

I'm here Doctor.

Still.

***You thought you'd left me behind, didn't you? Thought you'd buried me at Arcadia?
Cast me into the heart of the Nightmare Child? Left me behind like one of your
Companions?***

You didn't.

I'm still here, Time Lord.

And I've been waiting for you.

Wake up!

Silencing the Beast

by the Bunny in the Tardis

"Doctor? Doctor?"

Donna Noble stood before him in the *Tardis* main control room, wrapped in a fuzzy, emerald-green dressing gown, her red hair twirled up in a matching towel. Wet footprints led back down the steps and into one of the Time Ship's long corridors. She had... painted her toenails pink and green.

"Oi. What are you lookin' at, Mister?" she snapped at him.

"What? Nothing..." he protested, unsure why she was angry. What had he done now? Had he actually nodded off whilst piloting the ship? And where had that voice...

...gone? Nowhere. I'm here. I've always been here. I'll never leave you. Not like them.

...gone. Oh, this was not good. He swallowed deeply.

Not good? Not good? Are you telling me you haven't missed me? Haven't missed every wild idea I've ever put into your head? You mean you'd rather have... Donna?

The Doctor raised his gaze slowly to look into the face of his friend, Donna. Wisps of red hair spun out of the towel and clung to her glistening forehead. In all the long years he had travelled with companions across Time and Space, no one had ever made themselves quite as much at home in his ship as Donna Noble. He had to tell her...

...but you won't. You won't tell her. You wouldn't dare tell her.

"Well?" Donna prompted, arms crossed, right hip jutting to one side. The foot tap would be next. "I'm waiting, Spaceman."

"I was just, *uhm*, admiring your, *uhm*, nail art." He considered how impressed the *Fustani* would be, having as many toes as they did. He looked closer. "Are those watermelons?"

"What of it?" Donna asked sharply. "And you could have fooled me."

That wouldn't be difficult. Doctor, you really are losing your touch. Are those watermelons? Watermelons? You're looking at Donna Noble's TOES!

"Doctor, stop it!"

"What? Donna," he drawled, offering her an apologetic smile. He ran a hand through his hair, tugging at one ear self-consciously. "I'm not... I mean I wasn't... I mean I wouldn't. Donna. You know I wouldn't. Why would I?"

Why indeed! You blathering idiot. You always have talked too much. Too fast. She knows you don't fancy her anyway. Why would you? Fancy Donna Noble? She's here because she makes you laugh, doesn't she? Because she's safe? Isn't she? But she isn't. Not with you. None of them will ever be safe with you.

"Yeah, well, don't you forget it," Donna told him.

"Donna, no, I didn't mean it that way," the Doctor told her, squeezing his eyes closed, concentrating.

Oh, yes. Close your eyes. That always works. After so many years are you really such a fool? What next? Hop on one foot, hope I spill out into your shoe so you can toss me away? Think again.

"You know what I think," Donna said, strolling around the *Tardis* central control console, flipping switches as she rubbed her hair dry. "I think you need a holiday."

Oh, yes! A holiday. Let's go on holiday, shall we Doctor? Where shall you take me? Let's take a trip through Time, just you and...

"Everyone needs to get away from..."

...me.

The Doctor readjusted controls as he followed her. "It's just. You know. I don't think that's such a good idea right..."

Now! Nownownownow!

"Oh come on, Skinny Boy, live a little. Life isn't all about running around and alien invasions and things exploding and... running around. Well, maybe it is with you. I was just telling my granddad..."

She talks too much. She always talks too much. More than you, even, and that's a trick. You have more important things to do than listen to Donna Noble. Blah blah blah. You have places to go. Worlds to visit. History to make. You have places to take me. And I have places to take you. Dark places, Doctor. Dark, cold places...

"...and I don't mean another place like Midnight. You..." she gave him an appraising stare. "Is that still bothering you?"

Yes.

"No."

Liar.

"You're sure? Because what happened there... It wasn't your fault, you know," Donna said gently. Her smile reassured him. It was easy to believe her. "It really wasn't."

Yes, it was.

He swallowed hard. "No, it wasn't."

Liar. Liarliarliarliar! As if you will ever get over that. Like you ever got over what happened in the Blue Mountains on Metebelis 3? Like you ever got over being possessed by the heart of the Torajii sun. Are you still burning, Doctor? This time you will Burn with me.

The Doctor drew the back of his hand across his sweaty brow.

"You feeling all right?"

"I've been worse."

Oh, but this is so much worse, isn't it? So much worse. Worse than Tegan's worst nightmare, Doctor, because my roots go so much deeper.

"Yeah? And out that door we'll find the Yellow Brick Road, too."

The door...

You can't push me out the hatch. Not unless you push yourself. Better yet, let's push

Donna...

The Doctor took a faltering step toward her.

“Oi! What are you on about? Give a girl some space, yeah? Steer your ship, or whatever it is you do,” she told him, brushing past him, the lingering scent of lavender giving him a moment of clarity. “But I’m telling you, you need a break.”

I’ll break you, Doctor. I’ll break you yet. And when you are broken, I will consume you. And then, Doctor, then I will run faster than you ever dreamed possible.

Oh, do put away the toys, Doctor. Why not make something more useful? Laser, maybe? No? Too much like a weapon? Even weapons have their uses. You ought to know.

The Doctor examined the readings on his sonic screwdriver as Donna plopped herself down on the steps and examined her toes. She’d traded dressing gown and towel for a floral sundress and a wide-brimmed hat.

Hats. So many hats. There are multi-headed species that don’t have as many hats as Donna Noble. What is that smell? It’s just wrong.

“Donna, something’s wrong...”

Don’t tell her.

“Yeah, no kidding. My watermelons look like little alien faces with too many eyes,” she frowned. She stuck one foot out and wiggled her toes. “Whatcha think? Oh, never mind. If I’m going to be wearing sandals I’ll have to do them over. Where are we going? Some place warm. But not warm like the inside of a volcano, all right?”

Clueless. Utterly clueless. Donna Noble, princess of the inane, queen of clueless. Martha wasn’t like that. Oh, no. Martha Jones was smart, remember? So smart. She adored you, Time Lord, and you were blind. No. You were just being an idiot. Too busy pining after Rose Tyler to notice. And Rose... poor, poor Rose. You lost Rose. You lost Rose and didn’t even try to cross over to get her. You could have. You know you could have...

“Stop it,” the Doctor growled under his breath.

“What? It’s peeling off anyway...”

Peeling away, like paint on a weathered fence...

“No, no, no. Donna, listen to me.” He sat down beside her, not daring to touch her arm, but wanting her to look at him. Needing her to look at him. Pay attention. Could she see it in his eyes? *Donna!* “Something’s wrong. I...”

Don't tell her. You don't want her to know about me. Something terrible might happen. Something so terrible...

The Doctor ignored the warning and pushed on.

"I need you to look into my eyes."

She won't see me.

"You what? Is this some kind of trick? All right, Mr. All Powerful Time Lord, I'm lookin' in your eyes..." Donna said with a crooked smile.

She won't see me.

"What do you see?" he asked, hopeful.

"Big brown dumbo Martian eyes. What do you mean what do I see? You. I see you."

Told you.

"That's what I was afraid of."

They never see me, Time Lord. They only see you. They only see you until it is too late. And the ones that do? They leave, don't they? Go ahead. Have her look again.

"Donna wait. Look again. There's — there's something inside me," he began, struggling to find the words he wanted to use. Struggling to find any words at all. "It's difficult to explain..."

Try a language she understands. Text her.

"Oh, God," Donna told him, turning to face him again. "Really? Just... you are kidding me?! You said you just wanted..."

"That isn't what's inside of me!"

Oh, Doctor. If she only knew. If she only knew what was inside of you. Let's show her. Let's show her the Destroyer of...

"World class aren't you? Just like every other bloke I..."

"Listen. Just listen..."

...worlds! I still hear them. Do you hear them? Do you dream about them? Do you...

"Donna!"

...Doctor?

"I..."

Doctor, don't tell her.

"I need..."

Doctor, don't tell her... don't tell her... don't tell her...

"I need..."

Me. You only need me. You've only ever needed me. You don't need her. You don't need any of them. You survived because of me! I got you out alive. I kept you running. I keep you running. I...

"I need to get something that's inside of me out of me!" he cried, the words tumbling out of his mouth.

"What? Oh, is this like before, when you needed a good shock?" she asked, sidling away from him, balling up one fist. "Well, I'm about to give you more than a shock, buddy."

... as her life depends on it, Doctor. Don't...

"Get out!" The Doctor pressed his hands against either side of his head.

"What do you mean, 'get out'? We've not even *landed* have we?"

Oh, but I have, Doctor. I've landed. I've landed. Take me to your leader. Oh, wait. I AM your leader!

He squeezed closed his eyes, willing the voice inside his head to go away. "Get out! Get out..."

Again with the hands. Again with closing the eyes. Those big brown puppy-dog eyes. Wait. Martian eyes, wasn't it? If only she knew what real Martians looked like! Oh, Doctor, are your eyes still closed? Do you really think you can shut me out so easily? Do you think I don't know what you're doing? Do you think I won't be here when you wake up?

"Doctor? Doctor? Oi, now, come on, you. Wake up. This isn't funny. Doctor?"

Go on. Wake up Doctor. Wake up. Your nightmares are still all here. And so am I.

The Doctor opened his eyes. Donna was above him, upside down, her long hair framing her face, his head cradled on her knees. He blinked in surprise.

"D-Donna...?"

Well, what do you know. Donna's still here. She didn't listen to you. Imagine that. Did you really think she would leave? We landed over two hours ago but here she is. Two hours I've been listening to her. Two bloody hours! Just Donna... and me. Guess what I told her.

"Wake up, Sunshine," she said, giving the Doctor's cheek one final slap. "When I said you needed a break I didn't mean a kip on the floor."

He sat up and looked around. Judging by the crick in his back he'd slid down the stairs. And hit his head on every one.

Hurt you more than it hurt me. Self-induced Time Lord coma? Care to try again? Should have used the Zero Room. Oh, wait! You don't have one, do you? Shame. Let's be a bit more creative next time.

Donna helped him up and guided him to one of the battered jump seats. The Doctor looked at her, registering the concern written across her knitted brow.

Why do they stay? Have you ever asked yourself that question? Why do they stay when all around them people are dying and they are probably next in line?

"Donna, you can't stay here. You need to go — you just need to go..."

Before it's too late...

"Before it's too late. Donna, go. Just... go."

"And leave you like this?"

"I'll be fine," the Doctor told her, forcing a smile. "I'm always fine."

Keep believing that, Time Lord.

"You were unconscious on the floor! You are *not* fine."

And neither will she be if she stays. I can think of a thousand ways a Companion can die. Can you?

"Do you even know where we are?" Donna asked him.

Do you ever know where you are? You didn't know where I was. Where I have been. Where I've always been. Waiting for you to remember me. Waiting for you to open the door and see...

He pushed himself up to examine the coordinates. Earth. England. Chiswick. It was even the right century. He smiled to himself.

"Earth!"

You think you're so brilliant...

"I *know* I am," he muttered, then spun around and grinned at Donna. "Home again, home again, jiggedy-jog! Go on, then. Have a peek."

What if you're wrong. What if you're seeing what you want to see? What if you're seeing what I want you to see?

"Yeah?" she asked slowly, then hurried down the ramp to the door. She glanced back once before swinging it open to poke out her head. The scent of lavender wafted into the

Tardis.

What is that smell?!

“See, what did I tell you. Home. Springtime by the smell. Or we’ve landed near a florist shop. Or in a bathtub. Go on. You said a holiday. See your Granddad. Go on, then.”

Goodbye, Donna Noble. Tell her goodbye. It’s never too early to tell them goodbye.

“It’s still early. Come around later then, for Tea?”

I hate tea...

“Aw, Donna...” he protested.

“It won’t kill you to come around,” she told him dryly.

But it might kill her... or...

“Mum’s... warming up to you.”

No she isn’t

“No she isn’t.”

“No, I guess she isn’t — but granddad has. Have a proper kip, then come ‘round. Promise?”

Oh, pretty please, Doctor? Pretty please? Be part of a family again. Go on. You know you want to. You haven’t had a family in so very long. And another child, lost. Poor little anomaly, left behind like all the...

“Rest up if you can.”

...rest. I wonder what Susan is doing now. Or did. You’ve never gone back.

“I’ll try,” the Doctor said, forcing the words between his teeth.

You lie. After all, I ought to know.

Donna gave him an appraising stare.

She knows. She knows. You lie.

“Well, see that you do,” Donna told him.

Dull as a dish rag, that one. Don’t you remember the day you first met? Oh, your memory is so selective, though, isn’t it? You’ve even tried to forget me.

“You’re rather hard to ignore,” the Doctor said softly, waving at Donna when she turned back for just a moment.

Go on. Call her back. You don’t want to be alone. You never want to be alone. Not that you ever were. Not that you ever will be.

“This is between you and me.” He forced himself to wave again.

Isn't it just. Right then. Let her go. Say goodbye. Cheerio! Don't forget to toss out all her hat boxes before we leave. Dull as a dish rag.

"Oh, I don't know," the Doctor said, watching Donna go off across the tarmac, shaking her fist at a passing car, calling for her grandfather, Wilf. "I thought she had spirit. Showed a lot of courage after what happened with Lance and the Empress of the Racnoss."

She ran away from you. She ran as fast as she could after she saw what you were really like. Murdering helpless children. Doctor. It really was disgraceful. Even by your standards. Let's show her again, shall we?

"She already knows. And she came back. Of all things — she came back."

An accident.

"I don't think so."

A mistake.

"Maybe."

A happy bit of circumstance in any case — and not so happy, as it will turn out. You destroy them. Just like you destroy yourself. Were it not for me you would never have gotten this far.

The Doctor wrinkled his nose, smiling as he shut the *Tardis* door. He let go a pent breath, rubbing at his temples.

"This ends. Now."

This will never end, Doctor.

A moment of silence, inside and out.

I know.

What are we doing now, Doctor? Preparing to dematerialize? Oh, good. Time and Space and everything in between! Have I finally given you the excuse you needed to leave Donna behind?

"I don't intend to leave Donna," the Doctor said, rapidly setting, resetting, then changing the settings as he worked his way around the control console, "and you know it. She's brilliant. Or will be."

Maybe. If she doesn't die in your arms, first. Oh, but that's right. They never die in your arms.

"Some of them do." the Doctor whispered.

Not the ones that mattered.

“You can stop anytime,” he pointed out, fingers a blur on the controls. Check, recheck, re-re-check.

I could. But why would I want to?

“Because, I’m going to stop listening.” He punched three random buttons and a piece of lavender hazelnut toast popped into the air.

To the voice inside your head?

“Just that,” he said, snatching the toast and taking a bite.

Then why do you keep answering me?

“Well, if you really must know,” he said between bites, “you have to admit you’re more than a little distracting. But, I know what you’re doing and it isn’t going to work on me.”

And why not?

“Because you *are* me.”

At last, we understand each other.

“Awww, like I didn’t know what you were the moment I heard your voice. Oh, it’s been a while since you’ve been this *noisy*, but don’t think for a minute that I didn’t know you were still there. You know,” the Doctor said bitterly, “there’s a reason I don’t like you.”

You.

“Me,” he said. “But this isn’t the time to talk about it. We’re going to take a little trip.”

You haven’t set any coordinates. Are you trying to be clever, Doctor?

“That’s because I don’t have to leave here to take you where you need to go. And, oh, in case you’ve forgotten — I *am* clever!”

Silence.

He had gotten the last word.

Not yet you haven’t.

The Cloister Room, Doctor? The Time Lord’s cathedral. You are getting old, aren’t you? Old and sentimental. Do you even remember, Doctor? What it was like being young? Do you? You try so hard not to. Shall I tell you the stories all over again? Perhaps start with a lonely boy on a very cold night, a very long time ago? A boy who didn’t know a real enemy when

he saw one? You didn't listen to me. You should have. I tried to tell you. Or will it be War stories? Shall I tell you those? I have so many.

"Knock yourself out. But wait. You don't have to. It's all here," the Doctor said calmly, fingers resting on the neural interface relay switch. "You want stories? I'll tell you a whopper!"

The Tardis doesn't remember anything that I don't already remember. That you don't already remember. Remember fleeing? Remember burning? Remember everyone you left behind?

"We don't have to just remember." He flicked the switch and stepped away.

At once, over every channel, came the roar of ships' engines, the grating voices of Daleks, and the panicked voices of Time Lords. So many Time Lords. So many dead Time Lords.

What? Are we playing at ghost stories now? Are you trying to frighten me? With this? You'll have to do better than this.

"More like this?" the Doctor asked, punching up the visuals. Images of the past engulfed him, the room transformed into a cosmos of terror.

Oh! I remember this! Did you ever feel more alive? Did you!

Laughter rang as they barreled into a sea of Dalek battle cruisers, the dark horizon a blur of War *Tardises* and a thousand other ships stretched across a thousand different Times.

Doctor! I'm surprised at you. Revisiting the glory days? On the front line again are we? For Rassilon and for Gallifrey? What do you hope to accomplish with this? What do you expect to see?

"What do *you* expect to see?"

Nothing I didn't see before. War, Doctor! War! At last, we had our revenge.

"Oh, yes. And wasn't it sweet," the Doctor said softly.

Sweet? Sweet doesn't begin to describe it. Look at them! Remember them! We watched them burn!

"We watched them burn. And a thousand worlds with them."

War, Doctor. War. You answered the call to it. You didn't bring it home.

"Didn't I?" the Doctor asked, gazing at the images before him, steeling himself against the memories that flooded every fibre of his being.

The Daleks were the scourge of the galaxy. The scourge of ten galaxies! Of Time itself. Time was unraveling, Doctor! They had to be stopped. Nothing else mattered!

“And nothing has mattered since.”

Too true.

“Not the least of which are these pesky, human Companions, eh?”

What do they know? How can they even compare to what you once had, Doctor? What you left behind. Again and again. And for what? To roam like a cosmic hobo when you could have ruled them all? Traded away all that, for these people with their tiny, stupid brains and their tiny, stupid planet, all so worried about their everyday lives that they miss the big picture. They didn't even know that war raged in Heaven!

Panic grew to terror. The voices grew louder with the memory of their pain. Weaponry as cunning as any living thing obliterated planets that were at once restored to be destroyed again. Cataclysm after cataclysm burned into his eyes. He let it all in.

You were ruthless, Doctor. You were as ruthless as any of them.

“I know.”

You still are.

“Oh, believe me. I know.” The Doctor flicked another control and the *Tardis* lurched into motion, careening into the Vortex.

What are you doing?

“Flying!”

What?

On she flew, screaming in terror. Faster. Faster. The noise was deafening now, the room choked with smoke and memories as they began to tumble through Time, the War enfolding them, closing around them. The Cloister Bell began to ring.

What are you doing?

“What? Can't you tell? We're going back in!”

WHAT?

“We're going back in! You were right. You brought me through. You ran away and took me with you. Or I ran away and took you. Either way, we survived when so many others perished. Well, no more! We're going to crash through the Time Lock and we're *Going. Back. In.*”

What? No. That's impossible!

“Nothing’s impossible. You said yourself, earlier, I could have reached Rose. I could have brought down the walls between Universes to get to Rose and I didn’t,” the Doctor said through gritted teeth. “I never even told her...”

That’s because you’re a coward.

“No! That’s because *you’re* a coward.”

The ringing of the Cloister Bell was deafening.

This isn’t real. This cannot be real. What have you done? What have you...

“...done? Nothing. I’ve done nothing. Except unlock the door you wanted to open.

Flung it *wiiide* open. Welcome to my worst Nightmare. Don’t you like the view?”

What? No! Stop it! Stop it! We left Gallifrey burning!

“Oh yes! Yes we did!”

We left Romana burning.

“We left them *all* burning!” the Doctor grated.

We left them... left them... left them all burning. I — I — I saved you. I saved you. I — Doctor, stop. You won’t go back there. You can’t go back there! If it weren’t for me you would have burned with them. I kept you running. I keep you running. I’ll never stop running! I don’t want to go back there! This isn’t real. You can’t fool me. You can’t fool yourself. You can’t!

“Who said I was fooling?” the Doctor said, throwing wide open the telepathic relays to remember... everything.

They flew into the maw of the Nightmare Child.

No! No! NO!

“No,” the Doctor whispered as he slid down against a bulkhead, covering his head with trembling hands, rocking, rocking, rocking.

The *Tardis* burned, inside and out, and so did he.

“Doctor? Doctor? Where’ve you got off to now? *Doctor!*” Donna’s voice boomed over the open com system.

D-Donna... S-she’s... b-back.

“Yes, she is!” the Doctor grinned, bounding from the Cloister Room, running through long, empty corridors. He skidded to a stop in the primary control room and threw his arms around his friend as she came through the door. “Donna!”

“Gah,” Donna said, pushing him away. She looked him up and down critically. “What a sight *you* are. Did you sleep at all?”

“No.”

“And didn’t shower either. Blimey!”

I’m still here, Doctor...

“No,” the Doctor replied, stepping aside as she breezed into the *Tardis*, tossing her hat onto the coat rack beside the door. She shoved a grocery sack into his arms. Once more the scent of lavender filled the air. “I had a lot on my mind.”

Cheeky...

“Well you missed Tea. Granddad brought in this gorgeous bottle of French wine he’s had put up since Christmas,” Donna said, rounding on him, hugging herself. “Shut the door then, it’s getting cold. Oh, that’s right, you don’t notice.”

“Not so much, no,” he said wearily, glad to see her. So very glad to see her.

Cold, Doctor. Remember the little boy, so cold; remember the burning, the...

“I brought more of mum’s bread — and the lavender honey butter you fancied. I should have brought the rest of Gramps’ bottle around for you, too.” Donna turned and looked at him. “Seriously. Are you all right? Did... something happen after I left? What aren’t you telling me?”

“I’m fine Donna. Really.”

“Is that Time Lord code again for terrible? Yeah. Thought as much... All right,” she said slowly. “Fancy tea, then?”

“I’d love tea,” the Doctor told her, tired at last from silencing the beast within. He looked into the sack. Lavender tea. Just the thing.

I hate tea...

“Don’t be getting ideas, though,” Donna said over her shoulder. “I’ll not be playing “mum” to *you*, Spaceman.”

I’ll be waiting for you Doctor. I’ll be waiting in your dreams.

“I know,” he said softly. *Why do you think I never sleep?*



**DOCTOR
WHO**

CLASSIC MONSTERS - BRAND NEW ADVENTURES

**SILENCING
THE
BEAST**

by the Bunny in the Tardis

THE CCPS VOL II - EPISTLES OF THE ENEMY

by the Bunny in the Tardis

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