

DOCTOR WHO

Re-Incarnated

Stars and Stripes

Mark Lee



DOCTOR WHO: RE-INCARNATED PRESENTS

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An original Doctor Who story

By Mark Lee

DOCTOR WHO: RE-INCARNATED

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A drop of water dripped down from the ceiling of the sewer. The steady *drip, drip* of water was the only sound audible in the dank sewer. Or rather, it was, until the roaring sound of an explosion tore through the tunnel.

Fire engulfed the claustrophobic space, lighting up the worn brick walls. The missile soared down the narrow space, spewing up water as it detonated into the narrow river of sludge that flowed down the center of the tunnel. And then, moments later, came the sound of footsteps. Sprinting, bounding footsteps, the sound of people running for their lives. The Doctor rounded the corner and skidded to a halt, breathing heavily. He was dressed in his simple black clothes and omnipresent trilby, and he was winded from the long run. His pause gave the man running behind him a chance to catch up; a middle-aged man with a strong, muscled figure came into view, dressed in what had been only moments ago an immaculate suit. Now it was covered in brick dust, and torn at the knees where the man had tripped.

'Harper,' the Doctor managed the gasp, in between bouts of catching his breath. Harper, similarly winded, made no attempt to reply, but instead clutched at his chest, heaving in great swooping lungfuls of air. After a few seconds, he gagged on the sewer stench.

'That is *vile*,' Harper complained, to no-one in particular. More footsteps began to echo through the sewer; another man rounded the corner, a tall figure with a curled beard, wearing a top hat.

'Any sign of Tracy or Edward?' the Doctor asked the tall man. He nodded.

'They were just behind me,' he said, in a strong, dignified American accent. Even as he spoke, more footsteps rang out in the dank tunnel, and two more figures came across the corner.

The first was a young woman, with dark hair that curled slightly as it fell around her shoulders and a pale, heart-shaped face. She looked exhausted. Right behind her was a man with a lined face and dark red hair, dressed in a similar suit to Harper, but slightly more worn.

'Tracy! Edward!' the Doctor pulled them into a quick hug, relieved. Then he stepped back, as a thought struck him. There were five people here now, but he recalled that there should be a sixth; another man, wearing a suit of similar quality to that of Harper and Edward. 'But where's the guard fellow?'

Tracy frowned as she struggled to recall. In the chaos of the chase, she must have lost sight of him. Then her eyes widened in terror.

'Oh god,' she put her hand to her mouth. She looked sick. 'I think he got caught in the first missile explosion.'

The Doctor needed no further explanation. Another man dead, killed by the creatures chasing them. The creatures armed with powerful missile launchers, the creatures that even now were cackling gleefully as they swept up the tunnel towards them.

'We need to carry on, or they'll catch up. Follow me,' said the tall man wearing a top hat, and he began to sprint again. The Doctor, Tracy, Edward and Harper all followed in pursuit, and the Doctor sighed.

How did I end up in this mess?

Earlier...

'All of time and space, Tracy. Far-flung futures, long-gone pasts. Everywhere, everywhen. Where do you want to go first?'

She stared at him for a moment, unsure how to reply.

'We can go anywhere?'

'Anywhere.'

The Doctor was standing by the console, leaning over the controls, his fingers twitching eagerly. He was ready to go. The sound of the TARDIS hummed all around them, an oddly soothing noise, but it did nothing to comfort Tracy as an eternity of possibilities opened up around her.

'Erm...'

'Go on?'

She had met the Doctor entirely by accident, when his ship – disguised as an old-fashioned police telephone box – had been wheeled in to the museum where she worked by mistake. Following a ridiculous museum robbery, and a short trip to a nearby laboratory, she had become embroiled in a battle between the Doctor and a group of aliens made of living smoke. When the threat had been foiled and the planet saved, she had found herself with a choice; follow the Doctor into his box, or stay behind and keep on living a normal, average life. Had she made the right decision?

'I want to go...'

'Yes?'

She drew a deep breath, and opened her mouth to make her decision.

The phone rang. The Doctor froze, like a rabbit caught in headlights, and began to scramble over the controls for anything vaguely resembling a receiver. He eventually found some sort of ear trumpet connected to a trailing wire, and cautiously held it up to his ear.

'Hello?' he asked, tentatively. After a few moments, his expression changed from bewilderment to delight.

'Barry! How are you, mate?'

The muffled voice at the other end of the line began to speak animatedly. Tracy crossed her arms and waited impatiently.

'Ah, right... I see. Tracy, could you grab a pen?'

She rolled her eyes and pulled a notebook from her museum guard's belt, along with a chipped blue ballpoint pen. She passed them over to the Doctor, who hastily tore a piece of paper out of her notebook and began to scribble things down on the pad. The voice on the other end of the phone continued to talk, with the Doctor umming and ahing as his writing became more and more illegible as he attempted to keep up. Eventually, the Doctor's friend stopped, and the Doctor dropped the pen.

'Shouldn't be a problem, honestly. I'll be right there!' he cheerily said goodbye, then attempted to place the ear trumpet back onto the console (he seemed momentarily lost as he tried to figure out where it went, then gave up and absently tossed in into the pell-mell mess of controls). He pocketed the paper, now covered in barely-readable notes, and looked over at Tracy.

'So?' she said. He just smiled knowingly, and pulled a lever on the console. The room began to shake.

'You want adventure?' he laughed. 'I'll give you adventure!'

George Scout stood, tall and still, outside the doors of the Oval Office. Everything was calm around him. His dark suit was still relatively new, and – in his own opinion, at least – made him look rather dapper and sophisticated. He'd been wearing it almost every day since he had emigrated over from tiny Scotland with his brother, in the hopes of making a fortune on the entrepreneur's frontier,

America. Unfortunately for them, America was at war, and jobs that didn't involve some form of military work were hard to come by. George tried to look on the bright side, though; many of the White House's trained security team had been conscripted to fight in the war, and skilled opportunists such as himself and his brother Edward had been able to fill in the gaps left by their absence. It wasn't the best job in the world, but it paid okay, and it made him feel important. Here he was, outside the office of the most important man in America, possibly the world. It was his duty to defend that man from those who may try to harm him; the significance of his position made George feel rather smug. Certainly, it was a step up from the humble delivery service he and Edward had run back in their home town.

Slowly, though, the feeling of pride and importance began to fade. He was beginning to feel sleepy, struggling to keep his eyes awake. He found himself glancing repeatedly at the tall, wooden clock that stood discreetly to one side in the corridor. It was getting late; surely the next shift would be starting soon? Then Edward would be able to come and relieve him of his post, and he could take a long sleep. That was all he needed, a bit of rest, and he would be fine. He looked over his shoulder, at the Oval Office door. He knew that two more guards were positioned just beyond it, inside the room, keeping watch over the President. It wasn't as if protecting the President was a responsibility that lay only on his shoulders. He could leave and nothing would happen. Just for five minutes, of course, just while he cleared his head and shook off the sudden drowsiness that had engulfed him. The muscles in his shoulder clenched, but he shrugged the feeling away. 'I'll just be five minutes,' he murmured, to no one in particular. Then he set off down the corridor, away from the doors of the Oval Office.

The guard's dormitory was on the highest floor of the White House, and with his current tiredness George was in no condition to be climbing stairs. By the time he arrived there, he was exhausted; it was all he could do not to collapse immediately onto his bunk. He took a few moments to look around the room, checking to see if any familiar faces were lying about. But the room was empty. Everyone else was either out on patrol, at their posts, or preparing for the shift change. The room was dark and cold, and some fool had left the window ajar; chilly night air was drifting in from outside. George crossed the room in a few steps and closed it. The final waft of the breeze that caught him before he locked the latch shut was refreshing; already his tired feeling was beginning to lift. He felt guilty about leaving his post. At the time it had seemed a reasonable thing to do, but now he was starting to see how stupid it had been. You couldn't just walk away from a guard's post whenever you felt like it! He had to get back there right away; there was no time for rest when the President needed protecting.

It was as he turned to the door that the fist hit him.

He stumbled away, taken by surprise, quick eyes scanning his surroundings for the presence of his attacker. He was alone in the room; the door was swinging gently on its hinges, and he could see that there was nobody stood beyond it. He glanced left and right, but nobody seemed to be there. Had he just accidentally bumped into one of the bunks? Most likely. Then another fist hit him, this one jabbing into his stomach. He gasped and staggered backwards, holding up one arm to ward off further blows. He was under attack – but from where? The room was empty! He felt a firm grip tighten around his collar, and in moments he had been lifted clear off the floor. He looked around, wide eyed. There was nobody there! He could feel the attacker's strong hands at his throat, but in front of him there was nothing but the dark doorway of the guard's dorm. What was happening?!

For just a second, something flickered in front of George's eyes; a shape, hazy, gone after a moment, but a shape nonetheless. He had caught a terrifying glimpse of blood red eyes, and a mouth lined with pointed white teeth.

'P-please, whoever you are-'

The invisible force began to push George back into the room. He tried to resist, to pull himself free or squirm from the thing's grip, but its hands were too strong, its fingers too tightly clasped at his neck. He kicked out, and felt his foot hit something solid; an audible grunt of pain came from the intangible figure, but it stumbled only for a second, before continuing relentlessly on. It took George a few moments to realise what it was doing. It was forcing him towards the window.

'Oh, god! No! No, please, let go of me! Let go!'

Three steps. Two steps. One more step, and they were at the window, George's back pressed against the glass.

'P-p-please...'

Again, the figure in front of him flickered into view, but only for a moment. This time, the red eyes were almost glowing with intensity, and a wide, toothed smile had spread across the thing's face.

'No!'

The window smashed as George Scout plummeted through it, the shattered glass lost in the first drops of rain that were beginning to fall, on that dark night. As the concrete rushed up to meet him and his ears roared with the sound of splintering bone, that jagged smile froze in the young guard's mind. The last thing he would ever see.

When the doctors found him, they pronounced it a suicide. Tragic, they agreed amongst themselves. Working here is as stressful as it gets, one claimed. And just outside the circle of paramedics squabbling as they covered the body up, a severe man with auburn hair and a lined face looked on, grieving silently. It made perfect sense. Suicide. He had fallen from a top floor window, of course, shattering the glass as he jumped. There was nobody there to push him, so what other explanation could there be?

But Edward Scout knew that there was one thing that suicide did not explain. The look of utter, naked terror, stretched across his dead brother's face.

The TARDIS shuddered and rattled to a halt, knocking Tracy against the side of the console as it landed. The Doctor tapped a small dial experimentally, and seemed satisfied with the results.

'Come on then, can't be late!' he said. Tracy gave him a sceptical look.

'No, we can't, if this is a *time* machine.'

'Well, yes but – I meant – oh, give over, would you?' he rolled his eyes like a scolded child, and Tracy couldn't help but giggle. He walked over to the TARDIS doors, pulling the crumpled piece of paper from his pocket as he did so.

'Are you coming?' he said, giving her a little wave as he slipped through the doors. She hurried after him, taking a deep breath of anticipation. Then, almost reverentially, she pushed open the TARDIS doors and stepped outside.

'Oh my god.'

They were stood on a long, spacious lawn, the grass beneath their feet trimmed to perfection. Trees and bushes stood in an orderly fashion to their right, forming a small grove of shelter. But, lovely a garden though it was, it wasn't the lawn that drew Tracy's attention. Instead, her eyes were fixed on the building, less than a hundred yards away from her, a building she had seen a million times in films and TV shows and news reels but never in real life, until now.

The White House.

It was a wondrous piece of architecture, the rounded front supported by heavy sandstone pillars, with an American flag billowing in the breeze, stars and stripes framed against a bright afternoon sun. It was the kind of postcard-perfect image you never really see in real life, and to Tracy it felt almost surreal. On either side of the pillared front, the building stretched away, both sides partially hidden by a multitude of trees that were growing around and behind them. The Doctor clapped his hands excitedly, while Tracy just stared.

'It gets lovelier every time I visit,' the Doctor smiled, before slipping his hands into his pockets and setting off up the garden. Tracy spent a moment longer gaping at the colossal building before she hurried after him.

'But that's the White House! The actual White House! I've *always* wanted to come to America!' she said, spinning dramatically on the spot. The Doctor chuckled as she quickened her pace to match his. 'So, why are we here?'

The Doctor unfolded the crumpled piece of paper, revealing a series of unreadable notes. 'I got a phone call asking me for help, from an old friend. Just a bit of uncertainty on some of his latest policies, he wanted me to look over them.'

'Who did?'

'Barry.' She gave him a blank look. 'You know? Barry? President Barry? Barack Obama?'

Her eyes widened. 'Oh... Why do you call him Barry?'

'Like I said. Old friend.' He chuckled as he pocketed the paper.

'Wait, so the President – the proper, *real* president – phoned you to come and help him out?'

'Yep, happens all the time.'

They carried on walking at a leisurely pace, the Doctor's scarf rippling in the wind. The sound of voices floated softly from behind the trees. Tracy was looking around, trying to take in everything at once.

'So if Obama's President, is it still present day? I mean, 2012. We haven't travelled in time or anything, right?'

'Nope. Well... Maybe a little bit. Give or take a year.' The Doctor shrugged. 'It's hard to keep track sometimes.'

Tracy raised her eyebrows in disbelief as they sauntered up towards the White House. When they had almost reached the far side of the garden, a thought struck her.

'Are you sure we can just walk in? I mean, is it safe to try and do that, what with all the... I don't know, the guards and stuff?'

The Doctor laughed. 'Tracy, don't worry about safe. This place is about as safe as anywhere can-
DUCK!'

They both dropped as something whizzed over their heads, dislodging the Doctor's trilby. They stayed crouched, frozen in place, as the voices from across the small patch of shrubbery grew louder.

'I say, talk about over-swing! Did the poor ball do something to offend you?'

'Very droll, Mr Stone, very droll. If you would be kind enough to fetch it...?'

'Of course, of course...'

The Doctor picked up his trilby hat and pulled himself to his feet. The flying object had in fact been a croquet ball, that now lay nestled in the grass a few feet away.

'Almost took my head off!' Tracy complained, but the Doctor pulled her sideways into a patch of bushes before she could say any more. Moments later, a well dressed man with greying hair stepped through the grove of trees. He looked around for a moment before spotting the croquet ball. He stooped to pick it up, rubbing his back as he did so, then straightened out and walked back to his friends behind the trees, brushing a loose tree branch out of his way as he went.

'...That's strange,' the Doctor said. 'I don't remember Barry being a huge croquet fan.' The Doctor stepped out from the bushes and gingerly followed in the man's footsteps. After taking a few paces, he stopped, and began to peer out at the scene on the other side of the trees. Tracy followed him, and from her hiding place amongst the greenery she could see several men, all dressed in smart, old-fashioned looking clothes.

'Err... You know, I don't think we've landed quite on target. I think we might have missed Barry by a fair bit, actually.'

'What makes you say that?'

The Doctor pointed at one of the men. He was probably the tallest of them, and his height was emphasised by his top hat. He had a dark beard of curled hair, and his rough mouth was creased in a sincere smile. He had dark eyes, which twinkled with laughter as he joked with one of the other men.

'He seems familiar...' Tracy trailed off. 'Who is he?'

The Doctor grinned, and held out his hand. 'Tracy, allow me to introduce the President of the United States of America, Abraham Lincoln.'

Tracy gaped. 'What?! Seriously?!'

'Keep your voice down! They don't know we're here... If we're caught spying on the President, things could get problematic.'

'You're the one who wanted to just walk right in to the White House,' Tracy grumbled in retaliation, but she began to retreat back through the bushes all the same. The Doctor followed her, and within moments Lincoln and his fellows were out of sight.

'So, from his age, I'd guess... 1860, maybe? Thereabouts.' The Doctor waved one arm casually. 'So we're a century, century and a half out. Could be worse, right?'

Tracy frowned at him. 'Are we going back to the TARDIS, then? Off to see B- I mean, Obama?'

The Doctor considered that for a moment, then smiled as he shook his head.

'Oh no. First things first, let's do some exploring!'

They strolled down the opulent halls slowly, drinking up the scenery. The smooth carpet, the paintings and portraits hung in gold frames. Behind every corner was another tall panelled door, leading into another beautifully designed room. It really was amazing. The corridors were mostly devoid of activity; the Doctor voiced a theory that perhaps an important meeting was taking place in some other area of the building, and the majority of the staff were occupied elsewhere.

‘America’s at war, you know,’ he said, with a vague frown forming across his features.

‘So there’s a lot of work that needs to be done,’ said Tracy. He nodded.

‘Yeah. The American Civil War. Quite a deal.’

‘And the President’s outside playing croquet?’

The Doctor’s frown twitched slightly, then snapped completely and inverted into a playful grin. ‘Oh, I doubt Abe Lincoln would be relaxing if they needed him. It’s probably an administrative meeting.

Besides, I imagine he’s inside now – we’ve been in here for almost an hour!’

‘Really?’ Tracy was shocked. ‘I can’t believe we’ve spent an hour just wandering around the White House!’

‘No,’ said a voice behind her. ‘Neither can I.’

The Doctor and Tracy whirled round simultaneously to find themselves accosted by two intimidating men in black suits. The speaker was a tall man with a sharp face and reddish-brown hair. His angular features gave him a naturally fierce appearance, amplified by his severe glare. The man to his left was slightly shorter and more muscular, thick arms showing up under his suit sleeves. He pulled absently at the cuffs, as if uncomfortable with his uniform. His face had an indefinable quality that made his age impossible to gauge; he could have been thirty, he could have been twice that. He stood very straight, drawing himself up so he was as tall as he could be. His eyes were deep set into his face, casting a suspicious look over the pair of intruders.

‘Ah,’ the Doctor started. ‘Hello there.’

‘Is that correct, miss?’ said the red-haired man. His accent had a hint of a Scottish inflection to it.

‘You’ve just been “wandering about the White House”?!’

‘If so, we’re going to have to ask you to come with us,’ said his colleague. The threatening manner in which he said it left no doubt in Tracy’s mind that they wouldn’t be sitting round a table eating biscuits, having a nice friendly chat.

‘Gentlemen, please,’ the Doctor raised his hands, a gesture of peace. ‘There must be some sort of misunderstanding.’ He put his hand into his pocket – both guards tensed, perhaps fearing that he was reaching for a weapon – but the Doctor instead took out his wallet.

‘As you can see, myself and my companion here are in fact British ambassadors. Doctor John Smith and Miss Tracy Blaid, at your service.’

The red-haired guard took the wallet sceptically, but when he opened it up his eyebrows raised in surprise. He passed it over to his friend, who viewed it with equal suspicion.

‘Well then,’ the red-haired guard said, after a long moment. ‘It seems your identification is indeed in order. My apologies, sir and madam. I hope you are enjoying your time in America.’

The Doctor smiled. ‘Very much so. A pleasure to make your acquaintance, Mr...?’

‘Scout. Edward Scout,’ said the red-haired guard. ‘I’m from Britain myself, as it happens. Small town in Scotland. Good to meet you, sir.’ The shook hands. The other guard, who introduced himself as Jack Cootes, passed the Doctor’s wallet back to him. What Tracy knew that the guard’s didn’t was that the wallet contained the Doctor’s psychic paper – a slip of seemingly blank card that communicated telepathically with the user’s mind. The paper would show the guards what they were expecting to see, what the Doctor wanted them to see. It was a clever trick; she had first seen him use in less than an hour ago, when they had simply waltzed into the White House as he had said

they would. On the few occasions that they had run in to other guards or staff members, one flash of his slightly phisic paper had been enough to discourage them.

'It's all in the confidence,' the Doctor had said. 'Act like you know exactly what you're doing, and they'll think you do, more often than not.'

Using that technique, they had so far managed to avoid confrontation, despite the fact that they were wandering around inside one of the most heavily protected buildings on the planet. Tracy wasn't sure if she should admire the Doctor's audacity or worry for the White House's security. From the look on Cootes' face, however, it seemed their luck was about to run out. He looked the pair of them up and down with a glare of mistrust.

'So what exactly are British ambassadors doing here, in this time of conflict?' Cootes asked. The Doctor blanked for a moment.

'Er... We're here to, you know, offer assistance. Show that the bond between our two nations is as strong as always,' he finished, pleased with himself for the quick improvisation. Cootes, however, was unconvinced.

'Really? How odd – I was certain that Britain was trying to remain neutral in this particular spat.' The Doctor thought for a moment and remembered that, yes – Britain had tried to stay out of the American Civil War for the most part. Oh, dear.

'Erm, yes. That's true... Er....'

'It seems to me,' said Cootes, taking a step forward (Tracy unintentionally took a step back in response), 'That you're still wandering around somewhere you aren't supposed to be.'

The Doctor laughed sharply. 'That's rich, coming from you. Marshal.'

Cootes froze. The blood drained from his face. He suddenly looked a lot less sure of himself. Edward gave him an odd look.

'Jack?'

'I... I don't know what you mean,' Cootes said, but his lie was transparently obvious. The Doctor had him.

'You keep pulling at the sleeves of your suit like you're unused to wearing it, so clearly you're new to the job – newer than Mr. Scout here, certainly. But your confidence and certainty marks you out as someone used to being in a position of authority. You've got a strong build and good posture, which makes me think military. But no, if you were an army man you'd be out there now, fighting on the front lines; your aggressive manner suggests a man who enjoys conflict, so you would have jumped at the first chance to go to war. But if not a soldier, then what? Simple. You're a law enforcer, specifically part of the Marshal's service; the average officer wouldn't know about Britain's stance on the war, but a Marshal, working for the executive branch of the government, might be a bit more knowledgeable about the subject. Am I wrong?'

Cootes stared at the Doctor, mouth hanging open. He was gaping. The Doctor just folded his arms and grinned.

'I thought not. So, let's begin again – hello, I'm the Doctor. You are?'

Cootes spent a few more seconds staring uncomprehendingly, then sighed in resignation and slumped his shoulders.

'Deputy Marshal James Harper,' he said, sheepishly. 'It's a pleasure.'

Edward was as shocked by the sudden turn of events as Tracy was. He turned to his fellow guard, as if unable to believe his ears. 'Jack, don't tell me this is true?'

'It's James,' his colleague grumbled, before adding, 'Actually, it's Marshal Harper to you.'

Edward frowned, scratching his chin. The Doctor looked round at the four of them cheerfully, as if their mutual bewilderment amused him.

'So, Marshal Harper. Care to tell me why you are dressed up as a White House guard?'

'I'm undercover,' he replied stiffly. Perhaps he thought he was about to be reprimanded.

'They sent a Deputy Marshal undercover into the White House?'

'Not undercover on an official basis, exactly,' Harper said. He was flushing slightly, embarrassed. 'As far as my superiors know, I'm visiting family on the other side of the state.'

'Ah! So you're on a little, how shall we say, personal reconnaissance mission?' the Doctor nudged him with his elbow. 'Come on, you can trust me. I'm undercover too.'

Edward and Harper both looked shocked, their eyebrows shooting up comically. 'Really?!' Edward asked.

'Yes, yes,' the Doctor nodded.

'Do we *look* like British ambassadors?' Tracy added sarcastically. Harper's eyes fell to the museum guard belt, still hanging around her waist. She had been wearing it ever since the Doctor had whisked her away from home, when she had first encountered him in the storage bay of the Wells Museum where she worked.

'Not really,' Edward muttered.

'Anyway,' the Doctor interrupted, clapping his hands together. 'Marshal Harper, tell us about your secret mission. Investigating anything interesting?'

Harper glanced left and right, checking they were alone. Then, carefully, he pulled a battered notebook from an inside pocket within his suit jacket. The Doctor regarded it curiously. It was worn and faded. Several pages had fallen loose and were hanging out slightly. Harper began to ruffle through it, turning pages quickly.

'Look at this, Doctor. Look at these clippings.'

The Doctor took the notebook from Harper and thumbed through. Each page was the same; a small obituary, concerning a tragic but unavoidable accident, or an unexpected suicide, or a sudden disappearance. Though the names and details were different, the gist of each article was identical. Someone had died or gone missing, but nobody was really to blame. As the Doctor carried on reading, he very quickly saw the pattern; each person, dead or gone, had worked at the White House prior to their demise.

'Too many deaths to be a coincidence, I thought,' Harper said, his tone picking up as he realised he had an audience with which to share his finds at last. 'And after the last death, I decided I needed to get in here for myself, and do some searching around.'

He turned the notebook's pages in the Doctor's hand, stopping them on the newest-looking clipping. He pointed, and the Doctor read. It was a short paragraph, detailing the unforeseeable, tragic suicide of George Scout, a guard employed by the White House, who had jumped from the window of his dormitory a few weeks ago. It took the Doctor a moment to make a connection.

He looked up at Edward. 'Your brother?'

Edward's eyes clouded over. 'Yes. George. Always the eager one, the headstrong one. He didn't deserve that. To fall to his death on the coldest of nights.' Edward was visibly holding back tears.

Tracy felt a sudden deep urge to put an arm around the tall guard's shoulder. He looked lost, all of a sudden, like the young children she sometimes saw scampering up and down the halls of the museum, separated from their parents. He had the same hollow look in his eyes – the look of somebody who has had something irreplaceable, priceless, something they never thought they would ever have to live without, taken away from them.

'He was innocent, naive,' Edward spoke at length, breathing slowly and deeply. 'He dreamed of making a fortune in America. Me and him, businessmen! That was the plan. Gone, now, I suppose. It must have been his time to go...' Edward shuddered, then calmed himself, swallowing. 'People can't live longer than they are supposed to, so who am I to argue with the fickle hands of fate?'

Tracy and Harper were locked on Edward, but the Doctor seemed distracted. He was gazing up at the ceiling as if he could see through it, his thoughts in the clouds.

'People can't live longer than they are supposed to...' he repeated to himself, barely a whisper. Then he plummeted back down to reality and snapped his head forward, looking at Harper.

'So you replaced George on the guard rota and did some snooping. What have you found?'

Harper shrugged dejectedly. 'Nothing. There's no evidence of foul play, anywhere in the building, from what I've seen. There's no way for half of these people to have been killed without somebody seeing the murderer. Either they really were accidents, or people are being murdered by an invisible man.'

'Invisible, yes. Man, no,' the Doctor muttered, glancing down the corridor. Harper gave him a strange look.

'What do you mean?'

'I can think of several species that could and would carry out the crimes that have occurred here. Our next step is to find out exactly what is behind this.'

The Doctor passed Harper's notebook back to him and put his hands into his pockets.

'Let's go and catch ourselves the killer!'

He set off in a seemingly random direction, and Harper surged into action, following him swiftly.

Tracy paused for a moment, turning her head back to Edward. His eyes were stony now, hardened against his loss.

'You okay?' she asked. It seemed pathetically inadequate a question to be asking. He nodded slowly.

'...So I'm the only one who *isn't* working undercover?' he said, cracking a weak smile. Tracy grinned back in response, and slipped her hand around his arm.

'Me and the Doctor aren't undercover, exactly,' she laughed. 'It's a long story. But come on, we've got work to do...'

'We're going to find the thing that killed my brother.' Edward's face hardened. 'I know. Let's go.'

They set off down the corridor, in pursuit of the Doctor and Harper.

Behind his desk at the Oval Office, Abraham Lincoln was deep in thought. This room was the perfect place for him to collect his mind; the familiarity of the yellow walls, the heavy chandelier at the ceiling, the sturdy wooden desk and the two tall, suited guards in place by the doors. He was so used to it that it seemed to blur out of his view, freeing his brain to wander and wonder as it pleased. But not today.

Today his mind was foggy, misted over. It was an unusual sensation, and not one he was familiar with. Usually he was able to think freely here, able to ponder any manner of complex issue or difficult decision. Today, though, he was feeling tired and drowsy, not quite on the ball. His mind struggled to focus on the papers in front of him, important documents pertaining to the war. Instead, he drifted, and started to consider taking a brief break. He was allowed to do that, as President, surely? He could just put his head down for a while and sleep. The muscles in his shoulder clenched, and he twisted his neck; for a moment, he could have sworn he had seen a tall figure stood over him, hand on his shoulder. But then his vision flickered, and he realised there was nobody there after all. The feeling in his shoulder receded, and all of a sudden he felt invigorated, like a great weight had been lifted off of his chest. The sudden bouts of drowsiness and energy confused him; where were they coming from?

Before he could think any further thoughts on the puzzling subject, however, one of the guards by the doors flung himself forward, cracking his head against the side of the President's desk and dropping limply to the floor.

A male scream echoed down the corridor. The Doctor spun round, immediately alerted.

'That sounds like something we should check out,' he said, deadpan, and then he blasted around the corner as quickly as he could, Harper, Tracy and Edward sprinting after him in quick succession. He stumbled to a stop when he saw the huge double doors that stood, pride of place in the corridor. 'Oh no,' Harper said. The Doctor ran to the door and threw them open melodramatically, stepping through into the Oval Office.

It wasn't quite the iconic room in Tracy's head. She was vaguely aware of some distant TV documentary she had seen, one dull afternoon, which had mentioned how the modern Oval Office had not been conceived until the start of the 1900s; but she was still surprised to find a room substantially different from her own mental image. There were the three windows on the south wall, but they weren't as wide as they were in the films, and they had yellow curtains hanging low across them. It did still have, though, the gentle, sloping oval shape that gave the room its title. And what made the scene really, truly feel complete was the grand figure of Abraham Lincoln, standing behind an ornate wooden desk, glaring at them as they walked in. There was a bald, suited man, another guard, standing at his shoulder, looking increasingly concerned as four strangers walked into the President's office. When Harper and Edward had both stepped inside, the Doctor immediately pushed the doors closed, making sure the door was properly shut before he surveyed the scene in front of him.

'Oh no. What's happened here?' he said.

There was a second guard in the room, and he was in a significantly worse state than the first. He lay, unmoving, beside Lincoln's desk, a pool of blood radiating away from his head. Harper's eyes widened.

'He's been murdered!'

The scene in the Oval Office would certainly have raised a few eyebrows. Abraham Lincoln, his face grim, stood behind his desk firmly, surveying the situation that had very quickly unfolded before him. A guard stood, breathless and inadequate, by his shoulder. Across his desk, four figures stood, each with a different expression on their faces. The young man wearing a hat seemed concerned, but his eyes were flickering about the room, as if he were deep in thought. The dark-haired girl looked in shock at the dead body on the floor. The strong, fierce man had his eyes on the President, weary of threat or danger. The tall man with auburn hair had anger in his eyes, a deep, hateful anger that would have struck fear into the hearts of many men. They were all stood in a loose semicircle around the corpse that lay on the floor, staining the Oval Office rug crimson.

‘No, not murdered,’ said Lincoln, after a moment. His voice, Tracy thought, was as strong and commanding as she had expected. He had a certain gravity to him. ‘He fell forwards. Quite violently, but an accident nonetheless.’

Harper didn’t seem to like that explanation, and crouched down to examine the body. The Doctor, meanwhile, treaded over to the over side of the desk and shook the President’s hand.

‘Hello, Mr. Lincoln. Pleasure to meet you.’

Lincoln returned the greeting uncertainly, tipping his hat. The Doctor seemed to find this gesture delightful, and copied the movement, tilting his trilby forward slightly. Then he took the hand of the hapless guard beside him and shook that too.

‘And it’s lovely to meet you too. Tell me, did you notice anything unusual right before your friend fell?’

While the Doctor cheerily interrogated the guard, Tracy knelt down beside Harper as he examined the body. The dead man had fallen face-first, so she could only see the back of his head; despite that, she felt a surge of sadness as she looked at the corpse. It didn’t seem fair that innocent people were dying here, and they had no idea what was causing it. She glanced over at Edward, who was still stood on his own by the door. He had recovered quite quickly from recounting the tale of his brother, but he still looked upset and angry. Tracy had a sneaking suspicion that it was something to do with Harper’s secret mission; the Marshal had been working to hunt down George’s killer without informing Edward, and that must have rankled the brother.

‘Do you think he’ll be okay?’ Tracy asked, murmuring.

‘I doubt it. He’s dead.’

‘Not the body,’ she snapped, ‘The-’ she caught Harper’s eye, and realised he was joking. She smiled at him, while he glanced over at Edward.

‘I don’t know. Losing a sibling, I can only imagine how it feels.’

Tracy shuddered at the idea of losing her brother Anthony. She started to emphasise a little more with Edward’s ordeal.

‘You saw *what*?’

The guard spluttered over his words as the Doctor asked him to repeat what he had said.

‘Well, like I say, it was probably just my imagination...’

‘Go on.’

‘But for a moment, I could have sworn there was someone stood behind him.’

The Doctor nodded. ‘Someone pushing him?’

The guard nodded. Lincoln, meanwhile, seemed concerned.

'It's funny you say that. I thought I sensed somebody looking over my shoulder, shortly before he fell.'

The Doctor looked from Lincoln to the guard and back again. 'Is there anything else about this "figure" that you remember?'

The guard thought for a moment, and his face lit up. 'I might have been seeing things,' he said, 'but I'm sure the figure had dark red eyes. The colour of blood,' he finished, and there was a waver in his voice that suggested a deep, genuine fear.

'Red eyes and invisible...' the Doctor stepped away from the desk and began to circle the room.

Slowly, everyone looked away from what they were doing to watch him. Lincoln and his guard, Tracy and Harper, even Edward looked up from his silent reverie. The Doctor took sharp steps, moving across the room in a seemingly random pattern. Every so often, he would spin round and swipe his arms out suddenly, as if swatting an unseen fly. After a time, he stopped.

'I know you're in here,' he said, to the room in general. Nothing happened. Everyone stared at him.

'Come on, you can't hide forever, Bazbalan.' He swung his left arm out wildly, but didn't hit anything.

'I'll find you eventually, so just save yourself the trouble, why don't you?' the Doctor inquired.

'As you wish.'

Everyone turned at the sound of the high, imperious voice. Where there had been an empty space only a moment ago, a monstrous creature now shimmered into view. It had dark red eyes, a wide jaw lined with teeth, and small pincer-like protrusions that snapped menacingly from its face. It had pale green, scaled skin, and the colour of its outfit – a complex, silken fabric wrapped tightly around its skin – matched that colour, blurring the line between clothing and flesh. The creature stared menacingly at the Doctor, while everybody else jumped away in shock.

'What the-?!' Edward exclaimed, as he almost tripped in his haste to get away. The Doctor's eyes were locked with the creature's.

'You know of my people?' it said.

'The Bazbalans? Heard of them, never met one before,' the Doctor said. His tone was hard. 'You're able to flicker your body across the optic spectrum at extreme speed, so you only become visible once in a while, for the briefest moments. A camouflage technique, I believe.'

The Bazbalan nodded. 'You are correct, Doctor. You are clearly not like these ones,' it gestured across the room, to Lincoln, his guard, Tracy, Harper and Edward. 'You are not of Earth.'

'That's right.'

'Then why are you here?'

The Doctor cast a sidelong glance at Tracy. 'I'm having an adventure, at the moment. Why are *you* here?'

The Bazbalan cackled, a distressing, scratchy noise that hurt Tracy's ears. 'Surely you already know, if you are familiar with my kin?'

'You infiltrate places of power,' the Doctor said. 'You hide yourselves, using your defence mechanism, your flickering. Then you influence the people in control – you literally lean over their shoulder and whisper in their ear. They think it's all in their heads but it's not, it's you.'

The Bazbalan nodded. 'Exactly.' Its teeth spread out into a grin.

'You're parasites. You take control of a planet without anybody even realising you're on it.'

‘More or less, you are right, Doctor.’ The Bazbalan swept its arm across the room again, a grand gesture. ‘Now, though, the question is simple. What do Bazbalans do when they are discovered before their takeover is complete?’

The Doctor’s expression hardened. ‘They kill everybody who knows of their existence.’

Another laugh, as high and sickening as the last. ‘Well done, Doctor. Absolutely spot on. It’s been a pleasure speaking to another higher life form, but alas, our time is up.’ The Bazbalan’s grin widened, until a complete row of sharp, shearing teeth could be seen. ‘Goodbye.’

That was when Lincoln struck. He brought the croquet mallet, the one that he kept propped against his desk, down on the creature’s head, snapping it downwards suddenly and forcefully. The Bazbalan stumbled away, tripping against a wooden chair reserved for visitors to the Oval Office, and collapsed to the floor. But it was only a mild deterrent, not enough to stop the alien from rising to its feet with a shriek of indignation.

‘With me!’ Lincoln cried – and, without another word, he disappeared from sight, as if dropped down an invisible hole. The Doctor scrambled over to where he had been stood, and found something rather extraordinary; a large, circular trapdoor beneath the office’s rug, leading into a dingy tunnel with a steep ladder dropping down it, into the darkness.

‘Secret passageways in the White House!’ the Doctor laughed. ‘Why am I not surprised. Come on, everybody in!’

He took Tracy’s hand and led her to the tunnel. She looked up at him as she began to climb down.

‘So there are aliens. In Lincoln’s America.’

‘Seems that way.’

She puffed out her cheeks. ‘You’re completely mad, you are.’

Then she dropped, out of sight, and the Doctor began to gesture to the others to follow suit. Edward came next, his tall figure causing him to waste precious seconds as he stumbled through the trapdoor. The Bazbalan was now steady on its feet, and just as it caught sight of its quarry escaping, the doors of the office burst open. There was nothing behind them, but the Doctor knew instinctively that a second Bazbalan had joined the fray. Hadn’t he read somewhere that they travelled in pairs? He slapped himself for forgetting, and stood, pulling the sonic screwdriver from his pocket and brandishing it like a weapon.

‘Stay back, I’m warning you!’

The visible Bazbalan, the first one, shrugged. It was an oddly informal gesture for the creature.

‘Make your escape now, Doctor. Down in the sewers below, we will no longer need to employ stealth.’ The Bazbalan pulled aside a fold of its tight, flowing clothes to reveal an elegantly curved gun, with a wide barrel and a short, stumpy grip. The Doctor’s hearts sank.

Are those rocket launchers?!

No time to deliberate. Lincoln’s shuddering, terrified guard had already dropped down the passage, and Harper was about to follow him. Defeated, the Doctor pocketed the sonic and leapt down the hole, listening to the Bazbalans cackle as he descended the ladder with surprising agility.

The ladder led right down, through the other levels of the White House and down into the sewer system below. They stepped off the ladder to find themselves in a sloping brick passageway, with a river of dubious content flowing down the center of it. Tracy wrinkled her nose.

‘What is that *smell*?!’

‘We’re in a sewer, what did you expect?’ Harper said. Lincoln nodded.

'There should be another ladder down that way,' he said. He set off, running briskly, still managing to look dignified despite his dank surroundings. Everyone else paused for a second, unsure.

'Come on everyone!' the Doctor shouted, as he dropped down out of the ladder shaft from above.

'What are you waiting for? Run!'

They all looked up, scared. The sound of footsteps on the ladder's rungs above them finally spurred them all into action, and suddenly everyone was running, sprinting down the sewer behind Lincoln's lead. The Doctor, something of an expert when it came to running away very quickly, soon caught up with and overtook Lincoln. To his surprise, Harper was also surprisingly speedy, easily matching pace with him.

'I never pegged you as one for speed, Marshal!' said the Doctor. Harper grinned at him.

'I could say the same of you, Doctor!'

They hurried along, stumbling in the dark. After twenty meters or so, the Doctor realised that it would soon be too dark for them to see their enemies, invisible or not. He raised the sonic overhead, bright orange light filling up the gloomy sewer.

'What were those – those things?' Edward asked, hurrying to catch up. Tracy glanced back at him, but could do no more than helplessly shake her head.

'I'm not entirely sure, it's the Doctor who knows this sort of stuff!' she exclaimed. To her right, Lincoln's guard was breathing in ragged gasps as he sped along.

'Hurry!' the Doctor's voice came from ahead. 'We've got to put some space between us and them before they start firing!'

Tracy's mind iced over. She looked over her shoulder with fear in her eyes, and saw two Bazbalans dropping down from the ladder, some way down the passage from them. They had abandoned their flickering camouflage – there would be nobody left to see them when they were finished, down in these tunnels.

'Firing *what?*'

Then the wall to her right exploded.

She cried out as she was flung aside, hurled against the opposite wall of the narrow sewer. Her cry made the Doctor stop in his tracks and turn back, eyes wide with worry, but his maddened expression softened when he saw she was unharmed, already pulling herself to her feet. She turned back, and saw Edward had fallen backwards. She reached out a hand and he gratefully accepted it.

'It was them, then. They killed George.'

Tracy nodded sadly. 'I'm afraid they did.'

'WATCH OUT!'

It was the panicked nature of the Doctor's yell that made her react so spontaneously. She flung herself down as another missile jolted overhead, smashing into the ceiling of the sewer several steps in front of them. They had to get out of the Bazbalan's line of fire, and fast. She risked a look backwards and she hauled herself and Edward up, and saw one of the two creatures aiming carefully with his wide-barrelled weapon. She tugged on Edward's hand and the two of them began to run again, trying to catch up with the rest of the group. Tracy leaped over a singed, explosion-blasted rock that must have dislodged itself from the sewer wall and pulled Edward wildly along with her. They reached a corner, and just as they spun around it another missile streaked past, soaring down the tunnel for a way before it detonated in a brilliant flash of fire. Around the corner, the Doctor, Lincoln and Harper were panting, out of breath.

'Tracy! Edward!' the Doctor pulled them into a quick hug, relieved. 'But where's the guard fellow?' Tracy frowned. The last she had seen of the guard was...

Singed, explosion-blasted rock

'Oh god,' she put her hand to her mouth. She felt sick. 'I think he got caught in the first missile explosion.'

A look of sadness flitted over Lincoln's face, but only for a moment. He was a leader, and his focus was firmly on the living.

'We need to carry on, or they'll catch up. Follow me.' He set off again, leaving the group to sprint afterwards as before. The cackling laughter of the Bazbalans echoed ahead to them – they must have found the unrecognisable corpse of the second guard. Another casualty to their parasitic plan.

The Doctor and Harper were soon at the front of the pack, as before.

'What are we dealing with, Doctor? What are those monsters?'

'You wouldn't believe me if I told you, Marshal.'

Something exploded, quite a distance behind them, and the sewer rumbled worryingly.

'President Lincoln?' The Doctor asked.

'Yes?'

'Exactly how stable are this sewer's foundations?'

'Why do you ask, Doctor?'

The Doctor almost tripped, catching himself against a wall, but stumbled onwards. 'If they keep on firing those rockets, the whole thing's going to cave in on our heads!'

Even as the Doctor was mouthing his concerns, another missile cracked into the ceiling overhead.

The Doctor heard the impact and knew what was going to happen before it did. He flung himself forward, jumping ahead to get clear of the crushing rock that slammed down from the ceiling as the sewer began to collapse. It wasn't build to stand up to the powerful and crude weaponry of the Bazbalans. Dust poured down on the Doctor's head, showering him in chips and shards of brick and rock. The whole sewer was rumbling furiously. Where the Doctor had been standing mere moments ago, massive chunks of brick had sheared into the floor, jagged and uneven. He rolled aside, disorientated.

'Tracy? Harper? You there?'

There was a small gap, big enough for one person to squeeze through, in the newly-formed barrier of broken sewer. Bricks continued to fall around him, dislodged from the walls and ceiling. The whole thing was tearing itself apart. Suddenly, Harper's face appeared in the gap.

'Doctor!'

'Harper! Come on, you can fit through there!'

Harper began to haul himself through onto the far side of the barricade, and before he was even through, Abraham Lincoln appeared behind him, top hat got. He must have lost it in the collapse.

The Doctor gave him a hand as he pulled through the gap. The three men quickly cast their eyes over the brick blockage. It completely filled up the tunnel, like some bizarre sculpture of carnage. The Doctor noted one particular heavy slab of brick that was holding up the whole thing. If it were knocked aside...

His train of thought was interrupted by Tracy, who had reached the barricade and was searching frantically for a way to get through.

'Tracy! Watch out for that pillar there when you're climbing through,' he said, gesturing to the slab of brick. 'If you knock it out of place, it might bring the whole tunnel down! It's the only thing holding the roof over our heads!'

Tracy nodded, too fearful to reply, as she clambered speedily through the barrier.

'Edward?' the Doctor asked, looking into the gap. 'Where's Edward?'

'I'm here,' came the reply, and a severe, red-haired man appeared across the gap in the barrier. 'I'm fine.'

'Great, climb through!'

'If it's all the same to you, Doctor, I think I'll stay here.'

The Doctor faltered, utterly wrong-footed. Harper and Lincoln had already set off running again;

Tracy was hovering anxiously a few steps away, waiting for them to carry on.

'What? Edward, we haven't got time to-'

'I've made my decision, Doctor. I have to do this. For George.'

The Doctor caught Edward's eye, and saw something in there. A hollow, empty look. The Doctor had seen it before, so many times. Numbness. The certainty of death. All there, behind those two brown orbs.

'Good luck,' the Doctor said, and then he took Tracy's hand and ran.

'Wait!' she cried, when she saw that Edward hadn't followed them through onto the far side of the blockage. 'Why isn't Edward coming?'

'He's doing what he has to do,' was the Doctor's reply. Cold and precise. Edward had made his choice. There was nothing to be done for him now.

Edward turned to find the two Bazbalans approaching him. One, the more cautious of the two, still had its gun trained on the red-haired guard – though it dared not fire it, in case the impact finished off the destruction they had started, and brought the tunnel down on their heads. They had learned to be cautious, realising the mistake they had made in using such explosive weapons. The other Bazbalan cackled eager as it moved, flickering in and out of view, taunting Edward.

'Hello, human.'

'Hello, monsters.'

The cautious Bazbalan seemed to find that amusing. 'Come to die.'

'Good idea,' Edward murmured. 'I think I will.'

He leaned back into the gap in the blockage. The Bazbalans both took a step forward, presuming he was trying to escape. Edward's hands wrapped around a pillar of brick, one he had seen the Doctor gesture to from the other side of the barricade.

If you knock it out of place, it might bring the whole tunnel down!

'This is for my brother,' Edward said, and he heaved the brickwork sideways. The walls began to shake, and in that moment the Bazbalans realised what was about to happen.

'You-' the madder, flickering creature leapt forward, hands outstretched-

And the sewer roof came thundering down as the entire tunnel fell to pieces, crushing Edward and the Bazbalans beneath the ancient stone and burying them in a single second.

The TARDIS hum was not yet entirely familiar to Tracy, but she still found it comforting. She was stood by the console, tired, waiting. After what was probably only a few minutes but seemed like an eternity, the Doctor stepped through the doors.

'Lincoln's fine, of course. Knew he would be. I had to have a bit of a talk with him about "UFOs" this and "creatures from the stars" that, but he promised to keep it to himself in the end. Probably for the best, all things considered.'

Tracy looked at the Doctor blankly, while he blithely continued.

'Harper's gone back to being a Marshal – not much point in working undercover now the threat's been stopped, I guess. He'll be rising through the ranks in no time. He's a smart one, is Harper. Showed some initiative.'

Tracy continued to look at the Doctor with glassy eyes, as though he was not really there.

'They're blaming the sewer collapse on something stupendously ordinary. Not quite sure what, but I'm sure the public will love it. So, all in all, a good job well done. Monsters stopped, President saved. All in a day's work.'

Tracy didn't respond. For the first time, the Doctor became aware of her demeanour.

'Are you okay?'

'Edward died to save us.'

The Doctor nodded, slowly, then made his way up to the console. He patted Tracy lightly on the shoulder.

'He died because he wanted to. He wanted to make sure the things that killed his brother never did the same thing to anyone else, ever again.' He looked across the console, and there was a faraway tone to his voice for a moment. 'Some things can be worth dying for.'

Tracy looked at him, and her expression told him she still wasn't happy. 'Are things always like this with you? People dying or getting hurt?'

'I told you it was dangerous.'

'I know, but...' She trailed off. 'I didn't think it would be like this. I thought we would have fun.'

'Tracy,' he said, taking her hand. 'We saved Abraham Lincoln's life. We saved *America*, I reckon. Don't tell me that wasn't worth doing.'

She stood still for a long moment, deliberating. Then, at last, she smiled.

'I suppose it was.'

The Doctor pulled a lever, and before Tracy could say any more the TARDIS began shaking again.

'Alright, now where was I?' the Doctor laughed. He pulled a crumpled note from his pocket, stared at it for a few moments, then tossed it over his shoulder. 'Barry's gig never looked like much fun anyway. Come on, let's find us something cool!'

Despite her reservations, and her worries, and her doubts, Tracy laughed. He was right. This was an adventure.

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By Alex Smith

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April 1st 2012



About The Author

Mark Lee lives in Merseyside, England. He aspires to become a lawyer, partly for the money but mostly so he can shout 'Objection!' and pretend to be Miles Edgeworth. In his spare time, he writes short stories and scripts, and he is even working on a full length novel. His obsession with Adolf Hitler is, he assures you, entirely academic.

You can follow Mark on twitter @Marcus_1963.



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