

THE
DOCTOR WHO
PROJECT

THE SPICKSBURY HORROR



POLICE BOX



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The Spicksbury Horror
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The house howled wordlessly into the moonlit night, venting its rage and horror in a hollow, drawn out, centuries-old scream of silence. Mist clung to the walls like a grey shroud, rippling in the slight breeze that caressed the ruin with freezing fingers. The grounds contained the remains of a dead forest, the bleached grey-white bones of the trees curled over themselves in their frozen death throes. Blackened mosses and ferns crept along the ground, sucking whatever toxic nutrients they could from the polluted soil before bleeding it back as they too died.

No creature dared venture here. No animals sought shelter in the abandoned house; no birds roosted in the exposed beams; no bats hung from the splintered rafters. Not even spiders wound their webs in the yawning, long-smashed windows.

Nothing lived here.

In the generally accepted sense.

* * * * *

The birth of the Nazarene had been living memory when this place was built.

Umbrius strode through the abbey's smoking ruins, passed the last fingers of flame that clutched at the bases of the fruit trees in the monks' orchard. Monks! He shuddered. What he and his men had discovered in the reeking cellars of the now-burnt Spicksbury Abbey would haunt him for the rest of his life.

The hobnailed soles of his leather boots ploughed through the thick layering of slick mud, freshly wet from blood and entrails. Umbrius, his attention elsewhere, felt his boots begin to slide, and unthinkingly, he grabbed for the nearest branch to steady himself and his precious cargo. Tiny, vicious thorns bit into his palm and he cursed the gods who had sent him to this black place. It seemed that every stone, every twig, every blade of grass thirsted for blood.

He clutched the package, fearful of what would happen if he dropped it. He smelled the thick, sweet scent wafting from it, and thought again of the strange black powder from the East packed inside the thick parchment. He still found it difficult to believe that something so plain had razed the abbey and its hellish memories from the face of the Earth.

His centurion talked with a tall stranger garbed in Roman dress but with the pale skin of the Britons. The man had an imposing wild tangle of brown hair. He raised an eyebrow as Umbrius pulled the package from his cloak and held it out to his officer.

"Why is humanity's first response to a problem is to blow it up? Are you sure a descendent of yours doesn't marry a Lethbridge-Stewart?" Piercing green eyes raked critically over the parcel of crude explosives. "The best you can hope for with that is failure. Otherwise, you'll blast it to pieces and multiply the problem tenfold. Only a-"

"Doctor!" A woman called from across the valley. Doctor? This rough, rude barbarian was some sort of teacher?

"Doctor!" A man's voice now. "You really should see this."

The stranger scowled and turned to go. "I'll be back to deal with this."

"Ignore him," the centurion barked at Umbrius, who stood awkwardly with the package. "Find the other men and make sure the powder is packed in tight.' He looked bleakly around the abbey's shattered remains and swore. "I want the cornerstones of this foul place blasted to the far ends of the valley."

* * * * *

Cane swinging determinedly, Lord Arthur Tattlestone marched across the building site. Mud caked his high black boots. He stepped over deep gouges in the mud where the massive foundation stones had been dragged. Finding firmer ground, he paused to survey the land around him. At the mouth of the valley the half-built manor stood against the sky, the jagged edges of its walls clad in scaffolding. Tattlestone retrieved his watch from his waistcoat and flipped open the lid. Glancing down at the face, he absently noted the bright gold inlay speckled with flecks of deep blue enamel. Almost noon. Tattlestone could not abide lateness, but being behind schedule had become business as usual on this site.

“Goodwin!” Tattlestone had no time for niceties in dealing with the lower classes. He rapped his cane against a rock to get the foreman’s attention. Goodwin ambled over, a great bear of a man; solid as the stone he’d worked with since his apprenticeship.

“Lord Tattlestone, sir.” Despite the deference of the words themselves, the phrase curled out of Goodwin’s mouth like a thinly veiled threat.

“Why the delays, man? I wanted this place ready to move in by winter. Every week behind schedule puts us further over budget.”

“It’s these foreign Johnnies of yours, sir. All they do is jabber away at each other. It’s the devil’s job getting them to work. I don’t understand them, they don’t understand me, half of ‘em don’t even understand each other. If you’d just put on the local boys-

“Thanks to your ‘local boys’” - Tattlestone spat the words - “and their superstitious fairy tales, there isn’t a labourer in the British Isles willing to work on this site. If your ‘local boys’ spent less time spreading hysterical rumours and more time engaged in honest work, I wouldn’t have had to bring in foreign labour in the first place.”

Goodwin gave his employer an unreadable look. “There are reasons nobody’s built in the valley since the old church back in Good Queen Bess’ time.”

Tattlestone barked an incredulous laugh. “I suppose you’re privy to these reasons, Goodwin?”

Goodwin’s face went red. “There’s something wrong in the stone here. It’s warm when it should be cold, and like ice when it’s been baked in the sun. It don’t work up like stone should.”

“Goodwin, are you joining the yokels in this madness? I’ve no time for this. Build this house on time and on budget, otherwise I’ll see you never work again!”

Tattlestone turned on his heel and stalked away through the mud towards his waiting carriage, the tails of his coat billowing behind him in the cold, damp wind. Goodwin shook his head and spit into the mud. His Lordship might have amassed a fortune from paying other men a pittance to scratch through the dirt for his copper and tin, but that didn’t mean he had an ounce of sense in his head. Any man could tell this was no place for a country estate.

The men were sitting when Goodwin returned, gathered around a stranger seated in their midst, fluently switching between what sounded like two or three different languages as he addressed different people. Goodwin cleared his throat pointedly. The men scrambled to their feet and returned to their tools, while the stranger stood slowly and strolled towards him. He wore a shirt of some patterned fabric more suitable for a lady’s frock, and rough trousers of coarse, blue cloth.

“You must be Nathaniel Goodwin. I’m the Doctor.”

“We don’t need a doctor here.”

“No, but you need a translator.”

Goodwin considered. “True enough, that.”

“You also need someone who can figure out what’s going on with the stones here, and put

a stop to it.”

Goodwin gave the Doctor a sharp look. “What do you know about that, then?”

Cold, green eyes caught Goodwin’s. There were depths in those eyes, the stonemason realised. This was a cove who knew things. Strange things. Someone who understood hidden things in a way Tattlestone never would.

“I know enough. I know there’s a history of awful things here, gory deaths and unexplained happenings. I know the rocks are caught up in it. And I think I know how.”

* * * * *

The Doctor and Goodwin walked slowly around the perimeter of the manor house, deep in discussion. The Doctor traced a hand along one of the buildings massive cornerstones, great monoliths taller than a man supporting the whole to-be-magnificent structure. Unlike the rest of the stones cut into neat, regular blocks, these four had been left rough, their raw edges fenced in with mortar to bind their natural shape to the strict geometry of the building. Suddenly the Doctor pulled his hand away, frowned at the red patches on his fingertips. A blister was already forming from the sudden burst of heat. He carefully touched the rock again, a quick, cautious pat. It was cold, cold as ice.

“Lot of history in them ones,” Goodwin observed. “Lot of trouble they caused, too, getting them into place.”

“What do you know of this stone's history?” The Doctor sounded distracted, hardly listening. He regarded the strange cornerstone like a cat surprised by an unexpectedly vicious mouse.

“Until it were torn down, there used to be a circle of standing stones further into the valley. Like down on Salisbury Plain. I played in it when I was a lad, me and me mates. Even with the circle gone, it didn’t stop...strange things going on in the valley. Devil worship.” His half smile at the idea slipped when he saw the Doctor’s troubled look.

“Leastways, that’s what the locals say,” Goodwin continued quickly. “Anyone with sense stayed away. I tried. Went down to London after me mam died, did an apprenticeship. Only came back when Dad passed over.” He scratched the back of his neck, eyes distant for a moment.

“They built a church here in the 1500s. They say they used the some of the old standing stones in its walls. My Nan said it was a fool idea, because Old Nick got wind of it and brought the lot down during the first Mass. My grandfather's grandfather was there, just a little lad. They say his leg was all crippled and withered after one of the stones fell on him.”

“And now you're using the same stone in Spicksbury Hall.”

“His Lordship won't have it any other way. He's built his fortune on ripping the wealth out of the ground. Anything in it is his for the taking.”

A strange noise, one Goodwin had never heard before filled the air, stopping the conversation. The repetitive, high-pitched sound made his skin crawl. He saw the Doctor pull a small metal device, strangely worked, from his pocket. An ominous red light pulsed regularly at one end. Goodwin thought it looked like some parlour trick a spiritualist might wheel out to impress the gullible. The Doctor examined it and scowled.

“I have to go. You have that stone where you need it now, yes?”

“The cornerstone? Of course, we're nearly ready to start on the roof.”

“Good. I strongly advise you and your men steer clear of it. It will stay dormant as long

as it's left alone. I'll be back to deal with this.”

The Doctor darted away around the side of the house before Goodwin could reply. A moment later, a wheezing, trumpeting noise, like the elephant Goodwin had once seen at the circus in London, filled the air. When went to see, all he found was a square of flattened earth. Of the man, nothing remained. Goodwin gave the looming cornerstone a hard look, and felt a chill run down his spine. Pulling his jacket tight, he walked away with the sense that something was watching him.

* * * * *

Spicksbury Hall loomed in the gloomy late afternoon light, hunkered against a chill wind that blew up the valley. The remaining shards of glass in the ruined windows caught the sickly yellow light from the Bentley's headlamps. Lillian, her eyes wide, regarded the approaching edifice from the passenger seat.

“What a grim looking place!”

“It's not as bad as it looks,” Walter Valance guided the car through the leaning narrow gates and down the heavily rutted drive. “It's just unloved. Been abandoned since old man Tattlestone died back in the nineties.”

“And he lived out here in the valley by himself? How perfectly beastly!”

“All his life. He inherited the place from his father, Arthur Tattlestone. Old Arthur was big in tin and copper, and bought himself a Lordship with all the trimmings. Didn't last, poor fellow. He held an enormous housewarming do after they finished the place, invited all the great and good. Some girls died, no one knows how, and there was a huge scandal. He dropped out of society afterwards. Not that anyone cared, mind. Hardly seen by anyone.”

Lillian quirked an eyebrow under her felt cloche. Walter picked up the expression even through the late twilight, and smiled and patted his fiancée's knee. “There's a long history of spooky stuff happening out here, sugar. That's what makes it such a great place to investigate.” In the gathering gloom, he didn't see the look of trepidation that stole across Lillian's face.

As the drive circled round and approached the house, the headlights picked up another car. A gleaming Bugatti in bottle green, a brand-new 1922 model, sat parked outside the abandoned manor.

“Looks like Hubert and Nora are already here. There's also a doctor chap Hubert's fallen in with coming tonight, another fellow Smith. Apparently knows a bit about the history of the place. He's brought some friends as well.” Walter pulled the Bentley into position alongside the Bugatti.

“Well, as long as they're more fun than that cancelled stamp, Nora. I think I'd rather spend the night with the ghosts than her droning on about the scientific method.”

Walter opened his mouth to defend Nora's scepticism, when the woman in question appeared at the door of the ruined mansion, on Hubert's arm. Hubert stepped forward onto the gravelled driveway. The crunching sound of his approach carried to Walter and Lillian. Lillian noted that Nora hung back in the doorway, a distracted look on her face. Hubert loomed in the driver's window.

“Walter, Lillian, jolly good to see you. We've set up some lanterns and a cold supper in the old dining hall.” He rubbed his hands. “It should be quite the night.”

* * * * *

Two sweeping marble staircases leading to the first floor framed the entrance to the dining hall. The ceiling was lost in the darkness and the cold stone echoed every footfall as the foursome made their way to the next set of double doors. Despite the obvious decay, the dining hall itself was as grand and imposing as the entrance. The wood panelling was still in place, as were the dining room table and chairs. Old Tattlestone could have just popped out for some milk, were it not for the great chunks of damp ceiling plaster scattered across the floor and the unmistakable scent of mould.

Seated at the dining table was a slim girl with a touch of the Mediterranean about her, and a tall young man sprawled across a chair, long legged and gangly like a half-grown puppy of some large but indeterminate breed. The man held a half-eaten sandwich in one hand, while with the other he fiddled with a strange device that shone an odd blue-tinged light into his face. A mechanical clatter from the other side of the room caught everyone's attention. A quiet hum cut through the thick silence, and a bright electric lamp glowed into life. Shadows crept across the dusty, tattered velvet curtains that covered the windows.

“Right,” an athletic man with an untamed mass of brown hair clambered to his feet from where he'd been crouched by the humming generator.

“I say, Doctor, is it safe to run that thing inside?” Hubert gave the generator a concerned look. “Don't they give off fumes?”

The Doctor shook his head. “Not this one. Hydrogen fuel cell. Doesn't give off anything more dangerous than water. It's, ah, a little something I've been working on.” The Doctor seemed to notice the new arrivals for the first time. “Anyway. I'm the Doctor. This is Val Rossi” - he gestured vaguely in Val's direction - “and Tom Brooker.”

Tom shoved his phone into his pocket quickly and made a show of looking innocent, which only served to make him look shifty. The Doctor rummaged through the pockets of his khaki jacket and pulled out more small black devices than should have been able to fit in there. He brandished one with a wicked grin.

“Who's up for some ghost hunting?”

Nora rolled her eyes. “You're not going to tell me those... those toy magic lanterns... are going to help us find ghosts? When Hubert met you through the Royal Society I had hoped you'd be a man of science, not some spiritualist crackpot with a bag of party favours.”

“Actually, they're battery operated tri-axis electromagnetic field detectors, designed to detect the auras emitted by moving electrically charged objects. They're tuned to alternating current, so they won't pick up the earth's background magnetism but should suffice to get a fix on whatever, judging by the documented history of the place, is obviously active here.” He thrust an EMF meter into the hands of the speechless Nora, then passed the rest to the others in the group.

“We'll cover more ground if we split up. Brooker, why don't you go with Hubert and Nora? And Ms Rossi, perhaps you should accompany Walter and Lillian?” He felt rather than saw the question forming on Val's lips. “I have some investigations of my own to pursue. Everybody take a torch, and crack on!”

* * * * *

The corridor smelt of disuse and decay. Plaster slumped from the walls and debris lay scattered across the cracked floor. Lillian tried one of the many doors along the wall, cringing at the

echoing scrape of the heavy oak as it juddered across the flagstones. She shone the torch inside and peered around timidly. The room was as awful as the rest of the place. She tried to pull the door shut but it refused to budge, so she left it hanging untidily ajar. Walter and Val were further down the corridor, each checking other ground floor rooms in what had once been the guest wing.

Same again. And again. Another dead, dark, empty room. Lillian could hear the faint echoes of the others exploring the rambling mansion. The vaulting ceilings dark and the strange acoustics made every little cough and step echo weirdly, adding to her sense of unease as she moved deeper and deeper into the house. Outside the light was gone, a few of the brighter stars peering through the rising mist. The sense that they were utterly alone in the wreck of a house grew sharply within her.

Something fluttered at the window. With a jump and a squeal, Lillian swung the torch wildly towards it, catching the wide, round eyes of a disoriented owl in its beam. She let out a huge sigh of relief as the bird fluttered away into the night. Ghosts or not, this place was really beginning to get to her.

The last room on the ground floor was one of the outside corners. The massive cornerstone was thicker than the rest of the wall, and formed a feature of the room where it protruded through the plaster. It looked every bit the ancient monolith, silent witness to long-ago rites carried out in a stone circle by moonlight, now surrounded by debris turned into vague, dark shapes by the pale torchlight. Lillian took a step inside. The smell in here was different. It had a thicker, more animal smell, of sweat and dirt and urine. She waved the meter around, and froze when the needle started to twitch.

“Huh, wha-?”

Lillian dragged in as much air as she could into her lungs and screamed as the pile of debris rose up against the inside wall. Groaning, the mound staggered towards her. Backing away, still screaming at the top of her lungs, Lillian toppled over a broken chair, accidentally kicking her assailant in the legs. The surprised tramp staggered stumbling backwards, his head striking the exposed cornerstone with a sickening thud. The man collapsed bonelessly in a heap, his dark rags camouflaging him against the debris-strewn floor.

Above him, the stone shivered as blood trickled down its exposed flank. On the EMF meter, forgotten on the floor, the needle thrashed, spasmed and fell still.

* * * * *

The Doctor was first on the scene, already kneeling by Lillian's unconscious form when Val came running, Walter following from further up the corridor.

“What the hell happened here? Lillian! Is she okay? Why was she screaming?” An agitated Walter shifted his weight from foot to foot, frowning down at the Doctor.

“She doesn't seem to have any physical injuries. It's just shock. We should get her back to the dining hall.” The Doctor made to lift Lillian into his arms when he was stopped by Walter's hand on his shoulder.

“Let me. She's my fiancée, Doctor. I talked her into coming here tonight. If anything were to happen to her...”

“Yes, yes, all right. Can you find your way back?”

Val smiled a silent apology to Walter as he gathered Lillian into his arms. As he exited the room, the Doctor retrieved Lillian's abandoned EMF meter. He stood in the doorway, and gave

the room a slow careful sweep with the meter. The needle hovered around the lower end of the scale, then suddenly shuddered and peaked violently before stilling once more. The Doctor cast a sharp, worried glare around the dark room.

“Interesting...” The Doctor turned and started back down the corridor towards the dining hall, Val following close behind.

“It's not ghosts,” Val said matter-of-factly.

“Of course not. No such thing.”

“So what is going on here?”

“It's something I've encountered before. At least, it's similar. But different. This house... There's something very wrong with it.”

* * * * *

Walter carefully propped Lillian up in a chair in the dining room, not wanting to lay her on the mouldy and filth-caked floor. She whimpered quietly and he crouched beside her, holding her hands in his and quietly mumbling meaningless reassurances. Without warning, she woke fully with a start, and was about to scream again when she realised where she was.

“Walter! Oh Walter, darling, it was horrid!”

“It's okay, sugar. Whatever it was, it's gone now.”

The Doctor and Val entered the hall just as Tom, Hubert and Nora came in through the opposite door.

“We were at the far end of the house when we heard screaming,” puffed Tom. “What's going on?”

“There was a... a... thing,” Lillian held her head in her hands, and Walter laid a comforting hand on her shoulder. “It rose up out of the floor and attacked me!”

Nora made a disparaging noise in the back of her throat. The Doctor ignored her and knelt beside Lillian.

“You need to tell me everything that happened. Right from the beginning.”

Under the Doctor's encouraging smile, Lillian nodded tightly, her lips set in a determined line.

“The meter hadn't moved at all 'til I reached that end room, and then it started flickering. I was fumbling around with the torch trying to get a better look at it, when this black thing got up and waved its arms at me.”

“I see.” The Doctor retrieved a tiny torch from his pocket and shone it into Lillian's eyes, first one, and then the other. He asked a series of questions about their location, the date and the name of the Prime Minister, before he finally nodded and stood.

“Your concussion seems to be quite mild. Walter, keep an eye on her just in case. Brooker, Ms Rossi-”

A shrill, terrified shriek cut the Doctor off. Screams echoed down the hallway, and everyone froze. The Doctor did a lightning headcount.

“We're all accounted for.” There were various murmurs of assent as the group turned as one in the direction of the cries.

“If we're all here, then who was that?” whispered Val.

* * * * *

Nobody fancied staying behind, so the whole group together hurried to the room where Lillian had met her attacker. The Doctor heaved the heavy oak door open and waved the EM meter around. The needle refused to move.

“Something’s changed,” the Doctor mumbled thoughtfully. He moved further into the dark room. The others crowded in. The walls seemed to swallow their torchlight. Tentatively, they spread out, while the Doctor carefully examined his meter.

Tom, peering up into a corner, suddenly stumbled over an unexpected lump in the pile of rags lying on the floor. His foot hit an object with a dull, hollow thud, and he watched it roll to land at Lillian’s feet. Lillian looked down, then screamed at the human skull grinning up at her. She sobbed into Walter’s shoulder as he led her from the room. Her weeping echoed in the corridor outside.

Hubert crouched down and played his torchlight over the skull.

“Looks clean, couldn’t be whatever it was that spooked Lillian.”

“I wouldn’t be too sure,” said the Doctor. “These clothes are still warm.”

“Probably a nest of rodents living in there, Doctor.” While Hubert spoke, Nora crept around the edges of the room, shining her torch against the walls. The window had been boarded shut and as best she could see, all of the walls were intact. Whatever Lillian had met, other than the door into the room, there was no apparent way they could have left it without the others seeing it do so.

“Doctor, what could do that?” asked Val, trying to make sense of the scene.

“Too many to count and none pleasant.”

“Can you hear that?” Nora’s voice cut across the conversation. A series of blank looks met her.

“You must be able to hear it. That drumming. Slow, like a heartbeat. She took a step backwards, and stumbled into the exposed cornerstone. A shower of dislodged plaster flakes cascaded over her as she turned in surprise, sure the wall had been further away a moment ago. Nora clamped a hand over her mouth to stifle a scream as veins of light flickered through the imposing cornerstone. It bore down on her.

Tom and Hubert scrambled forward to reach her, but the Doctor stepped in and held them back. Pulses of light flickered along a network of filaments laced through the rock. Everyone heard the sound of a heartbeat, a deep thump-thump-thump on the very edge of hearing, more a sensation than a sound, pulsing in time with the light. A sick fascination descended on Nora, and she reached out to touch the cornerstone. Before the Doctor could shout a warning, Nora had placed her hand onto the stone. Agony contorted her face. She managed a brief, pitiful howl as the stone absorbed her flesh and blood. Within seconds, Nora was reduced to a skeleton, her now empty frock cushioning the bones rattling to the floor as beads released from a string.

* * * * *

The thumping of the heartbeat brought the horrified group back to reality as the massive cornerstone, now obviously and monstrously alive, started scraping its way across the room.

“Out out out!” As one, they followed the Doctor’s order and ran from the room. Behind them, the corner room dissolved in an explosion of plaster and mortar, the ceiling collapsing in a thunderous crash.

“Doctor!” Tom called over his shoulder. “Should we get the generator and the rest of the stuff from the dining room? We’re gonna need it.”

“Generator and lights, yes. And the EMF meters. Torches. Leave the sandwiches.” The party stumbled out of the corridor, fetching up at the marble staircase. Casting around for signs of danger, the Doctor could only hear the stones rasping, grinding passage.

“Hubert, Walter, go with Brooker and give him a hand. Meet us upstairs as soon as you can with whatever you can carry.”

“Doctor.” Val placed her hand on his arm. “Hubert's just seen his girlfriend killed. I'm not sure giving him orders is the best thing to do right now.”

Pursing his lips, the Doctor shook his head.

“I don't have time to play nursemaid. It'll give him something to do. We need to keep moving. If he goes to pieces now, he'll be next.” The Doctor turned abruptly and headed up the stairs.

“Lillian, Val, follow me. The stairs will slow that thing down; give us time to plan our next move.” He set off without looking back to check if the women were following. Lillian raised an eyebrow.

“Is he always like this?”

Val sighed. “Yes. Well, now he is. He didn't used to be.”

Realisation and concern washed across Lillian's face. “Oh, I see. I thought he carried himself like a military man.”

Confused for a moment, Val remembered what year it was. If Lillian thought the Doctor had served in France, it might save some of the endless smoothing of the feathers this abrasive Doctor left ruffled in his wake.

* * * * *

In the dining room, Tom flicked the switch to kill the quietly humming generator, plunging the room into a gloom relieved on only by their torch beams. Folding up the Doctor's portable lamp, he tucked it under one arm, hefting the small, light generator in his other hand. Around the table, Walter and Hubert gathered up the EMF meters and other gear scattered across its surface. Walter looped a coil of rope over one shoulder.

A deep, drumming heartbeat overlaid with a grinding noise made all three men snap to attention. A hulking, rectangular shape became visible through the glass of the French doors at the far end of the room.

“There must be two,” Tom hissed, beckoning to the other men. “Maybe more.”

With a terrible groan, the rotten doors folded like fabric as the monolith smashed through them. The heartbeat grew louder, an unending thumping in time to the pulsing of the network of yellow light spread across its timeworn surface. Tom saw it pause and wondered if it was testing the air, like a predator scenting prey.

“Run!” Tom bellowed, turning for the doors leading back through to the marble staircase. He stopped short. The first creature, the one that had killed Nora, rocked back and forth at the bottom of the stairs, apparently trying to work out how to climb them.

“Not that way!” Tom turned again, scanning the room for another exit.

“There!” Walter pointed to a solid oak door, fitted neatly into the dark wood panelling. He struggled with it for a moment, before tugging it open with a wrenching sound. He cast a wild-eyed glance over his shoulder, then dived through into the darkness. Tom hefted the generator and followed.

“Hubert, come on!” Tom stood in the doorway. Hubert seemed transfixed by the

approaching monolith. He slowly turned his head to look at Tom. Tom shrank back a little, chilled by the strange, blank calm in the man's eyes. Hubert turned and ran at the stone, screaming semi-coherent obscenities, his torch swinging wildly.

"You damned demonic beast! I'll end you! I'll-"

"Hubert, no!"

Hubert swung his torch against the stone, the glass breaking and the light dying abruptly as the bulb smashed. The light pulsed faster through the stone creature. Blind with rage and grief, Hubert beat ineffectually against the creature with his fists. His struggles grew worse as he found himself stuck fast to the rough surface. He tried to pull away, his curses giving way to screams, but the stone toppled slowly forwards, smothering his cries and pinning Hubert's broken body to the floor. Tom turned away as the stone flared with brilliant light, a sickening sucking noise filling the room. Arms full of gear, he shoved Walter bodily down the corridor and away from the bloody sight.

* * * * *

"Doctor, what are those things?" Val stared down from the top of the staircase at the heaving mass at the bottom, rocking from side to side and trying to lever itself up onto the first step.

"Ogri." Loathing filled his voice.

"Ogres? Shrek's had some work done."

"No, Ogri. I thought the only one in this valley was dormant. It seems my assumption was wrong."

"Where did it come from?"

"Ogros, in the Tau Ceti system. It's a long way from home."

"What did that beastly thing do poor Nora?" whispered Lillian.

"It absorbed her body's fluids and proteins. To do it at that rate it must have been rather peckish."

"Doctor!" Val gave him an admonishing glance as she wrapped her arm around Lillian's trembling shoulders.

"No time for sugar coating. We're top of the menu for a very vicious predator. Possibly a whole nest of them. On their homeworld they slither around deep in swamps of haemoglobin, taking in as much as they need. Right now their food source is us."

Something beeped. The Doctor fished through his pockets and withdrew a small black cylinder, a red light flashing on one end. It beeped again, an annoyed, insistent noise.

"Ethereic beam locator," he answered Val's unasked question. "Should be back in the TARDIS toolkit, but every time I go to put it away something comes up." The locator's chassis folded open, revealing a screen that fed the Doctor more information about the energy it had detected.

"There's a signal coming from the cellar. And we need to move. That thing's worked out the stairs."

Val shone her torch down the staircase. Sure enough, the Ogri had realised that by swinging its weight onto one corner, it could raise its opposite corner enough to catch the step, slowly and precariously levering itself upwards. Chips of marble crumbled under its weight, the stairs cracking and shivering under the massive creature's bulk. From deep in the darkness of the house came a series of alarming, creaking groans. Stone ground against stone. Plaster sloughed from the walls. Distantly, they heard a crash and clatter. With the cornerstones now on the move,

the house had begun to disintegrate.

* * * * *

In the basement, the Joined slept. Tendrils of cold liquid rock coiled languidly through each, veins of gold and scarlet light flickering in the darkness. The light glowed in one place, pulsing in time with the ever present deep throb-throb of a heartbeat. Slowly, with a low grinding, the rock split and a hand emerged, delicate like a woman's, flexing and turning as joint and sinew, yet made of solid stone. A Glamour was being born.

On their native world, the Glamour would take the form of the tiny, swift gazelles that darted from clump to sodden clump of brown-red moss heaped over the haemoglobin swamps. Their tiny, trifurcated hooves enabled them to balance neatly on the thick pinkish balloons that showed the position of the airfish, slow moving behemoths that moved beneath the surface, excreting the oxygen that kept the ecosystem alive. The Glamour, lithe and nimble as a swamp gazelle, clever as the wily marsh fox, would rise to the surface as it split from the mating structure of the Ogri deep in the silent darkness of the bottom of the swamp. The fleet-footed creature, stone yet not stone, was the Joined's eyes and ears, lookout and scout. It was a tool, able to go where the larvae, the blocky, slow moving Ogri grazing beneath the swamp, could not.

* * * * *

Tom heaved the heavy oak door shut, all too aware of the stone still at large in the room beyond. They were in a small anteroom, little more than a cupboard, a servants' room lined with cupboards of crockery and glassware. A tiny fireplace in the corner had collapsed. There were no windows. Walter sat the lanterns down on a dusty sideboard, and sank to his knees.

"Great God in heaven, what is that thing? What has it done to Hubert? And Nora?"

Tom swallowed hard. "It's terrible, it really is. I hope it was quick. And painless. But we've got Stonehenge trying to break the door down, so we really have to keep it together now, okay?"

* * * * *

"Lillian, Ms Rossi, look for a way up into the attic. The Ogri won't be able to follow you there." The Doctor shoved the etheric beam locator into his pocket.

"Is that safe?" Val gave the ceiling an uncertain look. "It feels like the house is collapsing."

"At the moment you're in more danger from the Ogri than the house. If I'm successful, this should be sorted out before things get that bad."

"That bad? I'd hate to see what could be worse." She hesitated. "You're not coming with us?"

"No. I have an appointment in the cellar."

"But that's where the-"

Yes. Now go. Attic. Move!" The Doctor shooed Val and Lillian towards the next level of the staircase, a much narrower wooden affair that led to the attic. Even by torchlight, Val could see the fear and confusion in Lillian's eyes. She knew that look, had felt it herself so many times while travelling with the Doctor.

“It'll be okay. The Doctor's good at this sort of thing. It's what he does.”

* * * * *

The Doctor darted into a large drawing room to the right of the marble staircase. The Ogri was now halfway up the stairs. He had to move fast. The Doctor glanced around for another staircase, a short cut, any means of getting downstairs to the source of the strange signals.

Casting the torch beam around the walls, the Doctor lit on an ornate piece of panelling. A few prods and a sharp kick revealed the dumbwaiter. He grinned. The tiny service lift would have to go as far as the kitchens to be useful, and hopefully the cellar beyond. The Doctor shone his torch up and down the lift shaft. The rotted remains of the wooden lift lay in pieces at the bottom, but a quick tug on the cables revealed their soundness. Shucking off his jacket, the Doctor wadded it into a bundle. He wrapped his arms around the filthy cables, the jacket acting as padding to protect him from friction as he slid down. He took a deep breath, and pushed off into the darkness.

* * * * *

A scuffling, sliding noise from inside the wall made Walter jump. He caught Tom's eye in the lantern light.

“What was that?”

“Apart from the house falling down around our ears,” Tom said drily. “Rats? Bit of plaster falling off the ceiling? I don't think it was the rocks.” Tom went over to the wall where the sound had come from, holding the torch close and inspecting it. Then he realised what he was doing, shook his head and turned back to the generator.

“Might as well be able to see what we're doing.” He unfolded the lamp and plugged it into the generator. The small machine started with an easy hum, and both men blinked in the sudden brightness. In the sharp light, the small door fitted neatly into the panelled wall was obvious.

“A dumbwaiter!”

“Better than that, it's our ticket out of here.”

* * * * *

Sliding down, the Doctor braced himself for impact. He came to rest in a flurry of dust and splinters of rotten wood. Flakes of rusted iron peppered his tangled hair. His jacket was filthy and worn through in places, but he put it back on anyway. It contained many useful things.

Downstairs the mansion remained as it had been left, now garnished with a thick coating of decay. Copper pots caked heavily in verdigris hung from damp walls. Mouldering firewood was still stacked neatly by the range. From upstairs, the Doctor heard the creaks and groans of the Ogri's slow progress, hunting the warm, tasty sport barricaded in the attic. He cast his eyes around the kitchen, looking for - ah, yes, there it was - the door leading down to the cellar. A faint glow of golden light crept out through the gaps around the ancient, heavy oak. The Doctor strode purposefully across the kitchen and reached for the doorknob.

* * * * *

Tom angled the lamp towards the lift shaft, inspecting the rusty cables that led upwards into the darkness. He pulled on one. It held firm. He pulled harder, putting all six foot two inches' worth of weight onto the aging metal. It didn't budge.

"Feels secure. Think you could climb up here?"

Walter gave the cables an experimental tug of his own. "I say. I was in the Cambridge mountaineering club, don't you know?" He hefted himself easily up the cables. "What about the torches, though?" His voice echoed back into the room. "We'll need both hands to climb."

Tom dragged generator and lamp closer to the shaft, pointed the light directly upwards. Weird shadows danced around the shaft, cobwebs and splinters catching the unaccustomed light. Somewhere, something scuttled.

"How's that?"

"Enough light to climb by, but what when we reach the top?"

The door splintered as several tonnes of stone collided with it. Chunks of plaster rained down from the ceiling. A deep, throbbing heartbeat vibrated through the floor.

"Let's worry about that when we get there," said Tom grimly, and clambered into the shaft behind Walter and started to climb.

* * * * *

"Okay, ready? Right, let's go." Val hoisted her end of the heavy tin chest she and Lillian had dragged across the attic floor. The door was solid, but the hinges were rusted and weak. If the Ogrid somehow made it up the stairs, the door wouldn't keep them at bay for long.

Fortunately the attic was piled with Tattlestone's effects, heavy trunks and furniture which the women piled against the door to buy themselves a little more time. The floor pitched, like the deck of a ship in a storm, and an occasional table slid past to thud against the outside corner of the room.

Lillian shone her torch around the exposed rafters. Above their heads, mist and starlight shone through gaps in the crumbling roof. For a moment, she wished she was up there with the stars, safe from the chaos around her.

"I hope whatever your friend's doing works."

"I hope this place holds together long enough for the Doctor to get those things under control." Val gave the chest a final shove into position, against the maple sideboard and mouldering steamer trunk already blocking the door. It wouldn't stop several tonnes of blood-lusting stone, but it might slow it down.

"If this place does go," said Val thoughtfully, "would it be more dangerous to be up here and fall two storeys, or to be on the ground floor and have two storeys' worth of house fall on us?"

The walls shifted in response.

* * * * *

Light bathed the cellar. From needing a torch just a few minutes ago, the Doctor now had to throw up a hand to shield his eyes from the glare. He edged down the stone stairs, strangely dry given the damp elsewhere in the house, towards the source of the light.

The Joined shimmered, tendrils of stone tasting the air. Something was coming,

something that was not Glamour or larvae. Something warm and salty that stank of food.

The Doctor dropped his arm cautiously, eyes adjusting to the unexpected brightness. The light emanated from a mass of stone taking up most of the cellar floor, pulsing and glowing with light, the air filled with the throb-throbbing heartbeat of the Ogri. Movement caught his eye. A section of glowing stone split open revealing the figure of a woman trapped inside. She was a dark shape silhouetted against the light pouring from the stone, only her head and arms visible. The Doctor leapt to her aid, but instinct stopped him inches from the woman's outstretched hands.

She was stone. Her hands, her face, her neck moved like flesh but had the colour and texture of rock. Her eyes flicked open, deep pools of obsidian darkness. The mass of stone writhed once more, and the woman slid free to her waist, breast and rib and spine perfectly rendered in granite. She wasn't trapped. She was a part of this thing.

With a final shudder, the woman came free. She stood gracefully on slender stone legs. Tilting her head, she regarded the Doctor with those unblinking black eyes.

"What are you?" Her voice was a scratchy whisper, the grinding of stone on stone.

"I'm the Doctor. What are you?"

"You will take us home."

"I- I beg your pardon?"

"Long have we yearned to leave this place. It is too cold here. We hunger. You can step between worlds as though the stars are but pebbles on a beach. You will take us home."

"You want to return to Ogros?"

"More than anything."

The Doctor gave a short, humourless laugh. "Deal. If only they were all this simple."

An ominous scraping from the doorway cut the Doctor off. An Ogri blundered blindly around the kitchen, looking for the tasty meal it could smell in the cellar below. Reaching the doorway, the network of yellow light across its body paled into insignificance against the fierce brightness of the larger mass.

It paused at the top of the stairs. Through its link to its brethren, it had learned the trick of going up stairs. But down? It swung, pivoting on one corner. The opposite corner slipped over the top step, into the space above the next. For a moment, it teetered in perfect balance.

Then it fell.

The Doctor instinctively grabbed the stone woman and tried to drag her with him as he threw himself to one side, away from falling Ogri. But the woman couldn't be shifted; heavier even than a rock of her size should be.

Caught off balance, the Doctor fell in a tangle to the floor. The falling Ogri missed the woman by inches, tumbling end over end as it landed in the cold, liquid stone of the Joined. The mass split wide like a hungry mouth, the gaping chasm deeper than the floor should allow, sucking in the falling creature. Fascinated, the Doctor watched the now slightly larger Joined shift. Blocky shapes barely visible shifted beneath the surface.

"It's a composite." He stared at the stone woman. "A breeding cell."

"Our final form," she whispered in her grinding wheeze. "Many larvae become one, and from the one come many."

"Call off the Ogri. The individual ones. They're hunting my friends. Call them off, and we'll talk about taking you all home."

The stone woman shook her head in an unnervingly human gesture. "They are beyond our control. They have been hungry for too long. They are wild now."

* * * * *

Val and Lillian sat wearily on the tin chest, listening to the sighs of the house and the distant thump-thump of the Ogri on the move downstairs. There was a shuffling, scuttling noise inside the walls. Lillian drew her knees up to her chest.

“Ugh, rats. This grim old place must be crawling with vermin.”

“Why did you and Walter come here, anyway?” Val tried to distract her from their surroundings. “Is this something you do, hang around in old abandoned buildings out in the country?”

“Oh no, this was all Hubert's idea.” Lillian relaxed her legs and swung around to face Val, even though, with the torches off to conserve power, it was dark but for the weak starlight sneaking through the gaps in the roof.

“Hubert's a mathematician. He runs with the crowd from the Royal Society in London. It's where he met poor Nora. She has – well, had – quite the scientific mind, and the boys didn't like it one bit! She could run rings around them. But lately Hubert's been neglecting his Royal Society chums, and going to Spiritualist meetings. I think after all those years of numbers he's looking for something more.”

Val was about to reply when the scrabbling and scratching in the wall grew louder. Suddenly a previously-unseen hatch in the wall popped open, light streaming in. Lillian squealed and clutched Val in fright.

“It's me, sugar. Are you all right?”

“Walter!” Lillian flicked on her torch, revealing Walter's dusty face peering out of the wall. Awkwardly, he clambered out, closely followed by Tom.

“Room service!” Tom grinned into the dark attic. Val stifled a laugh of shock and relief at his cobweb covered face.

“What on earth are you two doing?”

“We had a bit of trouble with Rocky down in the dining hall, so we climbed up the old service lift. It was a pretty tight squeeze.” Tom held out his arm, and Val could see grazes on his knuckles and elbow where he'd scraped against the rough wall in the darkness. She winced in sympathy.

Lillian looked from Tom to Walter. “Where's Hubert?”

Walter picked his way over to his fiancée through the darkness and the clutter of the attic, and held her close. “He didn't make it, sweetie.”

“Oh.” It was more a gasp than a word, and Lillian buried her head against Walter's chest. As they embraced in the darkness, Tom made his way over to Val and put a cautious hand on her shoulder.

“How are you?” There seemed to be a lot of meaning loaded into those three little words.

“I'm.. I'm fine.” To Val's surprise, she was.

* * * * *

The Doctor ran his fingers through his hair, deep in thought, the constant double thump-thump heartbeat of the conjoined Ogri echoing through his head. He eyed the pulsing mass through the bright light glowing from its stony hide. He turned back to the stone woman.

“Is that lot mobile? I can get you home, but we need to get out in the open.”

The Glamour shook its head, the slow, graceful movement belying the creature's physical form.

"The Joined cannot be moved. Once their forms coalesce, they are fused into place."

"Right. That complicates things." The Doctor cast around the cellar until he saw the metal cover of a coal chute. The chute itself had long since rotted into a pile of damp splinters mouldering on the cellar floor, and the hatch was rusted solid, but it was the best chance the Doctor could see.

"Give me a boost."

The Glamour looked at him, blank stone eyes uncomprehending. The Doctor beckoned it over to the wall underneath the hatch, which had been set high into the wall.

"I need to get that hatch open and get out. I can rig up a portable displacement field to transport the whole nest back to Ogros, but I'm going to need to bring some gear down. Temporal beacons, fixed-point anchors. And a power supply. A big power supply."

Without a word, the Glamour held out her arms, and the Doctor clambered up. He expected her to sway under his weight as a human woman might, but she stood as still and firm as though the Doctor were just a sparrow perching on a statue.

Sitting awkwardly on her shoulders, the Doctor examined the hatch. It was so heavily rusted over the Doctor could hardly tell where it met the frame through the layers of flaking decay. He made an educated guess and aimed a sharp kick at the hatch. Another. Another. The fourth time his boot connected with the hatch the whole iron section splintered in a shower of rusty flakes and fell outwards, revealing a hole in the thick stone walls large enough for the Doctor to climb through. His voice echoed back down into the cellar where the Glamour watched his exit impassively.

"Try to keep those things from killing anyone else before I get back."

* * * * *

The house shook and shifted. From far below, a series of metal clangs rang out, ending in the snap of something breaking and the ringing of metal falling.

"We have to get out of here," Tom looked around at the rafters. "This place is going to come down."

"But those things are still out there!" Lillian moved closer to Walter. "We'll never get past them."

Tom reached over and tugged at the length of rope still coiled around Walter's shoulder.

"We don't have to go past them. We go down the outside."

"Scale the walls of the house?"

"Well, you can stay here if you want, but-" Tom was cut off by a crash from outside the door, as the Ogr that had stalked Val and Lillian made a final attempt at mounting the wooden stairs and smashed them to matchsticks.

Val shook one of the torches back into life and started casting around for a suitable anchor. The frame surrounding the tiny dormer window was brittle with dry rot, and while it might hold her weight, she couldn't see it supporting Tom on his way down. She looked upwards, and found one of the rafters straight and secure, while its cohorts twisted and shivered.

"Tom! Can I get a lift here?" Tom hoisted Val easily into the air, and she wrapped both arms around the beam. It held firm as she put all her weight on it. It would do.

"Rope!" Tom handed the end of the rope to Val, who tied it around the beam in a sturdy

if unconventional hitch. The house rumbled beneath their feet, and from far below came the muffled thump of a plaster ceiling collapsing.

* * * * *

Lillian looked uncertainly at the rope disappearing out of the window into the darkness.

“It's okay, honey!” Walter's voice drifted up from the darkness. “Hand over hand, just walk down the side of the building. I'm here to catch you.” Lillian took a deep breath as Tom helped her out of the window. She gripped the rope tightly and clambered gingerly out into the darkness. The wall was slick with moisture from the fog and the cold night air bit through her frock, her fur stole doing little to keep it at bay. Another step, another foot of rope. Down past boarded up windows. Another step. Another. Somewhere in the distance an owl called. Maybe it was the same one that had startled her at the window, just a few hours ago, before this nightmare started.

Lillian squealed as something warm brushed her face. The bat, as startled as the woman, tangled in her hair and fluttered wildly to escape. Lillian took one hand from the rope to fend off chirping creature scratching at her face. She swung around, disoriented, feet slipping against the slick stones. She thudded into the wall, the wind knocked out of her. Gasping in sudden shock, Lillian lost her grip and tumbled into the darkness.

She landed on top of a tall wooden box with an odd lantern on the roof, like an electric outhouse somehow misplaced in the Spicksbury Mansion grounds. She slipped on the slightly sloped roof and started to fall again, only to find her descent stopped by a strong pair of hands.

“Hey babe, you okay?” Walter's worried face appeared in the torchlight. He set her carefully onto the ground and set to work freeing the bat tangled in her hair.

“Everything all right down there?” Val's voice echoed in the fog, coming from all directions at once.

“All ticketty-boo down here – I caught her!” Walter called back. “But watch out for bats on your way down.”

* * * * *

The Doctor stumbled through the darkness, the fog bettering even his sharp eyesight. He squelched through the boggy ground around the side of the building to the back, where the TARDIS had landed earlier that evening. He could make her out in the darkness by instinct more than sight, a reassuring four-square shape looming in the darkness.

“Hi Doctor!”

The Doctor looked up sharply and saw Tom, squatting like a gargoyle on top of the TARDIS.

“I'm not even going to ask.” The Doctor replied wearily. As he moved closer he saw the rope hanging down the side of the house, with Val, Lillian and Walter clustered around the TARDIS.

“Right. Everybody in.” The Doctor unlocked the TARDIS door and hustled the group inside, ignoring Walter's argument that there wouldn't be room for everyone. He left the group standing around the console and darted through the interior door.

“Brooker! Ms Rossi! I need help carrying some gear.” Tom rolled his eyes, but set off after the Doctor. Val gave Lillian and Walter an apologetic smile, and followed.

* * * * *

The cable was thick as Lillian's arm, and snaked from the odd mushroomy-looking desk in the centre of this strange, impossible room inside a box and out the doors into the darkness. Through the gap, she saw the Doctor bustle around a series of odd, bleeping devices staked into the marshy ground. The air hummed with electricity and something akin to expectation.

“Ms Rossi. Mr Brooker, time to get back inside. If this goes wrong, disconnect the cable and shut the doors, and keep them shut until the danger passes.

“But-”

“No buts. You'll be safe in there, and I can look after myself.”

Tom and Val reluctantly re-entered the TARDIS, and took up position beside Lillian and Walter who peered through the crack in the doors. The Doctor adjusted each of the staked-out devices in turn, licked a finger and held it up to check the wind direction, squinted into the darkness, and then flicked a switch on the nearest device.

* * * * *

Blood, horror and monsters. The space ringed by the Doctor's construction irised open, the darkness folding back like torn paper to reveal another scene beyond. A sea of slow-moving liquid the colour and consistency of treacle flowed as far as the eye could see. A thick, red-brown crust broke and reformed as the liquid moved. In places where the crust was thickest, clumps of moss and grass grew in shades from black and brown to brightest scarlet. A massive pink balloon the size of a zeppelin drifted past on the surface, slowly deflating. Suddenly it rose upwards and a massive beast, something akin to a whale with eight stubby, webbed hands sprouting directly from its belly, breached the surface. Its maw opened wide, revealing tiny, sharp teeth spiralling around its mouth and down into its throat. It inhaled with a long wheeze, the balloon inflating as the creature took in far more of the dank, stinking air than its body alone could hold. It sank again, the massive air bladder drifting through the fetid pool. The smell was indescribable, the mingled scent of blood and animal musk, laced with the surprisingly fresh scent of leaf mould.

A crash from the crumbling mansion as an Ogri smashed through a wall. It lumbered nearer, drawn by the scent emanating from the strange entrance to Hell the Doctor had opened. It ignored the Time Lord completely and plunged through the aperture, landing with a splash. Its body pulsed and glowed as it drank deeply. It expanded as the horrified viewers watched, its ancient hunger satiated at last.

Another Ogri followed the first. A third crashed through a boarded up window on the first floor, taking much of the wall with it and tumbling end over end to land on the ground below. Unable to right itself, it inched forward like a grub, hauling itself through the darkness into its long-lost swampy home.

“One more,” mused the Doctor. “Where are you, then?”

The house, crumbling since its cornerstones had abandoned it earlier in the evening, had been fatally weakened by the third Ogri's partial demolition. The whole structure creaked and slumped, then with a final noise closer to a groan than a crash it collapsed to one side, a mangled confusion of oak beams, stone and plaster. Something moved in the wreckage, not the bulky shape of an Ogri but a multitude of tiny figures skittering across the ground like rats. The final Ogri, the one that had stalked Val and Lillian to the attic, had shattered in the fall, and now came

seething towards the Doctor in a mass of tiny, sharp fragments. Their stone forms moved at surprising speed, each one pulsing with a tiny fleck of light, its own tiny anchor linking it to the swamps of home.

The Doctor stepped back as they thronged across the ground and through the portal to home. He watched their progress hawkishly, making sure each shard flipped through the portal and landed with a gluey plop in the morass beyond. In moments the last stragglers were through. The Doctor flicked a switch, the gate to Hell folded neatly in on itself, and the darkness of the foggy night returned.

Walter, his face grey, turned away from the scene that had unfolded before him, swallowing heavily.

The Doctor strode through the TARDIS doors and looked around. "Is it just me, or is it dark in here?" A glance at the console made him cluck with impatience. "That little exercise drained more power than I was expecting. I hope we have enough for stage two."

"Stage two?" Walter looked horrified. "You mean to say there are more of those horrors out there?"

"No, not more of those horrors," said the Doctor. "Newer and better horrors await us, Valance." The Doctor gave the console an almost affectionate pat. Scooping up the thick power cable into his arms, he issued orders over his shoulder as he exited the TARDIS.

* * * * *

After an awkward, stumbling march through the darkness, the group had moved the Doctor's lashed together transport system to the remains of the coal chute. It had taken heavy damage when the house collapsed, and now lay buried under a thick layer of rubble. Fingers of bright light shone from gaps in the detritus, and the echoing thump-thump heartbeat rumbled through the ground beneath their feet.

"Hello? Are you there?" The Doctor called into the mess, to the befuddlement of his companions. "Can you hear me?"

The rubble moved aside as the Glamour emerged into the chill night air in all its cool, stony glory.

"You have sent them home." It wasn't a question.

"Yes. Now for the big one." Walter's eyes widened when he heard the Doctor's words. "But I can't get to work until we clear this lot away."

"I can help with that." The Glamour scooped up an armful of oak beams and slabs of rock and tossed them aside as though they were tissue. Val sidled up to the Doctor and gently nudged him in the ribs.

"You two go way back, then?"

"This is what was causing those strange readings from the cellar. It's another form of Ogri. Not a dangerous one. Not to us, anyway. There's a breeding nest down there."

"Oh, God." Walter held Lillian tight, and backed away from the wreckage of the house.

"Calm down, it's immobile. And it doesn't want to hurt us. It wants to go home. So let's give it that."

While they spoke, the Glamour cleared away the rubble from around the Joined, sending the light from the mass shining into the night sky like a spotlight. The screeches of a disturbed flock of birds taking flight rang out in the distance. The Doctor bustled about, boots sliding over the stones, arranging his portal system around the exposed, glowing nest of Ogri. He wedged the

last temporal anchor into the gap between two pieces of masonry, and inspected a small gauge by the yellow light of the Joined. He turned to face his companions, his face grim.

“Not enough power. Sending the first lot back has drained the old girl. She's putting out just a fraction below what I need to initiate the time bridge.”

“How much more power do you need?” asked Tom.

“Only another few-” The Doctor's eyes lit up as the thought hit him. “The generator! Where is it?”

Tom shrugged helplessly towards the ruins. “Somewhere under that lot. We couldn't carry it up the lift shaft with us.”

The Doctor turned away, chagrined.

“What about the Bentley?” Lillian piped up unexpectedly. Walter looked horrified, but the Doctor nodded thoughtfully.

“The battery might have just enough juice to get us over the line.” The Doctor took off into the night, trotting through the slush and dodging a bed of long-dead bushes as he made his way to the front of the house.

“Now see here,” Walter set off after him, sliding awkwardly in the mud. “That motor was new just six months ago.”

“Batteries are replaceable,” the Doctor snapped. “The people of this world aren't.”

Walter stopped in his tracks, silenced. The Doctor's retreating form marched on into the darkness.

In a trice, he had the Bentley's bonnet open. A few moments later he'd disconnected the small but heavy battery. Searching for jumper leads, he rummaged first through the tool box in the boot then the glovebox, to no avail.

He huffed in annoyance. Hubert's car, the neat green Bugatti, gleamed in the distant light of the alien nest. Inside it was impeccably clean, every tool in the box resting in its rightful slot. Ah, there – underneath a neatly rolled blanket the Doctor found Hubert's coiled jumper leads.

With the two car batteries connected in series to the Doctor's lash up through Hubert's jumper leads, the tiny power gauge grudgingly flicked into the green, giving him enough power – just – to power up the mechanism.

He threw the switch, and again reality peeled itself apart to reveal a vision of scarlet tinged Ogros. The site hummed and the Doctor leaned forwards, urging the energy-starved system to work one last time. With a tearing, shattering noise the Joined toppled through the aperture, landing with a sickening splash that sent drops of thick, reddish liquid through the opening. The Doctor watched dispassionately as the droplets landed on a piece of ornately carved sandstone, the stone hissing as the liquid ate it away in moments. He turned to the Glamour.

“Has everything on Ogros evolved to be as unpleasant as possible?”

“We find your world as distressing as you would appear to find ours, Doctor.” The Doctor thought he could see a sad smile on those impassive stone features, but perhaps it was just a shadow in the darkness.

“This isn't my- never mind. Through you go, this thing won't stay open much longer. The Glamour paused, gazing into the abyss below. Slowly, the edges began to flicker, the darkness and the rubble beginning to reappear as the power faded.

“Hurry up!”

The Glamour turned away.

The high-pitched whine of the power cord suddenly went dead as the TARDIS reached her critical power level and shut off the supply. Reality folded back into existence. The two car

batteries smoked from the strain.

“What are you playing at?” The Doctor snapped at the Glamour.

“The Glamour is crafted to the specifications of its environment. This body would be useless there.”

“So you're just going to hang around here? What happens when you get hungry?” The Doctor's fury was shut off at the return of that slight, sad smile.

“The Glamour does not feed. It is a tool, not an independent life.” She turned to look at the Doctor, the first weak hints of pre-dawn light reflecting from her obsidian eyes.

“What will you do?”

“I will guard this site. I will ensure the taint of our presence leaves this place.”

“How long?”

“On our homeworld, we are reabsorbed after one orbit of our planet's star. On this world” - the Glamour stared into the first traces of dawn on the horizon - “we shall see.”

* * * * *

Lillian woke early after a brief, broken sleep filled with blood and stairs and dark, moving shapes. She lay still, hoping it had all been a dream and she was home in her chic West End flat, but knowing from the unfamiliar mattress it wasn't so. The events of last night had left them with a car battery flatter than a flapper's chest, so Val's veteran friend had kindly – if brusquely – offered them a bed for the night in his impossible outhouse. Unable to fend off wakefulness any longer, Lillian clambered stiffly out of her borrowed bed and pulled her grubby frock back on over her shift. She headed cautiously out the door, retracing her steps from last night to find herself back in what appeared to be the Doctor's sitting room, the odd roundish room with its fungoid desk covered in switches and lights. Walter was already there, sitting uncomfortably in his shirtsleeves, nursing a mug of something warm.

“Ah, you're awake.” Lillian jumped as the Doctor appeared cat-like from where he'd been crouching by the centre console, connecting Hubert's jumper leads to some unseen outlet in its base. The other ends of the leads led to the Bentley's sorely abused battery.

“It'll never be the same, but it'll do to get you back to civilisation,” the Doctor said. “Give it an hour, maybe two, and it'll be charged and you can be on your way.” He looked up and ran a hand through his hair, which didn't appear to have seen a comb since last night. The Doctor flashed one of his rare, brilliant smiles.

“In the meantime, would you like a cup of tea?”



Spicksbury has long been stalked by death. An ancient ring of standing stones once pierced the valley's mists, and the locals knew to stay away. But later generations were not so wise; the circle was torn down to make way for an abbey, and later a church, but there was nothing Godly about what happened within those walls.

The TARDIS brings the Doctor, Val and Tom to Spicksbury in the 1920s, to join a team of young ghost hunters exploring derelict Spicksbury Manor. The grim old house has stood abandoned for years, plaster flaking from the walls and wood and velvet slowly crumbling to dust. Those years of lonely isolated would have provided ample opportunity for evil to move in – had it not already been there before the first sod was turned.

With the walls of Spicksbury Manor crumbling, an ancient horror awakens and the ghost hunters become the hunted. Deep in the heart of the house, the Doctor discovers an old enemy has taken on a shocking new form.

This is another in a series of original fan authored Doctor Who fiction published by The Doctor Who Project featuring the Tenth Doctor as played by Laurent Meyer

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