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**moonlight: part two**

**Jack Rees**  
additional material by  
**Samantha Warner**



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# **MOONLIGHT PART TWO**

## **SILVER BULLET**

'My name is Rachel Silverstein and I have a story to tell.

'So where do I start? I've never been good at telling stories, but it's the only way to get it out of your system. OK, so this is me: I like music, coffee (two sugars), and pizza with extra pineapple- like you really wanted to know that. You see, this story I have to tell, it isn't a story, it actually happened. This isn't me in my room writing a novel. It's just me and you, and the terrible things I've done.

I guess it all started almost a year ago when my dad died, battling monsters in the Whitehouse. That's when I met the Doctor. Have you heard of him? I can tell you have. It's hard not to miss the Doctor. He was my best friend and together we travelled the universe, fought monsters, and saved planets. We even went back in time to Woodstock, twice! It was a fairytale. This was my life.

'But then, one day, the fairytale ended. I woke up and I couldn't see space rockets or knights on horseback. There was just smoke, and cars, and bitterness. I looked down at my feet, and lying there was the Doctor. Dead.

'My name is Rachel Silverstein. Wait, I'm repeating myself aren't I? Sorry, it's hard not to. All I have left is my name. The wolves took it all away. The Doctor, my family, and my friends are all gone. All I have left is Seth, but soon even he will be taken from me, and the wolves will swallow the Earth up whole.'

'These wolves I keep talking about, they're called Therianthropes. Remember it well. It's a name you'll come to fear. You'll have met them before. They've been worming their way into every home, business and government for years. They're your boss, your neighbour, your president. By day they look human, but by night they're animals, carnivores, wolves. We only had one defence against them: moonlight. That little silver ball in the sky could have destroyed those monsters forever, like daylight to a vampire. But they dealt with that. They shut it up behind iron and metal, imprisoned forever. And now there's nothing we can do. The wolves are here, and they're gonna tear through every home and street to get the dagger; the key that will crack open the world and release the king of the wolves. So you better start running and running fast. The Doctor can't help you, and neither can I. So run for your life before the wolves get you. How will it end? Maybe we'll find out together.

'My name is Rachel Silverstein. This is my story. This is my life. And this is where the story *really* starts, the story of when hell came to Earth. I know it sounds clichéd, but what the heck. Once upon a time...'

**London. 9:32PM. 2.14 hours until the end of the world.**

'Hey, I was supposed to be at the theatre 10 minutes ago. What's the hold up?'

Mike obviously didn't say this out loud, the rules of a bus are simple: don't speak out loud when you're on your own. People hate it, and you look crazy. He could hardly blame the bus driver for the fact that he'd misread the start time on the theatre tickets- he was in a rush and had spilled scorching coffee down his shirt. They were front row tickets for *Spamalot*. His friend had chosen it for a laugh, Mike was just tagging along. It was just supposed to be a little distraction to end a stressful day.

He sighed and rested his head against the window. Ever since he was a kid he'd enjoyed sitting on the top deck of the bus, the view always excited him. Tonight he saw drunkards wandering the streets, untidy, but quiet. Even the teenagers smoking at the back of the bus were quiet. *Everything* seemed quiet. It was almost as if the people and the buildings were holding their breath, waiting for something.

Mike sighed and crumpled the theatre ticket in his hand. He suddenly began to feel uneasy. Was it just the silence, the held breath? It felt like something was about to happen- the next disaster, war, or terrorist attack- the things that he yearned for, just some excitement in his boring life. Mike could feel it building up inside him, the need to find something to warm his blood and make him feel alive.

*Wait, is that someone screaming downstairs?* Mike felt his heart racing. The people and the buildings of London had begun to breathe, so fast they were choking.

People were running off the bus- a flurry of coats, suitcases and hoodies. A window smashed. Mike ran downstairs, confused, letting the ticket slip from his hand. A fight had broken out at the back of the bus. The tacky blue seats had been turned red.

\* \* \* \* \*

‘Everyone off the bus! Now!’ screamed the driver, a middle aged plump woman.

Sam couldn’t stop staring at the massacre at the back of the bus, a red cobweb of free newspapers and body parts. In the middle stood a giant, howling animal, thick with grey fur and muscles. It was a wolf. Sam froze.

‘Hello, little red riding hood,’ said the wolf, licking the blood from its lips. ‘I’m afraid Grandma isn’t here.’

Sam was swallowed up whole.

\* \* \* \* \*

‘We urge viewers to stay in their homes. Do not leave to find loved ones. In doing so you will be putting yourself in danger-’

The news reporter tried to keep calm. The studio in front of him was in chaos. More and more paper was being shoved into his hands. The façade of professional news reporting was broken. Now it was just one helpless man reading the information given to him.

‘The military are trying to contain the situation, and police and fire services are setting up rescue stations for those not near their places of residence.

‘The reports coming in state that the cause of these... disturbances seem to be the outbreak of some strain of rabies. Our eye witness reports state that the wolves, or dogs, or some form of canine, are attacking city centres in packs. We have confirmation-’ the words faltered in his throat, each letter grabbing the walls of his wind pipe. He coughed to force them out. ‘We have confirmation that these animals are... consuming the bodies of their victims. They seem to be stronger and more flexible than average wolves according to our mammal biologist Dr. Stuart-’

The reporter paused as his producer frantically yelled another piece of information into his earpiece. ‘I’m getting another report that this outbreak is not confined to the United Kingdom. The problem seems to be on a much larger scale in the United States, and reports of cases in Paris, Tokyo and Berlin are coming in as we speak.

‘All we can do is stress how important it is to stay indoors. The problem seems to be in major city centres, with the countryside and suburbia remaining untouched- for the United Kingdom that is. We’ll keep you updated on events as they happen.

‘In other news, an event that may be connected with the current affair is the strange phenomena on the moon. Some sort of eclipse seems to have engulfed it, making it invisible to the human eye. Astronomers and experts at NASA are, to say the least, baffled by the event. It is having a major impact here on Earth, with the increasing tide rate causing trouble for ships at sea...’

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**Space- Earth's outer atmosphere. 9:33PM. 2.13 hours until the end of the world.**

*Light. Blinding light- milk filling her pupils. '39000 miles to go, that's 39kilometres. 39km till I hit the ground.'*

*She could feel her skin tightening under the pressure. She held the boy- her friend, closer, holding him tight whilst reality itself unfolded. She risked looking past his sleeping face to watch the stars swarm past, like blurred fireflies exploding in the sea of ink above. The darkness of space got more distant as she hurtled towards the blue chasm below.*

*'31000 miles to go- that's 31km till I hit the ground.'*

*She felt like a bullet, screaming towards the body of the planet, getting faster and faster. 24 kilometres. The atmosphere was getting thicker. 19 kilometres. Planet Earth was hurtling up towards her through the clouds. She could make out land, ocean, the gridlock of roads and houses.*

*She was falling to Earth.*

**Space- Therianthrope mother ship. 9:35PM. 2.11 hours until the end of the world.**

'The disturbance has been rectified, Lord Siren.'

'Good. Do you know what caused it?'

'No, all systems were functioning as normal. It can only have been some external force, perhaps a side effect of the lunar device? Or...'

'Or?'

'Or it was the Guardian, the one we've been searching for.'

'I hope not.'

'We've sealed that section up. No one could have got out alive.'

'Good. That's the Doctor and his friends dealt with. Has the invasion fleet teleported down?'

'As we speak.'

'You do know how to organise a good invasion. I think I'll join them. It's been ages since I last ate.'

**Connecticut. 9:40PM. 2.06 hours until the end of the world.**

The clouds parted. A pillar of light shot out and hit the ground, like a tunnel to heaven. Silver landed at the bottom, burning in the spotlight. A fallen angel. She had fallen 39,000 miles. A human meteorite.

*I thought it'd hurt more.*

She shut her eyes as the light burnt brighter. Struggling, she reached for the pentacle ring- the trans-mat device that had brought her here- and tore it off, throwing it to the ground. The light snapped off.

*I'm gonna be sick.*

She let Seth fall from her arms and collapsed face first onto the ground. It smelt of dry grass, the dark green bristles stroked her cheek, relaxing from a hot summer's day. *Must be a field, or a meadow or something.* She could hear the gentle heartbeat of a motorway nearby- trucks and cars hissing softly across a lonely highway. *Somewhere just outside of Connecticut. Home*

She rolled over and stared up into the night sky, the clouds drifting like lost ships. It was a warm summer night in Connecticut, and she had this beautiful field to herself. A warm breeze was stroking her face, reassuring her. It didn't last.

'Shit, shit, SHIT!'

She hit the ground, hard. Then again till her knuckles turned white. She got up and began punching the air and pulling at her hair.

'You bastard! Why did you have to do it?' she screamed up at the sky.

'Why do you always have to play the hero? Why did you have to go and do something stupid like that!' She cried, the memories flooding out with the salty, hot tears.

*The blood gushed down the Doctor's face. He coughed violently as the smoke forced its way down his throat.*

*'PLEASE GO!' he ordered. Another barrage of dirt and rubble cascaded from the roof, burying him forever.*

Silver wiped away the tears with her sore hands. *The Doctor. The man who travelled the universe in his magic cupboard, fighting monsters and saving planets. He was my best friend y'know, but he ain't coming back now.*

She picked up the ring from the nest of grass and looked down at the man who had escaped with her.

'Wake up, Seth!' She slapped him across the face. *Trust you to have a fit in the middle of an invasion, right before the ship went haywire. Maybe it's connected. I don't give a damn. I'm not the Doctor.*

'If you don't wake up *right now*- I'm gonna leave you here to rot! My best friend has just died, and the last thing I need is you blacking out on me!'

He opened his eyes. He looked like hell.

'Come on, we better get moving.'

Poor guy, she thought. Only seventeen years old and just met his first real life monster, but the Doctor takes-took our innocence away so quickly. She helped him up and put her arm around his waist and shoulders. Looking ahead at the motorway, she could see the lights of a service station diner.

'Stick with me, Seth. We're gonna get through this, just stick with me.'

\* \* \* \* \*

Silver pushed open the door.

It was as ordinary and as tacky as diner's came, right down to the greasy leather seats, candy dispensers and smoke filled bar. It was deserted except for a middle aged, balding, fat man sitting behind the bar. The radio was on and he was reading the newspaper. She helped Seth over to the nearest table and sat down to rest.

'Hey, I'm Larry,' he said smiling, taking out a pen and notepad. 'I'll be your waiter for this evening. What can I get you kids?' It may be a menial job, but he showed some enthusiasm. Silver appreciated that.

'Heya, can we just get two cheeseburgers and two waters?'

'Coming right up.'

She relaxed again. She didn't know where to begin. Her head was so crammed it felt like it might fall off. All she had left was Seth and the sound of passing traffic.

'We're gonna save the world on junk food?' asked Seth as he lay sprawled across the table, playing with a salt shaker.

'Who said anything about saving the world?'

'I thought that was what you did.'

‘That was what the Doctor did, I just tagged along. But he’s gone, so it’s just us.’  
‘Everyone’s gotta go sometime. It looks like we’ll all be joining him soon enough.’  
‘*The death toll is hard to calculate at the moment, but it’s steadily rising,*’ crackled the radio. ‘*We urge listeners to stay indoors...*’

‘Jesus, what is this, *Dawn of the Dead?*’ moaned Seth.

‘It’s up to us. We’ve gotta stop them-’

‘An army of werewolves!? Sorry, I mean *Therianthropes*. No- wait, it’s more like a bad episode of *Buffy*.’

‘The world’s ending and you’ve still got time to be sarcastic.’

‘I...I’m sorry.’ They both went silent.

‘So... what do we do now?’

‘I have no idea. But we need to get outta this dump so I can think clearly. We better get back to the foster house.’

‘Fine with me.’

‘But don’t think I’ve finished with you.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘You know exactly what I mean. Back on the ship, you have a fit and the whole place starts to explode, and yesterday, you got angry and the lights exploded. That isn’t a coincidence, you’re hiding something-’

‘I thought we’d been through this. It’s none of your business-’

The window exploded.

For a second the air was awash with frozen raindrops, and in the centre hovered the large, hairy bulk of a wolf. Out of the glass, fur and shadows shone its piercing red eyes. They were looking at Silver. She stared back, losing herself in the red ocean. Her eyes blurred and, for a second, the wolf changed. It was no longer an animal, but a man dressed in fur; a tribesman, a hunter. It changed again, back into the body of a wolf, and fell to the ground, landing on all four paws.

They both stood up, Seth getting ready to run for it.

‘STAND STILL!’ she screamed at him. Neither one of them could stop staring into those deep, red eyes.

The wolf stood firmly on the floor, blocking the doorway. It kicked a nearby candy dispenser over with its hind leg. There was another door at the opposite end of the diner, but Silver doubted they could make it in time. The creature bent down and sniffed the ground for a moment before showing its drooling yellow teeth.

‘Don’t say a word,’ she whispered.

The wolf let out a low growl that rippled through the air, like a heartbeat that could explode at any moment. It filled the silence, threatening to pounce at any moment. *Please stop making that noise,* thought Silver.

‘Grubs up, kids.’ Larry the waiter glided out the kitchen with their plates. ‘Holy crap!’

The cheeseburgers hit the floor with a squelch.

‘I’m sorry,’ whispered Silver.

Larry turned to run but the wolf leapt through the air, pinning him down and raising its head to take the first bite. He screamed. His white apron flailed in the air and turned red.

‘Come on!’ Silver grabbed Seth by the hand and together they ran out through the back door. They were out into the warm night air of the parking lot. It was so much darker than usual. Silver looked at the empty sky and remembered why. The parking lot was

empty except for an old, rusty blue mini covered with bumper stickers. *That's gotta be Larry's.*

Seth smashed a window. Before she knew it, they were inside the rusted blue heap that smelled of stale Cheetos. Seth was in the driver's seat, frantically pulling wires from underneath the dashboard.

'You don't seriously know how to jump start a car do you?'

He touched two wires together. The alarm started to sound.

'It's been a while.' He carried on fumbling with the spider web of wires. Silver risked a glance through the rear window. The wolf was standing in the doorway. The grey fur on its face was now drenched in the waiter's blood. Two more wires sparked together- the radio burst into life.

*'Unless you've been living under a rock for the past few hours,' said the lifeless, New England DJ, 'you know that the world has just about lost its mind. Crazy dogs attacking people or some crap.'* The voice let out a heavy sigh. *"Just goes to show what I've always said. This is a messed up world full of messed up people. So this song goes out to the entire human race- if anyone is even listening. This is the last track of the night, it's David Bowie with 'Starman.'"*

'Seth, please!'

The engine roared into life. Seth kicked it into gear and the car reversed across the parking lot. They were both thrown forward as the trunk smashed into a lamppost, the metal crunching like a tin can.

'Do you even know how to drive?'

'No.'

Seth threw the car into drive and hit the gas. Silver was thrown back into her seat. The crushed trunk of the car let go of the lamppost in protest till they shot off down the highway. The runway of lampposts sped past, their orange lights stretching into long glowing lines. The radio kept on playing:

*'Didn't know what time it was and the lights were lo-o-ow, I leaned back on my radio-o-o.'*

She looked back through the rear window, expecting the worst. Hurtling down the lane behind them was the wolf, hunting them the way any predator would. It was just them and the wolf on this lonely stretch of highway in the middle of nowhere. Tarmac, metal and flesh.

'It's right behind us!' She yelled, quickly putting her seat belt on.

'Yeah, I really wanted to hear that!'

'Just don't crash it or anything.'

'Can you drive!?'

'No.'

'Well then!'

*'Then the loud sound did seem to fa-a-de, Came back like a slow voice on a wave of pha-a-ase.'*

A devastating crack shattered through the air. Shards of glass were thrown against the back of their heads as the wolf sank its claws through the rear window, the cracks making a spider web, scratching away, desperate to get in. The car slowed down under its weight.

*'There's a Starman, waiting in the sky. He'd like to come and meet us, but he thinks he'll blow our minds.'*

'It isn't meant to be like this...'

'I hope this works-'

Seth flung his weight against the side of the wheel, sending the car spinning off the road. Silver felt sick as the tires screamed out in protest. She looked back just in time to see the wolf flung from the spinning vehicle. Its body hit the nearest lamppost with a sickening snap. It lay lifeless beneath the orange spotlight, almost sleeping.

They both sat silently in the battered mini, not knowing what to do next. Their heads were still spinning and their hearts were racing like mad. The silence made it worse.

‘Do you think its dead?’ asked Seth.

‘I dunno. Monsters are usually hard to kill.’

‘Come on, I’ve had enough for one night.’

He gently put his foot down on the pedal. They sat in silence, with the windows down and the air hitting their faces. In the distance, the skyline was burning orange over Connecticut.

‘We can’t save the world,’ said Seth.

Silver didn’t reply. *I know.*

\* \* \* \* \*

‘Where’s Lucy?’

Silver slowly shut the door behind her. Liza was standing there, clutching Gregg. Seth stormed off into the kitchen, ignoring their foster mother’s screams.

‘Lucy’s gone missing. Have you seen her?’

*I can’t deal with this, not now.*

‘She’s in hospital. She broke her wrist while you were out. She’s being looked after there.’ *It wasn’t a lie, just a twist on the facts. It’s what she wants to hear. I’m not brave enough to tell her, but it’ll keep Liza safe, for now.*

‘You can’t reach her now. The riots are spreading. We were lucky to make it back at all. She’ll be fine, the hospital is guarded. You can see her when this blows over.’ *It wasn’t a lie, just a twist on the facts.*

‘That doesn’t make me feel any easier. God, I need a smoke. I quit smoking 25 years ago! And don’t expect your present after the mood you’ve put me in.’

‘What present?’

‘The aura portrait you asked for, I was up all night doing it. I’ll give it to you later. Come on, Gregg, let’s put you to bed.’

She left up the stairs, carrying the little boy. *She doesn’t care about the riots, or the deaths, or the alien invaders. All she cares about is that her kids are safe and that they have a good night’s sleep. I envy her.*

Seth appeared from the kitchen holding a bottle of wine- dark green holding back the red inside, soon to escape, to taint and destroy. He took a big gulp before making his way up the stairs.

‘The world’s ending and you’re gonna get drunk?’

‘What else is there to do?’

\* \* \* \* \*

*Where do I even start?*

She lay back on the bed, staring up at the ceiling. The door was locked. The house was silent.

*So, I’ve got an army of Therianthropes tearing up the cities. They’re obviously gonna outnumber the military, so I can’t rely on UNIT or anyone else to fix this. I haven’t got any*

*guns or silver bullets. And if things get out of hand, there's a ship above the Earth that could blast us all to pieces. That's if the military don't go crazy and start bombing the cities-*

*I'm screwed.*

*How does the Doctor do this? How can he make decisions that decide the fate of millions in 1 second flat? Everything's against me. All I've got is the fact that the wolves haven't found the casket, yet. Oh crap, I'd completely forgotten about that-*

*She glanced across at the clock on her wall.*

*How long till the world ends?*

She lay back on her bed. Closing her eyes, she drifted off into sleep, hoping to escape from the world for just a few more seconds.

\* \* \* \* \*

'Do you like the view?' asked Death.

She peered over the edge of the rooftop. The boxes of metal and glass that used to protect the humans lay shattered and upturned across the road. Bodies littered the scene, like limp dolls hanging out of a grotesque toy box. A police siren was ringing somewhere further in the city.

'No.'

She stared up into Death's hollow eyes.

'Would you like to join me on *my* travels?' he said.

'No.'

'Why? You did so with the Doctor. I'm showing you the end of the world. I can show you a lot more; the end of this galaxy, the end of the universe, the end of time.'

'I don't want to see death, I want to see life.'

'What is the difference? You are very special, Silver. You can see things that no one else sees.'

'I see dead people- yeah right,' she snorted.

'You understand Wicca. You can see the celestial worlds that are on offer. Here, take this-'

His skeletal hand offered her a small leather pouch. She pulled the draw string and found a small wooden dream catcher inside. It was broken into three separate pieces.

'You have three worlds to choose from; my world, the Doctor's world, or Seth's world- your home. Which will it be?'

'I-I'm not sure.'

'What is it that you are looking for, Silver? You must want it enough to find your way into the astral realm.'

'I'm looking for the Doctor.'

'Why? Don't you understand? You are one in a long line of *companions*. He will leave you in the end, and you will die. You are a commodity to him.'

She paused for a moment.

'I don't care.'

Death vanished. The rooftop faded into black and she was left alone in an empty void, a blank canvas.

'At last,' a voice called from above.

Silver looked up. "Doctor? This isn't fair, you're meant to be dead!"

'Well this is hardly what I'd call living!' yelled the Doctor, his voice echoing in the void. He was suspended in the air, chained to a wooden crucifix. A spotlight shone down

into his eyes, blinding him. Beyond the two of them and the crucifix there was nothing but emptiness. He looked down upon Silver, not a scratch on him.

'It's funny. There's usually a guard on duty, not today it seems,' he said. 'Sloppy work can get people killed.'

'This has to be a dream. You're dead.'

'Yes, I suppose it must be.'

'This is just my subconscious or something- I dunno.'

'Don't you worry. Why don't you wake up and go save the world, hmm? You've got work to do.'

'Wait just one damn second, this is your work! You started all this, desperate to know who the Pentacle Corporation were! You're the bloody Lord of Time! You're the hero, not me. You're the Doctor, not me. You save planets, I tag along, remember? You're meant to fix things.'

He leant forward to gaze down upon her, the chains tightening around his wrists.

'So I've taken you to the farthest corners of the galaxy for nothing? You think I want to face monsters every single day of my life? I don't choose to do this, I do it because I have to!'

'But I can't save the world. I'm just one person.'

'A single person is the *only* thing that has saved the world, Silver! Now, are you going to sleep until the skies turn black, or get up and do something?'

His words echoed even louder.

'This whole thing is messed up. I thought you taught me that everything is down to science. Now the world has turned into Hell! I've just met Death, and werewolves, and the living dead. What am I meant to believe in?'

'Astral energies are dangerous things. Not even I truly understand them.'

'I suppose you're going to tell me they're all just an illusion?'

'Erm, yes.'

She couldn't help but laugh.

'Anyway, you and Seth seemed pretty sorted.'

'We're not going out!'

'You can move on and forget about me, silly old Doctor.'

'Doctor!'

'Good luck to the pair of you.'

'Hey! Look, I was fifteen when you took me in, and since then I've had the most amazing time of my life. You're my best friend, don't you understand?'

'And I'll save you, I promise. I'll find you, Doctor. I know you're not dead. Something else is going on here. I'll fix this mess, I'll save the world and I'll find you.'

She woke up.

\* \* \* \* \*

'Is that the house?'

'Yes, my Lord.'

'And the casket is there?'

'Yes. It's so near I can smell it, protected by humans.'

'How many?'

'Four. Three are young and tender, making for a softer bite. The other is old, her bones starting to grow brittle and dry. Wait, there's another scent.'

'The scent that Lucy reported?'

'Yes, it may be the guardian.'

'I hope for our sake it isn't. Call the troops, we'll move in for the kill.'

**Connecticut. 10:07PM. 1.39 hours until the end of the world.**

'You've had enough to drink for one night.'

Rachel snatched the bottle from Seth as he lay on his bed. He tried to get up in protest but she pushed him back down. The stereo was on full blast, she turned it off and threw the CD out of the window.

'Seth, you can be a sweet guy sometimes, but if you don't shut up and listen, I swear to god I'll shove this bottle where the sun don't shine. Now, I've been doing some thinking about this whole stinking mess.'

She began pacing up and down as the ideas filled her head. *Oh God, I'm starting to act like the Doctor.*

'This whole planet is a prison, with Lucius -the wolves pack leader- trapped in the centre, right? Now, the moon is the bars to the prison, but that could easily be got rid of, and already has been. It's too easy. What this set up needs is a guard.'

'You're talking crap.'

'I haven't even started. Now, call me stupid, but don't you think there's a connection between the fact that this house is giving off a massive energy trace, and that a light bulb or a spaceship explodes every time you get angry? Lucy must have been here for a reason, and I don't think it was just for Liza's cooking. She was keeping watch on someone.'

Seth went silent. He sat cross legged on the bed and held his head in his hands. Rachel realized that the Doctor had been trying to explain this to her all the time, whilst she was dreaming. *'There's usually a guard on duty, not today it seems...'*

'Alright, you want answers?' he spat.

Seth got up and reached under his bed, pulling out something large and heavy. It was about the size of a shoebox, shining with golden light. The casket.

'Take your stupid treasure box and leave me alone!' He threw the casket to her feet. 'Well, it's what you've been looking for isn't it, you and your stupid Doctor friend? Well take it.'

'How did you...?'

'I don't know! I don't know anything! All I know is that thing appeared out of thin air a few days ago. I tried selling it, but no one would buy it. Then I tried throwing it away, but it kept coming back to me. I even tried chucking it in the sea but it was on my bed waiting for me when I got back!' He felt like crying, but didn't. He could feel the wine in his stomach turning to acid.

Rachel stared at it for a moment, looking at her reflection in the gold.

'I admit that I don't understand much, but you're part of this, Seth. This casket, it was under threat from the wolves, so it came to you. It trans-matted all the way across the world, from a Buddhist Monastery to a foster house in Connecticut. Why would it do that? You have to be part of this.'

He fell back on the bed, curling up into the foetal position. The past he'd hidden from was flooding back. He'd spent so long running, on his own, but it'd finally caught up with him.

'You have no idea what I've been through! Do you have any idea what I can do!?'

*I'm 4 years old. It's my first day at school. I don't make any friends. I hide in the corner of the playground. I don't know why, but I think I might hurt them.*

'There's something wrong with me, I can do things.'

*I'm 9 years old. Carl Roberts steals my lunch, I try and snatch it back. Carl has an epileptic fit and is in hospital for 2 months.*

'I'm a monster and I can't help it.'

*I'm 13 years old. I get stopped in the street by a man with a knife. He forces me into his car. I try to fight back but he's too strong. I finally scream and the car sets on fire. I manage to get out before it explodes. I run home, every streetlamp shatters as I run past them. I cry myself to sleep.*

'I've done nothing but hurt people, I'm not safe.'

*I'm 14 years old. My parents find out that I've been kicked out of school. They scream and shout at me. I've ruined their night. They leave me in the house while they go out for dinner. I watch them driving off. I'm so angry I feel like tearing the whole house up. When I'm angry I can feel something inside of me, I've felt like this before. I watch as the car explodes. I know that I caused it, so I run.*

'You see what I can do? This power I've got, it kills people. That's why I don't get too close to people, and it's why you shouldn't get close either. From foster home to foster home, I'll keep moving and no one will get hurt.'

He felt drained, his head was spinning. Silver gently sat down next to him on the bed and risked placing her hand on his.

'That power has been in your bloodline since humanity began. You're the guardian, the jailor. You, the Earth, the moon- you're all connected, all linked. When the moon was imprisoned, the shockwaves hit you and caused your outbreak. And now the casket has come back to you, knowing you'd protect it, with you're power. You can use it, to destroy that cage around the moon, blast it into space and let the wolves' burn.'

'You gonna give me some bullshit about a prophecy? It's my birthright, yeah? Well screw that, I ain't saving anyone. This planet can go to hell. Why don't you tell me one good reason why it deserves saving? Kids are falling down in the streets 'cos they're too fat, adults are cutting themselves with knives to look a bit more beautiful. Governments are lying and cheating us, species are getting wiped out, people are living in poverty, wars are tearing up the population and global warming is doing its best to kick us while we're down. How's that for a planet worth saving?'

They both went silent.

Silver closed her eyes. The window was open and a warm breeze was stroking against her face. There were no cars on the street outside. It was just another warm, summer night in Connecticut, and it could be her last night alive. Silver gripped Seth's sweaty hand a bit more, feeling the blood gently flow through his veins. She remembered what some philosopher had once said: *'This is how the world ends, not with a bang, but a whimper'*.

'We're so... bloody... stupid,' she said, not knowing whether to laugh or cry. 'You, me, the whole stinking human race. We bruise so easily. We're so sensitive and ignorant, walking around on a big rock floating in space. But you need to realize something. All these alien monsters that try to invade earth, they do it because this the best place in the universe. Yes, we can abuse it. Yes things get bad, and we lock ourselves away, we hurt people, and we feel like everything's over. But it isn't, it never is. We've got so much potential. We know how to have a good time, we know how to have a laugh, we know how to make friends, and fall in love. We can walk home at 3 in the morning after a night out and realize how beautiful the world is. And maybe, just maybe, if we live long enough, we might have the chance to find out what it really is all about, and die happily. We can change things for the better. The world doesn't have to end tonight. We're going to see the sunrise again.'

She knew she was going to regret it, but she did it anyway. She bent down and kissed him. His lips were warm and tasted of wine. It was short and simple, but it worked. All Seth did to reply was smile. She smiled back.

The stillness of the scene was quickly broken by a pair of screams. Liza and Gregg were screaming.

‘What the hell’s going on?’ yelled Seth.

Silver kicked open the door and ran to the end of the landing. Seth followed. She looked down from the top of the stairs. Liza and Gregg were running up towards them. Gregg was in his pyjamas- patterned with blue and white sheep.

‘What’s wrong?’ asked Silver as Liza picked Gregg up and held him tight.

‘Just take a look.’

At the bottom of the stairs the front door lay broken in two. Spilling through the doorway was a tidal wave of grey fur that writhed and trembled. A herd of elephants, a swarm of bats- no, a pack of wolves, like grey boulders, pouring out like water from a tap. From out of the fur came a dozen pair of red eyes looking up at them.

‘The wolves are here.’

More of the creatures poured through to fill the house through the smashed windows and cracked doors that fell beneath their weight. They savagely clawed at the walls, ripping the wallpaper away and tearing down the aura portraits. Their screaming and howling could be heard from every inch of the house. Silver couldn’t make out how many there were, but she knew why they were here. Standing calmly in the riot of fur and bone was Siren, just as Silver remembered him; pin stripe suit and shaved head. A lion tamer with his pets. He sniffed the air, swallowing the dust, perfume and scent. He looked up the stairs towards the four of them.

He was smiling.

‘RUN!’ screamed Silver. She pushed Liza and Gregg down the hallway and herded them into Seth’s room. She sat them down on the bed while Seth threw open his wardrobe and tossed aside the t-shirts and jeans, searching for something.

‘Liza, listen to me. I need you to do something,’ she held her by the shoulders and could see the fear in her eyes. ‘You see this casket here? Those wolves are after it. I want you to stay in here with Gregg and guard it. Me and Seth will protect you.’ She lifted the golden casket off the floor and handed it to Liza.

‘Remember, do not let them get hold of this. If they do, we’re all dead. Seth?’

From the wardrobe he pulled out a baseball bat and hockey stick. He threw the hockey stick to Silver. Now armed, they made their way onto the landing and locked the door behind them. They held their weapons in the air, ready to strike anything that got in their way. At the end of the hallway the first pack of wolves came streaming out and began to surround them, keeping to the walls like a tide of black ink, swallowing up every surface.

‘This is what heroes do, yeah? Stand and fight?’ asked Seth nervously.

‘Yep. You scared?’

‘Yeah.’

‘Me too.’

It was getting darker. They stood back to back. Silver could feel the warmth of his body and was thankful. The lights in the house were beginning to fade, leaving only the glow of the wolves’ eyes in the darkness. She gripped the hockey stick a little tighter and wiped the sweat from her forehead.

‘Seth, can you see alright?’

‘I don’t know, it’s hard-‘

‘They’re trying to mess with our perceptions or something, just concentrate.’

The walls, with their dated paper and framed aura portraits, were totally swallowed up by the darkness, just leaving the red eyes that shone out like the jewels in Aladdin's cave.

'I won't leave you.'

'I bet you say that to all the girls.' Her heart was racing. It was getting hard to breath. She managed to laugh. From out of the darkness appeared Siren.

'Come on, children, this is getting a bit silly isn't it? You think you can kill us with a few wooden sticks?'

'We'll take our chances.'

'You could just stand aside and let us take the casket. Then you can run along without us harming one hair on your head-'

'And the world will crack open leaving nothing but a few shards of rock. Yeah, right. Where did that dagger even come from?'

'Why do your prison guards still keep the keys to your jails? I'm tired of this game. We are already devouring your race in every city and suburb, you can't stop us. We aren't merely creatures of flesh and blood, we are on another level altogether. We can see your dimension from a thousand different angles, we can smell your scent from halfway across the world, and we can hunt you until the end of the universe. Now stand aside.'

'No.'

'Then your fate is sealed.'

'Bring it on, Scrappy.'

\* \* \* \* \*

*Siren backs away into the shadow. I press my back closer against Seth's. I'm wearing my old converse shoes. They're tatty and old. I don't know why but that's all I can think of. Okay, get back on track- focus. Knees bent. Back straight. Arms back. I can feel the skin on my arms tingle with static, bracing itself for something. From out of the darkness comes the first wolf, leaping through the air- a speeding firework, a rabid dog, with its claws outstretched. Just like Miss Peacock taught me in sports class, I swing the hockey stick from behind my head and send it crashing into the beast. The wood snaps in two. The wolf lands on Seth, pinning him down and gnashing its jaws at his face. The smell of rotting meat pours from the monster's mouth. Seth screams and yells as he holds the baseball bat up against the wolf's neck.*

'Oh God! Rachel- quick!'

*I pick up the two broken pieces of wood. One of them is sharp and splintered. I try to stab it through the wolf's flesh, but it's like rubber. It's impossible to beat or cut no matter how hard I press. Dropping the remains of the hockey stick, I hold my fists together and slam them down on the wolf's back. My fingers crack and bruise under the strain. I can feel a thousand eyes watching me, waiting for my death. The wolf turns its head around and stares right at me. This is it. Just like the Doctor said: we all lose sometime-*

*Suddenly, the wolf begins to scream. Steam is rising out of its hair, the fur rolls off its back and the grey flesh beneath burns red, glowing infra-red. I try hitting it again, this time on the neck. The spot that I touch burns like the other- How the hell am I doing this? Wait, I don't wanna jinx it. I grab the wolf by the neck and feel the flesh collapse beneath my fingers into a cloud of steam. I'm like a giant- a god. The wolf- what's left of it- falls to the floor. It doesn't move.*

'How the hell did you do that?' asks Seth, getting to his feet and pushing the corpse aside.

'I have no idea!'

*Another wolf leaps from out of the darkness. I push Seth back against the door and run towards it, almost embracing it. The force of its body throws me to the floor. I feel like a cannonball has landed on my chest. My head throbs but I can make out the screams of the animal on top of me. I feel its wild movements stop dead. I'm the Medusa, I'm a witch. One touch and you're dead, nothing can stop me.*

*Seth rolls its red raw corpse off of me and I can breathe again. My hands are still burning with power. I stand up to face the sea of eyes-*

'You took the Doctor, you tried to kill my friends, and you just went and pissed off a very hormonal teenager. Big mistake. Now listen up, I'm the silver bullet you lot of have been afraid of since the day you were born, and I can hunt you till the end of time. Now get the hell out of here before I do some real damage.'

A thousand tiny eyes blinked. The lights in the house slowly flickered on. The wolves had vanished, leaving nothing but an empty hallway. The walls had been stripped bare. The wallpaper lay in shreds on the ground along with shards of broken glass.

Silver sighed.

'Ouch!' Seth pinched her arm.

'How come I'm not getting burned? How did you-'

Seth was cut off by the sound of screaming from his bedroom.

'Liza!' Silver kicked the bedroom door open. It smelt of dirty laundry. The bed had been turned on its side. Liza and Gregg were crouched behind it, terrified. In front of a smashed window, snarling at his victims, was Siren. His face had only half transformed into a wolf- his teeth sharpened, jaw widened and eyes burning red. The elephant man. In his arms he held the golden casket.

Siren turned his head and sneered at Silver and Seth. He let out a primal howl.

'Farewell my lambs,' he hissed. Still holding the casket, he ran and dived at the window. Silver quickly looked through the broken pane and saw him join a stampede of silhouettes -some human, some wolves, some halfway in between- rioting the street below. They were racing off into the horizon, howling in victory.

'We're screwed,' said Seth.

'Yep, but that ain't gonna stop us.' She helped Liza up. 'I'm sorry this had to happen.'

'Don't apologise, honey,' she smiled and wiped her cheeks dry.

'I'm sorry they, er- wrecked your house.'

'I only just finished decorating the kitchen! And they destroyed all of my aura portraits, hairy bastards. Sorry, Gregg. I never liked dogs.'

'They aren't dogs-'

'I know they aren't. I know demons and monsters exist. I've seen them in people when I've drawn their auras, but there's no such thing as evil really. It's just people that get lost, that's all. And by the looks of it, that guy was very, *very* lost.'

'It's okay, they've gone now to cause other trouble. Why don't you put Gregg to bed and make some coffee?'

'Are you always this patronizing?' she laughed. 'Gregg is staying up with me. I'll get a DVD, and it's hot chocolate, not coffee.' She picked up Gregg -still terrified- and hoisted him onto her arm. Together they went downstairs, leaving Silver and Seth alone in the war torn bedroom.

'Where do you think the wolves have gone?' asked Seth.

'There's only one place we can try. The Pentacle Connecticut offices. That stone chamber beneath the building, there's gotta be a purpose for it.'

‘OK, let’s go. I’ll have to change first. Try not to burn anything in the meantime.’  
Seth grabbed a few pieces of clothing and left the room.

Liza came back in. She was clutching something large and square in her hands.

‘The news says this is happening all over the world. I hope to God that the grocery store is open tomorrow. Anyway, here’s the present I promised you.’

She passed the object to Silver. It was a portrait of a girl drawn in pastel chalks. There was a globe of blinding silver light emanating from her chest, it sent out shockwaves of silver spreading all over her, so her outline was like a shining halo. Silver realized the portrait was of her. She didn’t look too bad either.

‘This is my aura portrait?’

‘Yep.’ She gave her a small hug.

‘Thank you, it’s beautiful- thanks! So my aura colour is silver?’

‘Yeah, pretty strange. There are usually other colours and shades in a person’s aura, but this is totally pure.’

‘Silver... like moonlight.’

‘I’ll sort out the hot chocolate,’ said Liza. Seth re-entered as she was walking out. She took a moment to brush some dirt off his shirt, then left. He peeked over Silver’s shoulder.

‘You’re aura colour is silver?’

‘Brighter than that, almost like moonlight-’ Her heart was racing.

‘That thing you did with the wolves- they just burnt up.’

‘As soon as I touched them...’

‘That is the coolest thing ever!’ Seth laughed.

‘The moon’s gone, but I’m still here. We’ll use it against them. It’s all we’ve got.’

‘We’re still screwed, but it’s worth a shot. Well, super girl, you’d better get changed before we go off to war. You should lose some of those necklaces and stuff.’

‘Yeah, wear something practical. I’ll meet you downstairs in five.’

She walked out into the hallway with the portrait under her arm. Looking down she could see a torn piece of one of the other aura portraits, a hole and had been scratched into the face of a twenty-something Pakistani man. She ignored it and entered her bedroom, laying the picture frame down on the bed, and sat down in front of the dressing table. She looked at her reflection and saw a beaten and bloodied Wiccan girl. She knew what she had to do.

She pinched a face wipe and took the eye liner off- and the eye shadow, and the blusher, and the dark purple lipstick. She took off the moonstone necklace, the yin-yang earrings, the charm bracelets, and the rings. Next the hoodie, the purple shirt, and the pentacle belt buckle. She pulled on a plain white t-shirt and brushed the last bits of gel out of her hair.

She took one last look in the mirror. She looked so different, but more like herself than ever before. She took a deep breath and said aloud:

‘My name is Rachel Silverstein.’

### **Connecticut. 10.59PM. 47 minutes until the end of the world.**

"Liza," Silver said, entering the kitchen, "we’re going out. We’ve got some things to do.’

‘More houses to trash? In case you’re forgetting, missy, I’m still responsible for you.’

‘I know, but if you don’t let us go, the world will end. Tonight.’

‘Sure it will honey.’

‘After all you’ve seen tonight, do you doubt me?’

Liza went silent.

'Alright then, but cut the crap about saving the world. You're only 16.'

Rachel suddenly felt dizzy and giggled slightly. She stumbled out of the kitchen and into the hallway, grabbing her jacket. *Sixteen years old. I'm sixteen years old. Other people my age are out at parties, going to school, getting boyfriends. And here I am saving the world, not even old enough to drink- legally that is.*

'Rachel?' Seth came running down the stairs and joined her by the door. He looked her up and down in shock.

'Wow, you look...nice, for a goth.'

'Shut up,' she laughed.

'You look good.'

'Thanks.'

She opened the door and looked out onto the black and orange lit street ahead. She was shaking. Seth stepped over the porch and into the night. He zipped up his jacket against the cold wind that had quickly fallen. He offered his hand to her.

'Nervous?' she asked. His hand was shaking.

'Yeah.'

'Me too.'

She took his hand and held it tight. Together they began to walk, passing the lonely streetlamps, cars and houses.

'Do all heroes get this nervous?' he asked.

'No, so let's try and act brave.'

'Do you think, well, if we win, things will be different?'

'I don't know.'

'I might get to have a normal life after this.'

'That'd be nice. Seth?'

'Yeah?'

'I'm glad you're with me tonight.'

'Me too, super girl.'

The concrete labyrinth of the city awaited them. The televisions and radios of Connecticut switched off as the people retreated to bed. The streetlamps flickered, struggling to stay awake, whilst the sun lay in its cradle, mourning the loss of its brother. The sound of cars faded away into the empty night. Earth turned out its lights, leaving just two young people on their way into Connecticut, to the end of the world.

\* \* \* \* \*

'Light the torches you fools, hurry!'

Siren hurried down the metal staircase, getting faster and faster as his legs creaked and morphed beneath him into their true form. He was so close now, his teeth grew sharper and his throat grew wider to make way for a shrieking howl. The staircase behind him was shaking as the hooded followers scurried after him in a possessed frenzy. Desperate to reach the bottom of the well, away from the stink of the human world.

His body tingled with electricity every time he entered the chamber- the doorway to Lucius' prison. He could feel his spirit burning up through the molten rock and fire, so close he could reach out and touch it. He remembered Lucius plucking him out of the mortal world as a child, leading him across the stars, but not in the weak bipedal form that he had possessed, but as the true wolf inside.

He remembered being taken to the cliff edge of the universe, to the wastelands of Dystopia, lead across the sharp rocks that bled with dark matter until he caught a small lamb amongst the rubble. His first hunt. He had held onto that memory since the dawn of time, and now, after the millennia of being lost in the astral plane, it was slipping away. His head was filled with the thoughts of the body he wore, he could hear its name: David. He could hear his thoughts, his monotonous day to day work, his stress, the battles he always lost. But tonight it would end.

He reached the bottom of the chamber, the shapeless forms around him smothered the walls and floor. Torches spat into life and the burning orange glow illuminated the central altar: the padlock upon the Earth. He stroked its stone surface, feeling the faint vibrations that echoed up from the core of the planet. He could hear the voice whispering to him:

*'Release me.'*

'Hand me the casket!'

Two hooded figures carried the casket between them on the other side of the altar. They placed it before him, letting its golden skin shine into his eyes. He could feel his muscles writhe, unable to decide on which form to take. He stretched out his quivering hand and pushed open the lid...

It was empty.

'Looking for this?' One of the robed figures lifted back its hood to reveal a dark young face with black spiky hair. He was holding the dagger. It was the boy: Seth.

'This is your last chance. Leave Earth, or else.'

'It'll take more than a few words to harm us-'

He pulled out an aerosol can and lighter. He aimed the can at Siren's face and held the flame of the lighter in front.

'I know.'

He fired the aerosol. Siren clutched his face as fire burst out and engulfed him. He howled in pain, as did the rest of the wolves. He morphed his face into a wolf again, letting the smooth grey hairs caress his flesh.

He pounced onto Seth and, with his still human hand, began to throttle him.

\* \* \* \* \*

Rachel tore off her robes and threw them into the riot of wolves surrounding her. It had been easy to grab two of the wolves lagging at the back the pack and take their robes. Then they just had to mingle in with the creatures, pushing and shoving, the warmth of their breath so close, the sound of their cries so loud. That's the thing about monsters, when they get excited they get lazy. Lazy enough to let someone carry the casket for them...

From out of her jacket pocket she grabbed another lighter and aerosol can. She threw the jacket off, leaving her in just a t-shirt and jeans. Seth was on the floor, choking under the force of the wolf man's hairy fists.

'Kill her!' screamed Siren.

*Oh God, That's my cue.* For a split second, standing by the altar in the centre of the chamber, she realized how many of them there were. They were climbing over each other on the floor, running up the walls, even onto the ceiling, until every surface was smothered by dark fur- and hundreds of eyes.

*Five years ago I still didn't know how to ride a bike. Now I've gotta fight hell itself.*

Feeling the breath of a wolf behind her, she spun around and fired the aerosol, illuminating the beast with the orange glow of fire. More were flooding down and encircling

her. She kept the can in firing position, holding it out and slowly turning 360°. Two more wolves pounced. She fired again and watched their faces burn and shriek before retreating back into the pack. She shook the can, it was empty. *Crap.*

She threw the aerosol and lighter at the nearest wolf.

‘Come on you hairy fleabags!’

A wolf was hurtling through the air towards her. She jumped up and hurled herself into its chest. She was knocked to the floor, the wind knocked out of her. The wolf shrieked under her touch as the fur and flesh began to scorch, but that did not stop it. She continued to hit and punch it, knowing they weren’t going to give up easily.

The rest of the wolves, over a hundred of them, joined in the fight.

\* \* \* \* \*

*It wasn’t like this in ‘Die Hard’.*

Seth cried out faintly as Siren squeezed his throat with his bare hands. He knew he didn’t mean to just strangle him, but break his neck as well. His sight began to blur under the pain. Desperately, he punched Siren on the side of the nose. The wolf man flinched, but Seth’s hand came away bleeding. *Where the hell is this power I’m supposed to have? It’s just a lie, I can’t do anything. We’re all gonna die tonight and there’s no one that can save us.*

Seth reached into his pocket, desperately trying to find the dagger. His fingers were shaking, and his knuckles sliced against the knife’s sharp edge. He grabbed the handle and pulled it out of his pocket. With all the strength he could summon, he thrust the edge into the beast’s chest, then removed it quickly. Siren howled and stumbled backwards. Seth took his chance to get free and scrambled across the floor. On the other side of the altar he could see Silver, smothered under the stampede.

‘Rachel!’

He was struck to the ground again. Staring up he saw Siren leering over him, his head now totally transformed into its true Therianthrope form. Seth let out another cry as he was kicked in the ribs.

‘Earth’s last defence? A couple of teenagers? It’d be funny if it wasn’t so pathetic.’

He kicked him again.

‘At least with the Doctor you had someone worthy, a respectable enemy, but you?’ Another kick forced the air from Seth’s lungs. ‘I don’t even know why you’re here. What are you fighting for? For your little suburbia? For your friends that betray you, parents that shout at you and governments that lie to you? Humans, born into emotional misery, working everyday of your life, consumed by materialism, until one day you die, with nothing to say you were even alive.’

‘But don’t worry, the wolves are here now. We’re here to take the pain away.’

\* \* \* \* \*

Silver screamed as the wolves snatched her away into the corner. Grabbing every part of her body with their claws and teeth, she was caught in the heart of the storm. They were going to rip her in two.

*I’m sorry Seth. We can’t always win. But when we die, we can see the Doctor in the heaven. You can get to know him better, and we can all be happy.*

A wolf’s head appeared to her right and sunk its teeth into her shoulder. It showed no sign of moving, its red eyes staring up at her like a sick dog.

*When I was 6 years old, I got chased down our road by an angry pit-bull. I fell over and grazed my knee. I thought I was gonna die. Dad appeared, picked me up, and told the dog to go away. It's funny what you think of when you're about to die.*

Red eyes, burning so bright. It was starting to get hot, under the sweaty breath and bristly fur. She could hear the creatures shrieking and crying. They were burning, but they kept on pushing and shoving. Even the wolf at her side, she could see the pain in its eyes.

*I remember Dad lying dead on the floor. I remember the Doctor lying dead on the floor. And it makes me angry, so angry.*

As one, the tower of wolves howled. It was a cry of desperation, pain and death. The silver heat seared through them like warm metal. The moonchild opened her arms. The wolves exploded into dust. Silver collapsed, bruised and bleeding, but free from the strain.

She was so tired, but she'd come too far to give up now. Lifting her head up, she saw Siren- his body human but his head in the shape of a wolf, like some grotesque carnival mask. He was advancing on Seth. She clumsily rose to her feet, picked up a small rock, and threw it at the monster. He turned around and fixed his gaze upon her.

'Little red riding hood has come to save the day,' he sneered.

She stumbled forward and fell into his arms, holding him tight, her fingers digging into his back.

'Burn,' she whispered with her cracked voice.

But he didn't.

Siren grabbed her by the neck and threw her across the cavern. She hit the wall with a deafening crack and fell to the ground like a lifeless doll.

\* \* \* \* \*

Inside he was screaming. He was screaming for his parents. He was screaming for Rachel.

'You shouldn't have done that,' he said, biting back the screams, 'cos now I really am gonna kill you.'

Siren marched towards him, baring his white, drooling teeth. His sharp, pin-striped suit began to stretch and tear until a muscular, hairy body burst out. Standing on all fours, he began to howl. A blinding white flash ripped through the chamber in tune with the beast's cry. Suddenly they were no longer in the chamber. They were in a forest.

*I won't be afraid. I won't be afraid. I always say those words in my head, like when I was 14 and breaking into Dan's house. Or when I was 15, surrounded by dealers asking for my wallet. No matter how hard it gets, I won't be afraid.*

He looked around. It was still night time. It was a forest like any other, smothered in tall trees that looked like hunched goblins, but hazed over with the smell of bonfires. It was hot, very hot- the landscape blasted with a scorching wind that threatened to set the trees alight. Everything blurred and shimmered in the heat. He struggled to make out the form of Siren ahead. There stood the wolf, tall and proud. He howled again but it was hard to hear, the sound of the wind and the pressure of the air battered against Seth's eardrums. The drums of war were sounding.

*I won't be afraid.*

The wolf looked different, its body shifting and fading, almost wraith-like, surrounded by the ghostly aura of alien lands. Raising its red eyes, it stared into Seth's mind.

'Welcome to the astral plane. Welcome to my home ground. I'd like you to meet Lucius, Lord of the Wolves.'

Seth fell to the ground, clutching his ears as a wolf's scream sliced through his ears. He could feel blood running down the side of his head. His ear drums felt like they'd burst under the sound. *I'm deaf.*

'Don't be shy.'

He could hear Siren inside his mind, filling the painful silence that had befallen him. Looking behind, Seth saw what Siren was gesturing to. In a clearing of trees he could see a cage made of dark, rusty metal with bars as thick as the tree trunks. Like a grotesque ribcage, the structure spread up above the tree tops overlooking the forest. To describe the prisoner inside as just another wolf would be an understatement.

Seth, struggling to staunch the bleeding from his ears, collapsed back onto his knees before the beast that lay ahead.

Its fur was not smooth and fine like that of the other wolves, but a fierce coat of black needles, sharp enough to cut skin. Its flesh was burnt and in some areas exposed raw bone, through which the rest of the forest could be seen. It was like a ghost, but too solid to be a creature that could gently vanish into the air. Its spine, a labyrinth of rust and bone, protruded from its back and stuck out of the needle fur, reaching up to its head which had been stripped bare to reveal blood stained bone. A blazing red fire could be seen through the eye sockets and cracks in the wolf's skull, glowing and flickering as the creature opened its mouth to roar.

There it stood, half a mile high, imprisoned both on Earth and in the astral plane, the Lord of the Wolves: Lucius.

But wait- there was something else. Held tightly in the beasts' hand was a dead body. A man. He was wearing smart, Edwardian clothes, now dirtied and torn. His skin was red raw with first degree burns, and the blood was still wet. Seth stared harder, recognizing the figure. It was Rachel's friend, her dead friend; the Doctor. There he lay, in the grip of the wolf, lost prey.

\* \* \* \* \*

She was a bullet shooting up past the houses and rooftops, into the sky, past the clouds, through the atmosphere. She was hurtling away from Earth. Looking back from space she could see it burning. It was dying.

She was in a forest. She was running, running from the end of the world. And up ahead, hovering in mid air above the trees, was a large blue box...

\* \* \* \* \*

*Here I am at the end of everything, and I haven't even got any weapons. I'm just a normal guy, and there's nothing else for them to take. They took my parents, my friend, my hope.*

He was running, his feet smashing through the leaves and twigs beneath. He was running at Siren. The ghostly wolf smiled and hurled himself through the air. They met in a grotesque embrace. The creature bit into his shoulder. Seth didn't bother screaming. He simply hit the wolf on the jaw, kicked it in the chest and clawed at its back. He didn't stop, until they both fell to the forest floor in a wild frenzy.

*All there has ever been is pain. And from that pain comes rage. We scream and shout and fight. That's life, kill or be killed. Jake was right. When he'd taken me in when I was 15, he said you can either hold the gun or take the bullet.*

He could feel his nails grow sharper as they pierced Siren's back, he could feel the warmth of his blood flowing down his arms. Siren howled in pain and fell back into the grass. The wolf was smiling.

'The wolves are here to take the pain away.'

In the dirt, a smooth sheet of blood spilled out from Siren's wounds. Struggling to stay upright, with his body ravaged and torn, Seth stared down at his reflection in the blood. It was not a beaten teenager staring back. It was a wolf.

Seth screamed.

He fell to the floor, but it wasn't the soft dirt and leaves that greeted him, it was the harsh stone floor of the ceremonial chamber. He was back on Earth. Rachel was nowhere to be seen. He needed her, just for moment. He needed touch. *Come on, super girl, please come back. I don't care about all this saving the world crap. Just come back and we can go home, and watch TV, and hold each other. Just come back, please.*

Looking up, he saw Siren grab the dagger from off the floor. He jumped through the air and thrust it into the altar. All went silent. Siren fell back in victory.

'I've done it. I've done it!'

The floor began to shake.

\* \* \* \* \*

Silver jumped up and grabbed the handle on the blue box. She took one look back at the dying Earth. It was so small now.

She ran into the console room. The lights were off and the instruments were dead. She pulled levers and pushed buttons until the rotor began to rise and fall, and they dematerialized into deep space.

Lying on the cold floor, unconscious, covered in blood and burnt badly, was the Doctor. Exhausted and sick, she lay down next to him, gently draping an arm over his still chest.

\* \* \* \* \*

The entire chamber rocked as the dagger's hilt began to glow. A crack appeared on the altar like a streak of lightening, reaching down to the centre of the earth. The crack grew wider, spreading like a spider web, exhaling clouds of scorching air.

'I AM FREE,' roared Lucius.

*I'm sorry for what I did and said, Rachel. I'm sorry for shutting you and everyone else out. I'm sorry for what I did to Mom and Dad. But I'll take it all back for you...*

Seth felt a tingling sensation from his head all the way down to his toes. Something inside him was stirring- an electricity that charged his every cell. The power he'd carried in his bloodline since the dawn of humanity. He knew what he must do. He closed his eyes as the world collapsed around him. The ground was shattering beneath his feet, as the beast shot up from the molten core of the planet. But everything was going to be alright. His time had come.

Seth could feel his eyes tingle. His head shot up and two streams of golden light shot out like torches. The light spilled out of his mouth and spread over his skin until he became a glowing figure of light, an angel. He could feel energy, electricity, power- flowing through his veins and exploding out into the chamber. It began to shake even more, pieces of stone and pillar falling from the roof.

And under all the chaos, Seth was laughing.

\* \* \* \* \*

The golden light shot up onto the surface, until the night skies of Connecticut turned to daylight. The aura spread across the continent, over the seas, to the end of the earth, bleaching out buildings and people- joining together in the light. Planet Earth became a sun.

But even then it did not stop. The light shot up out of the Earth's atmosphere like a firework, swallowing the satellites, the Russian space station, the Therianthrope mother ship, and even further, until it reached the moon. The moon encased in iron and steel, imprisoned, suffocated. The light formed a fist and grabbed it. It penetrated even the shadowy metal that swallowed the moonlight. It spread into the cracks, around the screws and beneath the bolts. The metal began to scream and scorch, its vast iron skeleton fiercely trembling. The bolts shook themselves free until every last steel panel shattered and the casing was hurled off into the depths of deep space, leaving a large silver orb to hang in space. Luna, the earth's natural satellite, had returned at last.

The rest of the universe looked on. They looked into space and saw a light brighter than the sun and larger than a star. Millions of cultures saw it as a sign of God, but they did not use it as an excuse for sacrifice or tyranny, but as a celebration. And that day henceforth became a holy day. But they were never to know that at its heart, the one responsible was not the creator, but a 16 year old boy, the guardian of the wolf's prison. With its work done, the heavenly light retreated, flying back down to Earth, past the satellites, through the atmosphere down through the clouds, towards the green continents, even further, until the grid of cities was in sight. The light converged like melting snow over one city, down past the skyscrapers, getting deeper and deeper, past the rooftops, until it reached the small stone chamber.

Seth inhaled and let the light shoot down his chest and seal itself up inside his body, into his flesh and blood. His vision was blurring and he could feel his legs trembling under the strain. He sank down onto the floor.

'We won,' he muttered.

He lay there alone on the cold stone floor surrounded by rubble and dust. The dagger stood thrust in the altar, its light slowly fading. Beside it lay a pile of ash, the remains of the wolves' champion, Siren. The crack that had formed in the stone, spreading deep down into the earth, was healing. Soon all that was left was the smooth stone floor.

Seth closed his eyes. All was silent.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Doctor opened his eyes.

He looked around at the forest. He was chained to one of the trees. The sun was rising, and autumn was coming to the land. The wood was slowly rotting and leaves were falling to crunch upon the ground. He tried to loosen the cold, iron chains around his wrists but they did not move. He did not have the strength, his body had been beaten to a pulp. He could feel the scars on his face and a throbbing black eye.

Up ahead he saw a wolf. It stopped before him and stood there, like a dog waiting to be walked. It's red, hypnotizing eyes stared up at him. The wolf growled. The Doctor growled back.

'I think it's time for me to leave,' said the Doctor.

'We'll win one day,' said the Wolf.

'I don't think so. Those wounds are going to take a while to heal. You'd better watch out while Seth is around, and my Silver, we're a tough bunch you know.'

'Lucius is still waiting for you. All it took was your fall from grace upon the mother ship, and we took you. One day you'll slip up, you'll take a wrong turn in your nightmare, you'll catch a stray bullet, and we'll be waiting.'

'That day will never come.'

'It must, so you better start running. Even your precious Gallifrey isn't safe. One day the wolves will catch up with you, Doctor, and you'll stay here forever.'

The chains around his wrist fell to the ground and were swallowed up by the leaves and vines. The Doctor embraced his freedom and fell back against the tree, the energy drained from his body. Ahead he could see a rough dirt path between the trees.

'We'll be seeing you again.'

'Don't count on it.'

He broke a branch from off of the tree and used it as a walking stick. He slowly stumbled his way onto the path and followed it out of the forest and out of the astral plane. He had a long journey ahead of him.

He didn't look back.

\* \* \* \* \*

Silver listened to the scanner as it chimed softly. They were hovering in empty space. She held the Doctor in her arms. It was just them, a wooden box, and the stars.

The Doctor opened his eyes. Silver jumped with shock as he took in a deep breath and began to cough.

'Doctor!'

'Hello,' he grinned up at her with his head in her lap. She slapped him.

'Ouch! What was that for?'

'For nearly getting yourself killed!'

'Oh- yes, about that-'

'How the hell is it that you can throw your life away so easily? Didn't you think that maybe I have feelings for you? And I might mind that you're dead?'

'I'm sorry, I didn't mean for it to happen-'

Silver sighed.

'I should give you more than a slap. Look, I know everyone dies eventually. You, me, even the TARDIS someday will all come to an end. But I'm not ready for that yet. Can't we just enjoy the time we have left together?'

The Doctor got up and sat beside her.

'I hurt you a lot, didn't I?'

'Yes.'

'I guess I've seen death so much that sometimes, I embrace it. I can't even begin to count the number of friends I've seen die. Some days I think to myself, maybe, if I get close enough to death so I can almost touch it, I might be able to see my friends again.'

'You know there's a room in the TARDIS where I remember those who have died? I light a candle for everyone I've seen fall. Sometimes it's hard when you've seen the genocide of entire races, but I try my best, in hope that they're not forgotten, and they can live on in the flame.'

She didn't know what to say. The TARDIS was so silent, beneath them a thousand cogs and wheels were winding away, doing their job, while the captain lay in shreds. She looked into his eyes and put her arm around him.

‘Back on the mother ship, you gave in so easily. You just gave up and let yourself go under.’

‘Of course, I’ve always got to play the hero. I’ve become a legend and I have no choice in the matter-’

‘I don’t mean it like that. But it’s a responsibility, travelling in time, because we’re the only ones who can stop it-’

‘Yes, you’re right. I’m surprised you didn’t stay with Seth-’

‘It’s a responsibility to be with you, and you can’t do this alone.’

He put his arm around her. She hugged him back.

‘So are you gonna tell me what happened?’

‘What do you mean?’

‘How did you survive? How did I get here?’

‘Ah yes, this is the bit where I explain everything with a bit techno babble, yes? Well, to be honest, I don’t think I can. My being here is just a matter of survival. I was buried and burnt alive, but I managed to crawl my way into the TARDIS. The old girl’s harmony fields have been working flat out to help me, but I was still trapped in the astral plane. I needed you and Seth to get me out.

‘As for you, well, astral energies are dangerous and uncontrollable, they build in cycles. Every so often they wreak havoc on the universe, they’re strong enough to pick you out of space and take you to where you want to be. Combine that with the forces inside your friend, well, I don’t think even I can explain what’s happened in these past few weeks.

‘Perhaps there’s some grand scheme to all this? Who can tell. All I know is that it’ll happen again, astral energies will build, and the wolves will return. But for now, all we can do is enjoy ourselves, and do what we believe is right.’

‘Men, I’m bloody sick of them,’ she gave him a weak smile then hugged him. He was warm, and she could feel both of his hearts beating inside his chest.

‘Look at the two of us, we look like crap.’

‘Yes, we could do with a change and a bath. How about we have a holiday? No aliens, death, big laser guns or dogs. I’ll make us some tea, and we can have it here on the floor?’

‘Yeah, I’d like that. Make it a hot chocolate, and bring cushions- and the biscuit tin.’

\* \* \* \* \*

‘The time is 2pm and here are the headlines.

‘The outbreak of riots last night has left the world stunned, with the major cities of New York, London, and Tokyo needing immediate repair. A conference was called in Geneva early this morning where the head of Euro UNIT announced that a new strain of the rabies virus was responsible, but UNIT troops have managed to contain it. This was in response to the eye witness accounts and CCTV footage of canine creatures attacking the public.

‘A charity cash pool has been set up to raise money that will be distributed to cities damaged mostly by the riots.

‘In other news, astrologers and spiritualists believe last night’s riots were caused by a freak lunar eclipse, which made it appear as though the moon had completely vanished...’

## Epilogue

**Earth- Connecticut. 11:32 PM. <NO DATA>/-- minutes till the end of the world.**

It's late.

Some people are celebrating- there are fireworks. There are parties and gatherings, everyone is thankful that they survived. Everyone feels triumphant, and they don't know why.

I can see the house up ahead, tucked away on what's left of the suburban street. The windows have been boarded up, but someone still mows the lawn. Probably Geoff, he used to mow everyone's lawn. It was his hobby. The entire neighbourhood has been ripped to pieces, but Geoff still mows the lawn.

I make my way to the front door. They might have changed the locks. The key in my hand is warm. The door opens. I make my way inside.

\* \* \* \* \*

*It's early morning.*

*I can see the house up ahead, tucked away on what's left of the suburban street. The soldiers have boarded up the windows.*

*I remember coming back here this morning, the morning after the war ended. Liza and Gregg sitting in the ruins of their house. There were soldiers on the streets, escorting everyone to a temporary shelter. A lot of the other houses had been damaged in the attack. Rachel wasn't there.*

*As we stood in line to get on the army jeeps, Gregg handed me a note. It was from Rachel.*

*'Go home.'*

*Liza was busy chatting to one of her neighbours. I patted Gregg on the head, and slipped through the crowd, back down the street to the ruins of the foster house.*

\* \* \* \* \*

I sit there all night looking at the stars.

*'That's Orion the hunter,' my Dad's voice echoes in my head. "He's a big strong guy, a hero. If you're ever in trouble, Orion will sort you out. Daddy is good friends with him.'*

*'What are the stars, Daddy?'*

*Should he tell her that they're just big balls of burning gas, some of them already flickering out of life?*

*'They're angels, Rachel. It's Daddy's job to try and learn about them, and other people will someday try and reach them, and we'll find out the answers to everything we want to know.'*

I want to know the answers. I want to find out what it's all about. That's why I'm with the Doctor. That's why I'm a time traveller.

\* \* \* \* \*

*The daylight is bleeding in through the cracks in the planks. The place looks pretty bad. I run throughout the house shouting her name until my throat is raw. She's not here.*

*I thought you'd be here. I've been wandering around all night trying to find you. I've changed so much because of you. I feel different now. The power in me isn't as strong. I feel normal, like one of the crowd. But I know I can't be, not after what I've seen. You showed me aliens and spaceships, and I can't go back to normal life. That's why I need you, super girl. I dunno if you wanted to make something out of what we had, maybe try going out for a bit, ah- I dunno-'*

\* \* \* \* \*

We would have been happy, for a while. He was a nice guy. Well, what do I know? I'm 16, I can't commit myself to one guy forever. But I did like him.

It's hard to tell when you go from one place to the next, never staying for too long. You never know if a guy is *the one*, but if it didn't work, at least we could be friends. He couldn't have come with us. He belongs on Earth, the wolves will come again, and his...*talent* is needed.

I enter the dining room. The table is still there, covered in dust. With my finger I write: 'Super girl'. There's a letter in my pocket. I don't know what to do with it. I spend a few moments thinking, and then put the brown envelope on the table.

\* \* \* \* \*

*I enter the dining room. There's something written on the table. 'Super girl'. It's her! She was here! I knew it!*

*'Rachel!' I call out. 'Rachel! It's me! I'm here. It's Seth!' My throat begins to hurt. There is no answer. She's been gone for a long time.*

*There's an envelope on the table right next to the signature. I quickly tear it open. There's a bank statement, credit card, and a letter inside:*

*Seth,*

*There's 2 million dollars in this bank account. Use it wisely.*

*Love, Rachel.*

\* \* \* \* \*

It's nearly morning. The TARDIS is waiting for me outside.

I leave the envelope on the table and take one last look back. I might never see this house again. But I've got better things to see. I've got questions that need answering and I've got a responsibility. But deep down, something still isn't right.

I lock the door behind me and step inside the blue police box. Under the laughter of parties, and shrieks of fireworks, the TARDIS quietly fades away.

\* \* \* \* \*

*I search the envelope for something more. There has to be something. Just one little thing.*

*There's something else, on the back of the letter:*

*P.S. I'm coming back.*



# THE DOCTOR WHO PROJECT



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Seth will reveal his last secret. Rachel will face her destiny.

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The countdown to the end of the world has begun...

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