

BBC

# DOCTOR WHO

CAMERA OBSCURA



LLOYD ROSE

*The Doctor sat alone and listened to the beat of his remaining heart. He had never got used to it. He never would. The single sound where double should be. What was this new code hammering through his body? What did it mean? Mortal. No, he'd always known he could die. Not mortal. Damaged. Crippled. Through his shirt, his fingers sought out the thick ridge of his scar. Human. . .*

The Doctor's second heart was taken from his body - for his own good, he was told. Removed by his sometime ally, sometime rival, the mysterious time-traveller, Sabbath. Now, as a new danger menaces reality, the Doctor unwillingly finds himself working with Sabbath again. From a séance in Victorian London to a wild pursuit on Dartmoor, the Doctor and his companions work frantically to unravel the mystery of this latest threat to Time. . .  
Before Time itself unravels. . .

*This is another in the series of original adventures for the Eighth Doctor.*



# Camera Obscura

Lloyd Rose

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*To Paul Cornell*

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# Prologue

‘I’ve teeth in my hip. My sister’s teeth that should have been. I killed her in the womb.’

The young woman waited, but her visitor had no reaction.

‘So and that would be why,’ she continued, ‘I was a murderer before I was born. And that would be why, then, I murdered all those other small ones.’

‘You said at your trial you didn’t kill them.’

She shrugged.

‘It was only me talking, wasn’t it? Everyone knows it was me that killed them. They tell me the newspapers call me the Angel-Maker.’

He didn’t seem interested in what the papers said. ‘At your trial, you claimed that you killed an adult male – a man whose body was, in fact, found downstairs from the room in which the slaughtered children lay. You said that you had come to be interviewed for a position and that he attempted to assault you.’

She raised a leg, setting her foot up on the seat of her chair. Her skirt slid down her thigh. The man’s dark eyes remained on her face. Funny, that usually got their interest. He was funny. When he’d come in, not stooping but seeming to because he was so big and the room was so small, he’d looked around and said, ‘Ah, the ambience of a Victorian insane asylum.’ As if it were a joke. But not a joke on her. On the place.

‘And it must be that I was lying, then,’ she said. ‘Or it must be that I don’t remember. That God in His mercy didn’t let me remember.’

‘Do you believe in God?’

She stared at him for a moment. That was a new question. And he was asking it seriously. ‘Sure and you’re trying to trap me,’ she said. ‘To get me to blaspheme.’ He looked like he could be an agent of the Devil. Big and dark. Powerful. Uncaring.

‘If you believe your soul is damned already,’ he said, ‘what’s a little blasphemy?’

‘It’s evil you are,’ she said.

He smiled, gently but with an edge of irony. ‘Do you think you’re evil?’

'Sure and I must be, after what I did.'

'If you don't remember what you did, are you still responsible?'

'Someone is,' she said. 'They were all eight dead. And all the blood.'

'The wounds on the children were almost identical to the wounds on the man.'

'Well, then,' she said, 'it must have been me.' Bored, she lowered her leg. All the questions were the same.

'How old are you?' he asked.

'I don't know.'

'You look about eighteen or nineteen.' She shrugged again. 'How long have you been in service?'

'It's five years ago that I left Ireland. I was in Liverpool as a skivvy first. Then I did the same here for the Porters, till he lost all his money in that speculation.'

'How would you like to work for me?'

She laughed. 'And they're going to let me go from here!'

He nodded, smiling that smile again. 'They are.'

She looked around the small room: the bare brick walls, the simple furniture and threadbare rug, the barred windows. 'And what did you give them, then, to buy me?'

'I explained that I was a doctor, a specialist in the treatment of the criminally insane. That I wanted to take you on as a private patient.'

'Oh, and it was only that? There was no money?'

'There was money. This institution needs money.'

'So it's that you *have* bought me.'

'If you don't like the work, you can leave any time.'

She snorted. 'Oh, and it's likely they'll allow that.'

'They no longer matter.'

She stared at him for a long moment.

'So is it,' she said, 'that you want to do the dirty thing with a dirty murderess? Is that your gentleman's pleasure?'

He was neither shocked nor insulted. 'No.'

'Or is it just that you want a famous killer scrubbing your floors and emptying your slops?'

'I live in an odd place,' he said. 'You won't have to do any of that.'

'And what is it, then, you'll be having me do?'

'Why did you kill that man?' he said. 'Really.'

'He -'

‘No, please. Even that rather obtuse coroner could tell he was killed from behind. I’m certain that men have forced themselves on you. But not this one.’

Her eyes dropped before his dark regard. ‘No,’ she whispered. She put her hand to her mouth in fear. Why was she telling him this?

‘So why did you kill him?’

She looked up at him. His gaze was steady. He knew, she thought suddenly. He would understand.

‘He was wrong,’ she said.

‘Wrong how?’

‘A wrong thing. He was. . . It’s that he was here, and not here.’

‘How did you know this?’

‘I could tell,’ she mumbled, lowering her eyes again.

There was silence for a moment.

‘Tell me about time,’ he said.

She raised her eyes. ‘Time?’

‘The past and the present. The future.’

He knew! Her lips parted in wonder. But she still hesitated. His eyes reassured her, held her up, held her. ‘Sure and they’re the same thing,’ she whispered. ‘All the same they are.’

He smiled, a real smile, not an ironic one. She thought his face was beautiful then. He held out his hand. She placed hers in it. So big. But he would not hurt her. ‘I don’t believe you’re that doctor,’ she said. ‘I believe it’s just that you’re pretending to be him.’

He laughed.

# Chapter One

The Doctor sat alone in a first-class compartment and listened to his heart.

He didn't like to do this, and at first he had been able to distract himself with the rhythm of the train wheels: thackata-thack, thackata-thack, thackata-thack, thackata-thack. Like the third movement of Beethoven's Fifth, he thought, gazing out of the window and remembering a future a century from now in which the landscape would be dotted not with factory chimneys but with dark Satanic nuclear power plants. Thackata-thack, thackata-thack. . . But slowly, under that relentless mechanical clanking, the sound of his own body reasserted itself. The thump of his single heart.

He never had got used to it. He never would. That solitary beat, surrounded by emptiness. The single sound where a double should be. Echoless. Isolated. Alone.

When it had first happened, the experience was so strange, so *other*, that he had been subject to sudden awful plunges of fear. What was this? *Whose body was he in?* If he held his chest, he felt silence. This thin, dull thud – the monotonous rhythm – like the tick of a clock, a dead machine. It was not him. *It was not him.* All the other symptoms – the weariness, the slower healing, the loss of his respiratory-bypass system – were nothing compared to this horrible, hollow absence.

The thread of his pulse seemed to him a trickle, a leak, no more. A signal of something diminished, something running down. He was colder now, cold all the time, especially his hands and feet and, comically, the edges of his ears, and sometimes his lips or the tip of his nose. The little flutter of warmth wasn't enough. At times it seemed barely there, and he thought of sparks flaring and dying, of subatomic particles flickering in and out of existence.

For a long time, the unfamiliar, inadequate rhythm prevented him from sleeping. Not that he slept much ordinarily. But in his new weakness he often stretched out, exhausted, only to find himself kept awake, teased from peace, by the *wrongness* of his pulse, the way it beat strangely in his ear against the pillow. What was this new code hammering through his body? What did it mean?

Mortal.

No, he'd always known he could die. Not mortal.

Damaged. Crippled.

Through his shirt, his cold fingers sought out the thick ridge of his scar.

Human.

*Stop this!*

He rested his forehead against the cool glass of the compartment window. It was a grey day, and periodically the landscape outside darkened enough for him to glimpse his reflection, pale and partial, like a ghost. Did he look different now? He didn't think so. The same face – a man, just under forty, that human beings apparently found handsome. His appearance didn't really change, hadn't changed for a hundred years now. Maybe some strands of grey in the thick brown hair. And before that? What had he looked like when he was young, a boy? Had he ever *been* a boy? Did whatever manner of being he was have a childhood? True, he sometimes got the impression that he'd once been shorter. But there were also moments when he could have sworn he had once been taller.

The Doctor sat back and shut his eyes. Thackata-thack. Thackata-thack. Trains. What memories he had began a hundred years ago on a nineteenth-century train like this one. A second-class carriage. A wary woman opposite. Himself, just returned to consciousness. Confusion. Then panic. Then fear. Then something worse: the understanding that his past then was as lost as his heart was now. Gone, the both of them. Why even think about it? A waste of the time he seemed to have so much of. Better to concentrate on the matter at hand. That certainly provided enough mysteries of its own.

Octave could never see over the footlights into the dark, high-vaulted hall, so before a performance he would slip around to the back of the theatre to get a look at the audience. He did this early, before he was in makeup and while people were still finding their seats, so he could lurk unobtrusively and get a look at the faces. He liked to get a sense of whom he would be playing to.

Though the rather lurid posters outside proclaimed him Octave the Uncanny and showed him communing with skull-faced spirits and sharing a drink with the Devil, he was in person an unprepossessing man, thin and sallow with a scanty moustache and a hairline that was receding early. No one ever gave him a second glance when he loitered in the lobby or took a turn up and down the aisles.

Aside from getting a general sense of his public for the evening, Octave kept an eye out for other magicians and professional debunkers. He hated dealing with that sort of nonsense, and it was best to be prepared for it. Just a few weeks ago, Maskelyne had stood up from a seat and challenged him in mid-show. Maskelyne himself. Octave had been impressed in spite of the circumstances. He'd also been quite nervous when – as he had to, naturally, to avoid a fuss – he'd invited him up on stage. Not because he feared exposure, obviously. Simply because it was... Maskelyne. A legendary member of the legendary conjuring family. And of course, even the great Maskelyne had come away impressed in turn.

Afterwards he had bullied the unwilling Octave out for a drink and tried to persuade him to bring his act to London. It had been very difficult putting him off. Quite understandably, Maskelyne couldn't see why a man who bothered to perform as a professional magician wouldn't want to make the best living possible at it – why, in short, he wouldn't seek his fortune in London, where Maskelyne was certain he would find not only fortune but fame beyond his dreams. Octave explained that he had no dreams of fame, and that the money he made touring the North was sufficient for his needs. This latter wasn't precisely true. But then the precise truth was... untellable.

Maskelyne had gone away disgruntled, possibly a bit insulted. But genuinely mystified. Octave had been afraid ever since that he would send some friend or colleague up to Liverpool to see the act. But so far there had been no one.

Until tonight.

As Octave was coming up the left-hand aisle, surveying what looked like the usual crowd of entertainment seekers, his eye fell on a man at the back of the theatre who had paused to look around for a seat. The newcomer was perhaps forty, slender and handsome, his hair cut long. Something about him disturbed Octave very much. He stood still as the man came down the aisle, glancing at his hands as he went past. Long-fingered, deft – they could be a magician's hands. The man's profile was dramatic, rather beautiful actually, and he was dressed with a certain amount of flair. Yet somehow Octave doubted he was a performer of any sort. He seemed too remote.

Octave watched him take a seat in the eighth row, and half an hour later, when he came on stage, he sensed him there, though he couldn't see anyone in the glare of the footlights, not even the people on the front row. Octave felt rather than observed his audience. They were a single entity, with a single mood, a beast that laughed as one and gasped as one and, if displeased, booed as one.

Octave knew all about the booing. People arrived at his performances having heard that they would see something spectacular. He had become dismally used to the slow atmosphere of disillusionment, like air leaking from a bicycle tyre, that settled on to the audience as the evening commenced. For, to be perfectly frank, his opening acts were not very exciting. Coloured scarves in a stream from his sleeve. A rabbit from a hat. Linking and unlinking metal rings. A performance of the venerable but familiar cup-and-balls routine. Nor, to be equally frank, was he very good at any of these acts. Oh he was competent enough. He never actually failed to execute a trick. But he was uninspired, he lacked stage presence. And his moves were clumsy. Occasionally he dropped things. That was when there was sometimes booing.

Tonight, the presence of the man in the eighth row had him particularly on edge. The fellow was invisible, of course, but all the more present for that. Octave sensed a *stillness* emanating from him. If he had to, he could have pointed into the darkness straight at him.

Not that there was anything hostile in the man's attention. Indeed, as the show progressed, Octave felt dimly that he was on his side, sympathetic even. Wishing him well. He began to find this comforting. He pulled the scarves from his sleeve with an extra flourish, and hoisted the rabbit (which had behaved itself tonight, thank God, and not urinated in his secret pocket) high. In the perfunctory applause, he thought he could single out the man's more vigorous clapping. It gave him a sense of relief. Perhaps the fellow was a performer of some sort after all. He seemed to *understand*.

As he continued, though the audience became slowly more bored and disappointed, Octave's spirits nonetheless, as always, rose. He was approaching the act that filled the house nightly, the illusion, so-called, that had brought the great Maskelyne up to the unappealing provinces. In some ways, he was glad of the boredom he had generated. What a preface it made for what followed! What a turnaround the audience was about to experience, as if their very heads would swivel one hundred and eighty degrees on their necks. They were going to be stunned, agape, astonished. *Amazed*.

'And now, ladies and gentlemen,' he announced, straining, as always, to be heard at the back of the house, 'I will perform. . . The Illusion of the Time-Travelling Cabinets!'

He felt the crowd's attention shift and sharpen. *Ah, now*, it seemed to say in its single voice. *This is it*. Yes, he thought, *this is it*.

'I need a volunteer!' A murmur of accommodation came at him. He swept out his arm and pointed to his unseen supporter. 'You, sir! In the green coat!'

Though he couldn't see it happening, Octave knew an usher was guiding the man to the steps at stage left. He turned that way, and in a moment, the man came out of the darkness. Octave had hoped, imagined, he would be smiling. But he wasn't. His expression was focused, more watchful than curious, and Octave saw for the first time what a strange colour his eyes were, an unnatural blue-green, too pale rightly to be as intense as they were. Dismay slid down his spine.

'No,' he said involuntarily.

'Yes,' the man responded, just as quietly. 'I think so.'

He turned a dazzling smile on the audience, which responded with encouraging applause, then looked back at Octave. No one had heard what either of them had said. The audience must have assumed it was just the usual introductory chatter. Still smiling, the man said, 'I'm not going to hurt you.'

Octave almost laughed – a little hysterically, to be sure, but it was funny. 'Why yes you are,' he said. 'I called you up here to hurt me.' The man was puzzled. 'You'll see. It's part of the act.' His voice rose so that the audience could hear 'Sir, do I know you?'

The man shook his head.

'Have we ever seen each other before?'

'No.'

'Ladies and gentlemen!' Octave faced the black void of the theatre. 'I will now ask this perfect stranger to assist me in this, my most fabulous, most mysterious, most inimitable illusion!' He drew a hatpin from his lapel and held it up. 'What am I holding, sir?'

'A pin.'

'Yes, it is a pin. Of the sort usually employed to secure ladies' hats. I will now ask you, if you please, to take this pin,' he handed it to the man, 'and prick or scratch my hand in any place you choose.' The man hesitated. 'Gently!' Octave said with mock alarm. The audience chuckled. Just enough to draw blood.'

He held out his left hand, palm up. After a beat, the man took it. His own hand was cool. 'So,' he said uncertainly, too low for the audience to hear, 'I'm to... ?'

'Just a scratch,' said Octave. 'It's for identification purposes later.'

Rather reluctantly, the man pricked the flesh at the base of Octave's thumb. He had a lighter touch than most of the volunteers; Octave didn't feel anything. A drop of blood oozed from the tiny wound. Octave squeezed his hand so that the drop became a trickle and held up his palm to the audience. 'For those of you who cannot see: Sir, am I bleeding?'



‘Yes, you are.’

‘And you have taken note of exactly where you pricked me?’

‘Yes.’

‘Please look again.’ The man studied Octave’s palm and nodded. ‘Thank you. You may return to your seat. But I will need you again.’

The man went down the steps into the darkness. Octave watched him, still uneasy. What was it...? But never mind. The show must go on.

Back in his seat, the Doctor sat forward, eyes fixed on the magician. Octave gestured with *maladroit grandeur*, and the scarlet curtain hanging at mid-stage slowly lifted. As it rose, a set of low platforms came into view, spaced evenly across the stage, each containing a tall cabinet about the size, the Doctor thought, of the not-yet-invented phone box. These were blue and painted with bright yellow and crimson stars and comets. Octave walked from one to another, releasing a catch on each and swinging the door open to reveal an empty black interior. He entered each cabinet, turned around, tapped the walls and roof and floor. As he exited, he bent and swept a cane beneath each platform to show there was a space there. None of this particularly impressed the Doctor. He noticed that the cane didn’t sweep under and *behind* the cabinet and assumed a piece of black velvet hung there, placed to conceal anyone hiding round the back.

‘Time,’ Octave intoned, striding back to centre stage, ‘is a mystery, ladies and gentlemen! We live in it, and yet we cannot say what it is. But one thing we do know: Time is a trap. We cannot get out of it. We cannot slow it down. We cannot speed it up. It imprisons us as one of these cabinets will shortly imprison me, and this prison no one ever escapes. But tonight...’ He paused theatrically, ‘*I shall escape.*’

The Doctor wondered if Houdini had heard of this. He’d never read about his exposing an act of this sort. Of course, the Doctor rubbed his hands together worriedly, that might be because in history as it had once happened, there hadn’t been an act of this sort for Houdini to debunk. That was the problem, of course. That was why he was here.

Octave was finishing explaining that he didn’t work with assistants but that two of the theatre’s stagehands had agreed to wind chains around the box in which he was to shut himself. He introduced these men, who seemed a little embarrassed to be in front of so many people, and walked grandly up the three steps into the stage right cabinet. Once inside, he turned to face the audience, arms folded across his chest like the carving of a pharaoh on the

lid of a sarcophagus. The stagehands stood blinking at the audience. Octave hissed something, and one of them jumped slightly and hurried to close the cabinet door. Then he and his fellow clumsily wound the chains around the box and fastened them with an enormous lock. They hung sloppily, but it was clear they would keep all doors, visible or hidden, shut.

Instead, there was an anticipatory and uncertain silence as the stagehands shuffled self-consciously back into the wings and the stage was left empty. The silence continued, grew lighter. There was some shifting. Someone coughed. Then, just as a bored, slightly querulous mutter was beginning to rise, the door of the second cabinet swung open. Octave stepped out. He bowed. The crowd applauded politely. Without even waiting for the clapping to die down, Octave stepped back into the cabinet and slammed the door. And instantly, the door of the third box slammed open, and there was Octave.

The crowd gasped. Octave again stepped out. He held up his bleeding palm. The stunned silence that had greeted his appearance broke, and applause echoed around the auditorium. Again, before this had time to subside, Octave re-entered his cabinet. And again, as soon as he closed the door, the door of the next cabinet flew open and there he was.

‘It’s a fake,’ said a man behind the Doctor. ‘It must be.’

‘But how?’ asked a female voice. ‘He would have to be... what is four triplets?’

People in the cheaper seats were on their feet, yelling and whistling, and even the more genteel element was cheering. Octave bowed, a small smile on his face, and once more shut himself in his magic box. All eyes turned expectantly to the fifth cabinet. But the magician had a different trick up his sleeve. Suddenly, the door of the second cabinet banged open again. There was Octave. He smiled and, without emerging, pulled the door to. Immediately, the door of the third cabinet swung away, and there was Octave. He jerked the door shut. At once, the fourth cabinet opened. Octave bowed slightly, grabbed the handle, and shut himself back in. At which the door of the fifth cabinet flung wide, and Octave came out and down the steps to the centre of the stage.

Clapping and cheering filled the air. Octave, a sheen of sweat on his forehead, bowed and bowed. Then he raised a hand and, as if mesmerised, the audience fell silent.

‘Would my earlier witness please honour me again with his presence on the stage?’

The Doctor rose and made his way down the aisle. He felt the audience’s eyes on him, felt a faint tremor of suspicion from some of them. Was he really

Octave's colleague? Was it all, somehow, just a fake? The Doctor walked up on to the bright stage and Octave beckoned him over, holding out his wounded hand.

'Tell me, sir, is this the pinprick you made?'

The Doctor took Octave's hand in both of his, carefully. He had had no doubt this was the same man, and a look at the little puncture confirmed it.

'Yes,' he said. 'So far as I can tell, it's in exactly the same place.'

Holding his bloody hand aloft, Octave swivelled towards the audience. Applause crashed on to the stage. The Doctor stared into the blackness, feeling the pleasure plunge over the footlights like a wave. Once again, Octave raised a hand for silence, and once again the crowd hushed.

Octave gestured to the wings and the stagehands came on again, as awed as the audience. 'If you please, remove the chains.'

Surely, thought the Doctor, he's not. . . he wouldn't dare appear in two places at once.

And indeed, Octave intended no such thing. As soon as the chains fell to the floor, he bowed to the stagehands, to the Doctor, to the audience, and once more entered the fifth cabinet. He pulled the door to. As soon as the latch clicked, the door of the first cabinet was shoved open, and, from its interior, Octave bowed deeply.

The applause became a din. The Doctor, who had moved modestly to the far side of the stage, slipped into the wings. Quietly, he crept back to where he could see the rear of the cabinets. There were no pieces of black cloth hung from the platforms: no one was slipping in and out of trapdoors in the back walls. But from the sides the boxes looked deeper than they should have. Secret compartments? Probably.

The Doctor resumed his place at the edge of the stage just in time for Octave to turn to smile and thank him for his assistance. The Doctor gave a small, polite bow and returned to his place in the audience.

As soon as he sat down, people jammed the aisle beside his seat. Who was he? Did he really not know Octave? How did he think the magician had done it? The Doctor answered as best he could, distracted. The scar on his chest had suddenly, achingly tightened. He twisted around, trying to see over the heads of the crowd surrounding him. Up at the back of the theatre, he thought he glimpsed a large, familiar figure ducking into the lobby. A word in a language he didn't know leaped into the Doctor's head. He was pretty sure it was an oath.

It took him nearly half an hour to extricate himself from the mob of curiosity-seekers. By the time he did, the theatre manager had taken to the stage to explain that Octave had departed so there was no reason for anyone to visit his dressing room. The Doctor thought there was a good possibility this wasn't true. Avoiding the door that led directly from the auditorium to backstage, where the manager was firmly turning away others who hadn't believed the announcement, he slipped up on to the stage and into the wings again. The stage lights had been extinguished, and he moved in near darkness smelling of dust and canvas. Picking his way over coils of rope and past curtain weights, he went along behind the backdrop at the very rear of the stage and through a door in the far corner that led him into a dingy hall.

Only three of the corridor's gas lamps were working. The Doctor's soft-edged shadow twinned and tripled as he walked past them. He stopped at a door with a slit of light beneath it and knocked.

As he had expected, there was no reply. The Doctor put his ear to the door. The greasy, perfumed scent of stage makeup floated to him.

'Mr Octave, I'm the man who helped you on stage. I think I can help you off-stage as well.' No answer. 'You need help, you know.' Still no answer. 'I'm not a rival magician. I'm not with the press.' More lack of answer. The Doctor put his mouth close to the edge of the door. 'You're having a few difficulties with time, aren't you?'

There was a new quality to the silence, an intensified stillness. The Doctor waited. Finally Octave's voice said, 'Go away.'

'No,' said the Doctor.

'Go away, I tell you!'

'Not until we talk.'

'Go away!!' Octave's voice rose to a sudden shriek. The Doctor stepped back. 'Go away, go away, go away, go away, go away –'

Even muted by the door, his cries echoed along the hall. At the far end, the figure of the manager appeared. Octave's outburst subsided into incoherence, a wordless hysterical rant.

'Sir!' The manager advanced firmly. 'No one is allowed back here.'

'I was only –'

'I must ask you to leave.'

The manager had stopped a few feet from him, his expression politely determined. The Doctor looked again at the door, behind which the high, almost keening noise went on.

'Yes, of course,' he said. 'You're right. I'm sorry.'

Lightly avoiding the other's attempt to put a hand on his arm, he went down the hall to the exit.

The stage door brought him out next to the theatre entrance. The marquee was dark now, though above the doors the gas lanterns remained lit, yellow smears on the foggy night. Tiredly, he rubbed his face with both hands. Well done, Doctor. Unsubtle, to-the-point, and inefficient. Of course Octave would be frightened. Frightened half to death, probably. The Doctor sighed and put his hands in his pockets. He stood uncertainly on the damp pavement. Try again? Wait, in case Octave came out this way? Return another time?

And what had Sabbath been doing here?

The Doctor exhaled angrily and shut his eyes. He didn't like to think about Sabbath. Childish of him, but there it was. Sabbath had played him for a fool on Station One, and in Spain. Played him brilliantly too, which made it worse. Not to mention the effrontery of having saved his life. However he had done that. Add impromptu heart surgery to the man's accomplishments. The Doctor realised he was holding the side of his chest. Furiously, he dropped his hand.

'At least you're dressed properly for the period for once.'

The deep hollow voice rolled out of the fog. In a moment, its owner followed, massive and dark-coated, fog misting his top hat, a sardonic gleam in his eye. 'You look like one of Oscar's aesthetes.'

'Thank you for reminding me,' said the Doctor. 'I need to finalise my plans to walk down Piccadilly with a lily in my hand. Enjoy the performance?'

Sabbath smiled. 'I thought you did very well. First time on stage?'

The Doctor shrugged. 'I'm just a natural. How did you like Octave?'

'Intriguing.'

'So you're interested in conjuring.'

Sabbath's smile narrowed. 'Really, Doctor. We both know that wasn't what was happening tonight. Why do you suppose we're each of us here?'

'Coincidence? Bad luck? Maybe you're following me – do I owe you money?'

'I see you're as annoying as ever.'

'I have a reputation to keep up.'

'And you're doing very well.' Sabbath surveyed the empty street. 'I suggest we continue this conversation indoors, preferably somewhere with a bar.'

'I don't want to continue this conversation,' said the Doctor. 'Why don't we just take it as read, and I'll go off and do a lot of work and then you can come in at the end and tell me it was all your idea.'

'Bitter, Doctor. That's not like you.'

'I've had a change of heart.'

‘Still brooding on that?’ said Sabbath coolly. ‘Do I need to remind you that it was killing you?’

‘Oh, I know, I know. It was lovely of you to remove it. You’re such an altruist, Sabbath. Aside from your generosity with surgical services, you’re a selfless protector of Time. Time’s Champion, you might call yourself. That’s why you’re here, I presume.’

‘You noticed the problem.’

‘Oh yes. The time sensors did everything except flash red and sound a siren.’

‘Our magician tonight suggests the anomalies are taking human form.’

‘Yes. That’s why I wanted to talk to him.’

‘I gather he refused.’

‘Wouldn’t you? I’ll just have to try again.’ The Doctor turned to Octave’s poster, studying the schedule at the bottom. ‘He closes here tonight, but Wednesday he’s in Liverpool.’

‘Tonight?’ said Sabbath. ‘Dear me.’

‘Wanted to talk to him yourself, did you?’ The Doctor cocked a sceptical eye. ‘Not your usual style.’

Sabbath’s smile returned. ‘Perhaps I too have had a change of heart.’

## Chapter Two

Dr Nathaniel Chiltern looked around the small, crowded parlour and wondered what he was doing there. He often wondered that at these sorts of gatherings, and yet, he acknowledged with a sigh and a sip of his hostess's mediocre sherry, he continued to attend them. This at least seemed to be a less eccentric crowd than usual, perhaps because the medium – an American, if he remembered correctly, a Miss Constance Jane – was new to England. Word hadn't yet got out to the fringe element.

To be frank, he wasn't entirely sure about the young man perched uneasily on the edge of a slippery horsehair-upholstered chair, balancing a teacup on his knee as if he were afraid it contained some liquid explosive. Even though it appeared to have been recently trimmed, his hair somehow managed to be straggly. Name of Kreiner – Chiltern couldn't quite place his accent. Spiritualism and its various offshoots had a tendency to cut across class borders, which Chiltern supposed was a good thing, unless it simply meant that the classes were uniting in being snookered. He wasn't yet sure.

Kreiner's companion was an Indian woman, a Miss Kapoor, very becoming in her national dress. She hadn't the red mark on her forehead of the Hindu, but on the other hand, her head was uncovered, so she wasn't Muslim. Perhaps a convert – her English, certainly, was flawless when she bothered to say anything, but she seemed shy. She was smiling politely at an earnest, puffy-haired young man in a brown suit, William somebody or other, who had introduced himself to Chiltern as a poet. He was chattering on at her – probably reciting some of his no doubt ghastly poetry. Kreiner really ought to come to her rescue, but he was sitting like something stuffed. With another inward sigh, Chiltern prepared to do the duty himself, but was spared when Lettice Ainsley swooped down on the two of them. Not, he reflected, that she was a great improvement.

Still – his gaze shifted to the porcelain coal-fireplace where two women sat on a small velvet-covered settee – she was preferable to the formidable Helen Oglesby, a stern-looking matron with an incisive and unforgiving eye who had dragged along her niece, Phylemeda. The latter was a giggly young woman who seemed disappointed in the evening's offering of eligible male company,

though she kept surreptitiously eying the man who sat in the armchair opposite Chiltern – a handsome, if rather arty-looking, fellow with the prosaic name of Dr John Smith. Chiltern hadn't expected him to have any brains, but he'd turned out to be quite interesting. He was engaged now in assisting their hostess, Mrs Hemming, with the sherry decanter. Chiltern declined another glass with a gesture; the evening was likely to be trying enough without his being full of cheap sherry.

'So,' Smith continued when Mrs Hemming moved on to her other guests, 'you expect this evening to be a fraud?' His tone wasn't cynical, merely curious.

'"Expect" is perhaps putting it too strongly,' Chiltern objected. 'But it is the usual thing.'

'Yet you're not a professional debunker.'

'No. I'm not knowledgeable about sleight-of-hand. I may believe a mediumistic effect is rubbish, but I can't prove it. Anyway, it's none of my business if people want to comfort themselves with nonsense. It's no worse than religion.'

'A freethinker,' smiled Smith.

Chiltern shifted uncomfortably. 'That sounds a bit grand. A seeker, if you will.'

'Then you hope to find something that isn't a fake?'

'I believe,' said Chiltern seriously – amazing how easy it was to talk to the man; something about his eyes, a pale dreamy tint Chiltern had never seen in the human eye before – 'that we'd be fools to say that here, at the end of the nineteenth century, we've suddenly worked out everything about the way the world functions. Have you read some of the work in physics coming out of Germany? Or Charcot's accounts of hypnotism and hysteria? Those open completely new avenues for explorations of the mind.'

'I've studied Charcot.'

'Then you see. Our smug foundations of certainty are being undermined from every quarter.'

'And you welcome that? Most people are disturbed at the idea of the destruction of the world they know.'

'Well,' Chiltern said shortly, taking a cigarette from a box on the table, 'it all depends on what that world is, doesn't it?'

'Yes, of course,' his companion agreed soberly. 'You're an alienist, I believe you said. You must see a great deal of suffering.'

Chiltern glanced at him with respect. Most people who commented on his profession made remarks about how many queer or funny or frightening things he must see, as if the mad, having lost their selves, had lost their ability to



feel as well. 'More than is compatible with a just God,' he said, lighting the cigarette. He offered the box to Smith, who shook his head. 'More than should be accepted.'

'Yes, I agree,' said Smith, his eyes on some inner vision. 'It mustn't be accepted.'

'So here we are,' Chiltern said drily, 'questioning God's master plan in a parlour full of people waiting to attend a seance. Radical thinking turns up in the oddest places.'

'Well, it would, wouldn't it? Ideas that threaten the centre are always pushed to the edge. The truth is forced to keep company with the silly and the rightfully scorned.'

'Exactly!' Chiltern sat forward a little. 'We expect truth to show up at the front door with its Sunday suit on and its shoes shined. But truth is indifferent to our notions of intellectual propriety. It will out!'

'Yes,' Smith agreed softly. 'Like murder.'

'Ah, the East,' the woman in the mauve turban with the black feather stuck in top of it like the tuft on the head of a quail. 'So mysterious.'

Anji smiled. She had found this to be the best response to anything said to her, as it was taken as more evidence of how mysterious and Eastern she was. Also, frankly, she was afraid that if she opened her mouth she would find herself crying, 'This is all nothing but genteel racist garbage!', which would be true but would upset the Doctor's plans.

Which, speaking of mysterious, were as obscure as ever. He'd come back from that magic show or whatever it had been in Newcastle very tight-lipped and obviously unhappy about something, but other than muttering about doing without partners, thank you, especially silent and lazy ones, had divulged nothing about the trip.

She glanced at Fitz, looking almost comically uncomfortable in his stiff collar and three-piece suit. Those absurd Victorian clothes. She had told the Doctor she would prefer to stay in the TARDIS throughout their visit to the nineteenth century rather than wrap herself in all those layers of cloth and he had cheerfully replied that a sari would actually be a better choice since they would be spending a good deal of time in Theosophist circles, in which India was considered the fountainhead of spiritual wisdom. Anji felt absurd in a sari – as if she were playing dressing-up with the old photographs of her paternal grandmother for a model – but at least it was loose and comfortable.

The Doctor, for once, actually fitted the period sartorially. His cravat and bottle-green velvet frock coat were a shade dandyish, but not outre, and he looked perfectly in place standing amidst the dark, overcarved furnishings, softly lit by gaslight. He was absorbed in conversation with a gaunt, fair-haired man of around forty, with an expressive mouth and faded, near-colourless eyes, who had been introduced to Anji as Dr Chiltern. She wasn't sure what his speciality was. She thought she'd overheard him say something to the Doctor about 'the phenomenology of personality' which didn't encourage her to eavesdrop further.

'I wonder sometimes,' said the earnest young man with puffy reddish hair who, Anji had discovered, was under the illusion that he could write poetry, 'whether the Anglo-Saxon races are too pragmatic for genuine enlightenment.'

Anji smiled enigmatically.

Their hostess hurried over. She was a plump, energetic woman whose briskness put her at odds with her guests, who tended towards the sensitive and lethargic. Aside from Chiltern, the turbaned woman and the self-described poet, these included a blonde girl of eighteen or so, plump and bored-looking, and her aunt, a straight-backed woman with an uncompromising glint in her eye, who said, 'How much longer, Mary?'

'Oh soon, soon. You can't rush the spirits, you know More biscuits anyone?'

'You are very kind, Mrs Hemming,' said puffy-hair, taking a biscuit from the proffered plate.

'Nonsense. One mustn't face a journey into the unknown without sufficient sustenance. Mr Kreiner, another biscuit?'

Fitz seized the biscuit gratefully.

'Miss Kapoor?'

Anji shook her head, smiling.

'I hope you don't find our food too vulgar,' said the turbaned woman. Anji thought she had said her name was Mrs Ainsley, but she wasn't sure she'd quite heard her. She smiled again in order to avoid giving her opinion of Victorian food. If everyone was so crazy about the East, why didn't they use spices?

'Our little group must seem very dull,' Mrs Ainsley continued, turning to Fitz, 'compared to the Golden Dawn and the Psychological Research Society.'

Fitz just stopped himself from saying that the Golden Dawn were some of the grottiest bores he'd ever met. He looked enviously and a bit resentfully at the serenely speechless Anji. 'I liked the Psychological Research lot,' he said.

'Oh really?' said the aunt. 'Don't you find their scepticism poisonous to everything we believe in?'

‘Now, Helen,’ said Mrs Hemming, rescuing Fitz from having to reply – a relief, as he hadn’t for the life of him been able to figure out what any of these people believed in. The theorising he’d heard had stuck him as an immensely overcomplicated structure enclosing a centre vague as mist. ‘They’re very respectful. A movement needs well-intentioned critics.’

Helen sniffed. ‘Perhaps the spirits do not agree.’

‘Right,’ said Fitz. ‘That would explain why they never show up for the researchers. Wouldn’t it?’ he finished weakly when everyone stared at him.

‘I’ve written a poem about ghosts,’ said puffy-hair.

‘Except for poltergeists, of course,’ said Fitz, attempting to alleviate any offence. ‘Lots of those, aren’t there? Banging around everywhere.’

‘A *lower* spirit,’ said Helen coldly. ‘Mindless and destructive.’

Unaccountably, her niece giggled.

‘In it, I call them “pale ether-shrouded wanderers”.’

‘We should love to hear it, William,’ said Mrs Hemming diplomatically, ‘but Miss Jane may be ready at any moment, and I should hate to have to interrupt you.’

‘Have you met Yeats?’ Mrs Ainsley said to Fitz. ‘I think he is such a genius. The Irish, you know, are a primitive people and nearer to the spirits than we.’

‘He’s the poet, right?’ said Fitz carefully. ‘The one with all those theories about the phases of the moon?’

‘You *have* met him then?’

‘Well, mostly he talked to Anj – uh, Anji, uh, Miss Kapoor.’

‘Ah. Well, of course, he *would*.’

Mrs Ainsley smiled at Anji, who smiled back.

‘We have all lost someone!’ said William suddenly. ‘That’s why we are here!’

‘I haven’t,’ said Helen shortly. ‘That is to say, I *have*, but Phylemeda and I are not here to talk to Jerome.’

Probably didn’t talk to him when he was alive, Fitz thought. And lucky him. As if reading his thoughts, Helen fixed a beady eye on him: ‘And whom have you lost, Mr Kreiner?’

‘Uncle,’ said Fitz quickly. ‘Uncle Bob. Very close we were. Used to take me fishing.’

‘And why do you wish to contact him now?’

‘Well, you know, just to see how he’s doing. How the fishing is on the other side of the veil. Hate to think there wasn’t any, wouldn’t you? I mean,’ he faltered as her eye grew even beadier, ‘being as he was so fond of it.’

‘All our desires will be fulfilled in the beyond,’ said Mrs Hemming kindly.

‘What about now?’ pouted Phylemeda. Her aunt and Mrs Ainsley stared at the girl with shock.

‘I’ve written a poem about desire,’ said William. ‘Several, in fact.’

‘I’ll just go check on Miss Jane,’ said Mrs Hemming. ‘I’m certain she will be ready for us by now.’

Chiltern felt one of his headaches coming on. He swore to himself. The sensible thing would be for him to take his leave and go home and to bed with a supply of hot compresses – that would probably hold the symptoms down to no more than a day. If he waited, the pain might be worse and would almost certainly go on for longer. But he was weary of being ruled by his migraines – angry, if truth be told. He kept his seat in the stuffy little back parlour to which they had all retired for the seance. Constance Jane’s ‘spirit cabinet’ filled almost a quarter of the available space, leaving the guests to sit jammed together on chairs imported from the dining room. Chiltern found himself elbow to elbow with Dr Smith and Aunt Helen, with Phylemeda on the other side of her aunt, and Mrs Hemming at the end of the row. Miss Kapoor was immediately in front of him, flanked by Mr Kreiner and Mrs Ainsley, next to whom sat the poet person.

A round table covered with an Oriental rug had been placed between the spectators and the cabinet, and behind this Constance Jane stood facing them. She was tall and a bit gawky, with a pretty face and a raw American accent. Her brown hair was apparently determined to slip out of the pins with which she’d secured it on top of her head. To Chiltern’s practiced eye, she looked unhealthy, possibly even consumptive, and was certainly depressed – her shoulders slumped, she rarely looked up, and her flat, American voice hardly rose above a mumble.

‘Now I don’t know how this happens,’ she was saying. ‘And I don’t know why. I just know it does happen and it’s a gift, and if you’re given something, why, you ought to give something yourself in return.’ She fingered a tambourine that lay on the table next to a gas lamp. ‘Now, I’m going to go into the cabinet and contact my control, Chief Ironwing. And when he manifests, then you should ask your questions. Odd things might happen, they sometimes do, but there’s no need to be alarmed.’

She entered the cabinet and seated herself on a little wooden chair. Mrs Hemming hurried to shut and fasten the cabinet door, then lowered the lamp flame till it burned blue and went out. They heard her return to her chair.

‘A hymn is often appropriate,’ she said, once she was seated, and began to sing in a clear voice, ‘“And did those feet in ancient times. . .”’

The participants joined in with varying degrees of skill. Fitz, who didn’t know the hymn, abstained, and he didn’t think he heard Anji, though he could distinguish the Doctor’s pleasant light tenor and Chiltern’s baritone. A reedy soprano behind him must be Phylemeda. Everyone was just finishing the line about arrows of desire when, abruptly, the tambourine crashed down on the table.

Fitz jumped, and felt William and Aunt Helen do likewise. The singing stopped cold.

‘I do not like it,’ said a deep voice from within the cabinet.

In spite of himself, Fitz felt something like a chill creep through him. The voice was not only deep, but unnaturally harsh. He supposed Constance Jane could have produced it, but somehow it felt wrong.

‘We apologise, Chief Ironwing,’ said Mrs Hemming sincerely.

After a brief silence, the voice said, ‘Ask me.’

Earlier in the parlour, they had drawn lots, and William had come up first. Now he said quaveringly, ‘I want to talk to Mother.’

‘Not here,’ said Ironwing immediately. ‘Who is next?’

‘Wh- Well, wait. Wait. What do you mean, not there?’

‘He only means that she’s temporarily unavailable, William,’ Mrs Hemming whispered. ‘It’s all right.’

‘But I –’

‘Please,’ she whispered.

William subsided.

‘Who is next?’ Ironwing repeated.

Fitz was next, but after William’s reception he wasn’t inclined to speak up. He had a feeling Uncle Bob wasn’t going to fly.

‘Mr Kreiner. . .?’ Mrs Hemming prodded gently.

‘Erm. . .’ said Fitz.

‘You mustn’t be afraid,’ Mrs Hemming continued reassuringly. ‘Please, ask your question.’

‘Ask!’ barked Ironwing. Fitz jumped, as if a teacher had called on him unexpectedly, and blurted, ‘My uncle Bob!’

‘Bob’s your uncle!’ responded Ironwing and laughed heartily.

No one knew what to do with this, least of all Fitz. While they sat in confused silence, the tambourine suddenly shook merrily.

'Look, you nitwit,' said a completely different voice, 'what are you trying to pull?'

'Me?' said Fitz faintly.

'You've got no uncles.' The voice was peculiarly high, and it was impossible to tell whether it were female or male. 'Your parents are dead. You're what in the next century they'll call a loser, and you travel through time in a blue box with one not of this world.'

Mrs Ainsley made a bewildered noise.

'Fishing!' Fitz said desperately. 'How's the fishing over there?'

'Please,' said Mrs Hemming, 'may we speak to Chief Ironwing again?'

'Your solicitor has placed your funds in an investment that will fail in twenty days,' said the strange voice, apparently to Mrs Hemming. 'There will be a terrible war, by the way, but most of you will be dead by then.'

The tambourine smashed against the ceiling. Then it fell jangling to the floor. The voice began to sing in an unpleasant, babbling way.

'Oh dear.' Mrs Hemming started for the cabinet. Chiltern and the Doctor were on their feet. Beside Fitz, Anji stood up, so he did too, and they both hurried forward. Inside the cabinet, the song turned into a cough and the cough into gasps. Mrs Hemming grasped the handle just as the gasps became a shriek, and when she jerked the door open, Constance Jane, only the whites of her eyes visible, swayed and fell forward unconscious into Fitz's arms.

'Good catch,' Anji murmured later when they were all back in the front room. She and Fitz were standing in the corner of the parlour, while Chiltern tended to Miss Jane, who lay unconscious on the chaise. William the poet had swiftly and rather queasily made his departure, and Aunt Helen had dragged the unsympathetically curious Phylemeda away. Mrs Ainsley, apparently almost as overcome as Miss Jane, had collapsed in a chair and was cooling herself with a little jet-and-rose-silk fan, the draft from which made the plume on her turban bob back and forth. Beside Anji the Doctor, face thoughtful, watched Chiltern gently bathe Miss Jane's face and wrists with a damp cloth while Mrs Hemming hovered anxiously.

'Her pulse is almost back to normal,' Chiltern observed to Mrs Hemming.

'Thank heaven!' exclaimed Mrs Ainsley, her plume fluttering. Chiltern glanced at her bewilderedly, then returned his attention to Miss Jane.

Remembering her guests, Mrs Hemming brought over a tray with the heavy crystal decanter of sherry. Her hand shook slightly as she tried to pour, and

the Doctor gently took over the serving duties. 'Oh, thank you,' she said apologetically. 'I'm ashamed to be so all to pieces. But nothing like this has ever happened before.'

'No?' said Fitz, genuinely surprised. 'I'd have thought it would be an occupational hazard.' Mrs Hemming seemed puzzled by the phrase, and Anji shot him a warning look. 'I mean,' he faltered, 'if it's your profession to, you know, be possessed, then –'

Mrs Ainsley unexpectedly came to his rescue.

'The spirits from the Outer Circles,' she intoned faintly. 'One of them must have Come Through!'

Mrs Hemming nodded gravely, as if this explained things. 'Thank heaven Dr Chiltern is here. He's one of our most respected alienists, you know. His clinic is renowned all over Europe.'

'Alienist?' Fitz said uneasily.

'Psychiatrist,' the Doctor translated, as Mrs Hemming hurried back to the chaise.

'Doctor,' Anji said in a low voice, 'what happened in there?'

'I'm not sure.'

'She read Fitz's mind. She has to be a telepath.'

'Yes. Certainly a help in the medium business.'

'If she made that tambourine move she's more than just a telepath,' said Fitz.

'Mm, yes,' said the Doctor. 'I'd like another look at that tambourine.'

He slipped quietly into the hall, and, after exchanging puzzled looks, Anji and Fitz followed.

Even in the summer night, the back parlour was slightly chilly. Anji shivered in her silks. The Doctor lit the lamp and held it up. The chairs were in disarray, the cabinet door still open. The tambourine lay innocently on the floor. Anji lifted it. 'Seems all right.'

The Doctor was at the cabinet. 'Bring the light over.'

But the cabinet revealed nothing except its bare walls. Undeterred, the Doctor returned to the table and climbed up on it. He ran his fingers over the branches of the unlit gas chandelier. 'Ah ha.' He held out something invisible to Anji. When she swiped at the air below his hand, her fingers encountered a thread. In the dim lamplight, she still couldn't see it. She passed it to Fitz.

'How's this work, then?' he asked.

'The thread is thin enough to be manipulated through the crack of the cabinet door,' the Doctor said, still checking the chandelier. 'Run it over this lighting fixture and loop it though the tambourine, then hold both ends of the string in

your hands. If someone moves to investigate, let go of one end and pull the thread back to you. In this case, she didn't have time.'

'She seemed so nice,' Fitz said, disappointed.

'She's a con woman,' said Anji dismissively. 'They always do.'

'But she *did* read my mind. So why would she need to fake anything?'

'I – ah, hello, Dr Chiltern. How's the patient?'

Anji and Fitz turned. Chiltern's tall, frock-coated figure was silhouetted in the doorway. He looked uncertainly at the Doctor on the table. 'I left her with Mrs Hemming for the moment. Everyone else has gone, and I wanted to talk to all the witnesses to her... attack. May I ask what it is you're doing?'

'Looking for evidence of fraud.'

'A hoax?' Chiltern stepped forward. Fitz handed him the thread. He fingered it, frowning. Fitz thought he looked disappointed. 'Well,' he said finally, 'it is the usual thing.'

'I'm not so sure,' said the Doctor. He put a hand on Fitz's shoulder and took a long step down to the floor. 'At least, not quite the usual thing. Whatever the true nature of her talent, I think Miss Jane honestly believes in it.'

At Chiltern's request, Dr Smith stayed to help him see to Miss Jane. Smith sent his friends home. An oddly assorted bunch, Chiltern thought, but he hadn't time to wonder about them now. He sat on a chair pulled up beside his unconscious patient. Chiltern sat on a chair pulled up beside her. Smith stood at her head. Chiltern had sent Mrs Hemming for warm towels and a blanket – he disliked ordering her about in her own home, but as she had dismissed the maid for the seance evening, there was nothing else for it.

'Usually, a hoaxer in this sort of situation is an adolescent,' he said. 'It is traditional, if such a word can be used about these episodes. The so-called haunting of the Wesley family. The Blair Witch case in America.'

'Phylemeda never left the parlour all evening,' said the Doctor. 'She wouldn't have had time to set this up.'

Chiltern exhaled deeply. 'Yes, I noticed that myself.' He rose as Mrs Hemming came back into the room. 'Thank you. Now, if you will allow me to use you as a nurse, please loosen the young woman's clothing and apply the heat. The Throat, the wrists, the stomach –'

Mrs Hemming blushed. 'Yes,' she said quickly, 'I understand.'

'And then cover her securely with the blanket. We will wait in the hall.'

The hallway was dim and chilly. Chiltern lit a cigarette and turned up the gas. He caught a glimpse of himself in the large, gilt-framed mirror. He looked



exhausted.

‘This is the sort of thing you’ve been looking for,’ said Smith softly, ‘isn’t it?’

Chiltern drew pensively on his cigarette. ‘Yes,’ he admitted. ‘Not to be cold-blooded, but I think it may be.’

‘You think this isn’t spirit possession but something natural to the mind?’

‘Not natural in the sense of common, perhaps. But intrinsic to the mind, yes.’

‘Have you ever had a medium as a patient?’

‘No – although, as I mentioned, I’ve attended a number of seances. Many mediums are simply fakes, of course. But I’ve wondered about the ones who were obviously sincere.’

‘Have you ever thought that cases such as this might be. . . I’m not sure what the correct term would be. A hysterical dissociation of personality.’

‘Yes,’ said Chiltern excitedly. ‘There are cases in literature – not many. The so-called “split personality”, which is a misnomer arising from sensational literature – the disturbance is nothing like *Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. It wouldn’t surprise me if Miss Jane’s condition turned out to be something of the sort.’

‘You believe it’s a form of hysteria?’

‘Well, you’ve studied Charcot. You know what the mind can do. Most of us have moods or moments of which we say, “I wasn’t myself.” It’s only a short step from there actually to not being oneself.’ Chiltern began to pace. ‘When you read the works of Dickens or Shakespeare, or when you see an actor give a succession of utterly convincing depictions of totally different characters – you’re observing something right on the edge of a true splintering of the one into many. This ‘split personality’, so-called, is probably only an abnormal extension of the same quality. We are potentially many selves, but most of us only live as one.’

Smith had grown very quiet. He was leaning against the wall, arms folded, head down. Now he looked up, and Chiltern was struck once more by his brilliant eyes, almost reluctant in the shadowy hall. ‘But our many selves, potential or realised, share a memory that unites them.’

‘Exactly. This doesn’t seem to be the case with these patients, however. The memory is localised in each of the separate selves – it’s what makes them separate, in fact. They can hide from one another, the mind hiding from itself.’

‘Yes,’ Smith agreed softly. ‘Secrets within secrets.’

‘Secrets,’ said a queer high voice. ‘I know some secrets.’

The two men turned. Without their noticing, Miss Jane had slipped into the hall, standing quietly in the shadows by the door. Her eyes were very wide, almost round.

'Are you the one who set the tambourine trick?' said Smith mildly.

'Tricks,' she snorted. 'You're one to talk about tricks!'

'How should we address you?' Chiltern asked.

'You? On your knees and naked, handsome.'

Used to these sorts of remarks from patients, Chiltern was unperturbed.

'Then may I call you Miss Jane?'

'That cow! She doesn't know anything.'

'And what is it that you know?'

She smirked coyly. 'I'm not telling.'

'May we speak to Chief Ironwing?'

'No.' Sulkily.

'Why not?'

'He's gone to sleep.'

'What about Miss Jane?'

'Why do you want to speak to her? She's no fun.' The woman stepped forward and toyed with Chiltern's tie. 'I'm fun. But not you.' She turned on Smith. 'You're beyond all this, aren't you? Far, far beyond.'

'Miss Jane –' Chiltern began soothingly.

'Don't call me that!' She whirled on him again. 'I hate her! I hate her!' Her whirl turned into a circle, and she began to turn in one spot, faster and faster. 'I hate her, hate her, hate her –'

Both men moved forward, but as soon as Chiltern reached for her, she shuddered and became still. Her eyes rolled back in her head as if she might faint again, but then with a shiver, she stood upright. She looked into their faces and her own collapsed into terror. 'Oh God,' wailed Constance Jane's normal voice, 'has it happened again?'

## Chapter Three

‘You’re not a loser,’ said Anji.

‘Thanks,’ Fitz muttered.

They were in the sitting room of the flat the Doctor had rented, finishing their breakfast coffee. The Doctor was upstairs in the TARDIS, which, with surprising skill, he had managed to insert into the third floor box room. Anji assumed he was absorbed in research and instrument readings, trying to make more sense of the odd temporal pattern that had drawn them here.

Ceding the flat’s two bedrooms to Fitz and Anji, the Doctor slept in the TARDIS, and Fitz and Anji also made use of it for necessities like bathing and laundry. The Doctor had rented the place at very short notice from the brother of a man who was on an extended journey abroad, and it was certainly comfortable enough, with a large sitting room whose two windows overlooked the street. Certain peculiarities, such as a sheaf of letters and bills affixed to the mantelpiece with a jackknife, had given Anji the impression that the usual tenant was something of an eccentric.

‘Really,’ she insisted. ‘You’re not.’

‘The spirits seem to think otherwise.’

‘One spirit,’ she corrected. ‘And frankly, it sounded as if it had some sort of personality problem.’

‘I didn’t think spirits had those.’

‘Perhaps not. But people do.’

‘Mm.’

They sat in silence for a moment, finishing their coffee.

‘So you think it was all her,’ Fitz said.

‘Don’t you?’

‘I don’t know. Hard to believe she was faking.’

‘The Doctor doesn’t think she is. He thinks when she goes into a trance other personalities emerge.’

‘Yeah, that multiple personality thing he was talking about when he came in last night. I didn’t really follow it.’

'They're all really aspects of the same person, but they don't necessarily share memory.'

'Ah,' said Fitz wisely.

'One of the personalities is often nasty. That would be the one that insulted you.'

There was another moment's silence. Neither of them really wanted to get to the central issue.

'The one that insulted me,' Fitz finally said, reluctantly, 'knew about the Doctor and the TARDIS.'

'And the First World War,' said Anji.

'You think she's one of those time sensitives we've been on the lookout for, or did she just read our minds about the future?'

'I don't know.'

'It'd be nice to find one at last, after all the bores and nutters we've talked to and all those other nonsense seances.'

'Except that finding one means there's something wrong. According to the Doctor anyway.'

'Yeah,' he sighed. 'There's that.'

The Doctor came in. 'Any coffee left?'

Fitz passed him the pot. 'What's up, then?'

'I think – hello, what's this?' The Doctor paused, coffeepot in hand, and picked up a letter from beside his plate.

'Morning post,' said Anji.

He tore open the envelope and scanned the contents. 'It's from Chiltern. He'd appreciate it if I'd come up and take a look at Miss Jane. How convenient.' He went into the hall. 'Exactly what I had in mind.'

'Should we come too?' Anji asked.

'I don't think so.' The Doctor shrugged into his coat. 'It might be a good idea if you paid a visit to our hostess of last night, see what information she has about the seance participants.' He hurried down the stairs.

'When are you going to tell us what the hell's going on?' Fitz called, but the only answer was the slam of the door.

Mrs Hemming lived in a pleasant house off Kensington Church Street, not a short walk from their quarters but not a terribly long one either, and they could go through Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park. Anji found walking through the streets of nineteenth-century London a complicated experience. On the one hand, she was fascinated to see the streets and buildings that were yet to

be destroyed by the Blitz, as well as by the different look and deportment of the people and – since no fires were burning in the warm weather – the relative cleanliness of the air, which the Doctor had said was choked with coat dust in the colder months, a fact obvious from the blackened bricks of the buildings. She realised she had always associated London with exhaust fumes, an odour now replaced by horse dung and occasional whiffs of sewage or rubbish, of beer and frying food and human sweat, plus an odd, indefinable stony smell, impersonal and very old.

To her surprise, the pavements were frequently as crowded as they would be a century in the future, and the streets were often ludicrously congested in the more commercial districts, where teams of horses pulling huge wagons faced off while their drivers yelled at each other, omnibuses sided with ads for baking powder and chocolate edged around them, bicyclists wove past, men rolled barrels by, street urchins cut among the cart wheels, boys in red uniforms darted about collecting shovels of horse dung and depositing them in kerbside bins, pedestrians dodged across, and, near the markets, occasional small groups of sheep or pigs appeared, herded along by a farmer in country clothes.

She was amazed at the noise. She had expected a London without cars to be much quieter. But the clatter of the cart and cab wheels, particularly on the more roughly paved streets, was a constant din. Though Oxford Street, along which the first part of their journey lay, was much less rowdy, she was still relieved when she and Fitz finally reached the park, with its stately pedestrian paths and soothing green, though even here they had to make way for cyclists.

Even in the less-populated park, she remained self-conscious. It felt strange to stand out so boldly. Anji had hardly been unmindful of being a dark-skinned citizen of a mostly white country in the late twentieth century, but at least there were other Indians *around*. Here she saw almost nothing but white faces, the occasional exception – a Jewish businessman, an Italian costermonger, a Chinese man on some undeterminable errand – stood out startlingly. She hadn't seen a single African or West Indian. At least the glances given her were curious or, in the cases of some of the men, admiring, and not hostile. She looked exotic in her sari rather than threatening. Angrily and with some shame, she found herself grateful for Fitz's anchoring, 'normal' white male presence.

Fitz would never have admitted it to Anji, or even to the Doctor, but he wasn't feeling so normal. Usually he found pretending to be someone other than he was liberating, even weirdly relaxing, in spite of the problems it inevitably led

to. But this pretence was too close to reality – he was hemmed in, with little room to manoeuvre or improvise. Everyone accepted that Anji had studied English at an English school, and the Doctor’s educated voice passed muster easily enough. But no one could place Fitz’s accent – it didn’t quite ‘do’, but it wasn’t familiarly declass   either. No one was outwardly rude about it, but he felt the curiosity. He didn’t like this focus, the way everyone was waiting to discover who he really was.

Fitz was finding Victorian England depressing in general. There was no decent music. There were no ways to meet girls. You either spent chaperoned time with young ladies of your own class, to whom he had nothing to talk about, or you patronised streetwalkers, which was a bit raw even for Fitz, or you sordidly hit on servants who were either too cowed to refuse you or ambitiously hoping you were a way to escape their dreary lives, which wasn’t his cup of tea either.

Also his shoes pinched his feet and custom demanded he wear a hat. He had balked at a topper or, even worse, a bowler (he could just hear Anji’s giggles) and settled for a soft, wide-brimmed hat like the one the Doctor was wearing during this nineteenth century sojourn. After a surreptitious posing session in front of his bedroom mirror, he’d decided that he actually looked rather dashing, but he still chafed at having to wear the damned thing all the time if he didn’t want to be stared at. It was fine being stared at by aliens who didn’t look at all like him, but too much human scrutiny had the effect of keeping him nervously checking to see whether his fly were undone, even though, with all those buttons, it wasn’t bloody likely.

In daylight, Mrs Hemming’s home was a tall, handsome terraced house, its white walls covered with leafy wisteria vine, though once they were inside, the parlour that had felt nicely cosy the night before seemed underlit and too crowded with bulky furniture.

Mrs Hemming was pleased to have news of Miss Jane and relieved she was in Dr Chiltern’s care. ‘He really has an excellent reputation. Not all of the people at his clinic are. . . mentally distraught, you know. Many go there simply for rest or water cures.’

‘So there aren’t any really mad people?’ said Fitz.

‘Well,’ said Mrs Hemming, a bit thrown by his bluntness, ‘no, I can’t say that. He has a ward for the. . . disturbed. People from good families, you know, who can afford something other than a state institution. It’s very respectable. He set an example after all.’

‘An example?’ said Anji, trying not to appear too curious.

‘“Example”,’ repeated Mrs Hemming. ‘It means... oh dear, it’s rather hard to define. You take a specific instance –’

‘How did he set an example?’ said Fitz, coming to her rescue and averting Anji’s slow burn.

‘Oh.’ She was apologetic. ‘I didn’t realise you didn’t know. It’s common knowledge. His own brother is a patient.’

‘Oh my goodness,’ said Anji in an impressed tone she hoped would invite further confidences.

‘Yes,’ Mrs Hemming nodded solemnly. ‘He brought him there a few months ago. It was quite tragic. The brother, that would be Sebastian Chiltern, went mad and attacked him.’

‘Do they know what’s wrong with him?’ said Anji, not sure that an answer would be meaningful to her in this particular place and time. Were they even using the word ‘schizophrenic’ yet?

‘He’s quite delusional.’

‘What?’ said Fitz. ‘You mean he thinks he’s Napoleon or something?’ He stopped at Anji’s look, struck by the ghastly notion that he’d misremembered his history and Napoleon hadn’t happened yet. No, it was all right – 1815, Waterloo, he had that straight.

‘Well,’ said Mrs Hemming, looking at him a little oddly, ‘no. He doesn’t think he’s someone else. But apparently he claims that the most nonsensical things are true.’

‘What things?’ said Anji brightly.

‘Oh,’ Mrs Hemming waved a vague hand, ‘I’m afraid I don’t recall the details. Impossible things.’

Dr Chiltern sat at his desk in the sunlight that fell through the windows behind him. The warmth felt good on the back of his neck. He had successfully staved off his migraine last night by resorting to his usual unpalatable remedy, but it was still there, teasing at his nerve endings, biding its time. If only he could get through the day. There was a meeting with the board of governors in the afternoon. And he needed to do what he could for Constance Jane. It was awkward, her being an American, with no close relatives or friends in England.

Perhaps, though, Miss Jane would be all right. She had been overwrought last night – quite overwrought, in fact; he was glad he’d had Smith with him, the fellow seemed to have a calming effect on her – but certainly in her own mind. This morning, the nurse had reported that she was sad but not agitated

and had eaten a little breakfast. In Chiltern's experience, appetite was almost always a good sign.

He turned and looked out of the window. The sanatorium stood on the edge of Hampstead Heath. Behind a Victorian front of limestone-faced brick, it was a rambling, somewhat awkward mansion in a hodgepodge of architectural styles. Chiltern wasn't certain, but he believed the oldest parts dated back to the sixteenth century. The grounds had been laid out in the eighteenth and retained their spacious formality. He watched the patients, men in lightweight suits and straw hats and women in summer dresses with parasols, stroll and converse under the huge oaks. Some of the trees must be older than the house, he mused.

How civilised it all looked. Chiltern had done his share of work in public institutions, still spent two weekends a month in one in Southwark, and he was unhappily familiar with the squalor and misery too often attendant on the treatment of mental illness. Thank God for these new drugs. It had put an end to the binding and restraint of the poor sufferers, except for the most violent.

Would drugs help Miss Jane? He strongly doubted it. Did she even need help? It had been impossible to talk with her last night, and there was so much he didn't know. Did she often have these spells, in which another personality took over, outside the setting of a seance? Or was this the first time? If so, perhaps the instances of 'possession' were something she could handle and live with. Though the one personality had seemed malicious, and had deliberately set up a fraud with the tambourine, for which Miss Jane, who knew nothing of it, would be blamed.

She didn't remember. . . Chiltern put a hand up to his head and massaged his temples. He felt the pain gathering, like a dull, sullen heat. But the malicious personality *did* remember. For both of them. Or all of them, if you counted the Indian guide, who seemed to have only a partial existence. It was an extraordinary case. Truth to tell, he felt a bit out of his depth. What a piece of luck that Smith had studied hypnosis. The practice was still associated with charlatans and quacks, but Chiltern had long suspected there was something to it. Perhaps even Sebastian. . .

Oh, what was he thinking? What good would hypnosis do there? Did he expect he'd find the 'real' untroubled Sebastian hidden beneath the madness, the man he'd grown up with – 'Ah,' he breathed involuntarily, as the pain tightened at the base of his skull. He sat still, eyes shut, taking deep breaths, and it subsided a little. When he opened his eyes, Smith was standing in front of him.

To his extreme embarrassment, Chiltern jumped slightly.



'I'm very sorry,' said Smith. 'I did say your name a couple of times. You must have been deep in thought.'

'Yes,' said Chiltern awkwardly. He'd had one of his spells, then, those small trances that periodically robbed him of a few seconds of time. Epilepsy, he had grimly self-diagnosed. At least it didn't appear to be getting worse. He stood up and shook Smith's hand. 'Dr Smith. Thank you for coming.'

'Just Doctor, please,' said Smith. 'I was glad to, though I'm not sure what you think I can do.'

Chiltern touched his elbow and led him back into the hail. 'You've studied hypnotism,' he explained as they walked. 'I have not, myself, and finding a hypnotist with any sort of medical background is quite difficult in this country. It's still thought of as mesmerism and stage shows. To be frank,' he sighed, 'we are not as receptive in England as we might be to new ideas from the Continent. Even the strangest theory may contain a kernel of something true.'

Dr Smith nodded. Chiltern found his request to be addressed only by his title eccentric, but he didn't mind complying. His profession had made him extremely tolerant of oddities, even fond of them. He half-suspected that his companion might not even have a medical degree, might simply be one of those brilliant dilettantes who on the Continent styled themselves as 'Professor', but he didn't mind. The man had clearly had a good effect on Miss Jane the night before, and if his hypnotism helped her, who cared whether he had learned it in a carnival?

They walked together down the wide, sunny hall. None of the large windows was barred, though, looking out of one, the Doctor spied a turreted wing of grey stone where the windows were encased in iron grills. A few patients stood aimlessly about the corridor. One scholarly looking man was patting his head over and over and over. The Doctor remembered the eighteenth century, when patients had been put on exhibit. Fortunately, tastes in entertainment had changed.

Chiltern stopped beside a nicely dressed, middle-aged woman who was sitting on the floor, arms clasped around her knees, rocking back and forth.

'Good morning, Mrs Paracle.'

She neither answered nor looked at him. He bent down to her, hands on knees, and said gently, 'Would you be more comfortable in your room? It has a bed, and a soft rug.' After a moment, still not looking at him, she slowly nodded. He helped her to her feet, gesturing to a nurse who came and led her away. Chiltern watched them go. 'She hasn't spoken in years. There's really nothing I can do for her. But the rocking seems to comfort her, so we encourage

it.'

They came out of the main hall into a narrower corridor, with simple white-washed walls and high, deep-set windows: an older part of the house. The Doctor guessed they were heading to the stone wing he'd glimpsed earlier. 'Is Miss Jane violent?'

'Oh no. Unfortunately, the only bed available was in the ward for the more disturbed patients.'

'Have you many of those?'

Chiltern's face clouded. 'Enough.'

They were walking on flagstones, now, and the ceiling was lower. The doors on either side of the passage were new and solid-looking, painted a glossy black and inset with small windows. From behind one of these, the occupant, hearing their footsteps, cried, 'I'm as sane as you are! Saner!' Chiltern ignored this and proceeded to the next door, on which he knocked. 'It's Dr Chiltern.'

'Come in,' a voice said faintly.

The room inside was simply furnished: an iron bed, an armchair, and a table with a porcelain basin and pitcher on it and a commode cabinet beneath. The walls had been plastered and whitewashed but bulged out unevenly over the stone foundation they covered, a disquieting effect that made the Doctor think of horror stories in which people were walled up alive. Miss Jane sat slumped on the bed, wrapped in a shawl. Her hair was loose, falling thickly past her shoulders. She looked at them bleakly.

'You remember Dr Smith from last night,' said Chiltern. She nodded. 'How are you feeling? The nurse tells me your night was quiet and that you had some breakfast.'

Her eyes shifted away, and she pulled the shawl tighter. 'I'm crazy, aren't I?' she said in her flat, American voice. 'That's why I'm here.'

'You don't appear crazy to me,' said Chiltern calmly, 'only upset.'

'I have blackouts.'

'That's not proof of mental instability.'

She looked up. There were tears on her cheeks. 'I thought I had a gift,' she said helplessly. 'But I was just sick.'

'Do you have family I can contact?' She shook her head fiercely. 'Anyone I can contact?'

'Do I have to stay here?'

'No,' said Chiltern, after the briefest pause. 'But you're welcome to until you feel better.'

'I feel better now.'

‘Forgive me, but I don’t believe that’s entirely true.’

She began to cry openly and noisily, like a child. The Doctor went and sat on the bed beside her and took her hand. She fell against him, sobbing. ‘I’m so sorry, so sorry, so sorry. . .’

‘What about?’ said the Doctor quietly.

‘Everything.’

Then she just wept for a while. The Doctor held her, as Chiltern watched awkwardly, not entirely sure this wasn’t a trespass in the name of therapy. Yet there was something impersonal in the Doctor’s kindness, and nothing sensual in his embrace. After a few minutes, Miss Jane pulled away, sniffing, and wiped her eyes on the shawl. The men waited. Finally, she said, ‘Did you meet her?’

‘The angry one?’ said the Doctor. ‘Yes we did. Does she have a name?’

‘I don’t know. I don’t think so.’

‘May I talk to her again?’

She sat up and stared at him in shock. So did Chiltern – this was rather pushing things! ‘Why?’ she asked.

‘I’d like to find out what she thinks she’s doing.’ The Doctor’s calm, his good will, were almost palpable.

She relaxed a little: ‘I. . . I don’t know how to. . . to bring her out.’

‘I can call her, if you’ll let me. There’s no danger,’ he said as she pulled back. ‘She won’t stay. Tell me,’ he took her hand again, ‘how long has she been coming out on her own, when you’re not in a mediumistic trance?’

‘I’m not sure,’ she whispered. ‘A few months. She. . . played some mean tricks on me back in Oneida. People began to say I was a fake. That’s one reason I came here.’

‘You’re not a fake,’ said the Doctor firmly.

She rose abruptly and glided to the corner of the room where she stood for a moment with her face to the wall. When she turned around, she was someone else. In spite of all his experience, Chiltern felt something creep down his spine. The Doctor seemed impressed too. He stood up.

‘Well?’ said the thin, wavering voice. ‘Here I am, boys.’

‘Hello again,’ said the Doctor.

‘Hello to you. You’re a pretty thing, aren’t you? Too bad.’ She sauntered over and curled up in the armchair. Chiltern could have sworn that her body itself had changed, grown fuller and more feminine. ‘What can I do for you gentlemen? One at a time, please.’

‘Why are you here?’ said the Doctor.

'You wanted me, didn't you?'

'I mean in general. Why did you start coming out on your own?'

She looked uneasy. Her glance slid to Chiltern and she smiled. 'Why don't you come over here, honey?'

'Dr Chiltern is fine as he is,' said the Doctor. 'How old are you?'

'You should never ask a lady her age.'

'Please answer the question.'

She stuck out her lower lip. 'Twenty.'

'And how old is Miss Jane?'

'Twenty-six.'

'Chief Ironwing?'

'I don't know,' she said sulkily. 'He came after me. I suppose you want to know all about it, about the trauma.'

'No,' said the Doctor, to both her and Chiltern's surprise. 'I don't. I want to know about the last few months. What has changed?'

Chiltern almost spoke, but the Doctor shot him a *bear-with-me* look and he kept his peace. Miss Jane, or whoever was in her body, poked sullenly at a ripple in the carpet with her toe. 'What do you want to talk about that for?'

'How are things different?' The Doctor's voice was soft, but there was something relentless in it.

She glanced at him irritably and shifted in the chair. 'Everything's happening at once.'

She was babbling, Chiltern decided, but the Doctor went right on, as if what she'd said were perfectly rational. 'All the time? Now?'

'Yes,' she snapped. 'Now. There's too much of you and', her head jerked towards Chiltern, 'not enough of him.'

Chiltern looked at the Doctor in bewilderment, but his eyes were still on the woman in the armchair. 'Why is that happening?'

'How should I know? It just is. I used not to be able to get out except when Miss Goody went into her medium act. But now I'm out more than I want. It's all strange now. I see things... Nothing looks right...'. Her voice trailed off. She suddenly seemed frightened. 'How's it going to end?' Her head swivelled towards the Doctor. '*You* know, don't you? You know all about time.'

'I don't know the future.'

'All the same to you. One big circle.' She squeezed her eyes shut. 'I'm getting a headache. I'm going now.'

'Not yet.' The Doctor caught her hand. She scowled at him and tried to pull away, but he held firm. He ran a finger along the back of her hand and

up her arm. She froze. Like a rabbit with a snake, Chiltern thought. Perhaps he should stop this. But then her face calmed and smoothed out. The Doctor gently touched her forehead. She looked at him peacefully. The Doctor turned to Chiltern. 'You can ask her about the trauma if you want.'

'What?' Chiltern stepped forward. 'Is she...?'

'Hypnotised. Yes.'

Chiltern looked at her in wonder. The features were Miss Jane's, yet the face, somehow, was not. He sat on the edge of the bed, across from her. The Doctor went to the window; he seemed to have lost interest. Chiltern said, 'What's the first thing you remember?'

She was silent. After a minute or two, he probed gently. 'The first thing you remember.'

'It broke,' she said.

'What did?'

She was silent again, but just as Chiltern was about to speak, she said, 'She broke the lamp.'

'Miss Jane broke the lamp?'

'Yes.'

'Why?'

'It was an accident.'

'Was anyone else there when she broke the lamp?' No response. 'Was anyone else -'

'Papa.'

'Was he angry that she broke the lamp?'

'Yes.'

'Did he strike her?'

'Yes.'

Chiltern looked at the floor for a second, then continued:

'And this is when you were "born"?'

'Yes.'

'Why?'

'Had to come.'

'Why?'

'Had to come.'

'Why did Miss Jane break the lamp?'

'Already broken.'

'What do you mean?'

'Broken when I came.'

'How long had it been broken then?'

'On the floor.'

'Was anyone else there when you were born?'

'No.'

'How did you feel when you were born?'

'I was bleeding.'

'Had you cut yourself on the lamp?'

'No.'

'Why were you bleeding?'

'She was hurt.'

'How?'

'Her father hurt us.'

Chiltern looked at the Doctor, appalled. The Doctor was watching the woman expressionlessly, his eyes very pale. 'This is monstrous,' Chiltern said.

'Yes,' the Doctor agreed. 'But you've encountered it before.'

'Not in a young lady of refinement.'

'Surely you don't think only the poor are capable of dreadful acts.'

'But they have *reason*. The poverty, the hardship, the sheer crowding. . . Why would anyone who wasn't in such circumstances. . .?' He looked at the woman sadly.

'You believe that a virtuous and just society would produce virtuous and just human beings, don't you?'

Chiltern frowned, puzzled. 'Of course.'

'You're a good man,' the Doctor sighed. 'Shall we let this poor woman rest?'

## Chapter Four

Constance Jane did not rest. The man with the faraway eyes, Dr Smith, pulled her by the hand, very gently, back to herself, and then, still holding her hand, as if to keep her safe, lowered her into sleep. He couldn't know that there was no peace for her in sleep. There were dreams there. Rather than meet them, she woke up.

The two men were gone. She was lying on the bed on her side, curled up, clutching the shawl around her. She looked at the pattern of sunlit squares on the rug. Like a quilt. Or a checkerboard. She was a piece in a game, and she didn't know the rules. She didn't even know the game.

That was all right, she knew all she needed to know – that the game, whatever it was, was finally over.

Realising that, she finally felt peaceful. She smiled at the sunlight on the rug and went to the window. Through the grid she could see green lawn, and some flowers. She wasn't locked in; she could go out there if she wanted. But to what purpose? Things were the same out there in the sun as they were in here in the shadows. The light couldn't put her back together.

She wished she could talk to the other one, find out what she was like, what she wanted, whether she were lost as well. Poor lonely other piece of herself. Perhaps they could write to each other, she thought with a small smile. Of course, the other one didn't seem to like her very much – perhaps she wouldn't write, or would only write cruel things. Really, they ought to be friends, stuck in this same body together. But of course, they never would be.

'Who are you?'

She started. For an awful moment she thought it was herself who had spoken, in some other voice, some other person. But no, she hadn't, there really was someone. She pressed her face to the grille. She didn't see anyone outside. 'Is someone there?'

'Next to you.' The voice was a man's. 'In the next cell. Who was there with you earlier?'

'Doctors.'

'Chiltern?'

‘And another man. Who are you?’

‘Listen,’ said the voice intently, ‘I don’t belong here. I know how that sounds. I know it sounds mad –’

‘Yes it does,’ she said. ‘I’m ill but I’m not stupid.’

‘Wait – don’t go! Don’t go!’

She curled her fingers through the grid. The voice seemed to be coming from the left. ‘I’m still here,’ she said.

‘You oughtn’t to be here, should you? This is the violent ward.’

‘There were no other rooms.’

‘Doing good business, is he?’

‘Why are you here?’

‘I’m here by mistake.’ In spite of herself, she laughed. ‘No, listen listen! He’s locked me up, but he’s the mad one. He doesn’t realise it –’

‘I’m sorry, but I have to go now,’ she said, and left the window. She left the room too, and the ward, and went out into the garden. She found a bench by a sunny wall overgrown with still-open morning glories, and sat there and thought. She was afraid of what she thought about, but not as afraid as she had been of many other things.

‘His brother, eh?’ said the Doctor. ‘And he says impossible things – though, obviously, they’re not impossible to say.’

‘Impossible things,’ said Fitz, ‘are what we run into six of before breakfast.’

They were in the TARDIS, in one of the many rooms containing inexplicable, at least to Fitz and Anji, machinery, looking at an equally inexplicable readout that appeared to be a graph of some sort, with ominous-looking spikes and even an occasional smudge – though perhaps, Anji thought, that was from the printer. The Doctor sometimes got confused about which was the correct ink to put in.

‘Significant,’ she said of the graph, ‘but opaque.’

‘Well it is, rather,’ said the Doctor in dissatisfaction, smoothing the paper on the table, as if that would help. ‘The time sensors aren’t set up for exactly this type of phenomenon, whatever it is, and the location and intensity and even the exact number of disruptions can’t be detected with any precision.’

‘How can you be sure the disruptions are even human beings?’ said Anji.

‘Oh that was simple. I cross-referenced with some biological scans.’

‘And you’ve just been guessing about the form the disturbances would take?’

‘I never guess,’ said the Doctor, piqued. He turned the graph around, apparently to see whether reading it upside down would help. Or perhaps, she



thought, he'd had it upside down all along. 'In order to survive in time, all sentient beings have to be protected from full perception of it, rather the way the human eye filters out most light waves. Any time disruption linked to humans is either going to cause or be the result of mental aberration.'

'Why didn't you just start interviewing nuts?' said Fitz. 'Like the inmates at Chiltern's place?'

'The difficulty with schizophrenics is that they're often not very articulate.' The Doctor gave the paper a half-turn and looked pleased. 'And as my experience with Constance Jane showed, even if they're articulate, they're unlikely to know what's happening to them.'

'What's *causing* this?' said Anji. 'And shouldn't it show up on that graph somewhere, some big spike or something?'

'Yes it should, but it's not. Whatever caused the disruption may be gone or...'

'What?' she said after the Doctor had stared silently at the graph for a while. 'Or switched off.'

'Switched off?' said Fitz. 'You mean, you think it's a machine?'

The Doctor nodded. 'A time machine.'

In the thick, sweet haze of smoke, Chiltern slumbered. His eyes were half-shut, gazing unseeingly across the dark, low-ceilinged room past other slumberers – some still, some restless and muttering – to the brazier. A man crouched beside this, preparing the pipes, his face golden in the faint glow. Chiltern couldn't tell how old he was. He never could with the Chinese.

He felt better. The headache wouldn't materialise now. He could barely sense its presence – only a faint, threatening shiver at the edge of his brain. His thoughts slipped around as if the surface of his mind were a wet stone. He liked the sensation. Nothing would sit steady on the shelf of memory, everything tilted and fell and slid away. It was a form of silence. He could rest.

The day had affected him very badly. He didn't know why. At present, he was no longer even capable of wondering, but earlier he had been puzzled by the depression that had descended on him after the Doctor had left. Miss Jane's situation was terrible, to be sure, but no worse – indeed, much better – than that of many other patients he'd seen over the years.

The years... Chiltern was afraid for a second he might have been wrong about the headache. He groaned slightly and shifted on the pallet. But no, the pain was lost now, vanished, dispersed.

He sighed sleepily, then blinked. A face was forming out of the smoke, or coming to him through the smoke, he wasn't sure which. Nor did it matter. It was an effect he was used to and he watched with detached, contented curiosity as the features slowly became clearer. A beautiful male face, like a Botticelli. Pale calm eyes. The smoke wreathed around the head and became tousled, light brown hair. From a great distance, Chiltern felt what might have been a little jolt of surprise. He knew the face.

'Hello,' said the Doctor.

'Doctor. . . ?' Chiltern tried to sit up, or thought he did. 'Are you really here?'

'That depends,' said the Doctor.

'On what?'

'Which way you'd prefer it.'

The smoke thinned away completely, and Chiltern was relieved to see that the Doctor had brought his body with him, though he had exchanged his elegant velvet coat for a long, shabby, black garment that was too big for him.

'I wanted to talk to you,' said Chiltern.

'And here I am.'

'I'm not sure it matters if you're actually here or not. Just don't vanish.'

'Leaving my grin behind. No, I don't do that any more.' The Doctor certainly looked real enough, fine droplets of water shining in his hair as if he'd walked in out of the mist. 'What did you want to talk to me about?'

Chiltern dreamed for a moment. The Doctor waited, perfectly still, as if he'd been painted on the wall. After a while, Chiltern said, 'I wanted you to hypnotise me.'

'Why?'

'I think. . . ' Chiltern looked slowly around at the dim, huddled figures. How had the Doctor got in? Why had they let him in? 'Do you want a pipe?'

The Doctor shook his head. 'Why do you come here?' he said gently.

'To forget. No. . . to remember.'

'Remember what?'

'I don't know.'

'Is there something you don't remember?'

'I don't know.'

The Doctor looked down and his long, flexible mouth twitched. 'Yes,' he sighed. 'I understand.'

'Do you?'

'Tell me about your brother.'

This time, Chiltern knew, he definitely moved, propping up on his elbows. 'How do you know about him?'

'I heard.'

'My brother's mad.'

'I heard that too.'

'He's violent. Deluded.' Chiltern sobbed and buried his face in his hands. 'I keep him locked up.'

'I know that too,' whispered the Doctor.

'It's horrible,' Chiltern breathed between his fingers. 'My own brother! How could I?'

'What else could you do?'

Chiltern raised his wet face. 'I could cure him. I'm a doctor. Tell me,' He groped and found the Doctor's arm. It was reassuringly solid. 'Don't you think it's all physical? That the mind is wired, like a machine?'

'Something like that, yes.'

'It's in the flesh, you see – in the flesh. Someday we'll be able to cure everything with an operation. In the future.'

The Doctor looked at him sadly. 'When did he go mad?'

'Very young, very young. We were so much alike, everyone said so. Then he changed. His mind withered. While I – I prospered.' Chiltern's voice dropped to a whisper. 'It was as if I stole his life.'

'That's nonsense.'

'As if there had only been enough to make one person, and I sucked it all up. You know, twins kill each other in the womb. One absorbs the other. Or they're born with one strong and the other sickly, and the sickly one soon dies.'

'You brother's madness came after you were born.'

'But still, still... ' Chiltern fell back. The Doctor's face floated above him, remote yet sympathetic, an angel's face, something to confess to. 'Sometimes,' he whispered, 'I think there were three of us.'

'Three?'

'But he says there weren't. He laughs at me. He's always laughing at me, as if he knows something I don't.'

'What would that be?'

'The thing I've forgotten.'

The Doctor looked down at his clasped hands. After a moment he said, 'Perhaps I should speak to him.'

'No. No, it wouldn't be any good. He's quite mad. But I want you to help *me*. Isn't that why you're here?' The Doctor nodded. 'I called you and you came.'

'In a manner of speaking.'

Chiltern stared at his eyes. He began to be afraid of them, as if he might fall in and fall forever, drowning. . .

'Who are you?'

'Ah,' said the Doctor, 'I don't know. Does it matter?'

'No.' Chiltern lay back, oddly relieved. 'I don't know who I am either.' The Doctor smiled reassuringly. Chiltern smiled back. 'You must hypnotise me.'

'I don't think this is the time.'

'No, no.' Chiltern grasped his arm again. 'This is exactly the time. Now, while the drug is working as well.' The Doctor shook his head firmly. 'Please. Take me back.'

'I'll take you back to the clinic.'

Chiltern let go of him. He said dully, 'You really are here, aren't you? You followed me.'

'I'd come up to visit you and saw you leaving.'

'Why had you come?'

'I wanted to talk to you about your brother. I still do. I'm willing to hypnotise you. But I'm not sure it's a good idea with the drug in your system.'

'Then when? Tomorrow?'

'The next day. Tomorrow, I'm going to Liverpool.'

'Liverpool?' Chiltern frowned in surprise. 'Whatever for?'

'Magic.'

Chiltern dreamed again. The Doctor, in a splendid scarlet coat, was a magician, spreading a fan of cards in his long fingers. Only, Chiltern discovered as he drew one, these weren't playing cards but the fortune-telling kind. He held a picture of a tower being struck by lightning. It was extraordinarily well done: the lightning seemed to flash, and he could see the rain slipping down the rough wall of bricks. He squinted at those bricks for what seemed quite a long time before he realised that they were right in front of him and that his face was wet and cold and that the Doctor had his arm and was looking up at him with concern.

'Dr Chiltern. . . ?'

Chiltern's lungs filled with clear, damp air. He turned and saw pavement and the rain-slicked street glistening beneath a streetlamp. 'We're outside,' he said in surprise. 'How long have we been outside?'

'Not long,' said the Doctor patiently, guiding him towards a cab. Chiltern looked at his damp hair.

'Did you leave your hat?'

'I forgot to bring it. Here.' The Doctor opened the door of the cab and in a minute they were both inside, out of the rain and headed back to Hampstead. Chiltern laid his head back against the seat and shut his eyes.

'How are you feeling?' said the Doctor's quiet voice.

'Sober,' said Chiltern tiredly. 'I recover with unwelcome alacrity. Do you know Poe? There's a story of his that begins with a description of coming out of an opium dream, something about "the bitter lapse into everyday life." That describes it nicely.'

'"The Fall of the House of Usher".'

'Yes. It's quite a fascinating piece, actually. The brother and sister are two parts of the same mind, you see, and the house is the skull that contains them. When he tries to bury her, she returns and then the house cracks and collapses. A metaphor for madness.'

'An interesting reading.'

'One that suits my profession,' said Chiltern drily. He opened his eyes. The Doctor was sitting huddled into a shadowy corner. Light from the passing streetlamps periodically hit his face and made his eyes glint like glass. Chiltern found the effect fascinating. He watched it for a while.

'How are you feeling?' the Doctor asked again.

'Well,' Chiltern replied placidly. He felt wonderfully calm, almost sleepy. And safe.

'Would you like to talk?'

'Yes.'

'Shall we talk about the past?'

Chiltern hesitated. Somewhere, fathoms deep, a current tolled some broken bell of warning. His breath shortened. He felt sweat at his temples.

'It's all right,' said the Doctor, and Chiltern caught again the gleam of his eyes. What jewel were they the colour of?

'Yes,' he agreed.

'Yes,' repeated the Doctor. 'Let's go back. What's the first thing you remember?'

There was a long silence, somewhere on the edge of which the horse's hooves clattered noisily, competing with the drumming rain. Watching Chiltern's face, the Doctor saw it slowly stiffen into blankness. There was no fear there, or pain. There was no expression at all. The Doctor felt something cold at the base of his neck. He leaned forward. 'Are you still there?'

'Yes,' said Chiltern distantly.

'What's the first thing you remember?'

‘What’s . . . ?’

‘The first thing.’

Another long silence. The Doctor watched the periodic street light pass across Chiltern’s motionless features.

Chiltern said, ‘There isn’t anything.’

The Doctor looked out of the cab window. A passing streetlamp turned the darkness into wet shards of light. He pulled his coat tighter around him; it was a chill night. Over the decades, he’d used hypnosis to help people into some dark places. But he’d never guided anyone into nothing, and he wasn’t going to start now. Abruptly he leaned over and lightly touched the back of Chiltern’s hand. The alienist blinked at him, confused. ‘I’m sorry. Was I away again?’

Just for a moment.

‘Ah.’ Chiltern rubbed the back of his neck. ‘I don’t remember.’

‘No,’ said the Doctor.

Chiltern wanted him to come in for a nightcap, but the Doctor pleaded an early train. Chiltern was sorry. He could have used the company. He always felt a bit queer after opium, a little disoriented, sad. And at night, when it was mostly quiet, he was aware of how large the clinic’s house was, how ancient and full of secrets. He’d never even been through the whole place; possibly there were rooms that for centuries hadn’t known light. His own office, outside the warm circle of lamplight on his desk, seemed vast in its darkness. In the gardens, the rain rattled on the brick walks and whispered in the trees.

Chiltern put his face in his hands. He’d had a sudden lurching moment of uncertainty. He’d been brought up in a relatively modern house in Chelsea. Why, for a moment, had he remembered being a child in a house more like this one? A huge, draughty, shadowed place, set in . . . moorland? He stared helplessly out at the night Yorkshire? Dartmoor? He’d never even visited either. It was an awful thing, this sensation that his mind was a platform balanced on a single strut like a see-saw, something that might tilt and let him slide off into . . . what? What was beneath the surface of his own mind? Perhaps, he thought drily, hypnosis wasn’t such a good idea after all.

The click of a latch made him look up sharply. The door swung open an inch or two, revealing a slash of darkness. Whoever was on the other side was apparently hesitant to enter. ‘Who is it?’ he said impatiently and then, in surprise, as the person slipped in, ‘Miss Jane.’

‘Please excuse me,’ she muttered, head lowered. She’d attempted to put her hair back up, but not very successfully. A thick coil of it had come loose and snaked over her shoulder. He stood up.

'Are you all right?'

'Yes. I just couldn't sleep. She raised her face. Chiltern didn't think she looked well at all. He came around the desk.

'Are you ill?'

'No, I... Bad dreams.'

'Would you like a sedative? Or perhaps some tea?'

She looked uncertainly around the room, biting her lower lip. 'I think maybe... I'd just like to talk. Is that all right?'

'Certainly.' He offered a chair.

'Not here. Can we go back to my room?'

'It's much more comfortable here.'

'I know.' Her eyes darted at the shadowed corners. 'But...'

'And we shouldn't be in your room without a nurse present.' She looked at him for a moment in bewildered innocence. 'Oh.'

She blushed. 'There's an orderly on duty in my hall. Mr O'Keagh. But I...'

'He doesn't have to overhear us. He can stand just outside the door, as long as we keep it open. I don't mean in the least to insult you. The clinic has adopted this policy for reasons of both privacy and propriety.'

'Yes, I understand.'

'But it really would be much more pleasant for you here. I can summon -'

She shook her head firmly. 'I feel safe there.'

'Then that's where we'll talk.'

Chiltern recognised O'Keagh as one of the newer employees, a young Irishman with the build and face of a boxer. There was no sense pretending the violent ward didn't occasionally need men like that. It would be good when Miss Jane could be moved. He and O'Keagh gave each other good evenings, and he followed Miss Jane down to her room, the only one whose door stood open, letting in light from the gas fixtures in the hall.

'I wish I could have a lamp,' she said as he came up. 'Or at least a candle.'

'I'm sorry. It's difficult, I know. But we have to be careful of fire.'

She smiled crookedly. 'Of patients setting fires, you mean.'

'I'm afraid so, yes. The public rooms are illuminated till ten.'

'It's not the same.'

'No,' he agreed.

She made no move to go inside but simply stood looking up at him. In the gaslight, her brown eyes were very dark, almost black. 'You're a real gentleman,' she said, 'aren't you?' He smiled uncertainly, a bit embarrassed, and she ducked into the room. He followed her, and something heavy smashed into the

back of his head. He cried out as he fell, and then cried out again when his assailant stepped forward into the light and he saw his face. The last thing he heard was a voice coming from Miss Jane, a high, wavering voice that said, 'I'm sorry, Doc, but I had to do it. The silly bitch was going to kill herself!'



## Chapter Five

After seeing the Doctor off to the railway station in the morning, Anji and Fitz had been left at loose ends.

‘I think,’ she said with some asperity, ‘that after all our time together he could be a bit more forthcoming.’

‘Well,’ Fitz observed, ‘it might not be that he’s keeping things back, it might just be that he’s hiding the fact he doesn’t know anything.’

Anji saw the logic in that.

‘All right, then.’ she said. ‘Sight-seeing day. I vote for the Crystal Palace.’ Fitz groaned. ‘Fine, Mr Tour Guide – what’s your suggestion?’

‘All this history,’ he complained, ‘it’s too much like school.’

‘Well, it all *is* history, as far as we’re concerned. That can’t be helped, can it?’

Fitz perked up considerably when he actually laid eyes on the building.

‘Disneyland ain’t in it,’ he pronounced, gazing in amazement at what seemed like at least a mile of glass walls, some of them blindingly bright in the sun.

‘Neither is Mies van der Rohe,’ murmured Anji, equally impressed. The building struck her as a bit mad in a giddy, enjoyable way. In spite of its symmetry it was more Frank Gehry than Mies, she thought as they entered – a fantasia on the possibilities of building materials. She and Fitz stared up. Three levels of galleries ran the length of the vast hall of sunlight they found themselves in, and live trees grew almost to the arched and soaring roof. The huge space was jammed with people and noise – a cacophony of shouts and laughter underscored by the hiss of steam, the grinding melody of barrel organs and the wailing, echoing boom of a calliope organ. The great glass vault was sheltering a funfair.

Anji clung to Fitz’s arm just to keep from getting separated as they squeezed through the crowd. ‘I’ve never seen anything like this!’ she shouted in his ear. He shook his head in mute agreement. The fair had neither the sleekness of Alton Towers nor the flimsy tawdriness of cheap travelling carnivals. With its ornately carved and painted rides, stages, and exhibit fronts, all in continual bright motion, it was like an antique child’s toy come to life.

A red and white striped hot air balloon bobbed up under the glass ceiling. In niches in baroque facades, automatons draped in carved faux-Grecian robes turned and stiffly raised their arms, like figures Anji had seen on ancient cathedral clocks. Illustrated show cloths promised wonders for only a few pence. Anji and Fitz found themselves stuck in front of one depicting a four-tusked woolly mammoth trampling a hapless and very tiny Neolithic hunter. An elaborately lettered sign proclaimed that within was to be found the thigh bone of the prehistoric behemoth.

‘What twaddle!’ said an aggrieved voice to their right. It came from a dark-haired young man about Fitz’s age in a light grey summer suit and straw boater. Despite this casual attire, he had a scholarly look about him, though this was somewhat obscured by his scowl. ‘Utter rubbish. The proportions are all wrong. That hunter fellow doesn’t look as if he’d come up to the animal’s knee – if it had knees, which it doesn’t seem to. And where did anyone get the idea a mammoth has four tusks? They’ve confused it with a mastodon.’

‘What’s inside then?’ said Fitz curiously.

Their companion snorted. ‘An ordinary elephant’s thigh bone, if you’re lucky. If you’re not, the femur of an ox. It’ll be set up at a distance in a black velvet-lined box and carefully lit so you can’t tell its exact size.’

‘You seem to know a lot about it,’ said Anji.

‘Oh, I always visit these shows. Hoping, you know, I’ll find someone has unearthed a genuine fossil. It irritates me, though, how bally inaccurate they are.’

‘Are you a palaeontologist?’ asked Anji.

‘Geologist, actually.’ The man offered each of them his hand in turn. ‘George Williamson.’ As they gave their names, he fished in his pocket and found a card. ‘I end up learning a lot about fossils because, combined with the various strata of rock, they give us a dynamic picture of the earth’s history as *progressive*, not static and created all at once.’

‘Right,’ said Fitz. ‘Evolution.’

‘Yes.’ George’s face lit up. ‘You’re a student, then?’

‘Well, have been,’ said Fitz hesitantly, wondering how far his fourth-form science classes were going to carry him in this discussion. He’d always rather liked fossils, though, and had tended to pay attention during lessons about them. He wished he could remember when Darwin published that book of his, the one that caused all the fuss.

‘There is so much happening now,’ Williamson continued enthusiastically. ‘So many old theories challenged. And it’s past time! It’s been almost a quarter of

a century since Lyall, yet there's still resistance to the evidence that God did not create the world in seven days.'

'Well, of course not,' said Fitz. Williamson seemed surprised and impressed at his casual tone.

'Actually, I'm giving a small talk at the Olympia Hall in Islington this evening about an upcoming expedition to Siberia. There'll be mammoth bones there, I can tell you! Seven o'clock. That is,' Williamson suddenly seemed abashed at his boldness, 'if you think you might be interested. Delighted to see you if you are. Cheerio.' And he pushed away into the crowd. Fitz looked at the card Williamson had handed him. It was printed with the geologist's name and an address in Bloomsbury.

'Might be interesting. I've always wondered how those arctic explorer blokes in this century managed with just dogs.'

'Not very well, as I recall,' said Anji. 'The names Scott and Sir John Franklin come to mind. I don't think the mammoth bone is worth our tuppence, do you?'

'Definitely not. Let's see what else is on offer.'

They passed a long row of little coin-operated machines, prettily wrought in curving iron, their windows showing various scenes. For a ha'penny they could watch a mechanical hand raise a hammer and bring it down on an anvil. For a penny, they were treated to a scenario: the lower doors of an official looking building opened showing a man facing a bewigged judge who banged his tiny gavel sternly; then the upper doors opened, and the man, noose around neck, was dropped through a gallows trap and swung there.

'Charming,' Anji murmured.

They watched children on the carrousel and ventured on to a similar ride involving boats carved in the shape of swans and another that featured so-called Rolling Ships with full-size sails. In spite of Anji's prodding, Fitz ignored the opportunity to wield a sledgehammer and send a marker up a pole to reveal his strength of arm.

They skipped the exhibit whose sign announced The New Marvel of Electricity That Will Illumine The Birth Of The Twentieth Century and managed to resist the temptations of the waxworks show despite promises of figures of The Most Revered Public Heroes and a tableau of Nelson Wounded At Trafalgar. Anji was curious about a theatrical production called The Fatal Choice Of Mary Hardwicke, but uncomplainingly slipped out with Fitz after five minutes in which, in front of a painted backdrop of a parlour, a stern father and his pale but resolute daughter emoted at each other while waving their arms about.

The most magnificent facade belonged to the Phantasmagorical Exhibition. Horned grinning demons and gilded angels framed panels depicting ghosts and goblins, while to the left of the elaborate entry doors a rococo organ seemingly played itself. After this build-up, the show itself was disappointing. The ghost was effective – a transparent, white-veiled figure that Anji suspected was somehow projected through a combination of mirrors and lenses hidden in the orchestra pit. But the skit played out by the actors who supposedly couldn't see the apparition was all high jinks and broad comedy, the climax arriving when the hero, a young man with alarming side whiskers, slipped on a pie.

After this experience, Anji was inclined to pass on The Black Chamber Of Secrets, a little octagonal building with no facade, its only decoration being bright yellow letters painted on its black walls proclaiming an Optical Wonder and Astonishing Visions. The slovenly proprietor slumped on a chair beside the entrance, clearly the worse for drink, and eyed them unenthusiastically from red-rimmed eyes. As they made to move on, he roused himself enough to call hoarsely, 'Wonders inside, lady and gentleman. Impossible visions of the unexpected. The laws of time themselves suspended.'

Fitz and Anji looked at each other. 'You never know,' he said, and handed the proprietor eightpence.

'Thank'ee, sir.' The man stood up. He was younger than he had seemed from a distance, with strong shoulders and no grey in his long, sloppily tied-back brown hair. His bloodshot eyes were a dismal muddy colour. He smiled obsequiously, showing crooked, tobacco-stained teeth. 'Micah Scale, at your service. You won't be disappointed. No sir, you will not.' And he pushed open the door and shufflingly led them into the exhibit. The inside was plain, with a scuffed black-and-white linoleum floor. The only light came from an oil lamp attached to one of the unpainted walls. 'Over there, please. Left side.'

He pointed to a long, mirror-surfaced table, as big as a door, that almost filled the small room. Above this hung a knobbed brass cylinder extending up through the centre of the roof. A railing prevented observers from getting too close and marring the experience with their own reflections.

'Now when I dim the lamp,' Scale continued, shutting the door, 'it will be completely black. The lady mustn't be frightened.' He leered at Anji. 'It's only for a moment.' Anji restricted herself to a sigh. Scale slowly turned down the lamp until it flickered out. 'And now,' he said in the darkness, 'I will open the miraculous camera!'

A lit scene suddenly appeared in the mirror. For a moment Anji thought she was seeing a film projected from below, until she remembered that, even as a

fair attraction, moving pictures were still a couple of years away. Though the effect was startling and mysterious, the scene presented struck her as an oddly dull choice: a marshy landscape with a couple of rural cottages in it. She and Fitz watched dutifully. After a while, a chicken ran out of one of the yards.

'Well,' said Scale at her elbow, making her jump. 'Not very exciting today, I'm afraid.'

'Is it ever?' said Fitz.

'Oh, yes. You get people walking about. Hunters sometimes.'

'So you never know what you'll be showing?' said Anji.

'Of course I know,' he said angrily. 'I'm a professional, I am. It's just that it's changeable. Like life!'

'Right,' said Fitz soothingly.

'Look!' Scale's tone was defensive. 'There in the background, see that silver glint. That's the river, that is.'

'Very impressive,' said Anji politely. This only seemed to irritate him further.

'I was robbed,' he whined. 'A regular hall of mirrors, I had, till they was stolen from me, a poor man. The most magnificent hall of mirrors ever seen – oh, you wouldn't be looking down your nose at them. *They'd* have shown you something!' He leaned into Fitz's face, eyes teary. 'It's not fair!'

'No,' Fitz agreed diplomatically. Anji twitched his sleeve.

'But I know who took it.' Scale wheezed closer. 'I know where he is. And some day I'll have back what's mine!'

'I'm sure you will.' Fitz groped for the door.

'Don't go.' Scale suddenly sounded desperate. 'Wait a bit. You'll soon see something better. Sometimes there's cows.'

'Great, lovely, thanks, but have to run.' Fitz pulled open the door and he and Anji hurried into the light. She looked back, expecting Scale to come after them, but the entrance remained dark and empty.

'Well,' said Fitz. 'That was fun.'

'Creepy.'

'Yeah, wasn't he?'

'The projection too,' she said. 'I mean, how did he do that? It wasn't a film. But it was the moving image of a real landscape.'

'Well, how'd they do that ghost thingy? They're a lot more technical than I'd given them credit for, these Victorians. They're such bloody bores in history class.'

'I dare say the Doctor knows all about it. We can ask him when he comes back.'

‘Let’s go and find some supper. I’d kind’ve like to see that George fellow’s lecture.’

‘You?’ she said askance. ‘Something you can’t drink, inhale, play, dance to or –’

‘Right, nip my first fragile step towards self-improvement in the bud.’

‘Heaven forfend,’ she murmured. She supposed that she ought to go along if only to observe the first stages of bloom of this new Fitz, but she was feeling in need of a twentieth-century fix. She returned to the TARDIS. A few hours later, as the Doctor was leaving the theatre in Liverpool, she was curled up in jeans with a bowl of popcorn, halfway through some archival reruns of *Absolutely Fabulous*.

## Chapter Six

Octave sat in his dressing room and waited for the knock at the door. The man had found him again. Of course. Had he really thought he wouldn't? He must have come in at the last moment, because when Octave had surreptitiously surveyed the audience half an hour before curtain, there had been no sign of him. But then, later, up on the stage, when Octave had dropped one of the hoops he was supposed to be linking and unlinking, and, hot with embarrassment, stooped to retrieve it, his eyes fell on the front row, and there was the green coat, the grave, handsome face, the strange eyes. . .

Octave clasped his hands together hard and shut his eyes. For just an instant, he entertained the familiar, vain fantasy that when he opened them he would no longer be in another shabby, poorly lit dressing room in some seedy provincial theatre. He would be in the past.

Before.

At the knock, he jumped and stared whitely at the door. He didn't move to answer, just watched the doorknob, dumbly. The knock came again.

'Mr. Octave?' said the dreaded voice.

Octave rose, and went to meet his destiny.

'Is the manager gone?'

The Doctor thought this was an odd way to begin the conversation. Was Octave perhaps afraid he'd need protection? He did look pitifully nervous.

'Yes he is,' said the Doctor. 'I'm afraid I avoided him. I badly wanted to speak to you.'

'And I to you,' said Octave, with sudden resolve. 'But this room's too small. Come with me.'

The hall was dark except for a flickering fixture at the far end. Octave led the Doctor past the other dressing rooms to the stairs, scurrying ahead, slightly stooped. As they passed the lamp his slicked-down hair gleamed wetly at the edges, still damp from where he had washed off his greasepaint.

On the stage, a solitary electric bulb glowed in an iron cage on a rod, spreading a weak circle of light against the theatre's empty darkness. The ghost light,

thought the Doctor, wondering how he knew the phrase. He'd noticed earlier the up-to-the-minute electrical stage lighting, though the theatre lobby, like the backstage hallways, was still illuminated with gas. He looked into the black void of the rows of seats.

'You're curious,' said Octave. In the faint light, without his makeup, he looked washed out.

'No,' said the Doctor. 'Oh – unless that was a description of me.'

'About my act,' said Octave after a beat.

The Doctor shook his head. 'There's no mystery about your act.'

'I like to think there is.'

'I'm sure you do. Not a secret you want advertised. Tell me: how many of you are there altogether?'

At the edge of the light, in quiet unison, the doors of Octave's cabinets swung open. The Doctor watched as five identical men stepped out. He nodded. At a noise behind him, he glanced into the auditorium. Two more Octaves were coming up from the blackness on to the stage. Silently, the figures surrounded the Doctor. He turned in a circle, examining them. They wore different suits but otherwise were indistinguishable one from another.

'Eight,' said the Doctor. 'Thus the name. Bit obvious, don't you think?'

'No one's guessed,' said the first Octave. 'Till now.'

'I didn't guess,' said the Doctor. 'I knew.'

'Really?' said another of the Octaves, very quietly. 'What did you know?'

'Perhaps you're a gynaecologist,' said a third drily. 'Someone familiar with multiple births.'

'Though not quite this multiple,' added a fourth.

'You're not octuplets,' said the Doctor calmly. 'You're the same person splintered into eight parts.'

The Octaves hadn't been exactly animated before, but now they became completely still, their eyes fixed unblinkingly on the man at their centre. The Doctor was unruffled by this stark attention. He reached out, took the first Octave's hand, and gently pressed the little puncture wound with the edge of his thumbnail. A tiny spot of blood appeared. The Doctor looked around. As one, the other Octaves turned their palms towards him, each with its own glistening droplet.

'You're one man,' the Doctor said as the first Octave took back his hand, 'but shattered, like one reflection multiplied in the fragments of a broken mirror. Who did this to you? And why?'

'Who are you?' said the first Octave. 'And why have you sought me out?'



'I'm the Doctor. Time is wounded here. You can feel it, can't you?' The Doctor was turning in a circle again, facing each of the Octaves for a moment. 'You're part of the wound.'

The Octaves moved back a step. The Doctor looked from one pair of identical eyes to another to another, saw the trace of sweat beneath the moustaches on each upper lip. It was like facing multiple beings that shared a hive mind, only not quite. That was natural. This was a human mind, never meant to exist in more than one body, let alone eight. What kind of perceptual strain must it be?

'How do you manage?' he said. 'What do you do?'

'I sleep,' said the first Octave simply. 'They sleep.'

'Except during the act,' said the Doctor. The Octaves nodded. 'It's a risk, that act.'

'There's so little I can do,' the first Octave whispered, anguished. 'So little,' murmured the others.

'My mind. . .'

'My mind. . .'

Their voices broke. The Doctor flushed angrily. 'This is abominable! Who did this to you?'

Weirdly, they looked at one another. The Doctor watched in fascination. Elements of the mind communicating. So there was some slight psychic as well as physical fracturing. His heart sank. That made reintegration more difficult, perhaps impossible. . .

'I did it to myself,' the first Octave said. 'I thought it would be. . .'. He trailed off.

'What?'

The Octaves shook their heads, not meeting his eyes. Tears appeared on their faces.

'Let me help you.' The Doctor stepped towards the first Octave. They all flinched back. 'Please.'

'You can't.'

'Let me try.'

'Too late,' said an Octave behind him. The Doctor turned. 'I'm different now.'

'Than what?'

'Than myself,' said another Octave.

'I am,' said a third, 'a "we".'

'Too late,' they all repeated, eyes down.

'No,' the Doctor protested, though he suspected they were right. 'You can't know that.'

'You can't help,' said the first Octave. 'What could you do?'

'I have a machine –'

'No!'

'No more machines!'

'He has a machine, but it can't help.'

'Who does?' The Doctor turned on the Octave who had spoken last. He looked away. So did the others. 'And why can't he help you? Or won't he?' Silence. 'Where is this machine?'

The Octaves' heads snapped up. Sixteen eyes stared at him suspiciously.

'Why do you want to know?' said an Octave to the Doctor's left.

'Perhaps if I saw exactly how this –'

'You don't know?' said another. 'If you don't know how it happened, how can you help?'

'There are many ways of –'

'It's the machine, isn't it?' said the first Octave. 'Not me. Not... us.'

'You –'

'– just –'

'– want –'

'– to –'

'– find –'

'– the –'

'– time –'

'– machine.'

'I don't care about the machine!' said the Doctor in exasperation. 'I already have –'

One of the Octaves hit him. It wasn't much of a blow, but it knocked the Doctor off-balance, and as he staggered another Octave looped an arm around his throat, jerking him upright. Two others seized his arms and they began to drag him towards the wings. As the remaining five closed in, the Doctor managed to kick one of them in the stomach. They all stumbled and groaned and he wrenched free, but before he could get three steps they were on him again, grabbing his limbs, his hair, his clothes, twining their arms around him, moving as one.

'Don't be a fool, Octave!' the Doctor yelled, struggling against the clutching hands. 'Let me help you! Let me – mmph!'

A handkerchief was jammed into his mouth and they barrellled him into the wings and fell with him to the floor. The Doctor twisted and fought as they

spread his arms and legs, but against so many he might as well not have bothered – one Octave gripped his head, another two pinned his arms, two each leg and – Hang on. He turned his head as much as he could, searching the curtained shadows. That was only seven. Where was – He spotted the last Octave over by the backstage wall, hauling on a rope. The Octaves holding him had drawn away as far as possible, the two at his left leg keeping hold only of his foot and ankle. They were all looking up.

The Doctor followed their gaze. It took him a moment, peering into the high darkness, to discern a lumpen shape moving slowly upward. He knew what it was, had known as soon as he saw the Octave at the rope: one of the heavy sacks of sand that served as a counterweight to lift the painted backdrops of the stage sets. As Octave didn't use backdrops in his act, this one was free to be utilised for other purposes. The Doctor wondered exactly how much it weighed. At least thirty pounds. He imagined that when it crashed down on to his chest it would, in addition to crushing his remaining heart, drive the edges of his smashed ribs right out through his back and into the floor.

In this, as in so many other predictions of his long life, he was correct.

## Chapter Seven

Anji started awake, confused. She had been dreaming that she was in a large house, in a storm, and that somewhere an unsecured door, caught by the wind, was banging and banging and banging – that there were steps on the stair and voices in the hall and then just one voice, and she was sitting up in bed, blinking, listening to Fitz say, ‘Anj! Anj, wake up!’

There was a policeman in the sitting room, admitted by the landlady, knocked awake and still in her wrapper. The hearth was cold and the sky was grey and the Doctor was dying, his chest caved in in an accident, hours away in this slow century, unconscious in some primitive hospital ward. ‘If he’s not dead now, they’ll kill him before we get there,’ she said to Fitz on the train. Fitz was white-faced and his collar stuck out absurdly to one side. They were pulling into the Lime Street station before she registered this sufficiently to reach out and reattach it.

A long, high-windowed hall with a black-and-white tiled floor. Another policeman. She let Fitz do the listening. She wasn’t expected to understand English anyway, which was just as well because the words went past her. Theatre. After hours. No idea what. Flyweight. The policeman showed a card. It had their London address on it, half-observed in damp blood. The bright morning sun hitting the card seemed to her obscene. Their rushing footsteps were too loud, like a rattle of stones. At the end of the hall, tall white double doors. Then more white: the walls, the curtains, the screens, the sheets, the nurses’ aprons, the faces of the patients. And a young doctor in a dark suit: ‘He shouldn’t even be alive.’

‘I’ll say,’ thought Fitz. He stared at the Doctor’s face, paler than the pillow-case it lay against, even the lips without colour. Beneath a grey blanket, his chest was swathed in bandages. Jesus, Fitz thought, was he even breathing? The room smelled rawly of disinfectant with an under-odour of staleness and bedpans. Fitz put his hand on the iron railing at the foot of the bed. The young doctor was saying something. ‘I’m sorry?’

‘Mr... Kreiner, is it?’ Fitz nodded. ‘You are the nephew?’

‘Right. This is my uncle John. Smith. Mum’s brother.’

‘Are you aware that...’ The doctor hesitated. ‘It was difficult to tell, with so much damage to the body cavity, but your uncle appears to be possessed of a number of physical anomalies.’

‘Does he?’ said Fitz nervously.

Fortunately the Doctor chose that moment to open his eyes and scream.

It wasn’t much of a scream, having almost no breath behind it, and quickly lapsed into a sort of moaning gurgle. The Doctor’s head thrashed-back and forth. Blood came out of his mouth. Fitz and Anji found themselves jostled aside by a sudden knot of busy nurses. A needle glinted in the doctor’s hand.

‘No drugs!’ cried Anji. ‘He’s allergic!’ Then, wondering if the word were even in use yet, ‘I mean, he can’t –’

‘It’s only morphine.’ The doctor lifted the Doctor’s wrist. ‘He reacted satisfactorily before – Oh!’ The Doctor had wrenched the hypodermic from his hand and flung it across the room. It shattered in a sudden silence as the hospital staff froze, staring at him. Wildly, his eyes raked across their faces and locked on Fitz.

‘Why...?’ he whispered in anguish. Blood bubbled over his lip. ‘Why am I alive?’

Two days later Anji asked Fitz whether the Doctor *could die*.

They were in the TARDIS kitchen, where they spent most of their time when they weren’t staring at the Doctor, white-faced and unmoving, plugged into the machines he’d attached himself to before dropping into a coma. She had made tea in a mechanical, unthinking way, but neither of them had poured out and the pot had grown cold.

‘I don’t know,’ said Fitz. Maybe not, he thought, if two days ago were any example. At the hospital, the Doctor had suddenly recovered his composure. He had spoken calmly and with great sincerity to the young doctor, staring intently into his eyes, and soon the discharge papers were signed and they were on their way to the station, the Doctor in a clumsy wicker-and-wood wheeled litter-chair, encased in blankets and bandages, his pallor ghastly in the sunlight, his eyes glazed with pain. In the first-class compartment, they had stretched him on his back with his knees up and his head elevated on Fitz’s bundled coat, and he had immediately fallen unconscious.

‘Biodata,’ said Fitz.

‘What?’ Anji had lapsed into a little trance of her own, staring at the teapot. Now she frowned. ‘Biodata?’

'Yeah,' said Fitz. 'It's hard to explain. I don't know if it's his, erm, species, or if it's just him, but on the cellular level his DNA, because he's a time traveller – well, it's more than that – we're time travellers, you and me, and I don't think there's anything like this about us, but he sort of exists on a trans-temporal level, you know, and that translates to a trans-spatial level as well – I mean, a few years ago in San Francisco, his biodata, well, it kind of stretched –'

'I have no idea what you're talking about.'

'No.' Fitz deflated. 'Neither do I, really.'

To the Angel-Maker, it seemed as if there were a crack in the world. A very thin one, to be sure. Hardly wider than a thread. But dangerous, nonetheless, like a hairline crack in a jug that slowly, imperceptibly weakened the vessel, until suddenly one day, all unwarning, it fell to pieces. So might the world fall to pieces if nothing were done.

The big, dark man – who indeed, as she had suspected, was not a doctor after all, and who had told her his name was Sabbath – agreed with her about the crack. He couldn't see it with his eyes, as she did, but he detected it on his instruments. These were fabulous things, like the old scrying mirrors or stones, but somehow, he explained, connected to the light in the new, brilliant, electrical bulbs that he had in the study of his grand house. They sat in this new, strange light, he in a leather armchair and she on a slender, petit-point covered one, in front of the fireplace – a large thing, with a graceful marble mantel, not like the narrow little coal fires of the houses she'd worked in – and he'd explained to her that there was a crack in time – he called it a fissure – and that she had the gift to see this fissure and the monsters it produced.

This made sense to her. She had known people with the sight all her life. They too saw things that others said didn't exist. And these monsters – these freaks of time, as Sabbath called them – stood oddly in the world, too flat somehow, yet also too thick, and not angled right. They were wrong things, things that pulled the normal inside out, like a walking corpse or a stone that spoke. She feared and hated them on sight, with the deep, life-preserving terror she might feel towards a cliff edge or a whirlpool.

According to Sabbath – he did not let her address him as 'Mister' – these time freaks were actually *part* of the fissure, not just a manifestation of it. So destroying one closed up the fissure just a bit. This made sense to her too. It was like Satan coming through evil people. When the evil person was dead, there was one less doorway for the Devil.

About whether Sabbath were an agent of the Devil she had suspended judgement. On her first nights in the house, lying between sheets soft as the petal of a flower, she had not slept, waiting for his approach. The Angel-Maker wasn't vain. She knew she was nothing much to look at. That hadn't stopped men before. They were a sex that would have congress with farm animals, so why not with her? She felt safe with Sabbath; she wouldn't have minded with him. Nor did she mind when he didn't come. She began to sleep, deeply and sweetly, without dreams, and waked warm and relaxed to find, always, a fine porcelain coffeepot and cup on a silver tray beside the bed. Whoever brought this, she never heard them. She could not imagine Sabbath doing it. Perhaps he had invisible servants.

Why shouldn't he? She thought him capable of anything. He showed her marvels. In the zoo were animals with necks longer than she was tall. Overlooking the stony beach at Brighton stood a palace. In what had once been an even grander mansion than his, she saw the ancient dead of Egypt, swathed in linen and laid in magnificently carved boxes. Using an orrery and a lunary, he had explained how the orbits of the planets worked and why there were eclipses. He taught her chess, which she liked, because when she looked at the pieces she saw immediately dozens of their possible permutations. It was like looking into the future.

And naturally, any little errand she could perform for him, she was glad to do.

For three nights, Octave managed not to look at the blood-stained floor.

He didn't even glance in its direction. When he stood on stage, the dark wing-space to his left became a blind spot, darker even than the unseen audience. He could sense their presence, their shifting and breathing, but from the wings came only stillness. The man had screamed into the gag once, muffledly and horribly, when the sack shattered his chest. Then there had been no sound except Octave's own shallow breathings. With what had seemed to him great presence of mind, he had retrieved his handkerchief and made his soft, multiple way from the theatre and, by various routes, home.

The manager had considered closing the next night, but as the man hadn't actually died, he told Octave to proceed with his performance. And then things had gone on as before. The police had talked to Octave. They thought it was all an accident. The man had not recovered consciousness; they expected him to die any day. Octave supposed that by now he had. He had deliberately not asked the manager any questions or looked at the papers or the stains on the

floor.

But tonight... For some reason, Octave's eyes kept drifting to his left. He couldn't help it. For three nights, that shadowy offstage area had been a blank, without definition or presence. Now, suddenly it had acquired substance. It seemed to him to be a bulk of darkness. Solid. Massive. Like a weight that might fall on him.

Octave took a deep breath and drew the string of bright scarves from his sleeve. There was tepid applause. His heart wasn't in his act tonight. He performed the opening tricks with even less flair than usual, and though the cabinet 'illusion' still stunned the spectators, their enthusiastic reaction reached him from a distance, as if through thick glass.

He had discovered that he wasn't cut out to be a murderer. He spent that whole first night crying, like a frightened, remorseful child. All eight of him, blubbing like infants in his sordid rooms, some of them on the bed, one on the single hard chair, some on the floor, some standing. All weeping. It had been disgusting. And he had been afraid someone would hear, wonder at the sound of so many in rooms supposedly occupied by one. Not that the bulk of his neighbours were even in at night, and those who were generally weren't sober. He had chosen his seedy neighbourhood and down-at-heel apartments carefully.

Oh, what was he going to do? His life was already wretched before. Hiding. Pretending. Having to do without servants. Covertly taking his bulky washing to an indifferent Chinese laundryman streets away. Cleaning the coal dust off the sills. Hauling his own hot water. Huddled indoors when he wasn't at the theatre, shivering, not looking at one another. One went out occasionally for air and sunshine and exercise, but two couldn't. It wasn't simply the care that had to be taken not to be seen leaving the building twice. It was that the multiple sensory input was almost unbearable. He could just stand it for the time every day it took to sneak to and from the theatre, journeys that took hours. And all of them had to go. He'd tried staying partly at home and it was a disaster – the spatial separation was so disorienting he almost didn't get through the act. Now three hid in a storage room while the others performed. It wasn't so bad in the storage room. It was dark, like the interiors of his cabinets. Things were better in the dark.

Except for the dark at the side of the stage.

Tonight, he knew, he would look, if for no other reason than to try to replace his last sight of the spot, with the crushed body, and the blood. The blood had got on him, on all of him except the one at the rope, and later he had spent



hours in his rooms examining every article of clothing. Bit by bit, over several days, he had painstakingly burned each soiled piece in his little fireplace. He wondered if there would actually be any stain left to see on the floor. The manager had brought in men to swab and sand and revarnish. Probably the only noticeable change would be that the boards now appeared cleaner and newer-looking than the rest of the area. It would look as if nothing had ever happened. Octave took comfort from this.

Maybe, he thought, removing his makeup after the show, he wouldn't look tonight either. There was something morbid in this new obsession that he should resist. He put his dirty makeup towel in the hamper and checked to see that his nails were clean. It was hard to keep the greasepaint from lodging beneath them. He didn't glance in the mirror. He never did. He saw himself often enough as it was.

Octave always went home in shifts, carefully, one at a time, by different routes and in and out of different doors. Now he sat in his flat waiting for himself and feeling almost cheerful. He wasn't going to look, after all. Why should he? What difference would it make? He was being foolish and unmanly, allowing a mere whim to have so much power over him. It was only a floor, some old boards. The sight would be as meaningless as those historical sites where you knew some luckless prince or pretender had been slain and you looked at the stones or the tiles in the nineteenth-century sunlight and they were just stones or tiles, dusty and ordinary, nothing notable about them at all.

He was strong. He was in control. He heard the steps of his second returning self on the stairs, glanced up those stairs to the slit of light beneath the door, waited in the empty, echoing theatre, and smiled. No need to look. No need at all. It was over. It had never happened.

And then, at the last possible moment, he betrayed himself.

As his final self emerged from his cabinet at the left-hand side of the stage, the ghost light threw his shadow into the wings and somehow, before he realised it, his gaze followed the shadow. Then he was trapped, staring at the patch of floor only a few feet away. It wasn't too late, of course. He could still turn and leave. There was no need to walk over to the spot. There was no *need*...

He walked over to the spot.

He was shocked. He stood paralysed, staring down. True, there was no stain. Just as he expected, the floor had been revarnished, so that it gleamed slightly. That was just as he had imagined. What he had not imagined, had never even thought of, were the gouges, not terribly deep, but deep enough

that the sanding hadn't eradicated them, and still visibly pale under the new varnish. Scars in the wood. Made by... what? Octave's hand sought out and gripped the edge of the curtain. Surely not... surely the man's broken *bones* hadn't actually... come... through...

Octave gasped and turned aside. He felt sick. In his miserable flat, his various selves gripped themselves and swayed. He caught the curtain with both hands, held himself up, pivoted slowly so that he faced on to the stage. The ghost light glowed feebly. Above it, the high flyspace seemed as dark as if there were nothing there. Behind it, the opposite wings, through which he would have to walk to reach the exit, looked blackly impassable. He took a deep breath. This was nonsense. Nonsense. Why this cowardice now? He was not going to be one of those pathetic murderers undone by their weakling consciences...

And even as he thought this, a figure emerged from the shadowed wings, and he understood that indeed he was not going to be one of those guilt-stricken, self-accused, self-betraying killers. That soon, in fact, he was no longer going to be anything at all.

Anji and Fitz knew there was nothing they could do to help the Doctor, but they went regularly to the medical lab anyway. They always found him the same: ashen and motionless. He was still wearing the coarse, white hospital-issue nightshirt, stained near the collar with the blood from his mouth. Anji had cleaned his face when they'd brought him back, but she hadn't liked to – it felt like an imposition. And his cold immobility frightened her.

Fitz assumed this was his usual healing trance, except that he didn't heal now as he once had and also he really didn't seem to be breathing. Watching him now, Fitz could have sworn his chest wasn't moving at all. He wanted to ask Anji if she could see any movement, but what if she said no? She was staring rigidly at the Doctor. Fitz was afraid to talk to her. If they talked they would have to agree that of course he couldn't be breathing, because his lungs were smashed flat.

'The TARDIS will fix him,' he said.

Anji stared at the unconscious figure, biting the edge of her thumb. 'Why hasn't he died?'

The Doctor was dying and not doing a very good job of it. This had begun to annoy him. It seemed a simple enough task. Get most of your inner organs crushed. Expire. Basic cause-and-effect. What was the problem?

He seemed to be walking in the TARDIS. Corridor after corridor of white-rounded walls. Turn a corner, more of the same. It was very boring. Maybe this was death. But he didn't really think so – at the edges of his unconsciousness, he could feel his nerves screaming. He was still attached to the body.

The body. What an odd way to put it. He supposed this was the detachment of near-death. Certainly, he felt strangely separate from his physical form. As if it were a coat he'd taken off and any minute now he'd round a corner and find another one. Peculiar notion. He suddenly glanced back. For a moment, he had thought he wasn't alone. Who is that on the other side of me? But there was only him. Not even a shadow for companion. He stood for a while staring at the blank floor, thinking that ought to remind him of something. But all he could think of was *Peter Pan*. He walked on.

After a time, he began to feel that he *was* getting somewhere after all. Or, more specifically, that there was somewhere to get. He had a sense that any minute now he'd round a corner and actually see something. And sure enough, he took a turn and there, at the end of the corridor, he glimpsed an open door, a splash of green and sunlight. Then, as if the walls had moved, it shifted out of sight.

The Doctor began to jog. He came around another corner and, yes, there was the door again, and then, in a blink, it was gone. He sped up. Another corner. Another glimpse. Another disappearance. He was becoming angry. This was ridiculously difficult. He was of half a mind not to die after all.

Suddenly as he came around yet another corner, he realised that it wasn't the walls that were shifting at all. As the tantalising green doorway vanished, he felt just a tiny tug, like a pluck at his coat, jerking him back. He stopped and stood very still, one hand against the wall, head down. He shut his eyes. If he had been breathing, he would have held his breath. He concentrated. . . There. Yes, there was something. It was like. . . He opened his eyes and slowly turned his head to look over his shoulder. Behind him, as if it had come out of his back, a silvery filament, thin as spiderweb, stretched tautly away and out of sight. He watched it. Very faintly, it was throbbing. Not too fast. Steadily. Rhythmically.

The Doctor's eyes snapped open. Fitz and Anji jumped. The Doctor said, 'You son of a bitch!'

## Chapter Eight

Sabbath had taken a mansion in Regents Park built by Nash in the previous century, a finely proportioned house filled with tall windows and light. Its elegant rationalism amused him. He made his office in the library, whose polished shelves reached to within a foot or two of the high ceiling and which looked out through French doors on to a parterre of low boxwood centred with an eighteenth-century armillary sundial. Near the doors, he placed a graceful mahogany table to use as a desk. If this occasionally held instruments an observer would have found perplexing, Sabbath wasn't concerned: he had no visitors, and he didn't worry about intruders.

Which meant that he was, if not alarmed exactly, certainly brought to attention when one sunny morning in the week following the Doctor's adventures in Liverpool he sank into the leather armchair by the fireplace, tome in hand, and heard a rude spurting noise.

Sabbath started and turned red. Recovering himself, he rose and examined the chair cushion. Lifting this exposed a deflated rubber bladder with a short, wide tube. Sabbath glared for a moment at the alien object, then lifted his eyes and scanned the room. He found what he was looking for on the top of one of the bookshelves.

'This is temporal contamination,' he said.

'I know,' confessed the Doctor, 'but I couldn't resist.'

'Typical of your immaturity.'

The Doctor smiled. He was stretched out languidly on the bookshelf, eyes half shut. He looked thinner to Sabbath, and pinched, as if he'd been ill, but perfectly, almost liquidly relaxed. Now he sighed. 'Yes, it is, isn't it? Such a pity. I once had so much promise.'

'How did you get in?'

'Oh, can't you figure it out? All your alarms and defences are keyed to your biodata.'

Sabbath remained expressionless. The Doctor's smile thinned mockingly. He slipped to the floor, padded over to Sabbath and laid his ear against his chest,

listening. 'Tick tock, tick tock, like the clock in the crocodile. I don't think it sounds very happy.'

Sabbath calmly pushed him away and crossed to his desk.

'Ah,' said the Doctor, 'I see I was standing too close. Invading your personal space. Of course, even from over here I'm invading your personal space.' Sabbath looked at him. 'All nestled up under your ribs. Quite intimate, really. Yet we hardly know each other. Love songs have been written about less.'

Sabbath sighed and sat down. 'Have you finished?'

'You wish.' The Doctor gave a little hop and perched lightly on the edge of the desk. 'I kept wondering where my heart had got to. Was it in the highlands a-chasing the deer? Did I leave it in San Francisco? Had it joined a club for other lonely ones of its kind? Was it achy? Or breaky? Did it now belong to someone named Daddy?' Sabbath had turned his attention to some papers. The Doctor suddenly stretched out across them, like a cat taking over a computer keyboard. He gazed soulfully into Sabbath's eyes. 'Shall I call thee Father?'

Looking bored, Sabbath rose.

'Hamlet?' the Doctor queried. 'Royal Dane?'

Sabbath left the room. '“I've got you under my skin”,' the Doctor warbled after him. Then his face grew sober. He moved his hand to the empty side of his chest. 'You know,' he murmured, 'I think once I *did* leave it in San Francisco.' He shivered, as if, as the saying went, a rabbit had run over his grave.

When Sabbath returned, the Doctor was seated crosslegged on the desk surrounded by origami penguins.

'Oh, I see,' Sabbath said. 'Time for some infantile destruction.'

'I haven't destroyed anything. The papers are intact, they're just a different shape.' The Doctor surveyed his flock. 'Penguins are all right,' he muttered. 'I'm not saying a word against them. But I used to be able to make birds that flapped their wings when you pulled the tail. Only I don't remember how any more. Have I told you about my memory problems?'

'Please don't.'

'Well, I can't, can I, having forgotten?'

Sabbath looked at him speculatively for a moment, as if considering whether it would be worth the bother to break his neck. 'Was there something you wanted?'

The Doctor snorted with laughter. 'What do you think? Walked into that one, Sabbath old man. You're slipping. Tell me, you haven't felt a bit shaky recently, have you? Under the weather? Full fathoms five under the weather.'

'What happened to you?'

'You noticed, did you? I'm touched. Literally.' The Doctor was off the desk and in his face. 'I almost died. Only I couldn't.' He placed a hand on Sabbath's chest. 'I wonder... why... not.'

'Oh please, don't be coy. If you'd wanted to kill me, you would have. But you can't do without me yet. You don't know your way around well enough.'

Sabbath removed his hand. The Doctor put it back. Sabbath pulled it away again, gripping the Doctor's wrist as if he'd like to break it.

'It's time you accepted the situation. Stop taking it personally.'

'How can I?' The Doctor jerked his wrist free. 'You're the one who's taken it. Personally. What did you want it for, anyway, if you don't mind my asking?'

'As a human being, I had intrinsic physical limitations in penetrating Deep Time.'

The Doctor's eyes flashed. 'You fool. Do you think Time is nothing but a flame to imprison in your little lantern? Do you think *I* am?' He stepped back and smiled, grimly. 'Speaking of which, how *are* the side effects?' Sabbath said nothing. 'I see. A little twinge on Station One perhaps. A slight weakness in Spain. And perhaps a bit of difficulty about ten days ago?' The Doctor laughed. 'Still, quite an accomplishment. The very first human-alien transplant. I hope you kept records.'

'Octave's existence,' said Sabbath, as if the Doctor hadn't spoken, 'indicates a severe interference in the stream, either deliberate or accidental.'

'It was Octave who tried to kill me.'

Sabbath sighed irritably. 'I should have guessed. I assume you tried to talk to him, and he panicked.'

'More or less.'

'So, instead of solving the problem, you might have got yourself killed.' Sabbath smirked. 'Dear me. That would never do.'

'I appreciate your concern,' said the Doctor drily. 'Of course, given your regrettable paucity of allies, I suppose I'm worth keeping around. And though I hate to say it – given my new understanding of what you call the situation, I now agree we should join forces.'

'Is that why you came?'

'No, of course not. I just came to get on your nerves.' The Doctor strolled to the fireplace, tossed the cushion back into the armchair, and flopped into it. 'They are *your* nerves, aren't they? Haven't borrowed them as well?'

'Shall we return to Octave?' said Sabbath stiffly.

'By all means. What was the question? Oh yes – is his interference in the timestream deliberate or accidental? I rather think accidental, don't you? Dif-

ficult to imagine a fiendish plot in which Octave could be a tool. I'll have to ask him.'

Sabbath smiled, pityingly but with a glint of amusement. 'Oh yes,' he said softly. 'It worked so well the first time.'

'Never give up,' said the Doctor blithely. 'That's my motto.'

'What exactly happened to you, anyway?'

'Crushed chest. One of those – what do you call them? Flyweights.'

'Your TARDIS put you back together.'

'In a manner of speaking.'

'And you tracked me through our biodata connection.'

'Yes. It's fairly simple if you have the right technology. I daresay even you could cobble together something of the sort.'

'If I –' Sabbath began, but he was interrupted by the appearance of a young woman in the door from the garden. She shot a quick look at the Doctor and immediately glided to Sabbath's side – not, the Doctor noticed with interest, as if seeking safety, but protectively. He was intrigued by her strong-featured face, particularly the two tufts of dark hair right at her hairline, one directly above each eyebrow, like little patches of fur or perhaps even budding horns. They gave her a feral look that her simple wine-coloured frock with its black lace collar could not entirely domesticate. She touched Sabbath's shoulder warningly.

'It's all right,' Sabbath said. 'I know him. He's a time traveller, like myself. That's what you're seeing. This is Miss Elizabeth Kelly,' he said to the Doctor. 'She is sensitive to time disruptions. It's all right,' he told her again, 'you can leave us. I'll be quite safe.'

Reluctantly, with a backward glance at the Doctor, she left the room. The Doctor looked after her, his mind clicking away to find where he had stored her name. He knew he'd run across it recently. 'She's very solicitous of you,' he observed. 'You seem to bring that out in women.'

Sabbath ignored the comment. 'Octave's act is impossible, of course, without some warping of the fabric of space-time. It's unlikely he was the cause of that.'

'Doesn't seem the type,' the Doctor agreed. 'You never know, of course. But I'd think someone with that much power, not to mention the sophistication to access it, would have better things to do than tour the North with a conjuring act.'

'Indeed. From the evidence, it would seem that he had somehow acquired certain characteristics of quantum space-time, specifically the ability to flick in and out of what we call reality –'

‘Oh no,’ said the Doctor impatiently. ‘No, no, no, no. That’s not it.’ Sabbath raised an inquiring eyebrow. ‘Octave has been split.’

‘Split?’

‘Splintered. Fractured. Altogether there are eight of him.’

‘Eight?’ said Sabbath, fascinated. ‘Are you certain?’

‘I saw all of them at once. They worked in unison to kill me.’

‘Could there have been more?’

‘Possible, but I don’t think so. It was very difficult for them to be too far separated, because of the stress of the eight different sensory inputs.’

Sabbath leaned back in his chair, intrigued. ‘And it was one personality?’

‘Yes, not like octuplets. Some independence of movement, obviously, but a basic integration of physical and mental self.’

‘So the trick with the pinprick...’

‘If you pricked one, they all bled. If you hit one, the other seven felt the blow.’

‘We have no way of knowing how long he’s been like this?’

‘No. He’s only been touring with his act four months. I couldn’t trace him before that. I don’t think he’s the only example, either.’

‘Of the fracturing?’

The Doctor nodded. ‘There was a murder case only a few months ago. Eight people, an adult man and seven male children –’ He stopped. He jerked around to face the door through which the young woman had gone.

‘Interesting,’ murmured Sabbath.

The Doctor turned slowly back to him. ‘You hadn’t figured it out?’

‘I’m sorry to admit it, but no.’

‘So you just took into service a woman you thought was a mass-murderer of children?’

Sabbath shrugged. ‘I rescued her from a state institution. This is a war. All the combatants can’t be choirboys.’

‘You know,’ said the Doctor too quietly, ‘there’s a large pool of possible recruits that falls somewhere between choirboys and child-killers.’

‘Her gift is exceptional. She can actually see things you and I need instruments to perceive. I’m not surprised to find out she didn’t kill those children. That would have to be a psychopathic act, and she shows definite signs of a moral sense – her own, to be sure, but quite strong in its way.’

‘I’m so glad she doesn’t offend your sense of categories.’

Sabbath sighed again, with genuine, not theatrical, weariness. ‘All right, ride your moral high horse. Don’t sully yourself by association with me. Your



integrity is much more important than our unity in the face of a force that might possibly unravel reality.'

I've been here before, the Doctor thought suddenly. In league with a moral monster. He strained for details, but gained only a sense of despair and helpless rage. And of fear. Falling...? It was no use. He wasn't going to remember. He stared up at the intricate plaster fretwork of the ceiling. 'My integrity...'

he said tiredly, feeling the weak, unnatural beat of his single heart. 'You've destroyed that. I'm not complete. I'm not even incomplete. I'm *separated*.'

'You're alive to be separated,' Sabbath pointed out calmly. 'Technically speaking, this is the second time I've saved your life.'

The Doctor turned his cool, distant eyes on him. 'Thank you so much,' he said quietly. 'I hope I can make you regret it.'

## Chapter Nine

The Doctor didn't make the seventeen steps back up to the flat, he collapsed about halfway. Fortunately the landlady was out and the maid busy with the washing in the cellar. He could lie in privacy, catching his breath, waiting for the tremor in his limbs to subside and enough strength to seep back into his body for him to make it up to the landing and through the door. This, at least, was his plan. It was foiled, the privacy part anyway, when the front door opened and Anji came in.

'Doctor!'

She ran up the stairs and sat beside him. He looked terrible, greyish, and his eyes were strange. When she and Fitz had found him gone from the medical lab, they had both panicked. Fitz was still out combing the streets – he knew it was futile to the point of absurdity, but he couldn't sit and do nothing. Anji, torn, had finally decided she'd be more anxious if she stayed away from the flat, wondering if the Doctor had returned and needed help, so she'd come back.

And now here he was, crumpled, eyes half shut, breathing shallowly.

'Let me help you up,' she said.

'Not yet.'

His voice was weak. That frightened her, which made her angry: 'You got up too soon, you idiot!'

'I think you're right.' He smiled at her. 'It was vanity, really. Wanted to prove I was fine.'

'And...?'

'And I'm not, obviously. Still,' he went on more cheerfully, 'I'm clearly better. Where's Fitz?'

'Out looking for you.'

He was puzzled. 'Just searching London?'

'He was *worried*. I was worried. We've spent the last few days expecting you to die any minute. Your chest was smashed. The doctor said your ribs had pierced your heart.'

'What doctor was this?'

‘In Liverpool. We brought you back from a hospital there. You were in an accident. Don’t you remember?’

‘Vaguely.’ His eyes clouded. ‘I remember the accident.’

‘What happened?’

‘Help me up.’

She supported him into the sitting room, where he fell on to the settee. She hovered, feeling foolish and helpless. ‘Do you want some food? You haven’t eaten in days.’

‘That’s right,’ he said wonderingly, as if she’d made a point that hadn’t occurred to him. ‘You know, I bet that’s one reason I feel so bad.’ He sniffed. ‘He might have at least offered me a cup of tea.’

‘Who?’

‘Sabbath.’

‘Sabbath!’ Anji felt the blood leave her face. ‘He’s here?’

The Doctor nodded soberly. ‘Oh yes.’

‘Is that where you’ve been? Seeing him?’

‘Yes. He’s taken quite a nice house in Regent’s Park. One of Nash’s. Some people insist on the best.’

‘What’s he doing here?’

‘It’s not surprising, really. He picked up the same odd readings I did.’

Her heart sank. ‘Please don’t tell me you’re going to be working together.’

‘Well,’ he commented drily, ‘it’s preferable to my running about like a fool fixing everything only to find out he’s been playing me like a pinball machine.’ The blue of his eyes looked suddenly chill and airless. Anji glanced away.

‘You can’t trust him.’

‘No, of course not,’ the Doctor said absently, his mind on something else. ‘You know, he seems to have the strangest ideas about how time works. I don’t think he’s got it right at all. Of course, we had the discussion in Spain and I was still a bit rattled from the crisis with the TARDIS. Perhaps I misunderstood his point. I may be wronging him.’

‘Not possible.’

‘It won’t do to underestimate him. He’s brilliant in his way.’

‘He’s an arrogant creep.’

‘Don’t be too hard on him. It’s a difficult life when you can’t find anyone to take you as seriously as you take yourself.’ The Doctor cocked his head. ‘That must be Fitz.’ A moment later, she heard the footsteps on the stairs and Fitz banged in. He glared at the Doctor.

'Here you are! I've been all over the bloody place not knowing what had happened to you. You ever hear of leaving someone a note?'

'Sorry, Da,' murmured the Doctor. To forestall Fitz hitting him with something, Anji rang for tea.

The landlady – a motherly woman whose innate warmth was mixed with an air of having seen it all – brought up a tray laden with sandwiches and cakes. The Doctor sat up, pleased as a child.

'Just the thing!'

The landlady smiled and set down the tray. As she withdrew, she gave Anji a sympathetic glance of solidarity in the face of male eccentricity. Anji smiled uncertainly. She disliked being waited on, but she had discovered it was the only way to get anything to eat or drink. The one time she had tried to venture helpfully into the downstairs kitchen, the landlady had politely but firmly run her out, and she'd been left with the impression of having done something insulting.

Fitz dug in heartily and the Doctor wolfed down several cakes. Anji gingerly nibbled on some salmon. She had a bad feeling about the way things were heading; it cut into her appetite.

'So where were you?' said Fitz with his mouth full. 'I've been running around like a right fool, asking policemen if they'd seen you.'

'He's been to see Sabbath,' said Anji glumly.

'Sabbath!' Fitz dropped a slice of ham. 'Oh bloody hell. Why's he here?'

'The same reason we are,' said the Doctor. 'There's something wrong with time.'

'They're going to be working together,' Anji said unenthusiastically.

'Oh no.' Fitz clinked down his teacup. 'Terrible idea. One of your worst.'

'No it isn't,' said the Doctor patiently. 'We're combining forces against a common threat.'

'But he...' Fitz faltered. 'You know what he...'

'Yes,' said the Doctor flatly, 'I know what he did to me. It saved my life, you know.'

Anji snorted. 'I find it hard to believe that was his primary motive.'

The Doctor sighed and rubbed his face. 'It wasn't. He needed my – He needed the heart.'

'Needed it?' Fitz echoed faintly as Anji stared. 'What for?'

For a moment it looked as if the Doctor wasn't going to answer: his face closed up and got that remote look. But he must just have been trying to

think how to explain things simply, for he said matter-of-factly enough, 'Human beings have difficulties travelling in something Sabbath calls Deep Time.'

'Anj and me don't. Do we?'

'Not in the TARDIS. But the *Jonah*, for all its sophistication, isn't on a level with the TARDIS.'

'Why didn't he just steal the TARDIS then, instead of...'

'Instead of stealing my heart,' the Doctor finished ironically. 'What a phrase. I suppose I'll have to start sending him Valentines. I imagine it's because removing my heart was a fairly spur-of-the-moment idea, not some deep-laid plot. He realised what was wrong with me and how to save my life and how to benefit himself all at the same time.'

'I don't care how good a slant you put on it,' Anji broke in. 'I think he'd like it if you were dead.'

'Possibly,' the Doctor acknowledged.

'Well, then.'

'Well then, what?' he said testily. 'I'm not going on holiday with him. I've worked with worse.'

'What does he want, anyway?' said Fitz, heading off the argument. 'What's his master plan?'

The Doctor stretched out again, hands behind his head, face speculative. 'Excellent question. I've been pondering it myself. As near as I can work out, he thinks the fabric of time is exceedingly fragile and can be pulled apart if too many timelines proliferate. So, obviously, he's against chaos. But it goes further than that.'

'He's a control freak,' said Anji. 'His way is the only way, and everyone else is a fool.'

'Well, that's a fairly commonplace form of self-worship, and I admit he subscribes to it. But I think there's more going on.'

'He's got partners,' said Fitz. 'Or colleagues. Something like that.'

'Or employers,' Anji said. 'Though I'm sure he imagines he's in charge.'

'Yes,' mused the Doctor. 'That's troubling. Who could they be?'

'Whoever they are, they apparently don't want you harmed,' said Anji, 'which I find troubling.'

'Really?' He smiled at her. 'I think it's rather reassuring.'

'Doctor, for once, please look on the dark side. If these people, beings, whatever, wished you well, they'd have introduced themselves. They want you kept safe for *them*.'

‘To use me against my will to further their sinister machinations? Bit melodramatic, don’t you think?’

‘Your *life* is melodramatic. And more than a bit!’

‘So,’ Fitz broke in, ‘how does your heart help Sabbath?’

The Doctor sighed, more angrily than tiredly. ‘It’s complicated. Essentially, it gives him some of the physical advantages that apparently were bred into my people over millennia, of time travel.’

‘And it’s working all right?’

‘I dare say there’ve been some surprises.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘For one thing, the only reason I wasn’t killed in Liverpool is because one of my hearts was still beating.’

‘Huh?’ said Fitz.

Anji frowned: ‘Still beating?’

‘Still beating. Just not in *my* body.’

‘Christ!’ said Fitz. Anji looked sick. ‘You mean he. . . I thought you meant he was just using it as some weird biological navigating tool.’

‘He is. Only hooked up to him instead of his ship.’

‘Oh God,’ muttered Anji. ‘Oh God. I think I. . . How can you possibly have anything more to do with him?’

‘You’re missing the upside,’ said the Doctor patiently. ‘It’s the reason I’m alive.’ He watched as they struggled with the idea. ‘I owe him my life.’

‘By accident!’ Anji insisted.

‘Alive is alive.’

Fitz rose and went over to the liquor cabinet. ‘Anj?’

‘Scotch, please,’ she said faintly. The Doctor reached for the teapot. ‘What happened to you in Liverpool?’ she asked, unable to stay with the present subject. ‘I’ll never believe you had that clumsy accident.’

‘No,’ the Doctor admitted, pouring himself the last of the tea. ‘Someone tried to kill me. Several someones, actually.’

Fitz groaned. ‘Might have known. Someone’s *always* trying to kill you.’

‘Yes. I arouse hostility. Funny, isn’t it? I have such nice manners.’

‘Why?’ said Anji.

‘I must have been well brought up.’

‘Why,’ she said with overelaborate patience, ‘did someone try to kill you?’

‘And who was it?’ added Fitz, returning and handing Anji her drink. She noticed his was already half gone.

‘The magician, Octave. I wanted to help him, but I think he found my knowing his secret too frightening to deal with.’

‘You said “several someones”,’ said Anji.

‘Well, that was his secret. He was several people.’

Fitz frowned. ‘You mean like those split personalities you were talking about?’

The Doctor shook his head. ‘That’s several personalities in one body. This is one personality in several bodies.’

‘One personality. . .’ Anji felt something creep along her spine. ‘That’s not. . . How did he get that way?’

‘That’s what I need to find out.’

‘Hang on,’ said Fitz. ‘You’re not going to go see him again?’

‘I have to know what happened.’

‘You don’t even know he’s connected with this time problem.’

‘Oh he is.’

‘Well, you’re not going alone!’

The Doctor smiled. ‘All right then,’ he said, so agreeably that Anji could only think that, of course, if he wanted to slip away from them he could and would do it in a minute. He wriggled down into the pillows. ‘Now, tell me what’s been happening. Have you heard from Chiltern?’

‘No,’ said Anji.

He frowned slightly. ‘That’s odd.’

‘We haven’t been to see him or Miss Jane,’ she said. ‘We didn’t want to leave while you were, uh. . .’

‘Yes, I understand. Anything else? Anything unusual at all?’

They looked at each other doubtfully.

‘Well,’ said Fitz, ‘there was that telescope thingy at the funfair.’

‘That was odd,’ she agreed.

‘In what way?’

‘It was this little room,’ said Fitz, ‘with six –’

‘No, eight.’

‘– eight sides and this mirror table in the centre, and there was this sort of, more of a periscope thingy, actually, and it –’

‘It caught moving images from outside the room and projected them on to the table surface.’ The Doctor had momentarily seemed interested, but now he shrugged. ‘A camera obscura.’

‘What’s that?’

A Victorian amusement based on the physical principle that if you let light through a pinhole into a dark room it will project an inverted image from outside on to the wall. The pinhole and lens that turns the image right side up again are in what you called the periscope, and the table top serves as a screen. They were quite an attraction before the age of motion pictures.'

'What does the name mean?' said Anji. '“Hidden Chamber”?'

'Well, “Lightless Chamber” maybe. It's usually just translated “Dark Room”. As an experiment in optics it predates the camera, and you can see how the name was transferred –'

'Hang on,' said Fitz, not keen for a lecture on the history of the camera that he probably wouldn't follow half of anyway. 'It wasn't exactly like that. We were seeing marshy fields, and some cottages. So it wasn't showing us what was outside –'

'– because outside was the fair,' finished the Doctor. 'Right.' He sat up. 'Let's go.'

'There seem to be at least two manifestations of the time problem showing up in human beings,' the Doctor said in the cab. 'The first is that people with certain forms of psychosis have developed abnormally sensitive temporal perception.'

'Like Miss Jane seeing the future,' said Fitz. 'So she's bonkers?'

'Well,' the Doctor's tone became slightly acerbic, 'that somewhat oversimplifies it. Certainly, her mind doesn't work in the ordinary way.'

'Well, how does it work, then? Isn't there a bunch of her?'

'Not really. More as if the core personality shattered, and then new persons grew around each fragment. She's one being, but fractured so that she can't ever exist altogether in the present – one or another of the personalities will always be “out”, and the others suppressed.'

'And what's the second manifestation?' said Anji.

'Octave's an example of that, and as I said, he's just the opposite. He's been fractured so that he exists physically in simultaneous multiple presents.'

'How?'

'I suspect a time-travel experiment went wrong.'

'You mean he broke up when he tried to use a time machine?' said Fitz. 'What was he trying to do – travel to a lot of different times all at once?'

'And where'd it come from?' said Anji.

'I don't know,' the Doctor sighed. 'I don't know what Octave was attempting, and I don't know where the machine came from. There didn't used... ' He shut



his eyes and passed his hand over them, as if he had a sudden headache. 'It wasn't always like this,' he muttered. 'Time travel used to be restricted.'

'By whom?' said Anji.

The Doctor didn't open his eyes. His face looked blank and lost. 'I don't remember.' And he was silent the rest of the way to the Crystal Palace.

In fact, Anji discovered when they got there and she tugged his sleeve, he'd fallen asleep. He woke up bright-eyed – 'Are we there? I love funfairs!' – and hopped enthusiastically out of the cab. Talk about your mood swings, she thought, following. Chiltern should study *him*. Maybe it wasn't just that being unstable made you more sensitive to time, maybe it worked the other way round too, and being sensitive to time, let alone travelling in it, made you unstable. Oh, that was silly. She wasn't unstable. Was she? And what about Fitz? She glanced at Fitz, shambling along uncomfortably in his Victorian suit, and decided maybe it would be better just to abandon this line of thought.

The Black Chamber of Secrets was shut up, with a sign on the door announcing it wouldn't open for an hour. 'Oh, too bad,' the Doctor said unconvincingly. He clapped his hands together and gazed around. 'Where's the roundabout?'

They located and rode the roundabout. Also the merry-go-round, the swan boat ride, the balloon ascent, a rickety rail contraption called The Whip Of Doom, the sailing ships, and a gondola-car switchback. They looked for a while for a helter-skelter till the Doctor remembered it wouldn't be invented till 1905.

'No dodgems yet either,' he said mournfully. 'Not till the 'twenties.'

'And none of those turn-you-upside-down thingies,' said Fitz in the same tone.

Anji, who had had quite enough whirling, steered them back towards Scale's exhibit. Approaching from a new direction, they passed a showfront right beside the Black Chamber of Secrets that she hadn't noticed earlier, and for a second she was brought up short by the paintings in exceptionally vivid colours of grotesque human figures – a man with only half a torso, a bearded figure in a gown, an armless, legless creature puffing on a hookah, like a parody of the Caterpillar in *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland*. The signs proclaimed NATURE'S TRAGIC AND MYSTERIOUS ACCIDENTS and SIGHTS TERRIBLE AND WONDERFUL. Anji looked away angrily. 'How can anyone stare at those poor people? It's patronising and rude and cruel.'

'They have to earn their living,' said the Doctor mildly. 'If the Victorian public were more delicate about these things, the poor freaks would be doomed to the workhouse.'

'I don't like being stared at because I'm different.'

'But you never control the situation. These folk do. They make the public pay to, literally, patronise them.'

'Looks like Scale's back,' said Fitz, a bit apprehensively. Sure enough, the dissipated proprietor was once again slouched in his chair by the open door. The Doctor examined him for a moment before approaching. As they came over, Scale straightened up and attempted a welcoming smile. 'Wonders inside. Impossible visions of the unexpected. The laws of time themselves –' He squinted at Fitz and Anji. 'Seen you before, haven't I?'

'We told our mate how great it was,' said Fitz hurriedly. 'He couldn't wait.'

Scale looked the Doctor up and down. 'Quite the toff, ain't you? No offence, sir,' he added hastily, remembering that these were potential paying customers.

'None taken,' said the Doctor. Anji noticed that this courtesy gave him, another black mark with Scale. She suddenly didn't want to go back inside the dark little room, no matter what new sights appeared on the mirrored table.

'I'll stay out here, if you don't mind,' she murmured. 'I need the air.'

'Well, suit yourself,' said Scale rudely. 'It's not as if I run this place to make a living.' He was only slightly mollified when the Doctor put an extra coin in his hand. 'Come in, then.' He stood aside ungraciously.

'So what's on today?' said Fitz as Scale turned down the lamp. 'Any hunters or cows?'

'We'll see,' Scale said sullenly. The Doctor had gone right to the table and was looking at the scene it showed with interest, though when Fitz joined him, there was nothing in particular to see, just the same cottages and marshy area.

'Where did you get this?'

Scale's eyes darted from one to the other of them uneasily. 'It were mine,' he said aggrievedly. 'I come by it honest.'

'Yes, yes, I'm sure you did. But where?'

'I had it off an old Eye-talian carny man. He said it were Swiss.' The Doctor snorted. 'That's what he said!'

'It's no more Swiss than I am. Tell me,' the Doctor turned his pale eyes on Scale, 'where's the rest of it?'

Scale's face hardened. 'How'd you know there were more of it?'

'You said something yesterday about having most of it stolen,' said Fitz.

'I did.' Scale was suddenly lachrymose. 'It's robbed I was.'

'Where?' said the Doctor.

'Down in Devon just a few months back. We was wintering there, and I took one glass away to clean, and all the others was stolen. Oh it were hard, sir, it

were hard.’

‘How many went missing?’

‘There was eight to begin. This is the only one left.’

‘And how did you have it set up before? Not like this, surely.’

‘No, sir. As a hall of mirrors. Here,’ Scale became suspicious, ‘why’re you so bloody interested?’

‘A hall of mirrors?’ said the Doctor, ignoring the question. ‘And what did it show? Not the usual thing, I’ll wager.’

Scale abruptly lit the lamp. ‘Show’s over.’

The Doctor paid no attention. ‘What is this?’ he said, leaning over the railing to tap the table with his forefinger. ‘It’s not like any glass I’ve ever seen.’

‘I said, show’s over.’

‘Your hall of mirrors,’ said the Doctor. ‘When people entered it, what did they see? Their futures or their pasts?’

Scale was across the little room so fast Fitz didn’t even have time to react. He got the Doctor by his collar and pushed him against the wall. ‘How do you know so much about it?’

Fitz started to step forward, a little uncertainly since he had no real idea of how to tackle the much larger Scale. The Doctor’s eyes flicked towards him warningly. ‘I’m by way of being a scholar of time,’ he told Scale, unruffled. ‘Horology, chronology, temporal aerodynamics, also known as Why Time Flies. Did you ever wonder that? It might just as well flow. Like that river in your mirror. That’s the Thames, isn’t it?’

Scale’s hand tightened. ‘Might be.’

‘Oh I think it definitely is. Though not exactly the same river. You know what Herodotus said about stepping in rivers twice. You need my help.’

‘And you need a good thrashing.’

Scale raised his fist. Fitz darted forward to shove him off-balance, even as the Doctor slipped from his grip like water, and as a result Fitz and the Doctor collided and went down together, knocking into Scale and toppling him too. For a moment, there was a confused scrambling. Fitz smacked into something hard, the Doctor and Scale yelled in unison, and there was a floor-shaking crash. Fitz covered his head. When, after a second, nothing had fallen on him, he peeked out and saw that the table was on its side. The mirror had slid off the trestle legs and slammed to the floor on its back. As he got up, Fitz was amazed to see the glass hadn’t even cracked.

The door banged open and Fitz met Anji’s alarmed eyes. Scale had rushed to his precious mirror, abandoning his assault on the Doctor – Fitz hauled him up,

and he and Anji pulled him outside. A crowd was forming. An enormous figure detached itself from the throng and stepped forward. Fitz, Anji, the Doctor, and behind them the pursuing Scale, froze, looking up at a bald man in a leather tunic, with arms thick as logs.

‘What’s all this, then?’ said the apparition. Fitz put him at at least seven feet.

‘N-nothing,’ whimpered Scale.

‘Looks like something.’

‘Really,’ said the Doctor, ‘it’s all right.’ His voice sounded wheezy. Fitz looked at him and saw with alarm that he was ashy-white. The giant narrowed his eyes at the Doctor, then spoke over his head to Scale.

‘The thing about you, Micah, see, you haven’t got a showman’s personality. I always say, what’s the sense of going into this sort of business if you haven’t a showman’s personality?’

Without another word, Scale faded back into his octagonal room and shut the door.

‘That’s all,’ said the giant to the curious crowd. ‘All over now. But I recommend to you an exhibition of the wonders of nature, of which I am a foremost example.’ He pointed to the gaudy neighbouring showfront. ‘Temporarily on our teabreak, but bound to please and amaze when we return in just half an hour just half an hour, ladies and gentlemen, for the thrill of a lifetime. I personally have been known to lift a full-grown bull. Will I do it again this afternoon? Come and see.’

Fitz and Anji had leaned the Doctor against the wall of the Black Chamber. ‘I’m all right,’ he kept muttering irritably though he didn’t straighten up. Anji noticed he held his coat closed. But when the giant turned towards them again, he stepped forward and offered a hand. ‘Thank you.’

‘My pleasure, sir,’ said the man, enfolding the Doctor’s hand in one with fingers like sausages. His face changed, and he peered at the Doctor curiously.

‘The pleasure is all ours,’ said the Doctor. ‘I think introductions are in order. I’m the Doctor and these are my friends Anji Kapoor and Fitz Kreiner. And you are...?’

The man pointed proudly to a boldly lettered sign on the neighbouring showfront: SEE HUGO THE HUGE – THE HUMAN JUGGERNAUT. ‘That’s me. Forgive me, sir,’ he looked closely at the Doctor again, ‘but are you all right?’

‘Fine,’ said the Doctor pleasantly, and fell over.

Anji thought she wasn’t going to be able to bear it if the Doctor kept fainting like this. Was there any way of locking him in the TARDIS? she wondered frantically, as the Human Juggernaut caught the Doctor mid-fall and lifted him in

his arms as easily as if he were carrying a child. Fitz began to assure concerned passers-by that it was all right, their friend had these spells. She followed the giant up the steps to the rococo entrance to the freaks' hall.

After the ornate showfront and doorway, the inside was surprisingly plain: passages defined by dark blue curtains, interrupted periodically by cubicles containing small raised platforms. These were empty except for one in which a clean-cut, dark-haired man whose body stopped around his fourth ribs was balanced serenely on a wooden chair, arms folded, napping.

'That's Johnny Bind, the Human Torso,' said the Juggernaut conversationally. 'He's a twin – half a twin, he'd say – and they had a great act together. His brother was regular size, you see. So he'd get into a casket, assistant would fake sawing the casket in half, Johnny'd jump out and scamper around on his hands. Didn't half fit people. Grown men would faint,' he finished proudly.

'I'm sure,' Anji murmured.

'Then his brother got married and left the business. A shame, really, but, of course, not everyone's cut out for it.'

'Like Mr Scale.'

'He's bitter, is Scale. Used to have a gorgeous hall of mirrors. Someone pinched it.'

'Yes, he said. What was so special about it?'

'Well, it was peculiar, to be sure. Strange. You never knew what you'd see in those mirrors. I only went through it once myself. That was enough.'

Anji was about to ask for details, but they had come into a long room that ran across the back of the building. This was crammed with trunks, boxes, props, tins of paint, rolled canvas, ropes and a rack of costumes. At one end a space had been cleared around a little portable stove on which an iron kettle steamed, and around this, on boxes and rolled-up canvas, several people were seated having tea. They stared at Anji, not entirely welcomingly. She lowered her eyes, embarrassed at intruding and unsure where to look, for every one of the tea-drinkers was physically extreme. She had glimpsed the bearded woman who was advertised outside, a hugely fat man covered with tattoos, a pinheaded woman, a midget and a man with neither arms nor legs smoking a cigarette. She wasn't paying these people for the privilege of gawking at them; she had trespassed into their privacy.

'What's this then, Hugo?' said the bearded woman suspiciously.

'Micah hurt a chap.'

There was a general murmur of sympathy; Micah was apparently not well liked.

'I'm sure it's not bad,' said Anji, as much to reassure herself as them. 'My friend's been ill.'

Everyone was moving around, piling up some rugs and blankets for a makeshift bed. In Hugo's arms, the Doctor hung bonelessly limp, as if he might suddenly flow to the floor in a puddle. Anji had never seen a human body sag like that; no human being had that sort of muscular-skeletal frame. For a frightened instant, she felt more kinship with the man with no limbs than she did with the Doctor.

'Consumptive, is he?' said the bearded woman.

'Oh no,' said Anji, though, looking at the Doctor's white, thin face she understood the diagnosis. 'He's had an operation,' she continued, feeling as if she were babbling. 'It made him weak. Thank you for your kindness.'

Hugo carefully laid the Doctor on his back. His coat fell open, and Anji saw smears of blood on his shirt. Scale must have ruptured some of the operation incisions. 'It's nothing,' she blurted in relief. 'Just some burst stitches.'

An examination by the bearded woman confirmed this. She looked curiously at the hard, dead-white keloidal ridge on the right side of the Doctor's chest. Anji stared too. She had never actually seen Sabbath's surgical handiwork. She felt slightly ill.

'What's up, then?' said Fitz in her ear.

'Where've you been?'

'Had to reassure this copper everything was all right. Is it?'

'I think so.'

As if to confirm this, the Doctor opened his eyes. He looked around, then followed everyone's gaze to his chest: 'Hm.'

'"Hm"?' said Anji. 'That's all you have to say?'

'Oops?' tried the Doctor. 'Oh, gosh?'

'Smart lad, en't he?' said the bearded woman, unimpressed.

'I am, in fact, quite intelligent,' said the Doctor. 'You're not seeing me at my best. Tell her,' he said to Fitz.

Fitz said to Anji, 'I think he's still a bit woozy.'

'Hello,' the Doctor said to everyone. 'Sorry to have interrupted your teabreak.'

'Imagine you'd like some tea yourself,' said Hugo. 'And maybe a doctor.'

'Neither, thank you.' The Doctor sat up, pulling his coat shut. Fitz and Anji started to protest, but he stopped them with a glance. 'This looks much worse than it is. It's very kind of you to have looked after me like this. Thank you again, Mr...?'

‘Hugo Little, at your service.’

‘Stage name?’ said Fitz. Anji kicked his ankle. The giant looked affronted.

‘Never have chosen anything so obvious. But it’s the name my father left to me, and I’m proud to keep it.’

The Doctor’s beautiful manners had surfaced. He introduced himself and Anji and Fitz to the others. The bearded woman was just Vera, but everyone else had a title: Henrietta the Narrow-Minded, Reginald the Colossus, Rudy the Dynamic Diminutive, and Wobry the Human Serpent. The Doctor seemed to know something about carnival life, as he did about so many unexpected topics, and he talked shop, particularly with Hugo and Vera, about the rigours of touring, the changes in fairs since the steam-powered rides had come in, and the arbitrary and idiotic regulations imposed by village councils who knew nothing about the practical realities of running a fair. Everyone had tea. Wobry was curious about India and Anji was sorry to have to disappoint him by explaining she’d been born in London. ‘Like to travel there,’ he said, rolling his cigarette to the other side of his mouth. ‘See those fakirs. *They* know something.’

‘Tell me,’ the Doctor said to Hugo, ‘this being a relatively small performing world – do you know anything about a fellow with a conjuring act who calls himself Octave?’

Hugo and the others exchanged sombre glances. ‘Only that he’s dead,’ the giant said.

‘Dead?’ repeated the Doctor. What colour he had blanched out of his face and Anji was afraid for a moment he was going to pass out again. ‘How? When?’

‘Last week. Dreadful thing – he was murdered. Knifed to death after his show, up in Liverpool. No one knows why. Why do you –’

But with a brief ‘Excuse me,’ the Doctor, white to the lips, had risen, slipped past him and was gone. Making awkward thank-yous, Anji and Fitz hurried after him. They came out of the back of the exhibit building, next to one of the towering glass walls. The Doctor’s green coat was just visible vanishing into the crowd, and they ran to catch up. Hugo and Vera stood in the doorway, looking after them.

‘His blood was queer,’ she said. ‘Queer colour. Orange-ish. And did you feel when you carried him in? His skin?’

‘Yes.’

‘Too cold. And his pulse wasn’t proper neither.’

‘No,’ said Hugo. ‘You’re right. He’s one of us.’

## Chapter Ten

The Angel-Maker worried about Sabbath. She did this unreflectively, oblivious to any irony in her concern for the welfare of a man so obviously powerful. Nor, indeed, had she had any doubts about him personally. Her faith in him was perfect. But she suspected that he had dangerous enemies, more devious and capable than he realised.

She was particularly mistrustful of the pale man with pale eyes that Sabbath called the Doctor. He was *wrong*, why couldn't Sabbath see that? He didn't *fit*. Time warped so strangely around him, the way grass rippled when a wind passed through. It hurt her head to look at him. She didn't like thinking about him either. Doing so now, she frowned and plucked at a loose thread on her bodice.

Was this Doctor perhaps one of the Gentry? They were said to be fair, and he was certainly very beautiful to the eye. His coat was green. He played tricks too, as they did, and his attitude was not respectful. But no, he must be mortal, for she could sense that he was ill and in pain. Still, there was something to him more than human. Since he was Sabbath's enemy and Sabbath might perhaps be the Devil, he could not be the Devil. So he must be one of the unfallen, on the side of Heaven. This frightened the Angel-Maker a little. She was not herself on the side of Heaven, but she doubted her strength against a representative of that kingdom.

Contemptuously, she threw aside her fear and sat up straighter. He was mortal. He could be killed. That was all that mattered. She did not understand why Sabbath would not let her kill him now. He would have to die sooner or later. Sabbath had not said so, but she knew he believed that. Yet he hesitated. He seemed. . . not fond of the Doctor, but impersonally tender towards him, as a man might be towards a sick animal. She did not understand this at all. Sick or not, he was dangerous. She sighed. She must trust Sabbath, indeed she was very foolish and disrespectful not to. His dark wisdom was simply beyond her understanding.

And yet. . . did he truly understand this Doctor? Did he know everything about him? Did he know, for example, what the Angel-Maker had glimpsed –



that when the two were together, something not unlike the distortion around the Doctor shimmered around Sabbath too? It was faint, very faint, at first she had thought it a trick of the light. But it was no trick. And her heart chilled when she remembered that she had seen it before.

It had been when he fell ill so frighteningly some ten days ago. She had been sitting on a little chair in the hallway outside the closed door of his study. He wanted her to spend her free time on things that amused her, or to study lessons he had set for her – but she didn't like to let him get too far away. She didn't like to let him out of her sight at all, but constant surveillance annoyed him, and if she tried a subterfuge such as watching from the garden, he always sensed her presence. He was tolerant of this solicitude, but discouraged it. Still, though she took his direction in all things, she could not bring herself to follow his wishes in this. Shortly after her arrival, she began to leave her bed after she was certain he slept and, though she would never have dared to open his bedroom door, stretch herself across his threshold and rest there till she heard him rise at dawn. He knew that too, of course, as he knew everything, and finally took pity on her and let her in. After that, she no longer worried in the night.

Except on nights like this one, when he worked very late. So she sat quietly in the hall, a book of *The 1001 Nights* open on her knee, reading but also alert, more alert than reading, truly, for the man behind the study door was more wonderful than anything in the stories. His ship was grander than any magic carpet, and he commanded beasts. Time itself submitted to him. And yet he could sit in a room in a house like any man. The room should explode, she thought. The house should burn. How did they contain him? And it was just as she was thinking this, as if in answer, there came a crash from the study.

She was through the door in an instant, but of course the room was not exploding. Indeed, in the light from the fire and the desk lamp, everything was quite in place and peaceful, except that she could not see Sabbath. Had he gone? Then she heard a groan from behind the desk.

He had fallen from his chair. His eyes were shut and his face pale as death. She stared at him, panicked: he was too large; she could never move him. Dropping to her knees, she pulled his handkerchief from his breast pocket, dabbed at the drops of sweat on his brow and upper lip. He was cold and his breathing was irregular and shallow. At her touch, his eyes opened slightly, but they were dull and unseeing. It was then she noticed, as he moved his head slightly and the lamplight fell more fully on him, that distortion she had seen around the Doctor.

Furiously, she called his name and shook him. She pinched him. Finally she slapped him, and slapped him again, and then began hitting him in rage and terror, her hair coming loose and falling down into her face, half-blinding her. Though she wasn't crying, she made a strange moaning noise. She clasped her hands and pummelled his chest, as if her fists were a hammer and she could knock consciousness back into him. Should she pray? But to whom or what? 'Ah, Jesus,' she gasped – she couldn't help it. 'Ah, Jesus and Mary.' No, that was wrong. That would kill him. 'Ah, the Devil!' she cried, and then, at once, he sat up so abruptly he knocked her over.

He immediately reached a hand to the edge of the desk, to keep from falling again. His face was still pale, and he looked at her confusedly. She sat up, catching her breath, pushing back her hair. It was a miracle, surely. She had prayed to the right one. He put his other hand to his chest, where she had pounded him, and winced. The ironic glint came back into his eyes and he looked at her with sardonic appreciation. 'Congratulations, my dear. You have just invented what will someday be called CPR.'

He placed both hands on the desk and, with a grunt, heaved himself to his feet. She saw the sweat break out again on his face. She sat with her clenched hands at her mouth, staring up at him. 'It was him.'

'What?' he said distractedly.

'Him. The Doctor.' He glanced down at her irritably. 'He did this.'

'Nonsense,' said Sabbath hoarsely. He moved carefully around the desk and towards the fire. She knew better than to try to help. She watched him walk slowly to the leather armchair and, equally slowly, sink into it. His damp face glistened in the firelight. He stared at the flames, breathing deeply and raggedly.

She stood up. 'It was,' she insisted stubbornly.

Without looking at her, he waved a dismissive hand. 'Leave me.'

So she returned to the hall. After a little while, she heard him moving again, towards the door that led to the back of the house from where, somehow, he could enter his ship. She knew that he would be all right there. For the first time, she noticed the dropped book sprawled on the floor. She bent and picked it up. Several pages were creased, and the spine broken.

It *had* been the Doctor, she thought now, still picking tensely at the loose thread. It *had*. He had reached out somehow and hurt Sabbath. Impulsively, she got to her feet and left her room. On the broad staircase, she stopped, gripping the banister, at the sound of voices from the study. She recognised them both: Sabbath's resonant bass, and the Doctor's tenor, strident now in

anger. She rushed down the stairs and flung open the door.

The Doctor spun around. His eyes were a hot, dark blue, like dying flames. 'Call off your pet psychopath!' he spat.

She glanced to Sabbath, who was in his chair by the cold Fireplace. He nodded at her calmly. After a last, assessing look at the Doctor, she stepped back out of the room, pulling the door to.

The Doctor wheeled again to face Sabbath. 'She killed Octave for you.'

'Of course.'

'Listen to me, you fool,' said the Doctor, pacing softly towards him. 'You've murdered our only lead.'

'I don't think you understand the situation,' said Sabbath, unperturbed. 'This isn't some mystery novel, with leads and clues. These anomalies incorporate the time disruptions in their very flesh. They have to be destroyed.'

'I don't think you understand,' said the Doctor in a voice like velvet. 'We're dealing with a time machine.'

Sabbath sat up. 'What?'

'The source and sustainer of these temporal peculiarities is a time machine.'

'None of the readings indicates the presence of anything that powerful.'

'It's a machine, you know. It can be turned *off*.'

'How can you be certain?'

'Because I *know*,' the Doctor said furiously. 'I recognise the technique.'

'What is it?'

The Doctor began to pace. 'You're familiar with optical interferometry, in which light waves are broken up and recombined for a clearer image.'

'Of course.'

'Temporal interferometry does the same thing with time.'

'You've seen this?'

'Somewhere,' said the Doctor bitterly, still pacing. 'At some time. The circumstances elude me, but I certainly know the technology. As a functional method of time travel, it proved to be a dead end.'

'That must be why I haven't heard of it.'

'No doubt,' said the Doctor drily. 'The basic idea was intriguing. Get a focus on a temporal co-ordinate in the past or future, break up the signals, and recombine them inside the machine.'

'Rather than travelling to the time period, you brought it to you.'

'And then just walked into it. Rather elegant, really.'

'And it worked?'

‘It *could* work. But the technique was very delicate and complicated – a lot of moving parts, so to speak. Absurdly easy to get wrong. At the end of the day, impractical. Use it under less than precise physical circumstances – the wrong gravity, for example – and you had something that might run time through the equivalent of a meat grinder.’

‘But the power,’ said Sabbath softly. ‘The *reach* of such an instrument.’

‘Oh yes, extraordinary.’ The Doctor took a turn around the desk. ‘Powerful enough to collapse timelines together if you happened to have some sort of megalomaniacal interest in engineering on a cosmic scale. But if the purpose was to develop usable, reliable time travel, temporal interferometry... When it went wrong it could, at the worst, tear up time itself, and at the least –’

‘– it might fracture the time traveller.’

‘Exactly.’

‘Octave had been in such a machine.’

‘That’s right.’ The Doctor stopped pacing. ‘Wouldn’t it be nice if we could ask him about it? Especially as, any day now, it might get switched on again and chew up the continuum.’

Sabbath shrugged. ‘I was working with the information I had at hand.’

‘Well, you didn’t have enough, did you?’

‘As it turns out, no. Your being so emotional about it can’t change anything.’

‘I’m not emotional – and by the way, I think the word you really want is “enraged” – because of the stupid thing you have done. I’m anticipating all the stupid things you’re going to do.’

Sabbath’s eyes half shut, lazily. ‘Be careful, Doctor.’

‘Or what?’ The Doctor leaned into Sabbath’s face. ‘You’ll take, out my other heart?’

‘Perhaps.’

‘That’s all you can do to your opponents, Sabbath: kill them. You can’t persuade them to see the rightness of your ideas, because you don’t have any ideas, just this housekeeping compulsion to tidy up the universe.’

‘You’re beginning to irritate me, Doctor.’

‘Oh,’ said the Doctor, ‘you ain’t seen nothing yet.’ And, gripping Sabbath’s hand, he changed into a seal.

At least, where the Doctor had been, there was a seal, poking its sleek black face up to Sabbath, nosing at his mouth. It was kissing him! Sabbath stood up, and the seal hit the floor with a thump and a reproachful ‘Ork!’

Sabbath looked around. For an instant, he thought he was aboard the *Jonah*. Then he realised that this was a parody of his ship, arty and over designed,

like a stage set. The copper walls were set with rows of round, non-functional rivets and hung with intricate but nonsensical gauges cased in shining brass. Wine-coloured velvet curtains framed mahogany shelves of leather-bound folios. There was a silly-looking, tinkling fountain and a dining table draped with a lace cloth.

‘Puerile,’ Sabbath said disdainfully.

He was answered by the boom of an organ that careened into a swirling frenzy of notes. With a long sigh, Sabbath crossed to a pair of double doors and pushed them open. The sound hit him like a wind: Bach’s Toccata and Fugue in D Minor. The organ was an absurd construction with a fan of golden pipes and an oval mirror above the keyboard, in which the Doctor was smiling at him, though not very cheerfully. He stopped playing and turned on the bench.

‘You know, one of the things I don’t understand about you, Sabbath, is why, if you’re from the eighteenth century and points earlier, you act like someone who read too much Jules Verne as a boy.’

‘This isn’t particularly clever,’ said Sabbath, ‘but it is impressive. How are you doing it?’

‘Oh, that old devil biodata. I sort of surfed in on your nervous system.’

‘And this was the best you could think up?’

‘I’m not thinking it up, actually. I believe I’m dreaming. Or possibly remembering.’ The Doctor examined their surroundings. ‘Or perhaps this is a gloss, a sort of commentary on your style. A movie, wasn’t it? Not that you resemble James Mason. Someone else, I can’t quite get his name. Fat, pompous fellow who once had talent but ended up as a professional interviewee on talk shows. Oh,’ the Doctor slid his legs around to the front of the bench, ‘something else I’ve been meaning to ask: why is your ship called the *Jonah*? I mean, logically, shouldn’t it be called the Whale? Then you could be inside the whale. Orwell. Much more interesting writer than Verne.’

Sabbath stepped forward. ‘I want you out of my mind.’

‘Should have thought of that before you moved my heart into your body. This connection wasn’t my idea. In fact, I blocked it out for months. But now that I’ve realised it exists,’ the Doctor smiled broadly, ‘here I am.’

‘Get out,’ Sabbath said quietly.

‘Shortly. I don’t like it in here any more than you like having me here. It’s a nasty place. And so *small*.’

Sabbath took another step forward. The Doctor stood up, face set.

‘No more killing, Sabbath.’

‘Fine,’ said Sabbath agreeably. Just one exception,’ and he lunged for the Doctor. But in that moment, the ship lurched wildly, and he slid into the wall.

‘Time squid astern!’ cried the Doctor as he was thrown through the air.

‘What?!’

‘I mean – Oof!’ The Doctor hit the wall beside Sabbath. ‘I mean, *giant* time squid astern.’

‘What the hell is a giant time squid!’ Sabbath roared.

‘A big one,’ the Doctor assured him. ‘Very, very big. Look.’

He pointed. A huge black tentacle writhed past a porthole. Sabbath groaned.

‘Stop this!’ he yelled in exasperation. ‘You’re embarrassing yourself!’

The ship lurched again and the two men rolled across the floor and hit the other wall. The Doctor landed on top. ‘No I’m not, actually,’ he panted. ‘I feel fine.’

‘Well, you shouldn’t!’ Sabbath flung him off. ‘This is pathetic!’

‘Surely not,’ the Doctor objected. ‘“Tacky” perhaps. What Fitz might describe as “wankerish” – well, I suppose that means the same thing as pa-’

Sabbath grabbed him by the throat. ‘Shut up!’

The Doctor gazed up at him limpidly. ‘It’s only a dream,’ he wheezed, then the ship lurched for a third time and threw them to opposite ends of the room. It also turned upside down.

‘Tell me,’ the Doctor gasped, untangling himself from the chandelier, ‘isn’t this situation so completely stupid that it’s *beyond* irony?’

‘Yes,’ said Sabbath grimly, tossing the organ bench off him.

‘Then how do you plan to deal with it?’

Sabbath lay catching his breath. ‘I suppose,’ he said after a moment, ‘that I can’t actually kill you in this particular situation.’

‘You can’t kill me at all. As long as my heart is beating in your chest, I can’t die. You’ve made me immortal. And without even writing a poem.’

‘It was not my plan,’ Sabbath said drily.

‘The doctrine of unintended consequences,’ said the Doctor. A gigantic squid tentacle crashed through the porthole. ‘And there’s another one.’

Water churned into the room as the tentacle thrashed wildly about. There was another tilt, and the Doctor and Sabbath again found themselves side by side.

Sabbath spit out water. ‘Isn’t it time for you to wake up?’

‘Er,’ said the Doctor apologetically, ‘I mis-spoke earlier. It’s not exactly a dream, really. More of what you might call an altered state.’

They were yelling over the crashing, water. The tentacle twisted and swiped towards them and they rolled away together into another heap. This time Sabbath landed on top, looking down at the soaked and dripping Doctor, into his depthless, alien eyes. 'I mean it,' the Doctor said, in a voice as cold as the water overwhelming them. 'No. More. Killing.' And with sudden, surprising strength, he thrust Sabbath away from him and into the coils of the monster.

Cold. Crushing. But mostly silent. Sabbath remembered that. He was struggling not to inhale water and to keep the coiling limb of the beast that had pulled him under from snapping his spine, but there was no sound. It made everything oddly peaceful. Deep, cold, infinite silence. And shadows. There was a little light, broken up near the surface of the water, not penetrating very far. Yes, he remembered that too, though he had been far deeper then, those centuries ago when other enemies had tried to drown him. And then, very slowly, he realised that he *was* deeper. The light was dim and small, far away as a star. It was a star. It was the sun, on that brilliant English day of his first death by water. He was sinking not just through the water, but through the years. It was his past gripping him now, trying to strangle him with memory, with old panic, and terror, with the fear of death. . .

Sabbath gasped. Cold filled his lungs. This was an illusion. He was not in water. He could not drown. The cold slid into his lungs. He choked. No! This could not – could *not* –

'Wakey, wakey,' said the Doctor's voice in his ear. Sabbath flinched from its closeness. He opened his eyes. He was in his armchair. The Doctor was perched on the small chair opposite. They were both perfectly dry.

'Well done,' Sabbath said expressionlessly.

'Do you really think so? I thought it was a bit cheesy myself. But thank you. By the way, don't try it yourself. You haven't the brain. I don't mean the intelligence, I mean the brain. Yours isn't structured for the job.'

Sabbath stared at the beautiful, unreadable face. The Doctor looked back pleasantly, sitting up straight, his slender hands resting on his thighs. His eyes were once more like what Sabbath was used to, whatever that was. Was there anything human at all in there? Or was it just a case of splendid mimicry? 'Was that supposed to frighten me into doing things your, way?'

'No,' said the Doctor. 'I did it because. . . There's a twentieth-century American word, I don't know whether you're familiar with it. "Jerk." I did it because you're a jerk.'

'You *are* taking things personally,' said Sabbath with a thin smile. 'Yes,' the Doctor acknowledged. 'Perhaps I am.' He stood up and started for the door.

'I knew you wouldn't kill me.'

The Doctor turned. 'Oh,' he said softly, 'did you? Were you absolutely certain?'

For a moment they just looked at each other again. At last Sabbath said, 'Never trust anyone.'

'Good advice,' said the Doctor, and left.



## Chapter Eleven

Micah Scale did not consider himself a fortunate man. On the contrary, he spent most of his time in various states of self-pity, these being resentment, despair, maudlin sorrow, envy and viciousness. He blamed these states and any moral failings that might accompany them on the theft of his precious mirror-maze, though in reality he had been exactly the same before that catastrophe had given him an excuse for his character.

Scale's disgruntlement was aggravated by the irony of knowing who his malefactor was. This had not really been so hard to figure out, as the man had stood out from the other visitors – a gentleman, educated, and he'd asked a lot of questions. So when the mirrors went missing, Scale was certain where they had gone. He hadn't any proof, though, and even if he had, he knew what his chances would be accusing a man on a so much higher social scale of such an absurd theft.

With more resource and courage than he usually showed in his dealings with life, Scale had traced and attempted to confront the thief. Humbly, to be sure, with much cringing and wheedling. After being turned from the door, he wrote grovelling letters. When they produced only silence, he wrote slightly sterner letters. Somewhat to his surprise, these resulted in an interview. The man denied everything, of course, and told Scale he was only dealing with him to stop his being a nuisance. He then handed over what even Scale admitted was a very fair sum of money and told him he wanted never to hear from him again. He had eyes like ice, and Scale understood the threat behind the remark. Any thoughts of trying to sell the mirror he still possessed vanished from his mind. He was certain the man didn't know one was missing – it was almost impossible to count them properly when the maze was set up, reflecting each other as they did in such deceiving multiples – and after that disturbing interview, he'd decided simply to take the money and keep quiet.

However, several weeks later when he'd drunk and gambled the payment away, he began to feel differently. His grievance returned. He brooded long over his single mirror and whatever scenes it chose to show him. He wept sentimentally and picked fights. He had been wronged by fate, he told himself

over bottles of cheap gin. The gin frequently made him sick, and that was fate's fault too. Finally, one night, almost too drunk to walk, he had gone to the man's house again, only to discover it shut up. Peering through windows, he could just discern furniture – the place wasn't deserted then. Before he could explore further, a dog started baying on the other side of the house and he decided that prudent withdrawal was perhaps the best plan.

A little inquiry in the village informed him that the man had gone up to his main residence in London. It was simple enough to find him there as he made no attempt to hide. At this point, however, Scale hit an impasse. What could he do? He had no bargaining card, no way either to get his mirrors back – not very likely anyway, he admitted – or wring more money from their present possessor.

Scale was cunning enough to have figured out that the mirrors' value to the man who had stolen them (he continued to characterise it this way to himself, in spite of having been paid) had nothing to do with their value as a carnival attraction but was linked somehow to the strange scenes they periodically showed. And he knew, because people who had been through the maze sometimes told him, that on occasion these were scenes from other times. This was enough to have made the maze talked about and a great attraction. (Who could say, if he still had it, what fortune he might not be making?) And now this nosy stranger had come asking him questions, the same sort of questions as the thief had. What did he know? And – at this thought, Scale, who had been bending sullenly over a bottle, sat up a little – how valuable would that knowledge be to the man who had the mirrors?

So Scale followed the stranger and his friends back to their flat and then hung around in the street, uncertain exactly what to do next. This was decided for him when the stranger rushed out of the flat again and hailed a cab. Scale followed him once more, and watched him enter a mansion in the park.

The mansion gave Scale pause. This was money. a grand lot of it. Was the stranger perhaps working for the mansion's owner? It was worth investigation. He determined to wait and explore the great house. If nothing else, perhaps some silver or jewellery would repay him for his trouble.

He watched the stranger come out of the house again, much more quietly than he had gone in but somehow, Scale could tell, still angry. He was just as glad to have shifted his focus to the fellow's possible employer. True, Scale had knocked him around, but it hadn't been as easy as it should have been considering the disparity in their size, and... there was something unsettling about him. Scale couldn't put his finger on it. It reminded him of the way he

felt when, hurrying down a set of stairs, he'd miss one and for a moment tread on air. A sudden disorientation, a catch in his stomach, the beginning of fear.

Scale waited for at least an hour after the last light in the house flickered out before he carefully approached. During his vigil, he had watched the police patrols go by and gained a sense of their schedule: he had the area to himself for at least another quarter of an hour, and it didn't take him anything like that long to hurry around to the back wall and climb over it. In the silent privacy of the garden, he stood for a minute, letting his eyes adjust to the darkness. The odour of boxwood made him wrinkle his nose – just like rich people to have in their fancy grounds something that smelled like cat piss.

After a few minutes, he could make out a pale path leading to the house. This proved to be of crushed stone, so he walked beside it on the soundless grass. Glass doors opened into the house, and to Scale's contemptuous delight one was ajar. Fools deserved to be robbed. If Scale had kept up with scientific theories, he would have thought of himself as fulfilling a necessary Darwinian function as he slipped inside.

The room was much darker than the garden, and again he stood still for a moment, blinking and listening. No sound at all. There was a piece of furniture beside him – he put out his hand and felt papers. A desk. Not likely he'd find anything he wanted in a room with a desk. There might be a safe, but Scale had no skill with safes. Dimly, he made out a blacker rectangle against the room's blackness – another door. He moved cautiously towards this. It too was open, and he stepped through on to a thick rug. Bit of luck, that. He edged to his right. What was this, then? A sideboard? And this on it? A metal tray and tea service – silver, he had no doubt.

His heart almost stopped when the lamp flared up.

Standing in the door was the biggest man he'd ever seen. Some tiny, cool part of Scale's mind told him that this wasn't true, the fellow wasn't a giant, not like Hugo – but the rest of him stood paralysed in open-mouthed fear. The man's hair was cropped short against his massive skull and he had the neck and shoulders of a bull. He wasn't moving, just watching Scale with black, brilliant eyes that glistened in the light of the lamp he held. Scale heard himself make a squeaky, gurgling sound. He jetted out his knife. The next instant, the weapon fell noiselessly to the rug as, calm and quick as a snake, the man simply reached out; closed a fist around Scale's hand, and squeezed.

Scale yelled and dropped to his knees.

'Be quiet,' said the than, 'or I'll break it.'

Scale shut up. He gasped shallowly. There were tears on his face. The man

examined him indifferently.

'I let you come in here because I was curious, but you don't look very interesting.'

Scale didn't know whether his best bid for safety lay in agreeing or disagreeing with this opinion, so he did neither. He didn't really feel like talking anyway.

'Why did you choose this house?'

Scale was distracted by a figure who had appeared behind the man – a young woman with a fierce, dark look about her. The man glanced down at her then back at Scale.

'Is he all right?' The woman nodded. The man smiled. 'This is Miss Kelly,' he told Scale. 'I'm going to release you now. If you try anything, she will cut your throat.'

Scale believed him. The woman frightened him almost as much as the man. He cradled his throbbing hand, looking up at them. He had broken into some hellish place. Were all his fingers crushed? He was afraid to check. 'Mercy...' he whimpered..

'I've had a trying day,' the man confided, 'and am not in a good mood. Answer me now: why did you choose this house?'

'I followed the other fellow, the fellow in the green coat.'

'And then decided to stay and rob a wealthy-looking residence. I see. Why were you following him?'

Scale was afraid to lie to the man, but he was even more afraid to tell him about the mirror. 'He owes me money,' he whined convincingly. 'See, I run an exhibit at the carny, and I invited him to place a little bet –'

'– and cheated him and he wouldn't pay you,' the man finished. 'You really aren't very interesting, are you? Stand up.'

Shakily Scale stood.

'Now go.'

Scale stared at him wonderingly. The man nodded towards the other room.

'The way you came in.'

Scale hesitated no longer. He dodged between the man and the woman, and in a moment they heard him scrambling frantically over the wall. The Angel-Maker frowned.

'Why did you let him go?'

'Because he was lying,' said Sabbath. He went and looked into the garden, making certain Scale had indeed fled.

'Lying?'

‘If he’d wanted money from the Doctor, he’d have robbed him in the street on the way here. No, he had some other reason. No doubt it has to do with the Doctor’s investigations; he tends to. . . annoy people.’

‘But if he knows something, you could have made him tell you.’

‘Why bother?’ Sabbath turned back into the room with a shrug. ‘He won’t know anything of importance. And if, inadvertently, he may lead to people who do, well then – the Doctor will be pulled into the thick of it, as he always is. And I can always find the Doctor.’ Sabbath smiled. ‘He told me how himself.’

Anji spent most of the time the Doctor was with Sabbath telling Fitz that the Doctor was going to have to Start Talking To Them. The rest of the time, she practised to herself confronting him when he returned and demanding explanations. But when he strode in, mouth grim and obviously angry, all that came out of her mouth was, ‘Tea?’

‘No,’ he said and went upstairs to the TARDIS.

‘Bravely done,’ said Fitz from his armchair.

‘I didn’t notice you trying to get anything out of him.’

‘That’s because I’m not all uptight about this like you are. He’ll tell us what’s what in his own good time.’

‘That’s what I’m afraid of.’

‘You trust him, don’t you?’

‘Of course I trust his *intentions*,’ she said, annoyed. ‘But you know as well as I do he’s always stumbling into something even he only knows half the story of, and when we don’t know any of the story we aren’t much help then, are we?’

Fitz threw his cigarette end into the fireplace. ‘All right, then, you go ahead and try to get him to talk about something he doesn’t want to. I’d like to see that, actually, but I’m off.’

‘Where to?’

‘Going with George to a lecture on Siberia.’

‘What?’ she goggled.

Fitz stood by the door, a little embarrassed, hat in hand. ‘Well, yeah. Why not?’

‘Why not? Because that kind of thing bores you stiff.’ She put her hands on her hips and eyed him suspiciously. ‘You haven’t been taken over by some pod species, have you?’

‘Oh it’s a laugh a minute with Kapoor,’ he snorted, clamping on his hat. ‘Get a chap classified and you just can’t take it when he jumps the groove.’

‘I only –’

'I turned thirty-three in Spain,' he said abruptly.

'You did?' she said after a beat.

'Yeah. In Guernica, actually. Bloody awful birthday.'

She wasn't sure what they were talking about. 'Fitz, I –'

'I'm late,' he said, and went down the stairs.

Anji went up to the TARDIS.

'You're both acting weird,' she called from the middle of the empty console room. 'One of you had better come and talk to me, and it can't be Fitz because he's got a personality transplant and gone off to some bloody science lecture. Nineteenth-century science too! He'll have to unlearn it all!'

'Why? He's unlikely to apply it in any other century.' The Doctor had appeared in the kitchen doorway. He was in his shirt sleeves with a dishtowel stuffed in the waist of his trousers and was liberally dusted with flour.

'What are you doing?'

'I thought I'd make a cake.'

'What?' She followed him into the kitchen.

'A Lady Baltimore cake. American Southern confection. Rather complicated icing.'

There was more flour on the counters. Also eggshells and smears of butter and a large pale green ceramic bowl Anji had never seen before. She peeked in. It was full of sugar and chunks of butter.

'I mean "Why?";' she corrected.

'Why what?' The Doctor was looking around with an absent frown.

'Why are you making a cake?'

'Sometimes you just have to take the time to stop and smell the flour.' The Doctor paused, clearly pleased with what Anji thought was actually a pretty insipid pun. She maintained a neutral expression. The Doctor masked his disappointment. Casually, he turned, spotted a bottle of vanilla hiding behind the flour canister, and pounced on it triumphantly. Anji sighed and sat at the table. She watched him mess about with measuring spoons and a kitchen scale.

'Sabbath killed that magician?'

'Had it done.' The Doctor began to cream the butter and sugar with a fork.

'Why?'

'Because he's an ass!' The Doctor set down the bowl a bit too heavily and ran his fingers through his hair, leaving specks of butter in it. 'And he makes me behave like one too. I know better, but it still happens.'

'You're just angry,' she said. 'Why shouldn't you be angry?'

‘I shouldn’t give in to it. There’s no profit there.’ He returned to the mixing bowl. ‘It won’t get me what I want.’

‘Which is what?’

‘Mmm?’ He stared into the bowl in concern. ‘Would you mind looking for the raisins?’

‘Raisins?’

‘Yes. I’m sure we have some, but I couldn’t find them earlier.’ She tried to divert the conversation back to its earlier track. ‘What do you want?’

‘Raisins. I just said.’

‘Doctor,’ she began – but now he was frowning worriedly at the cookbook.

‘You have to use the soft-ball method to test the icing. I’ve never understood that.’

‘Doctor. . .’

‘I mean, is it supposed to form a ball as it hits the water? And how can you tell if it’s soft or hard without taking it back out of the water? By which time, won’t it have hardened anyway?’

She was about to say, ‘You can work a time machine, surely you can figure out the soft-ball method of testing icing!’, then she remembered that wasn’t strictly true. Instead she asked, ‘Don’t you have a sugar thermometer?’

He brightened. ‘Yes. I’m sure there’s one around here somewhere.’ He smiled at her. ‘Would you mind looking for it?’

Briefly, she held her ground. ‘We’re not going to talk about any of this, are we?’

‘No,’ he said softly, ‘we’re not.’ Then he smiled again, but not his charming dazzler – a sympathetic smile, self-deprecating, even a shade rueful. ‘But we’re going to have a very fine cake.’

## Chapter Twelve

On a bench beneath one of the large, leafy trees a man sat shivering. He was big and healthy-looking and well-dressed, but his face was slack with some inexpressible inner pain. Anji knew this because, though she realised it was a foolish question to a patient at an insane asylum, she had asked him what was the matter. He had looked up at her frankly and said, 'It's only, you know, that there's no air in here.'

She went back and sat beside Fitz on a bench near a flower bed. He was smoking and watching the inmates unhappily. 'Makes you feel bloody useless, doesn't it?'

'Yes,' she said.

The man beneath the tree had begun, very quietly, to weep. Fitz looked away. Bloody place made him think about his mum. 'So,' he said, as if continuing a conversation, 'Sabbath's killing these people.'

'Apparently. Unless the Doctor persuaded him it was a bad idea.'

'He never struck me as the persuadable sort.'

'No.'

'The Doctor wouldn't say what they talked about?'

'No. He just made that cake.'

'Good cake,' said Fitz appreciatively.

'It's bothering him,' she said irritably, 'but he won't talk about it. Sometimes he is *exactly* like a human man!'

'Hey, I speak up when something's bothering me.'

'That's because –'

She stopped. Fitz grimaced and dropped and stepped on his cigarette.

'Because I'm a boy?'

'No!' She flushed. 'I don't think that. I was going to say, because you're, well... ' He eyed her sardonically. 'Unique.'

'Ah.'

'I mean, you don't care what people think,' she went on, flustered. 'And things just sort of roll off you. You've been through a lot, Fitz – it's kind of surprising you're not in a place like this.'



‘Mm.’

‘What is this, anyway? All of a sudden you’ve gone all self-critical. You never used to give a damn.’

‘I don’t now, really. It’s just, sometimes I wonder what I’m doing with my life.’

She looked at him in amazement. ‘Uh. . . Saving the universe?’

Fitz snorted and took out another cigarette. ‘*He’s* the one who saves the universe. I just help out.’

‘Well –’

‘Anj, *anyone* can help him. He was saving the universe long before I met him. And you know who was with him when I *did* first meet him? A teenaged girl. It’s not exactly a job with high entry-level qualifications, helping him.’

‘For heaven’s sake, what were you doing before? You were a florist –’

He sat up, stung. ‘I was *not* a florist. I was selling plants.’

‘Same difference.’

‘It is *not*. Florists, like, *arrange* flowers. These were mostly in pots. With leaves and stuff.’

‘Stuff?’

‘Twiggy stuff. Like wood. Most of them didn’t even have flowers.’

‘I see.’

‘And there were other things in the shop. Lots of other things. Gnomes for instance.’

‘Gnomes?’

‘You know, the little plaster ones.’

‘I see. So you were a shop assistant.’

‘Yeah.’

‘And now you’re only a save-the-universe assistant.’

‘Let’s just drop it.’

‘You –’

‘I don’t want to talk about it!’

She smiled with mock smugness. ‘Just like a man.’

He opened his mouth to reply, then stopped, puzzled. She giggled. ‘All right,’ he said, trying not to smile. ‘All right. Another goal for Kapoor.’

‘You shouldn’t play out of your game.’

‘No,’ he agreed.

‘No,’ said Chiltern.

'I see,' said the Doctor, though actually this wasn't true. It wasn't at all clear to him what was going on. He put on his mildest expression and regarded Chiltern thoughtfully. The alienist had drawn sheer lace curtains across the windows, but even in diffuse light he looked more strained than when the Doctor had last seen him – which, considering he had been distraught and full of opium, was something of an accomplishment. His whole manner was different too. There had been a gentleness in him that the Doctor no longer saw any trace of. The man across the desk now was tense, harsh and abrupt.

'May I ask why you changed your mind?' the Doctor asked courteously. 'I trust that I have not inadvertently –'

'No, no, nothing to do with you,' said Chiltern impatiently. 'I'm sure you're a competent hypnotist. I simply, after thinking it over, decided it was not something I was interested in after all.'

'I understand,' said the Doctor. 'It is an invasive procedure. And your brother?'

Chiltern looked at him sharply. 'My brother?'

'Do you still want me to talk to him?'

'I'm not sure I ever wanted you to at all,' Chiltern retorted, frowning. 'If I did, I can't imagine what was in my mind. I certainly don't now.'

Two down, thought the Doctor. 'How is Miss Jane?'

'Quite well. She's gone home.'

'Home?'

'To America. One of the western states, I believe.'

And three. The Doctor stood up politely. 'I won't take any more of your time.'

Chiltern nodded curtly.

The Doctor paused in the hall outside Chiltern's office and looked up and down. At one end, a nurse was assisting an elderly man through a door. Otherwise, he was alone. He turned and briskly headed in the direction of the violent ward.

He didn't consider this an ideal course of action, but it was the one that presented itself. Sneaking back into the grounds and dodging guards and orderlies didn't strike him as ideal either. Particularly in such a relatively unregulated place, walking confidently along as if he knew where he was going got him easily past the nurses and patients and occasional doctor he passed. The orderly sitting in a chair at the entrance to the ward, however, was another matter. As he looked up, the Doctor increased his stride and stuck out his hand. 'I'm Dr Smith. Did we meet last week?'

The man had risen to take the Doctor's hand. He was young, very big, and rough-looking, though groomed without a button or hair out of place. He squinted at the Doctor, half-suspiciously. 'Don't believe so, sir.'

'Well, Mr, er. . .'

'O'Keagh.'

'Mr O'Keagh. I won't keep you long. I had a question to Dr Chiltern that he thought you could answer.' The Doctor looked frankly into the orderly's eyes. 'So I just nipped down here rather than have him go to the trouble of fetching you, though perhaps you wouldn't have minded that, it must get rather dull standing about here all day with no one to talk to, tiring too, I'd imagine, perhaps you'd like to sit back down. . .'

O'Keagh's eyes became even narrower. The Doctor reminded himself that psychotics, the overly-suspicious and – he glanced again at O'Keagh's military neatness – obsessive-compulsives were almost impossible to hypnotise. He smiled in what he hoped was a winning and reassuring manner. 'What I mean to say is, I saw Miss Jane a couple of times. Professionally. And I wondered if at any time on your shift, you heard her say anything unusual.'

'Such as what?'

'Just anything that struck you as out of the ordinary.'

'Never heard her say anything.'

'Ah,' said the Doctor. O'Keagh regarded him truculently. 'Well, that's that, then.' With another smile, he turned and went away down the corridor. He could feel the big orderly's eyes on him. He hoped he wouldn't run into Chiltern on his way back to the front entrance, that would be rather embarrassing and difficult to explain. However he didn't, and as soon as he was out of the door he spotted Anji and Fitz on a bench by one of the gardens. He walked up to them. 'Something's wrong.'

'What?' said Fitz.

'I'm not sure.'

'How's Miss Jane?' said Anji.

'Gone back to America. At least, that's what Chiltern says.'

'You think Chiltern isn't straight?' said Fitz, surprised. 'Seemed soul-of-the-Victorian-gent to me.'

'Yes.' The Doctor looked around at the men and women strolling and talking in the bright grounds. 'To me as well. But there's something. . . Fitz, would you please wait here and keep an eye on the entrance? And if Chiltern comes out, come and warn us.'

'Where are you going?'

‘To get a look at the grounds over by the old wing.’

‘What’s in the old wing?’ said Anji as they crossed the lawn towards the grim stone walls.

‘The violent ward.’

‘Where Miss Jane was? Do you think she’s still there?’

‘I don’t know. We may be able to find out, though. I think I got a sense of the place’s layout when I was in there.’ The Doctor glanced back at the main building. ‘Unfortunately, we’re in sight if anyone in the hall looks out of the windows, so I’ll have to be quick. Shield me as much as you can.’

Anji didn’t think that would be very much. But she obligingly stood behind the Doctor as he positioned himself beneath the last of the gridded windows. ‘All clear?’ he asked, and when she said yes, she heard him grip the bars and hoist himself up to look inside. He dropped back almost instantly and led her away.

‘Empty. No sheets on the bed.’

‘So she may be gone. Or she may simply not be in that room any longer. Now what?’

‘Let’s go round the other side.’

Looking up from his third cigarette, Fitz spotted the tall, gaunt figure of Dr Chiltern come through the clinic’s doors. He jumped up, then hesitated as Chiltern turned and headed along the front of the main building in the direction of the old wing. There was no way to warn the Doctor without sprinting right across Chiltern’s path. Well, he thought, all right then.

‘Dr Chiltern!’ he yelled, running after him. ‘Dr Chiltern!’

Chiltern turned quickly, not exactly alarmed, but on guard. Fitz didn’t blame him. He waved a friendly hand. ‘Hello! It’s me!’ He panted up to the alienist. ‘Fitz Kreiner. Remember? We met at Mrs Hemming’s seance.’

Chiltern stared at him unwelcomingly. ‘What are you doing here?’

‘Well, I . . .’ Fitz caught his breath. ‘I thought I needed treatment.’

‘Treatment?’

‘As a patient.’

‘Really,’ Chiltern started to turn away, ‘I don’t think –’

‘No,’ said Fitz desperately, ‘you’ve got to help me. I see things!’

Chiltern stopped unwillingly. ‘What sort of things?’

‘Horrible. You can’t imagine. People who turn into clocks. Beings from other worlds who look like rhinoceroses.’

‘Perhaps you should take up the writing of sensational literature.’ Chiltern moved away again.

Fitz followed right after him. ‘And there were these things – the Undecided, no, the Unnoticed – they had their stomachs outside slung beneath their legs dripping acid, and with worms in.’

This time Chiltern looked at him in revulsion. It occurred to Fitz that if he did too good a job with this he could end up in a ward himself. He glanced past Chiltern to where the old wing was now visible. No sign of the Doctor or Anji. He stopped. ‘Er, well then. . . maybe later.’

‘I don’t think so,’ said Chiltern, and turned an abrupt corner around the main building. He hadn’t been going to the violent ward after all. Just as well, thought Fitz. Even if the Doctor was out of sight, who knew what he was up to?

At that moment the Doctor was literally up to another window, his fingers intertwined in the grid, his feet braced against the stone wall beneath.

‘Anyone?’ said Anji from behind and below him.

‘No.’ The Doctor dropped back to the ground. ‘There don’t actually seem to be any other violent patients.’

‘If Miss Jane’s gone, there may not be any.’

‘There are,’ said the Doctor grimly, hoisting himself to another window, peering inside, and dropping again.

‘Who?’

‘Chiltern’s brother.’

‘The mad brother?’ Anji remembered her conversation with Mrs Hemming. ‘Sebastian? Why do you want to talk to him?’

‘Well, Chiltern wanted me to. Only now he doesn’t.’

‘So naturally you’re going to.’

‘Well, I thought I would, yes.’

‘Are you just being contrary, or do you have a theory?’

‘I try to avoid theorising – it boxes you in. I just want to know why Chiltern changed his – Ah.’

The last was a soft exhalation. Anji looked up to where the Doctor clung to the grid. He glanced down and nodded, then pressed his face against the iron squares. ‘Dr Chiltern. . .?’

Inside, the tall figure curled on the little bed stirred. ‘Dr Chiltern,’ the Doctor repeated quietly. The figure turned to face him. Well, of course, thought the Doctor. Twins. ‘It’s me,’ he said. ‘The Doctor. Do you remember me?’

Chiltern – whichever Chiltern it was – stared at him bewilderedly. He was unshaven and wearing white hospital pyjamas. The Doctor couldn't tell whether he was restrained.

'Can you come to the window?' Chiltern just stared. 'The window? Please. I'd like to talk to you.'

Unsteadily, Chiltern rose – not restrained then, the Doctor noted with relief – and came over. He looked at the Doctor in amazement, as if there were a griffin at the window. The Doctor smiled gently. 'Hello. How are you feeling?'

Tentatively, Chiltern put out a hand. He slid a finger through the grid and touched the Doctor's face, then flinched back.

'Do you remember me?'

Chiltern stared at him, hollow-eyed. 'Nothing to remember,' he said dully.

'We met about a fortnight ago.'

Chiltern shook his head very slowly. 'Nothing to remember. I'm... nothing.' He leaned close to the grid; the Doctor could feel and smell his cool, sour breath. Chiltern shut his eyes, put his lips against the iron, as near as possible to the Doctor's ear. 'I'm not here.'

'Dr Chiltern.'

But Chiltern turned away. 'Not here.' He lay again on the bed, his back to the window. After watching him a second longer, the Doctor let go of the grid and dropped beside Anji.

'Well?' she said.

The Doctor squinted up at the window, rubbing his sore palms. 'I don't know.'

'Don't know whether it's the brother?'

'Don't know which brother it is. Apparently they're twins.'

'Twins?' Anji glanced at the window, then back to the Doctor. 'Are you sure?'

'Identical, as far as I could tell.'

'I mean, are you sure there are only two of them? Could Chiltern be another of your fractures?'

'Oh,' he said in comprehension. He started back towards where they'd left Fitz and she followed. 'I don't think so. Each of the fractures simultaneously experiences what all the others are experiencing. That's not happening here. No, this looks like one of those stories with a Good Twin and an Evil Twin.'

'Which is which?'

'Ah,' said the Doctor. 'And what has either of them to do with our time problem?'

'Well, nothing, I suppose,' she said after a moment. 'But there's clearly something wrong here. We can't just leave it, can we?'

‘No.’ The Doctor glanced back at the window. ‘I don’t think we can.’

## Chapter Thirteen

The Doctor hadn't meant to fall asleep. As far as he was concerned, he just sat down on the settee while Fitz and Anji were going to investigate the cake situation, and the next thing he knew he was dreaming. It was the old one, the recurrent one, about his heart. The strange huge ceremonial hall. Sabbath. The pain. Screaming.

As so often in dreams, his emotional reaction didn't necessarily match the content. This time, he was for some inexplicable reason terrifically concerned that his heart was now outside his chest and exposed to the light. It wasn't a faux-vampire sort of fear – he wasn't expecting the heart to burst into flames or crumble to dust. Anyway, the light was all wrong for that kind of nightmare – firelight, not sunlight, and not very strong at that.

No, what he was absurdly upset about was simply that his heart, meant to spend its life unseen, had been touched by light, the dark chambers illuminated. A heart ought to remain safe in its aphotic home from birth till long after death, exposed by decomposition only to the sealed room of the coffin, if at all. This – what was happening – the raised, black and bloody organ, glistening in the light of the torches, was *against nature*. Wrong. Un-

The Doctor woke up. It was dusk, and there was a note on the table from Anji inviting him to join her and Fitz at Simpson's for supper.

A few minutes later, coat brushed and hat on head, he was out of the front door. He had only gone a few paces when he found that there was someone at his elbow. Glancing sideways, he wasn't entirely surprised to see Scale.

'Evening, sir,' said Scale obsequiously. He was hunched over a little, and his hands were clasped in front of his chest.

'Mr Scale,' the Doctor responded formally. 'What can I do for you?'

'Well, I come up here – all the way up here, sir, and, mind, it were a journey – to apologise to you, truth be known. Truth be known, I'm a bit ashamed of the way I behaved yesterday. I'm afraid I might have been a bit the worse for drink. I hope you're not bearing any grudge.'

'No, no,' said the Doctor lightly. 'All of us lose control at one time or another. I dare say you'd had a bad day.'



‘That were it, sir. Very trying. The pressures of the entertainment profession, if I may say so, can be excruciating. I was not quite myself. So I hope you’ll accept my apologies.’

‘Think nothing of it.’

‘Oh, thank ‘ee, sir. I knew you was a gentleman. I said to myself when I was debating coming to find you, he’s a gentleman, make no mistake, and he won’t turn away an apology made in good faith. I know that I reacted a bit strong to your comments. It’s only that that mirror is very precious to me. And afterwards I thought, Micah, what a fool you’ve been, for here’s a gentleman – as I knew you was, sir – who could have told you something about your mirror, maybe, and you’ve been violent towards him and driven him off. You do... know something about it, don’t you, sir?’

‘Yes.’

‘Anything – I realise how this must sound to you, after the way I behaved, but is there anything you’d not mind sharing with me? For it’s a wonderful thing, and I know so little about it.’

‘It’s a bit complicated,’ said the Doctor.

‘Well, sir, if you have the time, I’d be more than pleased to buy you a drink to tell the story over.’

Can you spell ‘trap’? thought the Doctor. T-R-A-P. ‘Why yes,’ he said aloud. ‘That’s very generous of you.’

Scale led him to a somewhat down-at-heel pub called the Flower and Dragon, a smoky, noisy place with a beer-slick floor. He deposited the Doctor at a table against the wall and pushed through the crowd to the bar, returning shortly with two whiskies. He set the Doctor’s in front of him and pulled up his own chair. The Doctor noticed that Scale favoured his right hand, which was red and slightly swollen. He looked at his glass, wondering what had been put in it. Nothing expensive or hard to get. Probably laudanum.

‘Here’s to your forgiving nature, sir.’ Scale raised his glass. The Doctor touched it with his and took a swallow. Definitely laudanum. At one time, he’d simply have drunk and swiftly metabolised it, but he wasn’t confident that would work now in his new, unimproved condition. And he didn’t want to be groggy while Scale carried out his no-doubt-nefarious plan.

‘Drink up,’ said Scale with ghastly bonhomie. ‘There’s another where that one came from.’

The Doctor wondered briefly if he were wearing a little sign stuck in the band of his hat that read ‘Stupid.’ Apparently so. ‘You say the mirror was one of a set?’

'A set of eight, sir.'

'And you acquired them where?'

'From an Eye-talian. But he said he come across them in Switzerland.'

The Doctor nodded wisely, wondering how they had got to Switzerland. Not that it really mattered. 'What do you think your mirror reflects?'

'Well,' Scale looked sly, 'don't like to guess, really, not being an educated man.'

'But you must have speculated.'

'Here now,' said Scale with an attempt at joviality, 'it's you who was supposed to have things to tell me.'

The Doctor smiled. 'Why yes, you're right. All right: Your mirror is part of a time machine.'

Scale's jaw fell. It would have been comic except for the glint of something cunning in his eyes. 'Now, you're playing with me, sir.'

'I assure you, I'm not. It's part of a time machine. Get me another drink,' the Doctor shoved his empty glass across, 'and I'll tell you all about it.'

Scale looked at the glass, surprised at how quickly the Doctor had drained it. Then he grinned. 'Right away.' As he shoved back through the crowd, the Doctor glanced at the floor, but it was so wet that his own dumped drink made no visible difference. Should he pass out now, or wait? There was really no necessity for further conversation: the mention of the time machine should have established his credentials as someone knowledgeable enough to carry through with kidnapping. Passing out now saved him from any more of Scale's fawning. And Scale would be extremely annoyed at having wasted money on an unnecessary second drink. He slumped over the table.

Sure enough, when Scale returned and found his victim already unconscious, he swore under his breath. Then he looked on the bright side – at least the plan was underway – and, draining off his own glass, dragged the Doctor up and assisted him out the side door into a smelly alley, where he relieved him of his wallet.

The Doctor exhibited just enough consciousness to wobble along if supported. He wondered whether he should sing but decided against it. He and Scale made their way to the mouth of the alley where Scale, after some difficulty, managed to persuade a cab to stop for them. They changed cabs twice more in what the Doctor assumed was a track-covering manoeuvre; each time he made himself heavier and harder to haul in and out. Scale was breathing hard when at last they alighted amid a tangle of mean, ill-lit streets and stumbled down another alley. At the end of this, in a junk-filled yard, stood

a drooping-headed horse harnessed to a rickety cart. Scale gave some coins to a surly personage who'd been minding the horse and, with a last burst of strength, heaved the Doctor into the back of the wagon. It contained straw and old sacks, some of which Scale threw on top of him. The smell was a bit pungent but as the cart moved off the Doctor snuggled in comfortably: probably a good idea to get some sleep.

A small, alert part of his mind noted that they travelled for over an hour and at some point crossed the river. The rest of him lay limp as the sacking he was under. He shivered as he slept, and when he decided to wake up, he discovered that he had drawn himself up with his hands beneath his coat for warmth. The cart had stopped. The sacking was whisked aside and the Doctor squinted into a lantern flame. He smiled affably and let Scale help him out of the cart. 'Nice... you to help...' he mumbled.

'Just going to give you a lie down,' said Scale, pulling him along. It was very dark. The breeze was fresh and the Doctor felt grass brush his ankles. The blurred glow in the distance must be London; they were in the fields that still existed south of the city. The Doctor looked up and traced the Summer Triangle among the many stars. It was comforting to see something so familiar before he stepped off into the unknown.

'Watch yourself here,' said Scale. The circle of lantern light fell on unstable looking, fold-down wooden steps that had once been yellow. These led to a door that still retained most of its bright paint. Scale's caravan. Scattered around in the dark were other bulky shapes, and the Doctor heard the shifting and snort of horses and smelled a recently put-out fire. This must be where the carnival people, or some of them, camped.

Scale led him up the shaky steps and through the door into the stale-smelling interior. Illuminated, this was cramped and messy. The Doctor saw a bunk with tossed-back, filthy sheets, crammed built-in cabinets, shutters fastened tight over small windows. Scale propped him carefully against the wall and tore the mattress off the bunk, revealing that its support had been a long, battered wooden box. The Doctor eyed this without enthusiasm. He wasn't crazy about being locked up in any case, but he was particularly averse to being locked up in tiny spaces. He wondered whether, if he slid to the floor in an apparent faint, Scale would settle for just tying him up there and leaving him. Probably not. Scale had heaved the lid open. The inside looked awfully narrow to the Doctor. Narrow as a coffin.

'A nice little lie down,' said Scale cheerily, as if to a particularly slow child. The Doctor put on his particularly-slow-child's smile and consented to be led to

the box, though he balked at actually being pushed into it, insisting on lowering himself in with some vestige of dignity. ‘That’s good,’ said Scale soothingly. ‘Very good.’ He took the Doctor’s wrists and tied them together with a strip of rag. ‘Now, I’ll wager you’d like a nice sleep, wouldn’t you?’ He produced another rag, this one slightly damp. The Doctor smelled laudanum. He turned his head aside, but Scale caught him easily and pulled the cloth over his face. ‘There,’ he cooed, knotting it in place, ‘that’ll keep you nice and peaceful.’

Not likely, thought the Doctor, and as soon as the lid closed he worked his hands up to his face and jerked the cloth away. The box still stank of laudanum but he’d have to put up with that. As he began freeing his clumsily-tied wrists, he heard a bolt shoot home on the outside of the box, then the mattress and bedcovers being replaced. Not a very sophisticated prison, but an effective one. The Doctor listened to Scale descend the creaky steps, then heard the cart rattle off. He sighed again and tried to get comfortable: though he couldn’t draw his legs up, he could rail a little on to his side and cushion his head with one hand. He lay there and listened to the beat of his remaining heart and tried not to think about how near the walls were to him in the dark.

The box suddenly shifted. The Doctor stiffened, confused – then it shifted again, and he realised that the caravan was rocking because someone very heavy was coming up the steps. Please, he groaned inwardly, don’t let it be Sabbath. No more humiliation in that area, please.

‘Doctor?’

The Doctor almost sat up in surprise but stopped himself in time. ‘Hugo?’

‘Are you all right? Soon have you out of there.’

The bedding thudded to the floor, the bolt scraped, and the Doctor found himself blinking up at the giant, who was bending over him with a lantern. ‘I must say, this is a surprise.’

‘You all right?’

‘Yes, thank you, I’m fine.’ The Doctor took the proffered hand and climbed out of the box. ‘You’re camped here?’

‘About a hundred yards from here. There’s a number of us uses this field.’

‘Scale took a chance.’

‘Well, we keep out of each other’s business most times.’ Hugo bent through the door, the Doctor following. Once outside, he straightened and stretched his spine. ‘You get all types in the carnival trade. Best leave well enough alone. But Scale had the signs of being involved in something nasty. Can’t have that. Bring the law down on one, it comes down on all of us. They don’t make distinctions.’

‘It’s my good fortune you’re so public-spirited.’

'I'm surprised it's you. You must have upset him something bad.'

'It seems so.'

'Cup of tea?'

'Well,' said the Doctor, 'as long as you're having one.'

Hugo fetched the tea things from his caravan and they sat out under the stars around a little stove. Before the kettle boiled, a sleepy, cross Vera appeared.

'Oh it's you,' she said to the Doctor without surprise.

'Micah's been messing up again,' said Hugo.

'Well, what a wonder that is. What's he done now?'

'Kidnapping.'

'Tsk,' she said. 'I hope there's enough water for three cups?'

'There is.'

'And are there three cups?'

'I brought an extra one just in case. Two extra, actually.'

'You think ahead, Hugo.' She settled herself in the grass. 'So, what'd he want with you?' she said to the Doctor.

'I'm not sure exactly.'

'Bound to be money in it.'

'I would imagine.'

'You're a close-mouthed one, ain't you?' The Doctor smiled noncommittally. She sniffed and started to roll a cigarette. 'It's all right, you know. Your secret's safe with us.'

'Vera... ' said Hugo.

'No harm getting things on the table. We know you're a freak,' she said to the Doctor.

'How?' he said after a beat.

'Your blood's funny, your skin's too cool, your heartbeat sounds like nothing I've ever heard. Course, maybe you just have some exotic disease. In which case, I hope it ain't contagious.'

'I don't.'

She nodded, eying him assessingly. 'Pity it don't show. No way for you to make a living from it. Course you're lovely, so you could be tattooed all over and display yourself.'

The Doctor laughed.

'Vera!' said Hugo.

'Well,' she said defensively, 'is it true or not?'

'How'd you get so far on the bad side of Micah?' said Hugo quickly.

'I asked too many questions about his mirror.'

'Aye.' Hugo sloshed some hot water around in the teapot to warm it. 'He's very protective of that mirror. Won't even leave it up at the Palace; brings it home each night.'

'Excuse me?' The Doctor sat up straight, like a squirrel sensing that a passerby has a nut. 'Do you mean to say it's here?' Hugo nodded towards the dark hulk of a large caravan. 'I don't suppose I could have a look at it?'

Vera sighed and moved the kettle off the boil.

'Hauls it home every night,' said Hugo, as he led the Doctor to the caravan. 'Great heavy thing it is too.'

'It's amazing he hasn't broken it.'

'Well, that's a funny thing. I've seen him bang it or drop it more than once. But it's never broken.'

'Really?' the Doctor murmured. Hugo had undone a heavy lock. Now he ducked inside with the lantern. The Doctor stepped after him and almost jumped as the light hit a staring object floating in a jar. In another second, he realised he was looking at a baby with an extra leg.

'Wax,' said Hugo. 'Vera'd never let us have a real one, after her own came stillborn. Good as Madame Tussaud's in my opinion.'

'Very effective, yes,' said the Doctor a bit nervously. His gaze roamed over the other jars glinting in the lantern light, each with its own grotesque inhabitant, deformed aquarium creatures in their formaldehyde-filled tanks: a hand with a vestigial finger, a frog with six legs, a siamese lizard. In a corner, a two-headed stuffed calf leaned against the wall. 'Why aren't you exhibiting these?'

'Well, they're a bit stuffy in London. Squeamish. They want to see this sort of thing, all right, but they're embarrassed that they want to. Someone always complains to management, or sometimes the law. So we only put these on show in the country and the small towns. Not that they draw much.' Hugo sighed. 'We could do with a really first-class exhibit. Now, where's your mirror? Well, that's peculiar.' He scratched his head. 'It's not here.'

'No?' said the Doctor tensely. He scanned the caravan interior. Hugo was clearly right. Nothing as large as the mirror could be hidden in this small space. His eye was caught by a sign on an empty cage: Giant Rat Of Sumatra.

'A nutria from Brazil,' Hugo explained. 'But it took against the climate and passed on. We'll ask Vera about the mirror.'

'Yes,' said the Doctor politely, though he was unsure what Vera could do. He followed Hugo out the door. 'I'd like to get another nutria,' the giant confided, as they descended the stairs, 'but they don't come available that often. And they come dear.'

They walked back to the stove. Vera had rolled a second cigarette and was leaning forward to light it, holding her beard back from the fire, against her breasts.

‘That mirror of Micah’s,’ said Hugo, ‘what about it, then?’

She was puzzled for a second, then her face cleared. ‘Didn’t bring it tonight, did he? Didn’t come down here till he brought you.’ She nodded at the Doctor. ‘Ah,’ he said in relief. ‘Then it’s still in place in his exhibit.’

‘Until tomorrow night, anyway. Right now, we need to think about getting you safe away from here.’

‘Erm,’ said the Doctor, ‘actually, I think it would be better if I got back in the box.’

They both stared at him.

‘You’ve gone a bit off,’ said Hugo kindly, ‘from the laudanum.’

‘No, seriously. You see, I need to find the man Scale is interested in taking me to. Also, frankly, if I leave, he’ll know that you’re the ones who freed me.’

‘Scale wouldn’t try anything with us,’ said Hugo flatly.

‘Not directly, I’m sure. But he’s a nasty piece of work, just the type who’d do something sly to your most vulnerable member, or find a way to block your licence renewal.’

‘Well,’ said Vera, ‘you’ve got him down right enough. See here, though.’ She squinted at him. ‘There’s no guarantee this mystery bloke won’t do the both of you.’

‘Well, no, but I assume he’ll at least want to talk to me first.’

‘He won’t care about talking to Micah. So you might be taking him to his death. Not that I particularly care, mind you, but there you have it.’

‘Oh dear,’ said the Doctor. He wondered why he hadn’t thought of that. He didn’t like the answer. Sabbath’s accusation returned and stung him: he was taking things personally. More human every day. He felt a sudden weariness.

‘You don’t look good,’ said Hugo. ‘Sit down.’

The Doctor sat. ‘I can’t think of a way around it,’ he said after a moment. ‘Except to warn Scale. There’s nothing else I can do.’

‘If he’d succeeded in knocking you out, you wouldn’t even have to be worrying about this,’ said Hugo practically. ‘Here.’

He handed the Doctor a cup of tea. The Doctor drank some of it. The hot, tannic bite made him feel better. He warmed his cold hands against the cup. ‘I’d like to write a note to my friends,’ he said. ‘Could you get it to them?’

‘Better hurry,’ said Vera, squinting again, this time past him. ‘I see a wagon lantern across the field. Must be Micah coming back.’

The Doctor looked over his shoulder. The light was still some distance away, small as a firefly. He shut his eyes for a few seconds, smelling the grass and the hot tea, feeling the little night breeze play with the edges of his hair. When he opened his eyes, the light was still far away, but noticeably larger.

Well, he thought, here I go.



## Chapter Fourteen

Scale nearly jumped off the cart when the voice came out of the box.

‘Scale?’ it said.

Scale caught his breath. His eyes darted around to see if anyone else had heard, but the dark narrow street was empty.

‘I know you’re there,’ said the voice from the box.

‘Shut up,’ said Scale.

‘That’s better.’

‘I won’t talk to you. You’re supposed to be drugged.’

‘That’s all right, I just want to talk to you.’

‘I won’t listen. Shut up, I tell you, or I’ll gag you.’

‘Very bad idea,’ said the man in the box. Damn him, Scale thought desperately. He’d known he was trouble from the minute he saw him. What if he called for help? Could Scale overpower him and stop his mouth if the man wasn’t drugged? Should he stop the cart now and try?

‘Listen, Scale,’ said the man, ‘have you really thought this through?’

He wasn’t shouting for help. In fact, he was speaking quite moderately. This was a queer one, all right. ‘What?’

‘Have you thought this through properly?’

‘Thought *what* through properly?’

‘This kidnapping business.’

‘I know what I’m doing.’

‘Well, now, you see, that’s where we disagree. You’re taking me to someone and trading me for a certain amount of money, am I right?’ Scale didn’t reply. ‘I’m right, aren’t I?’ No reply. ‘I’ll take that as yes. Now, that raises a question. How do you know the person in question will pay you?’

‘He won’t cheat me.’

‘Why not?’

‘He wouldn’t dare.’

‘Why not?’

‘I’d bring the law down on him. I could do it and not get caught meself.’

'Even if he kills you?'

There was a long, long pause.

'What?' said Scale faintly.

'Well, think about it,' said the man in a maddeningly conversational tone. 'Why shouldn't he? It will save him money. Not to mention guaranteeing you won't spill the whole thing when you're in your cups.'

'You're just trying to get me to let you go!'

'No,' said the man. 'On the contrary. I very badly want to meet this fellow. I suspect he knows something about your mirror, maybe something about all your mirrors.'

'Shut up!'

'In a second. One last bit of advice: as soon as you've delivered this box, you'd be wise to try to get out of there. Think about it, Scale; you'll see I'm right. Now I'm shutting up.'

Scale couldn't be sure, but he thought he could hear the man begin to hum softly to himself. He slapped the reins nervously against the horse's back and it grudgingly picked up its pace. Though the night was cool, Scale felt himself begin to sweat.

In his box, the Doctor relaxed. He had thrown out the laudanum-dampened cloth and Vera had provided him with a clean towel to fold under his head, so this second journey wasn't quite as uncomfortable as the first. And he'd done his best for Scale. The man might even pay attention; he seemed to have a fairly strong sense of self-preservation. Additionally, he'd made sure that Fitz and Anji would be notified about what was happening – and though this was somewhat mitigated by the fact that he didn't actually know what was happening, at least they wouldn't be at a complete loss. All in all, a satisfactory situation. He went to sleep.

He woke abruptly when the box tilted and he banged his head. Clearly, he thought, bracing himself with his hands and feet, they had arrived. The box wobbled some more as what seemed to be two men hefted and carried it. The Doctor stayed very quiet. He heard laboured, wheezy breathing which he presumed was Scale. The other man didn't seem to be having as much trouble. A door was unlocked. A corridor echoed. Another door. A couple of steps, stone by the sound of it. Then the box was set down with a jar, and the Doctor hit his head again. He rubbed it ruefully, listening hard. Scale and the second man had apparently moved to the other side of the room. Another voice joined theirs. The Doctor couldn't make out what was being said.

Footsteps approached. The bolt scraped in the lock. '...might be coming

around,' Scale was saying, 'but I've got him tied –' The lid lifted and the Doctor shot out like a hare.

'Scale, you idiot!' he shouted as he slammed into whoever had opened the box. 'They're going to kill you!' He leaped past the man he had knocked over and looked for the door. It was blocked by a large familiar figure: the sanatorium orderly O'Keagh. The Doctor spun to see behind him. Scale was standing stupidly in the middle of the room, and Chiltern was angrily picking himself up off the floor. 'Oh dear.'

Chiltern stood for a moment regaining his breath and straightening his clothes. 'Mr O'Keagh,' he said finally, 'please return the Doctor to the box.'

The Doctor let O'Keagh grab his arms and propel him forward. As they came up to where Chiltern was standing, he yelled, 'Scale, will you for goodness' sake, *get out of here!*', snapped his head back into O'Keagh's teeth and swung both feet up into Chiltern's stomach. All three went down, but the Doctor was up in an instant and heading for the door, pulling the stunned Scale behind him.

The Doctor wondered where they were. This was no part of the old wing he'd seen. He and Scale hared down the flagstone corridor, around a corner, and right into a locked door. A second later, O'Keagh barrelled into the Doctor, knocking his breath out, and shortly after that he was back in the box, with Chiltern sitting on the lid.

The Doctor breathed deeply, holding his aching stomach muscles. Before dragging the Doctor away, O'Keagh had punched Scale hard in the head. Now he'd apparently gone back after him. The Doctor felt the sour misery of failure. He himself needed to ride this out until he actually found out what was going on; he was almost certain that if Chiltern didn't have the time machine himself he knew where it was. But he wished he'd saved Scale. Of course, maybe O'Keagh was even now paying him, had only hit him to stop him panicking. . . The Doctor grimaced in self-disgust at his own enforced, self-protective naiveté.

He began to shiver. His heart raced. Too much time in a box. He had an absurd but pressing desire to curl into a ball which the narrowness of his prison prevented. Whence this claustrophobia? Had he been traumatised by an early game of hide-and-seek? He really should ask a psychiatrist about it sometime. It occurred to him that an opportunity was even now presenting itself.

'I have a question,' he said. No response. He raised his voice. 'I said, I have a question.'

'Be quiet,' said Chiltern.

'No, seriously. You see, I'm always uncomfortable in a box.'

A pause.

'Are you often in a box?'

'Well, not a box as such, no. Small confined spaces in which I'm, erm, confined, yes.'

'Why?'

'Sort of a professional liability.'

'You're not getting out of there till O'Keagh comes back.'

'I understand that. You're missing my point.'

'Which is?'

'Well, why?'

'Why are you in a box?'

'No, I *know* why I'm in a box. I have been *put* in a box. What I want to know is why it bothers me.'

'It would bother anyone, I imagine.'

'But it bothers me particularly.'

'How do you mean?'

'Well, panic and such.'

'Ah, I see. You're phobic.'

'Exactly.'

'And you don't know why.'

'I don't, no.'

'Probably something that happened in your childhood.'

'I don't remember my childhood.'

'Many people don't.'

'And how do they explain it?'

'One doesn't really need a specific memory. The symptoms themselves symbolise what the experience probably was. More importantly, they reflect the underlying emotional reality the experience has become.'

'Such as?'

'The conviction that you're shut in with something you can't get away from.'

'And what would that be?'

'Well,' there was a shrug in Chiltern's voice, 'what else is in there with you?'

Terrific, thought the Doctor morosely. Insight from a man who had him imprisoned in a box. As if the situation weren't demeaning enough. He bet Sabbath never got shut up in boxes. Too big for one thing – he broke off this piqued line of speculation at the sound of O'Keagh's returning footsteps.

'All taken care of, sir.'

The Doctor shut his eyes in a pang of reluctant sympathy for Scale. And guilt. Vera was right. In a way, he'd led him to his death.

The lid banged open. Before the Doctor could move, O'Keagh grabbed him, wrenched his arms up behind his back, and hauled him out. For the first time, he took in his surroundings. Steel drawers and cabinets. Shelves of large, labelled jars. Electric lighting above a long metal table with straps hanging from it. A white-tiled floor with a large central drain. The Doctor's eyes winced away from this back to the jars. They definitely contained tissue, but he couldn't make out exactly what kind. O'Keagh dragged him towards the table.

The Doctor supposed things could be going worse, but for the moment exactly how eluded him. 'What do you think you're doing?' he rasped at Chiltern – rather stupidly, he reflected, as the answer was unpleasantly obvious. 'Are you going to kill me?'

'I don't know yet,' said Chiltern as O'Keagh wrestled the Doctor on to the table. Chiltern stepped forward to fasten the restraints. Once his wrists were strapped, the Doctor stopped fighting. He closed his eyes in exasperation. Chiltern moved down to secure his ankles. 'Thank you, Mr O'Keagh. That will be all for the moment.'

The Doctor heard O'Keagh leave the room. Chiltern came back to the head of the table and regarded his prisoner thoughtfully. 'I've been told you have dangerous eyes. Will you behave, or do I have to blindfold you?'

The Doctor sighed irritably. 'You don't need to worry.'

'Good. Now, who are you?'

'I'm the only one who can help you.'

'Do I need help?'

'Badly.'

'Really? I'd say you were the one in trouble at the moment.'

'However much trouble I'm in, there's only one of me. How many of you are there?'

Chiltern stared at him rigidly. 'What are you talking about?'

'Oh, don't be coy!' the Doctor shouted, jerking at the straps. 'I'm talking about the machine! The *time* machine! Now are you going to release me and let me help you, or not?' Chiltern took a step back. 'You have the mirrors, but the mirrors aren't enough. You have to have the machinery. You must have found it separated from the mirrors. How did you even know what it was? Surely there wasn't an operating manual. The thing must have been all set up, with the frame for the mirrors intact but empty. What was it being sold as?'

'A carnival ride,' Chiltern whispered. 'But no one could guess how it had worked.'

'I'll bet.'

'So they'd sold off the mirrors for a maze. I knew as soon as I saw it that it was unique, some strange work of genius. Then the man who had it, a dealer in antique machines, told me of the queer things the mirrors had sometimes showed. I traced them.'

'You'd guessed it was a time machine.'

Chiltern nodded slowly. 'I knew it was something extraordinary, and thought it might have to do with time.' He came closer. 'I guessed. But you knew.' He bent over the Doctor. 'How did you know?'

The Doctor didn't answer. Chiltern placed a hand on his forehead, then felt for his pulse. 'There's something unnatural about you. Your body temperature is much too low, for one thing.'

The Doctor had been thinking for decades that he ought to devise an explanation for that particular peculiarity. Unfortunately, he still hadn't come up with one. Chiltern took a stethoscope from his pocket and undid a few buttons of the Doctor's waistcoat and shirt. He frowned. 'What happened here?'

'Accident,' said the Doctor shortly.

'A rather complicated one, apparently. What about this?' Chiltern fingered the thick scar above where the Doctor's heart had been. 'You haven't led a very healthy life.'

'That's one way of putting it. So you're a surgeon too?'

'I do the occasional autopsy.'

'I see. And send the occasional corpse to potter's field. So much for Scale.'

Chiltern shrugged and pressed the cold stethoscope to the Doctor's chest. He listened for a few seconds, moved it, listened again. 'That heartbeat certainly doesn't sound normal.'

'No,' agreed the Doctor drily. He turned his head to look at the jars. Each contained a grey, ridged brain. Chiltern took his chin and turned his head back, brought a lit match towards then away from his left eye and then his right.

'Abnormal pupil response.'

'Excuse my asking, but what exactly are you doing?' Chiltern walked out of sight. 'Did Scale bring me here because you needed some kind of new specimen?'

Chiltern returned with a hypodermic. 'I'm just going to draw some blood now. Your coat's in the way, so I'm going to take it from your neck. Please lie very still.' The Doctor lay very still. Chiltern slipped the needle in with

painless, professional ease. 'Your blood's a bit orange, isn't it? Rather subtle, but definite.' He held the hypodermic up to the light. The Doctor looked at his blood.

'Which one are you?' he said. 'Nathaniel or Sebastian, the Good Twin or the Evil Twin? Not that I really need to ask.'

Chiltern smiled thinly. 'You've guessed.'

'It wasn't that hard. Your twin has a completely different personality. Or should I say, your enantiomorph? Your mirror twin.'

Chiltern's eyes went so pale they were almost colourless. 'You know a lot, don't you?'

'More than you can possibly imagine. You were the first to try the machine, weren't you? After that, you changed the settings. You tried it on at least two more people, and it was still a disaster. But it's a different sort of disaster with you. You and Nathaniel experience the world differently, independently, as if you really were two distinct persons. And he doesn't seem to have a complete set of memories, or an accurate set either.' Chiltern didn't answer. 'He didn't know the truth, did he? Did discovering it drive him mad?'

Chiltern stood motionless for a moment, no expression on his face. Then he moved out of sight again. The Doctor was fairly certain by now that the only reason he was tied to an autopsy table was that it was the easiest place to secure him, but he still didn't find it reassuring. Probably it was the view of the brains that was getting him down. 'You do realise I'm probably the only person on Earth who can help you?'

Chiltern returned. In his hand was a microscope slide smeared with the Doctor's blood. 'Only because you're not from Earth.'

'Oops,' said the Doctor. 'Rumbled.'

'What exactly are you?'

'It depends. Sometimes I'm a wave, sometimes I'm a particle.'

Chiltern stared at him. 'You're very strange. Even apart from not being human.'

'Yes, I've heard that. Now that you know my mysterious secret, how about unstrapping me?'

'Not just yet.'

'Oh for heaven's sake,' said the Doctor irritably, 'I can help you.'

'Yes.' Chiltern put the slide in his pocket. 'Scale told me you asked him about the mirrors. How did you know to do that?'

'I was at the carnival. He babbles about them to anyone who will listen.'

‘How indiscreet. Well, he won’t any more. Was it beings such as you who made the machine?’

That hadn’t occurred to the Doctor. He supposed it could be true, but since he actually had no idea, he said, ‘No...’

‘That means there are other civilisations out there capable of having made it.’

‘At least one.’

‘Still, you know how it would work.’

‘At least in theory. I’ve never used one.’

‘I want you to repair it.’

‘I *want* to repair it,’ said the Doctor impatiently. ‘Every time you use it incorrectly, the process destabilises Time..’

‘What do you mean?’

‘It’s a bit complicated, but trust me, it’s not good.’

Chiltern looked down at the slide in his hand. He was silent for a moment. ‘So there are other worlds,’ he said softly. ‘Are they better than this one?’

The Doctor shook his head. ‘What you call “the human condition” is universal.’

‘Undeserved suffering.’

‘I’m afraid so.’

Chiltern nodded, as if this didn’t surprise him. He regarded the Doctor with neutral, clinical eyes. ‘I’m going to take a sample of brain tissue now, just a few cells.’

‘Think again,’ snapped the Doctor. ‘At least if you want my help.’

‘There are ways –’

– of forcing me. Yes, yes, I’ve been through this before. I’d be very surprised if you were ingenious enough to think up something I haven’t had tried on me. And I don’t force.’

‘I could kill you.’

‘Oh that would leave you in a nice situation, wouldn’t it?’

‘You want to repair the machine too,’ Chiltern pointed out. ‘Possibly even more than I do.’

‘I don’t think so. I have no personal stake in the matter. This is a silly conversation. If you want to kill me, kill me. I can’t stop you. I daresay you intend to eventually anyway. You can always take the brain tissue then. Not that it will help you.’

‘Help me?’



‘Why are you an alienist, Chiltern? Why did you even want a time machine? What do you think is in the future? An organic solution to madness? Do you think if you sliced me open, you’d find the mind-brain connection sitting there in my inhuman brain, maybe with a little sign pointing to it?’

‘There must be an organic solution! Someone, someday, must find it!’

‘Why do you care? You don’t strike me as an altruist.’

‘You ask too many questions.’

‘And you didn’t ask enough, did you? What about the others? What are they like? And what do they think of the way you botched everything through your carelessness and your arrog-’

Chiltern grabbed his throat and choked him off. ‘You know,’ he said, ‘I wasn’t intending to do this, but I think I may let you meet them.’

‘My pleasure,’ the Doctor gasped.

Chiltern smiled grimly. ‘No,’ he said, ‘I don’t think so.’

## Chapter Fifteen

Anji and Fitz stood looking at the note that Rudy, after ringing the bell insistently, had delivered into their hands. It lay open on the table, and they were reading it for the second time.

*Dear Fitz and Anji –*

*I have been kidnapped by Scale. It would be a good idea to rescue me.*

*Yours,*

*The Doctor*

*PS. – Tell Sabbath to help you.*

‘It’s a good effort,’ said Fitz gamely. ‘I mean, he really tried. But it’s not actually very helpful, is it?’

‘No,’ said Anji.

‘Still,’ Fitz turned the note over, ‘he did draw this map for us. I suppose those little boxes are meant to be houses. So this one with the X would be Sabbath’s.’

‘Yes.’

‘What do you suppose these puffy things are? Trees? Gardens, maybe?’

‘Possibly.’

‘I don’t know about this telling Sabbath to help us. I don’t think he’ll go for that.’

‘Well, they’re supposed to be working together. He’ll have to do something.’

‘No he won’t.’

‘Yes,’ she said firmly, ‘he will.’

Anji put on jeans, one of Fitz’s spare coats, and a cap she found in the TARDIS wardrobe. If they were going Doctor-rescuing, she’d be damned if she’d do it in a sari. At night, she could probably pass for a boy, and of course there was no need to dress up for Sabbath.

Fitz checked the map every time they passed under a streetlamp. ‘Might be duck ponds.’

‘They’re jam,’ she snapped. ‘Gigantic pools of jam.’

Fitz glanced at her sideways. 'Bit tense, are you?'

'Fitz,' she said between her teeth, 'it's natural to be a bit tense when your friend is in danger and you're not sure you'll get him out this time. Also when you're going to have to work with a posturing ham like Sabbath. If he pulls that sinister, mysterious act on me again –'

'All right, all right, point taken.'

'Why does he wear that stupid coat?'

'He said once it was in a spirit of irony.'

'Hah! He's just ashamed to admit he thinks it's cool. And he should be. It's embarrassing.'

'It's just a coat, Anj.'

'And that name! "Sabbath." Like a comic-book villain. He probably thought that sounded cool too. I'll bet his real name's Melvin or something. He's so full of himself. He's like... like... Wile E. Coyote, Super Genius!'

'I'm glad you're getting this out of your system before we actually have to talk to him.'

'Whereas we're like... like...'

'Don't say the Road Runner.'

'No. There were two of them.'

'Not Bugs and Daffy. I mean, Bugs is all right, but Daffy –'

'No. The two... were they squirrels?'

'Chipmunks.'

'No, that was Disney. I think they were squirrels.'

'I don't want to be squirrels.'

'Some sort of rodents.'

'I don't want to be rodents. Rodents won't have a chance against Sabbath even if he is the Coyote. This is too much like that cartoon planet, Anj. I don't feel I was at my best there.'

'But all they did was tear up the house. Oh, and jerk the cat up the chimney.'

'Cats and chimneys. It's not relevant.'

'No,' she said gloomily.

'It's not the image we want in front of us when we confront him.'

'No.'

'I mean, we worked with him once, remember?'

'That was before he tore out the Doctor's heart.'

'Yeah,' he admitted.

She said in a small voice: 'I can still hear his screams.'

'Yeah,' said Fitz after a beat.

They walked on for a few minutes without speaking.

‘But, Anj,’ he said finally, ‘this was the Doctor’s idea. He must have had a good reason for it. He just didn’t tell us.’

‘As usual,’ she muttered. ‘Here’s the park. You’d better consult that very useful map.’

The house, when they located it, was dark.

‘What if he’s not home?’ Anji said worriedly. ‘He could be out cruising the centuries in that timesub of his.’

‘One way to find out.’ Fitz yanked the bell pull. If this produced any noise, it didn’t come through the thick door. They waited. Fitz stepped back and looked the house up and down. ‘Nice place.’

‘I suppose we’re at the right one. That map wasn’t exactly to scale.’

‘I didn’t see anything that could have been those puffy shapes, did you?’

This question was apparently inconsequential to Anji; in any case, she didn’t reply. Fitz walked up and down, admiring the long windows. ‘I think the curtains are drawn tight. So someone might be here.’

‘Well, we can’t just go from mansion to mansion pulling the bell at this hour.’

‘Rich area,’ Fitz observed. ‘Bound to be well patrolled. We’d better hope we don’t end up jailed for trespassing.’

‘Great,’ she muttered.

‘I, at least, am dressed like a gent. You look like a, what, an urchin? Or Is that a fish?’

‘Both,’ she said glumly. She was starting down the steps to join Fitz when the door silently swung open. They peered in at an elegant entrance hall, softly lit by a gas-flame chandelier. At the back, two graceful matching staircases curved up and met at a high landing, above which a large bevelled window caught gleams from the chandelier. The floor was composed of black and white squares of marble, softly lustrous in the gaslight.

‘Cor,’ said Fitz.

‘Showy,’ she sniffed, though she was impressed in spite of herself. ‘The door opening by itself like that. Like that haunted house at Disneyland.’

‘Could have been answered by an ape,’ Fitz observed.

Anji had nothing to say to that. They stepped inside. The door quietly shut. Anji half-expected arms holding candelabra to swing out from the wall, an image from an old film she couldn’t quite remember. But nothing of the sort happened. Fitz simply pointed to a door to the left that stood open, and they walked through it into a drawing room in which Sabbath was sitting by the fire.

Confounding Anji's prejudices, he was wearing a beautifully tailored dark suit. He lounged in a wing chair to one side of the fireplace, facing them, his long legs stretched out comfortably, a large brandy snifter in one hand. In front of him, not too near the fire, sat a small, slender-legged table bearing a bottle and two more snifters. A pair of wing chairs were drawn near to this. Tall candles in equally tall silver candlesticks burned on either end of the marble mantel. Sabbath smiled, showing his fine white teeth. Not for the first time, Anji was struck by his eyes, merry, brilliant and cruel – the eyes of a genius gypsy, she thought unwillingly. Maybe even the gypsies' king.

'We were about to give up,' she said with irritation.

'Never give up,' Sabbath purred. 'Isn't that the Doctor's motto? Please, have a seat and a drink. I can recommend the brandy.'

They sat and he poured for them. Anji glimpsed an embossed imperial seal on the bottle. She warmed the glass in her hands, an action that drew an amused approving glance from Sabbath, and took a hesitant sip, then stared down at the liquid she had just tasted.

'Ambrosial fire,' murmured Sabbath. 'More?' he said politely to Fitz, who had simply knocked his down.

'Erm, no thanks.' Fitz set his snifter carefully back on the table. The warm glow the drink had kindled in his stomach was already moving to his head. 'Very nice, though.'

'Yes,' said Sabbath drily, 'it is.'

Anji was irritated again. She set down her glass too. 'The Doctor needs your help.'

'I'm not surprised. What is it this time?'

She passed him the note. He squinted in puzzlement. 'What are these puffy shapes?'

'Other side,' she said, embarrassed.

Sabbath turned the note over and raised an eyebrow. He smiled slightly. 'The Doctor is more ahead of the game than I imagined.'

'He always is,' she said, 'but I don't know what you mean here.'

'Only that I've met Mr Scale and his action doesn't surprise me.'

'Why didn't you stop him?'

'I didn't say I knew exactly what he was planning. In any case, I doubt he surprised the Doctor either. He's a most obvious rascal. How did the Doctor manage to write this note?'

Anji recounted what Rudy had told them about the Doctor's visit with Hugo and Vera.

'I see.' Sabbath handed the note back. 'So he went with Scale willingly, in the hope he'd take him to the man with the machine. Not a bad plan at all if you can count on someone coming after you. Yes, I have to hand it to him, this is nicely done.'

'He'll be thrilled you think so,' she said sarcastically. 'Once we find him, that is. How are you going to do that?'

Sabbath took another sip of brandy and savoured it for a moment. 'Because of the, ah, heart condition,' he smiled like a shark, 'the Doctor and I have what he refers to as a biodata connection.'

'Right,' said Fitz, abruptly joining the conversation. 'Like in San Francisco.'

Both Sabbath and Anji stared at him and he subsided.

'So you can track him.'

'Not yet.' Sabbath's smile this time was lazy and ominous. 'He tracked me with equipment in his TARDIS. I've been putting together a similar device, but I haven't finished it yet.'

There was a silence. The flames glinted in Sabbath's glass as he raised it to his lips again, his eyes on Anji.

'I'm not letting you into the TARDIS,' she said.

'Why not?'

'I don't trust you.' The remark sounded childish to her in the face of his urbanity.

'Clearly, however, the Doctor trusts me. He could hardly have counted on my having finished my own device.'

He watched her with a chess master's amused detachment. She clenched her fists in her lap.

'I'm not going to do it. You're a genius, aren't you? You must have some other way of finding him.'

'Alas, no.'

'I don't believe you.'

Sabbath shrugged. 'The Doctor has the most amazing gift for getting himself into unpleasant situations,' he said casually. 'I wonder what exactly is happening to him at this moment?'

'Whatever it is,' she blurted angrily, 'I doubt it's as unpleasant as having his heart ripped out.'

Sabbath's eyebrow went up. He lifted his glass. 'Touché.'

'Look.' She stood up. 'I'm sick of all this suave, Vincent Price crap. Are you going to help find him or not?'

‘Certainly I am,’ he said, unruffled. ‘As soon as you bring me to the equipment in the TARDIS.’

‘I won’t do that.’

He spread his hands innocently. ‘Then what can I do?’

She picked up her glass again. ‘This stuff is priceless, right? I’ll bet it’s genuine Napoleon brandy.’ She flung the liquid in the fire, which flared up with a hiss. ‘To hell with you and your pretensions and your luxuries and your bull.’

She grabbed Fitz, who came awake startled, and marched out of the house.

Sabbath didn’t look after them. He sipped his brandy and stared through half-closed eyes at the fire. In a few minutes, the Angel-Maker touched his shoulder.

‘What is it you’ll be doing now?’

‘Oh, I’ll give them a couple of hours to come to their senses. A very spirited young woman, Miss Kapoor, but not a stupid one. She’ll realise she has no choice.’

‘It’s lovely she is.’

‘Yes.’

‘Is she the Doctor’s woman?’

Sabbath laughed at the idea. ‘The Doctor? He’s practically a monk.’ Then his face darkened. ‘I’ve only known him to be close to one woman,’ he said quietly. He took another, larger sip of brandy, and covered the Angel-Maker’s hand with his own. ‘But that was in another century, and the wench is dead.’

Fitz was sober by the time Anji got him back to the flat, and they discussed the situation unhappily.

‘Sabbath’s right, you know,’ said Fitz after they’d gone around the issue for an hour. ‘The Doctor couldn’t have counted on his having finished his biodata thingy.’

‘We only have Sabbath’s word he hasn’t finished it. Maybe he’s lying. Maybe he even has other ways to find the Doctor he’s not telling us about.’

‘Well, the Doctor would have allowed for that, wouldn’t he? I mean, he knows him better than anyone.’

She threw herself into an armchair. ‘The Doctor’s landed us in a mess again.’

‘He’s in a mess too, probably.’

‘Which is a big part of why *we’re* in a mess.’

Neither of them said anything for a while.

‘Suppose there’s any cake left?’ Fitz asked finally.

'How can you think about cake now?'

'It would help me think about other things,' he said defensively. 'It's late, Anj. My mind's like glue.'

'Which differs from its usual state in what way exactly?'

Before he could reply, they heard the downstairs door open and shut, then a heavy tread on the stair.

'Guess who?' she said bleakly.

The door to the landing was open, and in a few seconds Sabbath filled it, wearing an elegant frock coat and carrying a top hat and gold-handled cane. He looked around the room. 'How ironic to pick the lock of this particular house.'

'Why?' said Fitz.

Sabbath just smiled infuriatingly. 'You've decided to let me into the TARDIS, of course.'

Fitz glanced at Anji.

'We don't have much choice,' she mumbled.

'Then let us proceed.'

The three of them just managed to squeeze into the lumber room with the TARDIS. Anji fitted the spare key in the lock and pushed open the door. 'Go ahead,' she said ungraciously. Sabbath stepped forward and stopped. 'Well, go on.'

'Something is preventing me,' he said coolly.

Anji and Fitz exchanged puzzled glances. Fitz ducked past Sabbath and through the door. 'No problem,' he called from the illusory darkness that shielded the console room from outside view.

'Try again,' Anji told Sabbath.

'I assure you,' he replied, an edge in his voice, 'I cannot move forward.'

Fitz popped back out. 'Want me to give you a shove?'

'No,' said Sabbath.

'What I think,' Fitz said helpfully, 'is that the Doctor's set up an exclusionary field keyed to your biodata readings: Only makes sense, doesn't it?'

'Yes,' murmured Sabbath. 'It's exactly what I would have done.'

'Oh, well, that's it then,' said Anji sarcastically. He turned his dark eyes on her.

'You're behaving very immaturely, Miss Kapoor.'

'I've seen your future, you know. In the 1990s. You're an opening act on the third-rate hip-hop circuit and your rap handle is Fatboy Phat.'

Sabbath stared at her in complete Incomprehension.



'Maybe I could go and get this thing for you,' Fitz put in quickly.

'Do you know what it looks like?'

'Well, no.'

'Have you any idea where it might be?'

'Erm, not really.'

'And how many rooms would you say the TARDIS has?'

'Ah, no idea, actually.'

Sabbath nodded and started back down the stairs. 'I need to get back to work.'

## Chapter Sixteen

The Doctor woke up with a plump, soft pillow under his head. This was a surprise. Also a nice change. Maybe he was dreaming. Certainly his mind was sliding from thought to thought in a careless, unedited manner that he associated with dreams. In which case, maybe he should just keep on with it. But even as he thought this, reality pushed in harder, and his body, heavy and sick-feeling, seemed to snap shut around his consciousness like a cage. He groaned and opened his eyes. They were dry, and stung; he blinked rapidly several times until he could see comfortably.

He was lying on an old four-poster bed. The room was plain, wainscotted about a third of the way up and whitewashed above that. There was a single window, a fireplace, and a wooden armchair. A washbasin and chamber pot completed the ensemble.

The Doctor got out of bed, rather slowly, and made his way to the window. It was chained shut, the frame too narrow for him to squeeze through even if he broke the panes. He rubbed the dirty glass with his palm and peered out over an expanse of rolling, treeless country, almost wasteland, covered with sparse grass and bracken. In the distance, against a lowering sky, loomed a tower of tumbled stones, a rock pile made by a giant.

‘Dartmoor,’ he breathed.

There was water in the basin. The Doctor drank some from his hands, then washed his face. Dimly, he remembered Chiltern coming at him with a hypodermic back in the autopsy room. They must have made the journey to Dartmoor by train – Chiltern would have had to drug him again periodically on the trip. Had he travelled in a compartment as a very sick private patient with his personal physician, or in another damned box? His general stiffness made him suspect the latter.

He tried the door. Unlocked. He stepped into a long hallway illuminated only by a stained-glass window at the far end. Approaching this, he saw that it depicted a number of coats of arms on a dark blue ground. He didn’t find one for the name Chiltern. Not a family home then. Probably bought when the line of the original owners died out or went bankrupt.

He descended an oak staircase with a heavy, ornately carved baluster. The lower hall walls were covered with linen-fold panelling, though the floor was uncarpeted flagstone. Cold in the winter, but then, whoever spent much time in their halls? He'd found that he usually ran through the ones he encountered.

The massive front door was locked. Above it was another stained-glass window, this one a depiction of the four seasons that the Doctor thought looked Flemish. Imported and added early this century, no doubt. Everything else he'd seen appeared to be Jacobean. The place had the uncomfortable, empty chill of grand seventeenth-century houses – too much space, too little warmth.

He looked back along the hall. A door beyond the stairs that probably led to the kitchen and workrooms. And a door to either side. Eeny, meeny, miney, mo. He pushed at the left-hand door. Locked. Well, this was being made easy for him. He crossed to the right hand door and opened it.

The room he entered was sparsely furnished. Wainscotted walls with no pictures. Tall shelves with only a few books. A worn wing chair on the hearth. A threadbare Oriental rug. A few other old and neglected furnishings. Chiltern was seated at a table by the window, reading some papers. He looked up and removed his glasses. 'Ah, here you are. How do you feel?'

'Like I've been drugged and locked in a box.'

'Exactly the case,' said Chiltern. 'Do you want something to eat?'

'I'd like some water.'

'Help yourself.' Chiltern indicated a dented silver pitcher on a sideboard next to the door. The Doctor poured himself a glass and drank it, then poured and drank another.

'Who's running the shop?' he asked.

'If you're referring to the clinic, my able associate Mr Mayview. He often takes over my duties when I have to be away.'

'Nice to have good help. You're lucky you didn't kill me, you know. I sometimes react weirdly to drugs for human beings.'

'Yes, I thought of that, but there was no other way.'

'You know,' said the Doctor, 'I *want* to help you. I keep telling you that, but it never seems to penetrate.'

'What are you doing here?' said Chiltern. 'On Earth?'

'I came for the waters.' The Doctor sensed a presence behind him and turned his head. O'Keagh. 'Oh, Mr O'Keagh, there you are. Tell me, how exactly did you kill Scale?'

O'Keagh put out a muscular hand and pushed the Doctor firmly into the middle of the room. Then he shut the door and leaned against it, arms crossed.

'He thinks I'm mad, doesn't he?' said the Doctor.

'I think you're mad,' said Chiltern.

'And yet you want my assistance.'

'Newton was quite mad. It doesn't necessarily affect the reasoning power.'

'I accept the compliment.' The Doctor's eyes went to the window behind Chiltern. The alienist followed his glance.

'I don't advise breaking out. The dog would track you down.'

'Dog?'

'An Irish wolfhound.'

'Of course. The hound of the Baskervilles.'

Chiltern frowned. 'Excuse me?'

'Oh, I forgot. Hasn't been published yet. Sorry.'

Chiltern stared at him for a minute, his head propped against his fist. 'Perhaps this was a mistake.'

'You're right there,' said the Doctor. 'You should never have had anything to do with the machine. Where has it got you?'

'Well,' Chiltern stood up, 'now that I have you, we'll see. Come along.'

He led the Doctor, trailed by O'Keagh, along the hall to the kitchen, then, after finding a candle, down a flight of stone steps into an extensive cellar. Once O'Keagh lit a hanging oil lamp, the Doctor could see that most of the area they were in had at one time been given over to wine. A space beneath the steps, barred with an iron gate, had obviously been reserved for special vintages. Of these one-time vinous treasures, no bottle remained. The place had the same empty, disused air as everything else he had seen.

'This way,' said Chiltern, and the Doctor followed the wavering candlelight down a passage, past a series of locked storerooms with ancient oak doors. Chiltern stopped in front of one of these and unlocked it with a large, old-fashioned iron key. He stepped inside, fumbled for a minute. The Doctor heard the hum of a generator, then the room was bright with harsh unshaded electric light.

'Oh dear,' said the Doctor. He stood with his hands on his hips, lower lip between his teeth, eyeing the gleaming, elegant construction in the centre of the room. Clearly this was where Chiltern's time and energy had gone, for the metal and mirrors shone. The Doctor moved forward even before O'Keagh could push him and stepped into the machine.

It was open to its farthest extension, so that the mirrors were arrayed almost in a straight line, forming a wall rather than a many sided box. Pulled shut, they would make a chamber not unlike the interior of Scale's camera obscura,

but with mirrored walls. The Doctor saw immediately why Chiltern hadn't realised a mirror might be missing. The frame was jointed at roughly twenty-centimetre intervals, so that it could be adjusted to hold mirrors of differing widths and number. Currently it held seven. When these were drawn together to form a seven-sided room, they would enclose a smaller, cylindrical chamber with transparent walls and a hinged segment that could be used as a door.

The Doctor stooped to examine the floor. It was a dull, polished metal he'd never seen, cool to the touch in the usual way. Standing, he peered up at a clear dome formed of dozens of individual squares of glass, above which were carefully mounted seven lenses. It was odd to see these focused on the thick cellar walls, but of course time, unlike light, was no respecter of physical boundaries.

'You sometimes see other times in the mirrors even when the machine is off, don't you?' he asked.

'Yes. There's no pattern, and the scenes don't last very long.'

'Mm hm.' The Doctor counted the lenses again. One for each mirror. Well, there was the difficulty right there. Scale must have the eighth lens as well as the missing eighth mirror. No doubt, the machine could be set up with various numbers of mirrors and lenses, but a seven-mirror configuration would need a different set of lenses to an octagonal one, its own unique set. They weren't interchangeable. The machine was lensed for eight mirrors and would never work correctly with fewer.

On the other hand – and this was his problem – it all too clearly worked incorrectly.

'How did you ever figure out how to put this together?'

'It came with instructions,' said Chiltern drily. 'Look again at the floor.'

The Doctor knelt and took a magnifying glass from his pocket. With this he could see a neatly organised set of engraved diagrams. He followed them with fascination, delighting in their sophistication and clarity. This was quite wonderful. His knowledge must be incomplete. Such easily understood, culturally transcendent instructions had to have been developed in order to make the device adaptable to numerous civilisations. In spite of what he thought he remembered, at one time such a machine must have worked. Or perhaps – a grimmer idea struck him – the technique was being tried again, in this new era when time travel was unregulated. The wheel was being reinvented. Did the inventors know the danger if it accidentally bumped off the road?

He sat back on his heels. 'Remarkable. And where are the controls?'

Chiltern showed him a simple console made of the same metal, a rounded-edge cube with no joins and a control panel consisting of raised symbols. At a glance, the Doctor could see that these were keyed to a base-12 number system. When he examined the sides, he saw diagrams illustrating the use of the console. The simplicity was breathtaking. Of course, the machine had been designed to be user-friendly. The technological complexity was all concealed inside the apparently impenetrable box.

He went around to the other side. Well, wasn't this nice? Instructions for spatial plane interfacing. The Doctor ran his finger lightly over the raised glyphs. That certainly would make the unwieldy device no problem to transport. He wondered whether Chiltern had understood the instructions. Better not to draw attention to them by asking.

Chiltern had been watching him impatiently. 'Can you repair it?'

'I'm not sure. But in any case, it mustn't be used again.'

'Not used?'

'Never,' said the Doctor, still somewhat distracted by the beauty of the machine's design. 'I suspected as much before I came here, to be frank, but now that I've seen it, it's obvious that using the machine when it's not working properly is hideously damaging to Time. Even running tests in order to adjust it to the correct settings wouldn't be safe.'

'So you won't even attempt the task?'

'There are dozens of things that could be wrong. The Earth's magnetic field, for example, might be different from that of the world on which this was constructed. There's also the gravitational field to be considered.' The Doctor thought of the eighteenth-century Earth clocks used to measure time at sea, subject to the environmental stresses of movement, moisture, temperature... Who made you? he wondered, lightly touching the glyphs. What were their dreams for you?

'There must be a way.'

'There isn't, can't you understand? The device hasn't even got all its parts. You'd distort Time so badly that whatever you want to accomplish would undoubtedly turn into something else. Not to mention the damage to the rest of the universe. We're talking about a cosmic problem here.'

'That can be avoided somehow!'

'No it cannot!' The Doctor turned on Chiltern. 'Get some perspective, man! Haven't you been listening? Even if it were complete, turning on the machine could easily start a time destabilisation that -'

'Mr O'Keagh,' Chiltern said.

The Doctor exhaled angrily. As O'Keagh started for him, he turned and sprang up to grab the edge of the machine's roof. Ignoring Chiltern's angry shout, he hoisted himself on to the glass tiles and rapidly shoved the lenses out of alignment, actually managing to pull one loose and fling it to the floor before O'Keagh, after several jumps, succeeded in grabbing his ankle and jerking him down. He fell right into the big man's arms, one of which immediately whipped around his neck while the other pinioned his chest and upper arms. Livid, Chiltern rushed forward and hit him hard in the face.

'Hours of work!' he cried. 'Hours!'

'I weep for you,' the Doctor wheezed. 'I deeply sympathise.' Chiltern hit him again, this time in the stomach, and the Doctor didn't say anything else as he was hauled from the room and back to the old wine cellar. Chiltern dragged open the barred gate beneath the steps; it grated screechingly along the flagstones. 'Throw him in. Find a padlock.' O'Keagh shoved the Doctor into the recess and Chiltern threw his weight on to the gate to clang it shut. He leaned against the bars, smiling viciously. 'Maybe you can't be forced, my strange friend. But you can certainly be used.'

'For what?' The Doctor still hadn't quite got his breath back. 'What *precisely* do you think I could possibly be used for?'

'I'm not certain yet. But experiment will tell.'

'You're talking nonsense, Chiltern.'

O'Keagh had returned. Chiltern took the heavy padlock and snapped it in place. He stood up, brushing off his knees. 'Enjoy your new lodgings. A bit less comfortable than your old ones, but you'll get used to them in time. Or possibly not. You don't really like close quarters, do you?'

'How much time? How long do you imagine you can keep me here?'

'As long as it takes,' said Chiltern. Then O'Keagh extinguished the lamp and the two men went up the steps, shutting the kitchen door behind them and leaving the Doctor in darkness.

'Where's the Amontillado?' he yelled after them, but it didn't make him feel any better.

## Chapter Seventeen

The darkness was total. Not that there was anything to see. The recess was nothing but stones and mortar. Unfortunately, as the barred gate was much taller than the actual entrance, the padlock was fastened to it high on the outer wall. The Doctor stretched an arm through the bars and groped as far up as he could reach, but without success.

Abruptly, as if sluiced down a drain, his strength left him, and he fell on his side, his cheek smashed against the stone floor. His heart pounded shudderingly and he shivered so hard his teeth chattered. He could feel every healing wound on his body as if it were fresh, and the empty side of his chest ached and sucked as if it were a vacuum. A whimper slipped from his throat.

He squeezed his eyes shut, clenching his teeth in rage. He hated this weakness. Hated it. It was easy to blame Sabbath, but Sabbath had only stolen an already-broken part of his body. And whatever had broken it – infected it, blackened it – was something he had done. Something he would never remember but that would always remember him. Pursue him. Punish him. Perhaps he no longer deserved that heart. Perhaps he was unworthy of it.

*Stop this!*

He rolled on to his back, took slow deep breaths, tried to will his shivering to quiet. However much he might be unworthy of the heart, he reminded himself, Sabbath was hardly a deserving recipient. He snorted at the very idea. Speaking of which, he hoped Sabbath was quick off the mark tracking him. He didn't know how long it would take Chiltern to reset the lenses, and it was imperative the machine not be switched on.

The weakness broke over him again, soaking through to his bones. He pulled into a ball, his face in his cold hands. Nausea crawled through him. A good thing he hadn't eaten for a couple of days. He became uneasily aware of the closeness of the recess walls. Another cramped prison. He told himself it was better than a box, but he still felt a subrational discomfort growing in him. Underground. Buried. His heart sped up. Well, at least if he had a panic fit there was no one around to be embarrassed in front of.

Or was there?



To his extreme dismay, he realised he was no longer alone.

Something was coming through the cellar towards him.

The Doctor squinted frantically into the blackness, cursing his diminished senses. In the old days, he would simply have shifted his vision into areas of the spectrum invisible to human eyes. Unfortunately, for all intents and purposes he now had human eyes. Though maybe there wasn't yet anything to see. The sound seemed to issue from around the corner, down the passage that led to the time machine. What was it, anyway? A dragging, limping, *rustling* sound. He'd never heard anything quite like it. Considering all the things he'd heard, that wasn't good at all.

Did it know he was here? Or was it just out for a little walk? The Doctor was still curled on his side. He thought he'd stay that way. He shut his eyes, even though he already couldn't see. It might be able to see him, and he'd rather appear unconscious. The sound dragged nearer. Whatever it was, it was either crippled or not originally designed for walking. He heard ragged breathing. It was out of the passage now, coming towards him at its slow, tortuous pace. Keep still. Very still.

It stopped at the bars. Incredibly, the Doctor smelled roses.

What was this thing? Was he hallucinating? Was this all some sort of weird fever-dream? He breathed quietly, inhaling the gentle, sweet scent, waiting. For several minutes, nothing happened. The Doctor began to relax. Maybe he was hallucinating. He really had no exact idea of how ill he was –

Something snaked through the bars and around his wrists.

The Doctor yelled in surprise. A hand grabbed his mouth, silencing him. A human right hand, as far as he could tell. The left hand ran over him curiously, as if trying to figure out whether *he* were human. There was something wrong with its little finger. The odour of roses intensified. The Doctor thrashed, trying to free his mouth, to roll as far away from the thing as possible. It was a primal response. He knew he was in immediate, terrible danger, that whatever held him was misconceived, unnatural to the deepest degree, a wrong thing –

'Hmm,' it said.

The left hand withdrew. He heard an angry yank at the padlock, then a hiss of frustration. With one less hand on him, the Doctor managed to get his feet against the bars and shove backwards. His back hit the wall. His mouth was free, but the thing pulled on the cord around his wrists. Grimly, the Doctor braced his feet against the bars and pulled back. The cord cut into his wrists, and he gave forward for a moment so that he could grasp some of its length with his hands. It felt like – it couldn't be! But it was. He was gripping

appliance cord, the hard-rubber coated wire manufactured after the 1930s. What in the name of heaven was going on here?

He and the creature on the other side of the bars rocked back and forth, like children playing tug of war. The Doctor's palms burned, but at least he'd relieved some of the pressure on his wrists. He thought he could hang on. Anyway, it couldn't get him out. He wondered whether to call out. Probably no one would hear him, but maybe he'd panic the other into retreating. He took a deep breath and bellowed, 'Chiltern! Your monster's got me!'

The thing hissed. Great. He'd insulted it. 'Chiltern!' he roared again. Suddenly something touched his throat. Something very sharp and very thin. A needle? The Doctor froze. The creature dragged him to the bars. The needle went away and the hand returned, pressing against his chest for a minute, then moving up to his neck, running a thumb softly along the pulsing artery.

Then, abruptly, it released him. The Doctor fell back, bruising an elbow. He heard his unwelcome visitor turn away, its breathing harsh. The Doctor lay as he had fallen, listening to its laborious, dragging departure. The scent of roses faded. Silence returned.

The Doctor took a deep breath. He was trembling, and not from weakness. What had just happened? Was he caught in a drug-Induced dream? Was some force playing tricks with his mind? Either was preferable to the idea that the encounter had actually occurred. Unfortunately, each was also more unlikely.

Was it gone for good, or at least for a while? He thought so. Whatever it had wished to know about him, it seemed to have found out. And what was that? A dozen speculative answers ran through his mind. He dismissed them. It was foolish to try to understand the situation without more information. He curled up again, this time with his back to the gate and – just to be on the safe side – his hands and feet tucked as well out of reach as possible, and let himself sink at last, after days of needing to, into the deepest healing trance of which he was capable outside the TARDIS.

He left one ear awake, so to speak, in case a return visit sounded imminent. But nothing disturbed the silence, and he drifted away on a black sea, rocked by waves of sleep and something more than sleep. He lay absolutely still, not moving even a finger, and it must have been many hours before a noise penetrated his rest that called for attention. He woke up immediately. Someone was descending the steps. The Doctor sat up. He felt much better, as if he'd been drenched in some healing psychic rain. He wondered how long he'd been out. A pale circle of lamplight wavered on the stones in front of the gate, and O'Keagh appeared.

‘Oh, it’s you,’ said the Doctor. ‘What do you want?’

‘Dr Chiltern says I’m to take your coat.’

‘Well, hard cheese for him, O’Keagh, because I’m keeping it.’

O’Keagh blinked a couple of times, taking this in. ‘He wants it.’

‘We can’t have everything we want. You know that. I’m sure he has lots of coats. What does he need mine for?’

‘He wants to check the pockets, to be sure there’s nothing in them you can use to . . .’ Uncharacteristically, O’Keagh trailed off.

‘Make away with myself? Rob him of his prize? So nice to be worried about.’

There was a pause.

‘He wants the coat,’ said O’Keagh finally.

‘He can’t have it,’ said the Doctor. ‘Your move.’

O’Keagh thought some more. ‘Just empty the pockets for me, then.’

‘Ha,’ said the Doctor. ‘You know not what you ask. I’m sorry, O’Keagh, it’s not your fault, for you it would be the first time, but I’m not going through the endless emptying-the-pockets routine with its plethora of whimsical surprises again. I’m just not. The first several dozen times are fine, but after that it gets old. I mean, finally, in the long run, I don’t *care* how many yo-yos I have. Do you see what I mean?’

O’Keagh didn’t appear to. The Doctor leaned forward.

‘Tell Chiltern that if he’s really worried about my coining to harm, then he shouldn’t have me locked up down here with his mysterious, shuffling, nosy, perfumed monster. You don’t have to remember all of that. Just the monster part. I’ll bet that interests him.’

What a burden always to be right, the Doctor thought a few minutes later when he heard Chiltern rushing down the steps, followed by the heavy tread of O’Keagh. Chiltern gripped the bars. ‘What did you see?’

‘Nothing,’ said the Doctor. ‘You left me in the pitch black, remember? I heard a number of things, however. And felt a few.’

‘Are you . . . ?’

‘It didn’t hurt me, if that’s what you’re asking.’

Chiltern hurried to the head of the passageway and held up the lamp, peering into the blackness. The Doctor could see the muscles tense in his jaw. ‘When do you think you saw something?’

‘Heard,’ corrected the Doctor. ‘Felt. Also smelled. Did I tell you it was rose-scented? Nice touch. A few hours ago.’

Chiltern looked back at him. His face was ghastly, but perhaps that was because of the way the light fell on it. ‘You’re safe enough in there.’

'From what? And I disagree.'

Chiltern had turned again to the passage. He removed a revolver from his pocket. 'You're armed, I trust, Mr O'Keagh.'

'Yes sir.' O'Keagh joined him. The two men hesitated, staring into the dark.

'See anything?' said the Doctor. 'It's a terrible idea to leave me in here, by the way. Whatever it was tried to get the gate open.'

'But it didn't succeed,' said Chiltern, as if to a child.

'Not that time, no. What *is* it, anyway? You can tell me. I can keep a secret. In fact, over the next hundred years I'll probably forget it altogether.'

Chiltern was speaking to O'Keagh in a low voice. The Doctor only caught a few words: '... how... got out... may not be...'

The Doctor kicked the iron gate so that it shuddered and clanged. 'Give me a hint!' he roared. 'Animal, vegetable or mineral?'

Chiltern wheeled on him. 'Shut up!' he rasped. 'Do you ever shut up?'

'Not when some fool's endangering my life.'

'Listen to me!' Chiltern was suddenly at the gate. 'You're as safe in there as you'd be anywhere in the house. Safer. I know.' The Doctor grabbed his shirt through the bars, yanking him close. 'What do you know, Chiltern? You made this thing, whatever it may be. Your Frankenstein's monster. Did it come through accidentally? How many has it killed? Where are the rest of your "brothers"?''

'Let me go!'

'Let me *out*!'

Chiltern stuck the revolver in his throat. 'Let. Me. Go.'

The Doctor opened his hands. Chiltern stood up. 'You fool,' he said. 'You don't understand anything.'

'I understand this much,' said the Doctor. 'This is personal with you. You've done something you think is terrible – probably it is terrible – and you must undo it, and you don't care if you die trying. But you don't have to. We can all three of us leave now, regroup, work out a way to handle this.'

Chiltern faced him expressionlessly. 'Repair the machine. It's the only way.'

'It may not be.'

'It is. Will you repair it?'

'Tell me what exactly is going on. Give me a chance to explore alternatives.'

'Will you repair the machine?'

'No,' said the Doctor.

'Sir,' said O'Keagh, 'I hear something down there.'

Chiltern was at his side. The Doctor exhaled angrily and drew as far back in the recess as he could. There was nothing more he could do to save either of them. ‘Oh, stop. . .’ he said hopelessly. ‘You *know*, Chiltern. You know you can’t –’ But they had gone.

The Doctor didn’t want to hear. He particularly didn’t want to just sit there and hear. But he was going to have to. He rested his palms flat beside him on the cold stones and waited. It didn’t take long. There were shots. There was an ugly blurt of pain, probably from O’Keagh. Then there were screams. Long and horrible, and many of them. For a time, these had pauses between them, as if the screamer had momentarily broken away from his tormenter. But finally they became one continuous sound. The Doctor bent his head and pressed his hands over his ears. It didn’t help, of course. Nothing would help. Help was not in this story.

After a while, the screams stopped. The Doctor lowered his hands. Now he was going to have to save himself. Funny how skilled he was at that. Not always so good with others, but damn good with himself. Teeth clenched, he turned his back to the gate and drew himself in, hands and feet tucked away, his coat pulled up so his hair couldn’t be snagged. It wasn’t going to get hold of him without opening the gate.

Then, for a long time, there was no sound. A palpable absence, the kind that presses against the eardrums. The Doctor waited, curled in his still little ball. He thought of many things. They were not thoughts he could have communicated, had anyone asked. Silences were in them, and hollow distance. He felt tears dry on his face – the way they so lightly, lighter than any touch, just for an instant tightened the skin.

At last, almost with relief, he heard it. The awkward thudding step, the scraping rustle. What had it been doing? Gloating? Feeding? He bunched up tighter. His back felt horribly exposed. It was like one of those nightmares where he was being chased by something through a passage too narrow for him even to look over his shoulder, so he couldn’t tell how near his pursuer was. Or had that actually happened to him? He smelled roses. Iron clanked on iron: it had the key.

Something groped at his back, felt for an arm or a leg, seeking purchase, wanting to hold him still while it opened the gate. The Doctor continued in his hedgehog impersonation. The something – what was it anyway? – lashed at him angrily a couple of times; he felt it drag across his back and heard his coat rip. Then it withdrew. The gate began to scrape back.

The Doctor rolled and lunged. He hit the gate and knocked it wide open,

pinning the other against the wall. It yelled in rage. The Doctor slammed the gate at the wall again. And again. And again. Whatever he was hitting yielded and *crunched*, a sound that set his teeth on edge. It was yelling in pain now. The Doctor kept pounding at it in sickening desperation, putting his whole body behind the blows. What was he hitting? How badly was he hurting it? Was he killing it? He didn't want to, but he wanted even less to be caught by it. When the cries finally stopped he gave the gate a couple of extra bangs for good measure, then sprinted up the steps.

He ran down the hall, dodged into the room where he'd met Chiltern, jerked open a window and jumped out, landing in a stone-flagged yard. A wide gate stood open to the moor. He dashed through it. Under a near-full moon, the heath before him was patched with pale light and black shadow, the distant tors like brooding giants. A few miles away, a little cluster of lights indicated a village. The Doctor turned towards them.

The road was hardly more than a wide cart track, and he soon left it. Running on the springy heath wasn't difficult, and the moonlight showed up patches of gorse or bracken in time for him to avoid them. But he didn't know how long he could continue at this speed. He wished he had a horse. Perhaps he should have tried to take one, but he suspected the dog would have been guarding the stables. He'd been keeping one ear open for the sound of the dog baying on his track, but so far there seemed to be no pursuit. He stopped, panting, at the top of a rise and turned to look back. The house was distant and dark. But there was something rising behind it he didn't like: clouds. The wind picked up, whipping his hair back. A storm was coming.

He took off again, down into a dell, where the shadows were longer and he began to stumble into patches of wet bracken that dragged soggly at his legs. All he needed now was to find himself in a mire. But he was going uphill again, towards dryer ground. The wind bore a sweet, wild smell; a patch of heather must be nearby. As he crested the hill, the Doctor saw the lights of the village again, brighter now. He stopped, panting, catching his breath, and looked back. The storm clouds covered half the sky. As he watched, lightning glowed inside them, and in a few seconds he heard a muted rumble of thunder.

And then, in the silence that followed, another sound.

'Oh no,' he breathed. He turned and started down the hill, slipping and sliding in his haste. The sound echoed across the moor, deep and savage. Mr Holmes, it was the baying of a gigantic hound. No, that wasn't exactly the quote. He reached flat ground and began to run. The exact quote was. . . what was it now? The howling of a gigantic hound? No. The – He splashed suddenly

into a cold stream. Uck! Wait – yes! A stream! He hopped out, yanked off his shoes, and plunged back into the water. Upstream or down? Up was towards the village, the way he'd be expected to go. The dog would be directed that way first. So downstream it was. He could only hope he'd gain enough time to be able to double back.

The stream wasn't deep but it was stony and hard to move through quickly. The Doctor slipped continually, bruising his feet. When he came to a little tributary, he cut up it. This was steep, almost like a water stairway, and the stones were mossy. He climbed carefully, concentrating on each step and foothold, and was surprised when, pausing for breath, he straightened and brushed his head against a cluster of leaves.

He was at the edge of a grove of tiny oaks, growing twisted among a nest of boulders. Deformed by their stony ground and the fierce moor winds, the trees were bent, misshapen, dwarfed – a fairy-tale forest. The Doctor climbed up among them, pulling himself along by the low-hanging branches. It was dark in the grove, but looking up he could see the paler sky beyond the black leaves and guessed that none of the trees topped ten feet.

He was still walking in the stream. With the aid of a particularly low branch, he climbed directly from the water into a tree. There. Now he had left no scent on the ground for at least half a mile. He could make his way through the treetops to the other end of the grove and start off again from there. With luck, he'd throw the dog off entirely.

He sat for a moment, feet dangling, breathing hard. Suddenly, something rustled at his side. The Doctor froze. Slowly he slid his eyes sideways – to find that he was being stared at by a large owl. He grinned, almost laughed with relief. As if affronted, the owl blinked at him solemnly, puffing its feathers out. It was a solid, dignified-looking animal. A tawny owl, the Doctor thought, admiring it shyly – the bird that cried in Shakespeare's plays. 'I'm not you tonight,' he said. 'Tonight, I'm prey.' The owl remained indifferent. Rightly so, thought the Doctor. We all have our problems. His revolve around mice, mine around dogs. Where, indeed, is the common ground? 'Nonetheless,' he said aloud, 'it's been a pleasure sharing this tree with you.' The owl spread its wings, dropped from the branch and glided out over the little stream. The Doctor watched it go. 'Good hunting,' he said softly.

He lodged his shoes in a crook of the tree, stuffed his wet socks in his pocket, and climbed up to where he could look over the moor. The clouds had blotted out more and more of the sky, though they hadn't yet reached the moon, which hung lower now, as if cringing from their advance, its radiance wan and sickly,

the shadows it threw longer and deeper. The wind had taken on a bitter, almost metallic edge. The Doctor saw with dismay that his detour had indeed led him farther from the village. He searched some other, lonelier light – a farmhouse or inn – but saw nothing. Twisting around, he peered back the way he had come, finding the spot where he had entered the stream, where, with a nasty shock he saw something moving, casting rapidly back and forth at the edge of the water. The dog. And worse, much worse, there was someone on horseback, watching. The Doctor couldn't make this person out, except that he seemed to be swaddled in some sort of large cloak and wasn't... shaped... quite... right.

The Doctor shivered – from the wind, he told himself. Stay or go? If he stayed, he could watch his pursuer, see which way he headed and use that knowledge to elude him. Unless the rider came this way. If he went to the other side of the grove and on to the moor there, he'd be fleeing into unknown territory in which, as far as he could see from here, there were no dwellings. Heads or tails? The Doctor decided to go with his instinct, and instinct told him to put as much distance as possible between himself and the figure on the horse.

He retrieved his shoes, tucked them under his arm, and made his way through the branches to the far end of the grove. On the ground, he put his damp shoes back on and then stood for a few seconds, wondering which way to go. He would have continued walking in the stream, but it had vanished underground. Best to head for high ground and search again for a farmhouse light.

He had to wade up through bracken, which made for slow going and soaked his trousers to his calves. The view from the top of the ridge proved disappointing: no lights, just spreading, desolate moor. Of course, most farmhouses probably wouldn't be burning a light all night. He might just as easily come on one by accident as not. In any case, there was nothing to do but keep going. The moor was empty, but it wasn't vast. Ten miles in any direction and he'd come to the settled edge.

The Doctor ran and walked alternately. An occasional rabbit shot across his path. Once, passing a stand of trees, he startled a badger which stared at him for a rigid, surprised instant before slipping into the shadows. Several times he found himself suddenly among sheep, which trotted nervously aside as he ran by, then stopped and looked after him, chewing. If he'd come across any of the wild Dartmoor ponies he would have done his best to capture and mount one, but he never saw any.



More unavoidable bracken. A surprising and unpleasant encounter with a gorse bush. Heather, which smelled lovely as his stride crushed it, but was uneven and treacherous under his feet. All this time, the clouds crept up on the moon, and finally, as he stopped to rest near the foot of a tor, seized it. The light vanished as if swallowed, and the Doctor found himself blinking in total darkness. A spot of rain touched the back of his hand, another his face, then, with a brisk patter, the downpour began in earnest.

Almost simultaneously, he heard the dog.

Not now! Not now in the dark and the wet. Clumsily, the Doctor scrambled towards the tor. Seek high ground. Climb up the rocks. The dog couldn't get at him there. Maybe the rain would wash away his track. Water ran into his eyes and soaked his hair. Was he going towards the tor at all? Could he even climb it in the dark? A deep, baying bark broke out in the distance, and he began to run.

It was more jumping than running – sliding, turning, dodging, barely keeping his feet on the uneven, invisible ground. He fell and rolled and sprang up and ran till he fell again. After one tumble, he rolled down a hill, and though he landed bruised he was grateful for the distance gained. Thunder began to rumble now, and lightning blazed and cracked. But all the brief flashes showed him was barren, endless moor. He had left the tor far behind.

But not the dog. Every time he heard it, it was closer. He was gasping for breath and his blood pounded in his ears and every step jarred him to the bone. How ironic if he ran off a cliff. Well, perhaps 'ironic' wasn't quite the word. What would the word be, he wondered, lungs aching. Not 'amusing,' though, admittedly, there was something amusing about it. And speaking of the right word – he slid and stumbled down a rise, narrowly escaping twisting his ankle – what was that quote? The something of a gigantic hound. Snarling? No. Barking? – his foot hit a rock, he recovered, pounded on – No. Yelping? Definitely n-

A triumphant howl broke out behind him.

*Persistence.* The Doctor frantically shrugged off his coat. *The persistence of a gigantic hound.* He spun around, throwing up the coat as the dog careened into him, and hit the ground with the animal in his arms, snarling and fighting the enveloping cloth. Rolling the furious bundle off him, the Doctor gained his feet one more time and staggered away. It was hopeless. The dog would be free in a matter of seconds. Lightning flashed. He glimpsed a grotesque shadow thrown in front of him, whirled in time to see the wild eyes of the charging horse – then the night was pitch black and something, with impossible strength, seized

his collar and heaved him across the saddle.

The Doctor's breath slammed out of him. His captor wrenched his arm up behind his back to hold him in place, but he still rocked and slid wildly on the galloping horse. He tried to cry *Slow down*, but could only gasp. His arm was going to break, he could feel it. Why so fast? He was caught, there was no need, his arm, his arm was –

The horse reared and the Doctor, released, slid to the ground. He rolled away, dazed, throwing up a hand against the brilliant light that had startled the horse. Where had it come from? He turned his head, gaped stupidly at his shadow. The light was blinding at this close distance, too bright, brighter than any light produced in this century, bright as –

The Doctor fell back, with a noise that could have been either a laugh or a groan. The horse and rider leaped into the darkness, and now he could hear, below the rain, the hum of an engine before its time, after its time, out of any time whatever – he shielded his eyes and stared into the blazing searchlights, just glimpsing, beyond their glare, a brass railing, and the massive figure leaning on it.

The next minute, hands were lifting him and worried voices talking.

'Doctor...?' said Fitz.

'Are you all right?' said Anji. She pushed the Doctor's soaked, straggled hair back. His eyes were shut. She and Fitz stared anxiously at his white, rain-wet face. His lips moved, and they bent close to hear.

'Footprints,' the Doctor murmured. '“Mr Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound.”'

## Chapter Eighteen

In the courtyard of the thatch-roofed inn sat stone urns of flowers, still a little wet from the night's rain and almost sparkling in the clear sun. The whole white-walled village, and even the ancient grey church, seemed to have a new-washed gleam. The Angel-Maker didn't care. She sat on a bench in the high churchyard looking down at the thatched roofs and clean cobblestones, frowning.

She could just see a corner of the inn yard and the arm and shoulder of someone having tea out-of-doors. She thought it was Fitz. The woman, Anji, would be with him. *He* was still inside; she'd made sure of that when she couldn't find Sabbath. Fitz had said Sabbath had gone for a walk on the moor, and this sounded reasonable to her, but she was still uneasy and kept an eye on the inn in case *he* came out.

Oh, he looked harmless enough. Last night, bruised and pale and drenched to the skin, he'd been weak as a drowned cat. He made her think of a cat, actually. Those strange slender cream-coloured ones wealthy people owned, with blue or fawn tips to their noses and tails and paws. Sly animals; you never knew what they were about. So even with him limp and wet as boiled greens, she'd not liked him being taken on board the ship. Not that she said anything, of course, but Sabbath had sensed her discomfort and assured her the Doctor had been aboard the *Jonah* many times and had done it no harm.

*Not yet*, was all she thought. Fortunately, they hadn't stayed on the ship. The Doctor had directed them to a house in the middle of the moor, a great empty place with two dead men in it. One of them was torn so badly that the Anji woman turned away, and even Sabbath had looked grave. He and the Doctor had spent a lot of time over the body, discussing its injuries and speculating how the man had died. The Angel-Maker had gone up and down all the dark staircases, just to be sure there was no one else in the house. In front of a gated recess beneath the cellar steps she had found scattered rose blossoms.

The Doctor and Sabbath had also spent a long time in one of the cellar rooms, the Doctor distraught because some machine was missing. He had described this to Sabbath, and then they had gone through the house together, taking

particular trouble to examine all the papers in the library. By this time the sun was up, and Sabbath and she went into a nearby town – she thought it was called Bovey Tracy – to report finding the bodies to the police, while Fitz and Anji brought the Doctor to this little village inn where they had booked rooms the previous evening.

There had been much going to and fro all day, with interviews with the police, inquiring telegrams sent to London, and everyone making excursions to all the nearby railway stations to see whether a strange man had been seen. She presumed this was the same man she'd spied last night on the horse before it shied at the searchlights and sped away – he'd had a queer shape to him under his cloak, and that *distortion* rippled round him – not as strong as the Doctor's, but strong. She'd told Sabbath and he'd seemed unsurprised.

The Angel-Maker's eyes narrowed, and she stood up to see more dearly into the inn yard. That had been the sound of the door opening: was the Doctor up? But it was only the serving girl. Across the rooftops, a whistle sounded as the local train pulled in. The Angel-Maker ignored it, settling back on to the bench. Only one visitor to this village concerned her.

'So,' said Fitz, 'the dead man, Sebastian, was the original, if you like, and our Dr Chiltern, Nathaniel, the one who was at the seance, is one of the copies.'

'That seems to be it,' said Anji, spooning up the last of her fresh blackberries and cream.

'Only Nathaniel thought he was the original, and when Sebastian started babbling about a time machine, everyone thought he was mad and Nathaniel locked him up.'

'Yes.'

'And the fellow on the horse last night was *another* of the copies.'

She might have shivered just a bit. 'Of a sort.'

'We both saw him. He *looked* like Chiltern, except for that bandage over his eye.'

'The Doctor thinks he hurt him with the gate.'

'So there's two copies. Where's the other, what, five?'

She shook her head.

'And what's wrong with the one on the horse?' he said. 'Something off there.'

'To say the least,' she murmured. 'The Doctor's theory is that the settings were different when Chiltern tried the machine on himself than they were for Octave and the other man.'

'Yeah, but different how?'

'I'm not sure I really want to know.'

Fitz brooded over his teacup. 'Where is she, anyway?'

'Who?'

'Sabbath's little friend. The one who killed Octave and that other multiple bloke, the one the Doctor said she was put away for in the first place.'

'She's usually with him.'

'Better him than us.'

Anji said uneasily: 'Where is *he*?'

Sabbath had in fact spent an entertaining afternoon at the murder scene, charming the police with his helpfulness and expertise – as Mr G.K. Thursday, retired clergyman and amateur student of the fauna of Dartmoor – and offering persuasive support of their theory that the ferocious dog they had shot earlier on the moor was the cause of these horrible and regrettable deaths. He was consequently in a good mood when, having strolled back to the village (a straight route, unlike the Doctor's the night before, was only a little over four miles), he passed in the street a couple walking from the railway station. The woman he didn't recognise, but the man he did. Intrigued, he followed them, and was not at all surprised when they entered the courtyard of the inn.

Fitz, who had been left alone when Anji went to see whether the Doctor were awake yet, reacted with considerably less composure. His jaw dropped and he sprang to his feet.

'Dr Chiltern!' His eye fell on the woman. 'Miss Jane! Erm, or is it...?'

She tossed her head. 'What do you think?' she said in a high, quavering voice.

'Oh,' said Fitz. 'Right. The other one.'

Chiltern was staring placidly and vaguely at the flowers. She sat him gently down at the tea table and shot a suspicious look at Sabbath who, with uncanny lack of notice considering his size, had slipped into the courtyard. 'Who's the big boy?'

'That's Sabbath,' said Fitz. 'This,' he said to the affronted-looking Sabbath, 'is Constance Jane's alter ego.'

'And who,' said Sabbath stiffly, 'is Constance Jane?'

'She's a bore,' said the woman. 'Never mind about her.'

'And this,' Fitz nodded towards Chiltern, who was now watching a rook walk along the top of the courtyard wall, 'is Dr Nathaniel Chiltern.'

'Dear me,' said Sabbath, his good mood returning, 'this is all rather complicated.'

‘Not half,’ said Fitz unhappily. ‘What the hell are you doing here?’ he asked the woman.

‘Where’s the Doctor?’ Having peeled off her gloves, she removed her hat and laid it on the table. ‘And you can order us some lemonade if they have any. I wired ahead for rooms.’

‘How did you know where to come?’ Fitz persisted, but she only sat down at the table and patted Chiltern’s hand. Fitz gave up and went inside. Sabbath moved around to get a good look at Chiltern and the woman. She returned his scrutiny boldly.

‘Sabbath. What kind of a name is that?’

‘At least I have one,’ Sabbath pointed out amiably. ‘What is yours?’

She shrugged. ‘Call me Millie.’

Sabbath smiled; he had rarely met a woman who seemed less like a Millie. He turned his attention to her companion. ‘And how are you, sir?’

Chiltern didn’t respond; he might not even have heard.

‘He’s distracted,’ Millie said defensively.

‘That’s because he’s not all there.’

She glanced at him fearfully. ‘What do you know about that?’

‘Things have been happening,’ said Sabbath. ‘His brother is dead.’

‘What?’ She stood up, her face working. ‘When? How?’

‘Murdered. Last night.’

‘No,’ she whispered. ‘No!’ she cried. She ran at Sabbath. He put up his hands, expecting her to pound on his chest, but instead she hit him in the stomach and ran into the inn, weeping. Annoyed rather than hurt, Sabbath looked again at Chiltern. If he’d heard the news about Sebastian’s death, he wasn’t showing it. His eyes were on the flowers again. Sabbath stared at him openly, amazed and not embarrassed to show it. If the Doctor’s theory were correct, then what sat in front of him was only a fragment of a personality, but clothed in the flesh of a complete human being.

‘Not right,’ whispered the Angel-Maker at his elbow.

Sabbath nodded, not looking around. Her unheralded appearances never startled him. ‘No,’ he said. ‘Not right at all. But quite extraordinary.’

After Millie had been calmed and given a glass of brandy, everyone crowded into the Doctor’s room to hear her story. She and Anji sat on the bed, with Chiltern in the room’s single chair. The other men stood: Sabbath in a corner with his hands clasped behind him, the Doctor leaning against a wall with his arms crossed, and Fitz sitting on the sill of the open window. The Angel-Maker declined to join the party.

After she had helped him replace his brother, Sebastian Chiltern, had, in Millie's words, thrown her out. He expected her to return to America, but instead she had gone to stay with Mrs Hemming, pretending to be Constance Jane, and planning to persuade Chiltern to take her back, by blackmailing him if necessary. With this in mind, she had visited the clinic daily, without ever being allowed to see him. But the day they told her he had gone away for a while, she took hope, because, in an unguarded moment, he had told her about the family home on Dartmoor. It had not been difficult, with her knowledge of the clinic and its schedule, for her to help Nathaniel Chiltern to escape – at this point in the story, everyone in the room looked at Chiltern, who, gazing out the window past Fitz, clearly had no idea he had escaped anywhere – and bring him with her.

Millie was vague about why she had bothered to bring Chiltern along and perhaps only Sabbath was both sophisticated and cynical enough to guess that she had hoped to transfer her frustrated and desperate attachment from Sebastian to his more pliable brother. If that were the case, Sabbath observed to himself, she had undoubtedly failed: Nathaniel Chiltern hardly had the concentration to walk, much less perform as a lover. Sabbath's eyes flicked to the Doctor: possibly he had guessed too. It was hard to gauge his understanding of these matters, but he had seen a great deal of human behaviour and appeared to have been shocked by none of it.

The Doctor, as usual, was unreadable, listening to Millie's account with his head down, only occasionally raising it to glance at Chiltern. Millie herself was defiant and studiously unashamed – sitting next to her, Anji suspected that, for all her aggression and unchecked libido, Miss Jane's alternate self had got in over her head.

'This all started with you,' Millie was saying to the Doctor in her queer, unstable voice. 'You were the one at the seance who... who...'

'Who what?' said the Doctor mildly, his pale eyes fixed on hers. Sabbath watched him closely. 'What did I do?'

'You were... you were just there!' she said sulkily. 'And it all started to happen.'

'Really?' said the Doctor curiously. 'Is that how it was? That's quite intriguing. Inexplicable, of course, but definitely intriguing. You were in a trance, you know, when we first met. Perhaps you saw me more clearly that way. Do you think so? How do you perceive things when you're in a trance? You're very relaxed, then, aren't you – not sleepy, just relaxed, and very calm. Nothing can harm you. You're floating in a warm, safe place, and nothing can harm you,

and no questions can alarm you –’

Anji, who had been looking at the Doctor over Millie’s shoulder, suddenly blinked and turned away.

‘– because you’re absolutely safe. Absolutely without fear. Absolutely relaxed.’

Anji almost fell off the bed as Millie slumped against her. ‘Doctor!’

The Doctor was on his feet and had Millie’s hand. She straightened. Her eyelids fluttered and closed. The Doctor touched the centre of her forehead gently. ‘It’s all right,’ he said softly. Without taking his eyes from her face, he addressed the rest of the room: ‘If you’d give us some privacy...’

Anji and Fitz led Chiltern out. Sabbath didn’t move.

‘That was quite impressive. Did you learn the technique, or did you already possess it?’

‘I believe it’s intrinsic. I don’t know of course.’ The Doctor pulled the chair up to the bed and sat down. ‘I gather you want to stay.’

‘If you please,’ said Sabbath drily.

The Doctor shrugged. ‘Just don’t interrupt.’ He leaned forward and took the hypnotised woman’s hands. ‘Millie, it’s the Doctor. I have a question. Please try very hard to remember. Will you do that?’

‘Yes,’ she said, eyes still shut.

‘Did Dr Chiltern – either of them – ever mention *another* home? Some house or flat or place he might have gone to other than the one on Dartmoor?’ She shook her head. The Doctor’s voice took on a faintly desperate edge. ‘Are you sure?’ She nodded. The Doctor briefly bit his lip. ‘All right, thank you. May I speak to Miss Jane?’ Millie frowned. ‘Only for a moment. Please.’

The features of the woman on the bed shifted subtly, as if they were a malleable mask refitting to a different underlying face. ‘I’m here,’ said Constance Jane’s low voice.

‘Yes, Miss Jane, it’s the Doctor. I have a question. Do you know of any other home the Drs Chiltern might have had other than in London or on Dartmoor?’

‘No.’

The Doctor’s mouth tightened in disappointment. He looked up at Sabbath.

‘We haven’t heard from Mayview at the clinic,’ Sabbath said.

‘No,’ said the Doctor. ‘And I have yet to hypnotise Chiltern.’ But he didn’t look hopeful. Sabbath came over and examined Miss Jane’s face.

‘She looks like a different woman.’

‘She is a different woman.’

‘Which is the fundamental personality?’



‘Millie stores the memories for the other two and is aware of their actions, while they know nothing of her.’

‘And Chiltern?’

‘That’s more complicated. When Sebastian Chiltern used the machine on himself, he fractured into multiple personalities, like Miss Jane here, but each had its own physical being. And because each personality, however minimal, is different and autonomous, they all experience reality separately. Octave was one personality parcelled out in several bodies, and when one Octave died, they all died. That’s obviously not the case here.’

‘Sebastian appears to have been dominant.’

‘Yes. And now he’s dead. I don’t know what that means for the others.’

‘And how many were there?’

‘There should have been eight altogether, but we’ve only seen three, one of them apparently deformed.’

‘Could it have absorbed the others?’

‘Possible.’ The Doctor nodded, tapping his lip with a finger. ‘Distinctly possible. Or they could be somewhere else, providing another haven for him.’

‘Hadn’t you better hypnotise Chiltern?’

‘In a minute.’ The Doctor took Miss Jane’s hands. ‘I want to speak again to Millie, please.’ Miss Jane looked distressed, but the expression was almost instantly wiped away by the re-emergence of her other self. ‘Thank you. Millie, sometimes you see the future don’t you?’

‘Yes.’

‘Do you see it now?’

Her face twisted. The Doctor held on to her hands.

‘What do you see now?’

‘I . . .’

‘What do you see?’

Her head rolled. ‘No! I . . .’

‘What is it!’

‘Nooooo!’

Millie jerked out of the trance. She snatched her hands away, glaring at the Doctor. He slumped back in disappointment.

‘What did you see?’ said Sabbath impatiently.

‘I don’t remember,’ she said angrily. ‘It felt . . . You frightened me!’ she yelled at the Doctor.

‘I’m sorry,’ he said tiredly.

‘It’s all your fault anyway.’

'Yes.' Interest sparked in the Doctor's eyes. 'You said that before. What did you mean exactly?' She glanced warily at Sabbath. 'You may speak as freely in front of my colleague Dr Watson as with myself.'

'I thought his name was Sabbath.'

'Quit playing, Doctor,' said Sabbath warningly.

'Never mind us,' the Doctor told Millie. 'The seance – why was that night different from all other nights?'

'It was you,' she said sullenly.

'What about me?'

'I saw the future. That hadn't happened before. And you were the future. And you were the past. You made me fall.'

'Fall?'

'Before I could come and go, just for a little while. I fell towards you, like falling off a cliff. I was... heavier after that. More real.'

'You fell into being.'

'I suppose.'

'What does that mean to you?'

Tears appeared on her face. She turned quickly away. 'I don't like it out here.' she muttered sulkily. 'It's hard. It was fun just slipping out now and then to play tricks.'

'Leaving Miss Jane to handle the consequences,' said the Doctor.

She nodded without embarrassment.

'Then why not simply return... "inside" and stay?' said Sabbath.

She turned on him furiously. 'Because the bitch wants to kill herself! Which takes me with her!' She burst into tears. 'I don't want to die!'

Sabbath raised an eyebrow at the Doctor, who nodded glumly.

'And what do you expect the Doctor to do?' Sabbath asked curiously.

'I don't know!' she sobbed into her handkerchief. 'But it's his fault.'

'You're just a child,' said the Doctor gently.

Her head snapped up. 'I am not!' she sniffled. 'Ask Sebastian.'

'There are many things I'd like to ask Sebastian,' said the Doctor. 'Unfortunately, he's not here.'

'Oh! That's right!' She began sobbing again. '*She* liked him too!'

'Miss Jane?'

'At least, she liked Nathaniel. And they're the same.'

'Not exactly,' said the Doctor drily. 'As you may have discovered.'

Her response was to sob more loudly. Sabbath shifted irritably. The Doctor raised a hand for patience and leaned towards Millie again. 'Why don't you go inside now, and let me talk to Miss Jane? I'll see what I can do.'

'About what?' said Miss Jane's low voice. Both men started. She looked at her handkerchief in bewilderment, felt her face. 'Why am I crying?' She saw Sabbath and shrank back in alarm. 'Who are you? Oh,' she grabbed the Doctor's hand, panicked, 'where am I?'

'In an inn on the edge of Dartmoor,' he said soothingly. 'It's all right.'

'Has she – Did she -?'

'No,' said the Doctor. 'There's been some excitement, I'll tell you about it, but she hasn't done any harm.'

'What day is it?'

'July 31st.'

'Oh dear God.' She pressed the handkerchief to her mouth.

The Doctor glanced up at Sabbath, and he nodded in understanding and withdrew. Once the door was shut, the Doctor said nothing, only continued to hold Miss Jane's hand. She didn't cry, but sat for several minutes with her eyes shut. Finally she looked up. 'I'm all right.'

'Are you?' he said. 'Or do you still want to die?'

She blushed in shame. 'Did *she* tell you that?'

'It was why she came out and stayed out. She's afraid.'

Her eyes dropped.

'Listen.' The Doctor held her hand more tightly. 'We are in the middle of something very important and very dangerous. Much of what's happened to you lately is the result of this crisis. When it's resolved, things will be different for you. Please wait and see.' She didn't look at him. He shook her hand gently. 'Please.'

'All right,' she said. But she still didn't look up.

The Doctor recruited Anji and Fitz to explain to Constance Jane what had been happening. After checking to see whether a telegram had arrived from Chiltern's clinic and finding none had, he took Sabbath to Chiltern's room. This too contained a single chair, an armchair in faded chintz, in which Chiltern was sitting as they came in, staring at nothing in particular. The room was in the second storey, up under the eaves, and Sabbath would have had to stoop slightly if he hadn't sat on the bed. The small window didn't let in much light, and Chiltern's face was haggard in the dimness. The Doctor stood with his hands in his pockets, rocking slightly on his heels, regarding him with sympathy. 'I

don't have much hope for this,' he said to Sabbath. 'I've hypnotised him before. Under the false memories he created to give himself a past, there's not much genuine memory in there.'

'Is there much of anything?'

'Well, yes.' The Doctor was tapping his lip again. 'That's what's so interesting. He'd created a surprisingly strong character around that fragment of personality. A very decent, intelligent, compassionate man. Admirable, really. What I think – and I have no proof at all – is that what might commonly be called Sebastian's "virtues" fractured off to form Nathaniel.'

'So he's without faults?' said Sabbath cynically.

'I wouldn't go that far. But the centre of the self – or the foundation if you prefer that analogy – is "good", and the weaker character elements are pushed to the edges. This depleted creature you see isn't him. I think it's a form of temporary psychological shock and that he'll come out of it when he's ready.'

'Shock at discovering he was only part of a whole?'

'Exactly. Dreadful thing to find out. It would undermine your whole sense of identity.' The Doctor bent, hands on knees, so that his eyes were level with Chiltern's. 'I'm not sure I can even hypnotise him in this state. Let's see. Dr Chiltern,' he called softly, 'it's the Doctor. Will you come here? Look at me, please. Just look at me, yes, like that, like the night in the cab, remember? You wanted me to help you then. Now I need you to help me. Will you? I think you can. Will you try? It's safe here. Nothing can harm you. Will you come and talk to me?'

As if from far away, life and expression seeped back into Chiltern's face. Entranced but alert, he looked at the Doctor, who smiled in relief and greeting. 'You're here. Good. Thank you.' He stood upright. 'He's still in there,' he said happily.

'Very nice, I'm sure,' said Sabbath. 'Now if he only knows something useful.'

'Dr Chiltern, will you answer a question for me?'

'Yes.'

'Aside from the residences in London and on Dartmoor, did Sebastian or any other member of your family have any other home? Any place to go to in order to hide, or rest?'

'I don't know.'

'Try hard to remember. Please.'

Chiltern was quiet for a minute. 'There were... moors,' he said finally. 'The piles of stone... The house... The house was cold...'

'Yes. But was there any other place?'

Another silence. Then: 'I don't know.'

'Are you certain?'

'I don't know.'

The Doctor grimaced and turned away.

'It can't be Yorkshire or any other moor,' Sabbath pointed out. 'They have no tors.'

'No. He's thinking of here.' The Doctor looked sombre. 'Only of here,' he repeated under his breath.

As they returned downstairs, Sabbath said casually, 'Why don't we take a walk?'

The Doctor nodded. 'All right.'

They went down into the town orchard and along beside the shallow, amber-coloured river. The sun was bright without being too hot, and the sky a soft blue with only a few wisps of cloud. Butterflies flitted among the fruit trees. The Doctor kept holding up a finger for one to land on and then examining it.

'Red Admiral,' he observed as a particularly handsome pair of wings fluttered away.

Sabbath was uninterested in lepidoptery. 'Can she really see the future?'

'Sometimes.'

'Then it doesn't look very promising.'

'Her reaction could have been to some vision having only to do with her.'

'That was a very interesting conversation you had.'

'In what way?'

'In the way she claimed you were responsible for her present condition.' The Doctor strolled on without answering, his eyes following the butterflies. 'Well?'

'I'm sorry. Was I supposed to say something?'

'Don't be coy with me, Doctor,' Sabbath rumbled.

'I wouldn't dream of it. What do you want to know? Why I had such an effect on her? I have no idea.'

'None?'

'None at all.'

'I find that difficult to countenance.'

'Really? I can spin you all sorts of plausible-sounding nonsense theories if you like. Such as, I am some kind of temporal strange attractor.'

'Is that true?'

'How should I know?' said the Doctor impatiently. 'It's not something you can test in a lab. Am I a time-sensitive? Yes. Do I biologically incorporate certain

temporal elements? Yes. Does that sometimes appear to cause odd things to happen? Yes. Do I know what any of it means? No.'

'You are being disingenuous, Doctor. Have you honestly taken no notice of the way in which coincidence trails you like a shadow?'

The Doctor shrugged. 'Anecdotal evidence. You can't draw any conclusions from it.'

'No?'

'You've got that tone in your voice again. That sly, "the Doctor is an intrinsically disruptive force who must have Something Done About Him" tone.'

'You claim such righteousness in your protection of time. Are you afraid to face the possibility that you might be one of its greatest threats?'

The Doctor snorted in amusement. 'Are you willing to face the possibility that your thesis might be a trifle self-serving?'

'In the sense that it supports my argument, certainly.'

'Which argument is that again? I know we discussed it in Spain, but I was a bit woozy –'

'Doubtless from all the popping around in time you do. You're as dangerous as that fool Chiltern meddling with his toy time machine.'

The Doctor stopped, stung. 'That's a ridiculous accusation.'

'Is it?'

'Overblown and, if I may say so, a tad hysterical. I am hardly shredding time.'

'No, but you're fracturing it. Showing up here, showing up there – and each time a new timeline branches off.'

The Doctor scooped a stone from the bank and tossed it lightly into the river. With a soft splash it vanished, leaving gently spreading concentric circles. 'Oops. Fractured the water.'

'Facile and specious,' said Sabbath. 'There is no correlation.'

The Doctor had sought out a few more smooth stones. Now, as they continued walking, he began to juggle them. 'Your problem, Sabbath, is that you're a reductionist. You're so certain a timeline can be pinned down and defined just so. It's a very eighteenth-century view of science, if you don't mind my pointing that out, this idea that truth is something that can be proved rather than something that hasn't yet been disproved. Is there some ideal timeline out there, some Platonic essence of form, that you're trying to make time conform to?'

'Dear me, Doctor, I can't believe I'm hearing you argue for chaos.'

'You think it's either your kind of order or else it's chaos.' The Doctor started juggling so that he caught stones behind his back as well as in front of him.

‘What’s so difficult to understand about variations within a structure? What if the “real” timeline is like a musical score, with infinite ornamentations possible? There can’t be a perfectly correct performance of a score, because a score is a guide, not a definition. It opens possibilities rather than closing them off. Why shouldn’t time be like music?’

‘Very pretty. And what if you’re wrong, and every trip you so blithely take pulls out another thread in time’s warp?’

The Doctor caught his stones one after another, and tossed them all into the river. Their various concentric ripples smacked lightly together and dissipated.

‘And what if you’re wrong, and in paring down time’s possibilities you strangle reality?’

‘Doctor!’

They both turned. It was Fitz’s voice.

‘Down here!’ called the Doctor.

Fitz came jogging through the trees. ‘Telegram came.’

He handed it to the Doctor, who ripped it open. Fitz and Sabbath looked over his shoulders and they all three read that neither Mayview nor anyone else at the clinic knew of or could find records for any other residences Chiltern might have owned or rented.

‘That’s it,’ Sabbath said quietly. ‘We have exhausted all our leads. Unless the local police track him down, a contingency I consider remote, Dr Chiltern has eluded us.’ The Doctor said nothing, just stared at the telegram as if it might, if he looked long enough, turn out to contain a different message.

‘Maybe he won’t use the machine again,’ said Fitz without much conviction.

The Doctor shook his head. ‘If he didn’t intend to use it, why take it with him?’

‘Indeed,’ Sabbath agreed. ‘And it’s possible that if he even so much as tinkers with it...’

The Doctor crushed the telegram into a ball.

## Chapter Nineteen

The Doctor and Sabbath sat up late that night. Fitz, who was the last of the others to remain downstairs, sat nursing a beer at the little bar and watching them across the room, their chairs drawn up to the stone fireplace, heads together, arguing, pondering, suggesting. He was struck by the disinterested concentration of their discussions, as if each had forgot who the other was and was focused solely on the problem. Periodically the Doctor would rise and pace restlessly, while Sabbath, with a deep sigh, leaned back in his chair and stared morosely at the flames. Then the Doctor would resume his seat and they'd confer some more. The Doctor had drawn dozens of the machine's details and instructions on a pad, and they went over these again and again without, so far as Fitz could make out, arriving at any helpful conclusions. They were brooding separately when he finally went upstairs to bed.

'Of course, if by any chance he uses the machine again without destroying the universe,' Sabbath said drily, 'he'll show up on my instruments and we can quickly find him.'

'Ah yes,' said the Doctor in the same tone. 'After all, he's used it three times already and the universe is still here. We shall continue to trust to blind luck and it will see us through. But in that case,' he added, 'shouldn't you be crouched over your tracking screen?'

Sabbath displayed a small black device that resembled a telephone pager. 'This will alert me as soon as there's any disturbance.'

'Very efficient.'

'I think so.'

They sat staring into the fire for a while.

'You realise that all this proves my point,' said Sabbath.

'Well, thank goodness. I'd hate to think the end of the universe did nobody good. What point is that?'

'Your misplaced sentimentality about humanity's intrinsic value and their right to free will. This misguided fool got hold of a time machine, and where are we? Where are all his innocent fellows, those people whose welfare you claim to care about?'



‘What are you arguing? That if somehow you’d managed to murder Chiltern before he found the machine, everything would be fine? Someone else would have found and understood it sooner or later.’

‘Exactly. They can’t be trusted.’

‘That silly Prometheus. Nobody told him.’

‘The gods did,’ Sabbath murmured. ‘Afterwards.’

‘As I recall, it was his liver that was torn out, not his heart.’

‘Such arrogance, Doctor.’

The Doctor shrugged. ‘Obviously in this argument I stand in for Prometheus. Just as you stand in for the gods.’

‘Touché. But you haven’t rebutted my argument.’

‘Which is what? That humanity is fundamentally base and needs to be controlled? That a democratic society with civil liberties is a society with social inequality and crime, whereas a police state, by silencing dissidents, can guarantee a rough egalitarianism and public safety – so that the poet’s freedom to be subversive is invariably bought by the suffering of the poor? That the rule of the people too easily becomes the rule of the mob? That the centre of every human being is self-interest and even virtue is corrupt? That they are animals whose moral sense degenerates as soon as their bellies aren’t full? That idealism has killed as many as viciousness and there is no philosophy, however noble, that can’t be turned to depraved ends? That people will always fear, and as long as they fear they will hate?’

‘There is ample evidence for the truth of everything you’ve just said. History makes my case for me. Can you, in all intellectual honesty, deny it?’

‘No.’

‘Then why?’ said Sabbath, genuinely puzzled. ‘You’re not stupid about these matters. You’re not starry-eyed, or basically impractical. You can see what reality is. Why don’t you accept it?’

The Doctor was sitting back in his chair, his clasped hands resting against his chest. ‘Because I prefer not to.’

‘I beg your pardon?’

‘Because I don’t, won’t accept. I don’t approve. Injustice is the rule, but I want justice. Suffering is the rule, but I want to end it. Despair accords with reality, but I insist on hope. I don’t accept it because it is *unacceptable*. I say no.’

‘It’s all about what *you* want,’ said Sabbath softly. ‘You won’t accept the way things actually are because it is your will that they be different.’

The Doctor looked at the fire. ‘Perhaps.’

‘There’s no “perhaps” about it. You continue to amaze me, Doctor. This hubris is breathtaking.’

The Doctor shrugged unapologetically. Sabbath smiled.

‘I hesitate to mention it, but you haven’t yet thanked me for saving your life. Again. That’s three times.’

The Doctor eyed him sardonically. ‘Once unwillingly.’

‘Nonetheless.’

‘You’re right, the result’s the same. Make it three. Thank you.’

‘Think nothing of it. Doctor?’

The Doctor had abruptly stood up. For a few seconds he only stared blankly ahead of him, lips slightly parted, then, with a blink, he noticed Sabbath again. ‘Excuse me,’ he muttered distractedly. ‘There’s something I need to attend to.’ He hurried from the room.

Once upstairs, Fitz had discovered he didn’t really feel like sleeping. He’d leaned out of the window, smoking, staring at the thatch-roofed houses, so still under the moon. Dreaming through the apocalypse. The Doctor had that end-of-the-universe tension about him, no doubt about it. It was difficult to imagine in this tiny, peaceful place. Fitz was used to the end of the universe looming amidst a lot of noise and action and big machines, and even then it had never been a concept he could actually grasp, any more than he could conceive of the number one billion. Now it suddenly struck him that he might not make it to the age of forty, and for some reason that notion was more chilling than any of his past near-brushes with death.

A shadow moved in the street below. Fitz craned out and identified it. ‘Doctor!’ he called softly.

The Doctor looked up, moonlight flattening his eyes.

‘Where’re you going, then? No, wait, hang on.’ Fitz stubbed his cigarette on the sill and hurried from his room.

The Doctor eyed him unwelcomingly, but Fitz didn’t care if he didn’t want company. *He* wanted company. And he wouldn’t mind knowing what was going on either. ‘Where are you off to?’

‘I thought I’d take a walk on the moor.’

‘I’d think you’d had enough of it after last night.’

The Doctor moved off without replying. Fitz fell in with him.

‘So,’ he said, ‘what are we looking at? The end of the universe?’

‘Only as we know it.’

‘Oh, so that’s all right then.’

They walked in silence past the church and up the narrow road that led to the moor.

‘So how will it be,’ said Fitz after a while, ‘this end of which you have spoken?’

‘Well, put simply, a chain reaction will start and time will get all shredded up.’

‘That’s the layman’s version.’

‘Yes. I can give you the mathematics if you like.’

Fitz glanced at the Doctor, but apparently he had spoken without irony. ‘That’s all right.’

They walked on.

‘We’re lucky it hasn’t happened already,’ the Doctor said at last.

‘Yeah? Well then, it might not happen for a while.’

‘Your point being. . .?’

‘Well, that’s better than happening next instant, isn’t it? Gives you some time.’

‘To do what exactly?’

‘Erm, what you always do. Fix things. Pull the impossible rabbit out of the non-existent hat.’

The Doctor smiled faintly; it didn’t reach his eyes. They passed an ancient stone cross, its arms weathered to nubs, and turned left down an even narrower track through some woods.

‘Seriously,’ said Fitz, following the Doctor through the darkness, ‘can’t you pitch a spanner in the thing?’

‘I have to find it first.’

‘Can’t you track its time disruptions signal or whatever?’

‘Only if it’s on. And if it’s on –’

‘– we’re off. Got you. So you don’t have any idea where it is?’

‘Given Victorian transportation limits, it’s probably still in the British Isles at this point, but that’s not much help.’

‘This third Chiltern. . . He’s not right, is he? I mean, physically. So he’d have to go some place he could hide.’

‘Yes. I’m fairly positive he’s fled to some other place that he owns or feels he has safe access to. But there’s no record of such a place in his personal or professional files at the clinic, or in any of the papers at the house here. Miss Jane and Millie never heard Sebastian mention anything of the sort, and Nathaniel doesn’t know of one, either because there isn’t one or because he lacks the full memory and knowledge that Sebastian had.’

‘So only Sebastian could tell us.’

'Yes.'

'Except he's dead.'

'Yes,' said the Doctor. The word came out strangely, a long sigh. They were out of the trees now and Fitz looked at him sharply, but, in profile at least, his face was without expression.

'You could try Chief Ironwing,' Fitz said lightly.

The Doctor actually laughed. 'Miss Jane is a multiple personality with some telepathic abilities and occasional clairvoyant flashes. She doesn't actually talk to the dead. Just as well. The poor woman has enough problems.'

'What about the other mirror? The one Scale had? If that were in the machine, would it work better?'

'Better as a time machine, yes. It could still be hideously destructive to this continuum.'

'You mean it can't be used at all?'

'I dare say it would work all right in the vortex.'

They had come to the edge of a high field overlooking the moon-shadowed moor. The Doctor pointed to the crags of a massive tor off to the left. 'I'm going over there.'

'All that way?'

'You don't have to come.' The Doctor started down. Fitz sighed and followed.

It was very quiet, quieter than anything Fitz had ever experienced in the countryside in the twentieth century, not that he'd spent much time there. Occasionally an owl hooted, or some other nightbird called. Panicked rustles in the bracken indicated they'd startled a rabbit. The Doctor walked quickly, his hands in his pockets, as if he had some purpose in mind, though Fitz couldn't imagine what that would be. But he felt obscurely that he ought to stick with him. Watch his back, so to speak.

In fact... Fitz stopped and turned, but saw nothing. Hadn't he heard something? Another step besides his own and the Doctor's? But the only sound was the faint stir of the wind in the bracken. Embarrassed at his jumpiness, he hurried to catch the Doctor, who had strode obliviously ahead. Probably lost in his thoughts, which, if you were the Doctor, was a big place to get lost in. Watching his back, literally – the set shoulders and stiff spine – Fitz was suddenly sure of something. He increased his pace till they were side by side.

'You've got a plan.'

The Doctor didn't look round. 'Have I?'

'A cunning plan.'

The Doctor smiled that faint, distant smile. 'A fiendish plan.'

‘You have, haven’t you?’

The Doctor sighed, and Fitz was suddenly sure of something else, something he’d rather not be sure of.

‘I’m not going to like it, am I?’

The Doctor didn’t answer, only increased his pace. They were walking up the base of the tor, weaving among the rocks. ‘What is it?’

‘Fitz. . .’ said the Doctor.

There was a helpless note in his voice that struck Fitz cold. He grabbed the Doctor’s arm, spun him around. ‘What is it!’ The Doctor’s face was bleak as the stones around them. Fitz let go of him, and he immediately turned and walked away.

‘Wait,’ said Fitz. ‘Don’t.’ But he didn’t know what he was asking. He ran to catch up again. The Doctor waited for him on a grassy plateau. Fitz stopped beside him, catching his breath. The Doctor was gazing at the moor, stretched serenely below them in the moonlight. Fitz gave it a desultory glance.

‘Feels funny admiring the view when the world’s going to end.’

‘It’s still beautiful,’ the Doctor said matter-of-factly. ‘Look down – no, on the ground, beneath our feet.’ Fitz looked. ‘Do you see it?’

Faint scars seemed to mar the grass. Looking more closely, Fitz saw stone remains, worn level with the ground, forming a barely discernable circle.

‘Iron Age,’ said the Doctor. ‘This was once a village. Time,’ he added vaguely. ‘Things come and go.’

‘Bit banal,’ said Fitz. He was still uneasy and a little angry. The Doctor shrugged.

‘Well,’ he said, equally vaguely. ‘Language. . .’

He sat on a broad flat stone and after a moment Fitz sat beside him. The piled heights of the tor rose darkly behind them, an ogre’s castle.

‘Sabbath is dangerous,’ said the Doctor.

‘You know, I’d gathered that.’

‘I’m serious,’ the Doctor snapped. ‘He’s finally deigned to tell me in full about his theory of time, and it’s lunatic.’

‘You mean really wrong? I didn’t think he was stupid.’

‘Not entirely wrong, but idiotically mis-applied. He believes. . .’ The Doctor trailed off, eyes still on the moor. ‘Well, it’s complicated, but essentially what he believes, if applied practically, would be ruinous for the web of time.’

‘Well,’ said Fitz carefully, ‘that’s a bit academic, isn’t it? I mean, we’ve already got one whopping great threat to the web of time to deal with. Seems to me Sabbath has to join the queue.’

The Doctor waved a hand impatiently. 'He has to be dealt with, Fitz.'

'Not if the universe comes apart, being as he'll come apart too. Not to mention us. Don't you think you have enough to worry –'

'Dealt with! Do you understand what I mean?'

Fitz stared at the set, white profile. He's lost it, he thought. The strain's made him bonkers. Because the Doctor would never suggest what the Doctor seems to be suggesting. He stood up.

'Let's go back.' The Doctor didn't respond. 'Seriously, it's late. It'll be dawn soon. You need some rest.'

The Doctor glared at him. 'Don't patronise me, Fitz.'

'I'm not, I just –'

'I'm staying here. Go if you want. In fact, go. Leave me alone.'

'I'm not going without you.'

'Really? You're going to force me to come?' The Doctor looked at him with an expression Fitz had never seen before. 'Do I have to remind you how easily I could break any bone in your body?'

'Jesus,' said Fitz in disgust. 'You've gone off the rails, you have.'

The Doctor shrugged, turning back to the moor. 'As you say, considering that the universe is going to end soon, it hardly matters. Go away. Now!' he added when Fitz didn't move.

'Forget it.' Fitz plonked down on an adjacent rock. 'You're looping around like a pair of waltzing mice and I'm not leaving you like this. You want to break a bone, OK, pick one. As long as it's not in my fingering hand.'

The Doctor glared at him, but there was something else in his face as well. Suddenly, to Fitz's surprise, he smiled – the old smile, warm and rueful. He shook his head. 'I should have known better.'

'Yeah,' said Fitz shortly, 'maybe you should.'

'Fitz,' the Doctor's voice was milder now, almost gentle, 'I need to be by myself for a bit. To think some things through. Go back to the inn. Get a little sleep.' He squinted at the horizon. 'I think you're right about the dawn. It will be morning in a few hours. Come back then if you like.' Fitz hesitated. 'Please.'

Fitz stood up but still hesitated. 'What if that dog's still about?' he said lamely.

'The police found and shot it. The latest theory is that it killed Chiltern and O'Keagh. Sabbath told me.'

'Did you mean all that about Sabbath?'

'He is very dangerous,' said the Doctor slowly, 'and he must be stopped. Let's not talk about it any more now. Please leave. I just need an hour or two.'

‘All right,’ said Fitz unhappily.  
‘Good man.’

The Doctor watched Fitz go, picking his way among the rocks, vanishing from sight, and then reappearing on the moor, heading back to the village. He wasn’t moving very fast. Tired, thought the Doctor. Worn out. I’ve worn them both out. They’re human, and I’m wearing their brief time away, faster than it would go if they led ordinary lives. He rubbed his face with both hands. Enough egotism. Fitz and Anji had chosen to be with him – well, Anji not so much, but he’d get her back home soon, if there remained a back home to get her to. You’re not responsible for the world, Doctor. Except occasionally. Such as now. With a sigh, he lowered his hands.

The Angel-Maker was standing in front of him.

She was good, the Doctor acknowledged. Though he’d known she was nearby, he hadn’t heard her approach. He had been sitting slumped forward slightly; now he straightened, his hands resting loosely in his lap. ‘Miss Kelly,’ he said politely. He didn’t ask what she was doing there. He kept his eyes on her face, on her fierce dark eyes, ignoring the glint, at the edge of his vision, of something in her hand.

‘I heard you,’ she said. ‘I heard all that you were saying. You’re no good to him.’

‘No,’ he agreed.

‘You won’t be hurting him.’

‘Why do you hesitate? Do you want me to defend myself?’

‘You’re a quare creature and no mistake,’ she said. ‘Is there no fear in you?’

‘Whatever you’re going to do, do it.’ His voice almost cracked, and in shame and anger he shouted, ‘Do it now!’

She was quick, but he was still able to grab her hand and make sure the knife went straight into his heart.

# Chapter Twenty

The Doctor descended.

For a long while, there was no pain. He was certain that some time previously in his long, varied and largely unremembered life he must have been stabbed, but he didn't recall it. He had always heard that you didn't feel the cut, only the blow, but he wasn't in any position to confirm that, since he had lost consciousness almost instantly. He had no sense of how he had fallen or where he now lay.

Before, in the theatre, it had been terrible, a swirl of disorienting agony. This time he was better prepared. Even as he seized the Angel-Maker's hand to make absolutely sure that she hit her target cleanly, he was focusing in, shifting out of his ordinary state of consciousness, preparing for transition. He could no more control what was coming than he could a river he'd fallen into, but with some effort he could keep his head above water.

He knew his mind, desperate in the face of no meaning, would quickly make artificial sense of things, construct a sense-metaphor for what was happening to him. There were a few false starts. He was falling down a vertical tunnel, past a shelf with a jar of marmalade on it. He plunged into a watery chasm towards a shrouded figure white as snow. In a dark wood, a lion crossed his path. On a grey plain, a tornado whirled, gathering force. He flashed through these scenes, like the projectionist in that silent movie who walked into the film he was showing and had his world edited out from under him.

Now he was walking. There seemed to be a hard path under his feet, leading gradually downwards. His surroundings were vague. Nothing so definite as mist or as stark as darkness. He was simply in a place of un-seeing. After a time, this too changed, shifting and forming into a kind of mist, but with none of the softness of mist or the mystery of fog, nothing but a bland, obstructive greyiness: dullness visible.

He kept walking. Finally, he felt what he had been waiting for – a tug at his back, between his shoulder blades. He looked back and saw the silvery thread stretching into the non-mist. Good. Nothing to do now but continue. He expected it would become more difficult, and it did. He began to feel as if



he were pulling a great weight with that slender thread. He kept on. More time passed. He had begun to lean forward as he pulled, like a man in a harness. If he had been breathing, he would have been panting, even though the way led downhill.

It was as if he were trying, against all odds, to drag something infinitely large into a tiny space.

Structures began to appear to either side: hallways. They flashed in and out of existence. At the end of some of them were open doors, flashes of brilliant green. The Doctor ignored these. The place he wanted wouldn't have an open door.

What would it have? A locked door? A bridge? A gate? Or would it be a chasm, or a river – *la trista riviera d'Acheronte* – with a ferryman who refused to carry the living man who came here so unnaturally?

Just when he thought he could haul his immense burden no farther, the gate appeared. Age-darkened oak studded with iron roundels, it rose higher than he could see and extended without end from side to side. Undeterred, the Doctor walked up and knocked.

'Let me in!' he called. 'Unless you want a live being polluting your threshold!'

The doors opened. The Doctor entered.

More colourlessness. More emptiness. More silence. Only the sense of the hard track beneath him. He walked on.

A hand plucked at his sleeve.

'Give me your coat.'

'What good is it to you?'

'You must give me your coat if you want to go down.'

'Take it,' said the Doctor, and walked on. He was cold now.

A hand grabbed at his heel.

'Give me your shoes.'

'What good are they to you?'

'You must give me your shoes if you want to go down.'

'Take them,' said the Doctor, and walked on. Now the pathway bruised his feet.

'Give me your scarf.'

'It's a cravat,' said the Doctor, 'and I can't imagine what you'd do with it.'

'You must give it to me if you want to go down.'

'Take it,' said the Doctor and walked on. His throat felt frail and exposed.

Since he had come through the gate, he no longer felt the weight behind him. Was the thread unbroken? He knew better than to look back.

A hand brushed his face.

'Give me your eyes.'

For the first time, there was a catch in the Doctor's step.

'What good are they to you?'

'You must give me your eyes if you want to go down.'

'Take them,' said the Doctor, and walked on. Tears and blood ran down his face.

A hand seized his elbow.

'You must give me your hands.'

'What good are they to you?'

'You must give me your hands if you want to go down.'

'Take them,' said the Doctor, and walked on, stumbling and weaving.

A hand touched the small of his back.

'Give me your strength.'

'What good is it to you?'

'You must give me your strength if you want to go down.'

'Then take it.'

The Doctor lay on the stony path. He knew he wasn't mutilated. He knew he wasn't bleeding. He knew he wasn't getting colder. Except in the sense that he was.

A hand pressed against his chest.

'Give me your heart.'

'But I'll have nothing left,' he cried, small and cold and terrified.

'You must give me your heart if you want to go down.'

So the Doctor said, 'Take it,' and went down.

'Living animal, you profane this place!'

The Doctor was no more than a wisp, a breath, an echo. Yet everything hadn't been taken from him after all. He could hear, and he could feel on the back of his neck the dank breath of the being that had spoken.

'I apologise. I'll go when I have what I came for.'

'Why should I grant you a favour who have nothing left to give?'

'Of your great generosity, Majesty.'

She laughed. Had the Doctor been in his mortal body, the sound would have shattered his bones.

'I only take. But I am not yet ready to take you. Go away.'

'No.'

‘Go away, stinking meat, or I will tear you to shreds, and each shred will live. You will writhe like a tangle of worms.’

‘You can’t really harm me. I’m still outside your power.’

‘How have you done this trick? Ssh!’ He felt a palm against his chest. Had it been his mortal body she touched, his skin would have peeled and melted. ‘Ah, you have hidden your heart in another.’

‘Not willingly, Majesty.’

‘What is that to me? You have come here willingly enough. Now go.’

‘At least hear my request.’

‘Your stench is disgusting. Your presence is an obscenity. I will hear nothing from you.’

‘But your own words prove that I do have something left to give.’

‘Indeed? And what would that be?’

‘My absence.’

The damp whisper caressed his ear. ‘You are a clever creature. But I have known cleverer. You are brave, but I have known braver. You are fair, but I have known fairer. You are good, but I have known better. They all come to me, as you will.’

‘But in the meantime, here I sit. It is not my wish to disturb you, Majesty. I will leave if you grant my request.’

‘All the living want only one thing from me: to take back with them one they loved.’

‘That is not what I want.’

‘No? Why not? Have you never loved anyone who died?’ Again the corrosive touch. ‘I see. There are too many. Who would have thought you had undone so many?’

‘Hear my request.’

‘You are interesting. I see now that you have cheated me many times. Yet you claim you have not come to cheat me again.’

‘I have not.’

‘You intrigue me. Tell me what you have come for.’

‘I wish to talk to someone.’

‘Pah! Is that all? Usually the living call the dead to them.’

‘That is difficult.’

‘More difficult than coming here? You are stranger and stranger.’

‘Others have come.’

‘Buying their way in with blood. You have no more blood to offer.’

'Respectfully, Majesty, you are mistaken. The blood is for the dead, to give them enough substance to appear to the living.'

'I am never mistaken.'

'As you say. But I am insubstantial now myself, and can talk to the dead as an equal.'

'I am never mistaken and I never lie.'

'Truth is the will o' the wisp of the living, Majesty, and therefore only we lie.'

'A subtle answer, warm thing. And a courteous one. If you were in fact able to talk to one here, who would it be?'

'Sebastian Chiltern.'

'Hmm. There are so many...'

'He came only recently.'

'That word has no meaning for me.'

'He is incomplete, Majesty.'

'Incomplete?'

'Only a piece of his... of the spirit... was lodged in his body. The rest is –'

'You talk nonsense.'

'I assure you, I do not. He –'

'There is no soul here like that you describe. It is true that – and it may be that this was in a time that you might call recent – two came who had one soul and many bodies. But the other, no.'

'As you say, Majesty. His name in life was Sebastian Chiltern. That is all I know.'

'What information do you want from him?'

'A location.'

'That is a very short answer for such a long journey. Is there treasure there?'

'No.'

'What is there?'

'A monster and a machine.'

'And will you kill this monster?'

'If I can.'

'And if you cannot, will it kill you?'

'Yes.'

'It is a good bargain for me either way.'

'As you say.'

'How polite you are.' The touch again, at the nape of his neck. 'Perhaps I will mark you, so that I know you when you come again. Are you afraid?'

'We all fear you,' he whispered. 'Every one of us.'

‘Another pretty answer. I think I will let you speak to this Chiltern.’

‘To thank you would be to insult you.’

‘Very wise. One would think you had done this before.’

Perhaps I have, thought the Doctor, though he hoped not. Throughout the conversation a feeling had been growing in him so intense that he’d become certain that, even without flesh, he was freezing to death. Now he realised that what he had taken for a physical sensation was terror. He had been near Death too long, and its dark radiation was poisoning him, burning the fabric of what he thought of as his self. He clutched frantically at the empty side of his chest. There, just there, the shimmer and shiver, the thread of life. So fragile, stretched so thin – what had he done?!

‘Ask your questions,’ said Chiltern.

## Chapter Twenty-one

The Angel-Maker wept, a sniffling, gulping series of sobs, punctuated by wipes of her nose on her sleeve and raking tears at her hair. Roused from sleep, the landlord threatened to throw her out if she didn't quiet down, so she pulled the pillow from the bed and buried her face in it. Sabbath didn't notice.

She had realised there was trouble even before her knife went into the Doctor. He had helped her – helped her! – and what could that mean? – and then when he had fallen with the blood coming out of him, he hadn't died. The Angel-Maker knew something about lethal wounds, and he should have been dead instead of lying there all pale and his blood black in the moonlight and him still moving a little, and moaning.

She had run. Sure and he was one of the Gentry after all, and what would become of her? They never forgave, and their vengeance was cruel. For herself, she didn't care. But what if they punished her by punishing Sabbath?

And they had. She rocked back and forth on the bedside chair, bent over, pressed into the pillow, half-smothering herself. Around her, the inn was in an uproar. Still furious at her hysterics over what looked to him like a simple case of a man's having a drop too much, the landlord was forced to tuck his nightshirt into his trousers and fetch the dog-cart when Fitz came panting in with news of the Doctor's injury. Miss Jane had passed by in the hall, looking in at her timidly. The Oxford don on a fern-collecting holiday was wandering around asking what was going on. Anji had initially tried, without success, to calm her, but after talking with Fitz she had returned and started yelling at her.

'You did it, didn't you? Look at me, look at me! You little bitch, it was you, I know it was you!' In some part of her mind, Anji was appalled at her rage, even frightened. But she reeled with it like a drunk. She grabbed the Angel-Maker's tangled hair and pulled her face from the pillow 'You tried to kill him! That's your solution to everything, yours and this bastard here. Did he set you on to it? Well, did he? It's backfired, then, hasn't it? Not as smart as he thought, is he?'

The Angel-Maker didn't seem to know Anji was there. Certainly, nothing Anji shouted was registering with her. Her eyes were fixed on Sabbath, and she

continued to cry as loudly as a child. Anji finally looked at Sabbath too. He was on his back, a hand resting on his chest, sweating and breathing harshly. Anji stared at his hand. Over his heart. Hearts. Her anger drained out of her. What had the Doctor done?

The Doctor sat and Chiltern stood. A stream flowed between them. It was only a few inches wide but when the Doctor had peered into its lead-coloured waters he couldn't see the bottom.

Chiltern was grey too, as if he were made of the drab mist through which the Doctor had passed on his way down. He seemed to have difficulty holding his shape, except for his head, which was solid and opaque and exactly as the Doctor remembered from life. Well, the Doctor thought, it would be, wouldn't it? Everything here was being filtered through the prism of his conceptions and memories.

Perhaps not everything... Far above, in what appeared to be only a dull, undefined void, there were occasional darting, flapping sounds. Not quite like birds. Not quite like anything he recognised at all, actually...

'I want to know who you are,' said the Doctor. 'And who Nathaniel is. And who or what that third one is. And what happened to the others of you.'

'There are no others,' said Chiltern. His voice was dull and flat, though his eyes, fixed on the Doctor, were attentive.

'Just the three of you.'

'There are only two.'

'Two?' said the Doctor stupidly. 'But then... Wait, I see – Nathaniel is your twin. Not a fractured piece of you – your natural brother.'

'Yes.'

'So you're complete, aren't you? You never went into the machine.'

'I never went into the machine. I sent Nathaniel. Then I was to follow him.'

'Follow him where?'

'Into the future. Until I found the cure.'

Though Chiltern's face had no expression, for a moment the Doctor could not look at him. 'He was mad, your brother.'

'Yes.'

'You thought you were to blame. That you stole his life. You must have told him, because the fragment of him that I know as Nathaniel remembers that, has made it a part of him. He took your guilt because it matched some subliminal guilt of his at not being turned into a monster.'

Chiltern didn't respond. It doesn't work like that, the Doctor wanted to say. You could no more have stolen your brother's sanity than his taste in wines or his musical preferences. It wasn't your fault. You've put everything, *everything*, at risk to make up for this, and it wasn't even your fault. But he kept his mouth shut. Why tell a dead man he'd wasted his life?

'Why did your brother split into two pieces instead of eight?'

'You waste your questions,' said Chiltern.

'Yes,' the Doctor agreed. He was, he realised, hesitating, afraid to get to the important question, afraid of having to face the possibility that it might not have an answer. 'The other one... He's fled Dartmoor. He can't return to the clinic. Where might he have gone?' Chiltern wavered, as if he might vanish. 'Tell me,' the Doctor pressed, 'and possibly I can help him.'

'Capel Gorast.'

'Wales?' said the Doctor in surprise.

'On our mother's side there is a ruined house. For generations we could neither afford to live in it nor find anyone to buy it, only let it fall apart. We were taken to see it once as boys.' Something like expression crept into Chiltern's face. 'Tell me,' he said falteringly, 'is my brother...? He's alone now. Is he all r-'

With a shriek, a cloud of claws and wings swept down on Chiltern. His head flew back and his mouth opened, but he was gone before any cry emerged, either carried away or dissolved to smoke, the Doctor couldn't tell which. He sprang to his feet in horror, and a bony hand closed on the back of his neck.

'Intruder,' said the clammy voice in his ear. 'Desecrater. Defiler. Did you truly think you could come here and with mere pleasing words avoid my judgement?'

The Doctor's head rolled on the pillow and he gave a tiny cry. Anji jumped up and bent over him. His lips were parted, his face creased with pain. Sweat beaded on his brow, but when she felt his forehead he was cold. 'Oh God.'

Fitz was suddenly in the room with her. 'What's happening?'

'I don't know. He's so cold.'

'I'll get another blanket.'

'And a new hot water bottle,' she called as he ran from the room. She went to the fire and added wood. 'And more wood,' she muttered. 'And... and...'. Abruptly, she sat down on the floor. This is it, she thought, slumping against the fireplace surround, her cheek pressed to the brick. If he survives this, if I survive this, I'm going home. I'm going home, I'm going home, I'm going home, I'm -



'Anj?' Fitz was back.

'I'm all right.' Embarrassed, she quickly got up.

'You sure?'

'I'm fine, really.' She moved to help him tuck the blanket around the Doctor. From down the hall, the Angel-Maker's sobbing could still be heard. 'I wish she'd shut up.'

'It's that old Irish grief you hear about, isn't it?' Fitz said soberly. 'Like the banshee.'

'I suppose.' She wiped the Doctor's damp brow with the towel from the washstand. 'Useless, though, isn't it? She'd be better off getting him a hot water bottle.' Anji hung the towel on the headboard. 'I suppose I could do it,' she said grudgingly.

'Yeah.'

She left for the kitchen. Fitz watched the Doctor. His breathing was rapid and shallow, but at least he could breathe. Not like last time when, Fitz would swear to the end of his days, his lungs hadn't even been working. He became aware that the Angel-Maker had stopped crying and was relieved until he looked up and saw her in the doorway. With her wild hair and red-rimmed eyes, she looked like a banshee herself. Fitz wondered nervously where her knife was. She was staring at the Doctor. He saw fear creep into her face. 'It's that he helped me,' she said. 'Almost he took the knife from my hand.'

'Yeah,' said Fitz without surprise. He'd half-guessed it already. The Doctor's strange mood on the tor... The way he had talked... He must have known the Angel-Maker had followed them, known too what she would do.

'Why?' she said. 'Only to kill him?'

'Sabbath?' said Fitz. 'This isn't about Sabbath. Sabbath's just his... his anchor to life. His way back. This happened before when he was nearly killed in Liverpool. Did something happen to Sabbath then?'

She nodded and approached the bed. Fitz watched her cautiously. He didn't think she'd attack the Doctor after the disastrous consequences of her previous attempt, but she was one weird, scary bird. 'When one falls the other falls,' she said, looking down at the Doctor's white face. 'And which one was it I stabbed, then?'

'Both of them.'

She pointed. 'Look,' she whispered.

At the edge of the blankets, which the Doctor, shifting, had pushed down, was a red stain. Fitz jerked back the covers and tore open the Doctor's shirt.

The stab wound had stopped bleeding, but now blood from the old ridged scar was seeping through the bandage. 'Oh hell.'

She ran from the room. Fitz pulled off the bandage and pressed a damp towel to the scar.

'Oh God, what now?' said Anji, rushing in. 'Sabbath's bleeding. She says the Doctor's bleeding –'

'Yeah, but it's not bad.'

She came over. 'No,' she breathed thankfully.

'What about Sabbath?'

'The same.'

Fitz glanced towards the door. 'She's awfully quiet.'

'She's gone all calm. I don't know why.' Anji brought over a fresh bandage. 'This really isn't bad,' she said, covering the wound. 'Almost like...'

'An afterthought,' said Fitz. 'Well, no, more like some sort of representation of what's happening to him... wherever he is.'

'Happening to both of them.'

In Sabbath's room, the Angel-Maker cut her palm and pressed it to his bloody chest. She kissed him and took his hand. 'You'll not be going from me,' she whispered. 'Not all the horses of hell can drag you from me.'

## Chapter Twenty-two

Sabbath liked the clocks. They were intricate and various and there were apparently an endless number. An infinity of these first time machines dividing time into finite bits. He toyed with the conceit as he walked among them.

The first part of the dream hadn't been this pleasant. He had been drowning again. It was getting to be a bore. What was the phrase he'd heard that excitable Anji woman use: Been there, done that. Exactly. Why his unconscious kept bringing it up he couldn't imagine. Surely the stock of terrors in his mental closet wasn't so limited that he had to keep experiencing this one. There was, for example, that incident in Cairo. . .

But why think of that now when he could examine these magnificent instruments, these miraculous devices that translated time into sound and so made it directly apprehensible to the human senses? Exquisitely calibrated longitudinal clocks, silly overcarved cuckoo clocks, clocks built for cathedral towers that were over twice as tall as he was, faceless clocks with bells to chime the hour, clocks with only an hour hand, mediaeval astronomical clocks that showed the planets' movements according to the Ptolemaic system and equation clocks which told both solar and mean time, anniversary clocks turning back and forth under their glass bells, clocks run by springs and powered by weights, works of brass and iron and wood and silver – and everywhere the tick of the pendulums, those beats of that clockwork heart, the escapement. Out of sync with one another, the ticks together produced a light, continual pattering, for all the world like the rapid drip of water from the edge of a rain-smearred roof.

Sabbath walked down a hall formed by a double line of tall-case clocks. Some of their faces were painted with flowers, some with the moon and the sun, some with nautical scenes, while others were plain brass or enamel, or even wood. At the end of this passage, he came to an imposing timepiece nearly eight feet tall, its ebony case flanked by slender green marble pillars. Its four pinnacles were topped with malachite and its face casing leafed with engraved gold, while the face itself was illustrated with the phases of the moon. He pulled open the door, and where the pendulum and weights should have been was a set of steps carved out of solid rock. Not without difficulty, Sabbath climbed into the clock,

and followed these down.

They led to a domed chamber, like a bowl laid upside down, with obsidian walls in whose smooth black surfaces the flames of the numerous torches reflected. The place was charged with a terrible silence. Atop an obsidian ziggurat stood a heavy, square-cut black throne, and on this sat a creature so horrifying that even Sabbath's eyes winced away.

Her skin was black and papery, like something burned. Her eyes were gelatinous as raw eggs. Large square teeth, the colour of old ivory, not only hung below her upper lip but cut through the skin to jut from her cheekbones. In the bottom of her mouth, her tongue lay curled like a red snake.

She said in a voice like razors, 'Not another one!'

Sabbath inclined his head. 'I do not come of my own will.'

'More excuses,' she spat. 'Look at me.' He did. 'Hm. Even more alive than the other one. You nauseate me.'

Had the moment been more appropriate, Sabbath would have allowed himself several ripe eighteenth-century obscenities. The Doctor! He might have known. He *should* have known. What had the damned imp done now? But all he said was, 'I return the compliment.'

She pulled her feet up and rested them on the seat of the throne, her knees apart. Her flat breasts fell to her belly, and the way into her was deep and black as the grave.

'Man of flesh,' she said, 'are you not afraid?'

'I may or may not be afraid when my time comes, but that time is not yet.'

'The other was more respectful.'

'I imagine the other wanted something from you. I do not.'

'Do you not even want him, your friend?'

'He is not my friend, and I do not want him. But if I live, he lives.'

'Ah.' She slipped off the throne and padded over to him, and he saw that she wore a girdle made of the skulls of little animals knotted to one another. The long nails of the hand that reached towards him had specks of blood and flesh beneath them. She wriggled her fingers, and an iridescent thread, elusive as a bit of spiderweb, glistened among them.

'Look,' she whispered. 'Here it is. You can sever it. I can give you the power. Then you will be free of him.' Sabbath shook his head. 'He tricked you here. He counted on you to help him and did not care that he put you in peril.'

'I am not in peril.'

'Do not be so confident, my learned friend. You do not know what you may suffer bearing him back.' She dangled the thread in front of him. 'Take it. Snap

it. You will be rid of him at last.'

'No.'

'Hypocrite! You who boast of never flinching from sacrificing a life when necessary.'

'The Doctor is still of use to me. If you want him dead so badly, why not snap the thread yourself? Ah, I forgot – you can't. His time is not yet.'

With a hiss she withdrew to her throne, liquidly swift as a shadow. For a few minutes she only stared at him. Sabbath held her yellow gaze.

She shrugged. 'It was worth trying.'

'He is yours in the end anyway. Why bother?'

'He annoys me,' she said sulkily. 'He has teased me before. He dies yet does not die. I would punish him for his arrogance and his trickery and the way he continues to *live*. I suspect he is unnatural.'

Sabbath had been handling the conversation fine so far, but, considering its source, this last remark threw him. 'What do you mean?'

'You will find out,' she said carelessly. 'Do you want him? Then here, take him. I am glad to be rid of his stench – and yours.'

She gestured to her left and, turning, Sabbath saw another tall clock, this one of ebony, its plain white face arrayed with eight long minute-hands. He opened the door to the works. The Doctor hung inside, impaled on a meathook.

'You took your time,' said the Doctor. His face was drawn and livid, but his voice was quite normal. The meathook, Sabbath saw, was somehow attached to the clock's weight chains, so that the Doctor had become part of the mechanism. Sabbath almost shivered. He looked around. The black throne and its occupant had vanished.

'I don't suppose,' Sabbath said, 'that I'm going to be fortunate enough to discover that this –'

'– is a dream? Er, sorry, no.'

Sabbath sighed. 'It's not, by any chance, a hallucination in which you are only an unpleasant element rather than an active participant?'

'Not that either, I'm afraid.'

'Give me one piece of good news. Tell me at least that you're actually hung on a meathook.'

'In so far as actuality has any meaning here, yes, I'm actually hung on a meathook.'

'Well, that's something.'

The Doctor smiled apologetically. Sabbath noticed that the tip of the meathook protruded from where his missing heart had once been.

'I don't suppose,' he said almost wistfully, 'that I could just go myself and leave you here?'

'You'd only come back.'

Sabbath sighed again. 'I suspected as much. Why don't you explain to me exactly what is happening?'

'As near as I can figure, your heart – I mean the one that's really my heart – is not only keeping me alive, it's also healing its twin. Presuming we make it back, I should be as functional as I was before I was stabbed.'

'That's how you got here?'

'That's how.'

'Who stabbed you?'

'Who do you think?'

Sabbath's lips tightened. 'I've explained to her –'

'– how harmless, indeed cuddly and inoffensive, I am. Yes. Well, don't be too hard on her. I lured her into it.'

'Yes,' said Sabbath. 'You would have.' He eyed the clock. 'How did you get in a clock?'

'Am I in a clock?'

'What do you see?'

'Not much of anything except you. I'd rather not be in a clock,' the Doctor went on doubtfully. 'They have grinding gears and things.'

'You're on a meathook.'

'Yes, but if I don't move, it doesn't move. Speaking of which, you might want to get me off.'

Sabbath gripped him under the arms. 'Why did she impale you?'

'I got on her nerves.' Sabbath raised an ironic eyebrow 'Anything alive gets on her nerves,' the Doctor said drily. 'So perhaps we'd both better hurry.'

Sabbath braced himself to lift. 'Put your hands on my shoulders.'

The Doctor did and, very slowly, Sabbath raised him off the hook. There was a wet, tearing sound. The Doctor's head fell back and he made a noise somewhere between a whimper and a groan. Then he righted himself, gasping, and looked down, and for one terrible moment, Sabbath saw his own face staring at him. He stumbled, biting back a cry.

'What is it?' The Doctor was in his own face again.

‘Nothing,’ said Sabbath between his teeth. He half-turned, moving the Doctor safely away from the clock, and set him on his feet. The Doctor’s knees gave and Sabbath held him up. ‘Can you even walk?’

‘Let’s see.’ The Doctor tried to stand. ‘No.’ He squinted curiously at Sabbath’s shirt front. ‘You’re bleeding.’ Sabbath looked down at the slight red stain, inconsequential next to the Doctor’s half-scarlet shirt but definitely there. The Doctor laughed. ‘Blood brothers.’

‘Spare me your comments.’ Sabbath braced the Doctor against the clock. ‘Clocks everywhere,’ he muttered. ‘Not my picture of the afterlife, I must admit.’

‘Well, as neither of us is actually dead, I don’t think it can be the afterlife, per se. More like the suburbs.’

‘You came to speak to Chiltern, didn’t you? Did he come to the edge to meet you?’

‘Something like that.’

‘And gave you the information we need.’

‘Yes.’

‘So another of your lunatic capers pays off.’

‘You needn’t take that tone,’ said the Doctor, offended. ‘I don’t know what else you could have expected me to do, given the situation. If that machine isn’t found and destroyed, more than the two of us will end up here. And in the city centre.’

‘All right, point taken. We’d better get started. Climb on my back.’

The Doctor linked his arms around Sabbath’s neck, and Sabbath slid his arms beneath his knees and hefted him up. Their heads turned, almost in unison but in opposite directions, to examine their surroundings. The Doctor sighed.

‘“There must be some way out of here,” said the joker to the thief.’

‘Miss Kapoor?’

Anji raised her eyes from the Doctor to the door. She was so tired that she almost wasn’t startled. Almost.

‘Dr Chiltern?’ she said disbelievingly.

‘Yes, I . . .’ He crossed worriedly to the bed. ‘Miss Jane has been explaining things to me. She says the Doctor is ill. What’s happened to him?’

‘It’s complicated,’ she muttered. ‘He’ll be all right.’ At the moment, she was more inclined to be anxious about Chiltern. He seemed distraught, unfocused. ‘What about you?’

‘I . . .’ He hesitated, and she realised that what she saw in his face was grief.

'I'm sorry,' she said quickly. 'This must all have come as an awful shock to you.'

'It's like a dream,' he said distractedly, sinking into the armchair. 'Or a nightmare. If I hadn't just recovered from a nervous collapse, I'd say I was having one. Complete with hallucinations.'

She smiled. 'We're all quite real.'

'Of course. I mean delusions. These fantastic, ridiculous ideas. A time machine!' He looked at her as if he hoped she'd correct him.

'I'm afraid it's true.'

'Dear God.' He passed a hand across his face.

'I'm sorry about your brother,' she said. He looked up sharply. 'The Doctor is going to try to help with... with the other difficulties.' His eyes moved doubtfully to the Doctor. 'He'll be fine soon,' she said firmly, as if that would make it true.

'What's wrong with him?'

'Just a minor stab wound.'

Chiltern apparently didn't believe there was any such thing. He insisted on examining the injury. Anji watched uneasily. Sure enough, he was puzzled.

'It seems quite deep not to have caused greater damage.'

'Mm,' she said.

He was obviously bewildered by the operation scars but didn't ask any questions. Something to be said, she thought, for Victorian discretion. He cleaned the wound again – 'The great danger now is from infection.' – and rebandaged it. Throughout, though the Doctor's face indicated he was still in pain, he lay quietly, unresponsive. This obviously bothered Chiltern. 'Has he been drugged?'

'No.'

'He's *deeply* unconscious.'

'He's a sound sleeper,' said Anji weakly. She really didn't think that cluing Chiltern in on the Doctor's unearthly origins was the right move at this point. One fantastic, ridiculous idea at a time.

Chiltern washed his hands, emptying the basin into a pail Fitz had brought up earlier. He kept glancing at the Doctor. He looked so sad, Anji thought. What a night of terrible revelations for him. 'Are you hungry? I could sneak down to the kitchen.'

He shook his head. 'No thank you. What about you? You must be tired. Would you like me to sit with him for a while?'



Anji hesitated. She was tempted. Fitz's shift didn't start for another hour. But she didn't feel comfortable not having one or the other of them – people who knew exactly who and what he was – with the Doctor. 'No. I'm fine. But thank you.'

'Are you certain? You look exhausted.'

'That bad, huh?' She grinned. 'No, really, I'm fine.'

'You oughtn't to wear yourself out for no good reason,' he persisted. 'You don't think it's your fault, do you?'

'No,' she said in surprise. 'Not at all. I'm not guilty,' she went on, a bit insulted. 'I care about him.'

'Of course.' Chiltern was embarrassed. 'Forgive me, I didn't mean to imply any lack of appropriate feeling on your part.'

'That's all tight,' she mumbled. Maybe she did feel guilty, she thought unhappily. Why did being with the Doctor make her so protective of him? She looked at him again, then more closely. Just while she'd been talking with Chiltern, the pain had gone out of his face. And was that... Did she hear something? She bent and put her ear near his lips.

Sure enough, he was humming.

'Stop that!' said Sabbath.

'Sorry,' said the Doctor contritely. 'You know how you get a song on the brain.'

'No I do not.'

'Oh, of course not. My mistake.'

On the theory that any direction he chose would be likely to take them away from this place in which they didn't belong, Sabbath simply started walking. Sure enough, the black wall faded, and he found himself on a steep rocky path. When he looked up all he saw was something that looked like a starless night sky. He hoisted the Doctor to a more comfortable carrying position. 'Any advice?'

'Don't look back.'

Sabbath never afterwards thought consciously about this journey through the unknown night. He had no reason to want to remember it, and on the few occasions that he for some reason tried, it would not be thought of. The experience was somehow too shapeless to focus on, too close to time itself to be comprehensible enough to recall. There was duration, terrible duration, in which the very conception of there being an end was somehow forgotten and unrecoverable. This eternal now was undifferentiated, one step after another

on an unchanging path, not even Sisyphean, only repetitive. A single moment experienced forever. Sabbath, who did not believe in hell, knew that this was hell.

He would almost have been glad of the Doctor's conversation, but the Doctor was silent. Was he experiencing the same thing, Sabbath wondered, or did the peculiar temporal elements of his biology make him immune? A long, long while passed before Sabbath allowed himself to understand that it was only his connection to the Doctor, that alien heart that somehow beat impossibly in both their chests, that allowed him to incorporate his surroundings at all instead of going suddenly, screamingly mad. Even as he realised this, the Doctor's voice spoke softly in his ear:

'You wanted to travel in Deep Time. This, where we are, is far deeper.'

'It is terrible,' said Sabbath simply.

'Yes,' the Doctor agreed. 'It is.'

The very survival of his mind was in the power of this fantastic creature he was bearing on his back like the old man of the sea. The Doctor had dragged him into this like a drowning man pulling another under. True, the purpose was to attain something they both wanted, albeit for different reasons, but the Doctor had not consulted him. Had he thought Sabbath would refuse? Or did he just not care? Monstrous egotist, insane risk taker, manipulator and trickster. I have underestimated him, Sabbath thought grimly, a complacent and foolish thing to do, though not yet, fortunately, a mistake. I let myself forget he was not human, judged his capabilities and limits as if he were. If the gentleness was true, I presumed the ruthlessness was a front; if the ruthlessness turned out to be true, then I was sure the gentleness would be revealed as hypocrisy. But neither and both are true. He lives in contradictions as we cannot, and for him they are not contradictions but wholeness.

Good God, he thought with a rare trace of fear, what might a whole race of such beings have been like?

Or was the Doctor unique – an aristocrat of time, a prince of coincidence? Was the warping Elizabeth saw around him merely evidence of his peculiar temporal experience and being, or did it indicate something even stranger? It might be as well to kill him sooner rather than later, though there were, to be sure, certain drawbacks to such precipitate action. In any case, Sabbath told himself, he would never again forget what he was dealing with: someone, something, that was radically and completely *other*.

'Who else is here?' said the Doctor suddenly.

Sabbath saw nothing. 'There's only rock.'

‘Yes? No. Who is it?’

‘There is no one.’

‘There is.’

‘You’re hallucinating.’

‘Or you’re blind. Drawing us upward.’

Towards the light and the air. The light a tiny opalescent blur far above, floating on the surface of the water. The air lost to the cold silence. But he would not die. The fools had done their best, but it would take greater than they to murder him. Towards the light and the air. His lungs crushed against themselves; they would scream if they could. The air and the light. The blood starved for oxygen beat in his head: breathe, breathe! Then the chains slipped from him, the Doctor released him –

Sabbath surfaced into consciousness, gasping for breath. The afternoon sun lay in a golden bar across the foot of his bed, and the Angel-Maker was gripping his hand as if she would break it.

## Chapter Twenty-three

Bathed and dressed, the Doctor sat on his bed and happily pulled on fresh socks. He was still a bit intoxicated with his return to full life, and everything, even socks, struck him slightly breathless with its richness, its sheer *actuality*. This will pass, he thought sadly, this wonder and appreciation. Not entirely, but it will pass.

He got a good shove in this less-appreciative direction when the door opened and the Angel-Maker came in.

The Doctor stood up fast, then caught himself. ‘Sabbath ready to go yet?’ he asked casually.

‘It’s that he’s fixing the course. Sure, and you’re a rabbit,’ she added disdainfully. ‘Jumping up like you did.’

‘Excuse me,’ said the Doctor with what he thought was, under the circumstances, remarkable patience, ‘but you may remember that the last time we met you stabbed me.’

‘Only because you willed it.’

‘You contributed something to the encounter. I seem to recall, for example, that you brought the knife.’

She shrugged, as if the details were trivial, and sat on the bed.

‘Do you want something?’ he said.

‘It’s nothing you need fear.’

‘That’s extraordinarily reassuring. Thank you so much for telling me. Why are you here?’

‘Harming one of you is the same as to harm the other. Why would that be so?’

‘We share a heart.’

Her eyes widened and she almost started to cross herself. Instead she shook her head uneasily.

‘Why does that bother you? You’ve seen things as strange – one person in many bodies, many people in one body.’

She continued to shake her head, stubbornly. ‘The heart is never the same.’

‘It’s only an organ.’

'It's never the same.'

'Well, in any case,' said the Doctor, in no mood for a biology lecture, 'that's the reason we're mutually mortal. I can't die as long as he's alive.'

'And if he were to die?'

'I don't know,' said the Doctor, uneasy himself now. 'Probably it would also work the other way.' He almost said that, being human, Sabbath might not have his resilience, but decided that would add an unnecessary complication to her attitude towards him.

She looked him up and down, then got up and came over to him. The Doctor held his ground. She examined his face, as if she might find something she hadn't seen there before. 'He says that you've forgotten everything. There's a story that in heaven we drink from a river that lets us forget and so are reborn innocent into God's love. I think it's that for yourself you must be innocent, and that is why you've forgotten. And that your innocence is a cheat and a lie.'

'Perhaps,' said the Doctor expressionlessly.

'Always I was knowing you'd bring harm to him.'

'He yoked himself to me without my consent,' said the Doctor, 'and it's up to him to deal with the consequences. It's not my fault he doesn't understand what this so-called power of mine that he envied is, or that his theft has results he didn't bargain for.'

'It's that he saved your life!' she said furiously.

'He saved my life when he removed my heart,' he retorted, equally angry. 'Taking it for himself wasn't done as any favour to me!'

She looked down briefly, as if acknowledging his point, but only said, 'And so now you're the same.'

'He wouldn't be any happier than I am to hear you put it that way, but on one level yes, we are. The only reason I came a bit earlier is that my physical stamina is greater.'

She cocked an unflatteringly sceptical eye at him, and he knew she was comparing his slenderness to Sabbath's massive stature. A greyhound to a mastiff. 'It's true,' he said, a shade defensively. 'And the fact that I'm up and about, stab wound and all I might add, means that he's probably in better shape than I am.'

She actually seemed slightly ashamed. 'It's that I thought you were meaning to kill him.'

'I know,' he said. 'I meant for you to. It was my doing. I had to go there, you see.'

'To the back of the wind?'

'Yes.'

'You could have done the thing yourself.'

'I don't know. I've never stabbed myself. If I'd flinched at the last minute, everything would have been ruined.'

'So you made me hurt him!'

'I'm sorry. It had to be done. And you've helped him more than hurt him. That's the way it works, sometimes. He'd be the first to tell you it's not always nice.'

To his surprise, he saw tears on her face. She turned away, wiping at them angrily with her hand. 'You took my feeling for him and turned it to harm him. It's heartless you are, no matter how many beat in your chest.'

'I'm not human.'

She shuddered, and he looked away. 'I'll tell you this,' he said. She shot him a sullen glance. He took her hand and held on to it when she tried to jerk free. 'It is not my intention to hurt Sabbath. I admit, I don't mind it when he gets bounced around a bit – it's my own weakness; I let him get to me. But I have never set out to kill him. Thwart him, yes. Annoy him, certainly. Make him jump about in frustration and rage, absolutely. Greatly to be desired. But kill him or harm him wilfully, no.' He released her hand. 'You needn't believe me, but it's the truth. Now I'm going to the station. Come and fetch me if he's ready before I'm back.'

Constance Jane sat on the bench on the railway platform beside Dr Chiltern, thinking of the things she had told him and that he had told her. They were both silent now. He was deep in thought, but she felt as if all thought had left her. All feeling too. She refused to hope. Hope made the damage worse.

Her emptiness was like a thick transparent wall around her. On the far side of it was a fine summer's day, all soft air and golden light. A stand of purple-pink foxgloves bloomed on the other side of the railroad tracks. She stared at them remotely, curious about their beauty, to which she felt she ought to be having some reaction. But what?

Chiltern stood up. Turning, she saw the Doctor hurrying down the platform, clearly relieved at not having missed them. He looked, paradoxically, both wan and invigorated, his step a little weak but his unusual eyes bright. He tipped his hat to her and shook Chiltern's hand.

'I'm glad I didn't miss you.'

'So am I,' said Chiltern. 'Though I had counted on seeing you in London once this is over.'

'You still will. How are you, Miss Jane?'

She smiled faintly. 'I'm fine.'

The Doctor seemed doubtful, but he didn't pursue it. With a polite 'Excuse us' to her, he drew Chiltern to the end of the platform.

'Anji told me how helpful you were when I was... ill. Thank you.'

'It was the least I could do. You seem very much better now,' Chiltern added curiously. The Doctor only smiled. 'What are you going to do now? Go and destroy the machine?' The Doctor nodded. 'Extraordinary,' Chiltern sighed. 'I have absolutely no memory of that Welsh house.'

'No,' said the Doctor sympathetically.

'Is the machine so dangerous?'

'Oh yes.'

'But you said it doesn't even work properly.'

'It doesn't.'

'Why not?'

'It's missing a piece, one of the mirrors.'

'Lost forever, I hope.'

The Doctor turned his unreadable eyes on him for a second, then strolled to the edge of the platform and peered up the track. 'Well, actually, at the moment it's in Scale's camera obscura at the Crystal Palace and may as well stay there – it can't do any harm once the rest is gone.' He tapped his foot briefly, as if that might hurry the train. 'I hope you didn't mind my hustling you away like this. I thought it best for you to return to London as soon as possible.'

'Yes,' said Chiltern. 'I had the same idea myself. I felt rather in the way here, frankly.'

'I wouldn't say that. But it's true there's not much you can do. And I thought it would be better for Miss Jane at Mrs Hemming's house.' The Doctor glanced back at Constance, who was sitting with her hands in her lap, head down. 'I hope things will be different for her when this time problem is solved.'

'Do you really believe they will?'

'It should make some sort of difference. The stresses aggravated her condition. Millie couldn't come out on her own before, only in the trances.'

'But she isn't disturbed so much by the fact that the other one can emerge at will as by the knowledge that there is another one. Her very sense of self is disrupted.'

'Yes,' said the Doctor unhappily. 'Existential shock.'

'I beg your pardon?'

'I'm sorry, never mind. What about you?'

'Me?'

'You've had the same sort of revelation, after all.'

'That I'm only a piece of a whole, you mean. And with no true memories. Well, I've had my little nervous episode. And now here I am.' Chiltern looked at him with weary frankness. 'I suppose I shall just continue on as before. I seem to have stood in for Sebastian quite effectively at the clinic.'

'He did it out of love,' the Doctor said abruptly.

'I'm sorry?'

'Sebastian. He wanted you to be well. He thought he could do that for you. Make things right.'

'Yes.' Chiltern's eyes focused on some private sorrow. 'Why should he be whole when I wasn't? I understand.'

'He never meant for this dreadful thing to happen to you.'

'Good intentions,' said Chiltern grimly.

'Unintended consequences,' said the Doctor. 'Forgive him if you can.'

Chiltern smiled with bitter amusement. 'What makes you think he's the one who needs to be forgiven?'

The Doctor frowned bewilderedly, but before he could say anything the train whistle sounded in the distance and Chiltern turned and hurried back to Miss Jane. The Doctor watched him gather the luggage and, when the train arrived, escort her on. Two people with only partial existences. How nice if life were a fairy tale: they would be two halves of one whole, meant for each other. I could make a decent living, the Doctor thought, as a writer of sentimental fiction. He allowed himself a moment to admire the departing locomotive. One of the best things about the nineteenth century, no doubt about it.

A heavy arm fell across his shoulders. 'Bidding adieu, Doctor?'

'Just seeing Chiltern and Miss Jane off.'

'Back to London?'

'They would have been underfoot.'

'You certainly hurried them away.'

The Doctor tried to shrug. It was difficult under that weighty arm.

'Shall I tell you what I think?' said Sabbath conversationally.

'Can I stop you?'

'No.' Sabbath strolled towards the far end of the platform, propelling the reluctant Doctor along with him.

'Can it wait? We really should be on our way to the machine.'

'Ah yes, of which you so ingeniously gained the location. I wonder, did Sebastian Chiltern tell you anything else of interest?'

'Such as?'



Sabbath spun the Doctor to face him, keeping a massive hand on his shoulder. 'That train's first stop is Newton Abbot in twenty minutes. I could be there in the *Jonah* well in time to intercept your friends and bring them back here.'

'What for?'

Sabbath shifted his grip to the Doctor's shirt front and shoved him hard against the station wall. The Doctor grunted. If the staff down the platform in the ticket office heard anything, they didn't check to see what it was. Released, the Doctor smoothed his shirt fastidiously.

'Bit testy today, aren't you? Bad night? Temper, temper,' he said warningly as Sabbath took a deep breath. 'You really don't want to go beating me up in public in this charming little village. Extremely bad form.'

'Seventeen minutes,' said Sabbath. 'Answer me, or I bring them back.'

'Why should I give you an answer when you've obviously got one all worked out? You tell me: did Sebastian Chiltern tell me anything else of interest?'

'I think that you discovered that Sebastian isn't the one who went into the machine and became fractured. I think he had a twin, and that *twin* was fractured into two selves, and those two selves are the thing that chased you on the moor and the man you just put on the train. And if that's so,' Sabbath grabbed the Doctor's shoulder again before he could dodge away, 'then it's a definite possibility that killing Nathaniel Chiltern will kill the other one, just the way it worked with Octave. That's the only reasonable explanation for why you so suddenly wanted to get him away from here – away from me.'

'Good work,' said the Doctor sourly. 'You get the school prize.'

'Did you think I wouldn't work it out?'

'Not at all. I hoped we'd be on our way before you even noticed they were gone.'

'You've done it again,' said Sabbath, almost in disbelief. 'You've risked sacrificing billions to save one miserable life.'

'You're so *certain*,' snapped the Doctor. 'Certain that the death of Nathaniel will kill the other. Certain that will solve the problem –'

'It *will* solve the problem.'

'Oh really?' The Doctor's voice rose. 'What if the damned machine is no longer with the third Chiltern? What if he's hidden it, and you strike him dead?'

'The immediate danger is past.'

'Until someone else finds it!' shouted the Doctor. He knocked Sabbath's hand from his shoulder. 'That thing is a time bomb, it's temporal radioactive

waste, it's death! Preventing its use now, in this year, only delays the inevitable catastrophe. We have to get rid of it!

The station manager, a portly little man in wire rims, crept timidly from the office. 'Everything all right, gentlemen?' he asked, more hopefully than sternly.

Sabbath and the Doctor both beamed at him. The station master didn't really find this a reassuring sight. 'Just dandy,' said the Doctor.

'"Just dandy",' Sabbath repeated in disgust when the station manager had withdrawn. 'When do they start saying that?'

'Can't remember.' The Doctor rather ostentatiously smoothed his coat shoulder where Sabbath had gripped it. 'Shall we go? People to see, things to blow up.'

## Chapter Twenty-four

Sabbath and the Doctor sat at the foot of the waterfall. The Doctor had removed his shoes and socks and dipped his feet in the clear water. Sabbath remained shod. Shafts of light fell dramatically through the trees.

‘This area attracted a number of Victorian landscape painters,’ said the Doctor.

‘At the moment, natural beauty is not high on my list of concerns.’

They had searched for hours. First the house in Capel Gorast, which though decrepit was substantially intact and more resembled a small castle than a house. When this finally proved fruitless, Fitz and Anji went into Llanrwst and Sabbath, the Doctor and the Angel-Maker into Betws and made inquiries about any mysterious, misshapen strangers arriving by train or carriage. No such person had been spotted. At which point, they returned to the house and started investigating the grounds and surrounding forest.

The Doctor had come across the remains of the eponymous chapel, now fallen to ruin, the roof collapsed and the whole claimed by brambles and nettles. A piece of the chancel arch still stood, and he pulled away the growth at the top of one of the columns to see the capitol more clearly. A worn stone head grimaced at him, carved stone hawthorn branches issuing from its mouth and surrounding its face like a leafy halo.

‘And what is that, then?’

The Doctor jumped and glared at the Angel-Maker.

‘I wish you’d stop doing that.’

‘Sure and it’s a monster,’ she said, peering at the carving curiously, ‘and in a holy place!’ She stood on tiptoe to see better. ‘It must be that he’s in pain and the vines growing from him like that.’

‘It’s a green man,’ said the Doctor. ‘Come on, there’s nothing here.’

She examined the face a moment more before following him. ‘Green,’ she said. ‘Is it then one of the Gentry?’

‘No one knows what the green man represents. Maybe rebirth. Maybe the spirit of the forest.’

‘Is it a good or an evil spirit?’

'No one knows that either. Listen to me, Miss Kelly, you really must stop sneaking –' The Doctor turned to continue his lecture to her face, but she was gone.

The Doctor and Sabbath weren't actually resting by the waterfall – they had just finished talking with two fishermen on their way home who, of course, hadn't seen anything unusual.

'We're too early,' said the Doctor. 'He hasn't arrived yet.'

Sabbath nodded. 'The crates containing the machine will have slowed him down.'

'Well, he has a spatial plane interfacer, so carrying the machine won't be a problem for him. But he might still be a while.'

'It would be difficult for him to travel by train without attracting attention.'

'If he used a carriage, he'd have to trust the driver.'

'A journey by horse would take several days.'

'Particularly as he's almost certainly travelling only at night.'

They fell silent. The Doctor's eyes roved over the trees. No sign of the Angel-Maker, but he knew she was nearby.

'So,' he said, 'we simply have to wait for him to turn up.'

'Unless he has another hiding place even his dead brother didn't know about.'

'There is that,' sighed the Doctor. He pulled his feet out of the water and drew his knees up under his chin, wrapping his arms around them, his pale eyes fixed on the foaming falls. There were bits of twig and green leaf in his dishevelled hair. *Silva daemonium*, thought Sabbath with ironic erudition. To him, at that moment, the Doctor looked much younger than that fool he travelled with. A sick boy. Sabbath wondered idly whether the loss of his heart, which had saved his life, would in the long run kill him.

'That's four times now, you realise.'

'Doesn't count,' said the Doctor. 'You had the ride of your life. Fair exchange.'

Sabbath shrugged graciously. 'You know, Doctor, even allowing for the, ah, unique circumstances of your last near-death experience, it's extraordinary how often you're plucked out of trouble at the last minute.'

'Is it?'

'Rescuers turn up. Weapons jam. Your companions, who, if you will forgive me, don't strike me as more than usually competent, save the day. Buildings explode immediately after you find the way out. Cities fall just as the TARDIS dematerialises.'

'Exaggerated reports, I assure you.'

‘Electrical currents short-circuit. Evil masterminds make foolish errors. If you fall out of a window, there’s something to catch you. If you’re drowning, a spar floats by. You find your way unsinged out of burning houses.’

‘Where do you get all this stuff? I don’t remember half of it.’

‘You survive alien mind probes that would boil the average brain in its skull. You are dug unharmed from beneath fallen rubble. No one ever shoots you in the head. Deadly drugs turn out not to affect you. Villains tie you up too loosely, and hide-bound tyrants’ convictions falter at your rhetoric. In short,’ Sabbath finished smoothly, ‘in your presence, the odds collapse.’

‘What have you been doing – studying up on the legends of my presumed people, the so-called Elementals? I wish you’d stop using that word, by the way. Whatever I may be, it’s not a chameleon or a sprite.’

‘I use the word as it refers to an ultimate constituent of reality. And listen to your own words: “Whatever I may be” But what is that? Has anyone ever taken you apart to find out?’

The Doctor grimaced. ‘Not yet.’

‘But not for want of trying. More lucky escapes.’

‘Really, Sabbath, this is quite silly.’ The Doctor began to put back on his socks. ‘Certainly I’ve been lucky in my time, perhaps unusually so, but a series of anecdotal incidents doesn’t add up to a pattern.’

‘Disaster flies at you,’ said Sabbath, ‘and then, suddenly, it swerves aside. As if it encountered a force field.’

‘Well, it didn’t.’ The Doctor finished lacing his shoes and stood up. ‘And anyway, you’re wrong. I don’t always escape disaster. Sometimes. . .’ He faltered. ‘Sometimes. . .’

Sabbath watched him keenly. ‘What?’

A blank, almost frightened look, had crept into the Doctor’s eyes. He shook his head abruptly, and the expression was gone. ‘You’re simply wrong, that’s all. Fairy tales and myths, that’s what those stories are. Things that happened to others of my kind, already exaggerated, applied to me. We both know exactly how unreliable those legends are. There aren’t even primary texts, just fifth- and sixth-hand accounts in histories of actual, non-legendary civilisations. You might just as accurately say that I’m the model for Tom Thumb.’

Sabbath got to his feet. ‘You seem agitated.’

‘Well, of course I’m agitated. The universe is about to end and we’re wasting time discussing old wives’ tales.’

‘A few minutes ago you were content merely to wait for Chiltern to come to us.’

'And you pointed out that it's possible he has some other hiding place. I want to go back to the TARDIS and see if I can modify my sensors to find the machine even in its off-state. Probably I can't, but it's worth trying. You should do the same with your equipment on the *Jonah*. Just in case.'

'So you'll return to London.'

'Yes.'

Sabbath regarded him, black eyes expressionless. 'Doctor,' he said softly, 'is there something you're not telling me?'

'Nuts,' said the Doctor. 'Caught out again. Yes, I confess: I know where the machine really is and I plan to keep the fun of destroying it all for myself. You don't get to play.'

Sabbath flushed. 'Your frivolity verges on the idiotic.'

'Unlike your pomposity, which has left the verge and jumped right to the centre.'

'Want me to hold your coats?' said Fitz, jauntily emerging from the trees.

They turned, and Fitz was suddenly cautious. He could feel the exhausted anger coming off each man, and though he couldn't conceive of their actually coming to blows, the last thing he wanted was to be around any sort of altercation they *would* engage in. He didn't even want to imagine it.

'Anj is right behind me,' he said casually. 'And Miss Kelly's around somewhere. We've pretty much combed the area. Guess Chiltern isn't here yet.'

'No,' said the Doctor. He shoved his hands in his pockets and toed a pebble into the stream. Sabbath turned and stepped back up on to the bank. Fitz smiled brightly.

'So,' he said, 'what's the plan?'

'I used to like trains,' said Anji.

The Doctor smiled, but she didn't think he'd really heard her. His eyes had that thinking-of-something-else vagueness and he was rolling half a crown back and forth between his fingers across the back of his hand. She watched this for a few seconds.

'You should have been a magician.'

'Maybe I was.' He pocketed the coin. 'Maybe I will be.' He glanced out of the compartment window, but night had fallen and there was nothing to see except the reflection of the three of them, floating outside on the darkness: he and Anji sitting beside each other, Fitz asleep on the seat across from them. The Doctor seemed mesmerised by this simple illusion. 'Do you think I'm lucky?'

'Lucky?'

‘Unusually lucky. Coincidences. Last minute escapes. Things like that.’

Anji considered the question.

‘Well,’ she said doubtfully, ‘I suppose you do have an awfully high survival rate considering the situations you throw yourself into –’

‘– but I’d say, from what I’ve seen anyway, that it’s something else.’ He looked at her sharply. ‘Something else that’s odd, I mean.’

‘What?’

His intense gaze unnerved her; she wasn’t used to this sort of focus from him. ‘Uh, well, it’s hard to put into words.’ She turned away from his eyes, her own gaze falling on Fitz, sleeping peacefully, his mouth slightly open. She wished he were awake to help her out here. She was certain he’d noticed the same. . . what was it, exactly? ‘When we arrive somewhere,’ she said carefully, feeling her way, ‘often it’s as if everything there – the place we’ve come to, I mean – was suspended, in a state of balance, waiting to tip one way or another, or maybe just waiting to tip, full stop. And then you enter the equation, and it tips. As if your arrival somehow completed a process. Like you were a fate or something. Catalytic,’ she said triumphantly. ‘That’s the word.’

‘The wave function collapses,’ he said tonelessly. She looked at him again. His eyes were hooded and his face very still. ‘The cat lives or dies.’

He’d lost her. ‘I suppose so.’ He suddenly struck her as smaller, and very young. ‘How are you feeling?’

‘Sorry?’

‘I mean, after. . .’

‘Oh, that. I’m fine.’

He didn’t look fine. He looked worn and ill. Like a man who’d nearly died the night before. Cut the ‘nearly’.

‘You’ve got to stop doing that,’ she said, a little more shakily than she meant to. He raised his eyes.

‘I’m sorry.’ He sounded sincere.

‘You can’t just keep on. . .’

‘Risking my life?’

‘Grinding me up like that. It’s horrible. I don’t know you’re going to come round. We have to watch you, me and Fitz, lying there looking like you’re in agony. You don’t know what it’s like. You *don’t*,’ she insisted, though he hadn’t tried to say anything. She felt tears at the edge of her eyes and squeezed them shut angrily.

‘You’re sick of this sort of life,’ he said quietly, ‘aren’t you?’

She rubbed her eyes with her sleeve. ‘I’m just tired.’

'No. You never chose it. You've always wanted to get home.'

'Well, that might be a moot point now, mightn't it?' To her embarrassment, she sniffed loudly. 'I mean, if time explodes or the universe uncurls or whatever's going to happen.'

He shifted uncomfortably, crossing his arms and looking at his feet.

'Sabbath could have at least given us a ride in that timesub of his,' she added, a bit sulkily.

'No, he was right. It was important for someone always to be at the site.'

'It would only have taken five minutes.' He didn't respond. 'What can you do in London, anyway? Is there really something in the TARDIS that will help?'

'Probably not. I had another reason for wanting to get back.'

'What?'

'I'd like to fetch that mirror.'

'Scale's?'

'Yes. I wasn't worried about it when I thought we were going to find the machine quickly. But now I don't like the idea of its drifting around loose. I want to take it to the TARDIS.'

'And smash it, right?'

'Mm.' The Doctor tapped a foot thoughtfully. 'That's going to be a bit of a problem, I think. It's not glass. I'd be very surprised if it's any substance that can be broken with a simple blow, and it could be impervious to material force altogether.'

'Then what can you do?'

'I imagine a confluence of certain energies could shatter it. The question is, which ones? I'll need to run tests.'

'Tests. . . ?' she said uncertainly.

He smiled. 'Oh, there won't be any danger. Not in the vortex. Anyway, that's not an immediate issue. I'd just like to get it out of that exhibit at the carnival.'

'Mm. Sabbath doesn't know about this extra mirror, does he?'

'Well. . . no.'

'Plan to tell him about it?'

'There's not really any reason to.'

Fitz opened his eyes and looked around sleepily. 'Everything still here, I see. So far so good. You know, I'm kind of getting used to the idea that I'm going to twist out of existence any second now. I suppose you get used to anything, after a while, just to keep the blood vessels in your brain from popping.'

'Are you always this chatty when you first wake up?' said Anji. Fitz smirked.

'One way to find out.'



‘Eew,’ she said, imitating a thirteen-year old. ‘As if.’

‘You know, “The universe is going to blow up” has got to be the most persuasive pick-up line in the history of everything.’

‘Well, you can spend your last hours finding out if that’s so.’

The Doctor was regarding them with benign tolerance, like a parent watching quarrelling siblings. Fitz thought he shouldn’t have been quite so calm. Running in frantic circles and waving his arms would have been more appropriate. On the other hand, that wouldn’t actually help any more than just sitting there.

‘I suppose it’s a good sign that you’re not leaping about in panic.’

‘I never leap about in panic. I tend to hold my head and stamp my feet.’

‘Yeah, but you’re not. Are you exercising incredible self-control, or are you really not worried?’

The Doctor moved his shoulders in something that wasn’t quite a shrug. ‘We’re doing everything we can.’

This didn’t really answer Fitz’s question, but he let it pass.

‘The only danger,’ said Anji, ‘is if this third Chiltern has another place to go. And that doesn’t seem likely.’

‘No it doesn’t,’ the Doctor agreed. ‘He was a prisoner in the house on Dartmoor, which rather diminished his opportunities for finding hideaways.’

‘You never saw him there, did you?’

The Doctor shook his head. ‘It was dark. You’ve seen as much of him as I have.’

‘He looked like...’ Fitz thought back on his brief shocked glimpse of the horseman in the glare of the *Jonah*’s lights, ‘I don’t know what...’ he finished weakly.

‘What happened to him?’ said Anji. ‘What went wrong?’

The Doctor looked out the window at the night rushing past. ‘I don’t know.’

Back in the TARDIS, the Doctor went straight to the computer screen attached to the sensors and began fiddling with different settings, calling up readings and printing out graphs, none of which appeared to satisfy him. Fitz watched him, slightly tranced from tiredness but, after his nap on the train, wide awake. After muttering that she was not, *not*, going to be asleep when the universe ended, Anji had more or less passed out on the sitting-room settee. The Doctor, in contrast, seemed keyed up, almost in a hurry.

‘Fitz –’ he said, pausing for a screen to come up, then stopped. He punched a few buttons. ‘Last night –’ he began again.

‘It’s all right.’

'I wasn't –'

'Forget it,' Fitz said. 'You were right to get rid of me. If I'd known what you were planning I'd have killed you.'

The Doctor smiled. 'I had to go there,' he said, still apologetic.

'I know. Bloody shame if it was a wasted trip.'

The Doctor shut his eyes briefly. 'Yes.'

Put my foot in it there, Fitz winced. What could that journey possibly, even impossibly, have been like? And to take it again after that first, involuntary, hideous one – he thought of the Doctor in the white bed in the Liverpool hospital, screaming when he had no breath to scream with.

'So,' he said quickly, 'what are you going to do if you get a signal on that?'

'Contact Sabbath immediately.'

'How? By pager?'

'An equivalent.' The Doctor laid something that did indeed look very like a pager beside the keyboard. 'He'll do the same when Chiltern shows up there.'

'And we'll charge over?'

'He may be able to handle it himself.' The Doctor narrowed his eyes at the screen, then sat back. 'All right.'

'What?'

'I *may* have managed to make the sensors work on a fine enough level to detect the machine when it's off, just from traces of its activity. *May* have. The trade-off is that I've had to narrow the sweep area geographically to about forty square miles. I'm beginning in Devon and moving up through Wales, going from west to east.'

'How long will that take?'

'Three or four hours. Now,' the Doctor stood up, 'I want you to sit here and watch the screen and if you see *anything*, press this button on the, erm, pager.'

'What if I fall asleep?' said Fitz, nervous at the responsibility.

'Why would you? You look bright-eyed and alert to me. And I'll turn on the coffee machine as I leave.'

'Go where?'

'After that mirror.'

## Chapter Twenty-five

In the night, the Crystal Palace seemed constructed not of glass but of shadow and reflection. Not fully illuminated but lit at intervals by electric bulbs, it was from the outside a mass of soft darkness with glints of hard yellow light in its depths. As the Doctor moved swiftly along beside the building, the interior shadows wavered and moved with his passage, and the light came and went as if from behind wind-stirred leaves.

Over the river, the public clocks of London began to sound, not quite in order, so that there came an overlapping echo of bass and tenor and dull iron notes, shifting in shape and pitch as they fell across the water. one-two-three/ONE-tw- /two-THREE-one/three-one-TWO/three-three-three-three, all the threes ending and dying and fading away. The Doctor automatically checked his own watch. It read the same. Three in the morning.

He paused to consider the situation: a guard at each of the several doors, but none, so far as he could tell, inside. Each door guard periodically strolled up and down a length of the building, checking for anything suspicious. None of them struck the Doctor as particularly alert or concerned, which didn't surprise him. There wasn't much reason to break into the Crystal Palace when a funfair was there except to vandalise the exhibits, a noisy enterprise at which the perpetrator was bound to be caught. Guarding the place was *pro forma*.

Which made it simple for him to get inside.

For a second, he stopped in the middle of the silent fair – the frozen rides and mute calliopes – and gazed up to where the light tapered out and the ceiling blended blackly with the night. There was something eerie about the shadowed stillness of this place that was in daylight such a whirl of movement and colour. All that energy, now suppressed and sullen, as if the unmoving rides were waiting tensely to swoop, or pounce. The carved figures on the showfronts, their painted eyes shaded, had this same guarded, anticipatory stealth.

In the dim light, the Black Chamber of Secrets had a forlorn air, small and shabby compared to the elaborate showfronts on either side. As the Doctor approached, he thought of hapless, pathetic Scale, of Sebastian Chiltern torn

to pieces by his own brother and Nathaniel Chiltern's stoically accepted half-life. So much pain from that infernal machine just on this small scale, and unimaginably, cataclysmically worse to come if he and Sabbath didn't find the renegade Chiltern. Wherever he was.

He picked the chamber's simple lock and eased open the door. The light from the midway, though faint, allowed him to see all of the small room. But just to be certain, he stepped in and lit the lamp.

No mirror. Not on a table in the centre, not propped against one of the walls, not – he checked briefly – behind the door. The Doctor nodded, sad but unsurprised. Well, at least this narrowed the field. How many places in London could a monster, his time machine and an extra mirror go? Back to Chiltern's clinic? Or would it have made just as much sense to stay –

His eye was caught by a gleam across the room. The only furniture remaining in the chamber was a draped table shoved against the far wall, a low, boxy thing swaddled in black cloth. The Doctor had taken it for a covered pile of sacking or folded canvas. Now he realised there was something sitting on it, an object so incongruous that several bewildered seconds passed before he took in what he was looking at.

A toaster.

It occurred to the Doctor that he might be dreaming. Certainly, everything suddenly had a warped, disorienting quality, rather like his reflection in the object's curved chrome surface, distorting and spreading as he walked slowly to the table and bent for a closer look. It was a toaster, all right – one of those nicely solid round-edged ones from the 1950s, with chunky black plastic handles. The Doctor stood with his hands on his knees, staring foolishly, as if the thing might abruptly metamorphosise into something more period-appropriate, like a toasting fork. He reached to pick it up.

The table moved.

The Doctor sprang back. The table tilted, widened. This wasn't a dream. He was chillingly awake. He backed against the wall, helplessly, as the table curved, straightened –

– *and stood up.*

For an instant, the black cloth parted, showing the Doctor what he had finally, much too late, guessed – that, like a shiny metal tumour, the toaster was growing from a human back. The figure turned, slowly and clumsily, dragging its rustling robe, and things that the robe concealed.

'Doctor,' whispered Chiltern. 'So good to see you again.'

The Doctor's gaze had been fixed on the trailing robe, on an ill-shaped, restless bulge where Chiltern's left leg should be. Now he raised his eyes. Sebastian's face, Nathaniel's face, bruised where the Doctor had battered it with the gate, but otherwise identical. Except that there was something wrong with the right eye, which was wet and red and continually blinking as if from a tic, opening and shutting and opening and – snapping, really, snapping open and shut, like... like a...

It was a mouth. A tiny, toothed mouth, biting at the air. Chiltern grinned mirthlessly, like a skull. He raised his left hand and the Doctor saw that the little finger was a wriggling worm. 'There are other... additions,' he rasped, 'of a more... personal nature. I won't inflict you with the sight, though they are – or must be to some tastes, if not, alas, to mine – quite fascinating.' He had limped closer. The Doctor could see the mouth in the eye-socket clearly now, see that there was hair around it and that the little teeth were sharp. A rodent's mouth. A shrew? A rat? Tears dripped from beneath its chin. Or was that saliva? The Doctor looked away.

'Oh no!' said Chiltern harshly. 'You'll look at me. You'll look!' He pulled open his robe. The Doctor smelled roses, and the next instant a tentacled mass exploded at him. He dodged but the stuff caught him, twisting around his chest and arms and throat, pinning him to the wall. He felt his skin tear in a dozen places but couldn't move his head to see what held him. Chiltern smiled his death's-head smile. Gradually, gracefully, there twined into the Doctor's view a sinuous branch of scarlet blossoms.

The Doctor shut his eyes in pity. Immediately, thorns pricked at his lids. 'Open, if you want to keep them.' The Doctor did. 'Did you enjoy my little disguise? I knew there was a chance you might show up here. I've been waiting. And when I heard you at the door, I couldn't resist trying to surprise you. I think we both agree I succeeded.' Again, the smile. 'Very gratifying. But just wait', Chiltern stepped back, 'until you see the *piece de resistance*.'

With a theatrical flourish, he swept aside his robe. Sprouting from his rib cage and occupying the space where his left leg should have been was a tangled, thick-briered rosebush.

'Always in bloom,' said Chiltern. 'A pleasant touch. I suppose it remains forever in the state it was in when we... merged.' From behind him, he pulled the long cord of the toaster. 'I'm sure you remember this. I've come to think of it as a prehensile tail.'

'You're in eight pieces after all,' said the Doctor, his voice choked from the strangling brier, 'but only one of them is fully human.'

‘Very good. Yes, I came apart, and when I pulled myself together I pulled an assortment of other things with me. All from the same year. I believe it was 1957. The results are a bit ludicrous, don’t you agree? I think the toast-making mechanism is a particularly good joke. It took me weeks even to figure out what it *was*. That’s all I’ve really learned about the future: toast is important. My, you’re looking quite sad. I believe my plight has touched your heart. Does that mean you’ll help me?’

‘Isn’t Nathaniel enough?’ the Doctor gasped. Chiltern smiled, as if at a clever pupil. ‘You never left Dartmoor, did you? Where did you hide? An old mine?’ Chiltern just kept smiling. ‘Then you came to him last night, worked on his guilt, talked him around. That’s why he tried to get Anji away from me. You were going to kill me there.’

‘And now I’ll kill you here.’

‘Why murder Sebastian? He wanted to help you.’

‘Did he? He wasn’t making much progress. In the meantime, I was living in a cellar. Now why’, Chiltern moved in close again, ‘do you imagine he locked me away? Do you suppose he thought I was mad?’ The Doctor said nothing. ‘What do you think?’ He gave the Doctor a little shake. ‘Hm?’

‘I think you’re mad as a hatter.’

Chiltern laughed. Then he lifted the Doctor and slapped him into the wall. He held him there, then dragged him down, slowly. The Doctor groaned.

‘I always was you know,’ Chiltern said confidently. ‘But he wouldn’t let it be. He kept trying to *cure* me. And what about you, *Doctor*? Can you *cure* me?’

‘You’re incurable.’

Chiltern’s remaining eye paled to the colour of dirty ice. ‘Really?’ he whispered. The brier uncoiled from around the Doctor’s throat and laid itself gently against his cheek. A soft rose brushed his temple. ‘You’re certain?’

‘Yes.’

Chiltern stabbed a thorn into the Doctor’s cheekbone and drew it languidly down his face, laying the skin open. The Doctor hissed in breath. He felt the blood slide hotly out and run down his neck. ‘Where is the mirror?’

‘With its brothers.’

‘The machine is here?’

‘What strange eyes you have.’ Almost wonderingly, Chiltern pushed the Doctor’s hair back, then took a handful and turned his head first to one side then the other. ‘It’s easy to believe you’re not human. Sebastian told me, of course. But I’d have known anyway.’

‘How?’

‘I can see it. Around you. I felt it too. It’s difficult to describe. A contortion. As if right next to you everything were going more swiftly. Or more slowly.’ Of course, thought the Doctor. Like the Angel-Maker, or Millie in her trance. The time-sense of the mad. Chiltern was still gazing at him, curious and speculative. ‘I wonder,’ he mused, ‘what would happen if we put *you* in the machine.’ The Doctor’s face went still. ‘Dear me, you don’t seem to like that idea.’

‘Chiltern,’ the Doctor said carefully, ‘you have to understand. Using the machine again could cause –’

‘– hideous destruction beyond all imagining.’ Chiltern stroked his hair softly. ‘Yes, yes, I know – I overheard you with Sebastian. What’s that to me? I already have hideous suffering beyond all imagining.’

‘All right,’ said the Doctor angrily, ‘let’s reduce it all to you. You could die.’

Chiltern laughed. ‘*That’s* supposed to dissuade me? I fear you don’t know your audience, Doctor. But do go on. I want to hear you try to save the situation.’

The Doctor was silent. Chiltern’s face changed. ‘Such a good man, pleading for all those unknown lives. And yet, as I recall, you can be quite brutal if you feel the occasion calls for it. I refer to your energetic activity with that gate. You remember, don’t you? It was something like this.’ And he raised the Doctor and smashed him against the floor.

And then again.

And then again.

And then –

Are you ready?’ Nathaniel Chiltern asked.

Constance Jane held on to his hand, staring at the machine. It was beautiful, really. Shining and brilliant. It belonged on a stage. She looked around the small gas lit theatre of the Phantasmagorical Exhibit, reminded of some of the places in which she’d performed as a medium. The stage was bigger of course; she supposed the front part covered an orchestra pit. In the seating area, empty chairs held a phantom audience. Witnesses to her new life. But still. . .

‘I don’t know,’ she said uncertainly. ‘Perhaps Millie should do this. She’s much bolder than I am.’

‘That may be,’ said Nathaniel, ‘but as it happens, she’s chosen not to be here.’

‘She did choose, didn’t she?’

‘She appears to do what she wants.’

Constance nodded. ‘I guess that means that she approves. Otherwise, she’d come out and stop me, wouldn’t she?’

'I have no doubt.' He took her hand in both of his. 'I wish I could guarantee this.'

'Oh.' She looked up into his grave face. 'That's all right. No guarantee on anything, is there?' She turned toward the machine. 'Tell me what to do.'

'It's quite simple. I start the machine, and we wait while the time diffraction and recombination takes place. A light on the control board comes on when it's safe to enter. You enter through that panel with the glyphs on it. I close it after you, and you walk through the door to the inner chamber and into the past.'

She bit her lip. 'And what about you?'

'I'll do the same thing with my brother. Different time setting, obviously. The day when Sebastian put us through the machine. We'll go in together, and, I hope, emerge again as one.'

'So, if it works, I won't see you again.'

'I won't exist,' he said steadily. 'But, really, I don't exist now.'

'And if it doesn't work?'

'I imagine it will kill us. I hope so.'

She looked down. 'All right,' she said finally. She squeezed his hand and released it. 'Let's go.'

Nathaniel went to the control cube at the side of the stage. She kept her eyes on the machine. As she watched, it seemed to become brighter. She heard a sweet musical hum, piercingly clear.

Was the metal really gleaming more intensely? Or was she imagining it? She clasped her hands together till her fingers ached, unable to look away. Could she do this? It was only a few steps. Think of it that way. Just a few steps. And then she was there, and it was just a few more steps. . .

'You can go now,' said Nathaniel softly.

She started. Nathaniel crossed and opened the door. She walked toward it as if in a dream. She glimpsed the inner chamber, glowing with sunlight and shade. She saw a corner of a wooden porch, the white wall of a house. Yes. She raised her chin. Her step lightened. Yes. She let Nathaniel take her hand and guide her in, heard him push the door to. In front of her, the second door opened. She stepped forward.

Yes.

Nathaniel stood tensely outside the machine, arms crossed, almost shivering. He could use a pipe. No. No more of that. No more of that, whatever happened. Oh God, he thought, whatever does happen to me, let it work for her. Let it not turn out an obscene joke. If she. . . if she came back. . . changed, it would



be better to... He paced to the edge of the stage. No. He couldn't do it. He wouldn't be able to kill her.

But the other one would.

I really should devise a name for him, he thought giddily. We can hardly go on calling each other Nathaniel.

Of course, it wasn't for much longer.

His head snapped up. There was a stumbling and struggling from the entrance. 'Is that you?'

'Who else?' His other self lurched into view. 'And I've brought a guest.' Chiltern heaved forward something entwined in thorns and dropped it in front of him like a heavy package. It groaned.

Oh God, it was a man. Nathaniel raced up the aisle. 'What have you done? Who is -' He stumbled to a halt. 'Doctor?'

'Hello,' the Doctor said thickly.

'Are you out of your - Release him, for God's sake!'

Sullenly, Chiltern slid the briers away. The Doctor rolled limply on to the carpet. Nathaniel knelt beside him. 'This is monstrous!'

'Well, what do you expect from a monster?' Chiltern leaned sulkily against the back wall with his arms crossed, watching Nathaniel wipe the Doctor's bleeding face and examine his torn arms and chest.

'Are you badly hurt?'

'No.' The Doctor took the handkerchief from Nathaniel and pressed it to his wounded cheek.

'That should be sewn up.'

'No offence, but your sense of priorities is skewed. Where is the machine?' The Doctor started to get up. Casually, Chiltern sent out a brier to whip around his neck, jerking him back with a thud. The Doctor gasped in pain and annoyance. 'Can you call him off?'

'Let him go,' said Nathaniel.

Chiltern sighed. 'We'll compromise.'

He shifted the brier to the Doctor's ankle. The Doctor carefully stood up, bracing himself on a chair back. He saw the stage and went white:

'You're not *using* it!'

'Miss Jane,' said Nathaniel simply.

'What?!' the Doctor yelled. 'Are you mad too? I thought you, of all of them, had a moral sense!'

'All of *them*?' Nathaniel echoed angrily. 'There is no "them", Doctor. There's only us.' He nodded toward Chiltern. 'There's only me.'

'You're not like him.'

'For God's sake,' Nathaniel cried, 'why do you think that's so? If he has no moral sense, it's because when we were split it ended up in me. If he's "evil", I'm responsible. And if I'm "good", it's to his cost.'

'Rubbish! That's what Sebastian believed about you, that your madness was his fault.'

'Sebastian was a complete human being. I am not!'

The Doctor stared desperately around the room. 'Too late,' he whispered. 'Is it too late? Is it happening?'

'Stop being melodramatic, Doctor! The machine has been used several times without causing damage to anything except the person in it.'

'It's *cumulative*, a kindling reaction. The fact that nothing has happened yet only means it's getting ready to.'

'That hardly follows.'

With a cry of rage, the Doctor wrenched his ankle free, losing a shoe, and hared down the aisle. Nathaniel sprang after him. Then, abruptly, almost comically, they both drew up short.

On the stage, the door of the machine was opening.

Miss Jane came out.

She stood gazing at them calmly. Her hair had fallen down on her neck. Absently, she reached up and freed it completely, then twisted it to hang neatly down her back. Her quiet eyes moved from one man to the other, but not, the Doctor noticed, to the back of the theatre. He glanced over his shoulder. Chiltern had withdrawn.

'It's not you, is it?' said Nathaniel. 'That is...'

'It is me,' she said. 'It's all of us.' She came down into the aisle, took Nathaniel's hand. 'Thank you.' She looked more carefully at the Doctor, fully taking in his condition. 'What's happened to you? Are you all right?'

'I ran into a revolving door,' said the Doctor. 'Where did you go?'

'I went back to before... to before something bad happened. And I stopped it. He must have been frightened, because he never tried again. He can't have, because here I am.'

The Doctor sank into a chair. 'You changed your past.'

'Yes. I did.' She frowned. 'Was that wrong?'

'Wrong?' said the Doctor. 'Well, maybe not "wrong" exactly. Dangerous and inadvisable and possibly disastrous, but no, I wouldn't say "wrong".'

'The Doctor is a pessimist,' said Nathaniel.

The Doctor knows what the hell he's talking about,' said the Doctor. He stared gloomily at Miss Jane. 'You seem to have got away with it. The trauma never occurred, you never split, and it didn't make that much difference to history because here you are, whole, and none of the rest of us has blipped out of existence. By rights, since you never split and therefore never became a medium, you should never have come to England and met Chiltern and been in a position to enter the machine – but somehow the timeline just sorted that out. It does occasionally, when the event isn't that important.'

'It's important to me.'

'And I'm happy for you. Truly. But how well or badly your individual life goes is not the axis on which the universe turns. You were very lucky. We all were. And now, if you'll excuse me, I have a machine to disable.'

He stood up.

'Doctor,' said Nathaniel nervously. 'I am going to sneak Miss Jane out past the guards and escort her safely to a hotel. Though I am not armed, I believe my presence will deter any but the most maniacal attacker, and how likely is it that we should meet such a person – unless it were someone who had recently been dangerously infuriated?'

The Doctor started to say something then stopped. His mouth tightened. 'I see.'

'I would ask you to accompany us, but I'm afraid that the likelihood of such an encounter would then be greater.'

'But surely,' said Miss Jane, confused, 'we would be safer with three.'

The Doctor smiled at her and shook his head, then looked at Nathaniel calmly. 'I understand.'

'Yes.' Nathaniel offered Miss Jane his arm. She took it, with a puzzled glance at the Doctor, and he led her up the aisle. The Doctor watched them go. He heard the door shut.

For a moment, he just stood there. Then he turned and grimly mounted the steps to the stage. He crossed to the impregnable console cube, then to the machine, with its one mirrored door swung open, showing him his bloodied, hollow-eyed, ineffectual self. Could it even *be* destroyed by ordinary means?

Chiltern appeared at the top of the aisle, grinning. 'Don't try anything, Doctor. I can always track down your lady friend.'

The Doctor walked to the front of the stage.

'You're a gentleman, Doctor. If a bit of a contradiction.' Chiltern made his slow, ungainly way down the aisle. 'According to you, that machine can kill millions. Yet in order to save one life, you leave it intact.'

'I'm like that,' said the Doctor. 'Whimsical.'

Chiltern smiled unpleasantly. 'And you've left yourself alone here with me, knowing I want you dead. Aren't you worried?'

'Not particularly.'

'Why not?' Chiltern was at the foot of the stage steps.

'I'm expecting the cavalry.'

Chiltern paused. 'What?'

'Sorry. Anachronistic entertainment reference. It won't work, you know.'

'What?'

'Running yourself – yourselves – through the machine again.'

'Really?' Chiltern hobbled up on to the stage. 'Forgive my questioning your expertise, but it just worked for that young woman.'

'A different situation.'

'And the universe', Chiltern peered around elaborately, 'appears to be in place. At least this little piece of it.'

'Luck,' said the Doctor. 'Ever hear of it?'

'Only bad luck.'

'Well, you're going to have more of it once you go back through the machine. Probably end up with a blender in place of your head.'

'You know,' Chiltern looked him up and down, 'I was watching you from the back, and that contortion around you becomes more marked when you're nearer the machine.'

The Doctor blinked. 'An illusion,' he said quickly.

'I don't think so.'

'You only have one eye,' the Doctor pointed out rudely. 'That distorts the depth of field perception.'

'This has nothing to do with depth of field.' Chiltern's good eye wandered from the Doctor to the machine and back. The other one gibbered and drooled. 'You seemed disturbed earlier when I wondered what might happen to you in the machine.'

'Did I?'

'Yes. You did.' Chiltern took a shuffling step forward. The Doctor took a steady one back. Chiltern smiled. 'You seem to know a great deal about time travel.'

'I read a lot.'

'In what library? From what century?'

The Doctor took another step back and said nothing. Chiltern smirked.

'You've let me get rather close to you,' he observed, 'though not quite within my... reach. I suppose you think you can outrun me.'

'It had occurred.'

'Well, you're right, of course.' Chiltern nodded solemnly. 'Running is not one of my strong points since the –'

One of his briars snaked out – not toward the Doctor but into the wings. The briar yanked, and with a bang the front of stage fell open like a giant trap door and the Doctor dropped into the orchestra pit.

The Doctor yelled, as much in anger as in pain, and scrambled to his feet. Chiltern crouched at the edge of the pit, his face hungry and rapt. The Doctor spotted a door to the understage, darted for it – and fell again when Chiltern whipped a bramble around his leg. He rolled on to his back, trying to kick loose. Chiltern laughed.

'You're in a bad spot, Doctor.'

The Doctor wrapped his hands in the edge of his coat, grabbed at the bramble. 'Chiltern, I'm warning you! You don't want to put me through the machine!'

'Methinks you doth protest too much.' Chiltern raised another long briar, waved it idly, then flicked it behind him. As if someone had struck a gigantic piece of crystal, a clear, penetrating note swelled through the theatre.

The Doctor's head jerked up. 'No!' He pulled savagely at the briar around his leg. 'You mad fool! Turn it off! Now!' He threw himself back as a thicket of thorns swooped down at him. 'Chiltern!' The brambles twined round his limbs. The Doctor tried to protect his eyes. The thorns scraped at him as Chiltern hauled him up from the pit. The sweet, pure vibration from the machine rang in his head. 'Oh please,' he whispered into his hands. '*Please* don't throw me in that briar patch.'

Chiltern dumped him on the stage and started pulling him toward the machine. The Doctor struggled, flailing for something to hold on to. There was nothing. The machine loomed closer.

'Don't do this, Chiltern!'

'Yes,' boomed a deep voice. 'Don't do it!'

The Doctor spat out another of those words he didn't understand. Of all the – What timing! Chiltern stopped dragging him, and he turned his head and looked irritably up the aisle to Sabbath.

'I suggest you turn off that machine,' Sabbath advised Chiltern. 'And I assure you, it would be most unwise to put the Doctor into it.'

Chiltern was frozen in surprise. 'Who are you?'

‘An expert in these matters.’ Sabbath approached the stage, his eyes roving over Chiltern. ‘Dear me, you’re a bit of – what is that modern phrase I’ve heard? – a dog’s breakfast.’

‘I told you the machine was no good,’ rasped the Doctor.

‘No good under these particular circumstances, perhaps,’ said Sabbath smoothly. ‘But in the vortex, who knows?’ His eyes gleamed triumphantly at the Doctor. ‘I should hate to see it destroyed.’

‘Destroyed?’ said Chiltern. He was still staring, his mouth slightly open. The Doctor sympathised. Sabbath came on. He wasn’t armed except for his cane, but the Doctor knew Chiltern couldn’t handle both of them. Not to mention the Angel-Maker, who was no doubt around somewhere.

‘Yes, indeed.’ Sabbath started up the stage steps. ‘Temporally speaking, the Doctor is an extremely unusual individual. One might say unique. I can’t predict exactly what would befall the machine if you attempted to run him through it, but you may take my word that it would be calamitous. As he very well knows.’ He eyed the Doctor with amusement. The Doctor gazed back sourly. ‘He’s a tricky fellow. Fools others into helping him find things he intends to destroy, for example. I dare say he was goading you on.’

‘It would kill him.’

‘And you. And, in a manner of speaking, the machine. But it would save Time. That’s all that matters to the Doctor. Now please shut it off.’

Chiltern held his ground. ‘I don’t believe you.’

‘You know,’ said Sabbath, gaining the stage, ‘I don’t care.’

The Doctor made a sudden, desperate lunge for freedom. Chiltern staggered, then grabbed at him again – the Doctor cried out as the thorns snagged in his flesh. He heard Sabbath’s angry roar – Chiltern must have attacked him too. The Doctor thrashed frantically as the brambles slipped around him like jagged-edged snakes. The machine’s hum razored through his brain. It was happening, he could feel it. The stretching fabric, the snapping threads, one here, one there, one now, one then – it would be just a few at first, one, then another, then another, and then they’d come faster, like the patter of rain before a downpour, and then –

Chiltern suddenly jerked and grunted. The thorns loosened. The Doctor batted and pulled at them furiously. Chiltern rolled away from him, snarling in rage. The Doctor writhed loose and leaped for the machine. As he wrenched the door open, he thought he heard Sabbath yell, telling him to stop, telling *someone* to stop, then he was inside. The central chamber was blank and empty. He plunged in and slammed the door behind him.

Splinters of time hit him from eight directions. His head shot back, his back arched. He clawed at the transparent walls, whimpering. The pain... the force... He began to turn, caught in some invisible circling current. In the mirror opposite, he saw himself, coatless, bloody, stretched in agony. Slowly he rotated. The next mirror floated into view. There he was, coatless, arching, scraping futilely at the wall –

It wasn't him.

The Doctor could barely focus. He tried to squint. It *wasn't* him. It was a smaller man, brown-haired, dressed in white, squinting back out of fierce blue eyes. He'd seen him somewhere, hadn't he? Dreamed about him? What –

The next mirror drifted in front of him. The Doctor wondered if the time pressure was distorting his senses. For this wasn't him either, but a robust, heavy fellow in a motley coat, his face slack with reflected bewilderment. They watched each other move away. The Doctor shut his eyes. just keep them closed for a bit. Reorient. Give it a minute... There.

He looked. This time the man looking back was a tall, curly-haired, pop-eyed fellow in a long scarf, someone Tenniel could have drawn for Lewis Carroll. They stared at each other in amazement. The Doctor put out a hand. So did the other. Then he was gone, replaced by the reflection in the next mirror, a stylish, white-haired man in a velvet jacket.

A new wave of pain hit the Doctor. His head snapped back and hit the wall, his joints felt as if they were pulling apart. He was too weak to cry out. He would have fallen in a heap if the current hadn't borne him up, still turning him gently while his nerves crackled and short-circuited. Break, damn you! Break! You've never had a spanner like this thrown in you! Chew on me till your teeth crack. Grind me up till your gears lock. I'm the nail in your tyre, the potato jammed in your exhaust pipe, the treacle poured in your petrol tank. I'm the banana peel beneath your foot, the joker that ruins your straight flush, the coin that always comes up heads and the gun you didn't know was loaded –

*I am the Doctor!*

He fell. Around him, everything cracked and collapsed. The machine was shuddering apart, shaking itself to pieces. The lenses powdered into bright sparks. The roof slid off. The mirrors quivered on their base and then, one by one, fell shattering on their backs. Before the last one toppled, he glimpsed in it an elderly man, strong-featured and bright-eyed, crouched as he was, staring at him. Then that image fell too, and the Doctor huddled at the bottom of the still-standing inner chamber in the loudest silence he'd ever heard.

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Nathaniel Chiltern and Constance Jane stood at Mrs Hemming's door. She had thanked him. They had said good night. Still they stood there.

'What will you do?' he said.

'Mrs Hemming talked of hiring me as a companion, and to help her in her spiritualist work.'

'Would you like that?'

'I would,' she said. 'The fact that I turned out to be a fake doesn't mean that spiritualism is. And it comforts many people.'

'Oh yes,' he sighed, 'the relief of suffering. It's the only worthwhile work, isn't it?'

She looked up at him. For a moment it seemed as if he might bend closer to her. But the moment passed. He raised his hat. 'Good night, Miss Jane.'

'Good night, Dr Chiltern.'

He went down the steps to the pavement and then two more paces, at which point, for no visible reason, his head twisted violently sideways and he fell dead.

Constance Jane screamed.

After a while, the Doctor managed to roll out of what was left of the machine on to the stage floor. After another, longer while, he turned his head. Chiltern was sprawled several feet away, his head at a grotesque angle. He wasn't alone. The Angel-Maker lay crumpled nearby, her throat torn open. Sabbath was kneeling beside her.

Sabbath raised his head. He and the Doctor looked at each other for a long time.

'She saved your life,' said Sabbath.

'She saved more than that.'

Very gently, Sabbath gathered the Angel-Maker in his arms and stood up. The Doctor didn't move, just lay staring at the confusion of flesh and foliage that had been Chiltern. With his face turned away and his deformed hand hidden; he might have been a man who had simply fallen asleep under a low-growing rose bush. Except for the toaster, of course. And the hilt of the Angel-Maker's knife in his lower back. And his neck. Sabbath must have broken it with his bare hands.

Shakily, the Doctor sat up. In the wings, Sabbath had carefully settled the Angel-Maker on a shabby blue velvet sofa from the ghost-show set. The Doctor got unsteadily to his feet and went over to them. Sabbath stood with his arms folded, his eyes on the body, absolutely expressionless.



‘Once again,’ he said, his voice betraying no emotion at all, ‘I’ve helped save you.’

‘She killed him to save your life, not mine.’

‘The fact remains, you are alive and she is dead.’ Sabbath turned his dark gaze on the Doctor. ‘I should never have saved your life that first time.’

The Doctor shrugged. His eyes were empty and old. ‘I told you I’d make you regret it.’

With a sound that was half-snarl, half-groan, Sabbath plunged a hand into the breast of his coat. The Doctor stepped back. Sabbath’s features contorted; he clutched the arm of the sofa to stay upright. Then, face pouring sweat, he straightened and flung something at the Doctor’s feet:

‘There. Mortal again.’

The Doctor looked down at a black quivering piece of meat. ‘Is that the one you loved her with?’

‘That?’ Sabbath lifted the Angel-Maker a final time, resting her head against his chest. ‘That is not a human heart.’

He walked into the shadows. The Doctor heard the inter-dimensional door to the Jonah open, the throbbing engines, the distant cry of apes. Then the noises stopped. Sabbath was gone. The Doctor stood staring at the bloody thing at his feet.

Dead at last.

# Epilogue

Hugo sat on the steps of his caravan, cleaning a harness. The late August days were still long, and though the fair had shut for the evening an hour ago, the sun wasn't yet down. But summer was passing. He could feel the chill in the waning day, smell the dying grass.

'Good evening.'

Hugo looked up quickly, then got to his feet. 'Doctor!'

'I didn't mean to startle you.'

They shook hands. Hugo thought the Doctor looked much better than when he'd last seen him. More colour in his face. Sturdier. He was wearing what appeared to be a new velvet coat and carrying a square box under his arm.

'How's business?' said the Doctor.

'No complaints. How about you?'

'The same. Off to the country soon, aren't you?'

'In a fortnight.'

'So you'll be bringing out your, erm, collection.'

'What? Oh.' Hugo laughed. 'Aye. I've got to give the calf a good cleaning. I'm afraid the moth's got at it.'

'Well,' the Doctor set down the box, 'I hope you don't mind, but, remembering the help you gave me, I've taken the liberty of getting you a new nutria.' Hugo started to protest. The Doctor raised a hand. 'No argument. It's being delivered to you at the fair next week. And there's something else.'

He looked suddenly... what? Hugo couldn't quite read the expression. Shy? Embarrassed? Sad? The Doctor nudged the box with his toe. 'Open it.'

Hugo sat on the step and opened the box. Inside was a large jar. He lifted it out. Something floated inside. 'Cor!' Hugo was impressed. 'That's a marvel and no mistake. It looks real.'

'Doesn't it?'

'Meant to be some sort of heart, is it?'

'It is. I thought you might say it was from,' the Doctor hesitated, 'oh, I don't know. An abominable snowman. Or a hobgoblin, if you want something closer to home. Or even a creature from another planet.'

Hugo chuckled. 'Not likely I'd persuade anyone of that. But it's marvellous strange, and I'll think up something worthy. Look here, Vera,' he called as the bearded woman came around the caravan. 'See what the Doctor's brought us.'

She nodded at the Doctor. 'You're looking well. What's this then, Hugo?'  
'See what you think.'

She raised the jar, squinted at the contents. 'A heart,' she said slowly.  
'But not like any you've ever seen, eh?'

'No indeed.' She handed the jar back to him. 'Best lock it up as soon as possible.'

'Oh, aye. Don't want anything to happen to it.'

Hugo hurried off with his gift. Vera turned a curious eye on the Doctor. 'Lovely piece of work. One of the best I've seen. Where'd you find it?'

The sun was finally setting, among lilac and salmon-coloured clouds rimmed with gold. The Doctor seemed unable to take his eyes from the sight. 'Oh, in a curiosity shop in London. One of those places out of Dickens where you expect the owner to spontaneously combust.'

'Mm. Do you know what I think?'

'No,' he said innocently.

She stepped forward and tapped him on the chest. 'I think it's yours. The heart that was taken from you. That left that scar.'

He looked down at her. 'That's a very strange idea.'

'You're a very strange bloke. Only, if I'm right, how can you be standing here talking to me?'

'Oh that's simple.' The Doctor smiled. 'I'm growing a new one.'

Thump. *Thwack.*

Pause.

Thump. *Thwack.*

Pause.

Thump. *Thwack.*

Pause.

Thump. *Thwack.*

Pause.

Thump. *Thwack.*

Pause.

Thump. *Thwack.*

Pause.

Thump. *Thwack.*

Pause.

Thump. *Thwack.*

Pause.

Thump. *Thwack.*

Pause.

Thump. *Thwack.*

Pause.

Thump. *Thwack.*

Pause.

Thump. *Thwack.*

Pause.

Thump. *Thwack.*

‘He’s driving me nuts is what,’ Fitz said.

‘Hm?’ said Anji.

Thump. *Thwack.*

Pause.

They were standing in the TARDIS kitchen. Anji was rummaging through a cabinet. Fitz was irritably watching the electric kettle.

Thump. *Thwack.*

Pause.

‘What’s he doing, anyway?’

‘He’s playing with a ball,’ she said, head still in the cabinet.

‘I know that.’

Thump. *Thwack.*

Pause.

‘But what’s he doing it for?’

‘You don’t play with a ball *for* anything, do you?’

‘He might,’ Fitz muttered darkly. ‘You never know.’

Anji emerged with a jar of peanut butter. ‘If you don’t like it, go in another room.’

Thump. *Thwack.*

Pause.

‘I’m waiting on the kettle. Takes for bloody ever.’

‘You’re the one wanted the electric kettle.’

‘Did not.’

‘Did so.’

Thump. *Thwack.*

Pause.

'You said it made the kitchen homey,' she said.

'I never.'

'You did.'

'I never said "homey". I'm not into "homey".'

'Oh no,' she said drily. 'Not your image at all.'

'I supposed your family never had a kettle like this.'

Thump. *Thwack*.

Pause.

Anji looked at the humble aluminium object. 'Everyone in Britain had a kettle like that. It's a twentieth-century icon. Like red phone boxes.'

'Or police call boxes. So you see, it fits.'

'Oh,' she said. 'A *design* choice.' Her eyes narrowed. 'Are you sure it's plugged in?'

Thump. *Thwack*.

Pause.

'What?'

'Plugged in. Are you sure you plugged it in?'

'Course I plugged it in!'

'Only you're not used to having to plug things in any more.'

'That doesn't mean I'd forget how, does it?'

Thump. *Thwack*.

Pause.

Anji pulled at the cord. It came easily up over the edge of the table, dragging a bulky black plug.

'Bollocks,' said Fitz.

Thump. *Thwack*.

Pause.

'If you don't like it, you should just go in another room,' she said.

'The kettle?'

'His bouncing the ball against the wall. You should just go in another room.'

'I've got to wait for the kettle to boil, haven't I?' he said, stooping to the socket.

'Suit yourself.'

Thump. *Thwack*.

Pause.

'Only I don't know why he chose the room next to the kitchen.'

'He probably didn't think.'

'Yeah.'

'He probably didn't realise you'd be trapped here, held hostage to ancient technology.'

'He's been doing it for hours.'

'Hm?' Anji was rummaging again.

'He'd been at it when I came in for breakfast. And now it's teatime.'

'Well, there's no harm in it, is there? Have you seen that packet of American crackers?'

'But why?'

'It's just a game.' She tried another cabinet.

'Maybe he's putting himself in a trance.'

'He doesn't need to bounce a ball for hours to do *that*.'

Thump. *Thwack*.

Pause.

'You could ask him,' she said.

'Yeah.'

'Well?'

'Well, I hate to *interrupt* him.'

'Suit yourself.'

Packet of crackers under an arm and jar of peanut butter in hand, she left. Fitz glumly watched the kettle.

'Siberia's going to be a nice change,' he muttered.

Thump. *Thwack*.

Pause.

With a sigh, Fitz went into the next room. The Doctor was standing in its centre, throwing a tennis ball so that it hit the floor, then the wall, then bounced back to him. His face was grave. He'd been pretty sombre in general recently. Distracted. And he never had said exactly what became of that time machine.

'So,' said Fitz.

Thump. *Thwack*.

Pause.

'Mm?' said the Doctor.

'This ball thing.'

'Yes?'

'What about it?'

The Doctor looked at him, puzzled. 'What about it?'

'Yeah. I mean, you've been doing it for a bit.'

'Seventeen hours and forty-three minutes.' Thump. *Thwack*. Pause. 'That's forty-four minutes now.'

‘Right. But. . . What I mean is, is there a point?’

The Doctor’s concentration was back on his game. ‘You know, there are gaps between the atoms of this ball.’

‘Yeah.’

‘And there are gaps between the atoms of the wall.’

‘OK.’

‘So it is, of course, possible for the gaps to line up and the ball to go through the wall.’

‘Well, sure. Only it never happens, does it?’

‘If you wait long enough,’ said the Doctor, ‘everything that is possible happens.’ Thump. *Thwack*. Pause. ‘It has to, in fact.’

‘Yeah, but. . . A ball never goes through a wall. A ball never has gone through a wall. Has it?’

‘No.’

‘I mean, what are the odds?’

‘Hard to calculate exactly. Ten to the power of a few hundred, I’d imagine.’ Thump. *Thwack*. Pause.

‘You’re not going to. . . You’re not planning to keep on until the ball goes through the wall, are you?’

‘Well,’ said the Doctor, ‘I thought I might.’

‘You’re going to stand here for zillions of years?’

‘That wouldn’t work. I’d be long dead.’

‘Well, you’ll be long dead before the odds come up anyway, won’t you? Not to mention me. Not to mention probably the whole universe.’

‘Mm.’ Thump. *Thwack*. Pause. ‘We’ve talked about probability.’

‘Yeah. Well, you have. I’ve listened mostly.’

‘Well, as long as probability is functioning, then yes, both of us will likely be long dead before this ball could ever go through the wall. We can’t physically wait long enough for the odds to come up. But if the wave function collapses, if “long enough” becomes “now”. . .’

‘But what could make that happen?’

‘That’s the question.’

Fitz looked closely at the Doctor’s face, trying to discern whether he were having him on. The Doctor turned to meet his gaze. His eyes had that flat, faraway look that always gave Fitz a tiny shiver.

‘Well,’ Fitz said, ‘I’ll leave you to it.’

The Doctor nodded and turned back to the ball. Fitz returned to the kitchen. Thump. *Thwack*. Pause.

'But if the wave function collapses. . .' the Doctor murmured.  
The ball went, through the wall.  
'Ouch!' said Fitz.



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## About the Author

LLOYD ROSE is the pen name of Sarah Tonym who, with her two sisters Nora Penefrin and Doe Pamine, has left the treacle well to take up residence in the charming English village of Adverse Camber. Someday they hope to go to Moscow.