



DOCTOR WHO

Re-Incarnated

GHOSTS OF CHRISTMAS PAST

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DOCTOR WHO: RE-INCARNATED PRESENTS

Ghosts of Christmas Past

An original Doctor Who story

By Shaun Collins

DOCTOR WHO: RE-INCARNATED

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Ghosts of Christmas Past
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The console room door swung open and the hat stand entered the room, carried by the Doctor. He waltzed with it across the floor, set it in a corner, stood back, and gave it a look with a critical eye. It was brand new, the wood gleaming, a replacement for the stand he lost in a scuffle with Jack the Ripper. He pondered it for a moment, then he moved it to the opposite corner. Quite satisfied with that, he took his trilby hat off of the console and tossed it up on the hat stand, where it landed with a flourish. Next he slid the red scarf from around his neck and hung it next to the hat and nodded.

He disappeared back through one of the many interior doors that were embedded discreetly into the room's walls, and emerged several minutes later. The door opened a little too far and banged against the wall as the Doctor muscled through from deep within the ship, wrestling with a giant evergreen Christmas tree, already decorated. He manhandled the tree into the corner the hat stand was originally going to occupy and set it down in a great flurry of jingling bells and jangling ornaments. Several silver stars fell from the tree and clattered to the floor, and a perfectly round red bauble that sparkled with a miniature galaxy inside rolled across the floor, coming to a stop beneath the hat stand.

He left the ornaments on the floor; there'd be plenty of time to clean up later. Right now, he was late for Christmas. He'd spent the last several years trying to hit the first Christmas that Kris Kringle started delivering presents (contrary to all the modern day hoopla, Kris was a real person, who traveled the frozen north from village to village delivering toys to children in a sleigh pulled by reindeer. The truth stopped there and the legend took over, transforming him into the jolly figure of Father Christmas the world knew today), but for some reason, the date was a difficult one for the TARDIS to hit. Last year he'd wound up in a bowling alley in Northern Iowa celebrating with a Christmas cheeseburger. Of course, the nest of Cybermats under the aisles had made the trip worthwhile, but it was a disappointing Christmas nonetheless. This year, he was determined to make a proper holiday out of it.

Feeling quite sorted, the Doctor moved around the central TARDIS console, flipping switches while whistling "We Wish You A Merry Christmas" to himself. To an observer – had one been present – it would have appeared as random acts of chaos from a madman. But anyone who had ridden in the TARDIS before, anyone who knew the Doctor, would have seen the truth of the scene, the pattern in the madness. It was not random, it was an organized dance of joy, a pure celebration of the fantastical wonder of *being*.

This Doctor was different than the ones who had come before. This Doctor was dressed rather simply in all black, trousers, shirt and suit coat, the only splash of color coming from the red scarf he'd just hung up. This Doctor was companionless, a startling change from his normal routine. And perhaps most striking of all, this Doctor should be dead.

In his fourteenth life and not really sure how or why, the Time Lord knew the mystery of his own survival would be a driving force in his life going forward. But the Doctor also knew that solving that mystery wasn't a priority for him at the moment. At the moment, he was simply enjoying his life, taking advantage of some advice given to him by an old friend, a monk.

No, not THAT Monk.

He flipped another series of switches and smiled, patting the console time rotor affectionately. 'And what Christmas surprise do you have in store for me next, eh?' He asked the ship, the room, and no one in particular all at once.

The TARDIS responded by lurching violently sideways, toppling the hat stand, Christmas tree and Doctor simultaneously. She righted herself just as violently, then fell out of the time vortex altogether, coming to an all too-sudden dead stop. The hat stand, the trilby, the scarf, several ornaments, and the Doctor slid along the floor and wound up in a heap against the far wall. The fallen Christmas tree thankfully stayed where it was on the floor. Slowly the lights on the console dimmed and went out, controls stopped humming and beeping, and the ship groaned from deep within her bones, as if settling on the bottom of the ocean floor. The time rotor sank to the bottom of the console and stopped with a loud, ominous boom that sounded like a tank being dropped in a concert hall.

The Doctor disentangled his limbs from the arms of the hat stand and got shakily to his feet as the dim emergency lighting kicked on, casting the console room in strange shades of amber and red. He crossed to the console, a little less than sure footed, and leaned heavily on the control panel.

'Well, that was a surprise,' he said. 'Not the most pleasant of them, but still a surprise.' He addressed the ship. 'I'd go so far as to say that may be one of the most unpleasant Christmas surprises I've ever had, and that includes the year I got socks.' He flipped a few switches and twirled a knob or two, but all the controls seemed dead. 'I mean, really, who gives socks?'

'Doctor?'

He spun around and found himself staring into the face of the past.

'Jo? Jo Grant?'

It couldn't be, but there she was, all mini-skirt and legs, a fuzzy light blue jacket waving its fabric tendrils in mock hello. Her blonde hair framed her wide eyes as if she couldn't believe she was standing there herself.

'Doctor?' She asked again, even more puzzled.

The Doctor turned from her to consult the interior scanners, but they were still dead. He spun back...

...and Jo was gone.

The Doctor paced quickly over to the area where she had stood. He passed his arms slowly through the space, then spun in a circle with them spread out before him. He pulled his sonic screwdriver from his inside jacket pocket and waved it around, then consulted the readings and frowned. He crossed back over to the console.

'I take it back. THAT may be one of the most unpleasant surprises I've ever had.'

He reached up and felt the back of his head, thinking perhaps his hand would come away bloody. 'A concussion would be just what I needed right about now.' But his hand was dry.

'Hmmm... Psychotropic hallucination? Random memory fragment?' He snapped his fingers.

'Nervous breakdown! Yes, that's the, oh. Oh, no. No, no, no, that can't be it. Though Sigmund always was after me to get on his couch.'

'Doctor?'

'Jo, I –' he spun around again but it wasn't Jo this time. This time it was a young woman in a blue spandex top with similarly-coloured shorts, peach shoes and a matching hair band in her short hair.

'Perpugilliam?'

Peri walked toward him, her arms outstretched as if to embrace him. The Time Lord took a hesitant step back. She frowned, tilting her head to the side as if considering something, then vanished before him.

The Doctor blinked twice. The image was still gone. He turned the sonic on himself then consulted those readings, but to no avail. Everything indicated he was fine. Shaken, but fine. 'Ergo, the problem must lie with the ship,' he reasoned aloud. He turned back to the controls, and saw Martha in her red leather jacket looking at him from across the console.

'Doctor?'

He pointed the sonic at her and scanned at full power, amber light flaring bright in the room from the tip.

'Results are negative, Master.'

He spun left and saw K9 sitting serenely below the console lip, his ear antennae rotating back and forth.

'K9, what's wrong? Why are my results negative? What's going on?'

'Insufficient data, Master.'

'Fat lot of good you are. If I'm going mad and you're figments of my imagination, the least you could all do is be helpful.'

'But Doctor, we are trying to be helpful,' came a new voice. A tall man in a black turtleneck stepped out of the interior ship door.

'Chesterton? Ian Chesterton?'

'Afraid so. But none of this makes any sense!'

'You're telling me,' the Doctor replied. He rubbed a tired hand over his face and when he pulled it away he was alone in the console room again. The cavernous space was empty, silent. The Doctor started examining every control on every section of the console, hunting for one thing, one clue, one working readout, one tiny detail that would explain what was happening. Why the ship had stopped, where the visions were coming from. But the TARDIS was utterly dead.

Twenty minutes of fiddling with dials and he was no closer to knowing anything.

'The machine does not function?' Called a female from behind him. Leela was leaning with her arms up, nearly hanging from the door frame with a look of boredom on her face.

'Hello savage,' the Doctor half-smiled. 'No, the machine does not function.'

'Rickety old thing never worked properly anyway,' said Tegan, standing in her dark blue flight attendant outfit against the far wall. 'I want to go home.'

'Oi, stuff it, missy,' replied Donna, crossing her arms as she stood beside the Doctor at the console.

'Ach, it's no use arguing, we're stuck,' said Jamie, crossing the room in his kilt to stand next to Donna.

Evelyn Smythe stepped forward carrying a silver tray with a small teapot and several glasses on it. 'It's happened to us before, it'll happen to us again. Would anyone like some hot chocolate while we wait for the Doctor to figure this out?'

'We'll help you make some. Won't we Susan?' Barbara asked the young girl standing next to her.

'Grandfather is frowning. This could take a while,' Susan agreed.

The Doctor shivered slightly as Amy placed a hand on his shoulder. 'Don't worry, Doctor. I know you'll figure this out.'

'Yeah, don't worry about it, Professor,' called Ace from across the room.

'You might want to hurry it up a bit. Despite all the space, we're getting a bit crowded in here, old chap,' the Brigadier said, standing at parade rest next to him.

'Take all the time you need,' argued Captain Jack, who whistled slowly, surveying the assortment of people in the room with eager eyes. 'You always did know how to pick them, Doctor.'

What is that supposed to mean, and who the bloody hell are you?' Lucie Miller challenged him with a glare, but Jack just winked cheerily in return.

'Ghosts of Christmas past,' the Doctor muttered. He rubbed his hands together, coming to a decision. 'Right. I'm going into the core,' he announced quietly. All other conversation died at once.

'You can't. You can't go in there, it'll kill you.'

The Doctor looked up to see Sarah Jane standing in a white flowing dress. The worry was evident on her face and he smiled sadly.

'Only thing for it, I'm afraid. The TARDIS has stopped. There's no power reaching the instruments. The problem must be in the core. If I can reach it, I can trip the manual resets and be on my way.'

'And if the core is still active you'll be killed instantly.'

'True. But if I do nothing, we'll never know how brilliant I am, will we?' He grabbed a torch from a drawer set in the console and headed off.

Three levels below the console room sat an immense chamber with a dull white orb set at the top of the room. The Doctor removed one roundel panel from the wall and scanned the interior circuitry with his sonic. The readings matched those upstairs. The ship was quite dead. He pulled another roundel free and took a deep breath, then started to turn a hand crank set within it. The orb unlocked and slowly began to descend from the ceiling, clanking and rattling, sounding like it was being lowered on chains of the kind found in Frankenstein's lab. The orb touched down on the floor. It was flat on top, and a long column with a ladder recessed within it stood atop the half sphere. It stretched up into the dark, black hole in the ceiling, into the immense power station that fueled the TARDIS.

The core.

'Doctor?'

He turned, one foot already on the first step of the ladder. 'Of course. It had to be you, didn't it. How are you, Rose Tyler?'

Rose stood in her jeans, and the Union Jack t-shirt she last sported in WWII London. She shrugged. 'I'm the only one who's ever experienced the power of the time vortex that's up there. Other than yourself,' she amended.

'I remember.'

'Be careful.'

'I will.'

'I'm sorry.'

'For what?'

'I dunno,' She shrugged again. 'Just seemed like the right thing to say.'

The Doctor shook his head sadly. 'Never apologize, Rose. **You** have no reason to.' He began to climb.

The chamber above was spherical, impossibly immense, and dark. The Doctor shone the torch around him, illuminating only small pockets of the walls. Straight up was the central junction box, and the manual resets. Ordinarily, this entire room would be sealed off, flowing with energy from the time vortex. As often as the Eye of Harmony was referred to as the heart of the ship, it was really just a petrol tank for the vortex energy. The core was the combustion engine

that made the TARDIS work. And climbing an insanely tall ladder several stories up into the inside of that engine was ranked so high on the TARDIS manual's list of not-to-do things that even the Doctor had never seriously considered doing it.

Until now.

Amusingly, it was also the ONLY thing on the manual's not-to-do list that the Doctor hadn't done yet.

He climbed a few more feet and came face to face with the box. It was a small set of switches behind a transparent lid, set right into the column itself. Above him the column ended inside the console and the time rotor, below him the Eye Of Harmony interface. The Doctor hung suspended between the two and opened the transparent lid, flipping it up on squeaky hinges. Four switches, all marked UP TO RESET on them. One by one clicked the switches to the downward position.

A flavershrew flew by, nearly startling him into jumping off the ladder. Flavershrews were bat-like creatures that lived within the multiple dimensions of the TARDIS. He'd rescued them from one planet or another long ago, and their colonies inhabited the ship and fed off the vortex energy. Inoffensive creatures, the Doctor found he liked having them around, if for no other reason than his claims of having bats in his belfry weren't unjustified. Besides, they gave the place character.

'You shouldn't be in here, though,' he admonished the creature. 'I know you like to feed on the vortex energy that bleeds through the temporal shields, but this room is about to become a more-than-you-can-eat buffet, a smorgasbord of unending proportions. And while that might sound tempting, you'd never survive the meal.' He shot a few blasts of harmless sound with the sonic screwdriver after it, and the flavershrew dived bombed down the open hole in the floor below him.

The Doctor turned back to the switches and slowly and methodically began priming them, flipping them back into the up position. The first one reset the lights in the core, and it brilliantly lit up, surrounding and bathing him in soft gold and white light.

He pocketed his torch and flipped the second switch. A rolling shudder spread throughout the ship. The third switch clicked into position and the walls of the sphere charged with energy from the vortex, swirling in hues of red, purple and blue. Arks of energy sparked out from the walls and struck the central column.

'A bit like being inside a Tesla coil,' the Doctor commented, awe-struck by the display. He eyed the fourth switch. Theoretically, there was supposed to be a built in delay before the charged particles surged though the room. Theoretically. It was only a theory, and climbing inside the core engine was at the top of the manual's not-to-do list for a reason.

'We wish you a merry Christmas,' the Doctor mumbled merrily, and flipped the switch.

He woke up on the floor in the console room. The hat stand was back in the corner, trilby and scarf neatly hanging from it. The tree had been righted, ornaments replaced with care. Standard lighting and flight had resumed, as the time rotor rose and fell smoothly. Everything seemed quite normal.

Father Christmas was leaning against the console, looking at the Doctor with a pained, worried expression, but apart from that, everything seemed quite normal.

Father Christmas extended a hand gloved in black, and with his assistance the Doctor got slowly and painfully to his feet, eyeing the fat man in the red suit warily. 'Okay, now this really is too

much. How am I supposed to take these delusions seriously if you're going to go to this level of ridiculousness?' He paused. 'Unless of course, you are the real Santa, in which case I've been oh so good this year and I'd like a new molecular stabilization circuit, please.'

Father Christmas chuckled (bowl full of jelly indeed) and shook his head. 'Not a delusion, but not the original model either, I'm afraid.'

'Then what? Psychic transmission? Bad Guacamole?' He looked the fake Father Christmas over. '...You're not a Slitheen, are you?'

'A different sort of clumsy alien, I'm afraid.'

The Doctor stood motionless for a moment, letting that statement wash over him. 'No, I'm not following.'

'We are the Venturi. We travel the cosmos exploring and learning all we can. We came across your ship and were quite curious. We had heard rumors of the Time Lords of course, but have never seen one until now.'

'Not likely to again either.'

'So true.' Father Christmas looked sad. 'We attempted contact, but underestimated the sophistication of your temporal shielding. I'm afraid we were responsible for knocking your TARDIS out of the vortex.'

'Oh. Well why not just apologize, exchange insurance information and move on? Why all the cloak and dagger, why all the rummaging about in my head? That's private property, you had no right!'

'You are correct. But we lacked the ability to contact you. Our physical form precludes being seen or heard on this plane of existence. We needed to mine your thoughts in order to learn a commonality of language and communication. Our first attempts at projecting your thoughts were less than successful. You have powerful memories of your companions, Doctor. So powerful they overwhelmed any controls we attempted to exert on them and they became quite solid for a time.'

'And the core?'

'A very real experience, and ultimately successful. You saved your ship. The least we could do was to save you in return.'

The Doctor snapped his fingers. 'The flavershrew.'

'It seemed the most practical way of monitoring you.'

The Doctor checked over the console and found everything to be in working order. 'Well, no harm done, I guess.' He smoothed his hair down. 'Although looking at the temporal coordinates, I've missed Christmas. Again.'

'We cannot apologize enough for the danger and inconvenience we have caused. How may we make it up to you?'

'Oh that's not...' The Doctor's eyes gleamed. 'Well, actually if you don't mind, there is something you can do. I'd consider it a most excellent surprise...'

Deep within the TARDIS, there was a room rarely used (and one that more than once had been threatened with jettisoning). The Great Hall as the Doctor liked to think of it – it mirrored the gothic cathedral architecture of the Eye of Harmony courtyard. It was large, cobblestone laid, with wooden support beams and flying buttresses, grand stained glass windows depicting the history of Gallifrey and the symbols of the Time Lords that reached up to impossibly tall heights. The ceiling wasn't even visible, it was so high above them. Flavershrews inhabited more than one of the rafters up there somewhere, and occasionally a flock of them swooped low enough to be seen. The tables were piled high with food and drink, places were set, and the chairs were full of smiling, chattering faces. The Christmas tree had been relocated to the head of the

room, and additional decorations of holly and pine, poinsettias and candles had been added to set a festive mood.

He tapped the edge of his wine glass to get their attention, then raised it in a toast.

“To my new friends, the Venturi, you have my thanks for allowing this celebration to come to pass. And to my old friends –” He looked down the table and began to recite their names.

‘–Sarah Jane. Ian and Barbara. Amy and Rory. Harry, Leela, Susan, Jo. Jamie and Zoe. Ace.

Brigadier. K9. Donna, Steven, Adric, Lucie, Nyssa and Tegan and Turlough...’ He carried on down the table, naming names, exchanging a wink with Jack here and a smile with Grace there. Each of his friends nodded, or waved, or raised their glass, or cheered as he spoke to them. When every single person sat at the huge table was accounted for, he paused, unsure how to continue.

‘To all of you, I’m so...’

He broke off again, uncertain he could continue for the lump in his throat. He sought out Rose, and her eyes met his. She shook her head, and mouthed his words back at him.

‘Never apologize, Doctor. **You** have no reason to.’

The Doctor relaxed, then. He looked around at the faces beaming back at him, and allowed himself a bittersweet smile. THIS was Christmas. This was the way it ought to be. ‘Merry Christmas, my friends. And thank you.’

And then he set about carving the turkey.

Coming next month to
Doctor Who: Re-Incarnated...

The Blue Box

By Alex Smith

'Would you believe me if I told you this isn't really a police box?'

When Tracy Blaid, an ordinary London girl, stops in the street to examine an unusual looking phone box, it will be the start of the greatest adventure of her life. A cheerful museum thief, a high-security research lab, and a swarm of living smoke – they're all waiting for her, through the doors of the blue box.

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About The Author

Shaun Collins lives, works and plays in Topeka, Kansas. He is an award winning writer and filmmaker, having several short film festival wins under his belt. His days are spent puttering around his keyboard, his nights are for donning a cape and mask and defending the citizens of Topeka and ridding the streets of crime. Except for Friday's when he co-hosts Friday Night Who, and Sunday's when he is one third of the Doctor Who podcast Traveling The Vortex. The city can fend for itself on those nights.

You can follow Shaun on twitter @VortexShaun, find him on Facebook or visit the podcast he co-hosts at www.travelingthevortex.com.



'And what Christmas surprise do you have in store for me next, eh?'

Legend tells there was a man named Kris Kringle, who handed out presents to children. The Doctor is on his way to see this bit of history for himself, when suddenly the TARDIS violently drops out of the time vortex and is stopped dead in space. When he comes to, he begins experiencing visions of companions long gone. Is the Doctor losing his mind? Or have the Ghosts come to warn him of a much greater danger?

