

THE  
**DOCTOR WHO**  
PROJECT

**THE CAGED ANGEL**



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Rachel glanced up at the bland white ceiling of her living quarters in the TARDIS. All of the roundels sat uniformly in line while a strange alien energy hummed through its nameless material.

The silk sheets of her bed were smooth and gentle against her skin. She would spend hours relaxing against their tranquil texture. At moments like these she could forget everything; there were no worries, no sorrows, no pain.

She stretched her limbs out and groaned, disrupting the moment of peace and silence. The youngster then glided towards her dresser and glanced into the shining mirror that sat perched on top. Her hair was a mess as usual; she hadn't bothered to highlight any streaks today. She felt bare, mainly around her neck and fingers. There was no sight of her silver trinkets that made her shine out from the crowd, the objects that made her who she was.

Silver.

Hanging on the corner of the mirror was a moonstone necklace, one of her favourites. She lifted it from its position with her black nail-painted fingers and settled it around her neck. A warm buzz engulfed her body as she felt the material's energy flow through her. Its vibration resonated into her very soul and the 15-year-old knew now what pure harmony felt like.

Then the tremor began.

\* \* \* \*

Silver ventured through the chaos-ridden corridors of the ancient time vessel. Small sparks and zaps occasionally flew from the glowing roundels while the floor gently swayed from side to side like the swings at her local park. The situation did not seem too serious; the TARDIS wasn't being attacked, more like a nudge.

She flung open the console chamber door to find the Doctor performing his usual sprint-around-the-console-hitting-as-many-levers-as-possible routine.

"Do I need an invitation to join this party?" she said over the randomly changing hum of the time machine.

The Time Lord took no notice of her comment and simply began to rattle away at the buttons on a keyboard that protruded from the console. A small spark flew from in between the alien lettered buttons while Silver stepped up to the machine trying to make sense of what was going on.

"What is it this time? Black hole? Alien invaders? Or did you just let the toast burn? Again."

"At the moment my dear Silver, I'm inclined to agree with all four of those suggestions. And for your information, I loathe burnt toast."

Silver reacted to the Doctor's movement of hitting the scanner lever and gazed up at the ceiling. A glowing image of deep space sparked to life. In the left hand corner was a purple stain of energy that warped and distorted the stars and space nearby.

"*Psychedelic colours man*, looks like something out of a music video," commented Silver while leaning back against the console.

"It's a bruise in the fabric of space itself, lets be thankful it's not a temporal disturbance or we'd be in a lot of trouble. It's almost like a fist trying to punch its way into this reality."

"Is that bad?"

"It is for anyone who has the misfortune to be caught up in the spatial disturbance, they'd find themselves turned inside out and maybe even flung into another reality."

"A simple yes would've done."

The Doctor switched off the scanner ceiling and returned to his tinkering. His face suddenly dropped after the console began to make an unusual groaning like an ancient wooden sailing ship against the water.

"That sound wouldn't happen to be a bad thing would it?"

"The TARDIS is being dragged into the bruise," said the Doctor while grabbing hold of the console for safety.

"I thought you said that would turn us inside out!"

“A normal space vessel: yes, as for the TARDIS, she’s *virtually* indestructible, but I’ve never had the pleasure of passing through a spatial bruise.”

Silver mirrored the Doctor by grabbing the console; this reaction was caused by the ever increasing volume of the groaning time ship.

“Hold tight...!”

“Can’t you do anything to break free? You’ve always had something up your sleeves!”

“The power is too strong! It’s distorting the time and space drives!”

Silver heard a slight dip in the TARDIS’ usual hum. “Here it comes,” said the Doctor as reality seemed to stretch itself around the time capsule...

\* \* \* \*

The Doctor stepped out through the police box doors to survey their surroundings: a simple, white, empty room. No windows, doors, or furniture.

“Good girl,” he said quietly while patting the rough paintwork coating on one of the corners.

“Is it safe?” asked Silver’s muffled voice from the TARDIS interior.

“Yes, in fact I’d go as far to say that everything is ‘normal’.”

The Doctor knew he’d live to regret saying that.

He turned around to see his young companion step out from the police box and gaze around at the disappointing surroundings.

“I thought we were meant to be splattered across the star system! Or land in another reality!” demanded Silver, sounding disappointed.

“Well, there are other alternatives,” said the Doctor while rubbing the back of his neck.

“Such as?”

“Well, you’ll know what they are once we’re finished here, you can rest assured.”

The Doctor marched towards the opposite wall and stroked his hand across its surface. He stopped and began to scratch his goatee.

“It’s definitely not brick or wood. But it’s obvious that this room has no purpose, so why put it here in the first place?”

“Perhaps we’re in some kind of building, and it was sealed up?”

“It’s possible, but there’s light in here. I can’t detect any fluorescent chemicals embedded in the material, so perhaps the material itself produces light.”

Silver marched away from the TARDIS’ police box exterior and joined the Doctor, who seemed to be deep in thought.

“Is there any point in staying? Sure, we got sucked into a spatial bruise thingy and ended up in an empty room, big deal. Haven’t you had enough techno-jargon for one day? Let’s just leave in the TARDIS, shall we?” The Doctor awoke from his concentration and glanced down at his friend.

“There’s something here Silver, something in the corner of my mind, like a whisper, calling out to me...”

“Doctor!” gasped Silver while her gaze was fixed on the TARDIS, or rather, where the TARDIS should have been. “It’s gone!”

“That’s impossible,” roared the Doctor, while stamping towards its previous location. “It was here only a second ago: it couldn’t have vanished that quickly.”

“That means we’re trapped, with no food or water, we don’t even know how much air – “. She suddenly stopped in mid sentence.

The Doctor turned around to find that Silver, just like the TARDIS, had vanished.

\* \* \* \*

She awoke from her deep sleep. Was it a deep sleep? How could she tell? She may have only been asleep for a matter of minutes, or even seconds. She surveyed her surroundings; it was a room, a

child's room, full of dolls and feminine colours. Her duvet cover was pink with yellow flowers. She touched the material with her small hands.

"Where am I?" she asked herself while continuing to gaze around.

Everything in the room seemed to be out of proportion, like an amateur comic strip. The room itself was gigantic, and her bed followed suit. It was far too big for her. A small wave of vertigo hit her.

She leaned over to look down at the distant floor. Scattered around were toys, chairs and lamps, some that matched her petit size, some that even a fairytale giant would complain about. With little effort, she slid under the covers and slipped down the side of the bed to the ground. Even though it was quite a distance, the fall did not register any discomfort or pain. It was as though gravity slowed down for a few moments. The little girl, whoever and wherever she was, made her way towards the exit that shaped itself into a giant wooden door, slightly ajar.

With her fragile fingers, she pushed it open and stepped out onto a rather normal landing. Up ahead was a large flight of steps. She rushed down them hastily as the questions rushed through her head like a driver fuelled with road rage. Where am I? Who am I? Where did I come from? Am I really here? All of them boiling down to the same word...why?

The girl, whoever, or indeed whatever she was, found herself in a dining room. But from the decorations, it was obviously a special day for someone, or something. A giant multicoloured banner stretched across the wall with the words *HAPPY BIRTHDAY RACHEL* patterned in a suited font. Sparkling confetti was scattered on the long wooden table and on the tiled floor. Back on the dining table were heaps of beautifully wrapped presents piled on top of each other.

The girl, whoever she was, jumped with fright as a door at the opposite end of the dining room creaked open and in stepped a beautiful young woman in her late thirties. She wore a cream cotton bathrobe and had silk hazel hair tied back. The woman made her way towards the girl and knelt down to be face to face with her. She then proceeded to hug her tightly and kiss her on the cheek.

"Happy birthday, sweetie," she said while letting the girl go. "How does my princess feel to be five years old?"

The girl took a few moments to take things in. She glanced back up at the banner and paid specific attention to the name. Am I Rachel?

"It's my birthday?"

"Of course, silly. Are you okay, sweetie?"

"I think so." My name is Rachel, today is my birthday and I'm five years old. Is this real? Am I really just a little girl living a normal life?

"Good, so you're well enough to open these presents. Lets get started, shall we?"

Rachel felt something stir inside her...an instinct. She quickly felt around her neck and found a beautifully crafted moonstone necklace. Her precious fingers stroked the chain and patterns that were marked into it. A buzzing energy seemed to flood from the materials and engulf her body. It was an enlightening feeling. She felt safe while wearing it. She felt whole. Yet something was still missing.

Her mind snapped back to the present situation and found that the woman, presumably her mother, had placed a large rectangular present in front of her.

"Well, aren't you gonna open it?"

"No!" screamed Rachel. "I don't want this! I don't want any of it! I don't need it! Just who are you?"

'What's wrong sweetie? You can't have a birthday without presents,' said the bemused woman.

"Its not my birthday and I don't want any presents!"

"Now look here young lady, your father and I spent a lot of money on this day to make it perfect for you. I'm not going to let you be in a mood and ruin everything." Her voice was strong and bursting with authority – she fitted the category of a mother perfectly. The argument was halted as the door opened again and a tall man with messy uncombed hair entered. His face was stern yet soft,

the kind of face that could be incredibly kind and fun, while still having the power to be strict and serious. It was Aaron. Her father.

“What’s going on down here, then? We can’t let anything ruin the birthday girl’s big day.” Rachel held the moonstone necklace even tighter. Things could only get worse.

“Rachel’s having a bit of a strop. She won’t open any of her presents and is being downright rude. I don’t think she should have a birthday at all,” said her mother. Deborah.

Aaron marched over towards his daughter and looked piercingly at her. His eyes then moved down to her neck where her hands were.

“What’s that you’re holding?”

Rachel quickly turned around, her hands still clasped around the necklace, unaware that her father could now see the silver chain streaming across the back of her neck. He quickly snatched at it and it came away in his hands.

“Give it back!” cried Rachel.

“What are you doing with a grubby little thing like this?” he said while surveying the necklace.

“It’s mine! You can’t have it!”

“I know what to do with this piece of scrap.” Aaron marched past Deborah and out into the hallway with Rachel chasing behind. He made his way towards an old and broken wooden door. He swung it open to reveal a set of steps that led down into an engulfing darkness. Darkness so strong that it could swallow a sun in minutes, leaving no trace.

It was the cellar.

He wouldn’t.

He couldn’t.

She thought back to the endless nights of unexplained noises coming from the cellar. It was where the monsters lived. They had tried to get her many times, but she had raced back to her safe haven, under her bed. They couldn’t touch her there. But the monsters were getting stronger, so strong that even Mom and Dad couldn’t hold them.

Rachel felt time slow down as her father flung the moonstone necklace down into the cellar. Down into the darkness...

\* \* \* \*

The Doctor was running from the monsters right now...

His legs felt as though they might give way any second. He’d been running for eternity and the monsters didn’t stop chasing after him.

He glanced back and saw a silver-skinned tiger gnashing its teeth and roaring, its smooth and solid legs never ceasing to move. Next to it were two bumbling Punch and Judy puppets, a menacing laughter bellowing from their carved wooden mouths.

“Submit! SUBMIT NOW!” ululated a demonic voice that might have echoed from the fires of hell itself.

“You’ll have to catch me first!” shouted a defiant Doctor. Where exactly was he? It seemed to be some bizarre dreamscape with no physical presence; it was mostly a void with occasional flashes of light that shot past. But that didn’t really matter. Nothing did. All he had to do was find Silver and escape: all in a days work.

Just keep on running...

\* \* \* \*

Rachel clung onto the banister with her sweaty hands as the pounding grew louder. The monsters were angry. She didn’t know what she had done to make them like this, but they were trying to escape.

The cellar door seemed to be made of rubber. Every time the monsters beat against the wood, it would bulge out violently. Rachel closed her eyes as the tears began to stream out again. *What can I do? I can't get the necklace back; it's in the cellar, and that's where the monsters live.* Was it a necklace? Or was it a ring? What was it? She couldn't remember...

"I'm off to work, Deb; I'll see you later alright?"

Rachel's eyes shot towards Aaron, who was standing at the front door. He was now wearing a shirt and tie with a briefcase held in his hand. He couldn't leave! He had to protect her.

The youngster raced down the staircase and towards her father. She tugged at his sleeve while tears rolled down her cheeks. She suddenly realized that the sound of people singing could be heard. People of all ages seemed to be chanting "happy birthday".

"What is it, Rachel?" asked an irritated Aaron.

"Don't leave me, Daddy, they're trying to get out, the monsters are trying to get out!"

"Let go, Rachel, you're fourteen years old, act your age!" His eyes narrowed. "You've been on drugs again, haven't you? Don't you know what a disappointment you've been to us? Taking drugs by the age of twelve! Who the hell do you think you are?"

Rachel cried more at his confusing words.

Who am I?

The front door slammed in her face. She suddenly screamed in sheer terror as the cellar entrance was blown off its hinges.

\* \* \* \*

*The transcendental numeral beginning with 3.14159 or more commonly know as pi is a mathematical figure used for solving the area of a circle by multiplying 'pi' by the squared radius of the subject circle...*

The perfectly crafted Punch and Judy figures pulled the straps tighter with their rough wooden hands as the prisoner continued to mutter meaningless gibberish. He quickly flinched as the leather buckles strapped him harder to the operating table.

The silver skinned lion sniffed the prisoner's body and bared its fangs towards his face. Its attempt at delivering a wave of fear had failed.

"Submit now!" thundered the demonic voice. "Open your mind to me. I must know your fears, your memories. Your weaknesses!"

The Time Lord was not listening...

*Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall...x must equal nine for the equation to make sense, although there is the problem of square-rooting the fifth set of brackets to make y the subject...unless it's a cubic equation...hmmm...hadn't thought of that...Pop goes the weasel...Humpty dumpty sat on a wall...of course that isn't correct...Humpty Dumpty...*

"Yes, of course! A perfect defence barrier of useless gibberish preventing any external force from entering. Well done Doctor, that was clever of you," he said to himself with immense satisfaction.

The Time Lord glanced around to confirm that his attempt had succeeded. He was inside his own mind. His voice could be heard a hundred times over as equations, nursery rhymes, song lyrics and even the Galactic Cup quarter final results echoed throughout. Utter gibberish that would give any sane person a nasty headache.

"All very well Doctor, but we can't stay here forever..."

\* \* \* \*

Her breathing was growing louder and faster.

Rachel lay face down on the patch of carpet underneath her bed. Her face was pressed deeply into her crossed arms to prevent any of the monsters finding her. It was of no consequence that her bed was three times bigger than any ordinary one; in fact, she wouldn't even reach the

mattress by jumping let alone stretching. Just as long as she was under her bed, in her safe haven, she was protected.

Everything seemed to have quietened down; the only sound was her fast paced breathing that had now begun to slow. Rachel raised her head to check to see if everything was as normal as it sounded. Up ahead she saw the open door. Beyond that was the landing and staircase. Just one quick run was all it required, down the stairs, through the dining room, and out to the door. Then she'd be free. Free from the monsters.

In the spur of the moment she was already on the landing, her fragile legs speeding down the staircase managing not to trip once. Her destination was in sight: the front door, unfortunately, like her bed, it was three times bigger than usual. She lifted her head to catch sight of the handle. It was out of stretching distance, but she wasn't going to give up so easily. The youngster dipped down a few inches before shooting up at the handle, missing at first, she tried again several more times before realizing it was futile.

The five-year-old took a few steps back before charging at full speed at the wooden surface. As her arm connected with the door she let out a small cry of pain. The door was not even scratched; she tried again, and again, until the bruise on her arm swelled up enormously.

"What do you think you're doing?" asked her mother demandingly as she stepped into the hallway.

"You have to open the door. Now!" said Rachel while clutching her battered arm. She could begin to feel the tears well up in her eye sockets.

Deborah sighed. "I don't understand you sometimes."

"That's the point!" she screamed. "You never have!"

The first tear splashed against the carpet.

\* \* \* \*

Why was his body throbbing with pain? He couldn't remember being in any accident or fight. Perhaps it was just a trick, some impulse inserted into his brain to make him feel pain, even though there was no damage to his body. Perhaps it was emotional pain? No. He was sure that it was physical pain.

The Doctor opened his eyes slowly. He was looking up at a white blank ceiling. He was back in the room. The room of no escape. His body seemed to creak with age as he got to his feet. He did a run-through of all the physical damage he could see or feel: a cut lip, black eye, bruised leg and burnt hand. Only minor things, but that thought would not make the pain go away. Only time would do that.

Something was wrong.

He glanced around, everything seemed to be the same as before, the same empty room, Silver and the TARDIS still vanished. But there was something else in the room. Up ahead was a long dining table cluttered with precious china teapots and teacups. On the china plates were mouth-watering cakes with rich icing and gleaming red cherries. There was an old and frail woman sitting at the table, wearing a black Victorian dress that straightened her figure upright. She was presently pouring milk into her own cup of tea and not taking any notice of the Doctor's arrival.

"I hope you're not going to stand there all day and wait for the tea to go cold," she said sternly but still not making eye contact.

The Doctor stepped forward as the woman gestured towards another chair at the opposite end of the table. He seated himself down and watched as another china cup materialized in front of him. There was a slice of lemon floating in the steaming brown liquid.

"I've never been too fond of lemon, which goes to show that your attempt to breach my mind was a complete and utter failure."

The elderly woman was irritated but tried her best not to show it. She simply closed her eyes and the Doctor's drink turned a creamy brown colour and the lemon vanished. He smiled and sipped from the china cup.

“Absolutely tasteless. It seems you’ve failed to excite my taste buds too. Just another psychic projection,” said the Doctor while settling the cup back on its saucer.

“An impressive one don’t you think?”

“Well naturally, to measure such a solid physical presence must make your power enormous. My cuts and bruises being another example of their power.”

“You flatter me Doctor; your powers are equally great. I found your neat trick of creating a barrier of nonsense very quaint.”

“Thank you, but the fact that you tried to breach my mind doesn’t make you one of the best hosts I’ve had the pleasure of meeting over the last few centuries. Now, why don’t we get down to business? What have you done with Silver and my TARDIS?”

“My dear Doctor, they’re right where you left them. I merely shifted their atoms and molecules onto a higher spectrum of light, making you unable to see or touch them in your own present body.”

A pause of silence settled in as the Doctor dealt with the shock.

“Well, if that isn’t the most advanced scientific technique in the universe, outside of my TARDIS naturally, I don’t know what is,” said a stunned Doctor, “but why don’t you just tell me exactly what you want with me and Silver? Who, or what, are you? It’s obvious to me your frail old body is just another psychic projection. Isn’t it about time the mask came off?”

“So many questions, yet so few answers. Well, if a fellow scientist wishes to exercise his enquiring mind then I see no harm. Very well, I hope you enjoy stories...”

\* \* \* \*

*The universe was but a few years into expansion when my species first crawled out of the primordial soup. Our bodies were advanced in evolution and within a few years we developed a primitive, well balanced agricultural society...*

The Doctor felt the stems of wheat brush against his sides as the sun shone down on his face. From his pocket he produced a pair of sunglasses, which he wore to gaze up at the clear purple sky.

“A true paradise, you must miss it deeply,” said the Doctor while smelling the air.

The elderly woman gestured towards the north area of the field where something, or someone, was using a wooden spade to dig up a small area of the land. The Doctor examined the alien figure in all its shining glory. It was a man, well built with strong muscles. He wore a spotless white toga and his skin was a beautiful tone of silver that glistened in the sunlight. Sprouting out of his back through the toga was a pair of white feather wings that would occasionally stretch out while the man stretched his arms. His face was blank with no hair, eye sockets or nostrils, just a smooth surface with slight indentations for the eyes.

“This is what your species looks like?”

“Yes.”

“It’s beautiful...the skin, the wings...everything.”

\* \* \* \*

*“That’s the point, you never understood me. You gave me everything I wanted but you couldn’t give me an understanding mother.”*

*“You’re pathetic. A shame to the family, taking drugs at twelve years old. Who the hell do you think you are?”*

*“Rachel, no that’s not it, something like metal, was that it? No, not metal, something else, please God tell me, what was my name, who am I, just tell me please!”*

*“Your father and I were devastated when we found out; the moment the news came we disowned you. You never tried to be part of the family, how could we love such a pathetic thing like you?”*

*“Where is it!? What have you done with it?”*

*“What are you talking about?”*

*“My ring, what have you done with it? Or was it a bracelet, no...it was a belt I’m sure of it...can’t go down there, the monsters live there. I’ve made them angry and now they’re after me.”*

*“Who’s going to protect you now? Your father and I don’t care what you do, just as long as we never see you again.”*

*“The Doctor will help me, he’s my friend, and he’d never leave me.”*

*“Who is the Doctor? Do you mean Doctor Henderson? The family doctor? He’s the only doctor you know.”*

*“You’re right, who am I talking about? I can’t remember his face. Why do I keep forgetting!? Wait, Shaun, he’ll protect me. I think...”*

*“Shaun, ah yes, I sense him in your mind, a dark shadow that you’ve tried to hide away...”*

*“No, don’t bring him back, forget what I said!”*

*“I thought he’d protect you? I thought he was your knight in shining armour?”*

*“No! Don’t bring him back! You can’t! Please, don’t bring him back!”*

\* \* \* \*

*One special ability that our race had from birth was tremendous psychic powers that we developed through scientific advancement...*

The Doctor leaned over a small computer bank among several that covered the right hand wall. Alien figures and letters whizzed past in a complicated equation. The Doctor looked up at what all the machines were charting, a small experiment into psychic abilities. In the centre of the room was another “angel”, like the man in the wheat field. This time it was a slim woman hooked up to a maze of wires and circuit boards.

“As well as psychic experiments, we researched into the atomic configuration of matter, which we could re-configure into anything at all. Grass into gold, wood into computer chips. Anything.”

“Who made these discoveries? They deserve more than just a pat on the back.”

The psychic projection quickly shifted to a black empty void. In the centre a random spotlight shone upon a limestone statue of another angel being. This one was male with fewer muscles and its featureless face managed to look sharp.

“Is this the man you have to thank?”

“Demetrius Acoda, chief commander of science. He was much more than any of the others. He was a god!” said the elderly woman, while looking on in pride at the statue.

“What happened to Demetrius, to your race?”

“They, decided they had reached their limit – they were content with their present mastery over the psychic and physical worlds,” said the frail and wrinkled woman. She seemed angry and bitter. “This decision made Demetrius’ position useless. It made all his work pointless if it was just to stop there. There were so many new regions to be explored and mastered, things you couldn’t even dream of.

“And so the chief commander of science secretly carried on with his experiments, perfecting himself into something greater than any puny god. And with his new powers he gave his people an ultimatum. Follow him in his scientific venture to perfection, or be destroyed, slowly, and painfully.”

“Could he do such a thing?”

“Oh yes, with his new powers he could do anything.”

“What did they do, your race: did they give in to his ultimatum?”

The spotlight went out and all was dark.

“A council meeting was held. A representative then went to meet with Demetrius in a secret location. He revealed that our people would follow him in his conquest. Demetrius wasn’t to know that it was all a charade. The council had laid out a trap and the scientist was imprisoned in a

mirror cage that copied his atomic and psychic level and adjusted it to always remain a level higher –

“ – so no matter how many times he tried to change his bodily spectrum, the cage walls would be more dense making it impossible for him to pass through them. Very ingenious.”

“A primitive toy,” scoffed the woman. “Then they flung the cage out into the shadow dimensions. Demetrius was trapped for centuries. His body soon died and decayed, until only his mind was left.”

“I’d be a fool not to see a pattern here,” realized the Doctor.

The elderly woman quickly disappeared in a flash leaving the Doctor alone in the void. He did a slow 360 degree turn to check that it was only him.

“I am Demetrius!” thundered a low pitched demonic voice.

“I gathered that. Imprisoned and alone in an empty room, your body no longer exists; you’re just a husk of energy living on the desire for revenge.”

“Like it or not Doctor, you shall be my salvation! You shall pilot your TARDIS out of this pathetic cage with me on board. I shall be free again!”

“I’m afraid that’s not in my job description, Demetrius.”

The Doctor began to lose balance as the non-floor beneath him shook violently.

“I can’t do it, Demetrius!”

The Doctor fell to the floor as standing became impossible. He desperately searched for something to grab onto, but there was nothing.

“You will Doctor, you will!”

A high pitched whine like a zap of energy began to reverberate throughout the void. It seared into the Doctor’s mind and burnt away at it slowly. He clutched his head in agony while the non-floor tossed him around.

“Submit Doctor! You shall free me, and Demetrius shall be ruler over all!”

\* \* \* \*

The Doctor felt the non-floor vanish beneath him as he was flung out into an abyss of darkness and pain. His head was throbbing and felt as though it might explode. He clutched it tightly, trying to find a distraction, anything that might help him: but there was only an ever-growing, never-dying pain.

“Please, you must stop this. If I die you’ll never escape,” he groaned through gritted teeth. “Please, stop!”

Just as the Doctor was thrown over the edge and all sanity seemed to have disappeared, the pain vanished. With frail eyes he watched as the void faded around him and he was back in the room. Standing over his battered body was a middle aged man in a black pin striped suit and a bowler hat.

“Has the fashion season changed again?” asked the Doctor, struggling with every syllable.

“Doctor, let’s get things straight. I’ve been here longer than you could have dreamed. I was ancient even when your pathetic race discovered fire. But of course it didn’t take long for me to hatch an escape plan.”

“Well, I’m lying right here, aren’t I?”

“That’s where you’re wrong Doctor; you are simply my back-up plan. Over the centuries I’ve managed to lure in space travellers through a psychic signal. With the help of the projections, I subjected them to severe emotional trauma that I converted into pure energy.”

“The complete transformation of energy...”

“Using that energy I could use it to break down the walls of this ancient cage, like a rusting metal they already begin to crumble and decay.”

“So it’s you that’s causing the spatial bruise. This area of space is getting quite a nasty kick from that energy.”

“Soon the walls will collapse completely, with the help of one more subject...your companion.”

The Doctor was on his feet instantly to face Demetrius.

“So that’s what you’ve done with Silver, and if you think I’ll stand by while you torment her with pathetic toys like this,” the Doctor shot his hand through the body of the projection, which moved freely like passing through air, “then you have another thing coming.”

“You are in no position to make threats, Doctor,” whispered Demetrius. “Young Rachel proves to have quite a history. The emotional trauma will probably kill her, and then I shall be free.”

“I won’t let you harm her, you...you animal!”

“That is up to you Doctor. You, Silver and I may leave in the TARDIS, or we can wait for your friend to die painfully as the ghosts from her past drag her down further and further –”

“Enough!” The Doctor felt his hands shaking. An unknown emotion was beginning to register. It was fear. Fear for his best friend. He let out a deep breath and nodded.

Demetrius smiled with satisfaction, there was an echoing fuzzy noise like a burst of energy as the TARDIS materialized back in the room, in the same spot where the Doctor had left it. The Doctor felt drained as he trudged towards his ship, his home. Within an instant he unlocked the doors and was surrounded by the rejuvenating hum of the time vessel. His fingers glided over the panels of the console as he felt the presence of Demetrius behind him.

“Sorry about this, old chap,” sighed the Doctor as he violently slammed forward a black spherical ended lever. The movement triggered alien-like bells to ring out through the chamber like a cathedral. The battle-worn Doctor shot his head back and embraced the holy energy as it flooded through his alien body. Underneath the chimes he could here someone screaming. It was Demetrius.

He glanced back and saw the man in the bowler hat explode out of existence with a look of agonising pain on his face. But why should he care? Even if it was extremely satisfying...

\* \* \* \*

Demetrius felt the sensation of pain begin to fade as he took immediate control. He was back in his cage, the surroundings that had haunted him for far too long. And yet only moments ago he had been free, until the foolish Time Lord did...something. But how did he end up back here?

He shot a glance at the police box exterior in time to see the doors slam shut.

“Can you here me out there? I’m using the external broadcast system –”

“What have you done, you fool? I’ll kill you for this!”

“I boosted the temporal grace fields. Rejuvenating for me, but for a nasty blob of energy like you, well, I expect you’ve had better days –”

“Open the doors at once!”

“No. They will remain closed and that’s the way they’ll stay until I’ve finished here. Goodbye.”

If Demetrius had any blood, it would have been rising and boiling by the second. The psychic projection let out an ear-piercing roar of rage...

\* \* \* \*

Rachel sheltered the cigarette as the lighter sparked into life and the end illuminated. She threw the smooth metal device back onto the bedside table where she found it and took a drag of the cigarette. The smoke rose to smother her face as she took in every choking fragment.

The bedroom had a slanted roof, since this was the attic section of the house. The unmade bed stretched beyond her feet a few inches and the floor was cluttered with dirty plates covered in solidified half eaten food. Cigarette butts and ash were littered everywhere and any ashtray in sight was bursting at the seams. There were no syringes in sight but Rachel was sure there were some lurking in the drawers. The stereo was pounding out some new indie band as a drum solo went into full swing.

She felt slightly nervous and so ventured out through the door and across the hallway to the bathroom door. She pushed it open slightly to glance at the mirror where she saw *his* reflection. Shaun Peterson, the infamous seventeen-year-old of Shepherds Avenue, small time crook, thief and drug dealer. At the moment he had a belt wrapped tightly around his wrist and a syringe breaching one of his polluted veins.

“You wanna beer Shaun?” she asked, trying not to look his reflection in the eye.

“Sure,” he said. The word was muffled through his teeth that clenched the end of the belt.

Rachel hurried down the carpeted stairs and into the cool aired kitchen. While collecting two bottles of alcohol from the fridge and returning to Shaun’s bedroom she tried not to think of what she saw in the bathroom. *That* kind of drug was a bit too extreme for her. Sure, she was no angel to preach, but taking the needle was a bit too far for her.

She took a swig of the beer and settled back against the soft duvet of the bed, blotting out the shouts of her parents. Every day was the same; even if she did go to school she’d end up fighting with her parents. Telling her to “act her age”, she was fourteen years old, and more responsible than them.

*Was she fourteen? She was sure she was younger, five years old? No fourteen, she was fourteen.*

Things had been weird like that lately, short memory lapses, probably too much dope, but they were getting almost...“painful”. She made herself comfortable and closed her eyes; she needed to relax more, relaxing that didn’t mean drinking.

*“When I look at you I don’t even see my own daughter anymore!” screamed her mother.*

Rachel snapped her eyes open and grabbed her beer. She kept on drinking till it was half empty. Or half full as an optimist would say, but to her it was always half empty. She then reached for the full ashtray and took a few drags from her cigarette. The bedroom door quickly slammed open and Shaun marched in towards a set of drawers. He opened the top one and fished out a bag of white powder from his jean pocket and flung it into the compartment.

“So Rachel, I didn’t invite you round here for coffee and a chat. You still haven’t paid me for the last batch.”

“I’ll get it soon, all right?”

“Not all right, I’m not a big one for charity. That stuff costs money, and don’t think you’re special enough to get it for free.”

“Tomorrow, I promise, you’ll get it then.”

Shaun dived his hand into his back pocket and produced a switchblade. The sharp metal flicked out and Rachel found her face near the receiving end.

“You’d better; I wouldn’t want you to get that pretty face of yours in a mess.”

Rachel knew he wasn’t lying. She’d known a guy who lived a few blocks down who’d been stabbed in the shoulder four times. He didn’t tell the police, no one did, not when you were dealing with Shaun. He’d worm his way into your life and discover every dark secret, and if there weren’t any, he’d make sure there was.

“Just remember who I am. I’m the guy who was there for you when your parents stopped loving you. I never moaned about your grades or what you got up to. I let you do what you wanted to do, and you could trust me. I’m all you have, so don’t mess around with me, understand?”

Rachel nodded in defeat as her dealer threw the switchblade into the centre of a dartboard that hung against the smoke stained walls. Just another show of authority. The trouble was that it was succeeding.

Shaun had his power over everyone, including Rachel.

*It was only meant to be a quick job, how could she have been so stupid? Just a few words to the cops was all it took. She’d planned it out perfectly, but just one mistake was all it took. That one mistake...of telling Shaun what she was doing. She had to do it, to teach that creep Josh a lesson, he wouldn’t leave her alone, but he wasn’t half as bad as Shaun, he didn’t have the power. That’s why it should have been so easy...*

Rachel watched as Shaun reached for the beer that she had bought up for him. He looked very stable even with a shot of heroin corroding at his body. But there was something else in him that was too dangerous, the knowledge that could get her in trouble with cops. It had seemed like a lifetime ago...

*The sweat pouring off her forehead. The darkness of the electronics store. Her prize waiting in the shadows at the back of the counter. Innocent victims silently asleep upstairs in their beds.*

Josh had just been a high school jerk. A skinny pervert who tried to ask her out. She rejected him so he started acting all hard and bad like he was some kind of 'death row gangster'. His perverse face would always be there in the background, thinking up new even more pathetic insults to shout across the room so the whole class heard. But they all knew he was just another "high school jerk". But then he went over the edge, he said *those words*, she'd been so furious, she could have swung out at him. Kick him to the floor and not stop, rage boiling in her blood, screaming till her throat split in two. All to see that pervert's blood on the floor.

The TV in her bedroom had broken down a few days ago and she didn't have the money for a new one. There was no point asking her family, since they stopped loving her years ago. But then the idea hit her. Josh's dad supposedly owned an electronics store on June Street. The perfect crime; she didn't care who got hurt, she'd been hurt a thousand times, over and over again. *What did they know of pain? What did they know of emotional pain that would leave you crippled till the day you died?*

The robbery was pretty quick, but when she got home, that was when the nightmare happened. She crept upstairs with the cheap, small, yet heavy television in her arms. Her parents were fast asleep, not caring where she'd been. They'd learn to live with it and not care. But as her bedroom door creaked open, she saw Shaun sitting there patiently on her bed. *He'd seen her at the electronics store. He'd made a dark secret for her. Blackmail. He owned her now...*

She forgot it quickly and buried it in the graveyard that sat at the back of her mind, where all the sorrows, the pain, the memories, waited. They'd break out soon.

\* \* \* \*

*Thoughts and images flew past as the Doctor ventured into a noisy and packed region. The intricate mathematics and energy of the psychic projections were incredible and almost overwhelming. He had to find Silver, but it could be very easy to get lost in this obscure maze. Reaching his mind out into the world of illusion had involved opening a hole in the TARDIS' force field, a weakness that Demetrius wouldn't be able to spot with his limited knowledge of the time vessel.*

*Another image flashed by and encircled his mind. A cellar door made of rubber, someone or something seemed to be beating against it and trying to get out. No Silver here. He had to keep searching; there was no question of turning back...*

\* \* \* \*

She took a drag of her cigarette and felt the smoke build up more tar in her lungs. Every fresh breath turned into a blackened coal chunk. Everything she touched was tainted. Corrupted. Diseased.

She glanced down at her bare arms and studied their stone coloured texture; a flake of ash from the cigarette end dropped onto her skin and made a sudden crack in the stonework. *Should her body really be made of stone? Did she even care?*

The smoke seemed to trap her like a cage, a prison that wouldn't let her go. Just like the pain, she was trapped, no way of letting anyone know. An eternity of sorrow in a cage of depression.

\* \* \* \*

*A weeping mother. An angry father. A gigantic bed that had a heavenly glow. Familiar faces. He still couldn't find her.*

The Doctor discarded the psychic projection that did not contain his friend. It was dangerous to stay here for too long, Demetrius would certainly find him soon.

*A disgusting messy room filled with cigarettes smoke and beer bottles. A teenager reading a music magazine. An old woman sitting on the bed with skin made of cracked stone....Silver?*

The Doctor did not discard this projection. With his mind he stepped through and it became his surroundings. It was hard to keep a grip on the image as his own body flickered in and out of this non-reality like a ghost.

He could feel tears welling in the back of his eyes as he gazed upon his best friend. She was aging by the minute, her hair turning a silvery grey as her skin crumbled like corroded stone. Yet she acted normally and continued to smoke the shortening cigarette.

"Silver!" he roared in fear, the volume in his voice fading and rising along with his body. She couldn't hear him, but he wouldn't give in so easily.

"Silver, it's me! The Doctor. Please Silver, you have to listen to me," he pleaded. But it was no use; she was trapped in a world of her own, trapped in the projection. The Doctor doubted whether even he could get her out of it.

\* \* \* \*

Rachel put the cigarette out in the ashtray and felt her skin begin to soften again as the cracks sealed up. But the same pain was there. The same sadness.

Her body sank back into the duvet as she relaxed and let go of any tension. She glanced up at the clock that hung against the cheaply painted walls. The time piece matched the walls in being cheap, but there was something wrong with this specific clock. Both of the handles were whizzing round so fast they became blurred. An hour past, then another, and another. Time was having a day off, it seemed. And before Rachel could even blink, she had missed a whole day.

The handles stopped abruptly, and she looked down to see that Shaun had been watching the clock as well. A day had past. She promised to give him the money by now. She didn't have it. Worst of all, Shaun knew it. His solid gaze pierced through her skull as he stood up to face his victim.

"Where's the money?"

She crawled back against the wall at the top of the bed, the fear made her spine tremble. It was now or never. The deciding point.

"I don't have it. Shaun, you've gotta hear me out –"

"What did I say, Rachel! What did I say would happen if I didn't get the money?" The switchblade was back and glinting in the rays of the light bulb. 'I'm going to enjoy this,' he sneered. Within an instant the switchblade was gripped between his teeth and he lunged onto the bed.

Rachel tried to resist as he carefully yet quickly pinned both her arms and legs down. A rank smell of alcohol and dope entered her nostrils causing her stomach to churn.

Pain. Sorrow. No Escape. She'd spent her whole life hurting people. Now Shaun was going to show her what those people felt like...

\* \* \* \*

On the inside, Demetrius was smiling. He could sense the Doctor worming his way in and out of the psychic projection that consumed the girl's out-of-sight body.

One of the doors on the strange wooden box swung inwards and the Doctor marched out gloomily. They both knew that he had been defeated. Demetrius could smell the freedom as it began to grow inside him.

“Tut tut tut Doctor. Thought you could reach out to your young friend in the projection? She’s been in there too long; it is the only reality she knows now. The pain has trapped her and dragged her down, she has forgotten all about you.”

“Stop it, please. You can do what you like, kill me, take my TARDIS, anything, just stop torturing Silver like this!”

The man in the bowler hat disappeared in a flash and a few feet away, the body of Silver materialized. The Doctor rushed over to her and became frightened as her body jerked violently and writhed in a fit....

\* \* \* \*

...she managed to wedge her leg free and with all the strength in her polluted body, kicked the corrupt drug dealer back against the wall. The switchblade dropped from his yellow teeth and fell against the stained carpet...

\* \* \* \*

He tried to hold her body down, but some inhuman strength had overcome her as she began to convulse.

“Please, Silver, listen to me!” he pleaded.

*In a high spectrum of space, in a dark lonely corner, Demetrius was smiling.*

\* \* \* \*

...Rachel regained her composure and dived for the switchblade.

*She’d spent her whole life hurting people. One more wouldn’t do any damage...*

*So many years had gone by of controlling and manipulating her. Perverting the truth to make sure she became his puppet, stopping at nothing to make sure he got his way. Supplying her with any drug she wanted so she’d become more polluted, more unstable, more trapped. She wouldn’t let it happen again. It would end. Tonight.*

Rachel set her sights on Shaun with the switchblade firmly grasped in her left hand, and slowly began to advance...

*Rage.*

\* \* \* \*

...Silver suddenly snapped out of the convulsing spasms. She was on her feet with her head hung low, yet her eyes fixed on the Doctor. Underneath them were bags as black as night.

The Doctor’s face fell as in her hand materialized a small but deadly switchblade.

“Silver listen to me!” he roared in an authoritative voice. “It’s an illusion, do you hear me!? A psychic projection! It’s not real! LISTEN TO ME!”

Silver lunged at the Doctor with the point of the blade aimed at his right heart...

\* \* \* \*

The Doctor shot his arms out within an instant and during that split second, he grabbed hold of Silver’s wrists and flung her around to the floor where he pinned her down.

The Time Lord backed his head away as his friends jaw snapped around viciously. From her throat roared a piercing scream of rage that burnt through the air itself. The Doctor moved his hand up towards her own where the switchblade was clamped into her fingers.

“Let it go, Silver! Let it all go!” he shouted in an angered tone that could have deafened the universe.

\* \* \* \*

*Shaun had gone.*

*The rage had gone.*

*Just like everybody else, Shaun had left her. Mom, Dad, everybody. She was alone. No one to hate. No one to love.*

*No one to hurt.*

\* \* \* \*

The switchblade vanished out of Silver's hand and out of reality all together.

The Doctor felt his muscles relax as his friend went silent and looked around at the empty room. Her eyes were fixed on the Doctor and within an instant she hugged him tightly and began to cry. The tears soaked his friend's shirt as all the sadness, all the pain, all the entrapment, escaped from the graveyard in her mind.

"Ssshh, it's over now. It was never real," he said softly to his weeping companion. Her arms tightened around his back and he did the same in return. "It was all an illusion."

Silver, Rachel, whoever she was, broke the embrace to wipe away the tears.

"An illusion?"

"A psychic projection. Implanted in your mind to create emotional trauma –"

"But the switchblade, it was so real, I could have killed you –"

"It was your rage and belief in that false reality that gave it such matter and density."

"But it was real, what I saw; it's still a part of me. If I were to leave now, the pain and suffering would still follow me. I can't escape it, Doctor," sobbed his companion.

"You mustn't give in, Silver, that's what Demetrius wants you to do."

*Silver. That wasn't her name. Why did he call her that? Her name was Rachel. She coped and she survived. Shaun would help her; he'd save her from this weirdo. Who was he?*

*No. NO. She mustn't forget. If she forgot she'd be trapped again. She didn't want to feel the pain again. She didn't want to hurt again.*

"Who's Demetrius?"

"An ancient intelligence that is using you to engineer his escape from this cage. That's what this room is."

*What was this guy talking about? Who was he? Why couldn't he just leave her alone?*

"Doctor it's so hard," she cried, "I keep forgetting. I don't even know who you are! I'm so confused."

The Time Lord hugged his friend again, this time even tighter while even he could begin to feel tears welling up in his eye sockets.

"I'll make this better for you Silver, I promise," he said desperately, "I'll make the pain go away; you won't have to worry about anything. I promise. Please just stay with me. Remember me and I'll protect you."

All was silent as the embrace continued and the tears began to dry. This was then broken as the nightmare returned.

"Rachel," said Shaun menacingly. The seventeen-year-old was standing in the corner of the room. His gaze ignored the Doctor and concentrated on the girl. "Rachel, I need my money. You know what I can do to you."

The Doctor physically turned her head away from the drug dealer and stared right through into her pupils. "You mustn't listen to him Silver. It's not real. You have strength inside of you. Use it, or you'll be dragged back down, but this time, I don't think you'll ever escape."

Rachel looked back at Shaun and then to the man again. THE DOCTOR, she cried out in her head, his name was the Doctor!

"I can't handle this!" she screamed.

“I own you Rachel. All it takes is one word to the cops and you can say goodbye to sanity forever. Do you know how much it will hurt your friends and family if they were to find out? Now come over here where you’re safe.” Rachel stepped forward, facing her body sideways so she could glance back and forth between the Doctor and Shaun.

*What’s the point? I can’t escape it. All there ever was, and all there ever will be is pain, I can’t stop hurting people. Its part of me. There is no escape.*

*Just give in.*

“It’s not real, Silver. You must believe me.”

“SHUT UP!” she screamed as her throat burned raw. “Just shut up! I don’t even know you!”

“Silver, please –” a small tear leaked from the corner of the Doctor’s eye.

“Why do you keep calling me that!? My name is Rachel! Rachel...I can’t remember. I keep forgetting!” she roared as the tears restarted.

The room quickly shifted out of existence like liquid being soaked onto a watercolour painting. In its place appeared a blurred and ever changing dreamscape like the Doctor had experienced earlier. Colours blurred and faded like speeding clouds while an old wooden door took centre stage in the bizarre nowhere.

The cellar door. Rachel immediately began to tremble with fear as déjà vu hit her. It was the same as earlier: the aged wood bending like rubber as the monsters tried to batter their way through. They screamed and howled with rage that seemed to echo up from hell itself. Fire burning on every syllable.

*Help me. Please. I don’t want to face the monsters, I never do. Please help me. I’ve hurt so many people. And now the monsters want to hurt me. Mommy, Daddy, won’t somebody please help me?*

The Doctor watched as Shaun/Demetrius summoned up more psychic projections to surround Silver and make her face the cellar door. The Punch and Judy puppets returned along with the silver skinned lion, blank shadow people appeared in the hundreds: their skin made of pure darkness with no facial features except mouths, which snarled and roared at his frightened companion.

“Stop this, Demetrius!” pleaded the Time Lord. “You’ll kill her if you push her this far!”

“Exactly, Doctor,” sneered Shaun. “Already, the walls of this cage are falling apart. Just one more spark of energy will grant me my freedom!”

“Won’t somebody please help me!” screamed Rachel as the tears soaked her cheeks.

*I don’t want to be alone. I don’t want to hurt people. I don’t want to feel pain. I want to remember. I want to be who I truly am.* The monsters joined together in harmony to create one whole terrifying roar. *They’ll never leave me alone.*

The Doctor felt like collapsing as he felt more helpless than ever before. He’d battled megalomaniac dictators to insane computers, but seeing a friend feel pain that could never heal was too much. The shadow beings snarled and screamed even louder while the wooden puppets let out a ridiculous yet effective laughter. The lion simply roared and bared its fangs to a terrifying result.

“You see Rachel; you can never face the monsters. You’re weak. Pathetic. Nothing without me,” spat Shaun.

*We never loved you. How could we? A drug taking failure. Hated by your friends and detested by your teachers. You could never cope with anything. You lost your grip on life, so turned to drugs and drink. Missing school to get your next batch off Shaun.*

*Now do you understand?*

*Now do you understand why we could never love you?*

“Silver please, face your fears, face the pain and fight it. If you don’t it’ll eat away at you until you’re nothing more than a slave to it,” pleaded the Doctor as he began to feel true fear for his companion. For his friend.

“I’m so scared,” sobbed Rachel as the tears began to drown her.

*Never could love you. Always a failure, to me and your father.*

She reached out her hand towards the door handle as the roaring and screaming began to rise in volume.

*No friends. No family. Alone. Why would anyone even want to look at you?*

Her hand smothered the cold metal. With her eyes closed she slowly pushed the handle down.

“NO!” roared Shaun, the demonic voice of Demetrius screaming within him.

The screaming. The roaring. The snarling. All raised to full pitch, the Doctor could almost feel his eardrums shattering under the pressure.

*“I don’t understand you sometimes.”*

*“That’s the point, you never have!”*

All went silent as the cellar door creaked open.

\* \* \* \*

*Nothing.*

*There were no monsters.*

*Were there ever any monsters?*

Rachel slowly opened her eyes to look beyond the threshold and into her world of nightmares. But there was nothing there. Nothing. She’d faced the monsters and she’d won. Wait. There was something. On the floor.

A moonstone necklace.

It was beautiful and a strange kind of aurora seemed to emanate from its metal work. Rachel picked it up and planted it around her neck.

*She was whole. She did not feel pain. She did not feel lonely. She wasn’t scared of the monsters. She was Silver.*

“NO!” screamed Shaun/Demetrius until the projection’s skin became bright red with anger and rage. The shadow beings. The Punch and Judy puppets. The silver-skinned lion. All exploded out of existence as the dreamscape shook violently.

“My name is Silver,” said the overwhelmed Wicca girl with a gleaming smile on her face. “I’m free. I’m not scared. I don’t have to feel pain ever again!”

“After aeons of waiting, do you think you can deny me of my vengeance now!”

“It’s finished Demetrius! Let it go!” shouted the Doctor over the violent rumbles.

“If I die here you’ll stay with me!” he roared.

“Time to be going I think,” said the Doctor hastily as he leapt over towards a renewed Silver.

*Renewal. Hope. Life. Happiness. Freedom.*

The Time Lord grabbed her hand and clasped it tightly. Together they sped off into the collapsing dreamscape. The cries and roars of Demetrius became further and further away.

Explosions burst out of the non floor beneath them as chunks of non-matter fell from the sky. Nothing was real. Which meant “nothing” was collapsing.

“Where are we going?” shouted Silver over the rumbling.

“If we carry on like this we’ll get nowhere.”

They both stopped and the Doctor turned to face his friend with their hands still clasped together.

“Close your eyes and think of home,” whispered the Doctor. Together they did so. And when they opened them, they were back in the room. The walls were violently glowing white with energy; it was as though they would explode in any second.

“Where’s the TARDIS?”

“Demetrius must have shifted its light spectrum again. We’d better find it quick before this place implodes.”

“Implodes!”

“Yes. We should find it in no time; we broke through that psychic projection easily enough. Demetrius’ control over everything is slipping; he really has lost it now.”

The Doctor was pacing around the room waving his arms around at patches of air, while Silver clung onto her moonstone necklace. She hadn’t let go since she found it.

“Doctor!” roared the demonic and unwelcome voice of Demetrius. The sound reverberated off the pulsating walls and uncomfortably against their eardrums.

“Let us go, Demetrius! Either you die or we all die, either way I won’t let anything happen to Silver.”

Silence.

“Give me back my home!” he roared.

Demetrius did not respond. There was only the buzzing pulse of the blinding walls as the floor beneath the two travellers began to quake.

“I think this may be the end, Silver,” said a worried Doctor as he marched up behind his friend and settled his hand on her shoulder.

“I’m not ready to die now. There’s so much more for me to learn, places to go, people to meet. My life only began minutes ago. I’ve faced the monsters and I’ll face them again, but it’s too early to just end like this.”

She clasped the Doctor’s hand that was still perched on her shoulder. “I never thought it would end like this. My oldest friend who became my one true home, lying only inches away, and we can’t even see her.”

They both broke their link and engaged in a full embrace, their arms wrapping around each other getting tighter by the second. Meanwhile, the room was shaking violently as explosions, rumbles and screams echoed from the unseen dimensions of the cage.

“Don’t you have any regrets? Any monsters you wished you had time to face?” asked Silver while absorbing the beautiful aroma of age flowing from her friend.

“I wish I could have shown my granddaughter how much I truly loved her. Try to prevent so many friends from dying, Adric, Katarina, Sara, Tamara, such a waste, so much sorrow.”

“You have to face this, like I did, you taught me not let the pain eat away at me. Now it’s your turn.”

“Silver.”

“Yes?”

“Thank you.”

At that moment, while the two friends with an unbreakable bond continued with their embrace, the room began to collapse.

\* \* \* \*

*Why should it end here? He was a god; even the universe would tremble at his voice. Why should he die? He could overcome death; he was Demetrius, conqueror of all. But if he did die, then he’d be alone. No one to love him. He didn’t want to be alone.*

*He’d given them everything; he wanted them to follow him. To look up to him. But they betrayed him. They didn’t love him. No one did. They simply used him to perfect themselves. And when he had rebelled they betrayed him. His life had ended. What would be the point of his existence if his life’s work were simply to stop at that moment? The council’s decision had resulted in his destruction.*

*He didn’t want to be alone.*

\* \* \* \*

“Don’t worry Doctor, I’m not scared,” shouted a tearful Silver over the quakes and explosions. “You won’t leave me, will you?”

“Never,” said the Doctor as he clamped his eyes shut and prepared for the moment...

\* \* \* \*

*It had been millennia since his body had decayed, but that didn't stop him from crying. He let go of everything. There was no point. He would remain alone forever.*

*Just let go.....*

They both heard it. A wheezing groan that grated against the air.

The tall blue police box exploded into existence in the centre of the collapsing room. Energy seemed to beam from its every atom as it stood firm and proud. The Doctor broke the embrace within an instant as he grabbed Silver's hand and leapt at the door with his other arm outstretched. Together they crossed the threshold as he led her into the console chamber.

For the last time, Silver glanced back at the collapsing room that buzzed with energy. For a split second, she thought she could see an angel crying...

*The walls finally gave way and the cage folded in on itself into a flaming ball of energy.*

*Pain.*

*He didn't want to be alone.*

*Freedom.*

*He didn't want to feel pain.*

*Death.*

The Doctor dramatically pulled any levers in sight and flicked any switches with immense satisfaction. Ever since they had dematerialized the enormous smile on his face had not changed.

"We're free to do what ever we like and no one can stop us! We have the whole universe to explore! We can do anything!" he said ecstatically. "And it's all thanks to you, Silver!"

"Me?"

"Of course, you fought the monsters; you won the battle and the war."

"I saved the day? I was the hero this time?" she said with a heart filled with shock and surprise.

"Well, I can't take centre stage all the time. It was you who fought back against Demetrius, your resistance against him and realization of who you truly were was enough to start a chain reaction that brought the whole web crashing down."

"Sounds like the chemical reactions we made in science class."

"That's exactly what it was like! And now we have all the time in the world to enjoy ourselves!"

The Doctor then shot out his arms to hug his friend. During the embrace he swung her around with excitement and then put down the dizzied Silver.

"But getting the TARDIS back, not even you or I could have done that."

"Cant win 'em all."

"We were lucky Demetrius let the old girl out of its grip or we'd be more than a little unhappy."

The Doctor suddenly looked tired; he leaned against the console and let out a sigh as the smile faded from his ancient face.

"What's wrong?"

"Demetrius, all he ever wanted was to help his species, but it became more than that, and they betrayed him. Even I betrayed him, and I gave him his freedom. If only it didn't mean his death as well."

"You can't always have a happy ending. Like my family and me –"

"Silver, whatever you saw in those projections, it wasn't real, any speck of truth would have been twisted. The same would have happened to me if I had let Demetrius enter my mind. But your parents loved you; they never stopped loving you for one second."

"I know, but there was truth in there Doctor, they never did understand me. I just wish I could have gone back and stopped myself from hurting them so much. I've learnt what pain can do."

"Pain is a part of life, we all have to face and overcome it."

“I think I already have.”

“Ditto, on many occasions.”

The time rotor began to slow down as the systems engaged into the materialization sequence.

“Where are we landing?”

“I don’t know,” he grinned towards his friend.

The console went silent as the door hummed open. Beyond there was only a blinding white light.

“There could be anything out there,” said Silver as she gazed out through the doors.

“Yes; exciting isn’t it? Come on, let’s go and see shall we?” he said gleefully like an ecstatic school boy.

And together, hand in hand, they ran out into the unknown...

# JACKSON REES

Jackson (Jack) Bradley Rees, a student from the UK, Birmingham has written two stories for TDWP. The first was co-writing 'Convergence' with Kyle Bastian and more recently, writing his own original short story entitled 'The Caged Angel'. He also worked with the fan made audio group, Dream Realm Enterprises, where he became part of the PR staff. He also co-wrote scripts with Jonithan Patrick Russell, these being 'The Mines of Mandor', and 'Harbingers'. He is currently preparing for exams.

