

# DOCTOR WHO



## Attack of the Snowmen

By Mark B. Oliver

## Part One

'Lost satellite reception...' Geoff Bluth glared at the GPS device on the dashboard of his car. It was late, he had been driving for hours and all he wanted was to find his hotel, have a nice hot shower and collapse into bed. And now it was snowing. Terrific. He pulled over to the side of the road and called the hotel.

'Hello, hi! I'm checking in tonight but I'm lost and wanted to make sure you didn't give away my room. Bluth. B-L-U-T-H. That's great, thanks. I can't be too far. I've been driving around town for ages. This snow is really picking up.' Geoff caught sight of a man crossing the street. He wore a grey pin-striped suit and bowler hat, and despite the snow, he wasn't using the umbrella he was carrying.

'Miss, would you mind hanging on? I'm just going to ask a chap on the street where I am. Won't be a tick.' Geoff left his mobile on the driver's seat as he opened the car door. He called out to the man, who was beginning to disappear from view.

'Sir! Sir, could you help me?' Leaving the car door open, Geoff hurried after the suited figure who didn't respond to his calls. 'I'm lost!' Geoff has almost reached him and gently tapped him on the shoulder. The stranger turned, raising his bowler hat by way of greeting as he did so. Geoff's eyes widened in horror at what he saw, a scream catching at the back of his throat.

A young woman's voice drifted across the cold night air.

'Hello, Mr. Bluth, are you there? Hello?' Her only reply was the efficient voice of the GPS.

'Lost satellite reception, lost satellite reception...'

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Ten days later, Louie Rollins was navigating his way across town on his snowboard. Well not *his* snowboard, it belonged to Mrs. Wharbuoy's daughter but she was away at university, so his neighbour had lent it to him. It had been a lifesaver. With the roads and pathways choked with snow it was impossible to get around on foot, or on his bike. And if there was one thing Louie disliked it was being cooped up indoors, especially as there was no power for the telly or his computer games.

As he approached his cousin Millie's house, he decided to zigzag around the numerous snowmen that stood on the field at the back of her house. They were everywhere - a readymade slalom course.

He zipped between the snowmen and was on the final approach to Millie's backdoor when he clipped the last one and started to spin out of control. Although the back gate was open he was going too fast. Way too fast. Panicking, he tried to correct his balance and regain control, but it was too late, he was going to smash into the house, and at this speed...

At the last possible second the door opened and Louie managed to steer himself inside. The snowboard slid from under him and he crashed into the kitchen in a heap. Sheepish but unhurt, Louie looked up at his Aunt Rachael who was standing over him, open mouthed, her hand still on the door handle.

'Sorry, Aunt. I haven't quite mastered it yet.'

'So I can see,' she replied as she tried, unsuccessfully, to stifle a laugh.

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As the TARDIS span through the space-time vortex, the Doctor was dancing around the console, pulling levers and twiddling knobs seemingly at random; he was excited. Now that he was travelling on his own he had decided to indulge himself. Next stop the Salcreyan Nebula, and more precisely the moment of its birth.

'The greatest firework display in history!' the Doctor declared triumphantly, as he skidded to a halt looking pleased with himself. 'I have no idea why I've never been before.'

Without warning the TARDIS lurched violently, throwing the Doctor first against the console before sending him spinning to the floor. As he scrambled to his feet, the TARDIS steadied herself and the engines roared as the ship began to materialize.

'Where have you brought me, old girl?' the Doctor asked. 'Certainly not the nebula...' The engines died down, until all that could be heard was the steady background hum of the TARDIS. He adjusted a dial, slowly drumming his fingers on the adjacent surface, as he took note of the readings. His brow furrowed, the Doctor made for the door.

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'Hello, Mills!' Louie said as his cousin came into the kitchen having heard the commotion from her bedroom. 'Snowball fight?'

'It looks as though you've been in one already,' Millie giggled as she looked at his snow-covered coat. 'Why didn't you just call?' she asked, before catching herself. 'Ugh, I forgot for a second, our mobiles are dead and no regular telephone lines either.'

'Is there any news, Mum? Do we know when we might have power back?'

'Sorry, luv, the morning news bulletin was just the same as yesterday. Power is out across Europe, and with the roads blocked, power lines down and petrol stations not working, it's not going to get better anytime soon.' She patted her old radio appreciatively. 'Without this we wouldn't have a clue what's going on.'

'Mum listens to the news on the car radio,' chimed in Louie. All three fell into silence, lost in their own thoughts for a second, when suddenly Little Mix's *Cannonball*, blared through the kitchen.

'Oh, my giddy aunt,' murmured Rachael as they all jumped at the sudden noise. 'Why can't you have a normal ringtone Millie?' But neither her daughter nor nephew answered as they simply stared at the ringing phone on the countertop.

'It's ringing, Mum!'

'I can hear that.'

'But the battery is dead and there's no reception...' As her daughter's words sank in, Millie tentatively reached for the phone. She hesitated for a second before snatching it up.

'Hello?' Without another word she ran across the room and flung the backdoor open. 'Doctor!' And there, stood in the doorway, was their weird, mad, extraordinary and utterly brilliant friend the Doctor. Stepping inside he scooped up Millie and Louie in a big bear hug.

'You've grown,' he said as he put them down, and much to her surprise air-kissed Rachael on both cheeks.

'So've you,' replied Louie, delighted to see his eccentric friend.

'Well it has been over two hundred years,' he responded. 'I don't know, I think I look rather fetching,' he said as he adjusted his bow tie.

'Two hundred...' Millie's voice trailed off. 'Never mind.'

'Now what am I doing here?' asked the Doctor.

'That's rhetorical right?' cut in Louie.

'What? Rhetorical?' said the Doctor. 'Ohh, I like that word. Rhetorical. Ret-oracle. Rhet-or-icle,' as he tried out different pronunciations and inflexions. 'Hmm, no, not a bit of it. What *am* I doing here? I was on my way to witness the creation of the Salcreyan Nebula when I was dragged off-course.'

'What could do that to the TARDIS?' asked Mille.

'Something powerful and *alien*.'

'That's not likely though is it? More aliens in our town? The most exciting thing that happens here usually is the annual fun-run.'

'Fun-run?,' asked the Doctor quizzically. 'Isn't that an oxymoron? Oh I like that word too...' Louie cut the Doctor off, before he started dissecting another word.

'But if there is an alien, how do we find it?'

'I'm not sure...' The Doctor's face darkened. 'I checked for signs of alien energy signatures, and any anomalous readings, when I landed, but nothing. Zip. Nada. Have you noticed anything unusual since the start of the storm?' the Doctor asked his friends.

'A businessman was reported missing the night the storm started,' Rachael told him, 'his car found abandoned near the centre of town, but that's likely to just be coincidence.'

'Possibly,' mused the Doctor. 'You two?' They both shook their heads, but the Doctor noticed Millie hesitate slightly.

'What is it Millie? Anything might help.'

'It was something Louie said just before you arrived Doctor. He wanted us to go for a snowball fight.'

'So?' inquired her cousin.

'It hasn't snowed in days, and it's been above freezing during the day, so surely the snowflakes should melt and then freeze together overnight. But the snow is still light and fluffy.'

A smile slowly spread over the Doctor's face. 'Come on!'

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A few minutes later the Doctor was kneeling in the snow, his friends stood around him. Millie and her mum now wearing thick gloves, coats and boots. 'It feels like snow,' and lowering his face to the cold surface, 'and it smells like snow.' He scooped up a tiny amount of fresh looking snow and gently placed a tiny amount on his lips. 'But it doesn't taste like snow! Well it does, you wouldn't be able to tell, but I have a very sensitive tongue. See?' The Doctor stuck his tongue out wiggled it around slightly as he tried to identify what he could taste. 'It's phosidium! Just a trace amount but it's definitely there.'

'Phosidium?' asked Louie, 'I don't remember that one from chemistry.'

'That's because it doesn't exist on Earth, or this solar system. The TARDIS is just around the corner, I'll be able to track down any concentrations of it anywhere on the

planet. Well it was good seeing you again,' said the Doctor cheerily as he made to leave.

To her surprise Rachael found herself speaking out. 'Oh no you don't, Doctor. You can't just waltz into my kitchen, tell us there's an alien invasion in progress...'

'I don't think I said invasion,' but Rachael cut him off.

'And just expect us to go indoors, pretend like nothing's happened, and hope that miraculously the snow vanishes, the power comes back on and everything goes back to normal, while we worry whether you're dead or alive. We're coming with you.'

'Way to go, aunty!' exclaimed Louie.

Resigned to his new entourage, the Doctor merely grinned. As they set off, the sun caught the clear white snow, and Millie was momentarily blinded. She raised her hands to shield her eyes, unnoticed by the others who continued towards the TARDIS. It was probably just a flash of light thought Millie to herself, but did that snowman's eyes glow for a fleeting second? She was just about to call out after the others before changing her mind. She'd catch up with them soon enough.

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Louie, his aunt, and the Doctor turned the street corner and at the end of the road was the reassuring sight of the TARDIS. On the other side of the street was a man tying his shoelaces. He was dressed in a pin- striped suit, smart black shoes despite the snow, and a bowler hat...

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Millie marched up to the snowman. It looked like hundreds of others all over town. She was just being silly she told herself. She slowly reached out her hand and touched it. It felt like snow but there was something else; it was very gently vibrating. Without warning the eyes she had mistaken for pieces of coal glowed bright red.

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As the trio walked towards the TARDIS there was a large explosion as a power line broke in two and fell to the ground. Sparks flew everywhere and the line danced on the road in front of them as though it was alive.

'Keep still, very still,' commanded the Doctor, 'one move and we're dead.'

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Millie slowly backed away and to her horror the snowman gently rose a few inches and glided towards her. She turned to run, but slipped and fell into the snow. She glanced over her shoulder, trying desperately to scramble to her feet, but it was too

late. The snowman moved inexorably towards her and Millie could only scream in terror...

## Part Two

Rachael heard her daughter scream in the distance and instinctively turned to run towards her. Immediately, the electric cable shot out, lashing towards her, but Louie dived at his aunt and brought her crashing to the ground with his best rugby tackle. The lethal-looking cable sliced through the space where she had stood less than a second before...

The Doctor was reaching into his pocket bringing out his sonic screwdriver. Turning at the same time, he aimed it at the live wire and a high pitched screech filled the air. The cable moved towards him at lightning speed, before suddenly stalling, as though fighting some unseen force. Seconds seemed to stretch to minutes as the battle raged. Louie and Rachael looked up in horror as the Doctor stood his ground. The slightest wisp of acrid smoke drifted upward from the end of the cable, but still it tried to reach him. Without warning the cable suddenly exploded, dropping to the ground, lifeless.

Louie and Rachael scrambled to their feet but didn't have time to worry about their near demise.

'Millie, I'm coming!' shouted Rachael as they ran back the way they had come. Unnoticed, the suited man continued on his way.

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Louie spotted Millie's footprints and they made their way through the thick snow as quickly as they could. The tracks came to an abrupt halt, and there was large indentation in the snow where she had clearly fallen.

'Millie! Millie!' shouted her mother, whose voice echoed around the deserted field. As she looked down at the Doctor who was crouched in the snow, she saw him move ever so slightly as though trying to hide something from her. 'What is it?'

'It's blood, but not much,' said the Doctor as he stood.

Rachael blanched. 'I think I'm going to be sick... My baby girl...'

'We'll find her aunty,' Louie said, placing his arm around her. 'She can't be far.'

'But where is she?' she asked, panic-stricken. 'What was I thinking? I should never have insisted we come with you Doctor. It's all my fault...'

'None of this is your fault, Rachael, and Rachael, look at me. Look at me.' She raised her eyes to meet the Doctor's. 'We will find Millie, I promise you.' She held his gaze, and knew he meant it.

'Where do we start, Doctor? There are only Millie's footprints and ours. Where did she go?' asked Louie.

'I'm not sure, Louie, but we stick to the original plan. In the TARDIS we can track both Millie and the phosidium.'

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They were greeted by the reassuring hum of the TARDIS as they entered, the Doctor moving quickly up the ramp to the console, pulling levers and studying the monitor closely.

'There are fresh, dry clothes for you through there,' waved the Doctor absent-mindedly as he concentrated on the readings.

'I'm fine,' protested Rachael. The Doctor was racing around the console now, and didn't look up.

'You're both wet through. Wet and cold. You'll be of no help to Millie if you catch pneumonia. So clothes, now, through there.'

'Come on, aunty, the Doctor's right. I'm freezing; we need warm dry clothes.' Reluctantly, Rachael allowed Louie to lead her away in the direction the Doctor had gestured. Running his hands through his hair, the Doctor murmured under his breath,

'Where are you Millie? Where?'

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Millie slowly opened her eyes. She had a splitting headache and could taste blood in her mouth. 'I must have hit my head,' she murmured to herself. The last thing she could remember was stumbling away from the hellish snowman.

She was laying on a flat bed-like contraption that was raised off the ground at a forty-five degree angle. Her wrists and ankles were secured by strong semicircular metal cuffs. As her eyes adjusted to the gloom she raised her head and looked around. Next to her was a similar device to the one she was on, and a man about her mum's age was secured onto it. Even in the poor light she could see he was deathly pale.

'Hello, hello? Can you hear me? My name's Millie. Millie Peterson!' But he didn't reply. He was unconscious or worse. She tried to see if he was breathing, looking for the slightest movement in his chest but it was too dark. She looked around the rest of the room. Old brickwork, and she could hear a steady drip of water not too far away. Some kind of abandoned building? Rather incongruously, a console stood just off to her left. She hadn't seen anything like it before. The cuffs weren't too tight, and she had small hands, maybe she could free herself...

After a few minutes her wrists were red and sore from the effort, she could nearly slip them through but not quite. A door creaked open that she hadn't noticed before. Silhouetted in the doorway was a tall, thin man, wearing a bowler hat. Millie instinctively knew he wasn't there to help her.

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As Louie and Rachael reentered the console room in their change of clothes, the Doctor had his back to them, leaning over the console.

'Come and look at this,' he said not glancing around. On the screen was a street map, and a building on the outskirts of town was highlighted. 'What's that?' he asked.

'It's an old manufacturing plant,' Rachael told him. 'It closed in the eighties, there was some talk of it being developed into luxury apartments a year or two back, but nothing ever came of it.'

'Well that's where Millie is,' the Doctor told them.

'How do you know, Doctor?' asked Louie 'And that's the far side of town on the other side of woods. How could she have gotten there so quickly?'

'Anyone who travels in the TARDIS is left with trace elements of chronon energy in their system, and there's an chronon energy signature in that building.'

'Millie?'

'It seems very likely, and there's plenty of phosidium in the immediate area too.'

'So what are we waiting for?' said Rachael making for the doors.

'Aunty, we don't have to go anywhere, we can go in the TARDIS can't we, Doctor?' The Doctor didn't immediately respond.

'Louie you made a good point. How was Millie transported several miles in this heavy snow so quickly? And why have they taken one girl out of millions? What's so special about her?'

'She's very special, Doctor,' shouted Rachael with more force than she intended.

'I know, Rachael, I know, that's not what I'm saying.' He placed a reassuring hand on her shoulder. 'Millie is remarkable young lady, but what makes her special to the aliens?'

'She knows **you**,' suggested Louie.

'Right!' declared the Doctor, 'and that's what worries me. If they took Millie because of her connection to me, then they are willing to take on a Time Lord, and everything that entails. So we leave the TARDIS here. Besides,' said the Doctor as he patted the console affectionately, 'she doesn't exactly make a quiet entrance.'

'So how do we get there, Doctor? We need to rescue my daughter, it will take hours to walk in this snow, and it will be getting dark soon.' But the Doctor had an idea.

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Finally, the silhouette in the doorway spoke. 'A simple human female. Intriguing.'

'Who are you, and what do you want with me? I have friends. They'll be coming for me.'

'Oh, I don't doubt that,' replied the figure as he advanced into the room. He tilted his head to one side as he studied her. 'You're not the innocent schoolgirl you appear to be are you?'

'I don't know what you're talking about.'

'You're imbued with chronon energy, that's why the sentry brought you here. You're an associate of the Doctor.'

'What doctor? Doctor Lamb? The GP?'

'Act a fool by all means, girl, but don't treat me as one.' He was now standing over her, a cruel evil smile on his lips. The Doctor is sentimental, weak. He'll soon come for you.' He removed his hat revealing horns on either side of his head, as he traced one of his fingers down her right cheek. Millie flinched, but managed not to scream. 'Your bravery is misplaced child, soon we will have the Doctor and you will be dead.' Silently the alien left the room.

Desperately, Millie tried to reach inside her coat pocket.

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'Hoverboards!' exclaimed Louie excitedly as the threesome sped towards Millie.  
'Woo hoo!'

'Amy picked them up for Rory, boys do like their toys,' shouted the Doctor - the air whistling passed made it hard to hear. The boards were hovering several inches above the snow, instantly correcting their height for an upcoming obstacle.

'I can't even roller-skate; how am I staying on?' asked a rather fearful Rachael, convinced she was going to tumble off any second.

'Oh, don't worry, they self correct any imbalance. At this speed we'll be there in a few minutes. We'd best go around the woods though, I don't like the idea of trying to navigate through the trees,' said the Doctor.

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Millie's fingertips grasped the object in her pocket and gingerly she pulled out her chapstick. Very gently, she pulled off the cap that tumbled to the floor and started to rub the lubricant on her left wrist.

'If I can just get enough onto my hand...' After several minutes of carefully applying the greasy substance without dropping the tube, she rolled her thumb and little finger towards each other, and very gently slid her hand out of its restraint. 'Yes!' she proclaimed triumphantly, quickly freeing her second hand now she could move more easily. Reaching down she untied her shoelaces and kicked off her boots. She was now able to wiggle her feet free. Jumping down she scooped up the boots and went over to the man laying next to her. His breathing was shallow, but he was alive.

'I'll be back, I promise,' Millie whispered to the man, who stirred at the sound of her voice.

'Geoff,' he said weakly.

'Hang on, Geoff, I'll bring help.' Putting her boots back on, she tiptoed to the door. Seeing the coast was clear she glanced back at Geoff and hurried away.

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'Doctor, will the boards be OK going over a frozen river?' asked Louie, as they raced towards a local steam.

'River? River's here? Where?' The Doctor furiously started to glance around, almost immediately losing his balance. Despite his earlier prediction he tipped off the board, hitting the ground. Hard.

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The alien reentered the room where Millie had been moments earlier. Noticing she was gone, he slammed his fist on the console in anger. She was the bait - he needed her! He activated a communication device disguised as watch on his wrist. 'Colleagues, we can wait no longer, activate the sentries.'

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All across Europe the eyes on snowmen, in every village, town and city, glowed red. Slowly they levitated and started to glide silently down roads and streets.

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'Aunty Rachael, we have to go back for the Doctor.'

'I know, but how do we turn these things let alone stop them?' Louie tried to jump off but the board just automatically corrected itself.

'I don't know, maybe we could guide them into those snowmen up ahead?' Rachael saw the group of snowmen and nodding her approval, they maneuvered in their direction.

Without warning two of the snowmen rose into the air, their eyes ablaze. Immediately Louie and his aunt felt searing heat wash over their bodies, causing them to cry out in pain.

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Millie had found her way outside. She recognized the building, and was making her way slowly along the edge of the factory towards the nearby wood, reasoning the trees would afford her better protection than the open road. Just as she was going to dart across the last few metres, into the relative safety of the foliage, a sentry snowman glided into view. She pressed her back against the wall not daring to breathe.

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The Doctor was laying on his back, momentarily winded. He propped himself up on his elbows, scanning the horizon for his friends. To his horror, he saw they were under attack. He scrambled to his feet, reaching for his hoverboard, but he was too late. The red light intensified around them and they were gone.

## Part Three

The Doctor stood alone, his hoverboard in his hand. First Millie, and now Louie and his Aunt Rachael. All taken, or worse... With the snowman that attacked his companions advancing on his position, he jumped on his board and sped away. He would approach the factory from the woods after all.

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Millie held her breath for what seemed like an eternity. The sentry was scanning the immediate vicinity but as she remained hidden in the shadow of the building, it failed to spot her and eventually moved away. She let out her breath, gasping for air, then sprinted across the open terrain and into the relative safety of the woods.

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The suited alien, Fasheith, was examining the unconscious man in the makeshift laboratory when another alien entered. With the exception of slightly different facial features he was identical in appearance to Fasheith. Looking up, a quizzical expression passed over his face.

‘Where are the others Hazneer?’

‘They are still in London concluding negotiations with the Zu’nar, and coordinating a response to the military attacks on our sentries. Your appraisal that it was safe to reveal our presence was premature. The humans on this continent are not yet significantly weakened.’ Hazneer’s tone was sharp, abrupt. Clearly the two were not friends.

‘All twelve of us must be here,’ snapped Fasheith ignoring the criticism of his tactical analysis. ‘It has taken us decades to get this close to the Time Lord.’

Hazneer considered continuing the argument, but he could deal with Fasheith later if necessary. ‘Show me the analysis of the girl.’

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Millie was crouched in the dense undergrowth. Red light was being reflected around the trees as the sun started to set. Snowmen sentries. She had only made it about a third of a mile into the forest when she had to seek cover. There were at least six of them patrolling. From the quick glimpses she had dared sneak they appeared to be searching for something - her.

'I have to find the Doctor,' she thought, but she daren't move. The slightest noise would alert the sentries to her presence. Getting colder she settled in. This might be a long wait.

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'There's no doubt that chronon energy was present in her body,' said Fasheith. 'After the temporal disturbance was detected several hours ago, I traced the Doctor's craft. An attempt to apprehend him nearby was unsuccessful, but using the girl as a lure is an easier solution.'

'A girl, a human girl,' sneered Hazneer, 'that you let escape.'

'She cannot be far, the sentries will soon capture her. Besides, that may not be necessary.'

'You said yourself that we need her as bait.' Hazneer was becoming more and more exasperated with his colleague.

A cold smile passed over Fasheith's face. 'There's more than one kind of bait.' Both turned as Louie and Auntie Rachael were shepherded into the room by a sentry.

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The Doctor was making his way through the trees by foot, carefully avoiding the snowmen that seemed to be everywhere. He brushed passed a dead branch which immediately broke off. He froze as a sharp cracking noise reverberated around the forest.

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Rachael's relief upon overhearing that her daughter was alive and free evaporated when the horned aliens strapped her nephew to the evil looking contraption. 'Leave him alone!' she screamed, despite being caught in a beam of light projected from the sentry's eyes. Louie was held tight, exactly where Millie had been less than an hour earlier.

'Observe these readings,' said Fasheith ignoring Rachael as she continuing to plead with them.

'He's only a child,' she implored.

'They show significant improvements over the adult specimen. Greater adaptability, superior skeletal structure that is less prone to damage, and greater resilience. The

Zu'nar may wish to modify their order.' Hazneer was impressed by his colleague's findings, but refused to acknowledge it.

'I will alert the rest of the council,' he said simply.

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The red glow from the sentries' eyes seemed to be moving off into the distance. 'Now or never,' Millie thought to herself, but as she went to stand something clasped itself around her mouth. How could she have been so foolish! But then whatever was holding her released her gently. She turned and relief flooded through her.

'Doc...' But she fell silent as the Doctor held a finger to his lips. He motioned for her to follow him.

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'The Zu'nar are examining your findings,' said Hazneer tersely. Fasheith ignored his tone. He knew the Zu'nar wouldn't be able to resist what they were now able to offer, and he had found the Doctor, the key to their salvation. Geoff Bluth began to stir.

'Another example of the superiority of the younger units,' declared Fasheith. 'The elder human has been unconscious for hours.'

Louie had been listening closely to their exchange and now made himself heard. 'What, you think children are superior to adults? Tell me something new. Every kid on the planet knows that.'

'Which is why the Zu'nar will purchase juvenile specimens of your species.'

'You're going to sell children?'

'Precisely, so we have no need for these decrepit specimens,' said Fasheith indicating Rachael and Geoff. 'Extinguish life!' he ordered the sentry. The man let out an involuntary gasp and Rachael fell to her knees as the sentry moved forward to carry out his instructions.

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The Doctor was approaching the side door of the factory. The lock was rusted shut; the sonic wasn't going to work. Rummaging around in his pockets he found a piece of wire, and carefully started to unpick the lock, failing to notice the sentry watching his every move.

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'Stop!' commanded Hazneer, and the sentry disengaged. 'Humans are sentimental creatures, the woman may be useful in controlling the boy.' Fasheith nodded in agreement. Rachael was racked with pain, lying on the floor, but alive.

'Oh, Aunty,' said Louie in despair.

'The male is all but dead, remove him,' said Fasheith dispassionately. As the sentry moved to obey, it turned towards Fasheith, silently communicating with him. 'The Doctor is here.'

'Have the sentries apprehend him!' Hazneer barked.

'No, let him think he has the element of surprise, he is coming to us.'

'I'll summon the others.'

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The Doctor steadily made his way through the building. Despite the numerous sentries outside there appeared to be none inside, and it was eerily quiet. He heard a faint noise in the distance - a woman in pain - he moved deeper into the structure.

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'What do you want with us?' Louie demanded.

'We don't want you, human,' Hazneer replied, 'You're nothing more than a commodity to be bought and sold on the intergalactic markets. And the Zu'nar are willing to pay a very generous price for each batch of 100,000 units.'

'You're going to sell 100,000 people into slavery?'

Both aliens laughed contemptuously. 'We are selling thousands of batches, and will continue to do so indefinitely. We will rotate through your continents in turn so as to ensure a steady supply. By the time the other continents are exhausted, supplies on this continent, Europe, will have replenished. A constant source of income for the Council, and workers for the Zu'nar.'

'But against every known intergalactic law,' interrupted the Doctor who was leaning rather nonchalantly against the open doorway.

'At last we meet, Doctor,' said Hazneer, but the Doctor ignored him as he helped Rachael to her feet.

'Millie?'

'She's safe. Far away from here by now.' The news calmed Rachael; whatever happened to them, her baby girl was going to be OK. Still weak she leaned against the wall for support. The Doctor turned his attention back to the aliens.

'You're Scrollnée; when did you become slave traders?'

'We're not just Scrollnée, we are The Council, their leaders.'

'The Council? But The Council was deposed in a popular uprising years ago. All the members of the council were reported killed as they attempted to flee the planet.'

Hazneer smiled. 'Nearly right Doctor. Our bodies died but **we** survived.'

'That just makes no sense,' interrupted Louie. 'You're walking and talking. Not many dead folk do that.'

'Our bodies are no more than cadavers animated by our consciousness.'

'You mean...'

Fasheith unbuttoned his suit jacket and pulled open his shirt revealing decaying flesh.

'I thought the Council of the Dead was just a myth, a scary story to tell Scrollnée fawn,' said the Doctor disbelievingly. 'But here you are resorting to petty crime; I wouldn't like to be in your rather shiny black shoes when the Judoon catch up with you.'

'The Judoon are no match for us.'

'Fighting talk, I'll give you that, but a few dead people against an entire planet, and the intergalactic police?'

'We may be few, but our business transactions have provided much wealth, and with wealth comes power. Power to buy advanced weaponry and assemble armies on an unimaginable scale.'

'Still, one nasty fall, and you're not going anywhere,' rejoined the Doctor.

A woman Scrollnée stepped from the shadows.

'Enough!' secure him. More Scrollnée appeared, grabbing hold of the Doctor, strapping him to the machine next to Louie. For dead people they had a very firm grip.

'Killing us won't achieve anything,' Rachael told them as she staggered forward.

The woman observed her. 'Killing you will amuse me no more,' she replied dismissively, 'but when we kill the Doctor, the last of the Time Lords, he will begin to regenerate.' Finally the Doctor understood the full extent of their plan.

'That's why you wanted me. You're going to try to use my regeneration energy to rejuvenate your bodies, to live again.'

'You cheat death Doctor, and now the Council of the Dead will too, we will be reborn! Extinguish life!'

As the machinery was activated, every fibre in the Doctor's body was on fire, he was beginning to lose consciousness, a regeneration imminent. Faint yellow light began

to emit from his fingertips which was channeled to the members of the council who stood around him.

As the light began to intensify, a gust of wind swept through the room, a wheezing, groaning sound filling the air. The TARDIS materialized on the far side of the room and Millie stepped out confidently. She was holding an egg-shaped device in her hands. 'Release him, now!'

But the Scrollnée ignored her as they fed on the energy. Realizing they weren't going to comply, Millie pressed a small indentation on the device. The effect was immediate and dramatic.

The yellow light abruptly vanished, and the Scrollnée council screamed in unison. As they fed on the energy they had relaxed their mental holds on their bodies. Without their overriding will to live, the bodies began to twist into grotesque shapes, before collapsing onto the floor. Soon they were no more than dust on the breeze.

'Now that's what I call an entrance, Mills!' exclaimed Louie, as Millie began to release him. Rachael did likewise for the Doctor, before hugging her daughter.

'But how did you pilot the TARDIS?'

'Oh, I didn't, not really. The Doctor gave me a homing device to plug into the console, and as soon as I did the TARDIS dematerialized, bringing me here. And the Doctor just happened to have this little thing,' she said holding up the powerful contraption, 'on him when he found me in the woods.'

'You knew it was the Council of the Dead all along?' asked Louie incredulously.

'I saw a man in a pin-striped suit and bowler hat out of the corner of my eye when we were attacked in the street. Not typical wear these days.'

'So you were just stringing them along, earlier?'

'I needed to give Millie time to reach the TARDIS,' he replied. The Doctor strode over to the Scrollnée's controls. 'A few minor alterations should take care of our unfriendly snowmen.' All across Europe the snowman sentries disintegrated as power surged through their robotic bodies.

'What about the Zu'nar? Aren't they still out there?' asked Rachael.

'To them this was a simple business transaction. I expect the Council told them they had dominion over the Earth. When I appraise them of the situation, they'll withdraw gracefully. They won't want to face the Judoon.' Millie was glancing around.

'Have you seen a man? He's called Geoff - he was being held captive with me.' Her mother's face dropped and Millie thought she was going to cry. 'I told him I'd come back for him.'

'No, no, Millie, it's OK,' said the Doctor. 'I found him discarded in a corridor where he had been left to die, but he's tougher than the Scrollnée gave him credit for. He's alive, Millie.'

Relieved, she smiled. 'We must get him to the hospital,' she declared.

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Several days later, the sun had melted the accumulations of snow, and life was slowly returning to normal. Millie and Louie were sat on the swings in the local park with the Doctor, gently rocking back and forth. It was hard to believe everything that had happened.

'So when your parents said I could take you out for a day, I had something a little more exciting in mind,' as he nodded his head towards the nearby TARDIS.

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The friends stood on the threshold of the TARDIS, looking out.

'Three, two, one,' counted down the Doctor. And in the blackness of space a brilliant blue lighted erupted on the horizon before a cascade of colors spread out before them.

'The Salcreyan Nebula...' whispered Louie, as the cousins held hands and watched in amazement.

**THE END**

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