

THE

# DOCTOR WHO

PROJECT

## The Goyellencanth



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### *Chapter 1 – Hidden*

Slowly, in deliberate handwriting, the following words flowed from the nib of the pen. *I have recovered the sphere. Long was it lost. So long, its terror almost forgotten. The eyes of the Blew almost dulled into darkness. But now, here they are, bright and wide and full of terror. I wonder how they were ever dimmed. I think I know what I have to do – yet I pause on the final decision. Though - not so much a pause – but a contemplation. A sign of regret, of humility. The land is far, but here I am in the machine that can take me there in an instant. Dare I go? What will I find? What will find me?*

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Pamanzi took an almost imperceptible breath. Drawn in so slowly then held delicately behind her closed lips. After a couple of seconds all she heard was her pulse throbbing in her ears. Life on the plains was hard, and on this stretch, it was harder still. She must make sure she hadn't been found. Above the Lytton, the wind was picking up. The storm she had felt coming was nearly here, which meant she was in for the night. *Another day lost*, she thought to herself. Another day for the Skiram to draw nearer. Pamanzi produced a root from her pack and stuck it against the Lytton, its translucent eye following her motions. She didn't trust the Lytton, but without it to cover the hole above her, the drop in temperature would freeze her within the hour.

Pamanzi led her blankets over the rough white rock beneath her. This hole, like the scant others on the plains, was too small to stretch out in. It had been used by traders like Pamanzi many times before. Drawing her last blanket over her shoulders, she produced a piece of charcoal, and wrote on the walls, tracing over the many symbols that had been drawn there before. Most of them were religious symbols, passed down by generations. Others were routes, showing other safe holes, as well as hermits dwellings, where a traveller could find rest at a price. Most of all, however, these drawings gave the traders comfort on the long nights; a feeling of belonging to a world, however fractured its inhabitants had become.

The light was fading. Pamanzi added her own symbol. The one her family was recognised by. She drew it with care; to rush was an insult on her ancestors. Carefully she drew a circle, with patterns around its middle.

When she had finished, she replaced the charcoal within her clothes, leant forward and closed her eyes. Pamanzi did not know if she would reach the next town before the Skiram appeared, but she put that to the back of her mind and relaxed into slumber. This was how she slept for the next three hours.

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The casing for the sphere was complete. A simple wooden box, laden with hi-tech dampening devices to aide its, and his own, safe passage. With one last regret, the Doctor opened the doors and stepped out. He was alone; that was a relief. He was in no mood to be met by inquisitive natives or hostile soldiers.

The TARDIS had materialised under the branches of a weeping tree, which added to the overall air of solitude. The air seemed clean, and the man from Gallifrey filled his lungs. This was the place; but he hadn't been expecting it to look like this. The Doctor crouched and looked out. He could see a bridge. A nice sturdy stone bridge.

"The thing about bridges," he said to himself, "is how do you know if you should cross them or if you're already on the right side?"

It was nice to hear his voice again. All too often he spent whole days in silence, and when that happened it was easy to forget he meant anything at all. The land was lush with plant life. Fantastic colours decorated the otherwise green foliage. The Doctor held the wooden box in his hand and waited. This was not an adventure. This was a chore he had to complete.

The sun, he noted, continued to rise vertically. The temperature increased by a couple of degrees, and the Doctor loosened his collar. No one appeared on the bridge. Neither did a single creature move across his line of sight. After thirty-five minutes the Doctor came out from the branches and stood in an open area of grass in front of weeping tree. To his right the land dipped away, and beyond another hill, a sea of water rippled. In front, the bridge, and beyond that the path entered a bank of trees thick enough to be a forest. To his left the path from the bridge curved away past him into a shallow valley. The Doctor didn't know which way to take. He could put it down to his melancholy mood, but the truth was he was lost.

He thought for a second. Within the thoughts, he reasoned that he'd rather not be in the forest when night fell, and since he didn't know how quickly that would happen, he chose the valley route.

He set off, pacing himself. So much of his life was fast and furious, but this time he hoped it would be different.

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Pamanzi awoke in the midst of the howling storm. *Too soon*, was the first thought. But then the more protective, *Why have I woken?* took over and she was alert for any dangers. And there were many dangers.

*Skiram!* screamed in her mind. They were coming, about five she judged by the vibrations in her body. She couldn't fight five – she couldn't fight one. She had not rested long enough. The only option was the storm. Pamanzi grabbed her rucksack and placed a small

white disk on the surface of the Lytton, causing it to close up like a spider playing dead. Pamanzi strapped the Lytton to her leg and looked up. The snow and gravel whistled over her head. She was going to sustain much damage but it still gave her a slim chance of life.

She felt the first of the Skiram was close. "Not today," she said, and climbed out of the hole. As she had been taught, Pamanzi curled into a ball, and waited for the wind to take her. For a split second she was in her own world, where her family were alive and held around her. Then the wind whisked her away and all she could do was scream.

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The Doctor was walking in the shade of the rolling hills that rose like vertebrae along the land. It was a beautiful place. How much of that beauty was due to the tranquillity it was hard to muster, but it was this tranquillity that made him uneasy.

The sun was dipping now, going down the same way it came up. His thoughts turned to making camp. He guessed he still had thirty minutes before it became a necessity.

He almost missed it. He was almost too wrapped up in his own thoughts to notice. Then he stopped. And listened. There - a sound, faint but discernable. Rhythmic; solid; similar to wood being chopped, but too regular for it to be man made. The Doctor quickened his pace, eager to put himself back into the melee of life.

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Pamanzi was still conscious, yet hurting so much she wished she was dead. The wind was continuing to force her not only along the surface, but at times through the air. She couldn't feel herself anymore, and she didn't know whether she was still curled in a ball. At one point she thought all that may be left of her was her torn soul being buffeted by the storm. Then she landed on the surface one last time, head first, and blacked out altogether. She would be like this for the next three days.

## *Chapter 2 – The Emerald Liquid*

Jeremiah whispered, “I’m sorry. I have to do this,” and the look in his eyes was enough to convince his captive of his honesty. He threw the switch and immediately the tension on the man’s straps eased and he sunk back onto the plinth. Jeremiah stood next to him. “My voice will be the last you will hear. It will be the voice you respond to. You are joining others like you, and together you will help me.”

Jeremiah turned and walked out of the room, closing and locking the metal doors. The man would have to stay on the plinth for several hours before he was completely drained, and he had other things to be doing. Locating the next object, for a start.

He didn’t look on them as victims. They were not dying, not mentally. They were helping him. Helping him to reverse time. Helping him to save his family.

Jeremiah was not a man of technological means. He utilised other methods of divination, methods the scientists dismissed as hokum. But they would believe him in the end; in fact, scientists had been among his first ‘voices’ to be captured. It hadn’t been planned that way, but since the scientists were some of the most vociferous in their protests against him, and as they had it in their power to shut his work down, it made sense to quieten them as quickly as possible.

So, the scientists had leant their voices to his, and they had shown him how closed minded they really were. But once he had opened them up, their rigid, logical thoughts had been able to advance his own ideas past anything he would have been capable of alone, and was that not enough reason to have done it?

He placed his white hand above the emerald liquid and closed his eyes in concentration. *The next link*, was the chant that he repeated in his mind. *The next link, the next link*. He sensed the liquid starting to move. Carefully, Jeremiah moved his hand over the surface, waiting for the right moment, like a fisherman waiting for the bite.

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The Doctor was close to the structure now. It was temporary, and its inhabitants milled around as if in the process of packing up to move somewhere else. They were a regular family, two

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adult, three young. The young were adept in their duties, moving with precision and efficiency. Their house was the shape of a right angle triangle, with one wall straight up, and another leaning on it. Broad leaves were tied onto the sloping surface to deflect the rain, and a few wisps of smoke still puffed out a small hole purpose-made at the apex of the structure.

The cause of the noise was still nowhere to be seen. The Doctor assumed it was the other side of the house, butted up against the flat wall, too close for him to see from his angle.

The creatures were short relative to him, their arms and legs muscular, their necks so thick it seemed to restrict sideways head rotation. The Doctor instantly liked them. They were workers, silent, together. He was jealous of their togetherness.

The Doctor stepped out into the open. One of the young was the first to see him. It stopped dead, and looked. The others, sensing more their kin's altered state than the presence of the Time Lord, stopped and looked up. The Doctor also stayed still. No hand movements, no forward or backwards steps which might show aggression or fearfulness respectively. He wanted to meet these people on an equal footing.

The creatures stepped towards each other, as one – so instead of individuals they were now one group. It was a beautifully synchronised manoeuvre, and the Doctor couldn't help but smile; he wanted to applaud, yet, still he didn't move. The group stepped backward, their body language indicating that they wanted to protect whatever it was making the noise. The Doctor raised his arms slowly - a universal gesture. To his surprise one of the smaller creatures stepped forward. As the Doctor waited, stiff as a statue, the creature took another, then another step forward.

"I come in peace," he said to them, trying his best not to think about the wooden box tucked into his trouser pocket.

The creature kept coming towards him.

"I'm a traveller," the Doctor continued, "I come in search of knowledge."

The creature didn't deviate. It headed directly for him. The Doctor felt himself tense.

"Can you tell me where all the people are?"

When he said the last word the creatures raised their arms aloft in unison, and cried out to the sky above. It was a pitiful noise; the noise of the lost, of the loved but now unloved, of those whose happy lives had been irreversibly changed.

The Doctor lowered his arms. Whilst he might not know these creatures race, he knew their purpose, and it was benign. He held his arms out to them, and the smaller creature ran forward in desperation, and leapt into his arms. These creatures seemed to be pets, and now, at last, they had found a new master.

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Jeremiah dived his hand into the emerald liquid. It was like his flesh was being stripped as he searched for the thing he knew to be there. The pain was such that he could only bear a few seconds at a time, but he was lucky, and his hands seized something. He pulled it back and upwards with all his might. *Heavy*, he thought as he struggled against the objects weight. Were this his first dip into the substance, he may have given up, but he was confident in his ability. He could get this, he could salvage something again.

With a desperate tug, Jeremiah pulled his hand up and out of the liquid. He collapsed onto the floor, waiting for the pain to subside before opening his eyes. After a minute he could; and wished, like all those other times, he hadn't.

He held a box, a box he remembered well. He pushed himself to his feet and walked slowly to another door, which led to a corridor, which ended in a room sealed to all but himself. Jeremiah opened the door and walked in. Lights grew brighter and, as always, the scene inside cut him in two.

Jeremiah crossed the room to a small bed, neatly made, too big for an adult. He knelt down and neatly brushed the covers flat, and squared the pillow just so. He moved the soft toys around, then stopped. Jeremiah picked up the box and placed it at the end of the bed. This was where the box had been. He knew it. He remembered it from that bedroom he'd last seen eight years ago.

Back then life had been simpler. He'd loved his family and they had loved him. He'd spent many nights in this room, reading books, or playing with toys, or just plain old being silly. Then it had happened, and he'd lost them all.

Jeremiah ran his fingers along the edge of the wooden box. He thought he knew everything inside that box, but he had to look. It tore him to pieces every time he retrieved something new. This was the awful truth; he hated to do it, but he had to do it. After he had been shown what the emerald liquid could do, he'd realised that he'd have to find every last fragment of this room.

Jeremiah put his hands under the rim of the box lid and lifted. Slowly it moved upwards on its hinges. Jeremiah gasped at the detail inside. Games, puzzles, colours and shapes. It was all the same.

The man who called himself Jeremiah broke down as he lifted each toy individually from his daughter's old toy box, and cursed and re-cursed the day he had ever heard of the Goyellercanth.

### *Chapter 3 – Pamanzi and the Hermit*

The Hermit had had a long day. The girl he had found had almost slipped away twice. He sat and watched the storm continue to blow. At least it was dying down now. A few more hours, and it'd be safe to venture out.

He watched as she slept, waiting for the change of colour or slowness of breath that forewarned him of a problem. She had been in a terrible state when he'd found her in the nets three days ago. As well as broken bones, she'd sustained several deep cuts to arms and legs, and had lost a lot of blood. The hermit had gathered up the net, placed it on his sled and carefully made his way back to his safe-haven using the guide ropes. Once there, he smothered her body in Hopgarth juice, a natural antiseptic, and carefully re-set her bones. She had not regained consciousness in all that time.

The following day the hermit noted the speed of her healing. The cuts had meshed back together, and the bruises had begun to fade, though it would be a few more days before the swelling died down enough for anyone to be able to recognise her.

Today, though, there had been some setbacks. From her fevers the hermit diagnosed an infection, but this woman was not like any he'd seen before; she did not respond to treatments as she should. He had tried many different, sometimes desperate, remedies, and had been lucky twice so far; though he wasn't sure even his skilled brinkmanship would be enough to save her a third time. He sat, nervously expecting another attack.

The hermit had tried to learn much about her kind. From her clothes and the shattered belongings that had remained in her rucksack it was obvious she was a trader. He had on several occasions given traders a roof over their head, and he'd always kept a watchful eye over them. Now the woman was here, and he knew she needed his help.

The hermit tipped a porcelain bowl of warm liquid onto a cloth and wiped the girl's brow, cheeks and chin. This was not so much a remedy than a ritual; cleansing her soul should he not be able to keep her alive beyond the day. The woman murmured a little, but remained unconscious.

Not that the hermit was looking forward to her awakening. She would have a rough journey ahead of her. The hermit sighed, before putting the girl's hands one within another, a gesture to signify his belief that the only person who could save her now, was herself.

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The Doctor sat and looked on as the creatures did everything they could to make his life more comfortable. It was a sad sight. Almost immediately after they had adopted him, he'd attempted to convey his intention of staying in the structure that night. Initially they had been too excited to care what he was trying to tell them, but after several attempts they had calmed down long enough to understand his message and had stopped packing everything away.

When the Doctor had begun to investigate the cause of the noise the creatures had become wary, so he had proceeded cautiously to allay their fears. The source, he found, was a rusty machine that didn't seem to belong in this world. It was driven by another one of the creatures, who took the place of the now defunct engine, and hefted and pulled a giant battle axe like pendulum into the centre of a large tree. The Doctor stood and watched for a while, attempting to fathom the reason why they would want to cut out just the centre of a tree, but could think of none. Not wanting to venture any closer, and knowing it would be pointless to ask, he had simply retreated and left the explanation for another day.

There was a fire a few yards in front of the structure, which the creatures kept regularly stocked and stoked. It was hardly needed. The atmospheric temperature had remained very high throughout the evening, so the Doctor was unsure whether it was being done just for him, or for some other reason.

As the hours passed he was bemused how the creatures could keep themselves busy for so long, and it struck him that maybe they had never been allowed to rest. This would not have been the first species he'd encountered to be treated in such a way, and he knew better than to offer rest until they were happy to take it themselves.

The Doctor looked up at the sky and thought fondly of the TARDIS. It too was spending its first night here, under the stars. Of course, it was far better at looking after itself than he had ever been; perhaps that was something to do with the easy way it blended into the background, and with the way that he didn't.

One of the larger creatures approached him with three medium sized red fruit in his arms. The Doctor smiled as best he could and waited for the fruit to be left at his feet. Instead, the creature sat down, picked up a rough rock and started to cut grooves in the skin. Long slivers of rind came away. After twenty or so had been cut, the creature collected them up and bound them together like a rope, tying each end securely. Carefully it lit one end, which flared briefly before disappearing, to be replaced by a thick column of smoke. One of the smaller creatures took the red rope and offered it to the Doctor, who accepted it. The creature then politely ushered the Time Lord toward the opening of the structure.

The Doctor nodded. This rope was to keep him safe; some kind of symbol to ward off evil spirits; these creatures equivalent to the Vampires garlic clove. The Doctor was in no mood to argue, and took the smouldering rope, smiled at the creature, and ventured into the structure.

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Pamanzi was once again facing the wrath of the Skiram. They were closing in on her, ready to take her. She attempted to run, but instead moved slower than her normal walking pace. This has happened before, and she knew what to do. The trader got down onto all fours and crawled, scampered along the icy surface of the plains. There was safety somewhere, but she was too panicked to look around and assess where she should go. Instead she moved blindly, her horizon no more than a few metres in front of her.

There was a sound. She glanced over her shoulder. No Skiram there, but she could feel the vibrations; could always feel their vibrations.

*Why won't anyone help me?* She heard herself ask.

It was no good. None of the villages were close. She might as well give up now.

***Don't give up!*** came a voice. Pamanzi wheeled around to try and see who had spoken to her. There was no one there. A false hope; the words rang down the ages. The false hope. This was the label Pamanzi had had to wear all her life like a chain. It was what her name meant. It had been her mother's name, and grandmothers before that. The reason why had been lost, yet the name remained.

*The false hope.*

***Fight your fears,*** encouraged the voice.

*Which fears?* Pamanzi countered, almost making her laugh. She had so many fears to choose from.

The trader scurried on across the plains, faster and faster. *Four legs are better than one,* she thought. Then a Skiram struck at her. Pamanzi lost her balance, and tumbled forwards, her speed causing her to roll twice before she could feel no more surface below.

Down Pamanzi fell, into nothingness. She would have screamed, but she didn't want to. This was what she had waited for all her life. She was ready to go, and the dark abyss was as good a place as any.

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Pamanzi shuddered and opened her eyes. Before her a hooded man leant over, his face full of surprise, and very quickly determination.

"You've got to go, girl," he hissed at her. "Lives depend on it."

### *Chapter 4 – Blue Dragons and Silver Seas*

In another time, a baby's mobile circled to a gentle tune. Below it, Colleen, eight months, two weeks and a day old, gurgled as slowly she fell asleep. At the door, her mother waited in the darkness, smiling, her heart full of love and pride for her child. It was a picture of happiness, one repeated every night without fail. But tonight, something else was in there with them. Something in the corner, waiting to take the baby. Its orders were not to harm anyone else, but its time was running short, and if this woman insisted on staying...

"Are you still in there?" Jeremy whispered from outside the door. The mother opened it silently and nodded. "Everything okay?" he asked. She nodded again, this time flicking her fingers to shoo him away. Jeremy gave her the thumbs up, and she shut the door. The air in the room was warm, and on it Colleen's scent permeated, creating such a strong reaction in her mother, she could not help but have one last look in the cot.

Out of the corner of her eye something changed. She looked around, peering into the gloom, but everything seemed the same. Reassured, she turned and walked across to the cot. Colleen's eyes were closed, her small hand pressed up against her ear, her delicate lips moving slightly as she breathed. She wished she could stay here all night. She wished she could get in the cot with her, and fall asleep with her in her arms.

Her toe knocked into something soft on the floor, and she looked down to see a toy dragon, blue and friendly. Jeremy had given it to Colleen the day after she was born. Dragon for Colleen, flowers for her. She reached down, picked it up and went to put it on the toy box at the end of her cot, but Jeremy must have moved it, because it was no longer there. She didn't have the energy to look for it, so tucked the dragon under her arm, and leant forward over the cot to stroke her baby's face. "I'll never leave you," she whispered.

Downstairs, Jeremy smiled as he listened on the baby minder. He turned the page on his newspaper, comfortable in his relaxed clothes, and settled in to read the markets.

"What? Who's there?" he heard his wife say. He frowned and put the paper next to him. "Jeremy!" she shouted. He jumped up and leapt towards the stairs. "Get away from me!" his wife shouted. He was at the fifth stair, out of thirteen; how many times had he idly counted the stairs? "You won't take her!" she screamed.

"I'm coming!" Jeremy shouted. "Hold on!"

At the top of the stairs now. He did a U-turn and headed down the landing to the room at the end of the stairs. He grabbed the handle and threw open the door. Light flooded in, but there was no one there. Not his wife, or daughter, or intruder.

Jeremy looked around frantically, upending the room, but they had gone, vanished. He checked the windows, all were locked shut. At twenty minutes past nine, Jeremy picked up the phone to call the police and report a double kidnapping.

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The hermit helped Pamanzi to her feet. Her bones were stronger than even he had expected, though she still had to use both of the crude crutches he'd fashioned for her. He went first, and Pamanzi followed as quickly as she could. The ground sloped downwards, and she was thankful for that, though it soon became obvious he wasn't going to wait for her. After what seemed like a small distance, the hermit was no more than a glimpsed silhouette in the light of distant torches.

*Why is he taking me underground?* She thought. *The higher ground is safer.* Whilst she travelled, she had little time to think about her escape from the storm, but every now and then a shooting pain would remind her of how lucky she must have been. And then, with her mind elsewhere, she turned a sharp bend, and the hermit was no longer far ahead of her; he was there, standing in front of her.

"On here," he told her, indicating a large bronze disc set into the floor. "You'll be hidden here."

Pamanzi wasn't about to argue. She moved herself up onto the disc and stood in the middle. Instantly the light vanished and she knew she was alone. *Have I been tricked?* She thought, but even before she'd finished asking it, an intense light forced her to close her eyes. Her legs felt wet and a breeze blew against her body.

Slowly, the trader opened her eyes. She was stood in a sea, looking out to the horizon. But this was no sea that existed on her planet. This sea was silver, and she was almost sick with the certain knowledge that she would never return home again.

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Jeremy replaced the phone before he'd finished dialling the police's number. He'd heard something, a noise come through the baby intercom. He looked up the stairs and waited. There came another noise, this time the sound of something moving across the floor, slowly, methodically.

"Help," a girl's voice said through the baby monitor. It was madness to follow it, to obey it. But it was madness that had got him here. His wife and daughter taken without a trace from a room that offered no escape. He felt certain this voice was connected to their disappearance.

And besides, what were the police going to make of his story? He hadn't wanted to think about it, but he knew there was no reason for them to believe him. He would be the prime suspect. No, he wanted answers himself, and the voice had called him.

He put his foot on the bottom stair, and pushed himself upwards, one at a time. On the fourth step, the landing light went off above him, making him pause. "Help," the voice said again.

"Who are you?" the man said.

"Help," came the reply.

Jeremy started up the stairs once more. He made it to the top and turned. Before him was nothing but dark, empty hallway.

"Help," the voice called again.

The door to Colleen's room was closed, but the door handle was being turned. Jeremy swallowed and once again moved forwards. Tears started to fall down his cheeks. The air became charged with static, making him suddenly feel queasy. He reached out and grabbed the banister for security.

Jeremiah put his hand on the door to Colleen's room; it twisted beneath his grip and on the other side a woman stood. "At last," she said.

"What's happened to my family?" he asked, quietly, painfully.

The girl looked away, "They've been sent somewhere."

"Who by?"

"It's complex," she said. It was an unsatisfactory answer. "By another part of me."

"Another part of *you*? Then who are you?"

The woman breathed out slowly. "I am the Goyellercanth."

### *Chapter 5 – Embankment*

The Silver Sea had been cold. Pamanzi now sat on the beach, wrapped in her warm clothes, watching the waves roll in. Whatever the liquid was, it didn't produce the sounds she'd been used to, and she missed them. Why had she ended up here? How was she to cope in this environment? The feeling of bitterness started to well in her chest. It was not an emotion she usually gave in to, but today she was tired, and bruised.

The trader looked at her arms, still discoloured from her time in the storm. As she had waded out of the sea, pains had shot up her legs, through her buttocks and into the base of her back. She could have cried aloud, but instead had kept it inside, not wanting to draw attention to herself. She was healing quickly, as her kind did, but she had taken a beating and was not as able as normal.

Pamanzi carefully rolled onto her knees and pushed herself up. She could see the tops of trees beyond the grass embankment that was behind her. They might offer some shelter. The trader picked up her rucksack and walked. The sky was going dark, and on the plains that meant danger. But the Skiram couldn't have followed her here, surely?

She reached the foot of the embankment, and started up, one tender footstep after another. By the top she was on her hands and knees, thighs shaking through the damaged muscles. In front of her the ground dipped away, dotted with trees for about four hundred yards, before finally the forest took hold. Pamanzi looked across the gap to the trees. It shouldn't take her long to cross it, but something was telling her not to; that it was too exposed, and that she might come under attack.

The trader glanced left and right; the embankment ran in both directions as far as she could see. Then something struck her; a thought borne from a life of running and hiding, of fighting and surviving. This embankment wasn't natural, it was man made. It was a defence to keep something at bay. Pamanzi felt her breath quicken. She didn't want to be here, on its crest, with night falling.

Pamanzi looked around, to the sea, and then back to the trees. No one was here; she was being foolish to fear anything. Yet why was her mind telling her to run for her life?

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The Doctor had lain for a while in a small uncomfortable hammock, staring at the doorway where two of the creatures stood guard. He had managed to extract their name from them; they were Holpt, and he was on a planet called Shuner. He had never heard of it.

The Holpt had turned when he had half gotten, half stumbled out of the hammock. He tried to smile to reassure them, and sat cross legged on the floor hoping tiredness would take him. Unfortunately, it stayed away, but he knew why; it was the eyes - everything came back to the eyes of the Blew. As soon as he'd seen the sphere, the eyes had returned. It was a curse, and rightly so. You didn't get to be the Doctor's age without a few good curses.

The Doctor watched as a Holpt brought in another stick; this one with even thicker smoke coming off the end. They had placed it near to the Doctor, who had sat watching the flames of the fire outside; in this place so bereft of life, the flames of the fire seemed alive. The Doctor put his hand into his pocket and removed the box. He held it in his hands. Even its weight was appropriate. It was the weight of the guilt inside him.

The Time Lord was unsure. He had come to this world to atone, but there seemed little here to atone to. He had trusted in the sphere, in its abilities, but now it didn't seem to be able to show him anything. Yet there was no choice. There never had been. The sphere didn't deal in choices, or plans, or secrets, or deception. It dealt with the present. And for a Time Lord, the present was a pretty scary matter.

The Doctor's head swam; there was something in the smoke. He put the box back into his pocket and tried to stand, but it was too late. The smoke had done its trick, and the Doctor was unconscious.

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It would be incorrect to say Pamanzi was running, for she couldn't. She had resorted to all fours, all limbs helping the others, and she moved quicker. The light was fading fast and she didn't know where she was going. She sped along the embankment, hoping it would reach a stretch of level ground, but it hadn't yet. The trees grew no closer either.

She had to go across the plain to the trees. She counted down from five in her head and then broke right, down the other side and onto the grass, expecting hostile creatures to attack her as soon as she placed her palms on the ground. Thankfully nothing happened. Pamanzi dug deep into her reserves and sped up across the level terrain, so that by the time she entered the trees, she was little more than a blur in the dark. Senses tuned, she moved through the forest swiftly, all the time listening for the clues of enemies.

As she moved into the centre of the forest the darkness was almost complete. Keep on going, her voice urged, and she obeyed. There, in the distance, the light grew brighter. She headed for it, hoping it was where the trees thinned. She'd be there in a minute.

Pamanzi put her head down and scuttled through the fauna as fast as she possibly could.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Doctor woke and he was no longer in the structure. The sky was still dark, but something had happened. Around him was peaceful. Carefully, he sat up, his head still effected by the smoke. He was in the same clearing the structure had been in, but it was no longer there. There was something else, too, but he couldn't work out what it was. The box in his pocket vibrated just a little. So slight it might have been the movement of an insect against his hand. Yet there were no insects, not here.

He concentrated, narrowed his eyes and stared at the box. There it was again. Slight, agitated. As if it sensed something was coming.

The Gallifreyan got up and ambled as best he could to where the structure had been. "Where did you go?" he asked the air.

He stood still with the wooden box in his hand, and waited. When nothing happened he took a step to the left and started to walk. After a few steps the box moved again. He was sure the vibration was stronger. The moon in the sky offered some light, though its constant greyness revealed little about the landscape before him, bar the presence of trees, tall trees.

Suddenly the box kicked in his pocket, sending the Doctor's leg into the air. Something was causing it, and it was coming his way.

\*\*\*\*\*

Pamanzi broke through the trees into another clearing. There, ahead of her, was a man standing watching. She did not sense danger from him. She slowed, so that by the time she reached the man she was walking upright once more, with as much pride as she afforded herself.

The man looked at her both quizzically and joyously. "I'm the Doctor," she heard him say, and then they attacked.

### *Chapter 6 – Attack of the Skiram*

“You’re what?” Jeremy asked. He hadn’t moved from the spot outside the door to his baby’s room.

“The Goyellercanth. Please, come. Listen.”

Jeremy watched as the woman turned and walked down the stairs. He followed her down slowly. By the time he reached the hallway, he could no longer see her. There was a noise from the kitchen, where he found she’d searched through some cupboards and was now standing at the sink drinking water from a vase. Jeremy watched. When she’d finished, she wiped her mouth and turned to face him.

“I’m sorry. Water is so precious.”

Jeremiah pulled a chair out from under the breakfast table.

“Where is my family?”

“There is an object. A sphere. It will help you.”

“A sphere? Come on!” Jeremy shouted, frustrated. “What stops me calling the police, right now?”

“The sphere is your chance at finding them again, and saving them. This is what you must do.”

“Who are you?”

“I am the Goyellercanth. I have come to help you.”

“But why?”

The Goyellercanth reached into a tattered shoulder bag and brought out a package, wrapped in green material. “This is the sphere. Take it. Follow it.” She held it out to Jeremy, who stayed where he was. The Goyellercanth took a step closer, a need in her eyes. “Please. This is no trick.”

Jeremiah shook his head. “Listen to yourself. You offer a sphere to find my family? This is ridiculous. This doesn’t make sense.” Jeremy lunged and grabbed the Goyellercanth’s arm. She smiled up at him, and put the sphere into his other hand. Jeremy jolted.

“You feel it now?” she asked him. “It’s waited for you. It brought me to you. Now you must follow it.”

Jeremy was rigid to the spot. The sphere was power. The sphere was urgency. The sphere was begging him, in return for his family.

"I will follow it."

"Then I must go," the Goyellercanth said. "You have set me free."

\*\*\*\*\*

Pamanzi screamed. The Skiram had followed her. They were around her now. She screamed at the man called the Doctor, and he took her hand and pulled her along, barely managing to keep her feet. Pamanzi batted at them as best she could; they were flying in, she could feel them, trying to tug at her hair, scratch at her face. She couldn't stand it. Couldn't stand them any longer.

Then she was being lifted. "Get away!" she screamed, but when she opened her eyes, it wasn't the Skiram carrying her, but the Doctor, and she felt the Skiram retreat. He held them back, and she clung to him.

The Doctor carried her to a tree and put her down.

"Don't leave!" she said.

"I'm not leaving."

"Skiram," she muttered.

"Ssh," he said. "They've gone now. There's nothing to fear."

"The Silver Sea," she said. "The forest."

"Try not to talk, you've had a bad experience. Get some rest. I'll guard."

Pamanzi sighed, and held up her hand. "Friend."

The Doctor smiled. "Friend."

The girl fell asleep in front of him, and the Doctor caught her hand and laid it down gently. He turned and looked at the tree next to him. He had seen what had changed. This was the tree the Holpt had been cutting the middle out of, yet here it was now, whole again.

The Doctor felt in his pocket. The sphere was sending jolts of energy down his leg. Powerful energy; containing so much emotion it was difficult for him to keep calm. The Doctor slid the top of the box off. "Whatever it is you want with her," he told it, "it will wait until she wakes up."

He slid the lid back on, and placed it, once again, away from sight.

\*\*\*\*\*

Jeremy stood alone in his kitchen. The girl known as the Goyellercanth had gone, and all he had left of his life seemed held within a metal sphere. He walked to the dining room, placed it on the table, and peeled away the layers of material until he could see it. The upper and lower portions had rings engraved, leaving the central third with an alpha wave type pattern encircling it.

Jeremy wanted to walk away from it. To leave the room, to leave the house, and search for his family on his own; but it wasn't going to let him. He knew it knew what to do, and whilst he didn't trust it, he had to use it.

Jeremy picked it back up, went to the cupboard under the stairs, and got his coat out. He took the car keys off the hook on the back of the door, and slipped into his shoes. He opened the front door and turned around. He didn't want to say goodbye, but he knew he would never come back.

He closed the door behind him, got into the car and drove away. There was a place he had to get to, a place the sphere wanted him to reach. He could tell it was a long way away; what he didn't know was how much he'd have to give up finding it.

### *Chapter 7 – The Land of the Blind*

Jeremiah had been following the sphere for thirteen months. It had showed him new sights; new cultures; and now, for the first time, it showed him a new planet.

Jeremiah waited patiently, stowed away on a vessel. Dehydrated, starving, possibly only days away from death, yet waiting until the time was ready. The sphere would tell him. It would let him know exactly what to do. In the thirteen months since he'd come into contact with the Goyellercanth, he had been consumed with his journey. The sphere had changed him. He could feel it. Gone was the fun, loving, family man; now all that was left was a gaunt shell with an unwavering determination.

The ship jolted as it docked with the orbiting base. *Go*, the sphere said. Jeremiah rose, almost robotically, and started to move through the cargo hold toward the exit. No one was down here; though there would be around five guards between him and the upper decks.

He reached the door and waited. After a moment, Jeremiah heard movement and the door slid open. The guard came through and he slipped out before the door closed. He knew where the cameras were. He had made a note of them on the way in. They were nothing to worry about, as long as he followed the blind spots it was unlikely he'd be noticed.

Down the corridor, second right, second left – he was there in less than a minute. As he expected the lift door was open. This was where he might be noticed; the two steps between him and the lift was monitored. He had no choice but to risk it. Jeremiah stepped forward and into the lift swiftly, nestling himself underneath the camera in the top corner. No sirens went off. He reached out and pressed the appropriate button and the platform started to rise.

Three long minutes passed by. Jeremiah watched as the platform stopped, and the doors slid open. No one was waiting for him. He moved out and along to the crew quarters. Any crew not on shift would be busy getting the loads ready and other jobs that enabled their shore leave would be as long as possible. Jeremiah opened a locker and put on some overalls. He had no ID so would have to hope no one asked him for any. Again, the general rush should give him a better chance of slipping through.

Jeremiah closed the locker and was about to leave when someone caught his eye. He stopped and looked over to his right. Sitting down on one of the long benches a man sat watching him. Jeremiah stopped and waited for the sphere to tell him what to do. The man

smiled at him and waved. Jeremiah, who'd barely spoken in the last year didn't know what to do. He put his hand on the sphere, but it remained quiet.

"Don't mind me," the man said. "Pretend I'm not here."

Jeremiah began to sweat. The sphere was silent, had it stopped working? What would he do if it never worked again?

"Go on," the man continued. "Shoo!"

Jeremiah, with a lack of any other orders, did as he said and left the room.

As soon as he was back in the corridor, the sphere started up again, and the nausea that had threatened to make him sick subsided. *Get out*, he thought.

Jeremiah had another two levels to ascend before he'd be able to escape to the other station. The man had worried him, yet the sphere's reaction had worried him more. He realised that he was unable to plan beyond the next instruction, and that without the sphere he would simply stop everything.

*Don't think about it*, he thought, or perhaps it was another order from the sphere. Either way, he accepted it. *Turn left*, he did. *Go through door*, he did. *Kill this man*; Jeremiah hesitated. The sphere had never instructed him to kill someone before. True, it had told him to flout many laws and he had done so, but never taking anyone's life. *Kill him*, it said again.

Jeremiah stood still. He couldn't do it. The man had his back to him, he would never know, but he couldn't ever kill anyone, not even if it meant never...

The man crumpled in front of him. Jeremiah looked down and saw the knife in his hand, saw the blood dripping from it. He *had* killed him, but had known nothing about it. *The sphere had done it*. It had *made* him do it.

"No!" shouted Jeremiah. "No! I will not kill people!" Now, however, the knife was at his throat, and still it was his own hand holding it. *You will do as I say*, the sphere said. *Nothing will get in my way – nothing but my goal matters*.

"What is your goal?"

The sphere said nothing, but released its control over Jeremiah's arm. *You'll find out*, it said eventually.

Jeremiah crouched and took the man's ID. He clipped it onto his own clothes, turned and left the room. Part way up the corridor, a guard came out of another room. The guard smiled at Jeremiah, and Jeremiah smiled back. He had managed to leave the knife with the body.

"You new crew?" the guard asked.

Yes, said the sphere. "Yes," said Jeremiah.

"Clocking on early?"

"Got some prep work to do," Jeremiah said under instruction, "Shouldn't take too long."

"Want me to open up the labs? They'll still be locked down from the quarantine."

"Yes, please. That's why I was coming to find you."

"Sure," the guard replied.

Jeremiah followed him, completely at a loss as to why he would want to go to the labs. He hadn't thought this was the plan. The plan always involved moving forward. Finding the next place. *Things change*, the sphere said.

The guard let Jeremiah in and left. Jeremiah stood in front of a bank of apparatus expecting the alarm to go off at any second. Someone was going to find the body and then that would be that. *Over there*, the sphere said, and he moved to a separate control panel. A touch screen read Quarantine Status: Off. *Turn it back on*. The sphere told him. He did.

Four buttons appeared on the screen. *Activate the Contamination button*, the sphere ordered. He did. An alarm sounded elsewhere on the station. Jeremiah listened as people shouted orders to evacuate. After three minutes, Jeremiah felt the ship detach from the station. "What's happening?"

*They've jettisoned the ship, it's all ours.*

"Won't they destroy it?"

*No.*

Jeremiah felt himself lean forward, then watched as his hands flew over the controls. He felt the ship's engines fire up.

"Where are we going?"

*To somewhere we're needed. Somewhere we'll make a difference.*

"Why?"

*Because, as the saying goes, in the land of the blind, the one eyed man is king.*

### *Chapter 8 – Chamber*

The Doctor opened his eyes, and daylight streamed in. He had fallen asleep. The Time Lord looked around for signs of danger, but all looked quiet. He looked at the solid tree once more.

The girl moaned, and the Doctor turned her over. In daylight the bruising looked worse, but something else caught his eye. Tied to her leg was a creature he'd seen before – a Lytton – and it was looking at him.

The Doctor opened the girl's rucksack, found the knife and located a root from a nearby tree. He shoved it onto the Lytton's translucent skin before detaching it from the girl. A Lytton, here, that was strange.

The Doctor sat on the dead leaves and wondered what had happened. The tree indicated he was elsewhere in time, but where? A year, ten years, a thousand years?

The TARDIS. He would have to try and find it. He knew the route from the structure, but he didn't want to go anywhere until the girl had woken up. And who was the girl? He touched the wooden box and it kicked its annoyance. The woman was important. What had she said? *The Silver Sea*.

"Careful!" came a voice from somewhere nearby. The Doctor slowly moved to the girl. "You'll set a trap off!"

"No, I won't," came the whine of a boy.

The Gallifreyan watched as two figures moved into view.

"I don't know why we bother to look anymore," the boy said. "It's not as if anyone's come through in *ages*."

"Be quiet, you'll give our position away."

"To who?" the boy asked.

"To me," the Doctor answered.

The two men whipped their heads round to look at him.

"Don't move!" the older one said.

"I'm not moving. I have a wounded woman here, she needs help."

"Who sent you?" the boy quizzed.

"Sent me? I don't know. I met the Holpt."

"The Holpt," the elder man said. "Who else did they send through?"

"Send through?" The Doctor asked. "It's just us, I think."

The boy caught hold of the elder man's arm. "So the rumours are true?" he asked. "There is no one else to help us."

"I don't know," the older man snapped. "I just don't know."

\*\*\*\*\*

Jeremiah held court over the country people of Shuner. He had appeared two years previous, doubling crop yields and curing diseases. The country people looked up to him as a God. In return for his 'miracles', they had shown him the ways of the mind, of the augmentation of forgotten abilities, of the power of collective thought. Jeremiah had embraced this, and the sphere was able to control many people.

Jeremiah had still not forgotten the death of the man on board the ship. He hated himself for doing it, and the sphere for making him do it. But, as the collective mind grew, the sphere's focus on Jeremiah loosened, till this morning, the man had woken and not been bothered by it at all.

He still carried the sphere. It still somehow needed his presence. He carried it now to one of the labs. He made his moves as regularly as normal. His days were spent in the labs; learning, experimenting. There was one tool he particularly wanted to make use of today. Jeremiah pressed a button and a chamber opened. He picked up a calibration measure and walked into the chamber, before reaching into his other pocket and pressing a button. The chamber shut with him inside it. Another button press and his left hand was clamped down the sphere still in it. The sphere jerked and jolted in a bid to get out. It invaded Jeremiah's mind but there was nothing it could do – the procedure was in motion.

Jeremiah closed his eyes as the two lasers switched on and honed in on the edge of the sphere. It instantly glowed red hot, but he was not going to let it go. Jeremiah screamed in pain, but the sphere screamed louder. This was going to be the end. He was not going to let it destroy him any longer.

Jeremiah sensed the fissure appear in the sphere; for with its breach came the same searing hot pain into his mind, and he blacked out.

When he woke he was still in the chamber, though the chamber door was open and sphere had gone, as was its grip on his thoughts and actions. Below him, on the floor, were several drops of liquid. Jeremiah came fully to his senses. Under the chamber was an empty space. He bent down and looked through the grill. Yes, there was something under there.

Jeremiah left the chamber and went to a console. He pressed a few controls and the chamber lifted up. Almost beside himself with excitement, the man went over and looked. There it was. More than he'd expected.

He lifted the tray out and carried it into another room, setting it down on a desk. The emerald green liquid shimmered under the lights. This was what was inside the sphere. This was its blood. Now maybe he could understand what it was, why it had wanted him. He didn't care where the sphere had gone. Someone had stolen it he guessed. Or it had latched onto another mind.

He still had his labs, and, hopefully, the people who followed him. That was enough; enough to start with, anyhow.

### *Chapter 9 – Drops in the Ocean*

The Doctor carried Pamanzi only some of the way. Fifteen minutes into their walk, she regained consciousness, and walked beside him the rest of the way. She was still in shock, and no matter how hard he tried to tell her she was safe, she still looked scared.

“How far?” he asked the man, who now led the way. The boy walked behind them.

“A couple of minutes,” he replied.

“We should have blindfolded them,” the boy piped up.

“Don’t be stupid,” the man replied.

“There’s still time!”

The man turned, infuriated. “Why don’t you just give it a rest. These two aren’t the enemy, or haven’t you realised that by now!”

The boy visibly backed off. “They might be spies,” he offered.

“Spies? These people have been recruited. They said as much themselves.”

“Recruited?” the Doctor asked.

“You said about the Holpt. The creatures cutting the tree?”

“The Holpt? Yes, squat like creatures.”

“They used to be, well, our pets. Then we found messages. On the trees. Telling us to cut them. To use them to move through time.”

“Through time?” the Doctor said, raising his eyebrows.

“The trees are links. They were here then, and they are here now. If you know how to use the trees, then it’s possible to go back.”

“You pass through the rings of the tree, and it takes you back in time?”

“Yes.”

“Fascinating...”

“You shouldn’t be telling him this,” the boy said.

“Anyway,” the older man said, setting off again, “The Holpt couldn’t come with us, The trees don’t work for them, so we had to leave them behind, to recruit others to fight for our cause.”

“So your whole population have journeyed back through time to do what?”

“To fight the sea.”

"Fight the sea?"

"Yes. There is a beast coming. We have seen it in other times. We must defend ourselves because the creature is too strong. We must trap it."

The party emerged from the trees. Before them the land was full of buildings, each one belching smoke into the air. To the far side stood a massive conical tower, out of which hundreds of tributaries ran, each one a stream of the Silver Sea. These ran under the buildings, and finished little more than a trickle falling into barrels that would then be wheeled away to be replaced by another.

"You're encasing the liquid?" the Doctor asked.

"Yes."

"And then what are you going to do with them?"

"We will sell them. This planet has an abundance of dense-platinum. It is rare elsewhere. The traders come and exchange it for goods. We cannot lose."

The Doctor put his hand on the wooden box. "How many have you exchanged so far?"

"Millions," the man said. The Doctor felt sick. He thought there was just one sphere. Where must all the others be?

"Then this is your battle? A battle of time?" The Doctor asked. "Encase the sea before the creature awakes?"

The man nodded. "Yes. We are working as fast as we can."

\*\*\*\*\*

*The fools!* Jeremiah explained. *They think they can stop it happening!*

He was standing over the man lying on the plinth once more. The man's thoughts had finally joined his own, and Jeremiah knew of their plan. Time didn't matter to him. What happened now could happen then. He cursed himself for being too arrogant to expect it.

In his hand he held a phial of the emerald green liquid. The blood of the sphere. Tainted; malevolent. He knew what he had to do. He left the man and walked to the lab, where he stood over the shimmering liquid and closed his eyes. He thought of the Silver Sea, of the furnaces and the spheres. The liquid began to move. He had to wait – wait until he could taste the smoke in the air, till he could sense the urgency in their actions...

\*\*\*\*\*

"You must stop," the Doctor said. "You are creating an unimaginable horror. Instead of solving your problem, you are scattering it amongst the stars."

"We have to survive," the man said. "We cannot beat the sea."

"But..."

"But nothing. This is our planet and our people. We are dealing with this how we can."

"But this is not getting rid of the problem. It will come back to haunt you."

\*\*\*\*\*

Twisting, over and over, glass glinting off the lights hung above. Jeremiah stood, hand open, concentrating. The noise of the phial hitting the liquid almost lost in the background hum of the lab...

... the phial continued to fall, through the sky, but as it fell a tiny detonation, the shattering of glass, and the drops parted, and, fanned by the wind, hit the Silver Sea...

... where something started to take shape, an idea, a hatred, a vengeance...

\*\*\*\*\*

The Doctor looked on. Pamanzi stood beside him. They were high on a hill, overlooking the smelting.

"What will you do?" Pamanzi said.

The Doctor didn't move. "I don't know. You?"

"I am not of this place. I am not of any place."

"How did you get here?"

"A hermit sent me. This is my planet. But it is different. I stood on a Bronze disc and I came out here."

The Doctor looked at the girl. "Well," he said, "Wherever it is you are from we need to find out."

The girl frowned. "Why?"

The Doctor took the wooden box out of his pocket, and slid the top open, slowly.

"You've stolen one?" Pamanzi asked.

The Doctor shook his head. "This one is mine," he said. "I bought it a long time ago, and I paid a very high price indeed."

### *Chapter 10 – The Battle of the Silver Sea*

It welled. A little at first. Barely a rise above the general undulations. But then it grew larger, and longer; every movement adding to the last. It was far from land at this stage. Nothing could be seen in any direction, yet still it existed; it lived.

Below the surface a shape began to form, appearing fleetingly then disappearing in the currents that guided the waters. Then it would form again, slightly differently, as if experimenting with its form. Again, it dissipated. Then it came together, one last time, with a resonance so loud it made the earth move many miles away.

\*\*\*\*\*

On the hill top the Doctor and Pamanzi looked at each other. Instantly the working noises of the huts below ceased, and everyone waited to see if the vibrations would come again.

“What was that?” Pamanzi whispered.

“Something big,” the Doctor whispered back.

“Look!” the girl said, and the Doctor followed her pointing finger to the horizon behind him. There the sea rose, higher and higher. “It’s a tidal wave.”

The Doctor ran down the hillside, and Pamanzi followed knowing full well it was a stupid idea. She heard the Doctor shouting, saw him waving his long arms at the people. He was telling them to find higher ground, as quickly as possible, and to Pamanzi it looked as if they were listening to him. The ones that had ventured from their huts went back in, and Pamanzi guessed they were gathering their belongings; food and the like.

But when they came back out, they were holding medieval weapons; axes, bows, swords. Pamanzi was lost for words; they were ill equipped to deal with a physical beast, but what they faced now was liquid. They would surely perish.

The Doctor’s shouting got louder – aware of their foolishness. He looked back to the girl, and motioned her to go to higher ground too, but Pamanzi wasn’t going to leave him. She didn’t want to be on her own again.

The men started running towards the sea. They yelled and hollered and cried and shrieked. This was all or nothing. This was a last stand. Pamanzi followed the Doctor who followed the men. Then, as soon as it had started, the men reached the waterfront and stopped.

Pamanzi was surprised at the numbers gathered in front of her. There must have been many similar works all along the coast, for the numbers spilled over the beach, up the embankment and down towards the forest. Something triggered in her mind. The embankment and the flat area. She had seen this already. She had raced along that ridge in the future; had felt the awfulness of the place.

Instantly she knew the battle was doomed. These men would lose their lives here, and their grief would remain. She glanced at the Doctor, who stood shaking his head, trying to work out what he could do next.

"All is lost," she said to him.

"It's never lost," he muttered.

A man turned and looked at the Doctor.

\*\*\*\*\*

A new memory entered Jeremiah's head. It was the man – the same as he had seen on the ship, and he stood, waiting on the shore for the beast to crush them. *What was he doing there?*

Jeremiah plunged his hands back into the green liquid. *I will have my answers*, he thought. "I will have my answers."

\*\*\*\*\*

It was almost nothing at first. The breeze of the air off the sea, brushing his cheeks, moving the wisps of hair. But then it changed, and the Doctor could feel substance in the wind, a hardness no sudden gust could have caused.

He looked at Pamanzi and felt sorry for her. Whoever she was, she was in anguish at the situation. The Doctor knew he must act. This girl was important. If he couldn't save the others, he must try and save her.

"Follow me," he said to Pamanzi, and he moved up the embankment, down and across to the trees.

"Where are we going?" the girl asked.

"I don't know. But it's not safe here."

\*\*\*\*\*

Jeremiah was having difficulty locating the man. He must be moving. He used the collective mind to jump to other vantage points, but each one he tried drew a blank. "No!" he shouted, enraged by the impotence of his experiments. He dove deeper into the consciousness, hurting the memories, squeezing them for every detail possible. Then he found it. Someone in the forest had seen them, had watched them go past. Had followed them.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Doctor and the girl moved swiftly. The sun was high, and the light was good enough for quick progress. After a hundred feet or so, Pamanzi stopped and turned. "We're being followed," she whispered.

"I know," the Doctor said. "Good for them." The Doctor moved to the front, picked up the speed, and within two minutes they were out of the trees to the area the Holpt had met him. It looked vaguely familiar.

"What now?" Pamanzi asked.

"We head right. The path goes up towards a bridge... if it's been built yet. It must go somewhere." Behind them, muffled by the trees, the battle cry of eighty thousand men started to rise. "It must be nearly here," the Doctor said. "We must move quickly."

\*\*\*\*\*

*Must move quickly*, Jeremiah thought. The memory was losing focus, becoming too far away. Jeremiah clenched his blistered fists and thrust them back down into the liquid. *He mustn't get away*, he thought. *This could be the one.*

\*\*\*\*\*

They ran – the air rushing past them, pulling at their clothes. It was enough to mask the searching hands of Jeremiah. The Doctor fell, inexplicably. Pamanzi heard him go and double backed to his side.

"You okay?" she asked, looking into his eyes. Screams erupted from the shoreline. Pamanzi looked up and towards where they came from. Then back down to the Doctor, her eyes full of terror. "You must get up!" she shouted.

The Doctor almost choked. After all these years, all these countless years, he thought he might have forgotten that look – but he hadn't, and through all the cuts and the bruises the Doctor recognised the woman looking down at him.

"Oh, no," he said. "I'm sorry."

He felt hands on his shirt, yet Pamanzi's hands were on his shoulders. The cracking of timber signified the beast's onslaught had reached the forest. It would be here in a matter of seconds.

"Forgive me," he said to Pamanzi, who just looked at him now with confusion. And then, without warning, the Doctor was taken, right there before her eyes.

### *Chapter 11 – Q & A*

The Doctor woke. He was chained – on a plinth, alone in a closed room.

A door opened, and a man walked in.

“My name is Jeremiah,” the man said. “But then I think that you already know that. After our last meeting.”

The Doctor opened his eyes as wide as he could. “I meet so many people...” he mumbled.

“Oh, come on, surely you remember? Six years ago, in the crew quarters of the Tiki Freedom Freighter. You seemed to be waiting for me?”

The Doctor blinked slowly, then blinked again. The drug was wearing off quickly.

“What did I say?” he asked.

“Not much. Just smiled.”

“I must have been happy that day. Where’s the girl?”

“Girl? The one you were with when I took you? I left her there. She’ll have died.”

“She didn’t... forgive me.”

“Then you should be more careful who you offend next time.”

“What do you want from me?” The Doctor’s head was clearer. These were not just shackles on his upper arms, they were linked to a thick wire that ran away from the plinth and into the darkness beyond.

“I want your memories,” Jeremiah said.

The Doctor laughed. “And what do you want from them?”

“What I always want; a path, a way of finding my family. If there’s something in there that can help me, I will find it.”

“You said your name was Jeremiah?” the Doctor asked.

“Yes,” the man said. He was checking the straps that held the Doctor down.

“Your wife called you Jeremy.”

Jeremiah stopped. His heart had flipped inside him, but he wanted to remain calm. “Now what makes you say that?”

“Take the straps off and I’ll tell you.”

Jeremiah looked for a long time at the Doctor. "You're in no position to bargain. I'll have your memories soon."

"I can help you get her and your baby, back, but you won't find that in my memories." The Doctor looked as Jeremiah's face crumpled, and tears ran down his face.

"You'll tell me how I can get them back now!" he shouted, twisting the Doctor's hand.

The Doctor winced, but continued to hold his gaze. "I will tell you everything. Just release me from the machine and I will explain."

Jeremiah let go of the Doctor and paced the circular room, moving in and out of shadow as he did so. Then, without another word, he released the clasps on the Doctor's upper arms.

"Tell me," he said.

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"Eight years ago, I came into contact with a sphere that threatened to destroy many worlds if I did not help it. It wanted a baby, that it wouldn't kill, and in return, it said it would leave us all alone."

"And you believed it?"

"I saw what it could do. I buried the people it killed. So I struck the deal. One baby for billions of lives. Unfortunately, that baby was your baby."

"You son of a..."

"Hear me out. I thought I could track the baby. I thought I could get the baby back. It was never my intention to..."

"To what? To lose Colleen. Because that was her name; Colleen. But I don't suppose you cared about her name. And my wife, what did you do with my wife?"

"I was in... Colleen's bedroom. I was about to take her, when your wife came in. I only had a few minutes to get the baby, only a few minutes. I was willing your wife to leave the room, but she just didn't go."

"So you took her as well?"

"Yes. It took her as well."

"It, what *it*?"

"At the time, I didn't know what the sphere was. All I knew was that it existed, and it had the power to kill many, many lives."

"At the time, you just said, *at the time*?"

"I know more now. I have seen the sphere's being made. I know they hold parts of the Silver Sea. But it is more than just a Silver Sea. It remembers, it has intelligence. And by encasing it in dense-platinum, the Shuner have unwittingly corrupted it, causing it to create a beast." The Doctor watched Jeremiah look away.

"I... I did that."

"Then you have much blood on your hands."

"I wanted to use the Sea. I thought it could help me find them."

"Your family?"

"Yes, my family. What happened to them?"

"I didn't know. I hadn't had contact with either of them till today."

"Today? You saw them today?"

"I saw your wife today. I recognised the fear in her eyes. It was the same fear I saw all those years ago. The sphere knew it was her."

"Where is she? How can I find her?"

"She was the woman I was with on the planet."

"But that means..."

"She's dead."

"No!" Jeremiah screamed. He brought his fists down on the machinery in the room. "I can't lose her! Not again!" Jeremiah turned and stormed toward the Doctor. "Why have you done this? Why did you take them?"

"I was forced to."

"But why *them*?"

The Doctor took a moment to collect his thoughts. "My theory is this: the sphere sent your wife to Shuner. I believe she came into contact with the Silver Sea, and it remembered her. But more importantly, it felt her loss of Colleen. So it sought her out, and, through me, it took her, as any mother would protect her daughter."

"But that woman, on the planet, didn't look like my wife."

"I think when the sphere sends people somewhere, the journey changes them; alters their bodies causing them to merge with the first thing they come into contact with. Your wife met a trader on Shuner, and the two merged."

Jeremiah sunk to his knees and cradled his head in his hands. "And my daughter? What happened to my daughter?"

"Have you met the Goyellercanth?"

The name cut through Jeremiah's misery; he looked up. "What do you know of her?"

The Doctor smiled to himself. "The Goyellercanth is the stuff of legend. She searches for her parents using a silver sphere."

"Her parents?"

"I've never met her, but they say she has lived for centuries, following a sphere that promises a new life. I have long since believed that she is your daughter; albeit altered beyond your recognition."

Jeremiah sat silently for a moment. Then he looked into the Doctor's eyes. "She came to me," he said. "She gave me the sphere; then disappeared right in front of me. I didn't know it was Colleen. She gave me the sphere and disappeared. What does that mean?"

The Doctor felt waves of emotion flow down his body. "Do you still have the sphere?"

"No, it was taken from me. I... wanted to destroy it."

"Then we have that in common. I had the sphere on the planet. In a wooden box. Has it gone?"

"I didn't find it."

"Then it is lost."

"What is there to do now? Can we use the green liquid?"

"What green liquid?" the Doctor said.

"When I tried to destroy the sphere, green liquid came out... I use it to... try and find them?"

"How?"

"I can reach into it, and get things from the past... it's past. Wherever the sphere has been, I can reach into it."

"And you've reached into your baby's bedroom?"

"Yes. But I can't find them. I try to find them, but all I get is objects."

The Doctor looked at Jeremiah. "I think we can save them," he told him.

"How? How can we save them?"

"First, you must trust me."

### *Chapter 12 – Eight Years Ago*

“What? Who’s there?” Tamsin asked into the gloom. Something had happened - someone was in Colleen’s room with her.

“Don’t be afraid,” she heard a man’s voice say. An old voice. Like a grandfather’s. Immediately she trusted the voice, but only for a moment.

“Jeremy!” she called out.

“I don’t mean to harm you.”

“Get away from me!” Tamsin shouted.

“I haven’t come for you. I don’t need you.”

“What are you saying?” Tamsin hissed at him.

“I need the baby. Lives depend on it.”

“You won’t take her!” she screamed. From somewhere outside the room, Jeremy shouted, “I’m coming! Hold on!” and for a second she believed he would save them. He would run into the room and take the attacker down.

But it was a false hope. She remembered that, through all the changes, all the years, the phrase false hope stayed with her.

Before he took her, before the old man reached forward and pressed the sphere against her, Tamsin was aware of the soft blue dragon under her arm. It was a strange thing to focus on, but in the split second before she was taken, Tamsin dropped the dragon into the cot with Colleen, and remembered thinking; *Goyellercanth will take care of you.*

*Goyellercanth* was what she had named the dragon the day Jeremy had given it to Colleen in the hospital; it was a word conjured from the gurglings of her newborn daughter in the dead of night; a random murmuring within many such murmurings, but the word had stuck with Tamsin.

*Goyellercanth*, she’d thought as she felt the sphere, *protect her.*

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Tamsin had lost almost everything that night. In fact, had the sphere not remembered her she would have been extinguished forever.

But the sphere had remembered, as within it was the memory of the woman called Pamanzi, who had materialised in the Silver Sea. The touch of her body, the mingling of DNA. This was what had been locked inside the sphere for many years. This is what it had yearned for, for so long. But the woman didn't really matter anymore. It had wanted the baby, her baby, its baby, and now it had it. Yet still it wanted the mother to live. So, it had chosen to save her, to send her to its world many years into the future, when the sea had frozen and all that was left of it were the vast plains.

The journey had changed Tamsin into Pamanzi. It had melded her Earth body with that of a Shuner trader, creating a person that was neither one nor the other. But the change had created problems; the Skiram plagued Pamanzi's mind. But that was all they were – imaginings, beings with no substance outside of a tortured woman's soul.

And there she had stayed, eking out an existence, unaware of her previous life and of her lost baby.

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Colleen had changed too. The thoughts of her mother had crossed over, and she too had been sent somewhere else; somewhere the sphere thought was safe, somewhere it could watch over her. But as Colleen grew up into the Goyellecanth, she controlled the sphere, she made it tell her its secrets, and this made her long for her real parents. The sphere was weak within her touch, and she manipulated it, forcing it to take her on a search for her parents.

She had found them, too, but her mother had already gone, so she used her father like she had used the sphere.

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The Doctor looked at baby in the crib; he was torn apart at separating the mother from it, and now he'd have to take it away from its father, too. He could hear him coming up the stairs. The Doctor thought for a brief second about waiting for the father, but the sphere warned him again of the consequences.

The Doctor picked up the baby, a soft blue toy dropping to the floor as he did. He touched the sphere to the soft warm clothes, and they were all transported to the back to the TARDIS, still hovering above the clouds.

The Doctor saw the eyes of the child only briefly, in the dimmed lights of the TARDIS; it had beautiful hazel eyes, so relaxed, not full of terror like her mother had been.

Then the sphere and the baby were gone, and the Doctor fell to his knees, sobbing and begging for forgiveness.

### *Chapter 13 – Eccentric Circles*

“What are you going to do?” Jeremiah asked the Doctor.

“The green liquid from inside the sphere, it’s the Silver Sea, corrupted, diseased. But then you know about that, don’t you?”

Jeremiah hung his head low.

“I wanted to use its power. I needed more of it to try and find my family.”

“And in return, you’re actions have killed many lives.”

“You took my family... what was I supposed to do? They were my life.”

“Yes. I am partly responsible. But there’s a chance we can save them all.”

“All?”

“Yes. But it will take a sacrifice.”

“What sacrifice?”

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Jeremiah stood, eyes closed, concentrating on that night eight years previous. He was scared, but not for himself; he was scared he would fail, and in failing, he would bring destruction onto everyone.

The Doctor waited, silently. Jeremiah Blew was a brave man; misguided, but brave. He had wanted to save his family, and now he was risking everything to do just that.

“I’m ready,” Jeremiah said, quietly.

“Good luck,” the Doctor said.

Jeremiah stepped forward and disappeared down into the liquid, which hardly made a ripple. The Doctor waited for a moment, before disappearing, too.

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Jeremiah landed on the floor of the bedroom. Downstairs he heard Tamsin shout up, “Are you okay, love?”

Another voice, his own, shouted back. “Yep, everything fine.”

Jeremiah inched over to the door, and opened it a crack. The door opposite, the door to his and Tamsin's bedroom was open. A bedside light was on, and he could see a shadow moving about.

Jeremiah stepped out of Colleen's bedroom and crossed the landing to the main bedroom. Jeremy was in the en-suite, getting changed into his relaxing clothes. Jeremy turned and physically jolted at the sight of himself in the doorway.

Jeremiah stepped forward and grabbed hold of Jeremy.

"It's okay," Jeremiah said to him. "Don't resist."

Jeremy relaxed, and Jeremiah, altered by the green liquid, was able to merge into his earlier body. Jeremiah cried. He looked in the mirror and remembered a time before the killing. This was who he had been. A man with a heart, a passion for life.

Jeremiah walked from the room and waited on the stairs, watching Tamsin from a reflection in the glass of a painting. He saw her nestle down, watched as her breathing slowed until at last she was asleep.

Then he went back to Colleen's room and lifted her out of the cot. He walked down the stairs, humming a lullaby, and placed her next to her mother. His tears still came. Silently, but just as strongly.

Jeremiah wrote a note on a piece of paper, and placed it next to his family. Then he walked back up the stairs and into the baby's room.

"Are you here?" he asked.

There was a small gasp.

"I know you are here," Jeremiah said. "I have instructions for you."

"What... instructions?" the old man's voice said.

"Instructions from yourself."

There was a pause. "I'm listening."

"Take me instead," Jeremiah instructed. "Take me and everything will change. It will cease to exist. If I do not exist, then the sphere cannot exist."

The Doctor could hear the sphere telling him to go and get the baby. It was panicking.

"How do I know..."

"You told me you called it Eccentric Circles. Something about the Crescent..."

"Cortex," the Doctor finished. "You know you will most certainly die."

"But my family... my family will live. And that's all I ever wanted." Jeremiah held an envelope towards him. "You said you'd need this. Instructions."

"Ever diligent. That's what being a Lord of Time's all about."

"Please, do it now. Before I change my mind."

The Doctor smiled briefly and stepped forward. He placed the sphere onto Jeremiah, and Jeremiah and the sphere disappeared.

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An hour later, Tamsin woke and saw Colleen next to her. The television was still on. She waited a moment and listened for Jeremy. When she didn't hear him, she swung her legs off the sofa, and pushed herself up. There next to Colleen, was a folded piece of paper.

She picked it up, opened it and read;

*Hi babies,*

*I didn't know how to say goodbye, so I wrote it. You looked so beautiful asleep. I've had to go, but in doing so I have saved many lives. You cannot understand this. But please know I left loving you both as much as any husband and father could ever love his wife and child. If I could have stayed I would. But I'm gone now. If you ever come across a man named the Doctor, then maybe he can explain it to you. Please, live your lives as much as possible, and remember me in all that you do.*

*All my love, as ever,*

*Jeremy*

*Xxx*

Tamsin ran through the house calling, but Jeremy had gone.

### *Chapter 14 – Loose Ends*

The Doctor stood in his TARDIS, not sure what had just happened. He believed a man had taken his life to save others, but he didn't know. Eccentric Circles. The Doctor smiled. *Time Sometimes Moved in Eccentric Circles*. It was one of his favourite quotes from the Crescent Cortex. It meant by changing the present, a new circle had formed; off centre, different, *unpredictable*.

He opened the envelope. Two instructions, with coordinates. The first instruction was about being on a ship, the other about being a hermit on the planet Shuner until a woman showed up, who he had to send back in time, using the Caleedre Disc, a Bronze artefact that hadn't worked since he'd found it a hundred and ten years ago. *Just in case*, his other self had written at the bottom of the page.

"Oh, well," he sighed, "Didn't have much planned anyhow."

The Doctor entered in the coordinates, and watched as the TARDIS wound into gear. He didn't wait around; he had to go to the wardrobe, he had a feeling he was going to need some warmer clothes.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born and bred in West Sussex, England, Simon has been writing since the age of eleven, when he finished in the top group at school for a poetry competition. Over the years he's written in many different formats, including plays, short stories, novels and most recently, short film manuscripts. His other passion is acting, and enjoys treading the boards in amateur productions in his home town. He has recently branched out into short film acting, and is currently developing a script he plans to shoot himself. As well as *The Goyellercanth*, Simon is working on a Season 37 story called *Keepsakes*.





Once upon a time a man named the Doctor  
did a shameful thing, something he had to do to save  
the lives of an entire planet.

Now the guilt has come back to haunt him in the shape of a sphere;  
a silver sphere on its own journey home.

But rectifying the problem is not going to be easy;  
scattered over space and time are others affected by it;  
manipulated by it; changed by it. Now they are coming together.

The Doctor is lost, following the instincts of the sphere, its instincts  
of survival, and hoping, at last, that he is doing the right thing...

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