

THE
DOCTOR WHO
PROJECT

THE MIST

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Prologue

The behemoth stood up in its cell. Arranging its six, elephantine legs, the oversized Orpheid turned around inside the tight confines of its room and brought its multiple, baleful, yellow eyes to bear down on the prison guard. The guard winced at the sound of the Orpheid's armoured scales scraping the walls like nails on a blackboard.

"You're being moved."

The guard gestured the giant out into the corridor. Jeering, whistles and bellowed cries from a hundred different species echoed along the hall as the enormous creature pushed itself through the too small doorway. Six more guards rushed in, holding manacles to bind the monster's feet. The behemoth watched them as the manacles were attached. The only thoughts in its head were the numbers as it slowly counted down.

* * * *

Inertia Williams was bored. Bored, bored, bored, bored, BORED!

She'd finally managed to get a transfer to the prison pilot unit only to have her dreams of dodging criminal fighter ships and trying to get their buddies out dashed on the rocks of the prison transfer service. Prisoner transfer involved getting up at ridiculous hours of the morning, going to point A and picking up a prisoner (who invariably smelt awful) and spending hours at of light speed travelling to point B. After which it was back to home base, where the cycle started all over again.

Six months of shuttling smelly prisoners back and forth was beginning to grind her down. She had a Class 1 pilot license; she was able to pilot nearly anything from a one-person shuttle through to star liners and the latest hyperspace fighters, but no. She was stuck out here on the rim, shuttling criminals around defunct asteroid prisons and space stations. The only thing she couldn't complain about was the money, but even that was useless, as she never got to spend any of it anyway.

She kicked the console, before leaning forward to look out the window. Sighing, she brushed her auburn hair from her chestnut brown eyes and sighed.

"Bet the next one's smelly too," she mumbled. Absently, she pulled an already open carb-bar from the pocket on the arm of her one-piece jumpsuit, and started to chew it noisily.

"Deg, naw, wyth, saith, chwech, pump, pedwar, tri, dau, un."

The behemoth, finishing its countdown, suddenly moved like lightning as the lights went out in the complex. A dull rumble shook dust from the ceiling as the EM manacles flashed in unison as they were snapped like glass. The pulsating light from the smashed manacles slowed movement down to a crawl in the pitch-blackness. Guards suddenly found themselves flying through the air, only to be trodden on by the three-ton monster as it charged down the corridor.

The guard at the checkpoint was hurriedly trying to jam something in the doorway to stop the prisoner from escaping as its full weight was rammed up against it. The door bowed, and then shattered as the prisoner powered its way through to the landing strip.

The flashing lights gave it away. Inertia's ship was effectively soundproof unless something banged on the hull, so she couldn't hear the deafening alarms on the atmospheric platform. After the carb-bar, she'd decided to take a snooze, and as pilot she was not only allowed but was supposed to do so – it was one of the nicer perks of the job. Vaguely aware of something flashing outside, she opened her eyes to see what was going on.

The Orpheid was powering across the landing platform. The lighter gravity and its own heavy gravity physique allowed everything needed to charge across the platform at full speed with as little effort as possible. It had pulled in a lot of favours and threatened many more for this, and it expected a ship to be there. Sliding around a smaller maintenance pod on four legs, the giant creature spied its destination sitting opposite the ship that had brought it in. As soon as she had seen it, Inertia started the ignition sequence. She'd brought the Orpheid in over ten shift rotations ago. Her fingers flew across her control panel.

As expected, the ramp was down and the ship was already powered and ready. It would take minutes for the crews to get to their ships, and by then it would be long gone. The giant settled into place and placed its head into the interface hood. Its six legs slotted into the Waldo boots and around it, the cockpit came alive as light danced across the control panels.

Inertia's cockpit shuddered as the ship opposite rose smoothly into the air. It turned to face the see-through wall of the port, pointing its exhaust vents straight at her cockpit screen. Immediately alarms started to sound as the screen started to glow cherry red, then suddenly she was in zero gravity. The Orpheid had blown a hole through the atmosphere shielding and the vacuum had dragged them both into space. The screen made alarming screeching noises as the heat dissipated into the frigid cold of the void.

Beyond the screen, the Orpheid's ship was smoothly powering away.

"Oh, no you don't! You're not getting away that easily," she said to herself as she strapped herself in. Inertia knew her ship was at least a match for the Orpheid's. All she had to do was catch it.

Episode One

The mist rose up from the warm ocean into the cool night air. At first it clung to the gently rolling surface, dancing and weaving in the moonlight. Beneath it, the warm glow of fluorescing sea-life gave the mist's underside a shallow green colour. Slowly, the mist rose into the air. Slender columns of thicker mist appeared to support the rest like a natural architecture crafted from air and water droplets. As the moon rose into the sky the mist glistened silver, and sparkled as larger droplets reflected the clean white light from Earth's guardian.

Silence. High above the atmosphere there were two flashes of white light. Strange, exotic, particles dissipated their energy into light and heat as two small spacecraft slowed from their light-speed chase across the galaxy. The dark grey vessel, spouting various gases, tumbled as it fought control of itself. The other light-cream coloured craft righted itself as it made itself ready to jump back to light-speed. Still tumbling madly, the grey ship powered forward and smashed into the rear of the other. Debris spurted out, wreathed in flame. Caught in the gravity well of the planet beneath them, they slowly drifted down to their doom.

* * * *

"Bob, can you take this up to Kyle please?"

Frank Tuttle handed his shipmate a large mug of coffee.

"Sure thing, Cap'n."

Frank looked out across the ocean. Fishing was fraught with danger at the best of times, but now it was fraught with financial danger too. He was struggling. His crew knew it too. It was becoming increasingly difficult to meet the EU fishing quota restrictions. There was a lack of funding in the industry, and the amount of illegal catches by crews from other countries was going up. Regardless of the so-called "regular" patrols by the royal navy, piracy was becoming a problem. The flat ocean sighed with him as he leaned over the stern watching the net stretched out behind them.

The flash was just that.

It was a streaking fireball, arcing down out of the sky in the distance – a blob of phoenix gold with a tail that was at least fifty miles long, streaking down out of the blackness. Frank had watched it as it streaked to meet the ocean. He'd seen quite a few shooting stars over the years. And viewing the Milky Way could only really be done from the ocean or a desert these days. Even so, there was something about this one he didn't like. As he watched, the night sky was lit. The thin ocean mist that had been lapping at the hull of the *Macy Gray* glowed white in the flash.

Then the thunder rolled across him. He knew what that meant. He'd heard what had happened to the *Mackie* when their skipper had ignored a nearby meteor strike.

"Kyle! Turn us around! Now!" He ran across the deck and hauled himself up to the bridge. "God-damn it Kyle! Weren't you listening?"

"Cap'n, the compass is screwed."

Frank glanced at the compass as he heaved on the wheel, pulling it around with all his strength. The compass was spinning crazily in its mount.

"Damn it, Kyle! Get on deck and cut the net free."

"What?"

"Don't question me! Just get down there with Bob and do it! Now!"

Frank rammed the throttle forward and the old diesel engine started spewing black smoke into the night air as it struggled to accelerate. Kyle slid down the ladder, and ran to the main winch. Pulling the release, the winch started to spin with a screech.

"I said cut the net! Not let it out! Cut it! Cut it now!" screamed Frank from the bridge.

"But we'll lose the net, Cap'n!"

"Bob, cut that net now! Cut it free, or we're all for the deep!"

Bob, pushing Kyle out of the way, kicked the release again, stopping the net from reeling out. With practiced precision his gutting knife appeared in his hand and he started sawing frantically at the nylon rope. It didn't take much. The net was already half full, and the rope was taught. The *Macy Gray* lurched forward as the weight from her stern was released.

Spinning the wheel, Frank brought the little fishing vessel around to face the coming wave. He hadn't realised it would be that big...

The rubber squeaked. For a while that was all he could hear; that and the gentle slap of the ocean against the sides of the emergency inflatable raft. His head span like a giddy top, and he felt sick to the stomach. Noises, sighs, yelling, the rush of thousands of tonnes of water...silence, the gentle grip of the ocean.

Around him, the mist thickened slowly. The gentle white of moonlight was replaced with an ominous, sickly, yellow glow. Enteric pseudo-pods slowly extended out, and explored the open flap of the raft. They entered. Huge yellow eyes formed in the thickening fog to watch.

Food.

Fear.

Strength.

The nightmare gripped Frank and squeezed his mind. It needed the emotion. It needed the fear. It needed to be –

– *whole again.*

The screams faded as they were absorbed into its new form. It needed more. The new energy allowed it to move now. With effort the fog changed its direction and started to head towards the shore.

* * * *

Silver was enjoying herself. The TARDIS had brought them to the southern coast of England, and the wonderful sunshine of Cornwall. The sea was glistening in the bright, late afternoon, summer sunshine, and she had a cone filled with creamy Cornish ice cream with a bar of flaky chocolate and a drizzle of strawberry sauce on top. As it was so hot, she was down to her summer clothes, a light and airy purple cotton top, and black cotton-mix skirt to match.

The gentle cool sea breeze wafted across the beach to the nightmare contraption of a deckchair that the Doctor had given her. The rickety old thing consisted of various pieces of wood and fabric that did not seem to be able to bear the responsibility of becoming the very thing she was sitting on. Fortunately, after the Doctor had put up the huge umbrella, she had been rescued.

After being persuaded that the chair was perfectly safe to sit in, the Doctor had rushed off to a local ice-cream stall and bought her an ice cream. Having done that, he had proceeded to build a magnificent sand castle, which was where he was now. Knee deep in the sand, he had finished with the flying buttresses along the outer walls of his fairytale creation and had started on the sea defences that involved a moat of quite considerable depth. Silver kept her mouth shut. Both the castle, and the Doctor, had attracted a reasonable crowd of onlookers from rest of the beach.

Personally, she thought that the minarets were probably a little over the top, but it was the Doctor's obvious enthusiasm that probably drew most of the crowd. She sprayed some more of the sun block that the Doctor had given her onto her exposed skin and sat back in the deck-chair, shaded by the umbrella.

She felt happy. Something she hadn't really felt since her father had died. The sun was setting over the ocean in a blaze of red and gold. The light reflecting from beneath purple-edged clouds made the fantasy castle in front of her just a little more real than billions of grains of sand stuck together. Behind her, the lights of the tiny village were coming on. It was all so heart-achingly normal; even when she knew that the man in front of her wasn't even human, and that a little way up the beach was a small blue police box that contained some of the most advanced technology in the universe.

She missed her father. Some little part of her wanted to be normal. A seagull landed nearby and cocked its head in her direction to see if she would do anything before it started work on the sand-coated French fry in front of it.

No, wait it was a chip. The British were a bit weird in that way. French fries were called chips, and they weren't the small crispy kind of French fry you might find in a regular McDonalds but large chunky things smothered in salt and vinegar. Chips in the UK were called crisps, but after that most things were easy to figure out. The sea gull attacked the chip, throwing it up into the air and gulping down the sandy lump of potato. It looked at her again before launching itself into the dramatic sunset. Silver followed it as it disappeared over the horizon and into the beginnings of a silvery sea mist.

The tide was beginning to wash in and fill the Doctor's moat as he jauntily walked up the beach towards her. His pant (trouser, she reminded herself) legs were rolled up to just beneath his knees, and his shoes hung by their laces from one hand. He brushed sand from his clothes as he walked towards her, and then promptly sat down next to her.

"What do you think?" he said, nodding at the castle. The moat was filling rapidly, although it would stand the coming tide for a few more minutes.

"A bit showy isn't it?"

"Well, the real thing is a lot showier than that."

"Real thing?"

"That, my dear Silver, is a fairly faithful replica of the rose quartz castle of the seventh prince of Hijaricuse Four. Of course the real thing has more windows, but there's only so much you can do with sand."

The moat had filled now, and the outer walls were under attack from the sea. Crumbling under the weight of water, the walls sank back into the beach from which they had risen so spectacularly. Silver couldn't help thinking of the parallels to her life. Maybe the Doctor was the sea, washing it all away: giving her the second chance at a clean slate that she might never have had once her father had gone.

"I'm feeling hungry. Is there anyplace around here that's not a..." She tried to pronounce it in a bad Cockney accent. "...fish'n'chip shop?"

"Of course there is! The local inn does excellent food!"

The Doctor sprang to his feet and swept up the umbrella, as Silver extricated herself from the potential death trap of the Doctor's deck chair.

"We'll just put these back in the TARDIS, and freshen up first. You'll probably need to put on some warmer clothes than that. They get some wicked ocean fogs around here."

And with that, he set off back to the TARDIS. The "old girl" looked completely at home and innocuous tucked away beside a crumbling fisherman's shack. She'd only seen it from the outside a few times, and still marvelled at the way people just seemed to ignore it until the Doctor disappeared inside and the TARDIS disappeared soon after, by which time it was far too late to even wonder how the thing had got there in the first place. Silver followed him into the huge control room, and headed off to her room to get changed and wash off all the sand that had managed to get everywhere, even after she had fastidiously tried to avoid it.

* * * *

The town inn was one of three. That was something else about the British; they did like their pubs. The village didn't look big enough to support more than one, but there they were; feeding off the tourists like huge immobile parasites.

The inn was the oldest of the pubs, having been built along with the village almost two hundred years previously. It sagged. The ancient wooden structure hugged the contours of the ground that it sat on. Pitch coated wooden beams undulated from one end of the building to the other as it gradually buckled under its own weight.

"Is this place haunted?" asked Silver as she observed the depiction of someone getting lynched on the inn's placard. A lone crow eyed her suspiciously from the heavily lacquered bar holding the sign up, before flying away.

"I don't believe in ghosts," replied the Doctor. "But this place has a very long history. It has seen its fair share of births and deaths. It was around during the Witch Trials of the seventeenth century, so it's seen its fair share of blood as well."

Silver frowned at him.

"You can be really morbid sometimes, do you know that?"

The Doctor grinned.

"They do an excellent vegetarian selection here though. The landlady is a vegan. You'd probably enjoy talking to her: she also owns the local 'new-age' shop."

For such a regularly used inn, the doorway was typically seventeenth century. Set deep within its own space, one had to stoop to pass through the tiny doorway. Inside, it was typically dark, mainly because the tiny windows allowed only a fraction of the light in from outside. The black oak beams spanned the ceiling, and there was a hint of fresh paint in the air. The wattle

and daub had been given a fresh coat of bright white paint in an effort to lighten the large room, but it didn't help.

On one side was a huge fireplace, currently unlit but in obvious regular use by the looks of the large soot covered chimney above it. The bar ran the length of the room, and was covered in glasses, bottles and various eighteenth and nineteenth century paraphernalia. Opposite the fireplace at the other end of the room were small cubicles with tables; friendly places to meet drink and eat. The Doctor immediately strode over to an unused alcove and sat down to scrutinise the menu.

"I'm just going to pop over to the ladies room. Back in a minute."

Silver left the Doctor to choose over the broccoli and mushroom medley and the vegetable satay with peanut sauce. When Silver returned to the table, the Doctor was building a small contraption out of knives, forks, a bottle and the wire top from the adjoining table's bottle of Cava.

"What are you building?" she asked, as she slid onto the bench. The Doctor didn't look up, as he adjusted a fork.

"It's a psychlotrope."

The carefully balanced knives, forks and spoons wobbled alarmingly as she accidentally nudged the table. The Doctor frowned, and set about balancing three fish knives on top of the horizontal forks. Silver looked hard at the bizarre construction and couldn't seem to find any reason for the pieces to stick together like they did. If they had been welded together, then she could have understood, but the various bits of cutlery were sticking to each other as though they had been magnetized somehow. That theory went out of the window when the Doctor added the plastic cap from her bottle of still water.

"What does it do?"

The Doctor adjusted the bottle cap, which was stuck firmly to the underside of a spoon by no apparent means of stickiness, and sat back.

"It's a child's toy. It detects psychic activity, such as emotional teenagers. I haven't built one in a few hundred years!" He wagged his eyebrows at her as the device slowly began to revolve.

"I'm not emotional!" she replied desperately, trying to keep the irritation she felt out of her voice. The psychlotrope began to spin faster. "How does it work?"

"Psychic phenomena: it affects the standing electro-static field of a planet. The result is a polarization in the field. The psychlotrope translates that polarization into a gentle spinning motion." The psychlotrope began to make an audible whirring noise. They both looked at it.

"Doctor – that does not look like a gentle spinning motion!"

"Oh, dear. You might want to move our neighbours under their table."

Silver gingerly slid out from the bench, and motioned the couple next to them to get under the table. The psychlotrope was making the same noise as a small fan now, and small blue electrical sparks were leaping between its internal structure of knives and forks. The Doctor looked around, and made sure that everyone was out of the way. He crawled under the table himself.

"What's it going to do? Can't you stop it?"

The psychlotrope was screeching like an upset cat breathing helium.

"It'll wear itself out in a moment, give it a chance."

There was an actinic flash of blue light, a loud bang and an intense smell of ozone. The Doctor, Silver and the couple from the next table peered out. The device was a welded mess of metal, except for a knife that was still wobbling like a tuning fork in the ceiling.

"Do they always do that?"

The Doctor shook his head. "No. Usually they just fall apart. I thought it was going together a little too easily."

Silver, being a fairly intelligent young adult, had to ask the question. "Doctor?"

"Hmm?" he said, stroking his chin.

"Is the speed of rotation linked with the amount of disturbance?"

"Indeed it is. Indeed it is."

Suddenly the Doctor was looking very, very worried.

"I think we have a problem here." He turned to the couple. "You should go straight home. Now."

Already frightened by the exploding contraption, the young couple practically ran to the door of the inn. Silver looked out through the small window nearby. Outside it was getting dark. The ocean fog was thickening as the warm ocean gave up its moisture to the cool night air.

* * * *

Francis Whitling walked slowly along the beach with his dog Charlie as the thick mist rolled across the beach. Francis may have been old and frail, but he knew trouble when he saw the two teenagers walking towards him.

“Come on, Charlie,” he whispered, beckoning the dog towards him. Charlie, however, had stopped dead still. The hackles rose along his back. The small terrier was snarling into the mist. Francis bent down, and clipped the lead onto Charlie’s collar.

“Hey! What’s that dog growling at? Better not be me, old man.”

The old man pulled hard, dragging Charlie across the sand.

“*Obnoxious child,*” came the whisper through the mist.

“What did you say?”

One of the youths quickly strode over to Francis, and pushed him. He stumbled backwards, letting go of Charlie’s lead. The dog simply stood there, foaming at the mouth as it carried on snarling and growling at the encroaching vapour.

“I didn’t say anything!” cried Francis. “Please, I’m just walking my dog!”

“*I’d have laid you out cold fifty years ago,*” goaded the whispering voice.

“Knock me cold would you, old man!”

The other teen came over to stand by his friend.

“Well, knock this!” He made to punch the old man in the face.

The fear emanating from the old man was palpable. The power of the elder human’s mind felt incredible, exhilarating. It took the fear into itself, like a drug. It had enough to manifest, but it needed more! More!

Behind the two boys, the growling from the dog was replaced by something deeper, something more ferocious.

Francis Whitling stumbled out of the mist, and onto the promenade of the tiny village. Some animal instinct operated his legs as he stumbled across the cobbles towards the inn. Behind him, the sea fog bunched and rolled forward enveloping him and the sea front in white oblivion. Inside the inn, everything became silent as the screaming outside started and then, abruptly, stopped. Silver was the first to say anything. Her words the loudest sounds in the room.

“What the hell was that?”

The Doctor was already at the tiny door by the time she finished the sentence; the remaining people in the bar were still motionless and shocked by the sound. The Doctor yanked open the door, only to find a wall of sickly yellow fog. Momentarily taken aback, he stood there, looking at the wall of nothing.

Suddenly, two hands reached out from the solid mass, as the elderly form of Francis Whitling fell out of the mist and into the Doctor’s arms.

Episode Two

The Doctor caught the old man, and nimbly stepped back from the doorway, kicking it shut in the process. The old man was shaking violently, covered in mucilaginous dew that was like a thick paste. He was soaked from head to foot.

The Doctor carried him over to the fireplace as Angela, the landlady, rushed over and started the woodpile burning.

“Silver, get me some of the dry bar towels, we need to get him warm.”

The smell of burning wood began to penetrate the room as the logs on the fire leaped into flame. Angela took some of the towels from Silver and started wiping the old man’s face.

“Come on Francis, what happened?”

The old man’s eyes were wide and staring as he looked straight at the Doctor, who was trying to remove his sodden coat.

“Something in the fog. Something. Charlie – Charlie killed them!”

Silver leaned closer to Angela.

“Who’s Charlie?”

“Charlie is his Jack Russell. He couldn’t hurt anyone if he tried! He’s eighteen years old and has lost most of his teeth.”

“Torn apart. Torn apart,” mumbled the old man, over and over.

“I’ll go get a blanket from upstairs...back in a minute.”

The Doctor finished peeling off the old man’s garments as Angela returned and wrapped a huge woollen blanket around the shivering form. The Doctor stood back and fiddled absently with his waistcoat.

“What’s his full name?”

“Francis Whitling. He’s a regular. Charlie, his dog, comes with him usually.” Angela pointed at the dog bowl by the fireplace. “Charlie likes his ale as well. They’re quite a pair. Been coming here for over fifty years now; well before I owned the place. Roger, the previous landlord, warned me about them.”

The Doctor suddenly turned on Francis and looked straight into his eyes.

“Francis Whitling: listen to me.” Silver was taken aback; she’d never heard the Doctor use such a commanding tone before. “Look into my eyes.”

The old man’s vacant stare changed as he focused on the Doctor’s deep green eyes. “I want you to remember what you were doing half an hour ago. Do you remember?” Still staring into the Doctor’s eyes, Francis nodded. “Good. Describe to me what you were doing.”

“I was locking the door to my house. Charlie and I were going for a walk down on the beach.”

“Tell me what happened on the beach, Francis.”

“Charlie and I were walking on the beach. There was a fog rolling in from the sea. Strange fog. Glowing. I thought it was reflecting light from streetlamps, so I ignored it. Charlie didn’t like it and started growling at the sea.”

“Go on. What happened next?”

“There were two young lads. Late teens. They came over to us. Then there were voices...”

“Were they talking?”

“No not them. Voices. Voices in the mist, in the fog. They put words in our mouths. The boys got angry. One of them tried to hit me. And then – and then...”

His eyes widened again in horror as the images replayed themselves in his mind.

“There was growling. Blood! Blood!” he shouted.

“Look at me. Look at me, Francis Whitling. You will rest now. Sleep. Sleep.”

The Doctor’s commands took on a gentler tone as he repeated the words over and over, as Francis slowly closed his eyes and he relaxed into the large chair. The Doctor looked up at Silver, Angela and the others in the bar.

“He needs peace and quiet. None of you are to leave this inn.” He turned to Silver. “I’m just going to pop out and see what’s going on. Stay here, and don’t open the door.”

“What? You can’t go out there! Look at the old guy!”

Silver pointed at the sleeping Francis.

“He looks fairly relaxed to me.”

“Of course he is! You just hypnotised him!”

The Doctor grasped her by the shoulders, his face now showing the worry that had been increasing in his mind.

“Look, Silver, I need to go outside to see what’s going on. I’ll be back soon. And don’t believe everything you see.”

Silver couldn’t help it. The hairs on the back of her neck were standing on end and she could just feel that something was wrong out there.

“Okay,” she scowled.

The Doctor opened the front door, not without a certain amount of trepidation on his own part. After the incident with the psychotrope, it was hard not to. The mist was almost a solid wall, and was glowing softly. The majority of the light came from the yellow sulphur streetlamps, but not all of it. The glow was too obviously uniform to be just the lamps. He stepped out into the thick fog. The water vapour had a greasy feel, almost glutinous.

The psychotrope had indicated an enormous level of psychic energy. Enough to generate an enormous disturbance in the Earth’s static electricity field. Tentatively, he reached out with his mind. Silver couldn’t close the door behind the Doctor, so she stood there and watched as he took two steps and disappeared into the mist.

“I need your help,” whispered Angela, making Silver jump. She took a deep breath.

“Yes?”

“The Doctor told me that you had some knowledge of white magic. I need your help in a protection spell.”

“I’m not very good. I’ve only tried a few spells, and they haven’t worked very well. Except for one,” she said, remembering the spell that she had cast to bring the Doctor back. It had surprised both of them!

“That’s all right. I just need you to help me with a few things,” she pointed at the door. “You’d better close that, we don’t want that thing in here.” Silver blinked.

“Sorry? What thing?”

“Can’t you feel it out there? The hairs all over my body are standing on end. I don’t know where it’s come from, but it is the closest thing to a demon I’ve ever met.” Silver looked out at the fog. She didn’t know how to describe it. The feeling was powerful and penetrating and made her feel like she was looking at a dog that was snarling at her. It was ancient and she was trying desperately not to give in to it and run away. She shivered.

“Okay, I’ll help. What do I need to do?”

“Simple, follow me and help out.” Silver followed Angela behind the bar and through a door that led to a covered alleyway. Even here, tendrils of the mist clung to the ground.

“It’s gaining power,” she whispered. “I hope the Doctor knows what he’s doing.”

“You know the Doctor?” asked Silver, as they passed through a door to the adjacent building.

“Yeah, I know him. The great traveller. He gets around a bit. Met him a few years ago at a campsite in Brecon.”

“Brecon?”

“It’s in the mountains of Wales a few hundred miles north of here. He was there with another lady.” She paused for a moment. “Ace, I think her name was. The Doctor was collecting rocks. His lady friend wasn’t impressed. She seemed nice enough, though. Still got his blue box?”

Silver nodded, thinking about the security the TARDIS would offer them right now.

“Yeah, the Doctor’s been around for a long, long time. You can always tell it’s him though, he feels...solid. You know? More...real, than anyone else.” Angela opened another doorway, and stepped into her other shop.

“This is my passion, of course. Been a member of the local coven for donkey’s years.” She started collecting various paraphernalia from the shop shelves. First came a large bowl, then some copper wire and a piece of obsidian with symbols etched into its smooth surface, a candle and some incense from behind the counter.

“I don’t usually sell this stuff to the public. This is my personal recipe; so don’t breathe it too deeply. It’ll make you dizzy, but it should calm down everyone in bar quite a bit.” Silver opened her mouth. “Don’t ask what’s in it. Just don’t breathe it too deeply. Trust me, its good stuff. One of the other coven members grows at his allotment some of the herbs that I use.” Angela looked around the shop. “Right, I think that’s all we need for this. Let’s get back.”

* * * *

Melanie Brightman looked across the bar at the old man sleeping next to the fire. His wrinkled face looked peaceful. She tried to concentrate on that, holding her fears at bay. She turned to look at her boyfriend, and screamed as the lizard-like monster reached out to her. Falling over backwards, she crawled away from the creature as it came towards her and her world dissolved away into hell.

Around her the demons were cackling as they scrambled over misshapen rocks towards her, their clawed hands reaching out. Fifty million years of instinct took hold of her terror-ridden mind, as her hand curled around the broken leg of the chair she had been sitting on. The lizard thing was almost on top of her when she brought the chair leg down on its head as hard as she could.

* * * *

The Doctor reached out with his limited Time Lord telepathy, only to feel the eyes of the thing turn their malevolence in his direction. It had been stretched out, sampling the village, touching those minds that it could. Now it had become aware of him. A non-human presence in its midst. He felt it gather itself together. The strength was phenomenal, and the Doctor began to realise just how much trouble he had walked into.

* * * *

Silver and Angela walked back into bedlam. Two men were holding one of the women in the bar down, while another of the patrons was bent over a prone body, trying to bind the large gash in his head. The woman was screaming incoherently when suddenly she stopped, and then started to sob uncontrollably.

“What happened?” Angela rushed over. One of the locals was trying to console the foetal woman.

“I don’t know! She just started screaming like mad, fell over backwards and then started to beat her boyfriend over the head with a chair leg!”

He pointed at the bloodied piece of wood. Silver stood there with her arms full of various items for the spell. Something at the back of her mind was screaming that there was something wrong. Like something was watching from behind her shoulder. She turned around. There was nothing there. The room had faded from view and all that was left was a black nothingness.

The sounds behind her gradually faded away to nothing. Her skin was crawling. She looked down, to see that she was standing on a tiny patch of floor from the inn. Hastily she looked up again, and then squeezed her eyes shut.

“*Silver...*”

She fought the fear building in her.

“*Open your eyes...*”

“No! No! This isn’t real!”

“*Open your eyes...*”

She opened her eyes and looked into the liquid, pus yellow, eyes of the creature in the mist, hanging in the absolute blackness. Beneath the eyes a gaping maw opened, revealing multiple rows of vicious teeth. She took a deep breath.

And screamed.

* * * *

“Silver! Oh my Goddess! Silver, are you all right? Focus! Where are you?” Angela was shaking her gently by the shoulders when Silver opened her eyes and looked straight into hers with abject terror, screaming as loudly as she could. Angela grabbed her as she stumbled backwards away from the horror that only she could see. The young woman fought in her arms, and then stopped. Silver blinked as if stepping into bright sunlight, then sank to the ground, sobbing.

“What was it? What happened?”

"It, it was like a nightmare, but I was awake. I couldn't see anything, it was all black. Then I saw it! It was in the dark. It, it..."

She gathered herself together. Screaming like a little girl wasn't going to make her feel any better. Silver stood up, anger beginning to build.

"It got into my head. I don't know why, but it was trying to get something. I don't know what." She turned to the door.

"I'm going to get the Doctor back. Do you need me for your spell?" Angela shook her head.

* * * *

"I want your lives, Doctor," the Valeyard sneered. "That pitiful creature calling himself 'the Master' isn't here to save you now."

The dark figure picked the Doctor up off the floor by his lapels. "Face it Doctor, you're living on borrowed time. Borrowed from me, and I've come to collect it."

The Doctor shook his head.

"No! You don't exist! You're not here!"

The Valeyard laughed, the sound echoing in the blackness that surrounded them.

"Of course I am here, Doctor! How can I not be? I am you! Your distillate, your evil; concentrated and given form."

The Doctor flailed at the Valeyard.

"No! No! You're not me! You cannot ever be me!"

"This is all about fear, Doctor," the faceless, hooded, figure snarled. "The chill of it. This is about the spine-tingling horror of knowing the unknown, coming face to face with it. It has brought you here to me, and I am going back with you, Doctor. I am what your subconscious has buried for so very, very, long. Do you want to see it, Doctor? Do you want to see the face of your defeat? Look at me and see the truth that you deny yourself. Look at me!"

The Valeyard pulled back the midnight black hood, as the Doctor screamed.

* * * *

Silver stepped out into the mist. Around her the muffled screams and moans of waking nightmares pervaded the glowing fog. Half-formed creatures wavered through the vapour like wavelets across an open pond. She shivered, bathed in the sounds of an insane asylum.

"Doctor!" she called. "Doctor! Where are you? Doctor!" The cold was beginning to penetrate her bravado, and she shivered deeply. The hairs on the back of her neck were standing on end yet again, as she felt the thing watching her. She called out again.

"Doctor!" In the mist, she could barely make out a dim figure. It appeared to be struggling with something. "Doctor?"

The figure collapsed to the ground, beating something. She started running. The muffled cries became louder.

"No! You do not exist! I deny you!"

"You cannot deny me my destiny, Doctor!"

"No! No!"

"I am always with you, Doctor! I am watching you from within. You are close now, Doctor, and I will come to the fore eventually! It is inevitable! We have seen it!"

Silver ran towards the voices to find the Doctor grappling with an unseen enemy.

"Doctor!" she shouted. Silver grabbed him from behind and span him around. "Doctor! It's me, Silver! It's in your head! It's making you see things! Please, please look at me! Wake up!"

The Doctor shrank away at her touch. His eyes flickered back and forth, looking for things that didn't exist. "Doctor, listen to me. Can you hear me?" She reached down and held his face in her hands. "Doctor, look at me." His eyes gradually regained focus.

"Silver?"

"Oh, thank goodness! We have to get back to the inn. Can you do that?" He nodded weakly. Silver helped him to his feet. "Come on."

* * * *

The door to the inn crashed open as Silver struggled under the weight of the Doctor.

“Help me!” she shouted as they stumbled in through the door. Angela and one of the other patrons, Tim, rushed across the floor. Tim lifted the Doctor, while Angela hastily slammed the thick oak door closed.

Angela turned back to Silver, as they helped the Doctor into a chair. “What happened?”

Silver looked up, her gothic makeup streaked with tears.

“I don’t know. I found him across the road, shouting with someone who wasn’t there.”

They looked at the Doctor. For such a young countenance, a face that ordinarily belied its age, he suddenly looked ancient and tired.

“He looks old,” whispered Angela.

“1024 to be precise. Nice binary number, that.” His voice sounded hoarse. “Frivolity aside, we are in a lot of trouble.”

“Do you know what it is?” The Doctor held Silver’s hand tightly. He nodded.

“It’s an Orpheidean. And it is very, very insane.”

“I don’t know what an Orpheidean is,” said Angela, sitting down opposite the Doctor and Silver, “but what’s it doing here? Why is it in that abysmal fog out there?”

“It must have crash landed. The Orpheid race is mainly telepathic and telekinetic. Their entire technology is based around it. When you can manipulate matter at the molecular level with your mind, chemistry and biophysics become elementary. Their version of an ejector seat is to imprint the mind of the occupant onto the crash site. That way, all they have to do is find the crash site, extract the mind from the surrounding area and clone it a replacement body; something that they are very good at indeed. Unfortunately it doesn’t work very well in water, and as the Earth’s surface is basically seventy per cent water...”

His voiced tailed away.

“Doctor?” Silver whispered.

“Hmm? Oh, yes. It must have crashed into the Atlantic. The heat from the impact probably boiled several millions gallons of water, turning it to steam. The Orpheid would have been imprinted into the water at the point of impact, and its mind rose into the steam. It doesn’t have a body. It’s trying to pull itself together but doesn’t have the energy, so it’s feeding off us to get it. If it wasn’t mad before, it is now and we have to stop it.”

“You mean kill it,” said Angela. Around them, the remaining people of the bar had gathered.

“We don’t have a choice. Orpheids usually abandon water crashes because the mind is dispersed soon afterwards. They won’t come for it. If I could do anything, I would have to get to the TARDIS, but as I can’t even get to the other side of the street at the moment, that’s out of the question.”

“So how do we kill it?” asked Tim.

“We need to degauss it with a large magnetic field,” replied the Doctor absently. Silver looked at him – she felt there was something wrong. There was something missing now...confidence?

“There’s the Devil’s eye. It’s an enormous Earth magnet up at the stone circle on the edge of the moor.” The voice came from the far side of the room. The old man stood up. “The children play around it all the time, but you can’t get too close. It’s not dangerous, but plenty of children leave their belts behind.” He grinned wickedly.

“That would do it. I need a runner.” Silver nodded. “I’ll create a distraction, then you’ll need to get to its boundary as quickly as you can. When it realises what’s happening it will chase you.”

“You should place a protection spell around the circle,” interrupted Angela. “It’s stopped its presence in here, so it should work at the circle. You can take whatever you need from the shop.”

The Doctor stood, straightening out his jacket. His face fell, as he pulled out a smashed pair of sunglasses from a pocket.

“I’m going to need a new pair of these. Thaumus Beta is such a tourist trap, though.” He looked at Angela. “Do you have a washing machine?” Everyone in the bar blinked. After everything that had happened, it just seemed like such an outrageous question to ask.

“Yes, it’s upstairs in the flat. Why do you want my washing machine?”

“The creature is basically an oscillating magnetic field using the water particles in the mist outside as an electrical conductor. It’s at least thirty to forty metres in height and covers the entire town. In the Earth’s normal electrical field, there is a gradient of a hundred volts per metre in height, plus it’s probably covering more than six square kilometres. So if we short out a large piece of it, it will be like prodding an elephant with an electric cattle prod.”

“But what’s my washing machine got to do with it?”

“It’ll make a perfect Van de Graaff generator, with some modifications. I’ll get you a new one afterwards.” He turned to everyone in the bar. “I’ll need you to find anything that can be used as a nylon brush. If any of the ladies can donate their stockings, it will be appreciated.” He smiled, back in his element as he turned to Silver.

“I don’t normally countenance this, but take Angela’s incense with you; you know which ones. You’ll probably need all of it, but it will clear your mind. Human belief is very strong, and you need to believe, Silver.” He held her by the shoulders, and suddenly he looked very old again. “I need you to be strong for me, Silver. I know you can do this, and I have complete faith in you and your abilities, but you need to have that faith as well. There may be times when I need you to believe in me even when everyone around you says otherwise. I need you to trust me as much as I trust you.”

He hugged her closely. “Don’t forget who I am.”

At arm’s length again, he winked at her and span around on the spot to face Angela. “I’ll need a socket set, a screwdriver and a pair of scissors!”

“They’re in the cellar, I’ll just go get them.”

* * * *

Thirty minutes later, the Doctor was adding the finishing touches to the huge contraption. At the top, the drum of the washing machine had been tipped on end and attached to a sweeping brush handle that ran up the inside. The electric motor was at the bottom and attached via a belt made out of rubber with a variety of nylon brushes made from things in the kitchen and anything else they could find.

“Better test it first. Angela, you have long hair, would you touch the drum please?”

Angela scowled at him, but placed a finger on the drum. The Doctor started the motor as slowly as he could. Slowly her hair began to stand out straight from her head.

“I’ll never tire of that.” He grinned, as he switched the machine off. “Silver, are you ready?” She nodded. She had borrowed one of Angela’s small backpacks, and filled it with everything she thought she would need, including Angela’s entire stock of “incense”.

“We’re going to take this outside. I want you to start running before I switch on. It’ll give you a head start.” She nodded in silence. The words that the Doctor had said before were still sleetng through her mind, cold and penetrating.

The men in the bar helped the Doctor manhandle the Van de Graaff generator through the small doorway of the inn. Behind them trailed the extension cable. Outside, things had not got better. Through the thick mist came the sounds of crying and sobbing. At the end of the street an unseen pack of cats yowled and screeched, making everyone shiver in horror. The Doctor was left to pull the generator into the middle of the street, his face a mask of concentration as he fought to keep the monsters away from his conscious mind.

He knelt at the bottom of the machine, where it suddenly occurred to him that placing the switch on the machine itself had been quite a foolish thing to do. Obviously he hadn’t been thinking straight, or maybe something had distracted him. No, that train of thought was banished immediately. He turned the rheostat all the way around. Full speed. While externally the machine didn’t appear to have done anything, mentally the reaction was instantaneous...

* * * *

Silver ran to the stone circle with her small bag from the shop rattling and bouncing on her back. Behind her the mist was gathering itself together. The malevolence was almost palpable, making the hairs on the back of her neck stand upright as fear crawled across her skin...

She’d never seen the circle before, but as Angela had said, it was easy to get to. It was now more of a triangle than a circle now, with most of the stones missing. On one edge, though,

was the Devil's eye. A huge, circular, standing stone glistening faintly in the moonlight as dew condensed on the ice-cold blue rock. Silver was in new territory now. She understood that the Doctor was relying on her to do this, but it seemed so unscientific for him to let her do it. Panting as she reached the centre of the circle, she unceremoniously upended her backpack onto the grass.

Grabbing the protection oil that she had taken from the shop, she ran around the circle sprinkling it liberally but leaving a gap where the Devil's eye stood. With that finished, she ran backwards and forwards across the circle to create the pentangle for the spell. In the centre she piled the incense sticks and the wood, doused them thoroughly in lighter fluid and threw a match on. The small pile erupted in a bright orange flame with surprisingly little smoke. Quickly, she ruffled through the pages to find the protection spell, but the bright yellow post-it she used to mark the page with had fallen out.

The first tendrils of mist were creeping across the moor now, as the bulk of it rose out of the village. She had no idea what the Doctor had done, but whatever it was, it had worked and was on its way. She finally found the spell and started the short chant.

* * * *

The static discharge from the Van de Graaff generator had more than done its job, and now the Doctor was genuinely running for his lives. The mist was all around him; although the intelligence within it was still disoriented from the discharge from the generator he could feel it probing his mind again. It was trying to break down the barriers he had set up when Silver had slipped away. Now that he had charged the creature, he had to discharge it. And the only place to do that was at the stone circle, which was where he was running to now.

Silver finished the spell. Around her, the mist was thickening but not entering the circle that she had drawn. The oil on the short grass glistened silver and orange, reflecting the crisp moonlight and the bright flames from the fire. At the edges the mist writhed and probed.

"I stand in circles of light that nothing may cross. I stand in circles of light that nothing may cross," she whispered to herself, repeating the words over and over as she turned in a slow circle on the spot. The warmth from the fire seemed to be retreating, as dew began to form on the grass. It was getting colder. The fire heat of the day was being leached away.

"Need..."

Silver span around, her skin crawling as the cold began to penetrate her thin summer clothes. The voice was a whisper on the wind, subtle and as chilling as the air.

"What do you want?" She shouted.

"You..."

Silver shivered. The dew was beginning to turn white as the temperature dropped further. Near the fire was a smooth pebble that she had picked up from the beach earlier in the day. As she went to pick it up once again, she touched the earth beneath. Under her hand the ground rang like a bell. She quickly pulled her boots off. Standing on the ground she felt the power rise up from the circle around her.

"If you want me, then come and get me. You know how to come in here. I left the door open." She turned to face the Devil's eye. As implacable as ever, the solid stone ring sparkled in its frosted coating. Around it, the mist bunched together in its monstrous form. Silver took a step forward. Beneath her bare foot she felt the frost crinkle and crunch, and then she felt the ice-cold water against her skin and the earth beneath.

Connected, she took another step. Her senses felt expanded; around her she felt the nature of the beast in the mist – knew its history, what had happened to it in times of the distant past. Why it had become what it was. How it had lost sight. Then beyond the mist, where all the inhabitants of Earth shared their lives together. The subtle motion as the oceans exerted their influence on Earth's gravitational field, the magnetic lines arcing gracefully through space, the feel of the solar wind brushing through her hair. Touching the Goddess that she had read so much about. Then using the power, pulling the entity in the mist through the Devil's eye, freeing the trapped souls that it had killed and sending it on its way...

* * * *

“Silver? Silver. It’s time to wake up.” She looked up at the Doctor’s concerned face. He smiled. “How do you feel?”

She smiled back, the memory sparkling like a jewel.

“I feel...stronger.”

“Good.” He hugged her as she sat up.

“Doctor, I...”

“Shhh...it couldn’t go on, and it wouldn’t let go. We all do what we have to do, regardless of how ugly or repugnant it might seem.”

“I think I touched her.” The Doctor raised his eyebrows as he helped Silver to her feet.

“Believe what you experience, and don’t ask anyone else for an explanation. I could give you my view, but it might not equate with your spiritual experience.” He sighed deeply. “Treasure it. It will give you strength when you need it most.” He winked, and then turned on his famous ten thousand watt grin.

“Come along, I owe Angela a new washing machine.”

Above them, the stars twinkled in the clear night sky as they walked slowly back into the quiet village.

JEFF TAYLOR

Born in Cardiff, Wales, in November 1971; Jeff has been a long time writer and amateur author. With a number of technical articles published, his passion is for horror, sci-fi and fantasy writing. Jeff has also been compared with Ann Rice amongst other authors, something he is extremely proud of. Jeff is married, with one cat and now lives in Kent, England.

