

THE
DOCTOR WHO
PROJECT

THE HORROR OF COUNT WAMPYR



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**PROLOGUE:
HERE THERE BE MONSTERS**

Thessaloniki, Greece—23 September 1933

Aubrey Warner came to Greece to search for monsters. It was important that he remember that, and he reminded himself of it many times, because in his time in the country, all he saw that was monstrous was the actions of his fellow men.

In fact, some good old-fashioned inhuman creatures would make a welcome break in the news and in the affairs of the beleaguered people Warner passed at every stop he had made since his departure from New York five weeks ago. He remembered Juliet's plaintive cry, half-sulk and half-temptation, "Why can't you take me with you? I've always wanted to go to Europe!"

It took every ounce of his willpower to remind his fiancée that the Professor had forbidden it. This was a work trip. She thankfully took that to mean a lot of time spent in libraries, brass rubbings, and old cathedrals. Juliet was no lover of old things. And yet Aubrey spent his life around them. He wondered, not for the first time, why they had ever matched in the first place. Oh well, Aubrey, he told himself, plenty of time to learn about all that after you're married.

However, going from London, to Paris, to Rome, and now to Athens, he wished she had been here just to distract him from the gloom of the world. There seemed to be no place on this Earth where men's hearts were not heavy. Still people reeled from the Wall Street crash, even so far from its reach. The poor lined every street, and while the Professor had no qualms about pushing past them with single-minded disinterest, Aubrey could not help but look at their faces, search his pressed cream trousers and struggle to find a few coins to give them (only to turn the street corner and find even more wretched people to whom he had no money to give). When his gold watch was stolen at the train station in Rome, he could not even bring himself to feel mad for the perpetrator: he only wished they had stolen his cufflinks instead so he could still tell the time.

Then there were the uniformed goons at every port these days, glowering over travel documents and stamping their visas with the force of a punch. The *fascisti* of Italy were the most zealous Aubrey had to face, and he thanked his stars he had not had to pass through Berlin. Just reading about the scenes there, the poverty and the violence, and the insanity it had provoked in the mass of people, made his stomach shudder with some grim anticipation. In one way, it made

his purpose here with the Professor seem benign. In another way entirely, it drew that purpose into even clearer focus.

The Professor had gone on ahead to Greece, while Aubrey spent some time researching their subject at the Vatican Library. Armed with the information they needed, he had cabled ahead and swiftly followed. Now, as the sun sank into the Aegean, Aubrey raced up the coast, somehow feeling the old superstitions about nightfall were all too true.

Feeling hot even in spite of his summer clothes, Aubrey left the carriage at the first opportunity, wandering through the windy, crumbling streets to recover his head before he saw the Professor. At last, for what seemed like the first time in this entire odyssey, the streets were deserted. If people had caused so many of the problems Aubrey was contemplating, their absence did not seem to make them go away. The streets without people, even the poor wretches he had passed, made him think of a city of the dead—a whole world of the dead. Again, his thoughts stewed by the news to make this seem a distinctly plausible prediction.

Aubrey summoned what little serenity he could as he made his wayward course to the cemetery. These days, the dead seemed to have all the fun. He chuckled at his thought, chuckling even more because of its grim, bitter truth.

“Well, Warner?”

Aubrey whirled around, further startling himself by his own shoe sinking into the soft earth of a recently dug grave. His research could not help making him superstitious, and he jumped from the spot, shuddering involuntarily at the skin-crawling concept. The Professor observed his comic antics with a thin, upturned mouth that the eye of faith might call a smile. Aubrey, however, had known and worked with the Professor long enough to know that the sombre, bloodless academic never smiled.

After blustering his way through the apologies, which the Professor had no time for, Aubrey got to what the old man wanted to hear: “You were quite right, Professor. This is the exact spot.”

A slender arm slapped Aubrey’s shoulder familiarly. “Don’t forget your sterling work, Warner. There have been times ...” He drew the collar of his fluttering coat around his neck, shuddering as Aubrey had a moment ago. “When I consider the enormity of what we’re pitted against, us mere mortals...”

“I know what you mean, sir. I’ve been thinking of little else ever since I got here.”

“Well, we know what we have to do. Find this site, steel ourselves for the task, and then before you know it we’ll be back in New York and you’ll be married to that delightful young shipbuilder’s daughter.”

The Professor marched into the cemetery, the tails of his long coat dancing in the air like the points of a cape. Aubrey called after him, “Are you sure we should do this now?”

“Absolutely. For the reasons I have stated.”

Aubrey indicated the full moon. “But ... at this hour? With what we know?”

The Professor nodded. “The longer we wait, the more damage it will cause. The sooner it is done, in the name of God and all that is holy ... it *must* be done. And may God’s hand guide us to do it.”

Aubrey’s objections were sharply silenced, and not for the first time, a twinge of resentment hung over the young acolyte as he traipsed through the cemetery. He could not help

noting that the pious pronouncement didn't answer his objection — why *now* of all times? Perhaps the Professor simply enjoyed scaring the willies out of Aubrey. His resentment grew as he looked sideways at his mentor, so absorbed with his purpose that he barely noticed the young man beside him.

They wound their way through the rows of graves. As they journeyed deeper within, as the moon glowed colder and brighter and the night shadows lengthened, Aubrey lost his orientation. The moon looked down like an all-seeing eye, and Aubrey felt other eyes on him, malevolently running up and down his mortal frame. The gate leading to the road vanished behind the proud lines of crosses and marble mausoleums, and the weak glow of the Professor's lamp seemed to grow dimmer, as if the forces of darkness would not even allow them to see their way into the trap.

But Aubrey felt the rush of fear most strongly when the walking stopped. The Professor drew his lamp over a mausoleum framed by gnarled trees, two gargoyles' heads looming from its corners.

He looked at the name proudly emblazoned at the arch of the mausoleum:

WAMPYR

Seeing the name gave Aubrey a queasy thrill. He turned to the Professor, looking ahead with an obsessive gleam in his eye.

"Hard to believe ..."

"What?"

"Well, it's really ... him. He *does* exist. No myth."

The Professor nodded, remarking to himself, "Old Stoker was wrong after all ..."

"Even after all I've read and researched, I could hardly believe ..."

Aubrey was feeling dizzy. Again, the oppression of other watchful eyes seemed to prod at him from all sides. The Professor snapped back to the present, grabbing Aubrey's trembling forearm and squeezed it. The larger man's grip was initially painful, but as he had come to do, the student gained support and a kind of pleasure from the contact.

"Have strength, my boy," the Professor exhorted him with fatherly stoicism.

"For Juliet," Aubrey Warner said to himself as he gathered his tools.

The two men entered the mausoleum and the cemetery returned to its former serenity, untroubled by the unwelcome visitations of the living.

CHAPTER ONE: BLUE BLOODS

He was just one of the crowd. With careful concentration, he could put one foot in front of the other, look around, say hello, and walk past his fellow humans.

They were all just people, out and about in celebration. Everyone was out tonight, the streets thronged with beautiful, ripe young things.

No, not ripe, he insisted to himself. Get a grip, damn you!

Yes, he was damned.

No, don't think of it. Control yourself, and focus on the one foot in front of the other, on looking around, saying hello. Being one of the people.

How difficult it was to lose himself in commonplace thoughts. But then, how quickly did the hunger, the thirst, the sickness overcome him. No sooner had he painfully dismissed the urges than they roared back, demanding to be satisfied.

A delicious—no, a beautiful, he corrected himself—young couple collided with him. He was hunched forward and so swimming in his pain that he did not notice them. They did not notice him, as they were marinating in a delightful stew of alcohol and love.

"Sorry, friend!" the one called after him. The words sounded garbled and distant, as if he was half-asleep. His girlfriend or wife or mistress laughed—laughed at him, no doubt. Who could not be happy on a night like tonight?

He looked back at the couple—their lovely, prominent veins. He could smell the life coursing through them.

They seemed to know, and after a moment staring after him, they receded into the crowd like frightened animals sensing a predator.

He wanted to explain, wanted them to know. Perhaps telling them might make him feel better. But then, he couldn't even tell his true love.

He was not one of them. How he wanted to be, how he took it for granted, but he was not one of them anymore. Not since he had come back from that damned place.

Damn you, Wampyr.

New York City, U.S.A. — 5 December 1933

“Am I crazy, or does it really taste better?” Maggie Weitz asked rhetorically as she sipped her Manhattan.

She slid her stemmed glass across the table for Kaylaar and the Doctor to judge. The former had shape-shifted to a pleasant dark-haired face, like Cary Grant, and was wearing white tie and tails to match. The Time Lord’s solitary concession to the prevailing dress code was a shawl-collared velvet smoking jacket in bottle-green; his omnipresent emerald-green balmacaan lay carelessly draped over the table’s fourth chair. One or two diners glanced at him sideways—whether due to his *déclassé* crimson fishing sweater or his skin colour, Maggie dared not speculate—but otherwise the sea of happy drinkers gathered in the Terrace Room at the Hotel New Yorker welcomed one and all. After all, it wasn’t every day the US government passed a popular law, and there was nothing more popular today—December 5—than repealing Prohibition.

The Doctor dipped his aquiline nose into the glass, and with a flare of his nostrils he recoiled. “I’ll stick to lemonade, I think.”

Kaylaar, more adventurously, took a sip, and joined Maggie in chuckling at their fellow traveller’s squeamishness. He had ordered a martini, the other quintessential metropolitan cocktail.

Maggie shrugged and enjoyed her second sip as much as her first. “All right, Doctor, but I’d have thought as a time traveller, you’d appreciate the historical significance of the first legal drink in over a decade.”

“Hm! When you put it like that ...” He grabbed the glass and sipped, his face screwing shut in disgust. “Nope. Seems like I haven’t regained my head for alcohol. I don’t know what I’ll tell Lloyd George if I ever bump into him again.”

“Suit yourself.” Maggie drained the glass. “If you don’t mind ordering me another?”

“My dear Miss Weitz!” the Doctor exclaimed in mock horror.

“Surely we can stay up late to watch history unfold!” she challenged. Truly buoyant now, she extended her hand to Kaylaar, and they strode to the dance floor.

“Didn’t you want to see *42nd Street*?” he called to them as they sashayed away.

Maggie smiled wickedly back at him. “Let’s play it by ear!”

The Doctor nodded approvingly as the young pair swept into a circle of flappers and swells, the swishing of body-hugging sequined dresses and dapper dinner jackets dancing their own foxtrots in tune with the incomparable music.

His eyes drifted around the deco grandeur of the Terrace Room, and the transcendent jazz echoing through its rafters, absorbing by osmosis the joy and vibrancy of humanity, a kind of joy whose distance to his own centuries made it all the keener to savour. It was a kind of intoxication in itself, he considered. He hoped no matter how long he travelled, he would never be numbed to it.

He noted with sadness one couple on a raised table a few yards back. No, not a couple, he realized from a momentary study of their body language. The stocky man’s caress of the woman’s bare shoulder was unfamiliar, and judging by the way she inched her chair away, unwelcome. Then, the man’s grey eyes drifted, surprisingly venomous as they landed on the Doctor. He

returned it with his widest smile, which only caused the man further distress. The lady exchanged further bitter words as she stood up. The Doctor felt an instant thrill when she sat across from him, in the chair just vacated by Maggie. What was that feeling? Could he sense trouble in the air after all his wanderings, which seemed so often thick with intrigue and danger?

The woman had dark hair cut in the fashionable bob of the time, and a pleasing round face with pale skin and high, aristocratic cheekbones. Her large brown eyes regarded the Doctor with curious sorrow that stood out all the more starkly in these convivial surroundings.

"You must forgive me for intruding," she said.

"Not at all. You're most welcome."

"That man—he's not my husband, I have to point out, he's a friend of my f—" She broke off, and the Doctor wondered what word her pain had prevented her from saying. "Anyway," the brown-eyed lady continued, "he has some horrible ideas about people and the colour bar and everything. I hope you know we aren't all like that."

The Doctor's brow furrowed, at a total loss. He spent a second or two trying to figure out what she was talking about. He studied the bottle-green sleeve of his smoking jacket and shrugged. "Not everyone's a fan of green."

She laughed. "Oh, how very cosmopolitan of you ..."

"I'm the Doctor," he said, extending his hand.

She shook it, introducing herself as Juliet Gleeson. "You're not drinking or dancing, Doctor?"

"I don't seem to have a head for either tonight."

"I know what you mean."

"Do you now?" Events had lately turned the Doctor's thoughts to his long-abandoned granddaughter Susan¹, and a related anxiety over his long lifetime—many lifetimes—of avoiding responsibility. He doubted Juliet was picking that up, however; as humans often did, Juliet was likely projecting some malaise of her own onto the Doctor, and wanted to talk over her own problems in the guise of asking about his. "If you want to tell me about it, I'd be happy to listen."

"Well, it's my f—" Juliet broke off, but this time persisted and concluded "... *fiancé*."

The Doctor hesitantly gripped her extended hand and sympathetically patted it. He was relieved that she was more receptive to his contact than she was to her escort's: humans were so apt to misinterpret such gestures.

She continued through her sobs, "His name's Aubrey Warner. He's such a clever young man. I should be happy for him but—" She broke into more weeping.

"Come along Juliet," the Doctor coaxed, "what happened?"

"Well, like I say, he got the most fabulous opportunity. One of his professors at Cornell asked him to come on a research trip to Europe."

The history of the decade flashed in the Doctor's mind. Americans were still largely oblivious to it, he recalled, but there was no corner of the globe at this time untouched by the deep-rooted evil that was spreading, Hydra-like, like a plague of the mind from many corners. Trying to understate it as much as possible, he asked, "That's rather dangerous at the moment, isn't it?"

¹ See *The Doctor Who Project: Cost of Cure*.

“Oh, they’re both American citizens—though come to think of it, the Professor’s Dutch or something. But it didn’t seem like he had any trouble till he got to Greece. Wrote me all the time. Then ... nothing. Two months of waiting.” She shot a poisonous glance back at her table, which had not been vacated by her miserable date. “And the vultures are circling.”

Maggie and Kaylaar returned to this scene, and the Doctor explained with some embarrassment Juliet’s predicament. Her escort now walked back over. “I’m sorry if Juliet has been any trouble ...” he insincerely said. “But I just got some news, dear.”

She looked up and brushed aside a lock of her dark hair. “Don’t be absurd. If you’re trying to get me away from these charming strangers, you’ll have to think of a better excuse—”

He waved a piece of paper in her face unpleasantly. “Telegram. Aubrey and the Prof came in three hours ago, on the *Queen Mary*.”

Suddenly ebullient, Juliet leapt from the chair and hugged Maggie and Kaylaar, who were even dizzier than the Doctor at this emotional rollercoaster.

“Why didn’t he let me know he was coming back? Don’t they have telegrams in Europe anymore or have the dictators got rid of them too?” she cried. “Oh well, whatever the reason, he’s back now. Oh, just in time for Christmas too. We’ll be giving the most fabulous party for him, I’m sure! Tomorrow at seven, our house in Glen Cove. You must come!”

Lovely though New York was, the Doctor had hoped they would leave after another round and that showing of *42nd Street* on Broadway. But Juliet had thrust her father’s card into his hand, and her gamine charm had him gabbling an acceptance before heading off, leaving all of them, including her date for the night, to say a more muted farewell.

As the Doctor began his second lemonade, Maggie looked down from the rim of her second Manhattan with a smirk. “You know Doctor, I think Time Lords are just as susceptible as humans to a pretty face.”

He looked at her and Kaylaar. “I guess that must be how I ended up travelling with you two.” They clinked their glasses and drank.

As he smelled the cold New York air, newly sodden with gasoline and coal and the rancid aroma of stale liquor, he staggered through the crowds. Too many people, too close to him. He just wanted to be alone. Wherever he went, he could only smell more people and grow hungrier. He couldn’t remember feeling this ill in his whole life.

And yet, another part of him, a part he did not recognize, felt something entirely different. It was overjoyed to be near so many young, healthy bodies. Flowing through their veins was so much of the glorious reviving liquid he needed.

The hunger that overtook him left the man feeling nothing of the sickness that plagued his weak, mortal self. That was all in the past, he realized. He felt nothing of what he once was, only the urge of what he had become.

When he saw her there, alone, it was the easiest thing in the world to give in to what he had become. This would be who he was, and he should not regret it.

Finding a suite booked in the name of 'Doctor John Smith' at the Knickerbocker Hotel, the trio took one last stroll along the mayhem of Times Square. It was nearly three in the morning, but the city was as lively as ever. In a piquant illustration of the truly democratic nature of the celebration, top hats and newsboy caps lay discarded alongside beer bottles and strings of confetti. It was as if New Year's Eve had come early.

"Do you know Prohibition had only been repealed three hours before the police made the first arrest for public intoxication?" the Doctor informed them, struggling to be heard over the raucous celebrations. "Marvellous, how industrious humans can be!"

Yet out here in the streets of Manhattan, the grimy contrast to the glitter was all the more apparent to his outsider's eyes. Juliet had made him think ahead, and he shuddered when he considered the horrors still to come in this decade—feeling the cultural rents to come from events about to twist in a monstrous direction and knowing he could do nothing to prevent it. He cast a rueful glance across the street to his old friend, the TARDIS, parked in an inconspicuous alley. Maggie and Kaylaar had remarked the landing was bumpier than usual—"Even bumpier than usual," Maggie had said unkindly—and were not slow to blame him for it. But he knew different. He knew the old girl didn't *want* to land here, and outside he felt the same queasy wrongness his ship did. They both felt the same helplessness, he in his hearts and she in whatever dimensionally transcendental equivalent she possessed, and equally strongly didn't want him trying to interfere with the timelines, no matter how small the interference nor how justified the change.

As he passed the alley, he patted the blue timber posts. "Haven't done anything yet, don't you worry."

He was jolted from his own thoughts by Kaylaar, who was reacting to something farther down the street, away from the crowds.

It was a muffled scream.

A woman of barely twenty years was pinned against a wall. Flaxen curls bounced above her shaking head. A cheap raincoat had fallen from her shoulders to reveal the shimmering costume cocktail dress and dancing pumps of one of the city's thousands of revellers; the dress's sequins and its flimsy material, not to mention its plunging neckline and the resultant expanses of exposed décolletage and legs, suggested a chorus girl. She was held against the cold brick by a slender man dressed in black. It was obvious she was held there against her will.

Maggie and Kaylaar rushed closer, the Doctor following watchfully.

Kaylaar grabbed the attacker by his shoulder. "Excuse me, friend, how about you leave her alone?"

The pitiful creature pulled away and glared at them, mouth foaming in an obscene hiss. Sandy hair flopped at the sides of a handsome but undernourished face, which seemed unhealthily thin and congealed to a wan grey colour. But the face was barely noticeable, barely human even, against its most gruesome distortion. The mouth hung agape, stretched unnaturally and its jaws hanging slack like a hungry Doberman Pinscher. Blood trailed from the man's lower lip—the blood, they realized in a horrible instant, dribbling from the poor young chorus girl's neck, which was scored with two ugly wounds.

The man covered his face with his hand, his animalistic grunting turning pitiful. Kaylaar reached forward, but he backed away.

“Just a minute—” Kaylaar called, but he had already fled, athletically leaping up to a fire escape and now ascending to the top of one of the empty office buildings. He stood silhouetted against the bright moon for a second before carrying on in his flight.

“Are you all right?” Maggie asked the victim, helping her back on with her raincoat.

“Yes,” she replied in a daze. “I didn’t even see him coming. He just grabbed me, pulled me back here, and ... *bit* me?” She rubbed at her neck. “I thought I knew him from somewhere. For a second, I thought he was an old friend ... until ...”

“How long had he bitten you?” the Doctor asked.

“He just sunk his teeth in when you showed up.” She took his handkerchief and dabbed at the bright red spots. “Got quite a lot out of me. Drank it? No ... but his teeth were so sharp ... oh, I feel faint ...”

The Doctor felt her pulse and examined the bite-marks. Maggie looked from the wounds to him. “It isn’t ... y’know ...”

“What?” Kaylaar asked dumbly.

The Doctor did not return his companions’ gaze, nor answer their questions, keeping his eyes on the chorus girl. After looking at her pupils, he concluded, “You seem fine, my dear. Let’s get you home, and then I think *we* should bed down for the night ourselves.”

He watched them from the rooftop, guiding the poor victim back to the world of the living. No thought for him—merely trying to survive himself, after all. Everyone in this mortal world was allowed to be a victim, except for him.

He did not linger on the rooftop long, but studied the three rescuers of that innocent. The woman was human, but her male companions were something different. He caught a different aroma and taste in the air. Their leader, the short-haired man in the long green coat, he was the most different of all.

He sensed in that man the blood of a hunter. And not accustomed to thinking of himself as anyone’s prey, he jumped across the roofs of the city, venturing deeper into its architecture to conceal himself from this pursuer.

Maggie awoke with a light hangover, and only the barest recollection of that disturbing moment in the alleyway. Kaylaar, on the other hand, was groaning and clutching his head as if it would shatter. “Why didn’t you warn me?” he bemoaned. “Alcohol must affect us differently than humans.”

“Looks like it affects you exactly the same, friend. I’ll brew us some coffee and we can grab some breakfast.”

She noticed that the Doctor was not in the room, nor had his bed been slept in. Still, she was past worrying now about his peculiar ways. There was more than enough to worry about in the travelling with him, without worrying after him as well.

It was a grey winter’s morning in New York, but somehow that felt more exciting than bad weather anywhere else. Below the Knickerbocker Hotel, beautiful old cars struggled through

the piled-up snow, and tiny figures could be seen bustling through the metropolis. After their ablutions, Maggie took Kaylaar out for a reviving breakfast, and then they spent a gleeful while in the mindless absorption of shopping. This too had a special patina of glamour—the dresses looked so new, despite their styles being decades old, and Maggie could not resist trying on all the most ridiculous pillbox hats and vicuña coats she could see.

Kaylaar dutifully tagged along, still a little uneasy on his feet. In that respect, he fitted in perfectly with the amassed New Yorkers, many of whom had clearly also over-indulged the night before. Unfortunately, he could not shape-change until he had got his head back, so he swaddled his inhumanly pale features in the upturned collar of a trench coat, and kept a fedora clamped over his rubbery strings of black hair.

There was one point during the 'trying-on', a lengthy and often fruitless process where Maggie would take three or four dresses into the dressing room and find all of them made her hips look too large, when she emerged to find her companion asleep. The rest of the department store seemed curiously deserted—more so than when Maggie had entered.

"Charming," a thickly accented Eastern European voice declared.

Maggie whirled around to see a man standing behind her. She had somehow not seen his reflection in the department store's mirrors—he must have crept up on her somehow. As she turned from the man to the reflection, she still saw nothing but empty space in front of herself. He must be standing at an odd angle, Maggie reasoned. He stood several inches shorter than she did, a height disparity he further exaggerated by hunching forward. He had no hair at all on his skull, which had the fine smooth texture of bone rather than skin. Dark circles ringed his eyes, and his mouth jutted forward like a snout. He was cloaked in a double-breasted black overcoat of a former decade—perhaps a former century—fussily buttoned with a dozen rows of ornate frogging. He kept his bony hands clasped in the overcoat's sleeves. His eyes, which had blazed when she first saw him, now averted in embarrassment, and he held one of his clasped hands up as if the light stung them.

"Forgive me, madam. Perhaps I intrude on you and your ... husband?" He waved over at the sleeping Kaylaar. At this gesture, Maggie was struck by his hands, specifically the nails, which grew several inches too long and had dark grime collecting under them. She felt sorry to react with distaste at the sight, as he was obviously keeping his hands clenched out of embarrassment. "But I thought someone ought to tell you, you should purchase this garment without hesitation."

She smiled at the little man's unexpected generosity. "Thank you. I will." She turned. "You don't think it makes my hips look too big?"

"You women of the new world and your obsession with looking buxom," the man replied ruminatively. "I come from an old country. There, a voluptuous woman is the most attractive specimen. You should not be ashamed of your appearance, my dear woman." His claw-like hands fluttered in excitement, only to flap over his face in embarrassment. "But again, I take unnecessary licence. With whom have I the pleasure of speaking?"

"Maggie," she replied. "Maggie Weitz. And you are?"

"Count Wampyr," he replied with a stiff Prussian bow.

"Wham-peer?" she repeated.

"Just so, Miss Weitz."

"Count Wampyr?"

The name struck Maggie as odd. The whole conversation unpleasantly scratched at the back of her mind like itchy old wool.

"An old, proud family whose name has fallen off the pages of the history books. I have for too long dwelled in the shadows of the past, so I treat myself to the metropolis of the future." The dark-ringed eyes welled up with sadness. "This country reduces even one such as I to ... how you say ... the *anonymous* citizen."

Wampyr's voice flowed musically, giving each thought the feeling of flowing out of its predecessor. Maggie wanted to hear more, but she was distracted from further conversation by the pressure of Kaylaar's hand on her shoulder.

"Sorry I dozed off. It's that damned drink again. So, did you decide on that dress? It looks fabulous on you."

"Yes ... oh, where are my manners? Allow me to introduce ..." She felt suddenly light-headed, whirling around to find the department store floor filled with shoppers and shop assistants, come to life again after that strange interlude. Count Wampyr had vanished, and she could see nowhere he could have retreated. "Kaylaar, did you see anyone just now?"

Kaylaar misinterpreted her remark as a slight on New York shop assistants, to her disappointment.

Maggie went to the counter, all the while searching for the strange little man with whom she had conversed. But he had gone, and their conversation was so strange and detached that Maggie wondered if it was some kind of daydream.

They decided to stop off at the TARDIS to deposit some of Maggie's great finds, and neither were surprised to find, in the small study beside the control room, the Doctor perched forward on his ottoman, his sweater-sleeves rolled up, several dusty hardcovers splayed across the coffee table and a steaming cup of tea cooling beside it.

He, however, was surprised to see them and disdained at Maggie's shopping spree. "You know the TARDIS wardrobe could mock these up for free."

"The TARDIS wardrobe doesn't always whip up the most flattering designs."

The Doctor sighed in concession to Maggie's point. "You humans, always so worried about your figures."

The remark, and its similarity to what Count Wampyr had said, made Maggie uneasily recall her apparent daydream. She turned the cover of a nearby hardback, and cried, "A-ha!"

Kaylaar read the title and puzzled. "*Vampires: Historical and Documented Cases* by Ayetabe Okonkwo. What are vampires? Some kind of alien race?"

The Doctor's eyes lost their light, and he answered broodingly, "No. Creatures that stalk the night, draining the blood of the living, corpses animated by ..." His brow furrowed, in rebellion against the irrational concept. "... An elemental death-force of ancient evil."

"There aren't really such things, are there Doctor?"

He shook his head furiously, but more to express his utter confusion on the point.

"Yes and no. Historically the cases on your planet are much exaggerated and prone to be conflated with other phenomena and neuroses that weren't yet understood. But countless ages

ago, early in the life of the universe, there were indeed such creatures, a whole race of them, animated after their deaths and swarming about time and space to spread their infection. They ultimately fought the Time Lords themselves, an aeon-spanning battle of life against death so bloody it made my people renounce violence in all its forms." A cruel smile curled as he added, "The vampires lost, and the Time Lords settled for the much nobler creed of hypocrisy."

"But that woman last night? Was she bitten?"

"Bitten yes. Vampirized, no. You can tell right away. The man didn't get a chance to drink enough of her blood."

"But did the man *intend* to suck her blood?" Kaylaar asked.

The Doctor's shoulders drooped sadly. "Alas, it's possible it was some violent ruffian. New York always has been a violent city, and as Maggie will tell you, people are a trifle more desperate with the Great Depression. I certainly hope it isn't a vampire."

Maggie could see the concern etched into the Doctor's brow. "Of course."

"I hope so too," Kaylaar muttered glumly, touching his head. "The way I feel today, I don't think I could stand to lose any more blood."

A matinee performance of *42nd Street* had improbably revived Kaylaar, and all three felt uplifted by the time they arrived at the Glen Cove residence of Ignatius and Arabella Gleeson, Juliet's parents. Maggie again had dressed for the occasion, and Kaylaar wore the latest double-breasted pinstriped lounge suit from Brooks Brothers. The Doctor, as if determined to make a spectacle of himself, chose to wear the same outdated Edwardian velvet jacket and an even more fraying shawl-collared sweater. His companions knew better than to question his taste in clothing, knowing that the knitwear in particular had sentimental value to him, having been crafted by Cadda, the woman who had shepherded him through his very difficult regeneration and rebirth².

Juliet's parents, though, received their daughter's guests warmly and insisted they all have a glass of champagne.

The house was panelled and styled in old English baronial dark wood. The guests included many silver-haired dowagers, their wrinkled necks encased in thick rings of pearls. Desiccated gentlemen balanced spindly arms on them as if any lateral movement would cause them to shatter like a brontosaurus skeleton. The next generation was represented by a few of Juliet and Aubrey's friends—hers were identifiable by their smart black-tie clothes and grooming, his by their academic look and tweeds even more threadbare than the Doctor's sweater. Wallace, the arrogant man who had escorted Juliet to the Terrace Room the previous night, loomed large in the proceedings, never far from Juliet's side, and whenever he was away from her, spying in her direction from across the hall while pretending to listen to other conversations. One man stood apart from all three crowds—a short and portly silver-haired man with thick glasses, dressed in sombre black morning coat and cravat and looking, despite being at most fifty, older even than the dowager friends of Juliet's parents.

² See *The Doctor Who Project: The 108-Year Hitch*.

It was not long before Wallace seized another chance to buttonhole Juliet again—Maggie speculated he was one of her friends, even an old boyfriend, from before she met Aubrey and before she had been introduced to his more bohemian interests. As she was last night, Juliet seemed glad to get away from Wallace and greet her new friends.

"I'm so glad you made it! And look at that dress," she cooed to Maggie.

They spent a few minutes talking animatedly. The Doctor felt momentarily light-headed, and felt his temples throb as a voice, at once familiar and alien, sounded in his ear.

"Leave, Time Lord," the voice commanded him, "while you still have the chance."

Then it was gone, the lights resumed their brightness, and he was surrounded with happy people again and not whatever cobwebby old monster had whispered in his ear.

"Are you all right, Doc?" Kaylaar asked him. "You look like I felt this afternoon."

"A momentary ... dizzy spell." He narrowed his eyes at the man whom he was sure would know about it. Was the Doctor imagining things, or was that man looking straight at him as the scene resumed? "If you'll excuse me, I'll try to see what I can find out about it."

The Doctor tried to get a word with the old-fashioned man by the fireplace, but he seemed conscious of the interest and circulated away. Despite herself, Maggie was amused to see him grow so frustrated. Maggie wished she could have watched the two men's dance of pursuit and avoidance from the top of the spiral staircase.

Mr. Gleeson, a cigar butt clamped in his mouth and a balloon of brandy in his right hand, silenced the crowd effortlessly. "Thanks all so much for coming," he growled through an unrefined New Jersey accent. "And now, I think we're ready to welcome our guest of honour." He raised the glass to the top of the sweeping staircase. "Won't you please join me, ladies and gentlemen, in welcoming back our future son-in-law, and the apple of our little girl Juliet's eyes? Mister Aubrey Warner. C'mon down Aubrey!"

The crowd burst into a polite and relieved strain of applause—clearly they had been as worried at young Aubrey's fate as Juliet was. The only three who did not applaud were the Doctor, Maggie, and Kaylaar. For they stood transfixed by the young man descending toward them. He had blond, floppy hair, an oddly elongated face, and an unhealthy pallor to go with his slender build.

They thought, as one, that he was the man they had seen with his teeth in the neck of that poor chorus girl the previous night.

CHAPTER TWO: FRESH BLOOD

He scanned the room, every moment a supreme effort of control. He still hungered, had not been satisfied, and as a result felt even more drained than before.

One face stood out from the herd of people from his former life. One was different from all the rest. He did not know it, but he felt the burning power of a man who knew him, saw him as he really was. He shrank back from the exposure.

The man was dark-skinned, with only a faint stubble of black curly hair on his large scalp. He wore a green jacket and a gaudy and ragged sweater (its ribbed turtleneck collar hiding his neck and those juicy jugular veins, the man noted with dismay). His large forehead and penetrating eyes told of a man of intellect, and yet there was something active lurking in his nature as well. If he didn't know better, he would have said that man was a hunter, just like himself.

Aubrey Warner graciously accepted his friends' and family's applause, descended the staircase, and gave his fiancée a kiss on the cheek. The Doctor, Maggie, and Kaylaar visibly tensed at the contact, and equally noticeably relaxed when his lips lifted from Juliet's skin.

"What do we do?" Maggie asked under her breath. Her mouth remained fixed in a rictus smile.

"All we can do for the moment is find out as much as we can," the Doctor replied flatly. "And pay attention to everything in the room. For instance: that middle-aged professorial man who was avoiding me seems to have disappeared."

"I'm not surprised, the way you were stalking after him," Kaylaar muttered. "So shall we look for him?"

"Later. First, I think we should welcome the guest of honour."

Maggie felt frozen with tension as they made their introductions. She felt sorry for Juliet, who was so enthusiastic in her greeting, and felt the falsehood of Aubrey's chit-chat. Was this a genuine disconcerting feeling, or was she reading too much into it, trying to find some subtext of Bela Lugosi tendencies beneath his every banal pronouncement?

Whatever the case, she was stunned into silence, by contrast to the Doctor, who was gabbling non-stop, attempting none too subtly to needle the poor young man into some inopportune admission.

"You didn't happen to be near Times Square last night, did you?"

Juliet laughed and answered on her fiancé's behalf: "No! Aubrey was in bed last night. All of today as well. Don't think I didn't try to see him the moment I got that telegram, but I was told, 'Aubrey's just dead'." The word hung unpleasantly in the air, and even Juliet felt the need to continue, "Seasick, isn't that right?"

"Y-yes," he replied, the sickness still sounding in his throat.

The Doctor nodded. "Mm, yes, you don't quite look in the pink. I suppose you spent most of your time underground?"

"What?" Aubrey snapped.

"Buried? In research, that is," the Doctor clarified archly. "I understand you were on a working holiday with your professor. Where is he, by the way? I would love to have a word."

"So would I," Juliet's father, Ignatius, boomed from behind the Doctor. He chomped down on his cigar and explained, "Got my shipping boys to bring in a few tonnes of Thessalonika soil on the *Queen Mary* for crying out loud. And let me tell you, that ain't cheap! So Warner, why don't you tell us what the hell that has to do with some old Greek nobleman? I'd be mighty grateful."

"Oh, don't pressure him, Iggy," Arabella scolded. "It's all some very bright project to do with history or agriculture or something, isn't that right, Aubrey?"

Maggie almost felt sorry for the frail young man, as the dual interrogation of the Doctor and his in-laws had caused Aubrey's eyes to widen, and after a couple of ragged breaths, he weakly responded, "Yes, there is something very unique about the soil in that part of Greece. It's all part of my work with Professor Erasmus. The Professor will explain everything in the fullness of time ..." He clutched at his stomach and rubbed at his neck. "You must excuse me. I'll need to lie down before dinner. I still haven't quite recovered."

Ignatius leaned toward the Doctor. "You got him pretty riled up there, Doc. I tell you, they don't make these college kids like they used to."

"Mm." The Doctor nodded, staring obsessively after Aubrey on his stumbling course out of the hall.

As he collided with one of the servants and sent an umbrella basket in the hall clattering to the floor, Ignatius shook his head. "Hasn't recovered, he says. I think he was a little nervous about meeting the in-laws-to-be, had himself a little Dutch courage."

"Transylvanian, more likely." The Doctor asked Ignatius in a stage whisper, "Tell me, Mr. Gleeson, is there any garlic in our dinner tonight?"

The apparent *non sequitur* went unnoticed by Aubrey, who left the walking canes and umbrellas strewn across the floor and continued his drunken lurches into a connecting room. The Doctor was further confounded when he asked after Professor Erasmus, and was told the Professor had to leave early because of university business.

Feeling dizzy, Maggie excused herself to the washroom. She spent a few seconds splashing water on her face and trying to tell herself everything was fine. After all, if Aubrey was in a room on his own, Juliet couldn't be in any danger, could she?

She was so sick with anxiety about the sweet young bride, Maggie shrieked when she walked out of the room and bumped right into her.

"I'm so sorry, Maggie. You're jumpy too, huh? Mind if I talk to you ... you know, woman to woman?" She guided Maggie upstairs, telling the ancient-looking valet, Bitterman, he should serve the soup and they would be down as soon as they could. "There's something about Aubrey ... he seems ... not quite himself."

Maggie swallowed, a gesture Juliet picked up on.

"You noticed it too, didn't you?"

"Well ... I don't know."

"Are you married, Maggie? That Caleb guy, right? Or ... is it your Doctor friend? I know England is a little more progressive—"

"No, neither!" Maggie hastily interrupted; the thought of the brotherly Kaylaar or the ever-avuncular Doctor as a husband was one she wanted to reject outright. "I ... I was married. The Doctor and Kaylaar are just my friends. They helped me get over the ... the loss."

"Oh, I am sorry. Did your husband ... well, did anything change when you got married?"

"We had a pretty boring relationship—I guess you'd call it a romance. But it wasn't romantic. Ollie was an ordinary guy. He didn't even sweep me off my feet. I just loved spending every minute in his company. Even now I don't know if I'd change this crazy life travelling with the Doctor for sitting at home with Ollie, watching TV and eating lasagne."

"That hardly sounds boring, Maggie. I don't even know what lasagne is. Did you live in Italy?"

"No, Revelstoke. Canada."

"And as for tee ... vee?"

Thankfully the gong sounded and they made their way to rejoin the party. Maggie felt an initial relief that her anachronism would go unchecked, but she was acutely aware she had failed to reassure Juliet, or herself. Worse, the poor young woman was trying to rationalize away her very acute observations. "Probably just the way of young men. I've heard everything changes once you get married. Dad's such an old fuss-budget and, well, I'm hardly going to ask Wallace about it."

Maggie laughed sympathetically. "Yeah, I can't imagine he's a shoulder to cry on."

Juliet seemed relieved, and Maggie wondered whether or not to leave the matter there. "I'm sure I don't know enough to know, if you know what I mean—"

Maggie could not let this go unchecked, and certainly wouldn't stand by and watch a woman 'gaslight' herself. "Juliet," she admitted, "To be honest, I think you're right about Aubrey. He may just be sick, but there is something wrong with him. Something a little off."

She immediately regretted her honesty. Juliet's enchanting brown eyes were welling up, and she stammered, "Wr-wrong? How so?"

"There's no need to worry. The Doctor will be able to help. Just ... tell me if you notice anything else odd about him."

The dinner itself was a strange mixture of pleasant and uncomfortable. Maggie was unsurprised to learn that Wallace—Juliet’s boorish friend, who had taken such exception to the Doctor the previous night—was a fan of the current leadership in Germany. “From what I hear,” he declared, “Herr Hitler’s doing a magnificent job over there. Waking the country up to its former glory.”

“Not if you’re Jewish ...” Maggie snapped. “Like I am.”

“We’re half-Jewish ourselves,” Arabella reminded Wallace, who scowled into his glass of red wine.

“You must forgive Wallace,” Juliet noted acidly to Maggie. “He’s never been east of Greenwich Village his whole life.”

“I suppose I can’t compete in that score with your *dear fiancé*,” Wallace spat back. “Travel broadens the mind and all that, so I suppose burying his nose in the many species of European bogeymen and skulking around Greek cemeteries must make Aubrey some level of genius by now. But it’s the twentieth century! What have a bunch of garlic-hating counts to do with the problems of our economy, of our working people, of—”

“Counts, did you say?” Maggie interrupted, remembering the odd man with no reflection.

Wallace impatiently looked to the connecting door. “Where has Aubrey gotten to, anyway? And Miss Weitz, Mister Caleb, I can’t help but notice your Doctor friend is not gracing us with his presence either ...”

Maggie and Kaylaar shot each other a glance, but outwardly retained their imperturbable exterior.

“Oh, don’t be such a fuss-budget, Wallace!” Arabella scolded. “We know from Aubrey’s friends that everyone should be allowed their own little idiosyncrasies.”

Aubrey lay on an ample leather-studded couch in Ignatius Gleeson’s study. On its back, his body looked even more emaciated, the skin practically translucent and hanging off the protruding bones. He did not emit any breath, save for a hideous gurgling sucking in of air at infrequent intervals.

The Doctor scolded himself for taking fright at the sound. He sat on the edge of the couch and looked down at the young man, sadly. “Now then, my dear chap, let’s see what the matter might be.”

He pulled a stubby cylinder from his coat pocket and pressed it against the sleeping man’s exposed wrist. With a painless puncture, the tube extracted a few millilitres of blood and the Doctor pocketed it, hoping to leave with no one any the wiser.

“What is your diagnosis ... Doctor?” a Dutch voice purred from a dark corner of the study.

The Doctor cursed himself a second time for not perceiving this intruder. Something in the air really was fiddling with his senses.

He turned slowly to see the Professor, his dark morning suit blending almost entirely with the shadows. There was something scratchy and mouldy about the man, as if the suit was not

made from wool but cobwebs. The only points of light were the tiny white polka dots on his antique cravat.

"I'll have to take it away for further study. You were a most elusive figure this evening, Professor Erasmus. I was hoping to ask you and your protégé here about your time in Greece. Lovely country I've always thought, though its glory might seem a little faded since the days of my good chums Aristotle and Plato." The Doctor stopped himself before he gave anything away. Why had he been so careless? It was as if this professor had some charm, some hypnotic ability.

Erasmus gave a hoarse chuckle. "The country remains beautiful even in its, ahem, state of decay. We had a very informative time."

"I don't suppose you got a chance to see too many sights, though. You don't seem like a fellow who knows how to unwind, if I may say."

"Very perceptive of you to notice, Doctor."

"What brought you over there?"

"We've been conducting research into a notorious nobleman buried in the area. You may have heard of him ... Count Wampyr?"

"The name rings a faint bell," the Doctor admitted. "He wasn't by any chance a chum of Graf Orlok, or the Countess Mircalla?" He tugged at his collar. "Not so charming folk if you happen to have a vulnerable cardiovascular system."

The Professor's eyes caught a glimmer from the moonlight. "Doctor, you know what forces we are investigating then. And you know what has afflicted this poor youth."

"What happened, Professor?"

"We found Wampyr's grave ... you understand, Doctor, that the only references to him were a few stray notes from Bram Stoker's original working papers, no trace of which survive in his finished manuscripts. We didn't expect him to actually be buried there, but young Warner was a masterful researcher, and he found the tomb in Thessalonika. It turned out Stoker had relied on a mis-translation of one of the local place names and so he couldn't find it. Dismissed the whole thing as fiction or folklore. But Aubrey got it right, you see, such a clever fellow." He beamed at his unconscious student like a doting father. "We arrived too late ... and what we saw there ..." Erasmus stumbled backward, as if physically laid low by the memory. "... The Count still lives, Doctor. It's all true."

"But you brought the Count back?"

"There is much to be learnt, Doctor. Knowledge occasionally comes at a price."

"All very well, if *you* are prepared to pay the price in its pursuit. But all too often it's innocents like Warner who pay that price. And people like you who judge their sacrifice an acceptable one."

"My conscience is clear, Doctor. You won't get me to admit any wrongdoing. In fact there's a wealth of benefit that may come from what we found —"

The Doctor felt a wave of nausea at Erasmus' pompous self-justification. "Don't tell me there's anything benevolent in those soil samples. Now where are they?"

"Should I hand them to you, Doctor? For ..." Erasmus chuckled. "Safe-keeping? How do I know you wouldn't use them, wouldn't try to live forever?"

"I don't have anything to worry about on that score, Erasmus," the Doctor assured him. "What do you want out of all this? Why pick a fight with me? Why can't we work together?"

"I should not be here, Doctor ... I only returned out of guilt for young Warner ..."

The Doctor's steely glare caused the Professor to rock back on his feet. "If I find you in any way culpable for this man's condition, and if he is unable to be restored to health, you will be singly responsible."

The Professor vanished through the room's French doors without answering. The Doctor gritted his teeth in frustration at the whole encounter. Deciding there was nothing to be done, he reluctantly returned to the guests, eager to go on his way and shed some light on this dark business.

The Doctor returned and dined with the other guests. It did not seem right to mention Professor Erasmus yet, so he attributed his absence to a telephone call.

"Your broker, I'll bet!" Ignatius bellowed agreeably. "I tell you, if mine doesn't get his act together, I'm going to be wiped out any day."

"You've made it this far, Daddy," Juliet noted.

"And we can only hope the repeal of Prohibition will stimulate the economy," one of Aubrey's friends added.

"A shame that young fiancé of yours didn't apply himself to something more useful than archaeology or antiquing or whatever the hell he was up to in Greece," Ignatius mockingly scolded his daughter. He clearly enjoyed playing the part of the philistine boor, and did it so amusingly that no one could really carp about his point.

As they made to leave, the Doctor took Maggie and Kaylaar aside for a huddle. "Kaylaar, my dear fellow, I'll need you to stay here for the night. With Aubrey apparently staying over, I want to make absolutely sure nothing untoward happens to Juliet."

"Maybe I should stay with her?" Maggie offered.

"No, I don't want to worry the family unnecessarily."

"I may already have done that."

"Well, it can't be helped." The Doctor looked over his shoulder, a cold gust of wind nipping at his neck. "Nor do I want to alert anyone more malign. I may already have said too much to that arrogant Professor." He snapped his fingers. "Why don't you try that butler's face on for size?"

Kaylaar looked across the room and smiled childishly at the crags and wrinkles of old Bitterman's face. A shape-shift like that tested his abilities greatly.

So the Doctor and Maggie took a cab back to Manhattan and Kaylaar settled into the lined features of the Gleeson family's butler, and into a comfortable club chair in the study to stand vigil against whatever creature of the night would drop in.

Maggie looked out the cab's window, which was whitening from a thick fall of snow. Manhattan was barely visible in the distance, its only point of light the weak red from the spire of the Chrysler Building. The cold seemed to bring with it darkness, and got Maggie in a reminiscent mood, thinking of her much-missed husband Ollie. So, she contradicted the Doctor's instructions to reach the Knickerbocker Hotel and asked to stay in the TARDIS with him while he conducted his experiments on Aubrey's blood.

He smiled. "If you'd like. If memory serves, I paid for a full week's stay when I visited New York with Tegan and Turlough around Christmas. Very gloomy pair they were. They were always needing cheering up."

"I know how they feel," she said, resting her head on the comforting woolen sleeve of her friend's coat.

As the winter night stretched on and grew bitterer, Juliet Gleeson drifted into a halting, disturbed sleep, her thoughts never far from her poor fiancé draped downstairs. Despite her father's assurances, she felt there was something wrong with him and wished to be by his side. But Bitterman the butler (sounding curiously sprightly) volunteered to stay up instead.

Juliet dreamed of Greece. She was flying above rows of small buildings ... not buildings, she realized as she swooped in lower, but tombs and gravestones. Her flight took her above one ornate mausoleum in particular.

Against her will, Juliet swooped within, Greece's balmy night air starkly replaced with the cloying atmosphere of the tomb. The slabs within were sealed shut, save for one.

It was hard to see in the darkness, but Juliet was certain one slab was askew.

She did not see what happened next. She merely heard the screams of Aubrey Warner reverberate through the dead space, so loudly they shook her back into consciousness.

Yes, Juliet, he wished to say to her, that was how it all started, that was what trapped me like this. Perhaps if she could see it, experience it through his own garbled memories, she would understand ...

Although, he wasn't sure what he wanted her to understand. Did he want her to forgive him the bloodlust, or did he want her to cure it?

Or worst of all, did he want her to join him in it?

He awoke to find an unfamiliar face before him. No, it was not unfamiliar. It was one of the three who had been in that alley, when his feeding had been interrupted. Not the most powerful, not the hunter, at least. But he did not scent on this man the usual blood. Still, he hungered for it all the same.

But the voice called to him. No, it commanded. I must have the stranger's blood for myself.

He was not strong enough to argue. He collapsed back into his tormented dreams, the dreams of Juliet and when he was a human. They were sadder and more haunting than anything he dreamt of about his trip to Greece and his transformation, on account of being so horribly out of his reach.

Kaylaar allowed himself to resume his natural form as he settled in for his night of observation. Ignatius Gleeson, ever the democratic soul, had thanked him for his service by brewing him a large pot of coffee. He hoped there would be no awkward conversations when the real Bitterman awoke the next morning.

Despite the violent sounds from outside, the gales of wind and the snow pelting against the glass, this little wood-panelled enclave seemed snug and secure, like a comforting warm cave. Kaylaar was happy to be inside.

He remembered his induction ceremonies back home, and the subterranean chambers in which the elders sat absorbing the vapours of their world's core. In such surroundings he had learned the wisdom of the Great Katlannu. There was a time when he had been so serious in his studies that the mere sight of natural sunlight made him cringe. He did miss the old planet sometimes.

He snapped out of those memories at a rustle of movement from the couch a few feet away. Kaylaar felt suddenly vulnerable, like the form shuffling in the darkness was not Aubrey Warner but a wild ravenous beast, with a taste for morsels like himself.

A lunge forward from the attacking beast's arm had Kaylaar on his feet. Their eyes met, bathed in the eerie glow of the moonlight. He reared up, tall and terrifying, and Kaylaar remembered Katlannu, and his studies. He summoned that faith to form a barrier against the vampire, and the death it represented.

The grey-skinned wretch shuffled back, his breathing growing faster and choked with bile. Kaylaar extended his hand and prodded him back into his couch.

He chuckled smugly to himself. "Nothing to it. Keep your wits about you and you'll be a vampire hunter in no time, Kaylaar. Just a shame the Doc and Maggie weren't here to see me in action."

As he took his seat, swallowed a restoring swig of coffee, and got himself comfortable again, Kaylaar didn't even know what he was so worried about. This space was safe, and his attacker would not be strong enough to take him by surprise. He felt so content, a blanket wrapped around his dinner suit, the mug of coffee so warming and fragrant down his throat ...

After that brief moment of excitement and worry, over an hour had passed with nothing more remarkable than the coffee drunk and him passing the time by making a list of some of the favourite shapes he'd assumed over the years. But he certainly felt the atmosphere in the room change. It was a change most unlike what he had prepared for.

Kaylaar hadn't fallen asleep, he was sure. His gaze was locked on that squashed leather couch against the wall and the barely visible shape of the young man slouched, unmoving, on it. He had expected to be jolted from his serenity by movement from that couch, by the man springing up violently.

Instead, the room seemed bathed in a golden aura. It was as if the sun had risen unannounced, just above Kaylaar's head. He felt suddenly warm, a luxurious pleasant glimmer that tingled over his entire body.

And there before him in the room, he saw the Great Katlannu. Kaylaar was again taken back to his youth, and those years of study of their wise figurehead's teachings. He cared deeply about the prophet, and it still chafed against his deeply held beliefs that he in adulthood had learned how disgracefully his people had twisted those wise teachings for political and selfish reasons.

At this moment, Katlannu's appearance was at once a soothing and welcome reminder of his distant youth, and a warning to be on his guard. The last time he saw the smiling face of the

Prophet, it had been a malign force impersonating him, and wished to exploit his unwavering belief in order to kill the Doctor³.

“My son,” the voice said to him, coming as it always did from all around and simultaneously from within Kaylaar himself. “Why have you strayed so far from home?”

“I-I ... I have not strayed,” he stammered in response, “I’ve explored. Broadened my horizons. It was necessary. I left my planet to protect people I cared about. And now I have met two others, the Doctor and Maggie, people I love and want to spend my life with.”

“All your life?”

“Why not?” He was surprised how unconvinced he sounded. Katlannu’s face remained benign, so the doubt was within Kaylaar, he knew.

“You know my presence here is no wanton thing. I represent a deep yearning in yourself. There is something wrong, Kaylaar. Whether you wish it or not, you must attend to matters you have left. Your people need you, and your time apart from them cannot last forever. I urge you to return when the choice is still yours to make ... if you delay it may cause suffering. Your own suffering.”

“That sounds like a threat.”

“It is a warning. And it comes from within.”

“How do I know...?”

“...that I am who I claim?” The beaming face smiled, and Kaylaar saw something of his own likeness in its kindly eyes. “The answer to that lies within you also. Do not underestimate your own wisdom, Kaylaar.”

“You know that I must question. It was asking such questions that led me away from my study. Then, my inner self told me turning away was the right way to keep your shining truth in my heart.”

“And you were right to do so, as I am sure you have never doubted. So think on what I have said yourself, when you are better able. In the meantime ...”

The voice broke off, and the golden light was replaced starkly by the dead silvery winter of the Glen Cove study. And where Katlannu had stood, there was a stunted, emaciated cadaver, fangs gleaming as it bore down on Kaylaar. Thanks to his vision of Katlannu, he hadn’t noticed Count Wampyr step through the French windows, and had barely struggled out of his chair when the creature’s horrid, rat-like fangs came violently down on his neck.

³ See *The Doctor Who Project: The Eternity Ghosts*.

CHAPTER THREE: THE SCENT OF BLOOD

Horses trotted down the Dublin streets, and the great cavalcade of city life offered all too much distraction to the heavy-set man seated reluctantly in front of the typewriter. He closed his house's grand bow window in an effort to shut out the distractions, but still found himself gazing out and daydreaming. He looked back at the paper and the name taunting him from its top:

MR. HENRY IRVING

It was the only writing he had managed to complete all morning. Perhaps it was the bustle outside. Perhaps it was trying to sum up the many contradictory feelings the great man aroused in him. But even trying to pinpoint what was distracting him was itself a distraction, the man realized ruefully. And yet, somehow, he had missed the most momentous distraction there was. For he gasped at the dark-skinned hand that familiarly gripped his shoulder and found himself taken aback when he recognized the voice that asked, "Bram my dear fellow, how goes the battle?"

He whirled around and his face lit up. "Doctor! My word, you've changed again!"

It had been many years since Abraham 'Bram' Stoker had laid eyes on this mysterious man. He may have exchanged that question-marked pullover for a fraying fishing sweater, the Scots accent was no longer audible, he stood a good half-foot taller, and the gnomish face had been subsumed by a longer, darker, more sombre one (topped with a woollen watch-cap in favour of the straw Panama hat). But one look into those eternity-spanning eyes told Stoker it could be no one else.

"Yes, it's been unspeakably long, Bram. And ..." He gathered the folds of his long green coat as he sat in the floral-patterned armchair opposite. "I regret to say, this isn't a social call."

Stoker swivelled his writing chair in a full circle. "Vampires, is it?"

"Oh dear," the Doctor sighed. "I do hope I'm not that predictable."

"A logical supposition, Doctor. It was vampires the last time, so it stands to reason doesn't it? I might have guessed Count Dracula would never let *me* rest in peace. Interested in Egyptology, by any chance, Doctor?"

"I'm interested in everything, Bram. And another time, I'd be happy to chew over what's keeping you busy these days. But I remember that last time we met in Whitby, you were researching *Dracula*, and you came across the name 'Count Wampyr.'"

Stoker waved a hand dismissively. "There was never much evidence of that bozo. *Dracula* was far more interesting."

"That's what I thought too." The Doctor frowned. "But there was some? Enough to indicate that he was no bogeyman but a real presence in the area?"

"Oh yes, one or two scholars had some reports of a little man dressed in decades-old garb appearing at night and preying on one or two unwary villagers. His coming was preceded by rats, if I recall. And he had those sad, dead-eyed wives ..." He shuddered. "That proud cruelty of European nobles. Those soulless, gloomy portraits. They looked wrong somehow, didn't they?"

The Doctor nodded. "Like the mirrors, vampires are somehow able to resist or conceal or twist any impression of themselves on the world. Whether it's mind control or some other power of theirs, I'm not sure. Makes them doubly harder to track down to boot."

Stoker did not like to admit that the Wampyr reports had given him a shiver or two. It was strange how the end of the nineteenth century seemed to carry the melancholy of the past around itself. Here in this new decade he was eager to dismiss that palpable feeling. They were a modern people in a modern age, he convinced himself, such that the sight of something irrational, something *old* appeared comical. But he had thought of that little scarecrow of a vampire stalking in the shadows—not urbane but feral, his eyes not full of lust but of simple and unquenchable thirst. Wampyr was said to have some control over the rodent population, and the thought of them scurrying up and down at his command gave Stoker another involuntary shudder. Now he was old himself, and knew better what those fears represented. He wondered how much they were wrapped up in the simpler, the more prosaic human terror of death, the fervent wish not to suffer, but to stay as one was, and for the world to stay that way as well.

Stoker shook his head before he identified too much with that loathsome creature of the night, and returned to the Doctor.

"But he was no *Dracula*, Doctor. More like Renfield, a contemptible little troll styling himself ruler over life for chewing up a few invertebrates. But to be fair to Wampyr, he could have caused a lot of trouble, if he weren't such an oaf."

The Doctor blinked. "I hope you're right there, Bram."

"I am, Doctor. A hopeless bungler was Wampyr. Fellow got himself buried at a crossroads not long after he came into that little town, so the account went. Then some builders dug him up and he bumbled around again. He was buried somewhere in Greece for good, but I never found anywhere more specific."

"Unfortunately, a chap called Erasmus used your notes to find the burial site. I wonder, if you're not too busy, if you might fancy a trip with me to Transylvania?"

Bram Stoker looked guiltily back at his typewriter. "I suppose Henry Irving can wait. He's got all eternity now. And I hope he doesn't use that time the way *Dracula* did." He rose from his desk and eagerly followed the Doctor into the tall blue box parked awkwardly in the landing outside Stoker's study.

Maggie tore herself away from a haunting dream, involving her Revelstoke domesticity with Ollie, feeling at once something was amiss. The dream had been twisted somehow: Ollie's beautiful innocent face distended like the jaw of the vampirized Aubrey Warner, his loving eyes had become a death-mask of hate, her house dulled to the grey of an abandoned asylum, and the silhouette of the Rockies out its window an oppressive death-shroud. The return to wakefulness felt like climbing out of a six-foot grave. She felt she was seeing her own life re-enacted by someone to whom she was a contemptuous, hateful figure. Was this how it was to see a normal human life through the eyes of a vampire?

She looked around but noticed nothing: she was in her cabin in the TARDIS, a curious space that felt homely except for its lack of windows and the chill air that surrounded the four-poster bed.

She got dressed — returning to her time-tested flannel shirt and jeans after two whole days of 1930s finery — and walked to the control room, feeling from the swaying hum bleeding through the walls that the time-ship was in motion. By the time she reached the control room, the motion had stopped.

The control room's double doors were open, but the room was not empty. A burly, bearded Irishman in a Norfolk jacket sat in the Doctor's anteroom, tutting to himself.

"That man's awfully inconsiderate of other people's time, have you ever noticed?"

Maggie nodded. The man rose from the padded armchair and crossed to the console, extending a hand. "Bram Stoker."

"What about him?"

The man's tetchiness returned. "That's my name. Do you happen to have a name, young lady?"

"Maggie." She extended her hand, which he shook. "Sorry I missed meeting you, I was horribly tired... I actually wish I'd woken up sooner." Ollie's distorted face flashed painfully in Maggie's thoughts. "Where are we now?"

Walking toward the console, Maggie found herself accidentally shoulder-checked by the Doctor, who was racing back in to collect a few of the volumes heaped on the occasional table.

"Ah, good morning Maggie!" he beamed. "Bram, won't be ten minutes."

"Doctor," she returned groggily. "Did we—?"

"Just a quick hop to the future," he confirmed. "What was once Transylvania, but is now one of the outlying provinces of the Europa Hegemony."

"Transylvania? Are you crazy? We haven't got enough vampires to deal with, you want to go poking around the tomb of the big guy?"

"No, no, Maggie. By the mid-2250s, Castle Dracula is one of the galaxy's foremost centres for vampiric research. It's cheating a little bit to dip ahead like this, but there's something about the sequence of events that's off, somehow. I wanted to get Aubrey Warner's blood analysed and Chancellor Ayetabe Okonkwo seemed just the fellow to shed some light on all this."

"I thought you knew everything?" Maggie asked, her eyebrow arched.

"Ha, it's flattering that you think so. Did you want to come and meet them?"

She shook her head. "No, I think I'll sit this one out. Just let me know what you find out."

"I don't suppose I can take a look outside, Doctor?" Stoker asked.

"Now now, old fellow, you know this has direct implications on your future ..." The Doctor paused in his usual lecture on the sanctity of the Web of Time, pained at the sight of Maggie wobbling on the spot. "Maggie? Is everything all right?"

Maggie related the events of her dream, and explained her fear that there was more to it than a dream. "I just ... had an odd feeling. Usually when you wake up, you feel better, you feel like it's gone away and you're back to reality. Well, I keep feeling worse. Like what I saw was a kind of premonition or something." She ran her hand along the ledge of the TARDIS console, its cool alien alloy soothing her tingling hands and her strained nerves. "But I guess it's probably all this supernatural stuff messing with my head. It's making me feel all 'bump in the night'."

"Yes, yes, I dare say," the Doctor replied amiably, not sounding convinced. "I'll just wait a short while longer with Chancellor Okonkwo and then we can get back to Kaylaar and Juliet and Aubrey. With any luck, we haven't missed anything exciting."

When Kaylaar's sense returned, he was wandering along a rocky beach, a frigid tide washing over the jagged grey scene. His body felt loose and shapeless, as it was when he was a child before he mastered the ability to hold onto one appearance. Luckily, no one was about—he was sure he was morphing in and out of different faces and bodies, with random limbs and features shuffling in and out of his natural appearance.

A sliver of sunlight stabbed through the icy clouds. Kaylaar was frozen through—he must have been running for hours, as his shifting legs were aching from the exertion—and welcomed the warm yellow rays. He did not understand the sharp sting he felt instead. He threw up his hands (currently a pair of ragged claws) to cover his face from ... yes, it felt hot, as if he had pressed himself against a flame.

These sensations, painful though they were, seemed oddly hard to focus upon. Instead Kaylaar was absorbed in the vision of the Great Prophet Katlannu. Those words, and the worrying undercurrents they carried, felt more real to him than these empty surroundings and this delirious and drained feeling that spread through him like a paralysis.

A car raced past on the cliffs above, seeming to gain speed as it saw Kaylaar. He hardly wanted to wave any humans down, knowing he would seem a greater monster than ... than ...

He remembered and trembled in fear at the sight of Count Wampyr. How did he know that name? He seemed to know much about the Count ... his long centuries of darkness and confinement, the difficult passage from Greece ...

Kaylaar realized for the first time he was not alone. With considerable effort, he perceived a figure standing bowed over on the beach. The ragged tails of an ancient black coat draped like batwings behind him. The bald head, long nails, and skeletal body he remembered from last night.

"Count Wampyr," he recalled.

Wampyr did not reply or turn around to acknowledge him. He spoke in a low, dreamy voice, as he looked out with sorrow at the spray lashing the muddy shoreline. Wampyr lowered

one of his talon-like fingernails into the water and dragged it across. "Not as cold as the waters of Lake Hermannstadt. Have you ever been?"

"No," Kaylaar replied.

"It is a deep, ponderous lake in the Carpathians. Its waters are black, and through them only Hell itself can be seen. When I crossed it, I was still a man, eager for knowledge and weary of life. What happened to me there ... it changed those sentiments. Eight hundred years. It feels longer."

The Count clutched his chest in agony and fell face forward into the surf. Kaylaar fought the revulsion the creature aroused in him—the knee-jerk wish to run a mile from this predator who had feasted on him like a tethered goat the previous night—and drew nearer. He extended a ... well, he meant it to be a hand, but it took the form of a flat flipper. He did not blame Wampyr for recoiling from the contact.

"What have you done to me?" Wampyr hissed.

Kaylaar touched his neck, feeling two bite marks and some of his blood seeping from the wound. "I could ask you the same question."

"That blood you have ... it is not blood. And now look at me. I ..." The Count doubled over, clutching at his belly. "I am polluted with your poison."

"What about Aubrey? Wouldn't he consider himself polluted with *your* poison? That's what you did, right? Turned him into a vampire?"

A black-ringed eye looked up at Kaylaar and Wampyr bared his fangs. "Didn't he want to know of my kind? Didn't he *want* to live forever? I was entombed, Kaylaar. Left there for ninety-four years and content to remain among the dead. They disturbed my sleep."

"Who did? How?"

Wampyr recovered sufficiently to sneer at Kaylaar in clear refusal to answer the question. This was a shame, Kaylaar thought to himself; it would at least save them some time.

"Where is Aubrey?"

Again, no answer. The squat vampire rocked back and forth, still looking unwell and still gazing out at the sea rather than looking Kaylaar in the eye.

"Did you take him away?"

"Not I ..." the Count muttered.

The same car, a long black saloon, had halted far up the beach. Two figures, dark slivers against the mournful horizon, came nearer.

He thought of his golden-lit saviour, of the unalloyed joy he had given to the Frenazzi and the Pryanni, how deeply he had believed in the rightness of their utopia. Why *had* he left? Why had the fates of his friends, and this exploration of times and spaces far distant from himself and his faith, taken the place of his devout commitment to Katlannu?

He could not think of that now. But somehow Katlannu gave him a momentary clarity, sliced through his fogged mind and allowed him to back away from the advancing figures. Before he knew it he was in the water. A moment's discomfort, and then he kicked out, taking the form of the local sea creatures and flapping newly formed gills.

As he escaped, the sickness still overwhelmed him. Some part of Kaylaar, feeling lower than he had for a long while, reached out to the Great Prophet, hoping his long-forgotten saviour

would forgive his lapses of faith and help him. So dire was his despair that it seemed more rational than wishing for the Doctor and Maggie to come back for him.

The Gleeson household was a chaotic scene that morning. The study's French doors were open, allowing an Arctic December blast to bluster into the house. Worse, there was no sign of Aubrey and two sets of footprints out in the snow. Ignatius roused Bitterman to ask what had become of Aubrey, only to find the manservant emphatically denying that he had stayed up with him.

Juliet awoke in the middle of this, her unease over her fiancé matched by the strange dreams and the strange face that had filled her thoughts. It was an old face, bald and ragged like a dried skull, but with the deathly white of the skin all the more gruesome when contrasted with the coal-black rings around the staring eyes. Staring and slaving over her, Juliet was sure ...

While Ignatius was storming through the house, demanding an account of his behaviour his servants could not provide, poor Arabella, ever aspiring to upper-class behaviour, tried valiantly to suppress her mounting confusion and distress by keeping all the household routines intact. So, when Juliet entered the dining room, she saw the standard breakfast trays had been laid out, and as she was brought up to speed by her mother and hoped that a hearty plate of sausages and eggs, and a large pot of black coffee, could dispel the cobweb-shrouded visions and the mouldering face that haunted her subconscious.

"There hasn't been any word from Miss Weitz, has there Mother? Or her doctor friend?"

"All I know is all *this* pandemonium, dear," Arabella answered sadly. "You know your father. He thinks any problem can be scared into submission if he yells loudly enough."

Juliet laughed. "Maybe the problem was getting mixed up in Aubrey's antics anyway? I don't know, even if we find him, if ..." She left the thought hanging unpleasantly in the drawing room air, and took another large sip of coffee.

"Oh, don't say that dear. You love him, don't you? You wouldn't be happier with Wallace, I'm sure. I know I wouldn't be. Your new friends had the measure of him all right—a jackbooted dolt if ever there was one."

Juliet's weary shake of the head counter-intuitively signalled her agreement. She had felt like another woman entirely when she knew Wallace and those well-to-do snobs. "It was easy to feel that way ten years ago ... before everything got so serious," she observed. "I can't imagine what it was like for Aubrey to go abroad and see all that first-hand."

"And you've changed too dear. And change should always be a good thing. If everyone stayed where they were, your father would have been happy with a job at the docks."

"And yet no one wants to keep the social order where it is now," Juliet mused.

Arabella poked her daughter's nose as she had done since she was a little girl. "Of course ... now that he's part of it."

Sadly, this moment of renewed tenderness was quickly interrupted by Ignatius, thundering into the drawing room. "Fine time to get visitors."

"Visitors, dear? Are you sure?" Arabella asked. "Were you expecting anyone?" she asked Juliet, who firmly shook her head.

"It's that Silver Wraith from last night. Didn't that professor drive it?"

Professor Erasmus swept into the hall. "Sir, madam, Miss Gleeson, I am sure you've had some considerable commotion this morning."

He raised his arm, and as if summoned by a magic spell, Aubrey stepped out from behind him. He looked even worse, his skin paler and sicklier, than the previous night. Juliet felt her eyes tear up as she ran toward him. "Oh dear, your shirt, it's ... did you cut yourself?"

He turned away, hid the ugly red blotch with his hand. Erasmus smirked. Juliet found the glance most unsavoury.

"Look like you could use a drink, young man," Ignatius guessed.

Aubrey merely swallowed and looked down at Juliet with such regret that she shivered in his arms.

Oblivious to their interaction, Erasmus went on: "I think I can explain everything. Or rather I can introduce you to the man who can explain it."

Only then did the parents and their daughter perceive the second man who stood in Erasmus's shadow, little more than a shadow himself, scuttle forward.

"There is no reason for anyone to be agitated," Count Wampyr said. His voice was always soothing, Erasmus found. He watched the Gleeson family sigh in relief at his mere presence.

A stray thought caught the Count, and he locked his eyes on Ignatius' finger. "Oh, dear, Mr. Powers. You seem to have cut your thumb."

Ignatius looked down at the red-stained digit and shook his head. "So I have. Damned paper cut or somesuch. Barely even noticed it with all hell breaking loose around here."

Wampyr took the elderly man's hand in his own, stroking the palm with his sharp talons. "I must put your mind at ease, Mr. Powers. We must get some colour back into your cheeks."

He smiled sharply.

The December air at Glen Cove had chilled still further by the time a police box resolved itself into reality on the frost-tipped lawn of the Gleeson residence. The house looked sad and neglected, though it must have been buzzing with activity mere hours earlier. Four people emerged, instantly on their guard at the eerie tableau: the Doctor and Maggie at the front, followed by Bram Stoker, and Chancellor Ayetabe Okonkwo, a technocrat whose Einsteinian tangle of wintry hair resembled the frosty grass and whose stylish twenty-third century African Union robes proved immediately skimpy against the brisk New York morning.

More than that, though, Okonkwo scented danger in the air; danger all too familiar from years studying in Transylvania's most haunted monument. "The vampire, Doctor, I'm sure he's nearby."

"But I thought you concluded Count Wampyr *wasn't* a vampire?" Maggie reminded the Chancellor.

"Aye, I heard you and the Doctor saying as much," Stoker averred. "Which does make me wonder why I've had to leave the warmth of Dublin for this charming spot?"

The Doctor held up his hand. "A moment, please, everyone. Let's find the Count before we can assess whether he's the genuine Un-dead article. I sense it too, Chancellor."

The scientists' train of thought was interrupted by a tall man leaping out from behind an oak tree, wooden stake in his hands. All assembled yelled in frightful unison, only to relax when they saw it was Wallace, still wearing his dinner suit from the previous night. The disagreeable man did not lower his stake.

"Just a minute! What the hell is going on? I don't trust you any more than that Professor and his friends, but—"

"Did you see anything?" the Doctor asked him.

"They all took off in a fancy Rolls," Wallace replied. "You know, I've checked up on this Professor Erasmus and there's nobody at Columbia with that name."

"Not *now*," Okonkwo corrected him haughtily, "but there will be."

"A time traveller?" Maggie asked.

"Yes, Maggie. And any time traveller who's messing about with vampirism is tap-dancing on top of a powder keg with a lit fuse." Turning back to Wallace, the Doctor continued, "Who all went with the Professor and the Count? The parents, Aubrey, Juliet, and Kaylaar?"

"That's right. *Your* friend was helping them. Looked like he'd had *his* blood sucked as well."

Maggie froze at this revelation. The thought of Kaylaar on his own, Juliet undefended, while they were away ... she looked guiltily at the Doctor. She knew he shared her guilt, as he was rapping his knuckles against his temple.

The Doctor leaned toward Okonkwo, whose hands were crossed in an eerie telepathic communion. "I know you've spent a while refining your telepathic gifts, Chancellor. Do you think you might be able to lead us to Count Wampyr?"

Okonkwo's fingers trembled in sympathy with his frenzied breathing. At first it seemed he was hyperventilating, and all but the Doctor found the spectacle decidedly eerie. "Yes ..." Okonkwo finally said, "I'm seeing them ... they've hit some automobile traffic on Forty-Second Street ... Ignatius is complaining about it ..."

"Ha!" cried the Doctor. "What a stroke of luck! New York's dreadful congestion might just give us the edge we need. Come on!" He piled them back into the TARDIS, pausing as Wallace followed the line, but then shrugging.

"Are you sure, Doctor?"

"Sadly, I've taken worse people aboard. Ramon Salamander and Richard Nixon, to name but two." The second name occasioned a raised eyebrow from Maggie, which the Doctor waved away impatiently. "Desperate times, you know. Plus, assuming we can trust Wallace, we may need all the backup we can get for this next bit."

When next the Doctor and Maggie and their growing entourage stepped out of the TARDIS, a cloak of night was creeping across the gloomy skies. Maggie shuddered, knowing full well what that meant.

"We don't have long," the Doctor agreed.

Wallace stood defiantly by the doorway. “Except you have a *time machine*. Can’t you go back to this morning and save Juliet from this vampire’s clutches? Go farther back to when Aubrey met Count Wampyr in the first place?”

The Doctor, already impatient with the young boor, balled up his fists to quell his frustration, and explained with his greatest condescension, “Because undoing events that have already happened will damage the timelines. This period of Earth history is already fragile—which I suspect is why Erasmus landed here in the first place.”

They were standing in the vast, empty quadrangle of Columbia University. The rising night twisted the surrounding buildings, made the gnarled trees look like skeletal hands sprouting up from the earth to pull the unwary down into their depths. Even the snow dusted along the quad looked grey and foreboding rather than festive. The winking buildings of New York’s skyline seemed to mock them from their great distance away.

The Doctor’s face brightened up, inappropriately contrasted against this oppressive atmosphere. “However, Wallace, you’ll be happy to hear the TARDIS has bent the Laws of Time to nudge us back just a shade. About half an hour if I’m not mistaken. Isn’t that right, Chancellor?”

Okonkwo’s eyes remained shut, yet he still walked confidently toward the most Gothic building of them all, the Administration Offices on the campus’s west wing. “Indeed it is, Doctor. Follow me.”

The Doctor pulled out his torch and lit the path leading over to the building. He, Maggie, and Bram Stoker walked in a line, with Wallace pulling up the rear—still disdaining to be part of their group. Between the company and the fact that he was last in the pecking order, Wallace wanted to be on his own as soon as possible. He looked around, not out of fear but with the air of someone shrinking in embarrassment and hoping nobody saw him.

Stoker also had his eyes open in enthusiasm, and marvelled at the few cars driving along the distant roads. “To think, a mere two decades in the future, and yet so different.”

“Not all the changes are good ones,” Maggie pointed out. Indeed, this whole trip to New York seemed haunted—if not by vampirism, then by the abstract cruelties of Prohibition and spreading dictatorships.

Stoker was still buoyant. “Think of it, Miss Weitz. I’ll certainly be somewhere out there ... experiencing all this somewhere else. How old will I be?” He counted it in his head. “Good Lord, four-score and six. I do hope I live to see it all.”

He breathed in some chill New York air and skipped ahead to join Okonkwo, not noticing the Doctor’s silence on the subject. Maggie asked, and he replied sombrely. “Poor chap. A life of bad habits is already taking its toll. He only has seven years left.”

“Oh.” This sadness ranked with the abstract ones, yet Maggie still felt it personally. However, any further enquiry was stayed by the fact that Okonkwo and Stoker had vanished inside the open door at the foot of the building, and Wallace was no longer behind them.

“Are you going to say something about splitting up?” Maggie asked.

“What’d be the point?” the Doctor rejoined. He was already racing inside the building.

Juliet was wedged sideways across a cramped bench seat of cold leather. Her parents had been as indecently lumped on the opposite seat. At the front, Aubrey, the Count, and Professor Erasmus sat staring ahead.

Juliet watched the city streets of her home town whirl past, a blur of grey, blue, and black. Her fellow New Yorkers were still in a revelling mood, and every time they stopped at a traffic light, lines of jubilantly exclaiming, fancily dressed humans danced past. In the distance, music could be heard. She remembered herself out with Wallace when they had gotten the news of Aubrey's return—she was happier than everyone in the Big Apple put together. Now, Juliet felt separate from all the happiness, could see nothing beyond the horrible pain and fear in the pit of herself.

Ignatius and Arabella Gleeson's eyes were fixed ahead, so wide and blank that Juliet assumed they must have been put into a trance by Count Wampyr. She didn't dare look at the Count himself, merely sensed his aura, like a wretched slimy abscess, festering in the darkness. Whether she was stronger or just more single-minded, Juliet was looking around, watched by her love, who looked as bad as Juliet felt.

"It's all my fault Juliet," Aubrey said, his voice trembling as if he was struggling to keep bile down. "I wanted to know. My damned thirst to get to the bottom of this. The Professor pushed me to find out, but I had to know the answers."

"Don't blame yourself, young man," Erasmus said dismissively. "Knowledge is always worth pursuing. You may regret the course now, but you won't when it's all said and done." He turned back to Juliet. "And you, my dear, you may find there is something to be gained by embracing this life with your fiancé."

She looked into Aubrey's eyes, seeing the anger and the self-hatred against the damnable calm of Erasmus.

"Can't you leave her out of this, Erasmus? And her parents? This is not what I want. Take me, by all means, but—" He clutched at his stomach, his face paralysed with pain.

Erasmus' maddeningly placid smile did not alter. "I know you have your doubts now, but you will be perfectly happy, my boy. You both will. Have no fear." He turned back around, flashing anger at the cars at a standstill around him. He blasted the horn, and were Juliet able to feel anything but her present horror, she was certain she would have felt amusement at the pettiness of the action.

A frigid fog billowed up from the East River, which the meagre fire pits did little to combat. Crowds of New York's homeless sheltered and huddled before their feeble warmth.

As miserable as they all were, they felt a shared pity at the pale creature floating, face-down, in the black waters. Two of them grabbed the supine figure and pulled him ashore.

Admittedly, the one did so under a false assumption. "Hey, what the hell? I thought it was a fish we were grabbing at!"

"Nah, you were seeing things. Looks like a man."

"Probably tried to jump off the Brooklyn Bridge. Seen it often enough. Know how he feels."

They gave the pitiful man a shake, before returning to their fire.

The musical voice of Katlannu sounded again in Kaylaar's ears, reminding him that life—not this possession—was still in his reach and he could conquer his present low.

"The Doctor will help you, my son. You can become your true self again. You know it to be true."

Was that a hint of jealousy in the Great Prophet's voice as he mentioned the Doctor?

Kaylaar woke, a clear picture of the vampires on their way through New York in his mind. He saw the streets and avenues, their regular denizens sheltering against the cold, sitting ducks against the onslaught. Kaylaar felt he was marching alongside them, sharing their hunger for blood. It was remarkable the shared consciousness they tapped into—how would the Doctor and Maggie stand up against so many minds working in unison? If he even thought of the Doctor and Maggie, was it enough to garner the attentions of Wampyr and his vampirized servants?

"Excuse me," he called out weakly to the horde of New York's huddled poor forced under this bridge on this bitterly cold night. "Thank you for your help ... which way is Columbia University?"

Wallace thought he knew the way better than anyone, and certainly didn't need these people to help him find the way. But he must have been distracted, must have turned left when the rest of them kept straight. For now he was in among the dead trees, snagging his Chesterfield overcoat on a brittle branch. The snapping sound jolted him, reminded him that he was more afraid than the situation warranted.

Vampires. He couldn't believe this Doctor and Maggie and their oddball friends had him talking about such things as if they were everyday occurrences. He remembered seeing that stupid *Dracula* down at Radio City a couple of years earlier. It had been a miserable evening and a creaking, preposterous load of nonsense. He particularly disliked that the friends he accompanied had all noticed every time he jumped and gasped as he watched it. But he wasn't scared, he was merely ... taken by surprise. All he saw in *Dracula* was the danger of letting suave foreigners into the country. But then, the vampire hunter Van Helsing wouldn't have been around either. Oh well, he shrugged. It was a story anyway, no need to over-think it. If he did, he would be stuffing crucifixes into his pockets and dabbing himself with garlic.

He reached forward to steady his path, but the branch he grabbed moved. It was no branch. It was an arm; a shapely woman's arm. A pair of glittering eyes fluttered in the darkness.

"Welcome," the voice said, soothingly but with a harsh *glissando* rattling in its back.

"We've been waiting for you," another voice in a slightly lower timbre said. "Why did you take so long?"

"Who are you?" Wallace began, but his inquiry was drowned out by the passionate kiss the woman gave him. Then she whirled him around and he saw another, blonde-haired but with the same intense stare, who kissed him even more passionately. He did not want to think of what had been bothering him. Why were they wearing flimsy nightgowns on such a miserable night?

“You shouldn’t be out here, you know. It’s cold and there’s—” Wallace stopped himself before he used the V-word and made this lovely pair laugh at him. “There’s danger about.”

“We like danger,” one of them said. It was hard to tell who was talking. They were both caressing Wallace, spinning him in a circle.

The pair were insatiable. Their lips pecked at his mouth, his cheeks, his neck. He felt the sharp point of their teeth brush against his skin.

Wallace felt dizzy. He wasn’t sure whether his eyes were open or closed. He also couldn’t assess the sensation he was feeling—if it was pleasure, why did he also feel so numb and drowsy?

“Let’s go somewhere and have a drink, eh?”

“Why don’t we stay here and have a drink?” one of the women suggested. The other laughed.

“Outdoor types, eh? I suppose it explains why your skin is so cold. I’ve never felt such chills.” Wallace rubbed at their hands, finding his own skin tingling with little pricks of pain. He did his best to ignore the unpleasant sensation. “Why don’t we go inside?”

His train of thought was interrupted by four sharp pains on either side of his neck.

Kaylaar felt the grimy New York waters still clinging to his skin as he trudged toward the university. The Earth formalwear was soaked through and seemed to make him colder. All this, and the continuing overpowering voice of Count Wampyr he struggled to block from his thoughts, made his progress like a death-march, a desperate matter of putting one foot before the other in grim determination, not even thinking of the end, but merely of that next step, and the next ... His daze was sharply broken by the sight of that awful friend of Juliet’s—Wallace. Either side of him stood two vampires, caressing him. Kaylaar desperately wanted to call out, to warn him, but the power of Wampyr held him terrifyingly frozen, able only to watch as they bit into him. They walked away, three more recruits to the army of the Undead. Would Kaylaar be able to fight Wampyr’s control if Wallace, or those two vampire-women, or Wampyr himself, threatened Juliet, or Maggie, or the Doctor? He could only hope, and dared not even think of that. Instead, he kept his steps ahead, one after the other ...

As he had the last time he got mixed up in the Doctor’s adventures, Bram Stoker felt worse for a lack of someone in whom he could confide. That young lady Maggie seemed agreeable enough, but here he was in the deserted halls of Columbia University’s administration building, with only the milky-eyed, mad-haired chancellor Okonkwo for company. The fellow’s stiff gait, closed eyes and hands pressed on his shoulders added up to body language of someone in a trance, not one open for amiable chatter.

So Stoker was surprised that the futuristic scholar broke the ice in such an affable way. “Before events overtake us, Mister Stoker, I should congratulate you on your work in raising awareness of vampire mythology. I hope you know how great a help it is to many future generations of scholars.”

"Oh, er ... I thank you, Chancellor. I am gratified that someone four hundred years in my future should remember me. I don't suppose you've read any of my other work?"

This question hung in the air so that it sounded as if it were still ringing when the strange screech echoed down the polished halls.

Okonkwo lifted his arms and violently pressed Stoker and himself against the floor. The screech sounded louder and terrifyingly close above their heads. Stealing a furtive glance, Stoker saw a black rubbery wall, rippling with the blur of rapid flight.

"Bats?"

"You've seen them fly this way before, I trust?"

"Indeed I have Chancellor. And wolves as well." He shuddered at the worst of the bunch.

"And rats ..."

Okonkwo flashed him a grim smile. "Count Wampyr has been busy."

The Doctor raised an arm to hold Maggie back when they heard the screeching sound from within. She thanked him when, moments later, the great leathery mass of vampire bats poured out of the building's doorway.

"Harmless enough when they're freed of the Count's control."

"So he doesn't turn into one?"

The Doctor shrugged. "I'm not entirely sure. The sources are conflicted about all the precise abilities of vampires. But I'd keep your distance from them just the same."

"No worries there, Doctor. It may not be as bad as turning into a vampire, but rabies isn't something I'm keen to catch either."

He strolled inside, each tread careful lest his boots squeak against the building's parquet floor, and Maggie followed, stepping with equal precision. "Another thing I've been meaning to ask, Doctor. Bram Stoker didn't really meet vampires, did he? I always thought most literary scholars considered *Dracula* a pretty hacky book."

The Doctor angled his nose up to indicate his disdain. "Scholars aren't right about everything you know. As for Bram, we had a few mutual friends, but no, we never did actually meet the Count." He raised an eyebrow. "It was an altogether stranger experience. But come to think of it, not half so strange was that time with Mary Shelley ..."

The Irishman himself ran down the corridor to interrupt the Doctor's train of thought. Maggie, never a fan of horror fiction, admitted she was a little relieved that the pair had interrupted a doubtless spine-chilling anecdote.

"I don't suppose either of you have seen Wallace?" he asked hopefully.

"No, but look what your chum found!"

They dashed into the library, which a dim legal lamp was failing to wholly illuminate. The darkness had the texture of thick black oil, and Maggie tended to see in its sludgy, dense solidity a mass, ready and waiting to attack from all around. In the same vein, she imagined the gales and the pellet-like snowflakes lashing the building's windows were like the bats, further manifestations of vampiric badness.

Between the stacks, thick wooden crates had been carelessly arranged, deep with what Maggie reckoned was the Greek earth Juliet's father had taken such pains to import to America at the behest of Professor Erasmus. Inside, she further chilled to see pallid men and women in unnatural repose.

"Who are they?"

"Even in the 1930s, New York has a population of a few million. Ample livestock for an enterprising vampire. Let alone three."

Okonkwo furrowed his brow. "We don't have long, Doctor."

"Do you think the infection is reversible?"

Okonkwo had pressed a vial against the raw-looking necks of each of the three Un-dead sleepers in turn. "They'll have a few rough nights, but the control is largely mental at this stage. They haven't yet lost their humanity, what you might call their 'souls', Maggie. As long as they lose no more blood—"

The Doctor and Okonkwo continued talking, but Maggie found their words growing increasingly quieter and more muffled. At first she thought it was drowsiness—the Doctor's technical talk could get so dense it may as well have been in Swahili. But then Maggie saw them, and the room around them, blur and darken as well.

She grew panicky as her senses increasingly dampened, as if she was being shrouded in thick gauze. A sensation of suffocation overwhelmed her, and her panic mounted when a chorus of cackling voices sounded in her ears.

"Poor Maggie."

"She isn't getting any younger."

Dry, scratchy skin dragged across her arms. It was cold, so cold to the touch. Her own skin prickled with gooseflesh at the contact.

"We will never get old. Why look forward to death when you could be like us?"

"A life free from death..."

A hand caressed her face, she was sure, but there was a sting behind the touch. And still so cold ...

Maggie rejected their words with every fibre of her being. It was odd to think that they had no better insults and temptations to fling at her. But she couldn't say anything. She found herself incapable of movement or speech, and she knew the force holding her was also whispering these taunts.

The Silver Wraith parked carelessly in the university quad, yet stopped carefully enough to miss Wallace by only a few inches.

Erasmus commanded Aubrey and Juliet to carry the Gleeson family inside. While the rest of the party retreated inward, Count Wampyr converged on the two women he had inducted into his Un-dead army, and the man they had inducted in turn. He knew from his newfound connection that this was a friend of Juliet Gleeson.

"Welcome, young man," the Count greeted cheerily. "How do you feel?"

Wallace clenched and un-clenched his fists. "Better than I have for a long while ... purposeful, meaningful at last."

"But with an appetite, I'd wager. You came with the Time Lord and his human friends? He and I have a great deal to discuss—those aeons of warfare and the wholesale extermination of the Great Vampire and our glorious ancestors. I am eager that he should answer and suffer on behalf of his perfidious people. Why not show me the way?"

"My pleasure, master."

The Doctor clapped his hands together, seeing for the first time a glimmer of hope against this plague. "It sounds splendid. You do what you can for them, Chancellor, and Maggie and I will go back to the TARDIS to get a portable encephalographic micro-inducer—"

He turned, to find Maggie staring ahead vacantly. He snapped his fingers, quickening the pace in increasing panic. There was no response, so he grabbed her shoulders to shake her back to her senses, but she was like a ragdoll. He saw her body tense, rapt in agony, struggling to fight against the hold in which it was held. He silently cursed himself for letting his attention wander.

But then a voice sounded from the other side of the library stacks that drained away that shallow reserve of hope he had built up. It was not Count Wampyr, but Juliet's father Ignatius.

"There he is, dear," he informed his wife. "There's the real menace. Doctor Who-ever-he-is."

Arabella nodded vigorously at the identification. "You're so right my dear. Why did we let him into our lives?"

"At least we won't be seeing any more of him soon."

Despite his escalating dread and the light-headed feeling that events were spinning out of his control, the Doctor felt a glimmer of amusement at the self-important American couple threatening him. He stepped forward, seeing whey-coloured hands reaching out from the dark spaces in the library. He pulled the luminous green sleeves of his coat away from their pitiful grasps. "Is that so? And who's been gossiping about me behind my back?"

Juliet, Wallace, and Aubrey emerged from the wings of their parents. All of them had a dazed and desiccated look in their eyes, but Aubrey looked deathly ill. The Doctor wondered if vampirism could actually reject the host. His skin was turning translucent, looking like Kaylaar did in the middle of a shape-change that was not completing. So fragile was his body that it looked like a tap on the shoulder might break him into a puddle.

"Doctor ..." he rasped, his voice low and filled with bile. "I'm ... sorry ... please help Juliet ..."

"Don't worry about it, old chap."

Juliet's eyes darted around desperately, like Maggie fighting the physical spell under which the Count had placed her. If he had time, the Doctor might be able to shake the influence, but right now he had to leave her in this wretched state.

A rumble of rage inflected the Doctor's voice as he called more loudly, "Well? Where is the Count himself? Rather cowardly of him to send out this warm-up act. I'd love to tell him what I think of his handiwork right to his face!"

The brainwashed Gleeson family stepped with Juliet, Aubrey and Wallace with immaculate choreography into two lines. The many Columbia students turned vampires flanked them. Why was the Doctor reminded, for all the scene's morbid and macabre solemnity, of Busby Berkeley?

The crowds parted, and the Doctor tensed.

"Ah. You didn't disappoint, Count."

Count Wampyr marched toward the Doctor, his legion of followers hissing their reverence for their master. He seemed perversely embarrassed by the attention, and kept his shoulders hunched and his long-nailed arms folded against his chest, the elongated fingernails wrapping around the shoulder-blades, as he advanced into the room.

Count Wampyr drew level with the Doctor. He straightened his back and extended his claw-like hands. His presence was no longer pitiful, but instead carried a strong aura of power and might. The Doctor's revulsion with this parasite grew at the thought of how much delight the vampire was deriving from the suffering he was about to inflict.

"Welcome, Time Lord..." The fingers fluttered, the nails clattering like blades. A smile full of fangs stretched across the charred gash of Wampyr's mouth. "Welcome to the dawn of the Age of Vampires."

CHAPTER FOUR: BLOODLETTING

This December night, all Manhattan was as eerily deserted as the quad of Columbia University. Humidity gave the air an added bite, and harsh winds whipped up clouds of skin-lashing ice. The city's gaudy lights were muffled by the wintry cloak, looking as if they hid under a frozen lake. The people who did roam the streets at this indeterminate evening hour fitted in perfectly with the surrounding bleakness. The vampire had kissed many while in New York. They marched now in an uncanny unison, not even caring whether they met any potential victims. They were abroad merely to demonstrate the truth of the words of their master, Count Wampyr, to mark the birth of his Age of Vampires.

Count Wampyr's message beamed through his victims' minds, and wafted beyond to form a kind of haunting reverie for those who were receptive to it.

These last years have been difficult ones. You are told you live in a land of prosperity, yet you feel emptiness. I, Count Wampyr, can fill that emptiness. The answer is mercifully simple. Taste my eternal blood and you will find fulfilment you never dreamed possible.

On the shore, the legions of the poor and abandoned rejected this telepathic cry. They had heard such promises from aristocrats like him before. A few would have undoubted prejudice against a foreigner telling them, Americans, what to do. They may not have two pennies to rub together, but they'd rather be penniless Americans than the servants of a vampire, damn it!

Still, one or two of their friends around the firepit may have been that bit more desperate than they were, and surrendered to the soothing voice, telling them that mere obedience and abandonment of their humanity might offer them salvation.

The message continued to transmit through the minds of New Yorkers. Many others in the city rejected the entreaty, but others were more receptive to it. And the more who fell under Wampyr's spell, the farther and broader it would span. It would, unchecked, be in the heads of every single inhabitant of this planet in short order, unless something could be done to stop it.

Kaylaar felt his insides churning and his skin crawling as he finally reached the library. His form felt fluid, shifting in and out of various shapes, but the shifting was beyond his control, dizzying him and making him delirious. The infection racked him and the voice of Count Wampyr, even before that wide-spectrum transmission, would not stop gnawing at his soul. He staggered into the library of the building to find his worst fears in the flesh. Countless vampires, ready to pour out into the city and feed on the supplicant population. His own friends standing powerless, with Juliet and Maggie under Wampyr's mesmeric influence. And right in the middle, looking small and humble against this martial might, stood the Doctor. Despite his horrible condition, Kaylaar summoned the faintest of smiles when he saw that the Time Lord clutched his lapel, looking as haughty as ever as he faced this menace.

All things considered, the Doctor had not spent long in his eleventh incarnation. Though it was nearly one hundred and ten Terran years since he had regenerated, he spent all but the last three of those years with most of his mind locked away, the expanse of his Time Lord intellect dormant while he lived the life of a remarkably unsuccessful fisherman⁴. Therefore, he was still capable of being surprised at his reactions. Now, for instance, as defeat loomed over him in the form of Count Wampyr, Professor Erasmus, the Gleeson family, and an alarming number of university students caught in a state between mesmerism and vampirism, the Doctor didn't know whether he would take it in his stride or if a bubble of fear might quiver in the pit of his stomach.

He too heard the mental broadcast of Count Wampyr. The words struck him as hollow and empty, but he knew enough of human nature to realize that many would be tempted. His only advantage was that relatively few had been put under the spell, limiting the range of the telepathy. That advantage wouldn't last long, though: the more people lining up for a bite on the neck, the quicker the whole planet would be overrun.

The Count's mental powers were dauntingly impressive though. But as he analysed the man—or rather the long-dead husk that had once been that man—the Doctor had a vague notion that it could be possible, and even easy, to block them at the source by taking advantage of his physical shortcomings.

But he was a long way from the Count. The vampires stood against the far wall of the Administration building's library, and he was back amid the utilitarian bookshelves that always adorned such facilities. Claw-like hands reached out from dark corners of the library, trying to pull away his balmacaan coat and the thick ribbed wool of his fishing sweater's shawl collar, and feast on the rich Gallifreyan blood in his veins. Unlike Kaylaar's, they knew from their master the Count that it would be most nourishing. To the discerning vampire, Time Lord blood was akin to the most coveted claret. Yet they pulled away as quickly. Everyone there assembled knew that Wampyr wanted the Doctor for himself. If there was one thing vampires believed in fundamentally, it was utter obedience and respect for hierarchy.

⁴ See *The Doctor Who Project: The 108-Year Hitch*.

The Doctor looked desperately around at his compatriots. His own safety was always a moment-to-moment proposition, but if any of his friends were harmed that would be another matter. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Kaylaar stumble into the library, ravaged by the throes of his rejected vampiric state, random limbs shifting and fading in and out of transparency, while his face looked as peaky and pasty as an under-poached egg. Aubrey looked little better, his skin growing more drawn and his eyes ringed with dark circles.

Somehow worse than either of these two sad sights was Maggie Weitz. Maggie stared ahead like a sacrificial lamb, only the faint tremor in her eyes pointing at a hint of life still remaining and screaming out against the control under which she was being held. The only two conscious were Stoker and Okonkwo, both of whom looked around, held in place as if straitjacketed, by the long-nailed arms of various unfortunate Columbia students who had fallen under Wampyr's sway. The Gleeson family hovered in the same zombified state. All of that left only Wallace—whose teeth had grown to pointed fangs, which nevertheless hardly changed his cruel features.

Erasmus patted Ignatius Gleeson on the shoulder. "You can see now how the Doctor caused all the problems, can't you?"

He nodded. "When you explain it, Professor Erasmus, it makes ... so much goldarned *sense*."

"And Juliet, you want to be happily wedded to Aubrey, don't you?"

She nodded, but no happiness could be seen in the puppet-like visage.

Aubrey's fanged mouth poised above her neck. Those dark-ringed eyes cringed at the violence he was about to inflict on his beloved.

The Doctor's baritone voice resonated through the library, causing a palpable weakness in the humans around him. "Your supporters don't look awfully happy about all this, if I may say. But you're a decent mind-controller, Wampyr, I'll give you that. Perhaps when all this is over you can take your act to the Southend Pavilion. They're always on the look-out for quirky little sideshows like you and the Professor here. Throw in a few tunes and a ventriloquist's dummy and you'd make a killing."

Wampyr's sneer revealed those elongated, rodent-like, centuries-developed fangs. "Do not mock me, Doctor."

"And why shouldn't I, hmm? I've defeated more impressive vampires than you, up to and including the mummy and granddaddy themselves, Ingiger the Ancient Haemovore and the Great Vampire. And from what my good friend Bram Stoker tells me, you're hardly in the first rank even among the lesser Terran strain of the Un-Dead. Isn't that right?"

He felt relieved to hear Stoker's Irish brogue respond from across the vaulted space. "Quite right, Doctor. Always stumbling around leaving the path to his grave clearly signposted. Staked through the heart and buried at the crossroads in Thessalonika by an amateur group of mystics and vampire hunters. From what I read, it didn't take much effort."

"Lies!" Wampyr snarled. "Second only to ridding the world of a pernicious Time Lord will be feasting on the blood of the author of that most outrageous libel against our people, *Dracula*."

The vampires around let out a ghastly gurgle of jubilation at their quarry. "Dracula!" they cried hatefully. "Death to the author of *Dracula*!"

“Not to mention Chancellor Okonkwo, who seeks to reduce our state of eternal grace, our higher evolution, to a medical condition and strip us from our rightful place as the force of death incarnate ruling above and over all life.”

The Doctor held his arms aloft, the thunder in his voice silencing more of the ghostly gurgling. “Gentlemen, ladies, assorted vampires, please! I’m sure you’d love a good gloat before you start the all-you-can-eat buffet. But am I right in thinking that *you*, Wampyr ...” His long finger prodded the empty air, causing the Count to rock back, “are *not* the genuine article?”

“More slanders!”

“Ah, but Professor, I can’t help noting a little academic condescension. You are not of this time, I’ve discovered that. But why did you come back here? Why did you steal a sample of Wampyr’s blood from Okonkwo’s institute and use it to clone him?”

“A vampire *clone*?” cried the Chancellor.

“The grave was empty, wasn’t it Aubrey?”

Aubrey nodded haltingly. Wampyr rocked back on his feet again.

“This cannot be! I cannot be killed! I transcended death when I passed into this state, and the blood I feasted on—”

“Is the key to *my* survival,” Erasmus interrupted. “Even by the twenty-third century, Doctor, there is no cure for Irumodic Grippe. Yet with a drop of vampire blood in my system ...” He flashed his own nascent fangs. “I am back to my old self. Better than my old self, unencumbered by the ravages of age or infirmity. I quite enjoy living in this decade. It’s a time when life is cheap, as you can see.”

The Doctor’s mind raced. The nagging question of how Erasmus had travelled in time and gained such advanced knowledge would have to wait. He focussed on his relationship with Wampyr. The pair had largely confirmed what he already knew, and even before he had landed he and Okonkwo had mused on the possibility that the counterfeit nature of the vampire might offer some clue as to its defeat. But they and their servants seemed real enough as they scratched with greater energy at his coat sleeves.

“But your arrival broadens the scope of my ambition, Doctor,” Erasmus purred. “The Time Lords were better able to defeat our great ancestors because their own form of ‘Un-death’ was superior. How dare you, with your cycle of regenerations, look down upon a vampire? We deserve our revenge. Therefore a vampire Time Lord, with a TARDIS no less, would give us power and glory greater still.”

“Power!” repeated Wallace. “Glory!”

“That’s what I like best about this time period. They wish to present themselves as so sophisticated, so mannered, and yet they are so close to yielding to the very worst of themselves. Worse crimes than even the Count and his fellows could imagine.”

Wampyr looked increasingly pained, and now clutched at his stomach again. The Doctor exchanged a sideways glance with Kaylaar. “Ah, but you did get too greedy didn’t you? I suppose you bit Kaylaar thinking he was the manservant at the Gleeson household. Nasty indigestion I’ll wager. That Frenazzi blood ...”

The Count’s hooded eyes slid shut. As the Doctor anticipated, without his mental control, the legions he controlled spun on the spot, disoriented. As well, Maggie came to her senses, and Stoker and Okonkwo freed themselves of their confinement.

“Are you all right, Maggie?”

“It was horrible. I could see everything dimly, like it was behind a veil, but couldn’t do anything. Couldn’t even move ... I wanted to help ...”

“Never mind that now. We have to get out of here.”

Erasmus roared, “Pull yourself together Wampyr! He’s planted the idea in your head! You have to resist him, deny it!”

The vampire lashed at the Professor, his bared teeth and his pained expression combining to give him the appearance of a rabid dog. “I feel it, Erasmus! I have felt it ever since I woke in this time. I feel I am not complete! I am ... an impostor ...”

“Not at all. You’re just a little peckish.” Erasmus’ eyes widened and he seized Wallace by the shoulder and flung him to the Count. The row of fangs sank into the soft, white skin and took a long and luxurious drink.

Wallace cried out in pain and fear. “I was supposed to be ... I wanted to be your servant ... I would have given it up willingly ...”

“And your service compels you to give up more.”

Despite himself, the Doctor felt a twinge of regret that he was powerless to help the young ruffian. Even more regrettably, the distraction gave him time to leap behind the vampires and push Juliet and the Gleeson family out of the line of fangs and through the door. He would have to wait before he could make this foolish man pay for the terrible forces he had unleashed.

Instead, the Doctor had to focus on the Gleeson family. Juliet was the hardest to free. As he wrenched her from the grip of Aubrey, the sallow-faced young man whispered, “Thank you Doctor ... look after her ...” His entire body was convulsing as he resisted the calling for blood.

“All of you, get to the TARDIS, fast as you can!”

He looked back at the legions of willing lost souls as he departed, hoping they would not be lost forever.

The air outside the oppressive building was no great relief, being biting and damp. Maggie coughed at the exertion from her running, and felt bad at the even greater exertion from the elderly Gleeson family.

“That poor Doctor,” Ignatius lamented. “How could I have said those things, thought those things about him, when he was out there busting his hump to try to save us?”

“He understands, Mr. Gleeson,” Maggie assured him.

“Please do apologize. It could only be because of that horrible count that we would have had those horrible thoughts,” Arabella added.

Maggie nodded to assure them both, but inwardly wondered what the Time Lord did think of humanity as a mass—their frailty, and those moments of their exposed selfishness.

She guided them to the Rolls-Royce parked on the lawn. “You should get back home!” She moved to push Juliet in after them.

“I have to go back with you, Maggie. I can’t leave Aubrey.”

“Are you sure we can’t convince you to come back with us?” Arabella asked, knowing the answer.

"I'll make sure Juliet will be okay," Maggie assured her, hoping the Doctor would not make a liar of her.

"Shouldn't we stay too?"

"I wouldn't forgive myself if you got bitten trying to help me."

"What if *you* get bitten, Maggie?" Arabella asked. "Those things ..."

"I signed up for this when I met the Doctor," Maggie declared simply.

The stage manager stood in the wings of the St. James Theatre. He had stood in this spot for months, never wishing to exhale until the first number of *42nd Street* started up and he could declare with certainty that another performance was underway. This evening felt different though. He had never seen an audience like the one that was milling about in a few feet away. More than that, he had never felt the—aura (was that the word?) coming from their direction.

The stage manager looked back to the cast, running through their last warm-ups and in whatever bizarre mental states they entered in preparation for their craft. Chorus girls rushed back and forth through the wings, seeming more like sprinters improving their lap times than performers. At least they hadn't noticed anything amiss. This stage manager had supervised more than thirty shows, and found actors, without exception, were sensitive creatures and the least little thing was liable to send them tumbling like dominoes.

He looked out at the rows of people. Their skin looked paler, and their eyes more searching. Even as the house lights dimmed, the stage manager felt he could see them cutting through the darkness, seeking him in particular out. What purpose they sought with him, he could not say. But he shuddered just the same.

"Something wrong, boss?" his assistant asked him. "You look twitchy with that curtain."

"Just the folks out there. Do you know if the restaurants closed early tonight?"

"Restaurants?"

"It's just that they all look a little ... hungry."

The stage manager checked his watch and called a five-minute warning to the chorus line.

Chancellor Okonkwo lifted the dusty delta-wave augments out of its spot secreted at the back of one of the farther roundels in the TARDIS control room. A nearly burnt-out ionic bonder rested precariously in its centre. Okonkwo put the blood sample in the spare chamber and looked to Maggie hopefully.

"What's the range on that thing?"

"It should cover everyone under Wampyr's spell ... so long as he's sufficiently distracted."

He gave the equipment a hopeful rattle.

"Well, what are we waiting for?" Bram Stoker barked at them. "Let's get it outside and switch the bloody thing on!"

Count Wampyr was so close, if he could just hold his concentration a little longer.

But it was so difficult. He was distracted, his mind renting in two. His certainty in himself, his purpose, was now gone, with what the Doctor had told him. More than the Doctor, he felt hatred for Professor Erasmus, as if he had been the man who really had staked him through the heart all those years ago. More than that, perhaps worst of all, he now remembered that final death, and the satisfaction he felt from it. The endless nature of his life had robbed it, finally, of its purpose. By the end he was little more than an animal, desperately clinging on to life for its own sake rather than any deeper purpose. And now those he had bitten, and the others he had reached by his mind, looked to him to be in the same mould.

Worst of all, these thoughts were being sullied and degraded by Erasmus, sharing them. That man could see nothing but his own mortality, saw nothing wider than anything that might extend his life, no matter what it meant for anyone else ...

Since when did the great Count Wampyr think of anyone else? He really was a counterfeit vampire. He shuddered in revulsion at himself.

"You are losing the purity of your purpose, Count," Erasmus barked at him. "Without it your followers will revert, you will perish ... you need their faith in you to be strong ..."

"Purpose? I am a reconstitution of a vampire. The feeblest echo, many times removed, of the long-dead Great Vampire of old ... a pale copy of a copy. How can such a purpose have purity?"

"Quite right, Count," the Doctor added. "You're learning."

"Doctor, why do you not run with your friends?" Erasmus taunted.

"Well, I thought I should give you two chaps a sporting chance." He flipped down the roll-neck collar of his sweater, exposing his neck. A prominent vein seemed to bulge on cue, to trigger their lust. "What do you say? Care to drink a few pints of Old Gallifrey? Far better than that diluted human stuff."

Wampyr's eyes widened, and he smacked his ghoulish lips at the thought.

The Doctor tilted his neck tauntingly toward Erasmus. "Unless you'd like to draw the first blood yourself, Professor?"

Erasmus pushed the Count forward, causing him to trip and fall on his face. The Doctor squatted on his haunches, looking pitifully at the collapsed heap of old vampire.

"Doctor ... you have made me remember my death ..."

"I'm sorry."

"Do not be ... to die ... to be *really* dead ... I always thought it might be glorious. And it was."

And Wampyr closed his eyes, and his body dried into a brittle old shell, which finally cracked into a heap of dust.

"His self-belief finally did for him. Those mental powers were all that was keeping him together. Take them away, and, well ... all the Great Vampire's horses and men couldn't put Count Wampyr together again." He looked up at the Professor. "Go on Erasmus, you must feel a touch of relief."

"I can go on myself, Doctor. And how much stronger will I be with your generous offer?"

Yet it was too late. Aubrey thanked whatever providence existed that he had not sucked that chorus girl dry, which would undoubtedly have left him in the same sorry state. Similarly,

those dozens of students were reverting to their normal selves, but Erasmus had drunk too much blood, strayed too far from his humanity.

The Doctor could have kept him alive with a bit of his blood. He wondered if Erasmus had caught him on another day, whether he might have considered letting him. But the professor's future only lay as a vampire, only in this twisted parody of human existence. And he could not allow that monstrosity, could not allow self-perpetuating death, to continue to ravage the living.

And in any case, the choice was quickly taken out of the Doctor's hands. Aubrey held him back, and the young man gripped him round the chest, while he too convulsed, his skin finally cracking and drying and turning to powder like his mentor's. The Doctor was thankful the young man had acted so quickly.

The Doctor clapped a hand on the young man's shoulder. His skin flushed, and there was a reassuring pink glow underneath it. "My thanks, young fellow. You look much better alive."

Aubrey smiled.

"Now, before we do anything else, we really should get a broom and collect these ashes before we go."

Across town, the stage manager mopped his brow as the performance of *42nd Street* commenced. For a couple of hours that audience would escape their concerns, whatever darkness had clouded their features and made them seem so menacing and threatening.

Had the stage manager imagined the whole thing? He would never tell the rest of the cast, or the backstage folk, the terrors that he nursed in his mind in those seconds before the show began, the depths of evil that those decent theatregoers seemed seconds away from unleashing.

He was glad he never said anything to the actors. What would they do if they found out that *he* was only human?

**EPILOGUE:
THERE GO THE MONSTERS**

Thessaloniki, Greece—30 April 1880

The group of vampire hunters stood over the body of Count Wampyr. Even his ever-servile rats had abandoned him. The black-cloaked, bald body lay immersed in the Greek soil, frozen in a final tableau of misleading serenity—those ghastly hands with their ever-growing fingernails held in terror against the sunlight, shoulders hunched forward against the stake the hunters had rammed through his heart for good measure. Despite all the dreadful deeds he had inflicted on them and stood for to countless others, he appeared curiously diminished and pathetic with his human slayers standing so proudly over him.

They spared him no pity. “The deed is done,” their whiskery leader declared. “So long as we none of us forget that ... there *are* such things ...”

The group then set about sealing the massive stone sarcophagus lid over the vampire, and finally barricading the rough-hewn stone front in the hope it would never again be opened. Their work understandably consumed them too much for them to notice the blue box in one corner of the cemetery, looking curiously appropriate against the sad monuments and mausoleums that decorated the area.

Maggie, Kaylaar, and Juliet and Aubrey stood by the Doctor. He had made it clear that this was a part of the record of history, and so they had to keep their distance. Bram Stoker and Chancellor Okonkwo were happy to return to their lives, but he thought this young couple in particular would need a bit of ‘closure’ (as the young of a much later generation would say) before they too rejoined their everyday, chronological routines.

“If only they knew,” Juliet mused.

“But to be fair, they were right. Count Wampyr was dead to all intents and purposes. It was only when the Europa Hegemony acquired and catalogued all the known vampire DNA for study in four hundred years that he was reconstituted.”

“Will be,” Juliet corrected.

“Who’s the Time Lord again?” her fiancé joked.

The Doctor chuckled, but the badinage could not distract him from what he had witnessed. "Seeing it happen ... I think he really did want to be dead. Ultimately, that proved to be our greatest advantage. Perhaps he was more human than I gave him credit for. Maybe more than me."

There were still questions to be answered, and the assembled humans did their best to ask them all while the Doctor ferried the young couple back to 1933. Would everyone bitten or mind-controlled by the Count really go back to normal, or should people carry around a stake, a bunch of garlic, and a crucifix as a matter of course? Where did Professor Erasmus get the ability to travel back in time? And ... no matter how many times the Doctor insisted the Count was dead ... *was* he?

"All right, Doc, there's no need to make faces," Maggie replied at that last question.

"There are loose ends all over the place lately. With any luck there will be a simple explanation."

Kaylaar snorted. "I wouldn't hold my breath on that one."

"We'll have to keep our eye out for rogue time travellers. And as for your first question ..." The Doctor looked up at Kaylaar. "How are you feeling, old chum?"

"I've been better, but I'll be right as rain I'm sure." The Frenazzi's words hung in the air with a little too much jollity.

"Are you sure? You seem ... distracted."

Kaylaar opened his mouth, about to tell them both about those visions. Katlannu had been there with him, he had no doubt. But he could not trust his senses. Other blasphemous aliens had assumed Katlannu's form before, had manipulated his faith for their own purpose. He could not discount the possibility that the vampires had done the same, and speaking it aloud would sully the Great Prophet's presence. Beyond that, his people always held a deep and protective silence over their spirituality, especially as it was generally not shared or tolerated by other races in the universe. Though his two friends knew more of his culture than any off-worlders ever had, he still balked to admit some of his beliefs were unshaken and unshakeable. This most recent experience confirmed to him that he retained that faith, shaken though it might be. He worried, in his darker moments, that his devotion might make his friends change how they saw him. Therefore, he merely touched his temple and concluded, "Honestly. I'm just still feeling a little light-headed." He felt relieved when Aubrey chimed in with his agreement.

The TARDIS ground back into visibility on the snow-covered lawn of the Gleeson house in Glen Cove. A brilliant winter sun shone, and it felt like the air had returned to the surroundings, a far cry from the sterile freeze that had descended on the place only the previous night. Arabella and Ignatius raced toward their daughter, while Bitterman and the other servants looked on happily.

"It's been a pleasure meeting you, Doctor, Maggie, Kaylaar," Juliet said. "But I do hope we can meet again without any ghouls tagging along."

"Yeah, these fanged bozos already took years off my life," roared Ignatius. "I don't think I could handle any werewolves or witches."

The Doctor thumped his chest and gave his best Scout's honour. He and his friends walked back to the TARDIS and the household watched it vanish. This time, it shot straight up into the sky: one last surprise from that strange Doctor.

The Doctor varied the ship's usual take-off so that Maggie and Kaylaar could watch that inspiring skyline of New York grow smaller and smaller until it was enveloped in the coastline and waters of eastern North America.

"One demon conquered," the Doctor mused. "But there are plenty more ahead for that city and the world."

Kaylaar raised his eyebrow. "Really? Just when you think humans have their heads screwed on ..."

The Doctor nodded gravely. "There's a long, slow recovery from the worst of the Great Depression, only for the rest of the world to go to war. A bloody period of mass insanity and delusion, stoked by men who brought out the worst in their people. A dark age made darker by the scale of the conflict and the advancement of the technology. A war nearly won by those dark forces. Monsters though they were, even Wampyr and Erasmus could not have fully comprehended the horrors those humans and their followers would wreak on each other. When the Time Lords went to war against the Vampires, they were so sickened by their own actions that they foreswore all such violence evermore. Wars, battles, crusades ... that's the biggest fraud about them all, that we can stamp out evil with them. Instead it just resurfaces, resurrects, reinvents itself ..."

Maggie nodded grimly and patted the Doctor's shoulder. "You don't need to take it so personally, you know, Doctor. We humans are in charge of ourselves, after all. Nobody can make *everything* better, and you do more than anybody I could imagine. We would be ungrateful to expect you to do any more than you already do."

"Thanks, Maggie." With some effort, the Doctor banished his own internal demons and gave his friends a familial clap on their shoulders. He walked away from the console and reached to the cubby-hole in which rested the casket with Count Wampyr and Professor Erasmus's ashes.

"What will you do with them? Give them to some holy order?" Maggie wondered.

"I think they'll be safe enough in here until I can find some suitably far-flung spot." He slammed the roundel shut on the caskets. "Do remind me. We certainly don't want any more trouble of, er, a jugular vein."

"Before we get to that ..." Kaylaar said sheepishly. "Well, I don't know about either of you, but I wouldn't mind another cocktail."

"Why don't we try for a Blue Hawaiian this time?" Maggie suggested.

The Doctor, Maggie and Kaylaar return in
"The Evil"



It is 1933, and the Doctor has taken Maggie and Kaylaar to New York's legendary Stork Club to enjoy the repeal of Prohibition and take in a show. But their holiday is interrupted by a grisly attack on a chorus girl, leaving two bite marks on her neck.

This event carries a sinister connection to Aubrey Warner, who has recently travelled to Greece on an archaeological expedition, and returned with a strange illness. Warner's mentor, Professor Erasmus, assures his family and his fiancée Juliet Gleeson that there is nothing to fear. But they have even less reason to take the Professor's word when they meet the mysterious Count Wampyr.

At this stage it goes without saying that vampires are abroad in the Big Apple, and the not-so-legendary Wampyr intends to lead them back from the (Un)dead. But someone from another time is aiding the Count's foul resurrection, and this could give him the advantage he needs to win a final victory against the Time Lords.

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