the sky. He guessed that he'd only been unconscious for an hour or two. He was still on the mountain range near the monastery. Through the windscreen ahead he could see a cliff edge, the mountain forest spread through to the area at the bottom of its fatal drop.

He tried to move his hands and felt the grip of handcuffs around them. In the driving seat in front of him was a figure dressed in a chauffeur's uniform. The mysterious stranger sat perfectly still, unnaturally so.

'Ah, you're awake.'

The Doctor jumped with shock. There was a man sitting next to him. He could have sworn that he hadn't been there a moment ago. He wore a sharp, pin striped suit and mirrored sunglasses so the Doctor was faced with his own reflection when staring at the stranger. His hair had been shaved off and his voice had a husky Scottish accent.

'Yes,' said the Doctor, 'which means you must be the breakfast waiter. Any toast on the go? It's been a while since I had any black pudding.'

The man grinned, 'A sense of humour, that's something I demand that all my business partners have. My name is Siren, and you are?'

He wasn't Scottish, he could tell. Some of the pronunciation was wrong, he was faking it.

'You come all the way up here to knock me unconscious, then hand cuff me, and you don't even know my name? I have had better breakfasts you know. I'm the Doctor.'

'When I found you, you had a golden casket with you. One moment it was there, and then it vanished...like magic. My colleagues and I have been searching for that casket for a long time, and we'd be upset if you didn't tell us where it was.'

'Look, I don't even know what's inside it-' he stopped upon seeing a small black ring wrapped around Siren's finger, the sign of a pentacle was attached to its front. He instantly recognized the mark of the Pentacle Corporation.

'All I know is that people - or rather, the Pentacle Corporation - are willing to kill to get their grubby little hands on it, as those poor Monks and myself discovered earlier.'

'I'm disappointed, Doctor. That's not the information I wanted to hear. Driver-'

'Yes sir?' asked the dead voice of the chauffeur.

'I want you to drive yourself and the Doctor over the mountainside.'

'Yes sir.'

The chauffeur turned the key in the ignition and gunned the engine.

'You can't do this!' howled the Doctor as he tried to open the door. It was locked.

'Now you see what happens when people disappoint me.' Siren exited the car, locking the door behind him. He casually strolled over the green land and took out his mobile phone.

'We lost it. Again,' he said into the receiver, 'I'm heading back to the ship, tonight. Oh, and get me another Bentley, would you? My other one is in bad shape...'

* * * * *

The Doctor stared ahead in horror as the cliff edge grew closer.

'You'll kill us both if you don't stop this!' he roared.

'I must obey'. The chauffeur continued with his duty, regardless of the consequences, as though hypnotized.

With his hands cuffed, the Doctor hopelessly tried to open the opposite door. Locked again. He then shuffled his whole body onto the seat and began to kick at the door. He managed to hit the window switch with the tip of his shoe and the glass slid open.

The cliff edge grew closer. He shot his legs through the open window. He began to wriggle his way through and out into the open air. As the door painfully dug into his back, he took one final shove and landed right on the edge of the cliff. The car plummeted over in silence. Panting for breath, he glanced over the edge to see fire and smoke billowing from the wreckage below. He'd lost his hat in the monastery, but he managed to take out his handkerchief and let it drop down into the crash.

'I'm sorry.'

* * * * *

Extract from: 'Histories Greatest Catastrophe's', Volume VII, by Lupus Banderjax.

It began with a planet. It was a planet like any other. Its oceans flowed like any other ocean. Its grass grew green like any other grass. Its birds flew through the sky like any other birds. But that was the problem. This nameless planet was a bit too familiar. Many observers noticed its startling similarity to the blue planet of Earth, and thus nicknamed it 'Earth 2'. That's the kind of joke that amuses these academics to no end.

Many millennia passed, and life began to sprout from the cracks of the planet. From bacteria, to insects, to fish, to mammals, and eventually, bi-pedal humanoids stretched their limbs and took in their first breath, their lungs filling with the satisfaction of millions of years work of evolution. From then on, they progressed to form a language, a culture, a society, a civilisation.

Like the human race they faced adversity, in disease, death, nuclear weapons, ideologies, global warming- all of which they overcame. While the human race was still ignorant of the existence of iron and metal, this new race was forging space ships that could take them out among the stars.

And so the war came.

* * * * *

The chimes of Big Ben rang out to the inhabitants of London. It was two o' clock in the afternoon. Most people were now settling down at their desks after their lunch break, all except one lonely journalist.

Hassan glanced at his watch to check it was synchronized with Big Ben. He was a few minutes behind and altered the tiny dial at the side. A waiter came over and delivered his sandwich and he murmured his thanks. It was a small, quaint café that he enjoyed visiting from time to time. He bit into the tuna mayo filling.

'Sorry, I'm late.'

Hassan jumped in shock, nearly choking on the sandwich. In the seat opposite him, which had been empty a second ago, the Doctor sat.

'The TARDIS chronometer is on the blink. I'm sure I'd fixed it a few days ago, or was that the egg timer...'

Hassan smiled. He looked across at this bizarre Victorian gentleman, totally out of place among the mobile phones, Nike trainers and suffocating smell of Lynx deodorant that the café customers brought with them. He'd done so much for Hassan, ever since he'd appeared at the bars to his prison cell, halfway across the world.

'Fancy being *liberated* from prison, young man?' Those were his first words he said to him. It was so late at night, and Hassan was lying beaten on the floor, with the rotten smell of faeces and iron blood, yet the Doctor was just standing there, smiling down on him.

'Doctor,' said Hassan cheerfully, 'enjoy your trip to China?'

'Don't worry, I sent you a postcard. You'll receive it tomorrow, or maybe it was yesterday... but I found the casket-', grinned the Time lord, '-then lost it.'

'Great, so I put my career on the line for nothing?'

'That's what being a journalist is all about, Hassan! And no, it wasn't for nothing. I got a holiday out of it, and, I had a run in with one of the Pentacle Corporation Leaders. He calls himself Siren.'

'But we still don't know what the casket contains, or why they want it.'

The Doctor went silent for a few moments, attempting to assess the situation. 'We know the Pentacle Corporation keep their business to themselves. They specialize in computers, that's their trade, and I read this morning that they've been in talks with Apple and Microsoft. They're a worldwide group and have been bribing almost every president, king and queen on the planet, all in the search for this mysterious casket.'

The Doctor sighed. 'I'll have to throw myself into the lion's den-'

'You treat this like a game! You can't keep risking your life-'

'I'm perfectly clear on the situation, Hassan. Now to gain access to the Corporation's London headquarters I'll need one of their rings. Did you manage to get one for me?'

'We're not dealing with simple businessmen, Doctor. These people are willing to kill to achieve their goal. What if I don't give you the ring? I'm sure one day you'll thank me for saving your life.'

'Hassan!' shouted the Doctor angrily before silencing himself in shame. He sighed. 'If it weren't for me Hassan, where do you think you'd be right now? I'll tell you, you'd be shot

dead in a ditch when your execution day came. I've done all I can to give you a better life here. I faked the I.D. papers, gave you a good home, a job, now can you please just do me one thing, and give me the ring.' There was no threat in his voice, just the weariness of 900 hundred years.

Hassan slowly placed a small, black pentacle ring on the table. 'That will give you access to any of the Corporation's headquarters worldwide,' he said bluntly.

'Thank you,' he smiled.

'You never could resist a mystery could you,' he tried to sound cheerful but failed. 'Just don't do anything stupid, like getting yourself killed or something.'

'Time lord's promise. I'll see you again in a few days time,' he got up to leave. 'Oh, and thanks for the sandwich. I'll pay you back another time.'

Hassan stared down at his now empty plate and grinned as the door rang shut behind the Doctor.

* * * * *

Silver lay back against the mattress and listened to the noises that seeped through the crumbling plaster of her bedroom walls. Liza, Gregg and Lucy were laughing at the TV. Seth was playing darts, each one making a loud thud when they hit the board. Neither of them had spoken since their incident earlier.

Great, I finally meet a good looking guy who isn't green with tentacles, and I go and piss him off. He's definitely got a secret to tell, I gotta find out what it is. And what happened to the mosquito light? Did he cause it?

She sighed. Things had started out fine but she had to go and spoil it, and she was nowhere nearer to finding the cause of the power source.

Her mobile phone began to vibrate. She glanced at the screen and saw the caller name: John Smith.

'Hey Doc,' she sighed into the speaker.

'It's Doctor to you, and hello.'

'How's Mortimer? You have been feeding him haven't you?'

'Yes, the cat's fine. More to the point, have you had any luck on the energy source?'

'Erm-well, I haven't had the time yet.'

'Oh. Well, alright,' he sounded hurt, which made her feel even guiltier. 'Well *I've* made a few developments, I found the casket that the Corporation were after.'

'What was in it?'

'Erm-well, it sort of...disappeared. Some sort of inbuilt trans-mat device I should imagine.'

'So you didn't really find anything out?'

'Only that the Pentacle Corporation are willing to kill to get that casket, which I had the misfortune of discovering.'

'What happened?'

'Oh you know the same old thing; hypnotized chauffeurs driving you over a cliff.'

'Doctor! You can't keep doing this, you're not indestructible you know!'

'Yes, thank you Silver. I am aware of my mortality. I have been saving planets for a considerable amount of time.' She felt hurt by his coldness. A long pause followed, each of them regretting their words.

'Silver, there is a grander scheme behind the Pentacle Corporation, I must find out what it is. They have no remorse in killing anyone and I have to find out whether their plans will result in more murder.'

'I know, but that isn't an excuse to throw away your life.'

He went silent again.

'Yes. I'm sorry. Anyway, I've got another mission for you.'

She felt her heart sink. In the past she would have happily thrown herself into danger for him. He'd given her a new life, that was what he did, and she'd do anything to repay him, but this time it was different. *I want to stay here. I want a few more hours of normal life.*

'The Corporation have an office stationed a few blocks down from the foster house; I want you to have a snoop round there.'

Why does it always have to be about you, Doctor? Why can't you spare me these few precious moments without chucking aliens and spaceships into my life? How many planets do you have to save to make it worthwhile?

'Every office they own requires a special security ring to enter. An associate of mine managed to provide me with one, but as for you, well, try and improvise.'

The line went dead.

* * * * *

'I swear you're gonna get me killed one day, Goth Girl,' grumbled Seth. He dropped his empty cigarette packet in a trash can as they passed by.

'Not if lung cancer beats me to it. Anyway, I didn't ask you to come.'

Seth ignored her and zipped up his jacket against the bitter night air. He thought of the comfy, warm bed that awaited him back at Liza's house, but instead he was freezing his ass off on the streets with a Goth and no cigarettes.

He'd been harmlessly downloading a few tracks off the internet when he heard something crash in Rachel's bedroom. If only he'd ignored it, but no, being the idiot he was he went to check that she was alright and found her sneaking out through the window.

'I've got important things to do. Now go away, Seth,' she had said severely, 'you don't want to get involved.'

He didn't know why he did, but she seemed too naive to know how rough the neighbourhood was. He'd had a run in with a few of the perverts and drug dealers before. They'd tear apart a little Goth girl like her. Before he knew it they were out on the streets while she raved on about the 'Pentacle Corporation'. He was regretting it already. As soon as they were back at Liza's place, he'd avoid her. He couldn't let himself get too close to her, not after the last time he met a girl like her...

'Seth, since you've come this far, I think you deserve to know the truth,' she said, obviously a little hesitant. 'I'm not here because I'm an orphan- my parents are dead, but I've been...travelling- with a friend of mine. He put me in Liza's care so I could "investigate" a few things. At the foster agency he planted and deleted my file so no other people could foster me, except him when he comes to collect me in a few days time.'

Crazy, plain and simple. Who the hell does she think she is, Lara Croft? Oh god, she's one of those people that plays role playing games and has a 'Lord of the Rings' t-shirt. This isn't looking good; I better go along with it.

'Yeah, sure, fine with me Goth girl.' *I hope she isn't taking me to see her favourite comic book shop.*

'We're here.'

They turned onto a giant ring road. Standing on the far side was a skyscraper, blotting out the sky and casting a cold shadow over the two of them. It was covered in dark reflective glass, making it almost invisible against the landscape. It was surrounded by a

ring of greenery and bushes, with a giant marble block standing at the entrance, 'Pentacle Corporation' engraved on its broadest side. They made their way to the tinted glass doors, making it hard to see inside. Fixed into the wall was a small metal plate with a pentacle engraved into it.

'They all use those rings as a sort of key card...' muttered Silver.

'What are you gonna do next? Break in and loot the place?'

'You're half right.'

She led Seth through the bushes around the building until they reached another window. 'I wonder why they use tinted windows?'

'I dunno. Maybe they don't want people to see them shooting up on drugs?'

'To keep something in, or to keep something out...'

'Earth to Sherlock Holmes.'

'If you're as hard as you say you are, open this window for me.'

Seth grinned. He was beginning to like this girl.

'Now that's what I'm talkin' about.'

He took out a small Swiss army knife and carefully lodged the blade between the frame and the glass. In his head he thought back to the tips that Jake had taught him when he'd been living rough in his loft for a week. He always used to do a few jobs for Jake if it got him a meal for the night; swipe people on the street, break into the local Hi-Fi shop, bust open cash registers. He'd jump at Jake's every word like a dog to his master. Then the foster agency caught him and he'd been moved from one fake family to the next ever since.

The pane of glass flipped open by the hinges in either side.

'Pretty skilled for an amateur,' said Silver. 'You can still go home now if you want. I don't need you anymore.'

'Naa, the only thing on the TV is repeats of *The Simpsons*.'

They grinned at each other.

'Come on then.'

She glided through the opening and into the building. Seth followed and left the window almost closed, ready for the escape he had in mind, involving alarm bells and angry security guards. They found themselves in a large open plan office full of work cubicles containing the usual scattered papers and greasy Apple Macs.

'Now that we're here, what did you have in mind? Getting a few lessons on internet connections?'

'Shut up for a moment.' She suddenly felt out of place playing the spy, it all felt so fake. She wanted to go back to Liza's house and have a normal night in, perhaps check out a few clubs with Seth, see what gigs were on at the Academy, but she knew it was wrong. It all felt so compulsory, her life with the Doctor, but people's lives were at stake, as usual, and it ate away at her in the back of her mind. She had to do this.

'The Pentacle Corporation has offices like this all over the world. All the official members and heads of the company who aren't just the drones slaving away at computers are never seen to leave the building. They must have some living quarters on one of the other floors, so they're still here. Now, Seth, I want you to shut up and do what I say. This isn't a game and I sure ain't crazy whatever you may think, now come on.'

Silver led the way out of the office and into a long corridor with several other doors and stairways. She stopped to examine a door sign reading: '*Authorized Personnel Only*'. She carefully turned the handle trying not to make any noise. It led through onto the top of a spiral stairwell which led down into the basement. The stairs were swallowed up in darkness as they descended. A cold breeze hit the two of them in the face out of the shadows, and they could hear the deafening silence of the basement below. Silver could

actually hear the emptiness and vastness of it, almost roaring, like a ghost screaming, as though it were alive.

They looked at each other, both too scared to break the silence. Silver took the first step, the metal creaking under her weight. She began to descend, Seth behind her, going deeper, and deeper, until they were drowned in the black ink of shadows.

They reached the bottom a few agonizing minutes later. To Silver, it felt like they had reached the bottom of the world itself. Just when it seemed like the darkness might suffocate her, the twinkle of candles flickered in the distance, casting light upon the basement.

Seth looked around in disbelief.

‘Seth, could you explain to me what a harmless computer Software Company is doing with a place like this?’

Basement was no longer a suitable word to describe it, chamber was more accurate. The walls and ceiling stretched far away to the size of a football field. Seth was beginning to know how Jonah felt, standing in the belly of a whale. It was constructed out of colossal grey blocks of stone, while out of the floor protruded a thick iron track, like a railway, forming a giant pentacle. In the centre of it was an ancient stone altar, stained with the wax of burning candles. There was no doubt that the rock and iron had been forged somewhere beyond this world.

Silver could hear something breaking the silence: footsteps. She fiercely dragged Seth behind the staircase where the rock had crumbled and pieces piled up to provide a hiding place.

Four robed and hooded figures entered the chamber. Their outfits were made from rich, black velvet that melted into the darkness of the cavern. They began to light several torches that hung from each of the five walls of the chamber.

‘This is ridiculous,’ spat one of the figures. ‘I feel and look like a loser. Why the hell do we need to do all this cloak and dagger stuff?’

‘Shut up Kane, you little prig,’ said another of the robed figures. This time it was female and had the same strange accent that was hard to pin.

‘What the hell is the point in all this ceremonial stuff? All we want is a bit of dinner, there’s no need to do a full scale horror movie in the process-’

‘Its tradition-’

‘Tradition? We are not in the dark ages, Fey! We’ve built fleets that can jump halfway across the galaxy, and everyone insists on acting like pagans and prancing around naked at sundown.’

‘In your dreams,’ replied the woman. ‘You’re becoming one of the techno-freaks. We don’t need technology, we shouldn’t become slaves to it like these primitive apes. Give in to the beast within you.’

‘But that’s the point! We could achieve so much if everyone just let go of this futile charade. We can run away from the war, start anew, and cast away the burden we’ve carried within us. There’s a whole universe out there! Let’s forget the war, Fey, let’s forget about Lucius...’

The other two robed figures seemed to shift uneasily, as did the woman.

‘You’re getting ahead of yourself, Kane. What we’ve been given has made us gods. Lucius can end all our troubles, lead the way to victory-’

‘Oh come off it, Fey! Lucius is insane! Why the hell do you think he was imprisoned here in the first place? He’s a war hungry lunatic, he’d happily swallow up whole galaxies just to prove his power-’

‘Maybe he’ll beat some sense into you. Maybe he’ll put you back in touch with the wolf. We are not human, we must not let technology enslave us and live the false dream that we are free. We are in touch with the raw, fierce powers within us-’

The woman advanced on him seductively. Seth watched the two of them in disbelief. ‘You can’t resist it, that raw passion with which you can do anything, have whatever you want, the power to hunt, to feed, to have. All we need is that one little dagger inside that one little casket, and we’ll be infinite-’

Hah! Big mistake, Fey. Detective Silverstein strikes again! So it’s a dagger inside the casket. And who heck is Lucius, thought Silver to herself.

I am, replied a demonic voice.

She felt a shiver run down her spine like a knife point. The stone chamber in the basement suddenly clouded from her vision, swallowed in darkness. She began to sweat and pant as the air turned hotter and hotter, beating at her skin. Everything seemed so out of place and dreamlike, but the fear she felt was real enough.

She searched around for Seth but she was lost in the black void.

‘Seth? Seth, where are you!?’

‘A lamb, a lamb, a lamb to the slaughter. Greetings, my pretty one.’

‘Who is that?’

‘Why do you stray from the pack my dear? You should not be here, standing at my cell door. I shall hunt you across the land.’ The voice giggled. *‘I am Lucius. I am the wolf at your door. I’ve been waiting here for so long, down here in the Earth’s core. It’s so very, very hot, so hot it burns. But that power has fuelled me, preparing me for my release, I shall return.’*

‘You should not be here child. Run, run as fast as you can, and you might be safe. Be careful that my brothers do not catch you, because I will.’

She was back in the basement. She quickly jumped to all sorts of scientific answers: hallucinations, mental projections, out of body experience. All logical conclusions to what she had just seen, but they didn’t hide her fear.

She jumped with shock as the footsteps of two more people made their way down the stairwell and into the chamber. One was another robed figure while the other was a fair haired, young woman in a long white gown and a red blind fold tied over her eyes. It took a while for Silver to recognise her: it was Jennifer, her old babysitter, the waitress who’d served her earlier that day. The woman made her way over towards the altar in a strange manner as though she were sleepwalking. The five robed and hooded figures each stood at a point on the pentacle to face the central altar.

‘Dinnertime,’ said Kane.

* * * * *

‘Pizza or Chinese?’

‘Erm, whatever you want. I’ll be late home tonight so I’ll do myself a snack when I get in.’

‘Again?’ sighed Jenny over the phone, ‘that’s the third night in a row-’

‘Hey, this job is what keeps us going-’

‘Well is it worth it if I never see you? You’re boss is creepy enough-’

‘Fine then, I’ll quit. You can go back to handing out leaflets, we can let the mortgage build and let our baby grow up with no toys or clothes ‘cos we can’t afford them.’

There was a long silence.

‘I’m sorry,’ she muttered in defeat. ‘The man’s coming round to fix the cooker at six. See ya.’

‘Bye,’ he said wearily and dropped the mobile phone back into his pocket.

‘Mr. Rosewood,’ grunted the security guard, ‘there is an after hours visitor on the premise.’

He marched over towards his monitoring desk and tried to blot out the odour of cheese nachos that the guard constantly stuffed his face with.

‘What do you mean? There aren’t any personnel scheduled to visit.’

Rosewood gazed into the black and white CCTV monitor.

‘Well, he used one of the security rings to get in.’

Rosewood watched a man in his 50’s stealthily make his way through the closed reception area. His face was wrinkled in a soft, gentle manner but with a powerful gaze at the back of his eyes.

In the past, when he had met with the heads of the Pentacle Corporation, their presence was cold, draining, and suppressing. Rosewood felt nothing but despair and depression when he was around them, finding it impossible to stare into their red, marble eyes. The intruder was far from this.

‘Security? We have...an incident, in the reception. Deal with it.’

* * * * *

No out of date a magazines, I’m impressed. He made his way up the reception desk, keeping to the walls.

Still, the décor needs a little work- ouch! The pentacle ring was cutting off the circulation in his finger so he quickly pulled it off and concealed it in his pocket.

He proceeded to make his way out onto a hallway- SHUNK! Blinding white lights flooded the area. His eyes painfully squinted. Through the blur he could make out the pitter patter of footsteps and the silhouettes of people.

His head throbbed with pain as he was struck from behind and sent flying to the floor. Before slipping into unconsciousness, he thought to himself how embarrassing it was for this to happen twice in the same day.

* * * * *

‘I confess to nothing, your honour,’ murmured the Doctor as the room began to come into focus. He was sat down at an ordinary, if expensive, office desk. The chairs were made of rich leather, there was a mini-bar to one side, and the lighting was dim and moody. The wall behind the desk was made of glass, providing a full view of London at midnight. For once, he was not handcuffed.

‘Anybody home?’ he called out. From out of the shadows appeared a handsome, sharply dressed man. He had a pierced eyebrow and brown spiky hair.

‘Why did you come here?’

‘Not very threatening, is it? You must be new to this interrogation game. You’re meant to come on all tough and menacing. Still, we all have to start somewhere. Who are you anyway?’

‘I am Rosewood. You’re not one of the Pentacle members but you used one of their rings to get into the building.’

‘Yes, well it doesn’t take rocket science to steal a ring, does it?’

‘If you don’t answer my questions, I can have you killed,’ he said nervously.

'Oh come off it. You're not a killer, I can see that. I'm here to find out what the Pentacle Corporation want. You're just a scared little front man, no real threat. You get a snazzy suit and a bigger desk and you think you're head of the company-'

'Rosewood, report,' crackled a voice from out of the air.

The Doctor stared as a holographic image sparked into life above the desk. It displayed a familiar man in a pin striped suit and small sunglasses.

'The stranger is hesitant in answering, Siren.'

The flickering image then stared past Rosewood and at the Doctor.

'You!' spat Siren, '*It's impossible, I left you for dead on the other side of this backward planet-*'

'Like a bad penny, I keep coming back. Unfortunately it isn't the same for your unfortunate chauffeur. Now listen to me, Siren, I've had enough of being shot at, kidnapped and running around on a wild goose chase. I've had enough questions for one lifetime and I want some answers. You have a ship in geostationary orbit above Africa, you've done something to the Moon landing crew, you're chasing after an ancient casket and have a liking for the tinted windows motif.'

Siren stared at him coolly for a moment.

'Rosewood, did you follow normal procedure and administer the chemical?'

'Yes sir.'

'Then there's no harm in showing him.' The hologram grinned and the Doctor watched as Siren began to twist out of shape...

* * * * *

Seth squinted through the gaps in the rock and onto the chamber. He suddenly realized that he was incredible close to Rachel. *I can feel her heart beating, she's so close. I never noticed how good looking she is- under all that makeup and tacky jewellery. Jesus, this isn't the time or place! The important thing is there is something going on here.*

The robed figures began to encircle the blindfolded girl. *Great, now I'm stuck in the friggin' Wicker Man. I thought desk jobs were boring, it's driven these guys to devil worship. The group of strangers began to convulse violently. Oh God what the hell are they doing?*

The four figures keeled over in front of the altar and began to quiver and stretch in a bizarre yet painful manner. Muscles began to sprout and rip through their robes. The sickening sound of bones creaking and snapping filled the air as their fingers and toe nails thickened and extended into claws...

* * * * *

Extract from: 'Histories Greatest Catastrophe's', Volume VII, by Lupus Banderjax.

It was a war like any other. Their enemy was like any other: equal yet slightly more powerful than themselves. The inhabitants of this Earth-like world despaired as defeat was at hand. From the planets many diverse cultures and continents, they assembled a council of leaders who were to decide on the solution to the war.

On the first day, they talked, they fought.

On the second day, they talked, they fought.

But on the third day, while cosily tucked up in their beds, each of the council members had a dream. The problem was, they all experienced exactly the same dream in which a voice spoke to them. They were offered a solution to the war. It promised them

victory if they submitted their race into their possession. The council had no other choice as they faced extinction.

On the fourth day, they became wolves.

* * * * *

Within the hologram that floated above the desk, Siren's now muscled and disfigured body began to sprout thick, grey hair. His skull creaked and stretched into an animal shape as the saliva flowed from his jagged mouth. And within this grotesque whirlwind of pain, where mankind's shape was rewritten by something less than human, the creature's eyes snapped open to reveal blood red marbles.

With the process complete, the wolf stood firmly on all fours. Siren let out an ear piercing howl that threatened to shatter the glass wall.

'So the Pentacle Corporation finally shows its true colours,' muttered the Doctor. 'Very pretty.'

'A wolf in sheep's clothing,' laughed the husky, demonic voice of the creature. 'Are you feeling alright, Doctor?'

'I'm fine thank you, why should-'

Something was wrong. He'd blamed the rise in body temperature on the hit to his head, but the pain had increased, and within an instance, his stomach erupted into a stinging pain.

'The poison should be hitting your kidney's by now, to begin its work,' laughed Siren.

'What poison?'

'While you were unconscious we gave you a slow acting poison,' said Rosewood coldly.

'It's our standard procedure for intruders. Rosewood here does have the antidote, but we only give that to those who can offer us something.'

'Please! I can-' his throat began to dry and tighten. He tried to stand up but his legs gave out and he was left holding on to the arm of the chair.

'Now, Doctor, maybe you will finally understand. We are the Pentacle Corporation and we mean business.'

The hologram vanished.

'Listen to me Rosewood, you're not a-a...wolf, like Siren. You are a human being. Now please, give me the antidote.' He coughed more violently, as though his throat was shatter at any moment.

Rosewood took a small glass phial out of his pocket and stared at it for a moment.

'No, I can't. This is my job, I need to do it. I need the money for my kid.'

'Your job?' he roared in anger. 'You'd kill me just to get another meal for you and your wife? I can help you, I can show you a better life, I can show you worlds you never dreamed existed. But you have to give me the antidote!'

Rosewood took a step forward, looking at the phial again.

'That's it, please...'

'There's no better life beyond this. You're lying.' He threw the phial to the floor, the liquid spilling out and soaking into the carpet. The Doctors face sank in horror and his coughing fit consumed him. Blood began to splatter up his throat and into his dry mouth.

Rosewood watched him collapse to the floor, then checked for a pulse that he could not find.

* * * * *

The pack of wolves savagely threw themselves onto the woman's body. The first set of fangs sunk into her flesh and the blood began to flow.

'Screw this! Come on!' roared Seth. He grabbed Silver's hand and dragged her out of the shadows and up the creaking iron staircase. No matter what, he did not let go of her hand.

One of the creatures was disturbed from its meal. Through blood drenched fangs it growled at the cattle fleeing up the stairs.

The hunt had begun.

* * * * *

Oh god-oh god-oh god! Trust tonight to turn into a bloody B-movie! Seth frantically led the way up to the ground floor corridor that was now an unfamiliar blur.

'One of them's coming up after us!' he heard Silver cry.

'Well chuck it some dog food!'

He quickly threw himself against the nearest door and they stumbled through into the large open plan office they had found during their entrance. They raced straight through the middle and lost themselves in the maze of endless cubicles.

Seth risked taking a quick glance back. He instantly regretted it. Crouching in the doorway was the vast, muscled body of the wolf. Its searing red eyes burnt bright as it let out a low growl.

The beast moved in for the kill. It made the first move and began galloping towards Seth and Silver.

The duo carried on down a pathway between the rows of cubicles. The fear began to sweat out of them as they felt every last breath being squeezed out of their lungs.

Seth glanced back again in time to see the creature leap off the ground and glide through the air. A blur of grey fur flew above their heads and landed abruptly on the floor in front of them. The wolf swerved around to the face them and pursued them back down the pathway.

Seth yanked at Silver's trembling hand and they darted off down another alley leading to the window they had entered through. As the strain engulfed his legs, Seth realized that, deep down, a small part of him never wanted this moment to end. He didn't need to spend his time watching TV alone in his room, he didn't need to worry about the next foster home he'd be moving to or the next school he'd have to attend. All that mattered was that he was Seth Nightingale, and he was fighting monsters.

The tinted window grew closer and closer, as did the wolf. Silver knew that as soon as they faltered for a split second, they'd be dead. Instinctively, as they passed another cubicle, she grabbed one of its flimsy walls with her hand and viciously tore it down behind her. It crashed into the wolf and delayed it for just a few seconds, but it was enough.

Seth slammed open the window to unveil the pitch black, night sky with a full moon shining down like a spotlight. He pushed Silver out on to the cool grass below. Behind him, the wolf pounced, its damp breath soaked the back of his jacket. With one leg out through the window, Seth knew he wasn't going to make it.

The wolf screamed. It skidded to a halt frantically, still screeching in pain.

As Seth crashed out of the building, he caught one last look at the beast as its flesh burnt red and steam began to hiss from out of its fur. The glare of the moonlight reflected in its demonic eyes.

The window slammed shut.

* * * * *

At first I thought *you* were crazy, now it's me who's the mad one,' moaned Seth. He began to unload the damp clothes from the washing machine, one by one and throwing them into the basket.

'You saw them for yourself'

'Yeah, I did, and yeah, I know CGI isn't that good even in the movies. So they really were...werewolves.'

'They're not werewolves you geek, they're called Therianthropes.'

'How do you know? Don't tell me. You're *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the Goth version.'

'Shut up. I've met them before, me and the Doctor did. They're hunters from the astral planes that possess your body to feed on the living. I never knew they had an allergy to moonlight, though.'

Seth snorted.

'You saw for yourself! It burnt right through its flesh like sunlight to a vampire. That must be why they use tinted windows - hey keep your paws off!'

Seth sheepishly dropped Silver's bra into the basket along with the other clothes.

'So werewolves- I mean Therianthropes, are they, well, from, ya know, up there?' He nodded up at the ceiling of the kitchen.

'That's only the beginning, Seth. There's so much out there, I could spend my whole life describing it.'

'Ha! That is so cool! Aliens and spaceships and monsters, they're real! So, erm, are there actually Jedi's? Are crop circles real? Wait a sec', you're not, er-'

'I'm human, relax.'

'What about Michael Jackson, is he-'

'Yep.'

'I knew it!'

'Now can we please focus?'

'Yeah, sorry. So these Theriangropes-'

'Therianthropes.'

'Yeah, these Therianthropes, are after this casket thingy? While running a computer software company? Now it all makes sense,' he sighed.

'I know it sounds weird but-'

Silver stopped in mid sentence as Seth clumsily removed a damp pair of jeans. Before he could put them in the basket, something dropped out of the pocket and rolled onto the floor. A pentacle ring. They went silent for a very long time.

'Those are Lucy's jeans,' muttered Seth in shock.

'Speak of the devil,' said the seven year old as she stood grinning in the doorway.

* * * * *

'Freshly baked waffles! Get 'em while there 'ot,' cried the vendor, shaking a can of whipped cream.

It was early morning, yet tourists still managed to fill up the side of the Thames. Whether they were queuing for the London Eye, complaining how disappointing the Saatchi Gallery was, or just struggling to finish the waffles they had bought, they were all there to just have fun and enjoy themselves no matter of creed, colour or religion.

'Mum! There's a dead body in the water,' cried a small boy, tugging at his mother's coat.

'Yes, very nice dear.'

The little boy returned to peering over the thick stone wall and into the Thames. He was surprised to find that the body was moving. It was a middle aged man in weird, posh clothes...and he was climbing up the wall towards him. To the horror of the gathered tourists, the haggard and soaking Doctor collapsed onto the floor in front of them.

The Time Lord could feel his stomach retching as he vomited the poison out of his system and onto the floor before him. He wiped the acidic remains from his lips. Those tourists that hadn't already done so gave up on their waffles.

'Cretins! Julius Caesar could teach you a few things on poison making,' he grumbled while getting to his feet. He suddenly became aware of the attention he was drawing to himself. Surrounding him were the bemused faces of innocent people, going through their lives like children, each with a lust for life and just having fun. He, for one, was not going to let the Therianthropes or anyone else ruin such a fantastic species.

'Sorry, the boat trip up the Thames was too awful to bear any longer,' he grinned before marching off to find the TARDIS.

* * * * *

Mortimer darted across the console room in fright. He had been rolling around in the Doctor's toolkit before it toppled onto its side under his weight. An array of alien devices spilled out onto the floor, some were smooth metal objects while others had strange fungus sprouting from places. With his soft paws he batted some around like a mouse until the floor was littered with them.

The cat stopped as his excitement was ruined by the Doctor entering through the roundel doors and drenched to the bone. His hair hung down in bunches over his face as water dripped off the ends.

'Mortimer!' he groaned after seeing his prized toolkit scattered across the room. The Time Lord activated the door controls and he was yet again back in his own world. He wearily let his drenched Victorian coat drop to the floor and let Mortimer settle himself within its soft, velvet lining.

Before he even had the chance to decide whether to feed the cat or not, he was interrupted by a peculiar ringing noise. He marched over towards one of the roundels on the far side of the console room and slid it aside to reveal an ancient Victorian candlestick telephone.

It was ringing for him. He held the speaker close to his face before lifting the receiver from its position.

'Hello?' he asked, expecting the soft female voice of Silver to reply.

'Doctor, you seem to have a talent for avoiding death,' jeered Siren.

He fell silent.

'Well, next time you try to poison me you'd better take a crash course on a Time Lord's immune system first. How did you know I was alive?'

'We are the Pentacle Corporation, Doctor. We have eyes and ears everywhere-'

'Wait a minute, only Silver knows this number.'

'Ah yes, you're little wonder girl. She and her boyfriend came snooping around our Connecticut office. They're both here with me-'

'If you've harmed one hair on her head-'

'Don't be such a hero. They're in safe hands, for now. And if you want them to remain that way, then stop interfering.'

'Is that meant to sound tough? I've fought your kind before and won. I've known greater evils than you, Siren. I've wiped creatures from the face of the universe. I'm the one

that the monsters have nightmares about. You couldn't stop me before, and you're not going to stop me now.'

The line went dead. The Doctor sighed, replaced the telephone and marched over towards the console.

'Looks like I've only got one card left to play, Mortimer,' he said as the cat brushed up against his soaked trousers. 'That ship above Africa, they must have used it to come to Earth and is probably their main operations headquarters.'

He slammed forward the dematerialisation lever and watched as the time rotor began to rise and fall.

'Ready or not, here I come.'

* * * * *

The Doctor cautiously locked the TARDIS doors behind him. He found himself in a bleak metal corridor. The metal was nothing like he had seen before. It was shiny and black, almost like liquid, with alien symbols carved into it. His eyes moved at grease lightening to scan the corridor for any surveillance devices. He was in the lion's den and one false move could result in the death of both Silver and himself. In the roof above he saw a spider's web of machinery, with girders, cables and pipes mingled together, the same colour as the walls.

He was thankful for changing out of his damp clothes before arriving, there was a bitter chill to the air. It all felt like a temple, rather than a spaceship. He had chosen an identical jacket and trousers to his previous attire but simply wore a plain white shirt underneath. He wasn't going to hide behind his Victorian garments when facing the enemy. It was time to unleash his true colours.

At the end of the corridor was a set of double doors. He pushed them open silently and slid through into a vast circular chamber made out of the same black, marble-like material. The room was in total darkness and instinct told him to turn back. Something was coming. Something even he couldn't handle.

'Would you come into my parlour said the spider to the fly,' smirked Siren.

Floodlights snapped on and harshly illuminated the chamber. Seated in the centre of the room was Siren, calmly stroking an animal by his side: a wolf.

Covering the far side of the circular wall was a giant tinted window looking out onto space. The Earth lay below, like a vast blue ocean with the moon hanging above, looking down upon them. In front of this vista, tied back to back against a metal shaft were Silver and a young man the Doctor had never met before. The boy looked no older than seventeen and probably still lived with his parents. Could he live with the fact that somewhere back down on the earth, a mother and father were grieving for his loss?

He had to do what was right.

He was the Doctor.

'I'm here for my friends.'

* * * * *

Seth felt the warmth of Silver's hands through the tangle of ropes. They had both been surprised at the strange man's entrance. He looked as though he were in his 50's and wore weird clothes, like Sherlock Holmes. He felt comforted by his appearance. He had a warm, reassuring presence that took his mind of the situation.

Oh god, this is like 'The Empire Strikes Back' all over again. I can't believe what Lucy did, she's seven years old! How could she pull a knife on us! She kept on raving about

someone called 'Lucius', and then she took the ring and twisted it, and then...and then we were here, in outer space. It's so beautiful. I don't think anyone's gonna believe me, if I get back to Earth. Oh god, what if I get turned into a wolf like Lucy? Maybe she was always a wolf?

He could feel Silver holding his hand to comfort him. She was just as scared as he was. He felt so defenceless, but he didn't want her to let go.

This wasn't supposed to happen. He didn't need friends like her, he didn't need some fling with a girl. He'd just move on before they got hurt like last time, and he'd be branded a freak again. Never stop moving. But this time it was different. He didn't want her to let go.

* * * * *

"I've been making quite a shopping list of questions ever since I heard about the Pentacle Corporation. Now it's finally time for some answers.'

Siren calmly watched as the Doctor paced up and down in front of the tinted window looking onto space. He nodded at Silver in acknowledgement.

'What we have is a supposedly harmless computer software company making a nice little profit. But what they're really doing is worming their way into businesses, corporations, governments. They bribe presidents and blackmail prime ministers, all in their quest to find a strange little casket that has been safely guarded by an order of monks for the past few millennia.'

'The human race is a bunch of superficial parasites. They live for money and material possession, brutally mutilating their bodies for perfection or by giving in to gluttony,' spat Siren as the wolf beside him began to growl.

'And I suppose you Therianthropes are any better?'

'Oh yes. We're the raw emotion within humanity that they have replaced with food, television, fame and famine. We beat our claws against the drum of the planet and let the music be our battle cry. We run to the horizon and further. We hunt. We feed.'

'And Earth is your next target?'

'They can't do it,' interrupted Silver. 'The moonlight burns them alive, we saw one get scorched within seconds. That's why they use tinted glass to protect themselves at night.'

'I'm glad to see you haven't just been dating while in Connecticut,' he flashed a grin at her.

'The glass isn't enough, it burns even now,' muttered Siren to Lucy, the little wolf beside him.

'So what does our mystery casket contain?'

'It's a dagger,' Silver beamed ecstatically. 'They say they want to use it to free Lucius- whoever the hell he is. They say he's trapped in the Earth, inside the planet. I could feel it, some sort of....presence, underground.'

The Doctor continued pacing back and forth as ideas and thoughts raced through his head.

'Let's say this Lucius fellow was one of their own race, a Therianthrope. He's trapped in the heart of the planet, a prisoner...and Earth would be the perfect prison cell! It's got a constant ray of moonlight shining down on the surface! If Lucius were to escape, he'd burn up and cease to be.'

Siren sarcastically clapped his hands. 'Staying alive has been worth something for you, Doctor. That is indeed true. Lucius was the pack leader from the wolves' ancient

history. He was captured and imprisoned for his crimes against humanity. The Therianthropes came to our species, offering us the answer to the war that has ravaged our planet. Lucius can lead the wolf within us. He can win the war. The dagger contains a raw energy source that can rip open this planet like paper and release him.'

'Besides annoying the human race, you've got another problem: the moon.'

'What do you think happened to the NASA expedition? Our service droids have been working in secret on the dark side of the moon for months now, ready for this moment. Those astronauts would have been in the way, so they took care of them for us.'

'Big mistake, Siren. Because if there's one thing I really can't stand, then it's when fools like you think you can kill innocent people and get away with it. That's why I keep coming back to this small little world, to deal with bullies like you. Now what have you been doing on the moon?'

Silence.

'TELL ME!'

Siren clicked his fingers. The wolf beside him began to writhe and twist. Its muscle and bones bent and creaked and its grey fur retreated back into its skin. Out of this backward metamorphosis, a seven year old girl was spawned.

'Lucy, do the honours,' he jeered while passing the girl a small remote control. The child gently pressed the switch on the remote as though it were a harmless toy.

A shockwave went hurling through the ship, nearly knocking the Doctor off his feet. As it passed, he raced towards the giant, tinted glass window overlooking the moon.

'You spent all this time running around on the planet below, playing the detective, when all the while, the real threat was up here. This is why we win, Doctor.'

* * * * *

Extract from 'The Intergalactic Encyclopaedia', Interesting fact #1:

There are many things in life that we take for granted: friends, family, food, air, least of all- the moon. Throughout the planet Earth's history, religions and cultures have worshipped and feared it. It has provided us with the movement of tide, and without it, there would be a cataclysmic chain reaction of natural disasters that would bring about the end of the world.

Extract from 'The Intergalactic Encyclopaedia', Interesting fact #2:

The end of the world begins with a piece of metal.

That metal, dirtied with oil and fastened with screws and bolts, could only have been forged in the furnaces of the underworld. Creatures from your nightmares have mined this piece of metal, and are making more and more by the second. They are burnt together, to make a fiercer, stronger material. It grows, almost as if alive, to form a casing, a sphere. This monstrous metal sphere has begun to smother the giant lump of rock we have known as the moon, like a shark swallows a smaller fish. It spreads- more squares of metal slotting out like a Rubik cube, until a cobweb of metal slowly spreads its way from the dark side of the moon, where alien hands have triggered it, out of our sight.

Like a giant eyelid, the armour-like casing slams shut around the moon, leaving a giant globe of iron and steel in its place. Like a fist around a marble, there was no sign of it ever letting go.

But this was no ordinary metal. Whether it was mined on the other side of the universe or in hell itself, it was certainly stronger than iron and steel. And the curious thing

was that, unlike the moon, which merely reflected the sun's light, this shield of metal absorbed the light and swallowed it up in its black, shadowy depths. And so the sphere remained in darkness, shutting off one tiny little rock, preventing it from ever casting down its powerful ray of moonlight upon the planet earth.

Immovable. Indestructible. Eternal.

And upon the moment when the casing slammed shut around the moon, there was a new sound in the air. Even in the depths of space, you could hear the cry of wolves in unison from the planet below. Victorious.

* * * * *

'Are you frightened yet? I told you that something wicked this way comes. And its here. You should have run while you had the chance. Because now there's no where you can hide.'

* * * * *

'These bloody shoes,' roared Tracy, throwing the high heeled nightmares into the road. She'd drunk enough tonight not to care about what she was doing.

The constant throb of 'Prodigy' thumped out through the doors of the nightclub. She needed a break from making a fool of herself in front of her friends, and so came out into the calm night air for a cigarette. It was pretty early in the night, yet it seemed a lot darker than usual. The atmosphere felt different as well, like stepping off a plane into a foreign country.

Further down the street was a blurred figure stumbling against lampposts and cars—probably just another drunkard with more in his system than he could handle. She considered whether she should go back inside before he tried it on with her or ended up with vomit all down her top.

Suddenly, the figure fell down on to the pavement and began to writhe and convulse. Tracy was not in the mood for getting involved or ending up calling for an ambulance. Instead she stubbed out her cigarette, ready to go back into the club. An animal cried out into the night sky.

There aren't any coyotes in Connecticut, are there, thought Tracy. She suddenly realized that the blurred figure was making its way towards her, at an alarming pace. It began to come into focus and slowly began to lose its human form. It was running on all fours like a wolf.

Tracy Burton was marked for death the moment she stepped out of the nightclub. And as the beast tore at her clothes and her flesh, Tracy did not wonder whether her friends would appear and help, or what a wolf was doing in the streets. She didn't even wonder whether or not it was some TV hoax. Her only thought was, why the moon was nowhere to be seen in the dark night sky.

They're here.

* * * * *

They had been worming their way into our societies and culture's without us realizing. They looked like us, spoke and acted like us, lied and deceived like us, and now they were showing their true colours. With the knowledge that the searing, harsh, burning light of the moon would never again cremate their bodies, they began their mass hunt.

Whether it was in the roaring night of Connecticut or the calm daylight hours of London, nothing else mattered to them but to feed. Children were snatched from their cradles, teenagers were swallowed up from the arcades, parents were mutilated in their homes while the elderly were too slow to escape from the madness. Cars crashed through shop windows, people were trampled to death under the crowds, families barricaded themselves in their houses.

And strewn all over the planet in tiny secluded observatories, astronomers were baffled as to why the moon was no longer shining down upon their small blue world.

* * * * *

‘Check- and- mate,’ spat Siren.

Silver glanced over towards the Doctor. He looked so mortified and shocked that he had not spoken since Lucy had pressed the button. She suddenly felt something hit against her back. She struggled to turn around to see Seth begin to convulse and writhe as though having a fit.

‘Seth,’ she cried out. She desperately tried to loosen the ropes around her waist. *He’s not gonna turn into a wolf is he? Seth, please be alright.*

The floodlights in the chamber began to buzz and flicker as though they might burst at any moment. Both Siren and Lucy seemed confused by this, but this was nothing compared to their shock when the floor lurched, knocking them all over as the ship rocked uneasily. Control panels built into the walls exploded into a cloud of sparks and overhead girders began to creak and loosen from their fixed positions.

‘What’s going on,’ roared Siren. ‘What’s happening to the ship?’

Silver turned towards the Doctor who still remained stunned by the events he had seen through the observation window. The Time Lord managed a weak smile and Silver did the same. No matter what, they could solve this. No one got in their way, they fought the monsters, and they won. In a burst of energy, Silver brutally pushed against the ropes until they fell loosely to her feet.

Siren tried to make sense of the chaos unfolding around him by inspecting the out of control computer banks. Next to him, Lucy caught sight of Silver’s escape and quickly made her way towards her.

The little girl’s teeth sharpened into fangs as she hungered for food. Her jaw widened ready to tear at the human’s pathetic body. Silver punched Lucy in the face, twice.

The Doctor rushed over towards her and helped Seth as he went into a seizure, frothing at the mouth, like a man possessed. He wasn’t turning into a wolf, but still, something was wrong.

‘Do you know what’s wrong with him?’ shouted Silver over the roar of the chamber rupturing.

‘No. This place could go up at any minute. Come on, we’ve got work to do.’

Silver slung Seth’s arm over her shoulder and carried him through the chaos. The Doctor led the way towards the doorway he had entered through. Silver could make out a corridor that lay beyond it with the comforting blue shape of the TARDIS in the distance. Behind her she felt shards of glass bounce off her jacket as the floodlights exploded into a thousand razor sharp pieces. The weight of Seth was slowing her pace as the Doctor sped off ahead, leading the way through the inferno. He was already out in the corridor and nearing the TARDIS.

WHAM!

A crackling power cable shot out from the exploding chaos and danced in front of the police box like a rattle snake. The Doctor turned around to face Silver. She stared back from within the chamber. In that moment, she knew what the look on the Doctor's face meant, and it made her want to scream.

We lose.

'DOCTOR!' she screamed as girders, cables, wires and dust cascaded from the roof above which cut Silver off from her best friend. Much of the debris hit the Doctor. He was thrown to the floor and he began to bleed, bruise, burn, and scream- He was screaming. It was the most terrifying sound in the world.

The tremors continued as smoke billowed out from some unseen pipeline. Through the mound of wreckage and grey clouds, Silver could make out the Doctor's red, bleeding face. Dust tried to colour his flesh in grey, until he became a concrete man, but the blood kept flowing so easily and freely.

'Run Silver! You must go!' he screamed urgently until his throat burnt raw.

This wasn't happening. Hero's never die. No matter what happened, she could always rely on the Doctor. She helped him, he helped her. They loved each other and no matter what, they'd never leave each other.

'I can't leave you!'

What could she do? Their world was in chaos, her friend was unconscious and having a fit in her arms while her other friend lay dying in his own blood. She glanced back at the vast chamber. Siren was nowhere to be seen, but through the wreckage, smoke and rubble, she saw Lucy's immobile body. The little girl groaned and tried and failed to move. But wrapped around her finger was Silver's faint glimmer of hope: the pentacle ring- the trans-mat device. It had brought them here. Maybe it could take them back.

'PLEASE, GO!'

A final cascade of wreckage collapsed on top of the Doctor and he was swallowed up forever.

The hero fell, never to rise again.

To be continued...

Epilogue

Extract from: 'Histories Greatest Catastrophe's', Volume VII, by Lupus Banderjax.

What happened on the other world, you might ask? What happened on that planet that resembled Earth so unusually? What happened after the council had sold their souls to the devil?

The next morning, every last person on the planet awoke to find a new presence inside their body. When they spoke aloud in their heads, another voice replied. They could speak to it and in return it spoke back. Hearing voices maybe the first sign of madness, but this was far from madness.

This voice could do things. If you asked, the voice could change you...into a beast, into a hunter, into a wolf.

'Don't be afraid, we have travelled far from the astral planes, and we are here to help.'

And the war began to change. The next few attacks by the enemy were vanquished with the aid of these new forms that the people had taken. But the wolves within the council demanded help with their fight. The wolves were in need of their pack leader who was not among the chosen to possess this race.

So a giant battle fleet was assembled, their giant iron crafts loaded with red fire that could charge them across the universe, to find the pack leader. He waited, imprisoned and powerless in the core of a small, blue planet: Earth. His time is now. Lucius awaits them.

THE DOCTOR WHO PROJECT



Something wicked this way comes...

Earth- the present day.

What connects the disaster at NASA, a strange signal from an American foster house,
and a large UFO above Africa?

The Doctor is on the hunt to unravel the mystery,
while Rachel does some detecting of her own, back home in Connecticut.

A world wide conspiracy is at hand, with the unstoppable 'Pentacle Corporation' behind it.

Time is running out, with alien cults and demonic creatures drawing in,
not even the Doctor will be able to save us this time...

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Doctor Who fiction published by The Doctor Who Project
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