

An illustration of a young man with brown hair and blue eyes, wearing a tan tuxedo jacket, a white shirt, and a blue bow tie. He is standing on a glowing, golden sphere that is partially covered in a white, crystalline or ice-like structure. He holds a blue, rectangular object in his left hand. The background is a bright, white, ethereal space with a soft rainbow-like glow at the bottom. The overall style is clean and modern, with a focus on light and color.

THE SONG AND THE SILENCE

a *Doctor Who* short story

THE SONG AND THE SILENCE

*A short story and reimagining of the Season Finale of Doctor Who.
The story takes place right after the Doctor meets Dorium in "The Wedding of River
Song" but disregards the alternate universe in the episode.*

THE DOCTOR RAN, as fast as he could, his heels striking the surface of a cold concrete floor. Smoky bands of moonlight and shadow casted across his long green coat as he wove through the heaps of junk and scraps littered throughout the warehouse. Hitting a corner, he stopped and swept his sonic screwdriver across the air, beaming a slow pulsating bright green before it softly flickered and faded away. "Low positron energy...static interference...signal lost. Hahh," he sighed from exhaustion and slumped against a pile of crates, panting for breath and scanning the environment with his eyes. "Two hundred years ago, I was here," he muttered to himself. "Two hundred years ago, I was led here for a reason. Not just to stop the Silence but to find a clue to save myself. Think, Doctor, think! What is it that I missed? What do I need to find...?"

Canton slowly emerged by his side, his face in sudden awe at the Doctor. The Doctor took notice. "Your asthma okay, Canton? I thought you couldn't keep up."

"How?" Canton gaped at him. "You were just over there and now you're here. Your clothes. Your hat. How did you...?"

"My clothes?" the Doctor blinked. "Waitaminute. Your suit! How are you wearing a suit...?"

WHACK! A wrench smashed Canton across the face before he flopped gracefully onto the floor. The Doctor shrunk back as another Canton, this time in his vacation yellow Hawaiian shirt, emerged into the moonlight panting in exhaustion. A look of surprise flushed across his face as he ogled his other self, flat on the floor.

"I thought...I...I can't believe it! That's me!" Canton stammered.

The Doctor took a double take between the two men before it finally registered to him: The present Canton knocking out the past Canton in shock. "Well of course it's you! See the receding hairline?"

"But," Canton poked his former self by the cheek and startled back at the sight of his breathing. "He's real! And he's me! And he's...!"

"He's you from four months ago. Don't you remember Jefferson Adams Hamilton? Getting knocked out at this spot?"

"You mean we're in the same time as—"

"*Help me!*" a child's cry echoed. Canton sprung towards the child's voice but

the Doctor yanked him back and ducked behind a wall of crates. Two other figures bolted across the warehouse: A young woman in a plaid red shirt, streaks of vibrant red hair whipped across her rosy face, followed by a gangly man in a bow-tie and tweed jacket.

Canton gaped in awe. "Doctor, that's *you*."

The Doctor peered out, watching the pair disappear through a corridor where they left the former Canton. "Yeah, that's my past. Don't want that catching up."

"But they're—"

"Perfectly distracted and stupidly dangerous," the Doctor popped his head into an open manhole in the ground. "Now come on!"

THEY DESCENDED UNDERGROUND, a vast network of intricate tunnels that weaved across the subsurface of the Earth. Wet caverns glistened with condensation and dew as they trickled through the damp ridges of moss and stone. Fascinated, the Doctor waved his screwdriver out as Canton cautiously followed behind. Shallow pools of icy water soaked their heels as two men carefully crept deeper into the narrow spaces of darkness.

"These tunnels," the Doctor remarked. "They must be centuries old but the ventilation and energy systems are still active." He traced his screwdriver along the stony walls, its surface riddled with alien tubes and wires. "Definitely not human, not possibly Silurian either with this kind of technology but—Ahh! Signal's getting warmer!" Excited, he raced through the stony tunnels until he hit an atrium branching into several narrow musty corridors. Canton stumbled against an object half buried in the dust and shined his light at a shredded patch of an American flag. His light traced a trail of space debris: A frayed NASA logo...bits of glass...a twisted piece of tubing...chips of plastic and metal shards...all leading into the dark unknown.

The Doctor picked up something large, round, and familiar. "Ooh, another one of these!" he remarked as he lifted up the space helmet, his reflection gleaming off its visor. "Same big ol' NASA head, but a little heavier. They must have built a dozen prototypes of these. Whatever was trapped inside of this kept trying to break out." The Doctor snapped the visor up, revealing a pulsating mass of alien wiring emitting a pale green film of plasma glow. For a second he looked impressed. "The alien technology in this, I've seen this before. This is very similar to the Pandorica..."

"Pan-what?" Canton turned around.

"The perfect prison...in a spacesuit! But what's this inside?" He peered into the helmet, noticing several digits ticking down the hours. "Kitchen doomsday timer?"

"They were going trying to trap you inside a NASA spacesuit!" Canton

realized.

"Yes, apparently, that *was* the plan," the Doctor scratched his head, remembering a similar stash of suits at Demon's Run. "This thing's got enough reserve to draw out the Auton energy from a timelord and turn it into a weapon. But why put a little girl inside it now?"

"Because everyone knows a good man would *never* let a child die," a voice icily crackled.

The Doctor halted, recognizing the voice. He swiftly drew out his screwdriver and buzzed it at the darkness. The lone figure of Madam Kovorian emerged from the void, calmly circling the Doctor. A menacing smirk curled from her lips.

"Madam Kovorian," the Doctor scoffed. "So glad to visit. Installed a temporal beacon inside your spacesuit, did you? Well congratulations, you found me."

Canton glanced between the two, confused. "You two know each other?"

The Doctor shrugged. "Well she is your boss from Area 51. The one who ordered you to hunt me down."

"*Was* my boss," Canton grunted. "Was."

"Enjoying your retirement, Mr. Delaware?" Kovorian chuckled. "No need to introduce me, Doctor. You run around two centennials later and you still haven't returned my call."

"Running is what I'm good at," he smugly said.

"Being late is what you're good at. Your Melody Pond is inside her suit."

"So I'll find her and break her out."

"Only if you die trying," she sneered.

Canton stormed up to Kovorian with a gun in his hand. "The hell you're going to kill him. Not on my watch!"

Madam Kovorian gleefully laughed. "Tsk ts! Haven't you gotten the memo? By Silencio Lake. On the Plain of Sighs. An impossible astronaut will rise from the deep. And strike the timelord dead. That suit has a design and one design only: to kill the Doctor. If not the Doctor, then the very person he loves. That very symbol you used to save humanity from us, we'll now use it against you."

The Doctor scoffed. "Ha! How poetic! And you think I'm willing to go? To my own death?"

"Keep running Doctor and the whole universe will know you killed a child. Either way, a good man will die—!"

"Doctor! Get down!" Canton shoved the Doctor away as he and Kovorian blasted shots at each other. His round struck her harmlessly in the chest; her bullet knocked his revolver off his hands. The Doctor whipped his screwdriver before she could fire again, dissolving her form into liquid pale goop. "Enough!" he raged.

Canton shrank as he watched his former boss splash onto the floor. "Oh God. Did she just—?"

"Turned her ganger into a puddle of Jello. Yeah, I know." The Doctor slammed the visor shut and paced back and forth, a hand to his face, muttering, distressed. His enemies had now turned the perfect prison into a perfect death trap and this time they knew he couldn't resist running from it.

Canton stopped him by the shoulder. "Uh Doctor..."

"What Canton?!" the Doctor barked, furious.

"Your face..."

The Doctor lifted the helmet up, mirroring several tally marks scrawled across his forehead. Spooked, the two men stared at each other before slowly lifting their eyes to the ceiling. A dozen Silences loomed above them, filling the chamber with their ominous hisses and rattles. Electricity surged through the air.

"Oh hello there..." said the Doctor, unsmiling.

Canton quickly drew his gun and pulled the trigger.

"RORY!"

River yelled as a shock of lightning rocked the alien Tardis. Rory flinched backwards, narrowly missing a bolt of electricity above his head.

River dragged Rory behind her to safety and grabbed her revolver, then paused to the sound of several gunshots, followed by stillness. She cautiously peered out the doorway and glimpsed the outside underground chamber littered with alien bodies withering on the floor. A terrifying oblong head with sunken eyes stared deep into River's before it dropped dead with one last rasp.

"Rory," the pit of River's stomach hardened with dread as she pulled a dazed Rory to his feet. "I don't like this. We're getting out of here!" She shoved him out, herding him through the narrow tunnels towards the exit. As she ushered him towards the ladder at the end of the tunnel, her foot struck something large and hard, sending a charred space helmet rolling across the floor. A familiar figure stopped it with the ball of his foot.

"Doctor?" She gazed at him. The Doctor stood silently, shrouded in the shadows amongst the alien bodies heaped around him. River eyed his foreign green coat, the ill-fated Stetson, the blank expression on his face. The Doctor two hundred years from the future. The Doctor with an ominous fate. He managed a reluctant smile and nudged his chin upwards to the ceiling. "He's upstairs. Go to him."

River took one last glance at him then wordlessly ran off.

Canton peered over his shoulder as she escaped to the world above. "Now what?"

The Doctor stared at the cracked helmet sitting in the midst of the dead Silences. "We save her."

ONE LAST TRIP, ONE LAST RUN, the Doctor piloted the Tardis across time and space. He didn't whirl around, skipped, nor danced. Just programmed each switch to their own intimate setting in careful and thoughtful precision. With one last crank and the roar of her engines he looked out to the Tardis chamber, closed his eyes and deeply breathed in, taking in this one last ride.

Canton stood by the steps, allowing a moment of privacy before breaking the stillness. "So. What's going to happen to the Tardis?"

"Oh, auto-programmed it," the Doctor slipped his goggles off his forehead. "Off into space where she belongs, where no one can find her. Perception filter, I tried disguising her as a floating asteroid but she kept staying blue."

"So just like that? Goodbye?"

Goodbye. He hated that word. Goodbye. The Doctor leaned over his console, tracing a finger delicately along the edges of the control panel. He never thought about it, saying goodbye to his beloved Tardis. To be pulled away to die in a world he loved, though a world that was still alien and strange. He had hoped to live through more centuries of misadventures, mayhem and madness before relapsing in peaceful contentment in the confines of her chambers.

Now all wishful thinking, he mused to himself.

Then an idea beamed on him and the Doctor quickly swept over the stairs and swung the doors of the Tardis open. A pale glow poured into the chamber, bathing him in light. Invited by a bow, Canton walked up to the doorway and gaped in wonder, beholding the massive silvery form of the moon.

"Neil Armstrong would envy you." The Doctor winked, resting a friendly hand on Canton's shoulder. The agent stammered. "But this...this..."

"You know Canton, I am very old than I look," he leaned against the doorway. "I've seen asteroids made of dirt and diamonds, billions of stars and galaxies, rainbownovas and supernovas, black holes, white holes, pink holes...planets and creatures of all shapes and sizes. I've seen too much, had too much time on my hands. Timelords cease to exist for a reason and the Silence knows it. But for you humans, it's just the beginning. First the moon. And then beyond. You lot will never fail to impress me."

The Doctor glanced at the envelopes in his hand. Four Tardis blue invitations to be sent across time and space. "When you see me again, when you lived your life, I think you'll understand."

HE BID THE TARDIS FAREWELL, a tender final kiss to her bright blue doors before he watched her dematerialize into the horizons of Utah. As time had planned it, a drive through the sunkissed plateaus of Monument Valley. His meet and greet with the Ponds and River Song. Milkshakes at the atomic diner. A road trip through the desert frontier. And a picnic at the shores of Lake Silencio.

The familiar figure of the astronaut emerged out of the waters, the azure desert skies reflected off its amber visor. The Doctor saw the awe on Amy, River, and Rory's faces but he couldn't bear to tell them why. He just simply warned them to stay back and wandered towards the astronaut, keeping a stoic expression. With a pounding heartache he quietly faced the spaceman and looked up at his own defeated face, gleaming on the helmet's surface.

"Hello." He weakly chimed in. "It's okay, I know it's you."

Gently, the visor clicked with a hiss, revealing a bewildered girl behind the glass. She beheld him with confusion then recognition, the strange man in the bowtie she had seen earlier in the warehouse. "Help me!" she whimpered with muffled cries. "Please! I don't want to do this!" A digital timer blipped across the helmet surface, seconds ticking away...

"Listen Little Melody, It's okay. I know you're scared," the Doctor said, carefully eying several Silences emerging in the horizon. "But you have to concentrate. You have kill me. Right here and right now." He pointed at the ground. "And I promise you'll wake up and never remember this terrible moment happening again."

The girl sobbed. He softly hushed her. "Hushhh now, sweetie, it's not over with you. You'll see me again. You'll be mad at me. You'll try to kill me. You'll blame me for the reason why you lived your miserable life even though you don't know why," he managed a smile. A sad, but tender and genuine smile. "But things will get better, I promise you."

He bowed his head willingly as the astronaut raised her right hand slowly in the air and pointed directly at the Doctor, the display counter counting down.

"You and me. Time and space. You watch us run, eh?"

That's when he noticed it: a small punctured hole with several wires frayed, patched up with reflective tape. He remembered where it came from: the gun from Amy Pond when she shot the astronaut in defense. A chill shuddered across his spine and he could feel something terribly wrong. A small alteration in the mechanisms of the suit. A slight shift in the time stream. The Doctor blinked. Shock flushed over his face.

If the suit's compromised...that means Melody...

At the corner of her eye, little Melody could see three familiar figures in the horizon. At once memories flashed in her mind. Her mother in the photograph at her orphanage bedside. Her mother in the warehouse who tried to shoot her. Her

mother...*Amy Williams*...now standing real before her, puzzled by the scene unfolding before them. The timer stopped. The little girl hesitated with recognition. Déjà-vu in a heartbeat, River quickly turned to Amy.

"Mummy?"

The Doctor bolted for the suit. "Melody, NO—!"

A blast of emerald green exploded off the shores of Lake Silencio. The suit violently spasm and swayed on its heels as a golden timeless glow flared from its limbs, a regeneration beginning.

"Open it! Open it right now—!!" The Doctor scrambled onto the astronaut, wildly buzzing his sonic screwdriver at the hinges, desperately freeing her before the final blow...

BOOM! A final surge of green exploded from the suit, a shockwave that flung the Doctor onto the ground. His mind slowed to a heavy dull as he rose to his feet, legs wobbling from the impact. For a moment he felt time flowed to a standstill, until he staggered his way towards the charred spacesuit sprawled across the dirt. "No...!" he moaned "No no no!" He quickly clung to the astronaut, unaware of the aliens in suits swarming all around him.

"Doctor!" Amy rushed to him but a Silent towered her way. It leered over her with its sunken death rattle, sucking the life out of her until Rory clutched his Napoleon wine-bottle and smashed it across its face, walloping it with a thud. "Uh...uh...ooohhkay...!" he remarked jumpily as a second Silent swooped alongside him, electricity charging through the air.

BANG! A bullet blasted the silent in the back. The alien body dropped, revealing Old Canton with a smoking shotgun. "Heads up, Roman!" he grinned, tossing an ancient bronze shield and sword.

Rory caught them, bewildered. "How did you know to bring weapons?"

Canton hurled his jug of gasoline into air and shot it, exploding several more Silences. "'Cause this is how I remembered it!"

Instantly harsh warp of the Tardis manifested in front of them, spraying sand and mist across the shores. The doors burst open and the younger Canton emerged, slamming a fist straight into the silent's face and knocking it out. He expertly blasted several other Silences with his revolver before yanking the Doctor from his knees. "Get in!" The Doctor, dazed, could only clutch onto the spacesuit, towing it with him. The Tardis slammed shut and the last explosions of gunfire thundered across the lake, laying heap to the swarm of aliens now buried in dust and spray.

The trio blinked and looked at each other, not remembering a single thing. "Okay...what just happened?" Amy shook her head, dazed, staring at the weapons in their hands. The beach was empty save her, Rory and Elder Canton. The three of them, alone and alive. "Where's the Doctor? Where's River? Who's that old man? And why do I have a gun?"

Rory looked at Amy, puzzled. "Who's River?"

THE SUIT FLOPPED LIFELESSLY onto the Tardis floor as Canton hauled the distraught Doctor away. "Doctor! Doctor! Get ahold of yourself! It's me! We're in the Tardis! We're safe!" But the Doctor raged, furiously wrenching himself away from Canton. "Rarrrrgh! I told you to go back home!"

"You ungrateful man," Canton balked with surprise. "I would if there wasn't a fat blue head in this container talking to me—!"

"That would be your stubborn sense of conscience speaking!" Dorium rattled inside his wooden box. "I didn't say anything nor did I imply I needed the Doctor to get me back home—"

"Melody!" The Doctor rushed to the fallen astronaut, frantically burying into his pockets for his missing screwdriver. "No...Nooo! Where's the Sonic!? Where did it go!" He then clawed at the hinges and furiously pounded a fist into the helmet, cracking the visor and splitting his knuckles. The helmet popped with a loud hiss, smoke and fumes fizzled through the cracks.

"Oh no..." Canton gaped as the Doctor pulled the body of a limp child out, lifeless and pale. The Doctor pressed an ear to her chest then rapidly patted her cheeks. "Come on, come on, come on! Stay with me! Melody! Stay with me! Melody! Please! Wake up!"

"Doctor, she's dead. There isn't anything else you can do—"

"Melody Pond, PLEASE!!" he ignored, desperately shaking the child's shoulders. "Don't you dare change one line! Don't you dare die! All those times we had! You're a child of the Tardis! You were supposed to kill me. You were supposed to live! You were supposed to become River Song—!"

The Cloister bell boomed, a slow heavy clang that thundered over the console chamber. It served not as a warning but a final death knell, bellowing into oblivion. Canton and Dorium could only watch helplessly as the breathless Doctor froze on his knees, the stillness of doom settling in. Seconds soon passed into eternity.

"She's gone," he said in disbelief. "River Song is gone."

The Doctor bowed his head, devastated. He cringed his face and sniffled, a few tears welled in his eyes. He softly stroked the girl's hair as he felt her timeline, a fragile thread of existence, slowly dissipating into nothingness. The woman in the Library. The woman in the Byzantium. The woman who waited for him in prison. The woman who stole him every night from his Tardis. The woman he said he was going to marry. The woman who killed him then brought him back to life...

...Brought him back to life.

"Of course," he whispered, a new idea dawning on him. "Of course."

The Doctor swallowed grimly. He closed his eyes, drew a breath, then

stretched out his hands. Shimmering wisps of gold gently pulsated from his fingertips.

"Hey! Pssst! What's he doing?" Dorium piped from his box. "What's happening now? I can't see!"

Canton stared at the Doctor immersed in a soft aura of golden radiance. Ribbons of warm energy streamed through the air, bathing the Tardis in ethereal twilight. "He's glowing."

"Glowing?" Dorium panicked with realization. "Wait, *glowing*?! Doctor! Are you insane? You're going to get yourself killed—!"

"Doctor...?" Canton stepped away in terrifying awe. "What is this?"

The Doctor breathed, concentrating. Then he lifted the girl's body against his and cradled her tightly. With a farewell smile he kissed her forehead.

"*Everything*".

The Tardis blossomed into light. His whole reality exploded into white.

THE MOMENT HE WOKE from his chair, the first thing the Doctor did was clutch his legs. *Oh good. Still got my legs!* He nimbly took mental inventory of his limbs, tugging his suspenders and tightening his bowtie around his neck. After checking his chest and feeling his head, he rested back in his chair in amazement. "I'm alive. Well that's cool!"

He then looked up and beheld his Tardis, his safe haven peacefully sailing through time and space. He grinned in wonder, ogling every shiny nook, lever, button and cranny of her again. "Hello, old girl," he whispered. The control room seemed empty as the soft burr of the engines reverberated across the vacant chamber.

Click! A noise echoed across the console room. The Doctor lifted his head, tracing the sound. "Amy? Canton? Dorium? Is that you?" He rubbed and squinted his eyes to see a familiar little girl tinkering with the controls. One look at him and she instantly tucked her hands behind her back, petrified.

"Ah. Hello there."

"Hi..." she shyly replied.

Lightheaded and wobbly, he slowly rose to his feet and approached little Melody Pond. "What are you doing, piloting the Tardis on your own? Could've hit an asteroid by now, a mountain range, or some giant pterodactyl thing—ow!" He clutched his head, a deep aching pang throbbing at the back of his head. "Ow." He stared at the buttons and noticed they lighted up differently. "This configuration. Where'd you learn to do that? My ol' girl's been teaching you tricks behind my back?" The little girl blushed. The Doctor leaned against the console and urgently whispered. "*Dear, what were you thinking? You know she doesn't have her driver's license yet!*"

"But you left your parking break on," the girl blurted out.

"Is that so? Love that noise. Never get tired of it—nnnngh!!" his legs wobbled from under him. He quickly grabbed the console and yanked himself back up before his knees could hit the floor. The girl stared at him, worried. "Are you okay?"

"Retrogeneration between two timelords. Stupidly dangerous, never works, so don't try it at home. Effects are wibbly for the first few hours, but I'll be fine." He straightened himself up and glanced at the girl. "The real question is, are you okay?"

The girl was still transfixed on the Doctor, half fascinated, half terrified at this strange and funny man. "You wear a bowtie."

The Doctor defensively clutched his collar. "Oy, don't make fun of the bowtie, bowties are cool! I swear one of these days, little Melody Pond, you *will* date a man wearing one of these! But let's focus back to the present!" He clapped his hands, back to business. "Spacestations and spacemen, aliens you can't even remember, growing up with your evil Auntie Kovorian in a kooky old orphanage in Florida, got your homework assignment to hunt and kill me and now you've hitched a ride inside a flying police phone box." He whirled his way around the console, gazed across the Tardis chamber and sighed a breath of happiness, contented to be with her once more. "You know, your mum would be jealous. Your age, she waited to see the stars. Though you've seen your fair share of bad things growing up—-neeorrh!" his knees buckled again. The Doctor clutched back against the railing before he could fall. "Gah! Left leg's asleep again! Hate it when it does that. Pull that lever over there for me, will you?"

The girl ran over to the other side of the console and cranked up the lever.

"No wait, the right one...! And that roller there...! Good! Now type coordinates 3351 dash delta, dash omega..."

"What are we doing?"

"Driving lessons!"

For hours Tardis sailed across the cosmos as the Doctor watched little Melody prance around the console, pointing to every button, configuration, and gizmo. The wibbly lever. The typewriting printer. The coordinates keyboard. The steering clutch. The auto-dial for delivery pizza. The emergency telepathic circuits. The three-phase mode switcheroo. The zig-zag plotter. The ketchup and mustard dispenser that give ketchup and mustard on Friday night hotdogs. The favourites folder. The scanner module. Access codes for squashball court version 2.5. And the "oh God don't ever touch that button or we'll blow up" button. The Doctor leaned back in his chair, marveling this impossible girl, child of the Tardis.

"And *that*, is how you fly a Tardis." He said with a final crank of the lever. Contented, he leaned against the console, an eager giddy grin on his face. "So! All of time and space. All that happened or ever will...where do you want to start?"

The girl didn't answer, but smiled and simply looked at him. Or rather, past

him. The Doctor took notice of her direction and turned around, face to face with the monitor: Leadworth. October 2nd, 2011. *Home*.

"Oh." he smiled.

ON THE SLEEPY STREETS OF LEADWORTH, on the stroke of midnight, a telephone police booth touched down at the doorway of Mr. and Mrs. Pond-Williams. The young couple, woken from their bed, raced down from their home and opened their door in time to see an old friend in bow-tie and tweed coat stepping out of his vivid blue box.

"Mr. and Mrs. Pond," he cordially announced.

Amy and Rory stepped closer. In the Doctor's arms was a familiar little girl cozily wrapped in his long green coat. "Oh, Melody!" Amy rushed to them, kissing her rosy cheeks and marveling her sleepy face. "She's...grown!"

"Time and space does that a lot." The Doctor winked. "And growing. But at least not grown up."

"Is she okay?" Rory looked in amazement.

"Oh, she's perfectly fine. Don't be surprised if she burps out a few Autron particles here and there. It's been a long day for her." He gently transferred the girl into Rory's arms. "I'll take her to bed," her father said with a nod before carrying his sleepy Melody into the house.

The Doctor watched Amy and Rory tenderly tuck the girl into bed then wandered his way outside. There he sat by the front steps, quietly gazing at the deep infinite universe. A meteor shower streaked through the starlit sky, stellar trails of light and dust sparkling the horizon's wake. Watching the tranquil expression on the Doctor's face, Amy sat next to him and tugged the sleeve of his jacket. "Hey, are you okay?"

The Doctor nodded. "I'm okay."

"I've know you well enough and you're lying," she frowned. "You're never this quiet when you're okay."

The Doctor reached into his coat pocket and handed Amy a small blue book, hundreds of pages scrawled and blotted in ink. "The Adventures of River Song and the Doctor," he announced with fondness. "Makes a great bedtime story."

Amy scooted closer to him, worried. She could see the tired lines across his brow, the loss on his face... "Doctor, does this mean you're leaving for good?"

The Doctor sighed. "I'm mortal Amy. I can't stay long."

"Is that so? 'Cause one time, I remember you dying. Another time, I remember you just disappearing. Lake Silencio—"

"—Is a fixed point in time, yes. An impossible astronaut *did* rise out of the deep. And it *did* strike a timelord dead."

"So how is it that you and Melody are still here?"

The Doctor solemnly gazed at her and Amy could see it in his eyes: the once bright-spirited energy she always saw in him now sapped from his being. She blinked with realization. "You used up all your regenerations, didn't you?"

"I promised I'd get your daughter back, didn't I?" He then smiled weakly and looked up to the stars, reciting the same words Dorium had spoken to him. "One day, my song will end and the Silence will come to me. On the fields of Trenzalore, at the fall of the Eleventh, when no living creature can speak falsely or fail to answer, a question will be asked. A question that should never be answered. But the silence will never fall. The song will never stop. Never for Melody Pond," he glanced at the diary in Amy's hands.

"But that means River's not going to exist."

He clasped her hands in his. "Not if you forget her. Not in your hearts and in your memories. And that is why she needs her childhood and her parents to protect it. A love that only mad impossible Amelia and noble brave Rory can handle now."

Amy nodded. "So this question...the question that should never be answered. What is it?"

The Doctor paused, holding her hands tightly. He whispered in her ear.

"Would you like a Jelly Baby?"

Amy shoved the Doctor playfully and the two laughed, old dear friends sharing a moment. Then Amy hugged him tightly one last time and planted a tender kiss to his forehead, her precious imaginary friend she needed to let go. He rose up, ready to return to the universe above. Amy stood by the door of her home. The Doctor paused by the door of his Tardis.

"You're a mother, Amelia Pond Williams," he gestured to his diary in her hands. "And I'm just a fairy tale."

"Aren't we all?" she smirked sadly.

The Doctor smiled. "Make it a good one, eh?"

Tucked in bed, Melody snapped open her eyes as the last of the Tardis screeched through the neighborhood air. She leapt out of bed and looked out the window, only to see a few autumn leaves swirl in the breeze. Her heart sank as stared at the vacant street, disappointed and abandoned.

"Melody."

She spun around to see a kind-looking couple standing before her in her bedroom. She eyed the familiar red-haired woman then slowly scanned her surroundings, glimpsing the peculiar mementos that cluttered her room. A photo of a woman and her baby. A book of Pandora's box. A Roman helmet. A fez. A glittering hand-sewn patch labeled "River." A paper-machete police phone box. And several makeshift dolls of a redhead girl and a raggedy man...

"Where's he?" she asked. "Where did the Doctor go?"

Amy and Rory came by her side and hugged her dearly.
"Doctor who?"

HE COULD FEEL THE THREADS OF TIME form across the vastness of space, filling the gap that was once Lake Silencio. The Tesselecta disguised as the Doctor, trapping a screaming Madam Kovorian into an Apollo spacesuit and banishing her to the abyss of space. Dorium in his ornate box, returned to the Seventh Transept vaults of the headless monks. The Silences without a leader, retreating from the surfaces of Earth and into the unknown depths of the galaxies. President Nixon, reluctantly appointing Canton as head director of the FBI's extraterrestrial and paranormal division. Mr. and Mrs. Williams with their little Melody, her bedtimes filled with adventures of the heroic River Song at night. The Earth, free and undisturbed once more to dabble with their affairs of the day. And the multitude of rumors of the Doctor mysteriously vanishing into the depths of an alien lake, a charred screwdriver all that was left of him.

Then there were the echoes of River Song, yet to kill the Doctor.

The Doctor had to make sure that River Song was gone. That she would no longer be a threat that would kill him off. He landed on the planet where it all began, a memory that no longer existed: The Library. There he descended into the spiraling chasm of bookcases where billions upon billions of indexed books would be filed away, never to be read again. Rays of warm morning sunlight seeped through the ghostly halls as the Doctor passed by each shelf, carefully reliving every step by memory.

He soon made his way to the Eastern balcony and beheld a sight: a vast network of glistening monorails and towering spires stretching infinitely across the skyline. On the railing sat River's stainless sonic screwdriver and a fresh blue diary with the likeness of the Tardis.

The Diary of River Song. The Doctor breathed to himself. *All those adventures we could've had... The Singing Towers of Darillium... The Bone Meadows... The Plain of Pyrie and the Thirteen Moons... could it all still be in there...!?* He quickly snatched it up and flipped through the pages...only to find them blank.

"Of course," he frowned. "You can't write a diary if you don't exist." He sighed, feeling the crisp edges of the pages slide along his fingertips before he snapped the book closed, unaware of his shadow—two of them—were morphing and stretching, looming over him for the kill...

BOOM! A blinding light engulfed the entire hall as rays of light shredded the Vashta Nerada, disintegrating them into fine black dust. The Doctor shielded his face from the glare, squinting a figure in a long green doctorly coat. *His coat.*

"Hello sweetie!"

The Doctor blinked, making out the magnificent figure of River Song standing

before him. She slid her goggles off her face and grinned from ear to ear. "See! This time I came prepared! Portable solar flare. Fries those shadows crispy every time."

The Doctor gawked at her. "River! How did you...You're here!?" he stammered. "How can you be here?"

"I looked all over the universe for you, silly! Graduated from archeology school. Hitched a ride off your old friend Jack. Borrowed a vortex manipulator from Dorium. Travel around planets, blasting a few Daleks here and there. Funny how some people thought I was you! You were such a tease! So hard to find...until you sent me an invitation!" She held up an unnumbered envelope. Tardis blue.

The Doctor snatched the envelope, flabbergasted. "I...I...I sent you an invitation?"

"Yes."

"ME?!"

"Yes! You!" River tapped him on the nose and gleefully pulled out a jaded blue diary...the very same journal the Doctor had given to her parents. "Who else is going to get you out of trouble. So! Can we do *Crash of the Byzantium*, just like this book? *Pandorica* sounds like fun, love a prison tale! Sorry I spoiled myself. I always read the end first on these books. Don't have the time to find out if it's an adventure worth spending my life on..." She continued to chatter with delight, her words inaudible echoes that blurred in his ears. The Doctor stepped away in shock before he realized this might have been his clever self again sending another invitation from the future...

"You know I hate repeats," he sighed.

"Well then! I propose we start a sequel." River gently pulled the blank diary from the Doctor's hands. "No more spoilers. No more time being rewritten. You could use a bodyguard. I could use some adventure. All on the same page and—My! Isn't this morning getting a little darker than usual?" she exclaimed, glimpsing the horizon with the corner of her eye. The Doctor turned and saw it too: the entire glistening library grounds slowly swallowed by a tidal wave of darkness. A swarm of a billion *Vashta Neradas* heading towards them. *Oooh, not good!*

"Looks like you made them angry," she remarked with a shrug.

"I don't remember making them this angry!"

"Well they definitely remember you making them angry! So what do you say spaceman?" River smiled, extending her hand towards him. "Care to go off and see the universe?"

"I say we RUN!" And the Doctor grabbed her hand.

And they ran.

THE SONG AND THE SILENCE

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Thank you for reading!