

# Nightmare of Bethlehem

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# Chapter 1

## Nightmare of Bethlehem

### A Doctor Who Short Story

The mourners stood around the grave. The day was grey and drizzling. There was a damp haze in the autumn air insufficient to penetrate the thick wool stuff of the mourners coats but misting their faces. Their faces were all solemn; “but they will all sleep sound tonight, nevertheless” thought one gravedigger. He was too old and cynical to be much impressed by the relatives; a man and woman standing together a discreet distance from the vicar. Opposite the couple stood a third man. He was wearing somber brown with a black armband and his hands kept moving, clasped together within his black leather gloves, writhing over and over each other.

“I am the resurrection and the life, sayeth the Lord, and he that believeth in me though he be dead yet shall he live and he that liveth and believeth will never die”.

The mourners left the graveside after the vicar had ended the ceremony. The words seemed to hang on the air in the silence that followed. But as their feet reached the path, they broke into low conversation that reached the two gravediggers waiting respectfully on the sidelines.

“My thanks for agreeing to officiate,” the woman was saying to the vicar, “in such difficult circumstances.”

“By which she means the girl shouldn’t have been buried on sanctified grounds at all,” muttered the second gravedigger who was younger and more garrulous than his companion, “still I expect you’re used enough to this up at Parris House, eh, Frank?”

Frank grunted non-committally into his whiskers and hefted his spade. His companion fell silent. Frank had worked at Parris House for nigh on three decades

and he was known to be protective of the place. The younger gravedigger wondered whether he had gone too far.

“Still, there’s no proof, I suppose,” he said by way of a peace offering. “She might just have tripped. You can get a nasty fall from stairs.”

“It was a tragic accident.” The lone man had remained behind the departing vicar. “You two have work to do. I suggest you do it rather than engaging in idle gossip.”

Frank touched his cap and scowled at his companion. Wordlessly they began filling in the grave. The lone man strode off in the opposite direction to the mourners, to the large 17th century manor house behind which the small chapel and graveyard were situated.

The elder gravedigger sent the young man away once they had finished. He remained in the graveyard, tidying up around the headstones and locking the heavy wooden gates so that no one could get in or out that way. He became aware of footsteps echoing on the pathway that lead down from the Parris House. He turned to look but the fog had rolled down obscuring its facade and he couldn’t see who approached. He suppressed a feeling of dread that was only natural with the lowering skies. He tried not to think of the whispers among the guests at Parris House that Abigail Barnett had been chased to her death by a terrifying stranger who lurked in the empty rooms of its unused wing.

To be on the safe side however, he returned to his tools and lifted his spade. The footsteps continued to come closer at a measured slow pace and a form gradually resolved itself in the mist. Its looming shapelessness made Frank take a step back until he realised it was a man in an inverness coat without a hat. The coat’s short cape had concealed the outline of his arms giving him more the appearance of a shambling mound than man. The mists parted to reveal his features; brown hair, beard and mustache. He walked purposefully down the pathway.

“Hello, sir,” said Frank. He’d not seen this man before, but his coat was well-made and he didn’t have the look of a servant.

“Good day, I wondered if you could be so good as to let me out.”

“I’m sorry sir, you’ll have to get Dr. Gordon to do that.” Frank might not have recognised the man, but he had worked too long at Parris House to let people out. The doctors could do that if he was a visitor, not a guest.

“Don’t be an idiot man! I’m in a hurry. Open the gates!”

“I’m sorry sir, I can’t do that.” Frank eyed the man and, though he was not aware of the movement, he hefted the spade and braced himself as if to meet an onslaught.

The man walked to the graveside looking down at the newly laid earth. “There is evil afoot up there,” he said not looking at Frank. “This was only the first death.” Now he looked at him, his eyes angry. “I will not forget that you refused to let me out.” Then he turned and the mist swallowed him up once more.

## Part I

Laura Croy sat with her sister in the bay window of the visitors’ parlour. A pale autumn sunshine fell through the window and sparkled on the silverware before them. The staff had brought them tea. A teapot sat between them and small cakes were arranged on a decorative plate. The plate was chipped Laura noticed. Nothing in this place was ever quite right.

“Why don’t you serve the tea?” she prompted gently. Kate had been sitting placidly opposite her for a while now, as the tea had first brewed and now probably stewed between them.

“You think I should?” asked Kate nervously.

“You are the hostess and I’m the guest.”

A look of mild panic crossed Kate’s face. But she stood up and hovered uncertainly over the silver teapot and the china mugs. Her hands stopping first over the small milk jug, and then the sugar bowl and then the teapot.

“I’d like some milk in mine, please,” said Laura hoping to help her out.

Kate picked up the milk jug and with shaking hands poured a splash of milk into each teacup then filled them with tea. With a look of relief she sat down again.

Laura picked up her teacup. “This is a much more civilised place to meet than the old room,” she observed. “I think the new owners have some very sensible ideas. It is much better to have as normal a life as possible, don’t you think?”

“Yes, it is much better,” said Kate.

“I hear they have new treatment methods,” said Laura, probing for a real opinion.

Kate smiled suddenly, “Yes it is much better. They don’t lock us up so much,” she paused and her face fell, “but I have bad dreams,” she whispered.

Laura and Kate went for a walk round the gardens. Laura rather valued the opportunity. Under the old administration she had always had to meet Kate in a small, enclosed, wood-paneled room. A stocky, grumpy looking nurse had sat stoically and disinterestedly in a hard upright chair by the door. Laura had never understood the need for that. Kate might have been of a highly nervous disposition, too swayed by her emotions and not enough by her sense nor her morals, but she was hardly a *physical* threat to anyone - let alone her own sister.

“Oh look! There’s Mr. Hardcourt!” said Kate, her face lighting with genuine interest for the first time. She let go of Laura’s arm and ran across the lawn, the train of her cream day dress rustling over the grass behind her. She stopped before an ancient gardener who was weeding among the flower bed. Laura frowned in disapproval. It was hardly the way to greet a servant. She followed at a more dignified pace.

The gardener waited for her to arrive, his cap in his hands. Laura could see that Kate was talking to him excitedly and that he was replying to her in a quiet tone. As Laura came up he fell silent. Kate looked at her and then at the gardener again. He must have been in his fifties, his face tanned by wind, rain and sun. He had short, curly white hair. A wide mustache and side burns framed his face. He was not especially large but Laura guessed that he was surprisingly strong. His arms had a muscled look beneath his shirt-sleeves and the garden grime. An awkward silence fell while Laura and the gardener both looked expectantly at Kate.

“Perhaps you could introduce me?” asked Laura.

“Oh,” said Kate, “Laura, this is Mr. Hardcourt. Mr. Hardcourt, this is Laura.”

Mr. Hardcourt nodded his head at her. “Mrs. Croy?” he asked, uncertain.

“That’s right,” said Laura.

“Miss Young has been so good as to take an interest in the garden,” he said. “I was just explaining how I’m hoping to plant a hedge along this drive here.”

The path swept up through formal gardens, from the wrought iron gates of Parris House to the imposing facade of columns and stone swagged windows built by some restoration noble.

“I think it’s such a shame,” said Kate. “I like to be able to see all across the gardens.”

The gardener grunted, “That’s all very well, Miss, but anyone in the gardens can be seen from the gate.” He glanced at Laura. “The local children will come and shout things,” he said. “It weren’t a problem when no one came out into the gardens much, but now they do...”

Laura nodded in understanding, "It sounds like a sensible idea. Was it Dr. Gordon's?"

The gardener looked embarrassed, "No Ma'am, I don't think he has much interest in the gardens except insofar as the guests like them. But he has given me permission to maintain them as I see fit."

"I'm sure he has chosen wisely." Laura looked at this gardener and ventured a probing question. "It seems much better; the new administration of Dr. Gordon's."

The gardener scratched his head. "Yes Ma'am," he said after a moment's hesitation. The unspoken "but..." floated in the air between them. To press him further would have been well beyond the bounds of propriety and, with Kate there, it was possible it would be repeated to someone inappropriate.

She thought a moment and then hazarded, "I hope the change has not unsettled the guests too much."

"They have been," he hesitated, "more troubled of late but I am sure they will settle down." He paused and scratched his cheek, a habitual gesture, she guessed. Then he seemed to shrug mentally and heaved his spade. "Now, if you'll excuse me." It was clear he would say no more.

He had been running for some time now. At some point, he knew, he had been aware of where it was he was heading. But somewhere along the way he had lost his bearings. Now he passed trees and bushes and hedges as they loomed up out of the fog with the vague feeling that he knew them and should be able to work out the way but all the time the terror was at his heels. It hounded him through the avenues, breathing on his neck, pounding along behind him and he never had the opportunity to stop and think or to stop and plan. If for a minute or two he could lose it and gain a moment of equilibrium then he would be able to get out of here. On he ran. This one is beginning to rationalise. Rationalise, yes, he needed to rationalise. His heart was pounding, safety was so close but he had lost his way. He turned through an archway and ducked under the branches of a weeping willow and nearly fell into the stream. The stream! he was on the wrong side of the stream, how had he ended up on the wrong side of the stream? He was going to have to go all the way back. He kept running. There was a second archway ahead. If he went through that then the terror would follow him but he could backtrack. He ducked through the archway. He didn't recognise this avenue but he'd been sure it led back the way he had come. No time to stop and think. He pounded

on. He heard the snuffling baying sound of terror approaching the archway. Don't think, just run. No, no, think. If he didn't think he would never get out of here. Think. He kept running. Think. The hedge, could he hide in the hedge? Get a moment to think. He leapt for the hedge and to his surprise scrambled over it. Keep running. The terror would be over the hedge too in a minute. No stop. The idea was to stop. The terror hadn't turned into the last avenue yet. It would lose him. He must think. I think its working! I think he's gaining control. Wait that wasn't his thought. He stopped, panting. The panic still rose in his throat, urged him on, but there was someone else in his head, someone was watching this. Slow breathing, close them out, shut down a few neural pathways, so, slow breathing, slow breathing.

Kate was sitting in the main parlour reading one of the romances Laura had left behind her. She didn't much mind living in Parris house. She'd been there since she was about fifteen when something bad had happened and it had been easiest to hide from the world. Sometimes she wondered what it was like out in the world, away from the regular hours and locked doors, but by and large she had no real desire to find out. It sounded like a frighteningly complex place full of money problems and strange rituals with which you had to conform and endless decisions that had to be taken. In Parris House you never had to make a decision. You were told when to eat and when to sleep and when to sit quietly in the parlour with a book. Though of late, she had sensed that there was something or someone in the corridors. Some of the other residents had whispered to her of a man who stalked at night and who had chased Abigail to her death. Dr. Gordon had assured her this was not the case but she shuddered and crossed herself as she had seen Daniela Guinchiglia do.

There was a sound of shouting in the hallway. Kate looked up. It was unmistakably the sound of Mr. Jones' voice. Mr. Jones shouted a lot. The door burst open and in he came followed by one of the new doctors; a small nervous man called Dr. Smith who always looked vaguely as if he was being chased by something.

"Kate!" shouted Mr. Jones. Kate spent much of her time trying to get nice men, like Frank Hardcourt, to call her by her Christian name whereas Mr. Jones had never even asked for permission. He always called her 'Kate' and she found she resented the familiarity. She put down her book.

“Do you know what this is?” he shoved a small crystal under her nose.

“Some sort of crystal? I’m afraid I know nothing of geology, Mr. Jones,” she shrugged, trying to show she wasn’t interested in his crystal.

“Doctor,” he corrected. He was always insisting he was a Doctor of something. Today, it seemed, he was a doctor of geology.

“Yes Doctor,” she said meekly, Dr. Smith had advised her to humour him. He was suffering a mania, said Dr. Smith, and the important thing was to try and keep him calm.

He looked at her intently, his eyes wide and goggling. She always felt discomfited by that stare. It was as if some part of him thought that he was the sort of person that stared wildly at people and yet, in his quieter moments, he had a sort of withdrawn thoughtfulness that suited his face much better. “It’s a memory crystal,” he said.

“Oh.”

He stood up, suddenly withdrawing into himself once more, the heavy eyelids lowering. “You don’t know what a memory crystal is, do you?” he asked. Mutely she shook her head. At moments like these when he suddenly became the still point in the midst of all the action, he was transformed. A sense of real power emanated from him and she trembled.

“Mr. Jones,” said Dr. Smith, “it is just a small ornament, nothing more.”

Mr. Jones closed his eyes. He was an ugly man. His nose was big and shapeless. Kate had sometimes wondered whether it had been broken at some point in the past, though the crook was not so pronounced that she could be sure. He had close cropped brown hair, beard, mustache and side-burns, although he had been clean-shaven when he first arrived. He had been semi-conscious and ill for most of his first few weeks there. The barber they had sent for, once he recovered, had insisted on the facial hair, saying it suited him. Kate thought it did. When he was quiet it gave him the air of an elder statesman and she didn’t think she could have refused anything he ordered her to do in his low, quiet, serious voice. She shivered and shrank back at the memory. He opened his eyes and looked at her again.

“I’m sorry,” he said as if he had read her memories better than she herself. He turned slowly to regard Dr. Smith. “I thought so,” he said slowly, standing so still he might have been frozen. He still held the crystal in one hand. “Not even human, some sort of avian life-form.”

“You have had a bad dream, Mr. Jones,” said Dr. Smith. “Here, give me the crystal and let us go back to your room.”

He advanced slowly towards Mr. Jones his eyes darting about in an even more panic stricken fashion than normal. One hand convulsively grasping for the crystal.

Mr. Jones stood stock still. Then he looked straight at Kate. “You are all in terrible danger. Warn the other patients.” He said it with such terrible calm that Kate couldn’t even protest at the use of the word “patient” to refer to the guests. She just stared at him, a feeling of terror remembered from some nightmare making her heart beat faster. Then, suddenly, he leapt for her his hands reaching forward as if grasping for her throat.

## Part II

The leap took him right past her, through the bay windows and out into the garden. Kate screamed in fright, the terror was at her heels. She began to scramble out of the window after him. As long as she didn’t stop it wouldn’t catch up with her. Hands grasped at her skirts and she found herself pulled back, still screaming.

“It’s alright, you’re awake now,” Dr. Smith was shouting. “This isn’t your dream.”

The terror was at his heels again but now it had shape and substance. Its wings flapped the air like a breeze around him. Its terrible claws reached for his back. Huge talons stretched out to shred his coat. The great beak opened wide to peck at his eyes. He bellowed in terror and ran on towards safety. He was not lost now although he didn’t know where he was he knew where he was heading. He felt his destination calling him like a beacon and he ran on.

Strong arms grabbed him and hurled him to the ground.

“Now where do you think you’re going?” said a voice.

He found himself grabbing at a shirt front made of some rough material and staring into hard flinty eyes; a tanned and weathered face with a mouth set into a grim and stubborn line. It was the gardener who had foiled his last attempt at escape. The terror was still at his heels. He raised his arms in a motion that felt both strange and familiar.

“Hai-ya!” he called making a chopping motion. A strong hand grabbed his wrist, muscle intercepting muscle. Ah, now the trick was to use the man’s strength against him, somehow. Strong arms grabbed him round the chest and began to haul him back towards the terror.

“No!” he cried. “Not that way. It’s coming after me I must get back to, back to..” he paused.

“You’re not going anywhere,” said the man, still dragging him back towards the house. He blinked and stared, looking for the creature that had pursued him.

“I was being chased,” he said, “by a large bird, a...” a memory struck him, “I do believe it was a Cartorian. Odd that, they are usually a remarkably peaceful species.”

“Well maybe you only imagined it,” said the man.

“They come from the planet Cartor, you know,” he continued. “It’s very odd to find them so far from home. Space travel disorients them. Their brains are very closely attuned to the magnetic field of the planet. Only a few have ever successfully survived off it. That would explain things. It must have been driven mad by the different magnetic field here. You do realise it’s almost certainly psychotic, don’t you.”

“Whatever you say, sir.” The man continued to drag him back to the house. Once again he struggled in the vice-like grip.

“It’s driving us mad, you know; the patients. It’s giving us dreams. You realise that! Dreams related to its own terror and disorientation.” There was a slight break in the man’s stride. “Dr. Smith is driving us all mad. Even I am beginning to break under the strain. You can’t take me back there. I have to get away!” The stride fell back into its old beat.

“Right you are, sir.”

“I have to get to the TARDIS. That’s it! the TARDIS. You must understand. She’ll calm me. We’re linked, mentally. She’ll calm me and then I’ll be able to think and if I can think clearly then, then I’ll know what to do. Because I always, do you see. It’s my forte, you might say, knowing what to do. I have to get to the TARDIS. She looks like a police box. No, that’s no good. I don’t suppose you’ve ever seen a police box.” He paused panting while he was dragged on, then he resumed. “She’s blue, about 2 yards high and maybe a yard wide. I have to get there. She’s that way,” he gestured wildly in the direction of the beacon that was calling him. “If you won’t let me go, at least find my TARDIS. I beg of you.”

The man shoved him through the door of the house, where Dr. Smith came to meet them. More hands, belonging to orderlies seized him. “Fetch my TARDIS. I need my TARDIS,” he shouted as he was dragged away.

Frank Hardcourt watched the rambling man being taken in. He'd seen him around Parris House a few times recently and thought him to be an new guest. But he was so unlike the rest of the guests that Hardcourt found it hard to account for him. Parris House was not really a Bedlam. The patients were always kept under control but none of them were violent. Those prone to escape attempts were all elderly and easily restrained. Parris House had always been a middle class answer to bedlam, somewhere where the odd but not obviously insane could be sent to keep them out of harm's way.

He was still standing in the entrance hall contemplating this when Dr. Gordon came to see him. Dr. Gordon was the new head doctor at Parris House. Like all the new doctors he seemed to be a bit twitchy but Frank had heard that they had all come from a German hospital abroad where the patients were violent so he attributed much of their nervousness to that. They'd settle down when they realised that at Parris House no one was likely to attack them.

"Thank you for detaining our escapee," he said.

"No problem sir. But if he's going to continue like that you'll have to keep a closer watch on him. He looks strong enough to climb the main gate even with the spikes atop of it, if he ever got that far."

"Indeed, the matter will be seen to. Dr. Smith, from whom he escaped, tells me that he took with him a small crystal belonging to Smith's mother. I don't suppose you saw it, did you? Dr. Smith is quite upset. It had sentimental value for him."

Frank frowned. He'd seen nothing. "Sorry sir. If he doesn't have it now he must have dropped it in the garden somewhere. I'll have a look."

"Thank you."

Frank hesitated in the hallway, a thought occurring to him.

"Yes?" asked Dr. Gordon nervously.

"Well sir, he was asking about some sort of box. He called it a TARDIS and said it was over Southwark way. He seemed to think it would help him calm down. It sounded pretty big. I wondered if I should take a look sir. Just in case there is something there? If you think it would help?"

Dr. Gordon wrung his hands and nodded his head. "Find it, if it exists," he said. "Something that calms him could be of great use. Yes, indeed."

Frank left, but when he glanced back as he walked down the path, he saw Dr. Gordon still standing in the doorway, wringing his hands and looking after Frank with a plaintive expression.

It was several days before Hardcourt took an afternoon off to seek out Mr. Jones' box. He found it about three streets away, tucked into a side alley, the persistent smoggy mist curling around it in drifts. It was roughly the dimensions Mr. Jones had stated and Frank had never seen anything like it. After walking around it twice in amazement he took himself into the nearby pub and bought a drink.

"That blue box out there?" he asked the landlord.

"Oh aye," he replied. A slow smile appeared on his face. Frank knew there was a story to be told here but that the landlord was waiting to be prompted.

"Been there long?"

"To tell you the truth no. It's been there about two weeks," said the landlord. "Why do you ask?"

"I work up at Parris House. One of our inmates claims to own something like it."

"That'll be the man we found near it," said the landlord with some satisfaction. "It was the middle of the night and Clara and I were asleep upstairs when we heard this dreadful noise. I've never heard anything like it in all my born days and I hope never to hear its like again. Clara grabbed a hold of me. 'Matthew' she says, 'the Devil has come for us!'. Clara had been worrying about the devil. We maybe don't go to Church as often as we should. I'm not saying as that's a good thing but I'm a busy man. The Lord may have said Sunday was a day of rest but it's a luxury I can't afford with a family to raise and all," He paused watching for Frank's reaction.

In normal circumstances Frank, who took churchgoing seriously, would have had an argument with him at that point. But he wanted to hear the story of the box so a deep streak of pragmatism kept him quiet and he merely shrugged and nodded.

"Well, as I said, Clara had been worrying about the Devil because the vicar had been round that evening, having a drink and dropping a few hints about seeing us in Church that Sunday coming. Which, I tell you, after the fright we had we attended and I feel the better for it, knowing I've done my dues by God and that he'll be watching over us while that devil box is here. Anyway, where was I? Oh yes, so we was woken up by this terrible noise and Clara was on her knees praying convinced that the Day of Judgment was upon us but I thought I should check and see in case someone was doing some mischief downstairs, trying to get into the beer cellar or some such. So I slipped downstairs, quietly as I could, and I grabbed this here club I keep behind the bar in case of trouble."

He showed Frank a large hefty club which he hoisted out from below the bar on which he was leaning. He placed it between them on the bar like an item of evidence in a court hearing.

“Well, there was no one down here or in the cellar, but I could hear a voice outside. Just the one, talking to itself, though I couldn’t hear the words. And then, suddenly, I heard a scream, a grown man scream I tell you, and it sent shivers down my spine I don’t mind admitting. It was outside the main door there,” he pointed at the door Frank had entered by, “but I couldn’t hear any other sound, so after a moment I decided I should check outside just in case someone was in trouble.”

He picked up the club, swinging it over one shoulder and glancing from side to side to demonstrate how he went outside. “Well,” he said, “it was a foggy night and at first I couldn’t see anyone but then I heard this voice talking and I looked down to find this man lying on the ground.” He swung the club down and leant on it to illustrate his sense of anti-climax.

“He were an odd one though. He had rolling eyes and was babbling all sorts of nonsense. His sentences made sense, if you follow my meaning, but none of the words did. But it seemed he felt there was some urgency; that someone or something were threatening an invasion and we had to stop it. But we couldn’t get any more sense out of him than that. I say we because by that time some of the neighbours had come out as well and we’d brought him in here and given him a brandy,” the landlord looked slightly aggrieved, “on the house,” he added with emphasis. “He looked like a gentleman, you see. He was nicely dressed and sometimes he’d give out these orders and you know, if I’d known what they’d meant, I’d have jumped to quick as quick. He had that sort of air about him. It was odd and no mistake. And sometimes, when he wasn’t giving orders, he’d look you in the eye and make some suggestion. You’d feel like he was taking you in a confidence and that it was a clever and sensible suggestion, except that it was nonsense of course.”

The landlord shook his head, “Well in the end we gave him a dose of laudanum and hoped he’d be better in the morning. But he wasn’t much better to tell the truth and he’d begun running a fever. He said he was a doctor but that was the most we could get out of him, so in the end we took him up to Parris House, reckoned your lot would know what to do with him,” the landlord sighed. “So, that’s the story here. What’s been happening up your end?”

Frank was not by nature a story teller but he knew the landlord was expecting an addition to the story, which he could tell to his customers. Frank outlined briefly the story of Mr. Jones’, or maybe it should have been Dr. Jones’, escape.

“So, he’s a Jones, is he?” asked the landlord.

“Reckon he must be,” said Frank. “Though I suppose they might just have given him that name, if he still couldn’t remember his own. They couldn’t just call him Doctor, could they?”

The landlord thought for a minute over his beer, “I don’t know. He had an air you know, and ‘the mysterious Doctor’ sums it up more than just ‘Dr. Jones’, don’t you think.”

Frank thought it was nonsense but didn’t say so. He let the landlord have the story his way. “Anyway I’m here to collect the Doctor’s box,” he said.

“And heartily glad I am to see such an unnatural thing go,” responded the landlord somewhat wistfully. Frank suspected he’d rather enjoyed the notoriety and extra custom it had caused.

“I’ll send a cart down from Parris House to collect it,” said Frank.

He left some more money as a tip and headed back. He hoped that returning the box would make the Doctor calmer but privately he had his doubts. It was only then he realised that he was now thinking of Mr. Jones as the Doctor. Frank shook his head. He wasn’t about to agree with some of the landlord’s more fanciful notions but the name did have a certain rightness about it that he couldn’t shake off.

Miss Young was waiting for him by the gate when he returned. She looked pale and there were bags under her eyes.

“Hello, Miss. Young,” he said as he locked the gate behind him. He took off his hat.

“Where have you been?” she asked curiously.

“Went to find a box for the, for that Mr. Jones. Seems he lost it. I’m going to arrange for a cart to bring it up here for him.” They walked up towards the house. “How are you feeling?” he asked.

“My dreams are worsening,” she admitted looking down. “I don’t know why, but my nights are filled with terror. I feel as though I’m being chased by something terrible and although I know the way to safety, somehow I have become lost,” she shuddered in the sunlight.

“Have you told the doctors about this?” asked Frank.

She glanced nervously behind her and Frank saw Dr. Harding, sitting on one of the ornamental benches. He was staring directly at Miss Young, his hand resting

on his knees, clenching and unclenching in time to the swinging of his legs.

“He’s been following me,” whispered Miss Young. “I found him outside my room this morning, sitting in the chair across the hall, watching.”

“I’ll walk you back up to the house,” said Frank.

They walked side by side up the drive, Frank keeping between Miss Young and Dr. Harding. But as they passed him he stood up. He took one step towards them planting a hand squarely in Frank’s chest pushing him back. Frank gasped, winded. Confused, he looked up and saw a huge bird staring down at him, then it was gone and Dr. Harding was holding Miss Young. He had his head pressed up against hers and was grasping her round the chest and waist. Miss Young had frozen rigid, her eyes glazed, too scared even to scream. Frank scrambled forward to meet an arm in a second swipe. The hand was extended this time and Frank felt a raking pain in his chest. He fell backwards blood oozing out of five gashes.

Frank saw a blur of movement. Someone threw something that looked like a small weighted net over Dr. Harding. He screeched, letting go of Kate and scrabbling at the thing over his head. Then he turned and began blindly running across the lawn, batting at his head until he tripped and fell over shrub. Then he lay on the ground still screeching.

Several of the doctors came running out of the house. They stood around the man but none of them seemed prepared to approach him. His view was obscured as he saw Mr. Jones, the Doctor, bending over him. He began tearing strips off Frank’s shirt and binding his chest with them.

“You were lucky,” he said, “it barely scratched you.”

“I’m alright,” said Frank crossly, struggling to sit up. The Doctor stepped back. Miss Young lay collapsed on the ground. The Doctor stirred her with his foot.

“Fainted,” he said contemptuously.

“Don’t treat her like that!” said Frank, angry and scared. He glanced across the lawn. One of the orderlies who had been at Parris House almost as long as Frank, approached Dr. Harding and removed the net from his head. The man remained on the ground, curled into a foetal position. Frank struggled over to Miss Young and tried to lift her upright, but he stopped as pain seared across his chest.

“No heavy lifting for you, for a while,” said the Doctor. He stood looking down at them. his hands thrust in his pockets.

“Help me then!” said Frank crossly.

The Doctor looked at him a moment more and then bent down. Frank noticed lines of strain around the Doctor’s mouth and eyes and realised that the he too looked tired and drawn, though he hid it better than did Miss Young. The Doctor

picked up Miss Young and carried her to the bench. She was already stirring and her eyes opened as he set her down. The Doctor stood back gazing across the lawn to where the small group was breaking up. Two of the doctors were helping Dr. Harding towards the house.

“You realise that they are causing the dreams,” he said, watching the party.

“You don’t mean that,” said Frank crossly because he was unsettled. “An educated man like you shouldn’t go making up tales like that to frighten Miss Young with.”

“Oh Doctor!” whispered Miss Young, “Do you really think so?”

“Why do you call him Doctor?” asked Frank angrily. “He doesn’t know what he’s talking about. He’s just trying to frighten you.”

“I asked her to call me that,” said the Doctor grimly, “and I am not trying to frighten her. Terrible things are afoot in this place. These so-called doctors are not what they seem. They are engendering the nightmares and running foul experiments of some kind. Even you must realise that! How do you think you got those?” He gestured to the scratches across Frank’s chest.

“There’s something wrong with Dr. Harding, all right!” said Frank. “I’m going to have a word with Dr. Gordon about it but one rotten apple doesn’t mean the whole lot are bad. Talk like this will frighten everyone and it does no one any good. You have no proof of any of this.”

“Don’t I?” asked the Doctor. He drew his hand out of his pocket to reveal a small magnet on a string. He held it up and it swung in the breeze.

“Your point being,” said Frank.

“That way is north,” said the Doctor, and pointed at a right-angle to the alignment of the magnet.

“It can’t be!” said Frank, looking in surprise at the direction he pointed. “You must have got something wrong.”

“I haven’t,” said the Doctor. “There is a very strange magnetic field in this House and grounds. I’d say it was being created by magnetic monopoles, an extremely rare particle. I’ve been tracking them. They must have several here, which is amazing. They are very hard to come by.” He paused. “Cartorians are very susceptible to the magnetic field of their planet,” the Doctor looked at Frank. “I told you that and now I find that the magnetic field in these grounds is being artificially maintained which would take up immense resources for whoever is doing it. I’ve also discovered that a small net with magnets attached to it seriously discomforts them. How do you think I got rid of Dr. Harding? Think on it!”

He put the magnet back into his pocket and walked away. After a short distance Frank thought he staggered and stumbled, but he couldn’t be sure.

“He’s a very strange man,” said Miss Young. “You know he’s a charity case, no one is paying for his keep.”

“They should send him to a proper Bedlam then,” replied Frank. “He shouldn’t scare you like that about the doctors.”

Dr. Gordon stood by as Frank and the hired man heaved the blue box off the cart. They stood panting slightly while Dr. Gordon, as Frank had done when he first found it, walked round it. He paused at last before the two doors reached up and pulled one. It refused to open. Dr. Gordon stared at the box and frowned.

“What do you reckon it is?” asked Frank. “It says police on it, perhaps we should contact them about the Doctor. I mean Mr. Jones?”

Dr. Gordon shook his head. “We contacted them when he first came in. I would have expected them to have said then if they knew him. No I don’t think so. Perhaps the name is there to prevent the inquisitive from tampering.”

“What are you going to do with it now?” asked Frank.

“We found a key among the Doctor’s possessions when he first arrived,” said Dr. Gordon, “I have it in my office. I think we shall open this box and see what’s inside it. Then, if it seems safe, we will let the Doctor have access to it.”

Frank wondered when Dr. Gordon had started referring to Mr. Jones as the Doctor.

“I should apologise for the behaviour of Dr. Harding, earlier today,” said Dr. Gordon. “It seems he had been under more strain than I had realised. I hope you were not badly hurt.”

“Just a few scratches Sir. He must have long fingernails.”

“Indeed. He had been letting himself go somewhat. We have him under lock and key for the time being until we can effect a cure. There shouldn’t be any more trouble.”

“I’m relieved to hear it sir. What was it the Doctor did to him? He certainly intervened at the right moment.”

“Hmmm, yes, the Doctor certainly intervened and I’m sure we’re all grateful to him,” Dr. Gordon sounded far from grateful. “However I have decided that in the light of his continuing aggressive behaviour he will be confined to the house from now on. His actions may have been for the best on that occasion but I think that was more by accident than anything else.”

After Dr. Gordon had gone Frank dismissed the hired man and then turned back to the blue box. He felt a hand fall on his shoulder.

“Good man.” It was the Doctor. He stood there one hand resting on his waistcoat pocket, the other on Frank’s shoulder. He stared at the blue box his face calm but otherwise unreadable. Then he walked up to the box and stroked it with one hand, closing his eyes as if drawing strength from the contact.

Suddenly he stepped back and took off his shoe. He up-ended it as if expecting something to fall out. But nothing did. He frowned and took off his other shoe repeating the behaviour. Then he stood still again gazing at the blue box, a shoe in either hand. His face was once more expressionless, but Frank noticed that his breathing had increased pace.

“Dr. Gordon says he found a key among your possessions when you first arrived,” said Frank.

Frank’s feet left the ground. He realised the Doctor had lifted him up and was surprised at the strength of the man. “Where is it?” asked the Doctor and his voice had a fierce edge to it.

“Put me down!” demanded Frank.

They remained as they were for a moment and then the Doctor put him down, but did not release his grip. “You don’t understand,” he whispered. “I can not continue like this much longer. No one here can. Do you really think you could have faced me down as you did just now if I were at full strength?”

Frank seriously considered hitting him for a moment. The Doctor did not strike him like many of the patients. He might have acted strangely but Frank felt that there was great purpose and intelligence in his actions and he should not be excused improprieties in the way many of the others were. However he contented himself with seizing the Doctor’s wrists and detaching him from his shirt. They remained like that a while longer both gazing firmly into each others eyes, their faces impassive.

The Doctor broke first shielding his eyes with the back of his hand. “What can I do to convince you of what is happening here?” he asked. “You saw how that Harding man behaved, you can’t believe that was normal.”

“I don’t rightly know, sir. Dr. Gordon says he broke under the strain. You have to admit that is more likely than he’s a bird intent on driving you mad through nightmares.”

The heavily lidded eyes blinked slowly once and then abruptly the Doctor was gone, striding back down the corridor. Frank let him go.

Kate was sitting in her room waiting for treatment to begin. She sat on the bed with her hands folded in her lap. She was afraid. She knew that dreaming therapy, as Dr. Gordon called it, was to come and she feared the dreams. The door handle turned. She shrank back onto the bed. Dr. Harding came in and she drew back even further away from him.

“Peace,” he whispered, “I want peace!”

He grabbed her head between his hands and she cried out quietly, squirming in his grasp. She felt his nails digging into her head as he loomed closer. His staring eyes filling her vision. Suddenly the Doctor was in the room, pulling him off her. There was a scuffle and a muffled thumping sound. Then the Doctor was helping her off the bed and out of the room.

“Where shall we go?”

“I can’t get out of the house but they’ll let you out while its still light,” he said in a low voice, hurrying her to the top of the stairs.

Her head hurt where Dr. Harding had gripped it. She felt her face and her hand came away red with blood. “I’m bleeding,” she whispered faintly.

“No time for that! you’ll live. Don’t even think about fainting,” the Doctor gave her a shake and she gulped back a scream.

“Now,” he said, “go out and find Frank. I saw him in the garden through the window only moments ago down by the shed. Tell him what happened. Tell him to hide you and come and help me. Have you got that?” he shook her again.

She nodded mutely.

“Doctor! Doctor! time for your treatment!” came a Dr. Gordon’s voice.

A look of fear that Kate understood only too well crossed his face. “Quickly!” he said.

She turned and fled down the stairs.

He was being dissected alive. Unable to move, he was pinned down but conscious, desperately conscious. The surgeons reached into him and pulled out his organs, examining each one with curiosity. He roared with pain and struggled to move. He watched, soon they would reach something vital. With greedy hands the surgeons cast aside the organ they had been examining and reached in seeking something else. Fingers clutching under his ribcage for the heart. Interesting, he was correct

that there is link with the box - the question is can we learn anything from it? Can the link help us? He roared once more in pain and agony as hands closed around his hearts and tugged, pain shooting through every part of his body. I'd leave that if I was you. It must be something vital. The hand let go and scrabbled around for something else. There was a wrench somewhere in the back of his throat and something came away. He wept with pain and watched as the surgeon examined the circuit board. His lips managed to form words "Temporal steerage". He forced his eyes open. This had to be another dream, though it was different in quality to the others. He gasped. Before him stood the TARDIS, her doors open and a flock of large bird-like creatures all over her and within her. Talons and beaks pulling apart wires and circuitry, one of them holding in its claws the temporal steerage circuit. He tried to lurch off the bed, but he had been strapped down. He saw between them a large screen still projecting his last dream image the surgeon in the same pose as the bird, holding the circuit. Another memory cube storing the readings. The Doctor screamed.

### **Part III**

Frank found Kate hiding in the small shed he used for tools. She was shivering with fear and weeping. There was blood in her hair and on her hands.

"Miss Young, Kate, what are you doing in here?"

"Dr. Harding!" she cried, "he attacked me again."

"Oh, Kate."

She wiped her face with her hands, smearing blood across her mouth. "The Doctor rescued me. He said to get you for help. You have to go to him Frank, please say you will go to him."

Frank hesitated, unsure of what to do. He didn't entirely trust the Doctor. But there was clearly something strange happening, and more than anything, he knew Kate could not spend the night here in the light summer dress she had been wearing.

"I'll fetch some blankets," he said. He walked unhappily back to the house.

Frank heard the scream as he entered the hallway and ran in the direction of the sound. He met Dr. Smith coming the other way with the Doctor in his arms. The

Doctor was sweating and seemed to be allowing himself to be meekly taken along.

“Mr. Hardcourt, thank goodness,” said Dr. Smith nervously and he licked his lips. “The Doctor here as had a shock while in treatment. Can you take him back to his room and lock him in?” He passed the Doctor over who hung like a dead weight in Frank’s arms. “We’ve lost Miss Young and she’s due for treatment. Last time she was hiding in the cellar. It’s most unfortunate.” Frank felt the Doctor’s grip tighten on his arm. He glanced at him and the Doctor minutely shook his head with a warning look in his eyes.

“I’ll think you’ll find her hiding in the shed in the grounds,” said Dr. Gordon, coming up behind Dr. Smith. The Doctor sagged in Frank’s arms. “You shouldn’t talk in your sleep so much Doctor, however it is fortunate for us. It was very irresponsible of you frightening the poor girl out into the grounds. Her constitution is not strong. She could easily catch consumption if she remains in the grounds all night.”

“I don’t sleep,” said the Doctor slowly. “What are you doing to me that makes me sleep?”

Dr. Gordon clucked and shook his head, nodded to Frank and he and Dr. Smith headed for the entrance hall.

Frank helped the Doctor to a chair where he sat with his head in his hands. “I’m getting careless,” he said. “Do you realise how much it is costing me to stay sane under this onslaught?” He leant back, resting his head against the wall behind the chair, he closed his eyes and took a deep breath. “You have to help me recover the TARDIS key. It’ll be in Dr. Gordon’s office.”

“I spoke to the people who found you in Southwark,” said Frank. “I don’t think you’ve ever been sane.”

“That was post-regenerative trauma. I’d have been completely recovered by now were it not for this place. I *am* recovering, but it is taking its toll. The scars will never properly heal now and I’m wearing out this body in the attempt.” He tapped his chest gently and then his arm fell limp at his side.

There came a commotion from the hallway below. Looking down, Frank saw Dr. Smith carrying Miss Young up the stairway, skirts drooping down and brushing the stair carpet. She seemed to be unconscious.

“Show me to the office and I may just be able to help her.” The Doctor hadn’t moved, he still sat in the chair, gazing at Frank. “You must know she is getting worse. Her mind was not strong in the first place. It must be close to breaking point by now.” He leaned forward, staring Frank in the eye, all his strength and will going into the effort. “You have to realise all is not as it seems. How do you account for Dr. Harding? You can accept Gordon’s explanation that he is stressed

or you can help me find the true cause of his malaise, and Kate's and mine. I," he hesitated, "I can not do this alone, Frank. It all depends on you."

Frank debated this internally. With his everyday mind he knew he could explain away all the oddness. But put all the oddness together and you needed too many strange random occurrences and coincidences to make it all fit. Small incidents he had hardly registered but which had troubled him. Patients, or guests if you preferred, accosting him in the garden always with the same question of late, "which is the way?"; Dr. Harding; the Doctor himself and his box; the strange behaviour of the compasses. None of it more than an oddity on its own, but together... "All right then," he said, "I will help you. But, I'm not believing you implicitly." He started to walk down the corridor towards Dr. Gordon's room.

The Doctor didn't move. He just kept his eyes fixed on Frank. "You'll have to help me, I don't think I can walk."

Frank helped the Doctor to Dr. Gordon's office. The office door was locked. Frank shrugged. The Doctor slipped to his knees and peered into the keyhole. He glanced up at Frank, "Belt buckle."

"What?"

"Belt buckle. Give me your belt buckle. I need to pick the lock."

Frank looked doubtful.

The Doctor reached across and pulled a crystal cube out of Frank's jacket inner pocket.

"How did that get there?"

"I put it there. It's a record of my thoughts while in the dream."

Frank snorted, unimpressed, "it's Dr. Smith's ornament. You stole it."

"Watch!" said the Doctor, "and learn."

Out of his pockets he pulled various oddments of wires, cutlery and strange pieces of some substance with which Frank was not familiar. It had a sort of uniformity in colour and texture that seemed unnatural. Into it were embedded pieces of what was metal in lines and dots.

"What's that?" asked Frank.

"I found it in the treatment room."

"Oh really," Frank contrived to sound less impressed.

"Tell me you've seen anything like it before and I'll call you a liar."

The Doctor began rapidly assembling the oddments together and then he placed the crystal in the centre and Frank saw...

Hedges and trees rushed past. There was the sound of someone gasping for breath. Lines crackled and jumped across the screen. It was like looking out of someone's eyes, far more realistic than a painting. Frank watched entranced as whoever it was turned under an archway, reaching a weeping willow and a stream. Then there was a sudden fizzle, the picture broke up and steam rose from the Doctor's device.

"That," said the Doctor forcefully, leaning against the door of the office, "that is the dream I have had every time they have taken me in for treatment and I'll wager you anything you like every other patient here has had the same. You have to help us."

Frank knew he could be sacked for breaking into the office. But what the Doctor had just shown him was so beyond his experience that he knew he was unable to judge the rights and wrongs of the situation. He would have to rely on someone else to guide him. All he had was the Doctor who, for all his idiosyncratic behaviour, was clearly an educated man. He was Frank's best hope to find out whether terrible things really were happening within the House. Reluctantly Frank unthreaded his belt.

"Thank you," said the Doctor and he began to fiddle with the lock.

Moments later the door clicked open. The Doctor stood, propping himself up against the door jam. "Simplistic mechanism," he said, handing the belt back to Frank. He staggered into the room, leaning on the desk and sinking into Dr. Gordon's chair. He began to rifle through the drawers looking for his key. Frank watched him from the door listening for movement in the corridor. The Doctor stopped looking through the drawers and stared intently at the large globe in front of him. He spun it thoughtfully, "You see this here?"

"It's a globe."

"Is it now? Point out Great Britain to me."

Frank moved into the room, remembering the rudimentary geography he'd been taught as a child. He spun the globe, but he couldn't find the country. In fact he found he couldn't recognise any of the land masses. He glanced at the Doctor.

"It's Cartor," he said. "I told you they were Cartorians."

"I've not seen any birds," said Frank stubbornly.

"You don't lie well, you know," said the Doctor. "But it's true. They're projecting some sort of mental image. It must be the same mechanism they use to create the dreams only more limited. Just enough to make those nearby think they look normal." He spun the globe again. "What's this?" he asked, tapping the pivot.

Frank looked. A word had been crossed out and another replaced it. Frank didn't recognise the word or even the alphabet. He shrugged.

"Do you ever do think at all?" asked the Doctor crossly. "Look, they've crossed out North and substituted South!"

"Have they now?" said Frank.

"Yes, can't you see?" the Doctor looked at him again. "No I don't suppose you can. Idiot humans!" he muttered. Then he slapped his forehead. "Of course! the poles have reversed. That's why they've changed the globes."

"The poles have reversed?"

"Yes, it must have caused chaos. The Cartorians will have lost all sense of direction..." he tailed off. "They would have known where they were trying to go, but would have felt lost and unable to get there."

"Like the dreams?" said Frank.

"Like the dreams."

"So why would they be giving the dreams to people here?" asked Frank.

"Yours is a species which is not so dependent upon magnetism to find it's way. It's incredible, they must have found a way to record and project thoughts at a sufficiently abstract level to cross the species barrier. I imagining they are trying to learn how you cope."

"But it hasn't worked, has it?" said Frank, "If what you say is true, and I'm not saying it is, everyone here is confused anyway so they can't get a proper reading. Can they?"

The Doctor looked at him, the lids once more drooping across his eyes.

"No."

There was a scream from along the corridor. "Kate!" cried Frank.

Kate was standing in the window. She was framed against the moon, still wearing her cream summer dress, although the bustle seemed to have slipped away leaving it hanging in awkward folds down behind her. Frank charged into the room and, perhaps because he was half expecting it, he looked towards the doctors and he saw birds: huge taloned and beaked birds. Their talons were long and flexible; flexible as hands. One held a notebook and pencil, pouring over the readings on some machine making notes. Another flapped near Kate, clearly not brave enough to approach close to. Frank blinked and the room was back to normal. Dr. Gordon

was taking notes while Dr. Smith hovered near Kate, alternately beseeching and threatening her in an attempt to get her out of the window.

Kate screamed and swayed in the opening.

“She’s seen through the illusion,” said the Doctor’s voice in his ear. “She no longer knows what should be normal, so she’s seeing things as they are. Her mental defenses have gone.”

Frank looked at the scene. Kate was staring at Dr. Smith as he twittered around her. The other new doctors stood nervously clustered around the Doctor’s blue box, clearly uncertain what to do. The door of the box was open and wires poured out of it. A heap of machinery, strange to the eye, was cluttered around its base. Dr. Smith moved towards Kate and she cowered from him, screaming once more. Hurriedly Dr. Smith retreated.

“Kate, Miss Young,” said Frank approaching towards her.

“Frank?” she asked. “Is that really you?”

“Yes, it’s really me,” he said. He walked carefully towards the window, as he would towards a frightened animal.

She glanced around the room. “Can you see the birds?” she whispered. Frank considered that. He glanced towards Dr. Gordon. He nodded, a look of concern on his face.

“Best tell her the truth,” said the Doctor behind him.

“I saw them, for a moment,” said Frank.

“I’m not mad then?”

“No Kate, you’re not mad, just nervous.”

“I’ve been having dreams. They’re coming for me. The terror, it’s them, it’s coming for me. I have to find somewhere safe.” She glanced out of the window.

“You don’t need to find anywhere safe,” said Frank, “I’m here. I’ll look after you.”

She looked at him uncertainly. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the Doctor pulling Dr. Smith back.

“They’re chasing me,” she whispered.

“No they’re not,” he said. “They’re lost too. They’re just scared.”

“Scared?”

Frank took a step closer to her, “Come down Kate. There’ll be no more dreams, I promise you.”

She looked at him uncertainly. He held out his hand. Cautiously she took hold of it. She more fell than stepped into his arms. He lifted her down and placed her feet on the floor. He began to lead her from the room. The Doctor lounged in the

doorway, though Frank suspected the lounging covered real weakness. But there was a sardonic and detached expression on his face.

“Good job, Mr. Hardcourt, good job,” said Dr. Gordon. He walked towards them. Frank felt Kate stiffen in his arms. “I’ll take over from here,” and Dr. Gordon reached towards Kate.

She screamed once more and Frank felt her slip from his grasp.

“Kate!” he cried as she ran once more towards the window. He grabbed for her and his hands closed around the trailing skirts. He felt her weight on them and he gripped and pulled. Then there was a tearing sound and another scream and the weight on his arms suddenly vanished. He was left with a strip of torn cloth in his hands and the gaping window before him.

The doctors hurried out of the room, all but Dr. Gordon who remained behind standing eye to eye with the Doctor in the doorway.

“Someone let Dr. Harding out of his room.”

The Doctor stared blankly back at him, “that was careless of them.”

“Yes,” Dr. Gordon brushed some dust of his shoulders, “whoever it was should be feeling very guilty right now. Miss Young was scared badly by his presence. So much so that she dreamed she was being chased by him.”

Dr. Gordon flicked a switch on the apparatus beside the door and the image flickered into life. Someone running down avenues and pathways. Every time the person looked over their shoulder it was clear who pursued them. Dr. Harding grown to monstrous size, his hand elongated into claws, his face set into a grin bore down on the unseen victim.

“Think on that, Doctor,” said Dr. Gordon and then left the room, brushing close to the Doctor’s motionless form, still propped up in the doorway.

Frank had remained in the window watching the doctors below fussing round the body, the piece of cream coloured cloth still gripped in his hands. Slowly he became aware of movement behind him. The Doctor was piling the clutter of mechanical equipment back into his blue box.

“What are you doing?”

The Doctor leant against the box a moment, “Dr. Gordon bumped against me as he left.” He produced a key from his pocket and displayed it in the moonlight.

“You picked his pocket!”

“It’s my key,” said the Doctor equanimically. He pushed the last tangle of wires inside the doors. “Come with me, Mr. Hardcourt.”

“Come with you where?”

“Anywhere; away from this place at any rate.”

“What, and leave these people behind?”

The Doctor regarded him carefully. “Which people would that be? You hardly know any of the inmates now Kate Young is dead and you can’t mean the Cartorians.”

Frank looked out of the window at the doctors flapping agitatedly around the body.

“I don’t think they meant any harm. If the dreams are what they were feeling then,” he paused, “then they need help too.”

“Stay here then, for all the good it will do,” the Doctor’s voice took on a sneer.

“Did you let out Dr. Harding?”

The Doctor had the grace not to look him in the eye, “She was near breaking anyway. I doubt she would have made it through this session whatever the circumstances. I know more of human psychology than your Dr. Gordon. I wouldn’t have done it if I didn’t think it imperative to get her out of the house.”

“I can’t pretend to like you much Doctor, but then you’re above the likes or dislikes of people such as myself. But I’ll need help to sort this out. I don’t want any more deaths.”

“You have more resourcefulness than you think,” said the Doctor shortly. “I owe them, you and this miserable planet nothing. Nothing at all. Save them yourself.”

Frank heard the door of the box slam shut. There was a noise. A noise such as the landlord in Southwark had probably heard. A straining pulsing sound and the blue box faded away before his eyes. Leaving him alone in the room with his strip of torn cloth.

The Doctor rested on a six sided console. His arms braced, holding the weight of his body. Lights flashed and blinked. The central column rose and fell. He straightened up, the strain showing visibly on his face for the first time in days. He walked carefully to an armchair and sat, eyes closed. Around him the TARDIS hummed. Scattered pieces of equipment poured across the floor.

“It’s not my fault,” he said quietly. “I am too tired. I had to leave.”

No one answered him.

## Epilogue

The mourners stood around the grave. The day was grey and drizzling. There was a damp haze in the autumn air insufficient to penetrate the thick wool stuff of the mourners coats but misting their faces. Their faces were all solemn, a man and woman standing together a discreet distance from the vicar. Opposite the couple stood Dr. Gordon. He was wearing somber brown with a black armband and his hands kept moving clasped together within his black leather gloves, writhing over and over each other.

“I am the resurrection and the life, sayeth the Lord, and he that believeth in me though he be dead yet shall he live and he that liveth and believeth will never die”.

As the mourners left the graveside their muttered conversations reached the two gravediggers waiting respectfully on the sidelines.

“My thanks for agreeing to officiate,” the woman was saying to the vicar, “in such difficult circumstances.”

“By which she means the girl shouldn’t have been buried on sanctified grounds at all.”

“Don’t speak of what you don’t know,” said Frank fiercely.

His companion lapsed into silence.

“It was a tragic accident.” Dr. Gordon had remained behind the departing vicar. “You two have work to do. I suggest you do it rather than engaging in idle gossip.”

Frank looked him in the eye. “I think I should have a word, Dr. Gordon.”

“This is hardly the place.”

“This is exactly the place. Run along!” Frank commanded his companion. The young man looked at the set of his face, then left.

“What is this?” asked Dr. Gordon.

“You need someone to show you how to find your way without magnetism. Is that right?”

Dr. Gordon’s eyes narrowed for a moment and then he said, “Suppose it is.”

“But everyone up there is weak in the head, right? So none of them can help you.”

“I think you’ll find that your race has a very catholic definition of ‘weak in the head’.”

“Still,” persisted Frank, “none of them have lived outside the walls of Parris House, and not one of them could find their way out of a paper bag with the end open.”

Dr. Gordon tilted his head to one side, but said nothing.

“So,” persisted Frank, “I reckon, to solve your problem, you need a volunteer. Someone who isn’t too timid or too afraid or too confused to stand up for himself.”

Dr. Gordon looked at Frank interestedly, “And why do you volunteer?”

Frank looked down at the plain surface of Kate’s coffin. “Because there have been too many deaths.”