

THE
DOCTOR WHO
PROJECT



**STONE TAPE THEORY
PART 1**

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Part One: Residual and Material

*“All those afflictions befell us because of ill counsel”
- from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle [11th century AD]*

Prologue

Leofric scored his fingers roughly through his matted chestnut-coloured beard as he walked towards his Lady’s tent deep in the encampment. His tunic and trousers were dirty and worn by his labours, but he paid this no mind. He strode towards his Lady’s guards with purpose, his eyes wild, giving the impression that he was there in body, but not in mind. Leofric was trusted for his mindfulness; his wits were a weapon. The moment he came into the Queen’s service since her ascension two years prior, he had focused on fighting off raiders from other kingdoms, from Danes, and whoever else she had bidden him.

But how could he focus in the presence of this madness, of this apparition from beyond?!

He had run on foot after his horse bolted in the face of the ghastly shade; his climb off the mound had left him breathless.

When it was finished, the fortification was to be part of his queen’s plan to defend her people from the Danes. They had been on a long trail of fortifying strategic points along the edges of her kingdom as she had decreed. It was then, passing between points in darkness with only a flickering flame to guide the way, that the horrifying attack had taken place. Perhaps once a person had travelled so long, they were bound to be confronted by a beast in the night – or worse.

The two guards squinted at him in the torchlight that seemed locked in a futile battle with the encroaching darkness. There was a dimmer light inside the tent and the faint outline of its sole inhabitant seated at a table. The younger of the guards registered concern at Leofric’s wild expression, instinctively moving his hand to the hilt of his sword.

The other guard, Ed, waved a lazy hand toward his younger colleague and nodded in recognition. “Leofric? Is something amiss, lad?”

The words snapped the muddy warrior’s wandering mind into sudden awareness of his present demeanour – suggesting a threat to be met with aggression.

"My apologies Ed, I meant no alarm, at least not presently. I would speak to our Lady if I may, it's a matter of utmost urgency I fear ..." Leofric said, trailing off at the end, suddenly wary of the silence of the night. "I am in dire need of her counsel."

Ed was a few years Leofric's senior, but a man he knew well as a reliable and wily judge of character. He studied Leofric for a moment, scratching at his own brown-grey beard, then nodded slowly.

"Aye, I'll see if she'll receive ye lad," he replied gruffly. "Wait 'ere."

Ed announced himself and had a brief exchange with the Lady inside, before re-emerging.

"Aye, the Lady will see you." Ed's eyes narrowed. "But mind yourself lad."

Leofric entered the tent, flanked by Ed, whose gaze remained fixed on the warrior rather than the distinguished occupant who sat awaiting them. Leofric bowed and knelt as he addressed her: "My Lady, forgive my intrusion at this late hour, but I wouldn't have come if it wasn't important."

"Rise, Leofric, and speak your news." The lady's voice was strong and deliberate, but with a calming undertone.

Leofric lifted his head to behold Æthelflæd the Warrior Queen, the Lady of Mercia. Beautiful, elegant, and fierce, her intelligent eyes seemed enlivened by the firelight as she studied him carefully. Her long dark hair, tied loosely away from her face and draped over her right shoulder, had recently been brushed and smoothed into flowing locks. He suddenly became aware of his dishevelled appearance and fussed with his cloak; he felt a slight flush to his face.

"What troubles you, my dear friend?" she asked, her face transformed by a warm smile.

"My Queen. I apologise, but we encountered some stragglers from a raiding party from Djúra-bý, we thought them threatening to our encampment, so we engaged them. Only, we realised it wasn't us they were occupied with..." He paused, and his face paled at the recent memory, and he wore the look of disbelief for what he was about to say.

"Well, if not us, what was it? Surely there isn't anything out there quite as fearsome as you and your warriors?" She proffered a hand, both for him to rise and to encourage him for further details.

Leofric rubbed at his eyes and face, as if replaying the nights' fearful events. "My Lady, we – we encountered ... that is to say, we saw – a *witch*!"

Ed snorted involuntarily at the suggestion before recomposing himself, earning a glance of reproach from his Queen.

"A witch you say. Fighting Danes in the night?" The Queen arched her eyebrow in disbelief.

"Yes, well ... as far as we can tell. The Danes paid us no mind, they were cursing and shouting, clashing sword against shield as if to ward her off, but as they approached, they turned to ash in the night – gone without trace.

"My Lady, in all my years I have never encountered such a creature. I have met the malice of men and heard the cries of battle – but never have I seen this dark magic and her terrible screams. She cannot be repelled, and I do not know what to do."

Æthelflæd stood for a moment considering his words, then ran her fingers gently across the contours of the dark hair resting on her shoulder. After a moment she turned and swept her long dark green hooded cloak from a nearby chair over her shoulders, fastening a clasped brooch

in the middle. “Then we mustn’t ignore it. There are things older and more mysterious in this world than the stones in the ground. Show me this witch.” She covered her head with the hood of her cloak. “Let us hear what she wants with us.”

Act I: Residual

Residual /rɪˈzɪdʒəəl/ [adjective]

Remaining after the greater part or quantity has gone.

Chapter One

“I mean, it’s not *unusual*-unusual for the TARDIS to detect temporal anomalies, but what might be unusual is that she seems to both want us to investigate and run away from it at the same time.” The Doctor closed the door to his blue police box and patted the rectangular recessed information panel sympathetically, almost intimately. He stood for a moment wrapped in thought, a pensive expression across his intelligent face, before he stepped back and observed his time machine.

Maggie half-smiled and shrugged to herself in amusement the way she sometimes did when she re-read the legend on that panel, instructing the reader to ‘pull to open’ on a door that opened inwards. A tiny contradiction that she mused suited the Doctor rather well.

His current mood seemed relaxed, if a little distant, which she observed had been frequent since he returned to this dimension¹. It was like his mind wandered off every now and again to some other plane. She wondered how he felt to be back in his routine—such as it was. Sometimes, recently, he almost seemed distracted. She wouldn’t say it was boredom as such, but at the very least he appeared unfocused.

“We’ll leave her tucked out of trouble and walk the rest of the way I think,” the Doctor stated, his tone not solicitating a response. He raised the wide Ulster collar on his coat against the nip in the air, he produced his warm woollen maroon hat from his coat and pulled it onto his closely cropped head. Suitably wrapped up, he rubbed his hands together and exhaled in satisfaction.

The TARDIS was at rest under the boughs of a giant oak tree, next to a mossy dry-stone wall that looked like it had stood the tests of time. Brown-red leaves had fallen from it, scattered across the grassy area where they stood. After a few minutes’ walk, the trees thinned out, the grass merged with a gravel path, and they saw a few low rustic houses, cottages, and shops, their walls as mossy as the wall, and their roofs thatched. The wall, however, continued all the way to

¹ See *The Doctor Who Project* Season 45: *The Last Doctor* Part Two.

the village, a protective barrier as far as the eye could see. Maggie noted that there were few places that it had looked more 'at home' than here, like an image from an atmospheric picture-postcard of the Britain of yesteryear. All it was missing from the scene was an elegant old streetlamp.

"So, where and more importantly, *when* are we Doctor?" she said thrusting her hands into the pockets of her dark Canada Goose puffer jacket and sniffing the air. The day was crisp and there wasn't much sunlight in the cloudy sky overhead. Maggie wore a woollen multicoloured scarf around her neck that she had found inside the TARDIS that seemed impossibly long on reflection. She'd wound it a few times as they had left the warmth of the interior.

The Doctor fiddled around in the pockets of his royal blue pea coat and glanced upwards and around before responding: "England, a market town ... somewhere in the midlands I'd guess." He picked some moss off the time-tested stone wall, tasted it and with a grimace, decided, "The year would be around 2004, I think. A Sunday ... not just any Sunday either, but Halloween!"

"You got that from tasting wall-moss?" Maggie asked incredulously.

"No, it says so over there," the Doctor said, nodding across the road to a charmingly sturdy, well-kept pub that stood proudly on its own on the corner between two carefully manicured streets flanked by its own stone walls matching its stonework. One was adorned with a large, printed banner that announced in a jaunty font: "ALL HALLOWS' EVE PARTY 2004", accompanied by a silhouette of a witch on a broom on one side, and vampire bats across. The pub had apparently stolen the beautiful old streetlamp from the picture postcard scene the TARDIS occupied, and lights were already on inside, due to the dwindling natural light outside.

"Cheater!" Maggie sniffed and smirked. "So, you ate the moss for the fun of it?"

"Largely, yes."

She shook her head at his incorrigible weirdness and read the pub's sign aloud. "The Royal Oak. Very British. Although I thought they went in more for Guy Fawkes Night than Halloween."

"Quite right, poor Guido ... the American influence has taken hold by now, subsumed by a desire to dress up and eat tooth-rotting chocolates." The Doctor looked up and down the town's high street, confusion speckling his features. "Although the Halloween spirit doesn't seem to have caught on here. Rather quiet, even for a sleepy English town."

Maggie nodded. "I thought so too. You don't think whatever spooked the TARDIS has cleared out the town."

"Well ...either that or they're out of beer." The Doctor shrugged. "Oh well. Their loss. Seeing as the 'quiet' often precedes the storm in my experience, what say we take in a libation or two before we get back to our mystery, eh Watson?!" the Doctor said, playfully pointing at the pub door. "And you never know, perhaps one of their patrons is sitting on an anomaly in the space-time continuum and wants to tell us all about it over a pint of Guinness and a game of billiards."

"Well, it's past five o'clock somewhere, etcetera, etcetera, Holmes," Maggie chuckled, taking him by the arm. "Capital idea!" she said in a mock-English accent.

"Excellent!" the Doctor proclaimed as they strolled across the quiet road toward the pub.

"But, do I *have* to drink Guinness too?" Maggie enquired.

"Of course, otherwise you have to wait in the TARDIS," the Doctor replied wryly.

The pub interior basked in the warmth of a large open log fire set inside a huge functional fireplace with an iron guard set across the hearth. The interior was traditionally adorned, in keeping with the style of the area, but well maintained. A few joke-shop props—furry spiders that descended from walls, cackling toy witches and ghosts on strings that circled the ceiling fan—dressed the place up for the day. The walls were adorned with beautiful landscapes and old photographs of the town in bygone days.

There were a small number of patrons inside, the Doctor noted it was a little after 2:30pm, and the clientele reflected that sleepy mid-afternoon shoulder. A prize specimen of the type was an older gentleman in heathery grey tweeds and flat cap, perched on a stool on the far end of the bar, thumbing lazily through the morning newspaper and muttering to himself contently. Opposite him, behind the bar, stood a large man in a light blue polo shirt and slightly too-tight Levi jeans cleaning and checking glasses; he had donned a half-hearted costume of a pirate tricorne and eyepatch that didn't quite go with the T-shirt and form-fitting jeans. Nearer the fire, a blonde woman whose expensive glasses, brown fitted leather jacket and black jeans—and flamboyant white-gold skull-shaped earrings—marked her as a bit out of place, sat in a high-backed parson's chair, tapping a high-quality fountain pen against her teeth and staring at a large hard-backed notebook. The Doctor noted that, far from being a fish out of water as her appearance suggested, she seemed more than comfortable with her surroundings.

"Ah, afternoon my friends, how are you both today?" the barman asked with a broad, easily worn smile. His voice was deep and gravelly, but friendly.

Returning the barman's smile with one of his own, he replied, "Good day sir, I'm the Doctor and this is my friend Maggie, we're just visiting the area, and we were hoping to get a drink and maybe a spot of late lunch."

"Well indeed, I'd say you've come to the right place. Although ... at this time, I'll have to check what we've got left in the kitchen – we've a rush on food between noon and two, especially today given the TV folk are around. Come in, take a seat anywhere you like." With another practised smile, he asked, "I'll be right with you, but what can I get you to drink?"

"We'll have *two* pints of Guinness please," the Doctor replied swiftly before Maggie could answer.

"And a glass of ice water," she was sure to add.

"Not a problem," the man said with a strong 'thumbs-up' gesture in their direction before turning and expertly flipping two tall pint glasses onto the bar in front of the hand operated pumps.

The Doctor and Maggie made their way to a table flanked by a pair of free-standing chairs facing a high booth-style bench against the wall. They took a seat looking out of the inner sanctum of the pub, the fire crackling to their left and the light from the bar sparkled through racked glasses and bottles to their right.

The older gentlemen glanced up from his newspaper momentarily and studied them both, before sniffing and going back to the chronicled events of the day, lifting the paper in front of his face to shield himself from the strangers. The back page extolled the latest exploits of Birmingham City Football Club in the Premier League.

"Who's winning the European Super League?" the Doctor asked him cheerfully.

"The wha—?" asked the man briskly in a slightly accented voice, flopping the newspaper down in front of him. "What sport you on about, lad?"

"The socc-er, football!" the Doctor self-corrected, not wishing to suffer further incredulity.

"Ain't no European Super wotsit mate. I think you're mistaken," The older man tutted and furrowed his wrinkled brow before hoisting the newspaper between them again.

"Two thousand four?! Give it time, lad," the Doctor muttered archly, flicking a cardboard beer mat off the table, which skittered to the floor.

The barman came to their aid, adeptly cradling their drinks before equally skilfully setting them down in front. "Ignore Wally, he's a bit of an old crank." He smiled at the Doctor sympathetically. "Whatever you do, don't get him started on the state of modern cricket."

"Perish the thought!" Maggie chuckled. "I wouldn't know where to begin."

"You say you're visiting. I can tell from your accent, Miss. And as for you, sir ... you haven't been at sea, have you? There's no port around here, you'd have come a long way," the barman said, nodding towards the Doctor and noting his appearance. When the Time Lord merely returned a blank stare, oblivious to his meaning, he shook his head. "But of course, what am I thinking? It's a costume, isn't it? Let me guess, that old sea captain played by Rex Harrison in ... *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*?" Before the Doctor could answer, the barman laughed at his own ingenuity for guessing. "So, what brings you to these parts?"

"We're investigating anomalies," the Doctor answered before taking a long, thirsty pull from his drink. He sighed with satisfaction and asked, "Have you seen anything strange around here?"

Before the barman could answer, the lady seated in the high-sided chair turned their way and called over: "Anomalies? Are you from the Koestler Parapsychology Unit at the University of Edinburgh?" Her excitement made her spit her words out a little too quickly.

The Doctor expertly slid into the lie without blinking. "Why yes, we are. I'm the Doctor and this is Maggie."

The woman stood quickly, almost knocking the small table in front of her over. "The Doctor ... why, Doctor Alderman! I am so glad that you came – we've been so looking forward to having you investigate with us!" She took his hand and shook it enthusiastically.

"A pleasure, Miss..." the Doctor enquired.

"Oh! Forgive me, I'm Crystal Forrester – host and co-creator of *Ghost: Haunted*." She blushed slightly. "You don't remember me?"

"Forgive me ..."

"I'm the one who contacted you – I'm so happy you've agreed to be part of the show. We were going to have to vamp without you."

"Well, I mean, how could I say no?" the Doctor said, returning her smile.

"You didn't seem to struggle the three times I'd asked you previously. I seem to remember a few cutting comments about our show ..." She waved away the hurtful memory. "But never mind all that, you're here now, and that's all that matters. Craig will be over-the-moon." Her practiced broadcasting voice suddenly lapsed into a Mancunian lilt when she used the idiom. "This area has been littered with parapsychological phenomenon over the years, and I'm sure it'll make for a great investigation."

"It had better," the barman muttered darkly. "You've surely noticed, Doctor Alderman, how quiet Tamworth is. Most people have left town. This little TV stunt is playing havoc with my All Hallow's Eve party. I expect it'll be me, the missus, and Wally, dancing to the 'Monster Mash'." This image elicited a chuckle from Maggie.

A chunky mobile phone jolted her, and she smiled as she read its screen. "Talk about timing. That's Craig Busby, my producer. He's up at the castle, finishing the pre-show checks. I've been a bit careless leaving him hanging up there. Will you join me?"

"Well," Maggie said, drinking her water and emphatically pushing her untouched pint of Guinness to the Doctor's side of the table. "We'd best not keep Craig waiting. Although I *had* hoped for one of those pub lunches that they say are so great in England."

"Can we grab a couple of pies and two packets of crisp to go?" the Doctor asked the barman imploringly before turning and downing the rest of Maggie's pint. "Now, I believe there was mention of a castle?"

Craig Busby stood at the arched gateway to the castle, looking down from the mound at the town in the half-light of the day. He scratched at the stubble on his face and then the grey and black speckled hair on his temple as his eyes traced the pathway down from the castle and past the terraced gardens, with their carefully curated flowerbeds, towards ground level and the small mechanical excavator and a taped-off dig site. It wasn't unusual for Crystal to take herself off to think before the cameras started rolling. He'd known her long enough to recognise when she needed space, but she was usually back with plenty of time to spare. Here he was, standing around, and still he had no reply to his gentle but firm text message reminder that they didn't have all day.

He glanced at his watch impatiently and sighed. Perhaps he should have taken onboard what she'd said about the direction of the show. Perhaps if he'd listened to her, she wouldn't have needed space. The show was a labour of love for them both, and its popularity had never been higher since they'd started a few years ago – but she wanted to be taken seriously, not chase the ratings. Needing endorsement from the scientific community had been a driver for her, even an obsession recently. He'd disagreed and said they should 'ride the wave' of popularity while they could. A live show on Halloween night would be a highlight for them.

"Why couldn't you just listen?!" he muttered to himself, raising his eyes skyward, its grey tone reflecting his own mood.

"To yourself? Or to someone specifically?" a voice said behind him.

Andy Parkin was someone he'd known since childhood; he was a great cameraman and an even better friend. He'd spent years filming documentaries before he'd joined Craig on the *Ghost: Haunted* team and he'd never been happier than now, blundering around in the dark with Craig and Crystal chasing spooks and things that go bump in the night.

"Just thinking about Crys ... I should have just listened to what she had to say." Craig sniffed the air and stretched his back.

Andy slapped him roughly on the upper back and smiled his goofy smile, "Look mate, she'll be all right. She just wants to be proud of the show, you know? Make a discovery." He

pursed his lips and drew Craig to his side with his left arm, shaking him slightly. "But she never stays mad at you for long."

"I wasn't trying to make her mad, I was just saying that our show is a hit, and we should enjoy that while it lasts."

"She knows that. But she cares about the show, it's her baby." He tapped Craig's shoulder and pointed down the hill. "Besides, she's there, look."

Craig looked down the path to where Crystal had appeared, waving enthusiastically at them, two figures alongside her. Craig and Andy set off to meet them. The path was buffered by strong stone walls matching the terraced garden space, and led down the grounds to a quaint area used for events like jousting tournaments and village fetes in the summer. Past that lay the gatehouse and beyond that, the path into town. The excavation site at the foot of the mound had nearly brought the whole production into jeopardy, until the University team responsible had agreed that the show could go ahead, as long as they committed in writing to leaving the site undisturbed.

There had been a fortification on this sight since A.D. 913, and Craig particularly admired the elegant patchwork that made up the rounded, sturdy castle as it was today. When they had received permission to film here, he and Crystal had been excited about the prospect of such an atmospheric setting for the show, as had the rest of the regular crew.

"I was about to send out a search party!" Craig said as Crystal neared. "We've got work to do." He smiled and opened out his palms.

"I'm here now, so you can stop worrying about me," Crystal said taking him by the hand. "And, better than that, I brought company. This is Doctor Alderman and his grad student, Maggie."

At a nudge from Maggie, the Doctor slipped into character. "Yes, yes, that's us, here from Edinburgh. We're keen to have a look at your anomalies."

"Oh!?" Craig chuckled nervously. "Well, never on a first date."

Maggie smirked but the Doctor gave him a baffled stare. "I'm sorry?"

"Ignore him, he's silly," Crystal said apologetically. "This is Craig Busby, our executive producer, and this is Andy Parkin, out cameraman extraordinaire."

"Lovely to meet you all," Maggie said, "You'll have to excuse the Doctor, he's brilliant but a little distracted – we had to tear him away from a pub lunch."

"A Yank?" Andy said with a cocky smile. "Nice to meet you too Maggie."

"Well – no, I'm from British Columbia – I'm Canadian."

"Oh, I do apologise. No one likes to be falsely accused of being an American," Andy said with a playful glint in his eye.

"That's enough, you old smoothy," Craig said, roughly moving him to one side and shaking Maggie's hand.

"What brings you to Tamworth from Edinburgh?" Craig asked.

"They're from the 'Koestler Unit', Craig," Crystal answered, an embarrassed flush to her cheeks. "You remember, I'd asked them to be part of the show and bring their expert opinion to the team as guests."

"Perfect! You're just in time then," Craig said, smoothing out his black casual shirt. "We're glad you could make it, and that Crys' persistence paid off. This is a big show for us. Getting the

custodians of the castle to agree wasn't too hard ..." Craig nodded in the direction of the dig site. "... but we had to convince the archaeologists we weren't vandals – now that *was* a challenge. Won't you come and meet the team and have a look around?"

"Craig, there's little I'd like more," the Doctor said striding off up the path keenly.

"Great! Fantastic!" Crystal said starting after him.

The stoic-looking castle was a very well-preserved motte-and-bailey structure typical of the European style of the eleventh century and post-Norman conquest in Britain. It stood as a silent sentinel on top of the man-made hill, over the town in the late-autumn gloom on top of the 24-meter-high mound. The path they had taken wound its way up the mound, past the tiered gardens, and through the main gateway into the courtyard where a trailer housed the Outside Broadcasting equipment.

"The castle as we see it was originally built by the Normans on an existing site that had been fortified by Anglo-Saxons, who built the motte – or mound – it stands on, and has been added to, and maintained, by its occupants over the centuries," Frank Catz, the show's historian and resident demonologist, extolled the facts with a theatrical flourish. Frank was a tall, slender man who was well dressed in a slim-fitting black suit over a charcoal grey shirt. A black silk scarf was carefully draped over his left shoulder. He seemed at home in the castle setting, and his dark colours and grave expression made Maggie think that he wouldn't have been out of place in a 'Hammer Horror' movie from the 1970s.

"The original site was first cultivated by Æthelflæd, Lady of Mercia," he continued. "It has been the subject of Viking raids, it was almost torn down by King John, and even subject of a Civil War occupation. But here it is, well into the new millennium, nearly celebrating *its* thousandth year. Isn't it something?" He turned to the group for validation.

They stood in the great hall with its polished wooden floor, its walls decorated with portraits and various armaments from the ages. Two suits of shining armour stood a quiet vigil at one end of the room, and a series of large, rounded candle laden chandeliers hung from the vaulted ceiling above.

"It certainly is," Maggie said turning in a slow circle to take it in with her hands on her hips. "A real piece of history."

Frank nodded his approval. "It's had its fair share of drama and excitement. We're looking forward to seeing what it has in store for us when the lights go out."

"Lights out?" Maggie enquired.

"Oh yes, the real action happens after dark," Crystal said wolfishly. "Once the night vision is on, we really get to see what this place is like underneath it all."

"The castle also has a rich paranormal history too," Frank noted eagerly. "The Lady in Black, the White Lady, dead soldiers, witches—poltergeists!"

"Let's not pre-empt it everyone, we need to at least try and maintain a scientific stance," Matt Thorne, the team's resident parapsychologist, called them from the rear of the group, motioning for calm. He was an older gentleman with shoulder-length greying-brown hair and a stubble beard, dressed in a dark tweed jacket, a slightly creased black shirt and chinos. All his

clothes were rumpled, and his scuffed and muddy brown suede shoes added to the impression that he might have just gotten out of bed. "We need to keep our heads clear and avoid any sense of group hysteria."

"Have you ever known me to be hysterical?" Crystal asked, knowing the answer.

"Yes, almost daily," Matt chuckled warmly.

The Doctor stood alone, detached from the hub of activity, as he quietly studied the environment and Maggie noted that he had his 'thinking face' on: not the deliberate one he used when he was about to showcase his vast intellect to dramatic effect, but the slightly furrowed brow and far-off look that indicated he was internally grappling with a conundrum, or searching for its answer without success. She had long been able to identify the difference, and she decided to give him some space to think.

"That looks like an expensive set of equipment," Maggie probed as Matt Thorne stood by a table checking the tools of his trade.

"Ah, it is new, thanks to the success of the show – but as one of Doctor Alderman's apprentices, you'll no doubt recognise the E.M.F. meters and the R.E.M. pods," Matt replied, indicating two clusters of blinking lights and L.E.D. displays whose functions Maggie could not have guessed, all the while side-eying her carefully.

"Of course," she bluffed, "and do you get good results?"

"The jury is out I'm afraid. Electromagnetic fields are an interesting area when it comes to detecting spirits or paranormal energy, but none of this, as I'm sure you'll understand, is an exact science.

"The best results I have had are with audio recorders," Matt continued, holding one up in front of her. "I find them particularly useful, the voices of those who inhabit the other plane perhaps can't always speak to us on a frequency that we can detect, but *these* certainly can." He offered her one of the recorders.

Maggie nodded her thanks and took the device from him; it looked like a hand-held radio with an extendable antenna and clearly defined buttons. Having seen so many technical gizmos from different times and planets, it made it all the more fascinating to note how little such a device had changed in the five years or so from her native time period. And to her relief, at least she wouldn't give herself away from not being able to operate it! She felt Matt paying close attention to her, so shifted the focus of the conversation.

"So, you guys turn up at these places, wait until it goes dark, and run around looking for ghosts?"

"Yes – well, with night-vision cameras, we're not completely mad," Craig interjected, scratching the back of his neck.

"And people watch this show?" Whether it was the difference between British and North American culture, or the changes in trends in the five years between this time and Maggie's, but the notion of people watching a made-up-as-you-go documentary – a kind of 'reality TV' – totally baffled her.

"Last season was in W.T.V.'s Top Thirty," he informed her proudly.

"Really?" Maggie suppressed her doubts about its entertainment value; these people seemed like an adorable collection of kooks and she wished them well. She added, "Wild!"

"We'll place the E.M.F. meters around the location, we'll also have motion sensors set up around the investigation areas, which the crew are setting up." Matt waved over his shoulder as he turned his attention back to his equipment checks.

"We'll work out who is investigating each area shortly," Crystals said to the group. "In the meantime, let's take another look around and see what locations we'll use on our walk-through."

As the group gathered their belongings and apparatus, chatting amongst themselves, there was a palpable energy and eagerness that was infectious.

"And then later on we split up and search for clues?" Maggie asked playfully.

"Something like that, yeah." Crystal smiled back patiently. "Now you're getting it Velma," she smirked, "And our psychic medium should be along later."

The mention of this person triggered a widespread groan among the crew, which Crystal tried to quell. "Now come on people, let's not be like *that* ..."

"You know as well as we do, Crys, she's planning to jump ship as soon as she sniffs a better offer."

"I'll be glad, I will," a runner opined. "She's always late. Never bothers to get directions to the locations, always wants to use her 'divining rod' ..."

As more stories of this prima donna were exchanged, Maggie walked over to the Doctor, who appeared to be studying an ornate coat of arms. His hands were on his hips, and he rocked back and forth on his heels.

"A penny for them?" Maggie enquired.

"For what, sorry?" the Doctor asked absently, rooting around in his pockets.

"Your thoughts, what's going on? Usually, you'd have your sport with a bunch of self-styled ghost hunters." Maggie nudged him with her foot. "But you seem like there's something on your mind."

"There's something wrong here Maggie, I know it, I can feel it." Since the Doctor had returned from his journeys through an alternate dimension, Maggie had noted slight changes, one of which appeared to be even keener sensitivity to changes or fluctuations in time. He had gained knowledge from other versions of himself and other courses of history, and this seemed to have granted him an innate awareness of changes in the area. The closer he got to them, the more tangible they became. Though he'd never articulated it as such.

"Should the TARDIS have left, do you think? Got us away from whatever it is?"

"The TARDIS wasn't wrong, we're in the right place I think, but there's something strange – elusive. I feel like whatever it is that brought us here and now hasn't happened yet. I feel like we've perhaps arrived too early. It's like the clouds are gathering but the storm hasn't broken. Does any of that make sense?"

He turned to her, and she could see the lines on his forehead had deepened, almost as if he heard the words leave his mouth and instantly regretted saying them. His furrowed face studied her face for a response, nonetheless.

"Not really – well, not if anyone else had said it. But I'm sure it'll make sense in time," Maggie said, trying to sound sympathetic without sounding like she was pandering, she didn't want to frustrate him further.

"In time, yes..."

Maggie snapped her fingers. “Hey! That’s happened to us before, remember? That time on Prospero’s Folly? We were getting the after-effects before we’d caused them?” Maggie shook her head in confusion; it was confusing enough to experience, never mind to recall².

He nodded slowly, but she could tell his own memory was a bit hazier. Because of the long gaps in their travels, what had been only a couple of years for her had been, as far as she could tell, centuries for him—these days he admitted to being nearly three thousand years old.

Then the Doctor’s gaze suddenly shifted to Crystal, across the wide room, being fitted with a microphone by one of the sound crew. His expression lightened like the flick of a switch.

“I say Miss Forrester – did you say, ‘psychic medium’?”

² See *The Doctor Who Project* Season 45: *Dead Gods’ Carnival*.

Chapter Two

Dina Ancona was seated in the back of a black Toyota people-mover behind blacked-out windows tapping a manicured blue fingernail against the door handle impatiently. Her other hand pressed a brightly coloured Nokia mobile phone to her ear as she gazed intently out of the window.

“So, what exactly are you saying? Is the offer still on the table or not?”

She shifted in her seat to sit up straight, the network-supplied driver glancing at her in the mirror with the expectation of eavesdropping on some gossip. She didn’t mind if he overheard; that could start a few rumours that could prove beneficial to her net worth.

Dina was a beautiful woman in her late thirties with raven-black hair and blue eyes; she had grown up in an Irish family on the outskirts of Liverpool, and though she had worked hard to lose the heavier parts of her accent and enunciate correctly, she slipped back into old habits when her temper flared.

“Look La, I’m paying you to be my agent – and if I have to do it for you, then I won’t need to pay *you*, will I?”

The male voice on the other end of the line rose an octave in response, and the driver sensed some form of apology, placation, or plain old-fashioned ego-stroking had been forthcoming.

Dina cut it short. “OK, OK, listen – I don’t have forever to wait for this break, this is my time, my opportunity. So, you secure me the deal for the show, or I’ll find someone else that will.”

She terminated the call and smoothed herself over, adjusting her smartly fitting suit and her lank raven hair. She had to be ‘in character’ by the time they reached the venue for tonight’s live show. This was going to be a big opportunity to show the people at W.T.V. that she had the star power they were looking for. Then the other ITV franchises, or those new digital channels, or maybe even the BBC, might take note. She hitched herself to Crystal and Craig’s wagon from the beginning and it was about to pay off; she could feel it in her bones. Her grandmother, with whom she’d spent a lot of her early years, had the ‘gift’. She had told Dina from an early age that she had it too. Mum and Dad hadn’t really wanted to entertain it, they didn’t really put stock in ‘superstition and nonsense’ as they put it, but she had always felt otherwise. She may not have believed in it, not fully; but as an adult, she could see that it was her path to fortune. Fame was nice, sure, but she that wasn’t the main driver. She had felt that she could use her gift as a ticket to bigger and better things.

The surging popularity of *Ghost: Haunted* had propelled her into the public eye. For every person that believed in the show, and her ability to commune with the dead, there always seemed to be another who didn’t. And then there were the people who *did* believe, but thought she was a charlatan, and those who didn’t believe but thought she was a careerist, and so on. The debate it

all generated was all good for the show and the network. People tuned in to see what happened either way, and now there was a chance she might be able to make a break into her own show. It might be daytime television, or it might be an acting gig; neither her agent nor her 'gift' were entirely clear on that. But Dina didn't care. Just thinking about it sent a ripple of excitement up her spine. She hadn't mentioned it to anyone on the team; she'd decided there was little point biting the hand that fed her.

The main challenge was that she didn't know where she was going for tonight's show. She knew the rough area sure, but there were a few sights of interest within that radius that could be hosting them. She'd struggled as she'd gotten older to focus on the messages, so much so that she'd begun to think that perhaps she'd never had a gift at all, and it was a delusion created and enhanced by her grandmother's stories and superstitions. Getting location information ahead of time had become a security for her, a necessity even.

But she was certain the prize was in sight, and so she had to make sure that she was at her brilliant best for the live show. She could read people, she'd learnt to do that early, she knew when she had picked up a thread from body language and their 'tells', but that wasn't enough – she needed to nail this location, she needed to nail the performance.

She glanced up at the driver who was still admiring her in the rearview mirror and saw an opportunity; she flashed him a practiced smile and batted her eyelids faintly and leant forward slightly towards the gap between the front seats.

"Eddie darling, how much longer are we going to be on the road? I really need to stretch my legs," she cooed rubbing the shin on her left leg slowly and deliberately.

"About fifteen minutes, Miss Ancona," he smiled back, reddening slightly.

"Oh, that's not too bad." She slid her head forward next to him to look out of the front window, so her mouth was close to his ear, and loosed a sultry sigh. "I do hope I don't have to walk far. It looks like it's going to rain."

"Don't you worry, I've spoken to the people at Tamworth, I'll get you as close as we can to the castle and I've got a golf umbrella in the back."

Dina slipped back into her seat with fluid ease. "You're an absolute diamond Eddie." She pulled the phone back out of her blazer pocket and crossed her legs.

She tapped a name in her contact list and smiled to the driver as the call connected. A man answered after a moment, "Paul," she whispered into the phone, "it's me again, get me everything you can on Tamworth Castle."

The castle was a little warmer than Andy expected. He'd been on so many shoots up and down the UK since *Ghost: Haunted* had started, and it was nearly always damp, or else nearly always cold, so to find that the main areas of the castle were pleasant in the late October gloom was a nice surprise. He unzipped his jacket to let some air in as he wandered the halls between the old cellars, in and out of rooms, busy checking areas marked as locations for the broadcast, trying to check the path was clear and find the best angles.

He paused for a moment in the room that had become the site manager's office. It was a collection of photos, small pieces of furniture, and other objects and oddments from different

decades of the castle's history. On a dark-wood corner table that looked as though it had seen its fair share of action in recent years, there was an old record player. There was very little dust on it, which indicated it was still in use. Beneath it on the floor sat a box of miscellaneous records. Andy looked down at the vinyl record sat on the turntable. "Huh, 'There's a Ghost in My House' – R Dean Taylor," he read aloud in amusement, "how very apt."

He hadn't been invested in the concept of chasing ghosts and poltergeists at night when he'd joined the *Ghost: Haunted* crew at the beginning, but he'd needed the work and Craig was one of his oldest friends. However, it didn't take long for the crew to become like a little family, and despite his resistance he'd even become, if not a full believer, at least invested in the concept himself. By now he'd seen enough to think that there was at least a reason to be open-minded, though the idea of witchcraft still made him uncomfortable, as it had since he was a child. Ghosts, ghouls, spirits and phantoms were all fine, but dark spells and hexes weren't for him. He remembered their investigation of Pendle Hill and felt his skin crawl. As a sceptic, he would have thought this work would exorcise some of those childhood fears, but instead it seemed to have stoked them.

He wished he hadn't thought of Pendle Hill right now. He was frightened enough by that experience; he was pretty sure it made him start to lose his hair. Craig said he was imagining it (the uneasy feeling, not the hair loss—alas, that was definitely real). But for weeks after, he'd had the feeling that he was under a cloud, like he was being followed by a dark presence. Now that he thought of it, the Pendle Hill business was always somewhere in his thoughts, and his fears, just out of conscious consideration like the shade or cloud that he could almost see hanging over him. Andy tried to shake off the memory, banish the dark thoughts, as he circled the makeshift office. He focused his camera lens on a roughly hewn doorway under a support beam. As he turned his back on the darker part of the room, he caught sight of the figure of a woman in his peripheral vision reaching for him.

He swung himself around – camera first, but there was no one there. He let out a loud exhalation and suddenly had the urge to be around other people. He set off towards the main hall again at speed, not wanting to acknowledge that he was feeling uncomfortable, even to himself.

As he passed through the intersection between two corridors, he stopped to look at an oil painting that depicted a Civil War battle, with the Royalists looking to be the victors. It was a vivid scene, and he could almost feel the carnage and the violence emanating from it. He didn't know why—he remembered the Tamworth House custodian's stern warning about touching priceless objects—but he had an impulse to reach out. He traced a finger across the surface, feeling the bumps in the oil where the battle ground had been layered onto the canvas. A sudden icy chill shot up his left arm and through the base of his neck, which made him shiver violently.

He turned to his left to see a man in Civil War-era dress, a long periwig and a neat moustache, standing a foot away from him. He could have stepped straight from the grim scene on the canvas.

Andy let out a high-pitched squeal of fright and leapt backwards a step. As he did, he had the same feeling in his right arm – though more intense. He wheeled around to see a bearded man dressed similarly standing to his right.

The man raised a pistol that seemed to aim at his central mass. Andy quickly turned to see that the man to his left had done the same, his mouth contorting in a silent shout. Whirling

back around he saw the bearded man doing the same. Andy tried to speak but couldn't find his voice – his own words were as silent as their shouts. He was in their line of fire; he'd walked into some kind of duel or stand-off!

Both men suddenly pulled back the hammers of their flintlock pistols and fired in tandem. Andy instinctively closed his eyes. He felt one shot whistle past his right ear and the other hit him between his breast and right shoulder, which knocked him off his feet. He dropped his camera and fell to the floor with a thud. His shoulders tensed, and his back arched, the wind knocked out of him. After a moment, he opened his eyes to see he was alone in the hall, flat on his back in silence.

He sat up and looked around in disbelief before his attention turned to the camera lying next to him on the floor. Apart from some scuff marks it appeared to be intact. Then he was hit with a thought like a jolt – he'd been shot!

He moved his arm free of his coat. There was no blood or entry wound visible. He pulled his sweater and T-shirt to one side and prodded the area where he'd felt the contact. To his horror, it was tender, the skin hot. He examined it and found bruising, like the time he'd gone paintballing near Eccles with the team, and Crystal had uncharitably shot him from close range. He winced as he prodded at the blue and purple patch of skin.

"What on earth are you doing on the floor?!" Craig said suddenly from behind him, piercing the ghostly-thick silence and making Andy jump.

"Oh – be careful mate," he said, climbing to his feet and looking around him. "The floor is slippery 'round here." He wondered if his stilted words convinced Craig.

Craig helped him to his feet then retrieved the camera, checking it over himself. "You need to be more careful mate. You might break something valuable – like the camera."

"All right, give it here," Andy chuckled. "Accidents happen."

"Especially to you," Craig slapped him on the back heartily.

Andy winced at the contact as he felt the impact of hitting the floor and his phantom gunshot at the same time. He slipped his arm back into the sleeve of his jacket.

He wasn't sure what to make of his encounter. Had he really just been shot by a ghost? He'd always enjoyed the fun and energy of working on the show, but he'd never really expected to see anything – real! Even Pendle Hill hadn't felt quite as real as what just happened. And the ache in his shoulder felt very real to him. Could one get so caught up in the ideas that you imagined a gunshot?

"Yeah, yeah – I think I need a coffee," he replied sheepishly, motioning towards the Great Hall.

Frank Catz had been many things in his life, but he'd always had a deep love of history. It was how he'd begun to look at the darker side of historical events, and eventually the occult. Developing in tandem with this interest was his other latent skill as a storyteller. He'd been able to hold a narrative, and over time he had accumulated a vast number of stories. "After all, what else *was* history besides a collection of stories?" he'd say to anyone who'd listen.

Tamworth had history – as had so many locations across the UK. He'd spent the past couple of years with the show as their resident demonologist and had never enjoyed work more – if you could call it work. He had loved every minute of the time he had spent with the team. They were a group of eccentrics, and he felt like he fit right in. By joining the *Ghost: Haunted* team he'd had the pleasure of investigating many of UK's supernatural hot-spots, or *cold-spots* as it were: Chillingham castle, Pendle Hill, Whitby Abbey ... but for some reason this investigation felt different, and for all his expertise he had no idea why. He had a feeling that they were on the verge of something momentous, that some kind of electricity could be felt in the air.

The corridor he was walking was dimly lit and lined with giant framed oil paintings. It led to a sturdy wooden staircase that went up to the first floor. Some of the treated wood on the walls had been here for over a hundred years. He paused for a moment at the foot of the stairs, feeling an itch in his nose. He'd recently been taking medication for chronic migraines, and he was always cautious of the onset because of visual disruptions. Slowly he ascended the stairs, taking in every worn groove in their old timbers as he treaded the footsteps of history. As settings went, Tamworth Castle had the right vibe, which would certainly be a hit with the show's followers. He only hoped that they could do it justice.

He stopped to study a painting on the wall; its large dramatic depiction of a crowd gathered around a crooked woman standing in a clear space in the middle, the faces of the people gathered were contorted in a mixture of horror and hatred, he couldn't decide if the woman was on fire or surrounded by light – it was an impassioned depiction of a time in the castle's layered past. The woman's features were unclear, apart from a pair of piercing eyes. It tugged at an uncomfortable itch at the back of his mind, like there was something needed to remember.

As he pondered the image, he thought he glimpsed something out of the corner of his eye – a dark figure of a woman, not unlike the one from the painting, reaching for him from the shadows. The hairs on the back of his neck stood on end, and he felt a rush of fear.

Reflexively, Frank turned quickly on his heels to face her, but as he focused his gaze on the shadow in the corner of the stairwell there was no one there. Perhaps that pool of darkness had only *seemed* like a woman ...?

"Jumping at shadows old boy," he chuckled to himself, "Not a good look for a demonologist."

Frank adjusted the lapels of his dark fitted jacket and tugged the garment straight, in a subconscious gesture of 'centring' himself after the scare. He steadied himself using a flat palm on the wall and turned back to ascend the stairs.

Four steps away was a woman he did not recognise. She was dressed a long white dress with flowing brown hair, who seemed to be looking downwards in thought. Suddenly her head snapped upwards violently and fixed him with a cold stare.

"She is awake. Fear her," the woman rasped, her voice seeming to both resonate in Frank's skull and sting his ears.

The woman reached out towards him violently motion, making him instinctively step backwards. He felt his weight shift, and his heels tipped over the edge of the stair. As the wood creaked, he realised he'd lost his centre of gravity and he fell down the stairs, wheeling down and around the slight bend before coming to a stop.

He groaned as he tried to raise himself, imagining the bruising he'd have in the morning, but his focus pulled back to the staircase. He was worried, terrified for a moment that if he couldn't see this woman she would be behind him, waiting ...

He looked around frantically, but he couldn't see anyone. The only thing around other than himself was his palpable shame – he'd been faced with a possible paranormal presence and fallen over! He wasn't sure he could ever live it down.

But the question bouncing around his mind was: *Were there two different presences that meant him harm* (i.e. the woman in black and the woman in white) or *were they two opposing forces who had him caught in the middle?*

Frank was grappling with this and the decision of whether to risk ridicule by telling the others, when a familiarly snarky Liverpudlian voice cracked from the foot of the stairs, "Had a fall, ol' fella?! Need a lift?"

Frank's shame was complete when he turned to see Dina, her hands on her hips, tapping her blue-manicured forefinger against her waist. The pose alone made it clear she was only asking rhetorically and would much rather watch him struggle.

"No, I'm quite capable of getting up thank you, Ms. Ancona," Frank said through gritted teeth as he righted himself. "So glad you could make it."

"Well then – let's get this party started!" Dina's words sang through the Great Hall as she entered, clapping her hands before flinging them out wildly to her sides in a theatrical gesture, her broad smile and flamboyant demeanour the antithesis of Frank's sheepish scowl as he followed behind and slipped towards Craig and Andy, checking equipment over on the right.

"Crystal my darling, you look absolutely fabulous as always!" she boomed as she walked over to her and embraced her emphatically.

"So do you sweetheart – always the show-woman!" Crystal answered, releasing herself from Dina's grip. "Let me introduce you to Doctor Alderman and Maggie from the University of Edinburgh."

Crystal swept Dina towards the Doctor and Maggie, extending her hand as she studied them carefully and with a hint of suspicion. "The University? So, Crystal, you finally got them to come down and see us, eh?"

"That's right, persistence quite often beats resistance," the Doctor said, studying her in return. "And you are the *psychic medium?*" He arched his right eyebrow to underscore his scepticism.

She shot back her own quizzical expression, incredulous that they didn't know who she was. "I am, indeed. Dina Ancona – though maybe my sight is slipping, as I must confess I didn't see this one coming!" Others might have said this as a joke, but Dina said it haughtily, ignoring his doubt or daring him to voice it to her face as she seized him in a rough handshake.

"Indeed," the Doctor said flatly, withdrawing his hand carefully.

"And Maddie, was it?"

"Maggie, Weitz," she corrected with a polite smile, proffering her hand first.

“Well, it’s lovely to meet you both – I hope we’ll have a great night together,” Dina said with a firm handshake and a theatrical wink, which seemed inviting even if she spoke rather coldly. The grand dame then pirouetted on the spot, reminding Maggie of the opening scene from *The Sound of Music*, her arms outstretched as she beamed a million-pound smile of artificially whitened teeth. “And just look at this fabulous location, you’ve outdone yourself this time Craigie baby!”

Maggie realised at that moment why there was such distance between Dina’s performative gestures and her brittle and humourless tone—she didn’t really want people to converse with her, she wanted them to stare at her from the sidelines while she monologued.

Craig interrupted her spin with a tap of his watch. “Yes, it’s fantastic – but seeing as you’re a little late Dina, do we want to get the cameras rolling and do the pre-recorded walkthrough? Producer Dave is going to lose it if we don’t have the edit ready to go out before the live broadcast later.”

Dina smiled sweetly. “Oh Craig, you’re such a stickler – but seeing as that’s why we’re here, let’s get into it.”

“There’s a strong residual energy *here* ...” Dina emphasised the end of her sentence unnecessarily whilst taking a long look at Crystal, who nodded attentively as Dina moved through her repertoire. It was an interesting vulnerability on the great expert’s part, that even when acting to a camera she needed the crew around her to encourage and applaud her like an audience.

They had drifted from the expansive Great Hall into the narrower corridors of the main castle keep, and she had so far spoken whimsically of times gone by and regaled her audience with tales of beheadings from a broadsword hung on the wall, to a lady in white roaming the halls in the small hours. Frank seemed particularly unmoved by her theatrical versions of the various histories belonging to people and objects associated with the castle: perhaps this was done effortfully, to shake the traumatic memory of the vision he had just experienced away. The Doctor studied her quietly, taking in all the information she had imparted without offering anything in return, which made Maggie consider that he was perhaps saving it for one big salvo across her boughs.

“And you think people would feel their presences here as they went about their day?” Matt Thorne asked, seemingly engaged with it all as he and Crystal walked slowly by her side on camera through an area of the castle laden with museum exhibits.

“Oh yes, definitely,” Dina responded with a raspy enthusiasm. “I wouldn’t be surprised if they felt a rush of cold air or the hairs on the back of their necks stood on end. Or they saw someone walking back and forth in their peripheral vision.”

“Huh, so just the textbook stuff then,” Frank grumbled quietly aloud from his position at the back of the group.

“You’re not convinced, Frank?” Maggie whispered to him from her position beside the Doctor.

"Not one bit – no," Frank replied, his eyes locked on the psychic. "This is what she does, it's almost exactly what you'd expect to hear if someone was reading it off the internet – give or take some of her little melodramatic embellishments."

"Have you told Crystal and Craig what you think?"

"Absolutely, but she's been around longer than I have, and the audience seems to love her, so not much has come of it." Frank sniffed. "But if you ask me, she makes a mockery of her profession."

"You believe in psychics then?" Maggie paused. "Well, I suppose that's not unrealistic for a demonologist, is it?"

Frank turned to face her and said in a hushed tone, "Of course, I've met some that I have been convinced by. Honest people who were tuned into the spirit world, or the energies of others – but she is *not* amongst them."

"Oh, she's a charlatan alright," the Doctor chimed in suddenly. "And not a very good one at that."

Craig turned from the brightly lit filming area. "Quiet back there – we're recording," he snapped at them.

"We have Doctor Alderman here with us, perhaps he'd like to tell us what he thinks about the castle and its permanent inhabitants?" Crystal asked, beckoning him over with a smile.

"As a matter of fact, I would." The Doctor marched confidently forward from the behind the light and sound technicians and into the lighted area.

"Oh no," Maggie sighed to herself, sensing a barrage was about to be unleashed.

The Doctor took his place before the camera and cleared his throat, before Crystal guided him to her side and to get the best angle. He had refused make-up, to Dina's disapproval.

"Doctor Alderman is a member of the Koestler Parapsychology Unit in Edinburgh, who's been invited as an esteemed guest for tonight's investigation. What do you think of the phenomena Dina has described?" Crystal looked from him and back down the camera lens, placing the index finger of her left hand to her lips in a pose of rapt interest, awaiting his response.

"Well," the Doctor coughed, suddenly aware of the camera focused on him, he shifted his weight slightly and gave an awkward smile before composing himself. "Well actually I think that Miss Ancona's accounts, while excellently acted, are nothing more than bedtime stories for children. Oh, I concede she's pointed out the obvious accounts of ghosts and ghouls from the material scattered around the walls of this exhibit. But any visitor could have caught those too. As for the rest – though artfully spun, at best stereotypical, at worst hoary old clichés. In fact, the apparent phenomena she has described could only be more in keeping with the archetypal 'things that go bump in the night' if there was a lady in a mirror and a headless horseman riding through the gardens!"

"Are you calling me a liar, love?" Dina's eyes narrowed and her voice lowered. She too flashed the camera a significant glance, knowing that long-time viewers would immediately side with her against this interloper.

"Not exactly, I was thinking terms chancer, hoaxer, hoodwinker or pretender – a well-rehearsed one no doubt, but a fraud nonetheless." He gave her a satisfied nod.

The crew stood around with a mixture of slack-jawed amazement and amusement, Frank punched the air with enthusiasm behind them before turning away to allow himself a silent chuckle.

Dina stood for a moment with her hands on her hips, looking at the Doctor, her eyes narrowed, posing stock-still as if suddenly in suspended animation, the only life the cool glint in her eye.

“Well? Mustn’t have any dead air, you know. What say you in response?” the Doctor verbally nudged her for a response, playing to the gallery himself.

Dina moved her lips as if to speak but then took a step to the side to shift her weight. Her response, when it came, was articulated with a succinct left hook to the Doctor’s right eye.

Chapter Three

"I'm so, so sorry Doctor Alderman – I can't apologise enough for Dina's behaviour," Crystal covered her mouth to try and cover an unintentional smile that played across her face more as a nervous reaction than one of levity, as she finished the sentence. "Rest assured, we'll throw in a hefty bonus for your trouble. Think of it as danger pay. Anything to avoid a lawsuit from the University of Edinburgh."

"It's quite all right, and perhaps going forward you'd best just call me 'Doctor'," the Time Lord replied gruffly as Paula from the makeup department dabbed around his eye socket with a concealer. "I'm just feeling a bit silly to be caught on camera looking so silly. Perhaps those two pints of Guinness slowed me down. Then again," he added, raising his voice a tad so she could hear him, "Miss Ancona is fortunate that I was distracted by the cameras – I used to be quite versed in Venusian aikido, I might have hurt her based on instinct alone had I anticipated the blow."

"Yeah, right mate," Dina scoffed humourlessly from the other side of the room playing with an unlit cigarette. "Calm down, Bruce Lee."

The castle's side room, being used by the makeup and wardrobe team, wasn't large and felt overcrowded now. Dina hovered near the doorway with Frank just inside, the Doctor flanked by Craig and Crystal with Maggie, and Paula from the makeup department in front of him. For their part, the rest of the crew—especially Frank Catz—had enjoyed the Doctor's dressing-down of their obnoxious co-star, and been quick to mutter words of sympathy that he had to pay for his candour with a black eye.

Maggie was trying to recall if she'd ever seen anyone successfully land a clean blow on the Doctor in their years together. Shot at, tied to exotic torture apparatus, chased down corridors and flushed into the vacuum of space, sure—but cold-cocked in the eye? That was a collector's item.

Seeing her amusement, the Doctor winced. "What are you smirking at? Don't tell me you're enjoying my humiliation? *Et tu*, Maggie?"

"Not at all, it's just – you were being a little pompous, don't you think?" Her feeling of disloyalty to say this out loud was only amplified when she saw Dina give a smug nod in agreement.

"Not at all," the Doctor replied indignantly.

"Well, anyway," Crystal pleaded, "Doctor, please don't go. Our lawyers have assured Craig there will be hefty compensation, and I promise Dina will be on her best behaviour from now on," Crystal pleaded, "Won't you Dina?" She glared at the psychic, and was dismayed at her lack of response.

"Go? My dear lady, I'm going nowhere – I have a job of my own to do here, and I'll be watching Miss Ancona very carefully from now on."

"Yeah, and better watch your gob while you're at it then," Dina hissed venomously.

While Crystal passed on some of the lawyers' more colourful threats, Craig clapped his hands and, trying to push some positive energy back into the room, declared, "Great! Well, no one is leaving, and we've got a schedule to keep to – we are going live tonight after all."

"Indeed, the show must go on and all that," the Doctor muttered darkly in response, stomping out of the room past Frank and Dina.

Craig sighed to himself as everyone sidled out of the room, he turned to Paula and shrugged. "Something tells me this is going to be a long night."

"Best of luck love," Paula smiled sympathetically back at him.

Craig took a deep breath and then followed them out of the room. Andy and the camera crew were busying themselves with the equipment check and the live feed test. He was relieved to see them working smoothly – they'd been working on the show long enough to know the drill, but it was always reassuring to him when things just worked.

Along with Crystal, he'd put everything he'd had into the show, both financially and emotionally, and its surge in popularity in the last two seasons had been validation that the risk was worth it. But the hype from Wessex TV (who saw a franchise in the making), and the money they had invested in promoting the Halloween broadcast had been large, and he was feeling the pressure. They had tried to keep the family atmosphere, and do the show their own humble way, but with this level of scrutiny it was unavoidable. He was worried that the humble, heartfelt, occasionally goofy but always sincere *Ghost: Haunted* that they had launched had been swallowed up by the growing popularity, become too big and accordingly too mediocre. Next thing, Disney would want to co-produce and the whole thing would be taken out of his hands.

Craig felt an ache in his temples and pinched the bridge of his nose as he tried to blink past the pain. He saw the svelte outline of Dina Ancona shimmy past and called for her attention as he jogged to catch up. "Dina – psst, Dina!"

"Yes, Craig love," she cooed back at him, turning the charm tap back on for an instant flow.

"Please – I know he was an arse, but you must see that beating up the guests, especially the academics, isn't going to be too helpful to your public image."

Dina's eyes widened in alarm. She hadn't thought of that. If this got out, those other opportunities might go sour. She might get tagged as being difficult to work with. "You don't think—maybe we could lose that particular scene?"

"We'll cut it to make it seem like you're having a good-natured difference of opinion. Fair enough?" He splayed his palms to signify that he was sympathetic to her feelings, but throwing himself on her mercy.

"Of course, I'll do my best darling – but he has to watch his lip. Frankly, I had a strange feeling about him from the off. Maybe it's 'cos he's an academic. Nosy pencil-necks, always think they know better, looking down on our show and getting in my way ..."

Craig noticed, with worry, that her fists were clenching again as if ready to mete out more violence. The legal department had made clear that an incident report would already be in the

offing, and any further acts might get staff members suspended. He tapped her lightly on the arm. "OK, OK – just be nice. Tonight is our big night."

"It sure is." She smiled wolfishly, as Craig joined the rest of the crew in prep. She strutted confidently through the room, deliberately brushing past the Doctor as she went.

He gave her a sideways glance as she passed and sniffed the air pronouncedly in response.

"You've made a fast friend there, Doctor," Maggie said sarcastically. "Reminds me of our old chum Xaul Gertjaars³."

The Doctor smiled ruefully at the memory of the crusty old Chief Justiciar, currently living incognito at some point in her own past. "Another tangle of past and future ... maybe there's some clue to be gleaned from that. Or maybe I'm losing my knack for this time travel business. I may have to retire and take up guest spots on cheap reality-TV shows like this full-time."

He laughed, but Maggie could see deep concern clouding his thoughts and said so. "Why are we still here, Doctor? Why are we involved in this circus? I mean, you were right. She's just a fraud, and the whole set-up is so penny-ante. This just seems to be people running around telling ghost stories, shouldn't we be looking for your anomaly?"

"The anomaly, whatever it may be, is here, Maggie. I can feel it. And these ghost stories, no matter how unwittingly, may have tapped into it. Don't you feel anything?"

"Not really. It's not even particularly draughty, considering it's an old English castle. What do you feel?"

"It's like the air is full of static – a residual energy more tangible here in the castle. But I can't quite tune into it. It's a feeling more than a prediction – but I fear if we leave now something bad is going to happen to these people."

"Then we need to find the source of your 'static', Doctor," Maggie said in a resolute tone, she set her jaw firmly waiting for what was next.

"Yes, I believe we do. As a matter of urgency," the Doctor said, holding her gaze, "At the risk of sounding melodramatic, I think it's of grave importance Maggie."

Under other circumstances, she might have thought he was punning deliberately, but she said nothing given his sombre tone.

He continued, "I've no way of being sure, but I think that storm front I mentioned is moving closer with each moment."

Suddenly Producer Dave shouted across the room to the jostling cast and crew. "Cameras on and lights out in twenty minutes, team! Let's make sure we're ready and in position, please."

"Then it looks like we're going to have to find it in the dark," Maggie said ruefully.

³ Xaul travelled with the Doctor and Maggie from *Either/Or* to *The Spaceship and the Witch* in *The Doctor Who Project* Season 46.

Act II: Material

Material /mə'tɪəriəl/ [adjective]

Denoting or consisting of physical objects rather than the mind or spirit.

Chapter Four

With all the lights turned out the darkness inside, the castle felt impenetrable. The Doctor and Maggie walked side-by-side through its halls. The interior rooms had taken on an intangible quality, as though the lack of windows and light had removed all sense of dimensions. They could be walking through either a huge expanse or narrow warren of passages at the same time – like a fluctuating and featureless TARDIS. There was a faint hue cast by the night vision cameras, but barely enough to register their presence and certainly not enough to provide any definition of their environment.

Instead, they were relying on sight and touch, their eyes straining to pick out the details and detect obstacles in the places where there was no moonlight.

The team split up for the investigation. They were prowling the rooms of the inner castle in front of the live television audience with Crystal, Matt Thorne, Dina and a young cameraman named Ryan. The other team of Craig, Frank, and Andy had ventured outside into the night.

Both Matt and Crystal both carried their own miniature cameras, which for the main part pointed at their own faces to record reactions and monologues. Matt had his recording device on a belt clip that seemed more salesman than James Bond.

Though it was difficult to tell how successfully, Maggie wasn't trying to keep herself from full camera shot – just in case she had some awkward explaining to do when she reached 2004 in her own time. Oh well, she doubted *Ghost: Haunted* would catch on in Canada anyway. This whole 'reality TV' concept seemed a bit childish. She suddenly realised she was holding the recording device that Matt had given her a little too tightly and relaxed her grip.

The Doctor felt that the dark had helped him to focus on the task of finding the source of the temporal disturbance, though it still felt frustratingly out of reach. To his chagrin, the static he had likened it to seemed dispersed and indistinct, surging then weakening. The waxing and waning soon frustrated him, but he breathed steadily trying to keep his concentration and overcome the worries of the material world.

"Imagine it's like using an aerial on an old portable television set," he had explained to Maggie before the lights went out. "There is a signal coming and going, you have to move around to catch hold of it in the air, until finally you get the right spot, and the picture comes into focus."

His reflections were broken by the voice of Crystal declaiming to the camera with rehearsed sincerity. "If there is anyone here that wants to communicate with us, move something, make a sound, touch one of us – we're waiting and we mean you no harm."

"What if there's anyone out there that means *us* harm?" Maggie whispered to herself as much as anyone. She had learnt from her own travels through time and space that all manner of things waited in the dark – and not all of them were benign. It seemed this whole exercise was a potential 'poking the bear', and the Doctor's sombre mood suggested it might have pretty dire consequences.

A door slammed ahead of them, catching them all off guard. Quickly this was followed by another, and another. They noticed each slam was closer than the last. The activity drew closer until there was a loud slam two or three feet away from them.

Dina, who had lapsed into a sullen quiet despite Craig's cajoling, jumped back and unintentionally knocked into the Doctor who had his eyes closed in concentration. He was serene and detached, which only aggravated her further.

"Did you hear that?" Crystal whispered.

"Of course we heard it!" Matt replied. "Who else is here?"

"No one. Come on, this way." Crystal gestured them towards the sound.

Before the Doctor could respond, the static in his mind built to a crescendo and then without warning it stopped and he found himself standing in an open field in the dark. He could feel the night air against his face, and the sky was lit by a bright full moon.

He realised he was holding his breath, and let it out slowly. It formed a cloud in the cold air like a small phantom before dissipating. He inhaled steadily through his nose, and he detected petrichor, that evocative aroma that suggested he had just missed a rainstorm.

He slowly turned in a circle. He could see there was a fortification on top of the mound: not the castle, something more rudimentary. Perhaps an earlier effort. There were torches burning within and he could make out the movements of guards. The ground was damp and soft underfoot.

"Incredible," he said aloud to himself.

"She is awake – fear her," a soft but stern voice said from behind him.

He turned quickly on his heels to see a woman dressed finely in white a few feet away. The style and decoration of her gown were Anglo-Saxon. She had long brown hair and a strong bearing.

"I'm sorry but – *who* is awake?" he asked, taking a step towards her.

"She is awake – and I'm sorry."

"I am the Doctor, perhaps I can help?"

"She is awake – fear her," she repeated, her voice becoming distorted, fading.

"Who?" he repeated more insistently, stepping forward again.

"Her," the woman in white replied in a short sharp tone, pointing over his shoulder.

The Doctor spun to face what seemed like a shadow of a woman, cloaked in black. Her head was bowed, and the straggly long dark hair hanging like seaweed to her midriff obscured her facial features. He estimated she was about his height, but it wasn't easy to judge as she was hunched. She had a slender but strong build.

He opened his mouth to speak, but before he could utter a word her head snapped up to fix him in her gaze. Her features still weren't distinct apart from intense blue-grey eyes, wide and wild. They seemed to penetrate his skin, boring into his soul. The sudden sight was shocking.

Suddenly she let out a guttural scream which seem to emanate from her core and then reached a crescendo, which hit him in the face like a shockwave. It left his head spinning, his ears ringing. The scream bathed him with fear, despair, pain and anger. He tried, desperately, to wade through the strong emotions, to find the calm of the enlightened. But her feelings were strong, and she was flinging them his way. He struggled for equilibrium, but was overcome with nausea.

He felt himself falling, time slowing dramatically as the static in his mind increased.

Back in the castle, the Doctor cried in pain and fell to the floor, crashing into a cabinet set against the wall behind him. Maggie, Crystal, and the others turned in surprise.

"Doctor – are you all right?" Maggie called out to him in concern.

Sprawled across the wooden floor, his head swam as the ringing in his ears faded. He became aware of where and when he was, and his cheeks warmed slightly with embarrassment when he realised that his fall may have been caught live on camera. This was certainly a blooper tape that would be replayed with hilarity at many a Gallifreyan High Council meeting. "Yes, I'm quite all right," he responded disingenuously, "I just felt a little strange and lost my balance."

He caught hold of Maggie's hand in the dark and she helped him to his feet. All the group's cameras were now trained on him.

"Let's get after your phantom door botherer," he said, waving them onwards with a lazy hand, hoping to get their damned cameras away from his face.

Crystal led the band off into the darkness towards the loud bang from the door while Maggie lingered behind with the Doctor.

"Did the static clear?" she asked in a hushed tone.

"Yes, briefly, and I'm afraid there's something behind the static. And I don't think it's friendly, Maggie." The palm of his right hand tingled with a strong pins-and-needles sensation, and he flexed his fingers to rid himself of it. "We were right to have stayed," he said as he glanced accusingly back to the part of the inner wall where he had braced himself, then back at his hand, still tingling painfully.

There was a late-autumnal bite to the night air and Craig pulled the zipper of his padded jacket up under his chin to ward it off. He could just about make out the vapour cloud from his breath from the dim exterior lights as he, Andy, and Frank crept tentatively along the gravel outside of

the castle, their footsteps crunching against the myriad stones. Craig held a small hand-cam that he pointed towards his face as he walked.

There were bright stars shining overhead through small patches of cloud that provided a dramatic canvas for the castle's backdrop.

"For everyone in the studio and at home; there is an electricity in the air that's almost tangible in this place," Craig said over his shoulder in the direction of Frank and Andy, who expertly manoeuvred around them to get the best shots against the castle backdrop in real time.

"It definitely feels like an active location to me," Frank chimed in, his grave tone evoking a northern English version of Christopher Lee.

"Out here, it feels like there are eyes on us in the darkness, watching us as we walk." Craig scarcely believed the scripted words with their portentous spookiness, but as he spoke he felt them hanging in the air and immediately formulated into a sensation that there were indeed eyes on them, and speaking them aloud had suddenly manifested them.

"There are forces at work here, I am convinced of it," Frank agreed calmly, as per the routine they had rehearsed. "Over the rich history of this place, many people and communities have come and gone. England was quite a different place when the first stones of this grand castle were laid. The people who lived and died in its shadows ... would we recognise them as our kin? All they have in common with us is their comings and goings. Some left in peace, some in war – and some perhaps didn't leave at all," he concluded, his words trailing off into the silence of the night.

Craig realised that they had stopped suddenly, as if they expected an answer to spring forth from the night in response. But there was nothing but silence.

A blackbird cawed loudly close by, and all three men gave a sudden start. They laughed quietly in unison at their own nerves. Hopefully the bathos wouldn't spoil the mood for those watching at home.

"Maybe we've been at this for too long," Craig said sheepishly, before nodding the way forward to his companions.

"Let's explore the grounds."

They made their way out of the yard and into the grounds, their footfalls crunching every step in a grim, tuneless rhythm. The terraced flower beds laid out along the descending pathway now looked drained of any of the bright colours of summer or spring, or even the more muted autumn plumage. They just looked grey and dead. To the north of the mound, the river Anker could be heard winding past the castle lazily, the faint noise of running water breaking the otherwise still night.

"The mound, or burh, was originally fortified by the Saxons as a defence against the Danes," Frank narrated as they walked. "The castle itself came much later, after the Norman conquest. So, the mound on which we stand is man-made – and has been added to over generations."

"Were they raiders, the Danes?" Andy asked from behind the camera.

"Not entirely," Frank said thoughtfully, "There were Danes settled not far away in what's now known as Derby. Æthelflæd, Lady of Mercia, led the fortification of burhs here and in other locations such as Bridgenorth, Stafford and Warwick, around A.D. 890 to defend against them."

"Æthelflæd spent much of her short reign defending her people from the Norsemen," Frank concluded – waving his hand around vaguely in the direction of the locations he'd named.

"I'm not sure I have the physique to defend the realm from Vikings," Andy chuckled, wincing slightly at the pain drilled into his shoulder. Try as he might to deny it, it was burning all the more now.

"Yeah, I know what you mean!" Craig smiled, gazing out on the lights of the town below from the burh. The people of Tamworth—at least, those who hadn't left town in disgust at all the TV bustle—had told them of a Halloween party at the Royal Oak. Those hearths and homes—and foaming pints—felt all the more welcoming when the first drops of rain fell on their heads.

Suddenly the rain fell in sheets, bouncing off the stone surface at their feet. Storm clouds had instantly formed above, thick and unpenetrated by starlight.

Craig winced as he glanced upward ruefully at the clouds. The sky had taken a stark transformation in mere moments, reduced the visibility ahead dramatically as the lights from the main build receded.

A brief and aggressive flurry of movement registered in his left peripheral vision and Craig swivelled in its direction. "Did anyone see that?"

"See what?" Andy said turning the camera in the direction of Craig's gaze.

"I didn't see anything," Frank chimed back unhelpfully.

Andy slowly panned the camera around to pick up on any movement using the night-vision, adjusting around the sudden driving rain. As he moved back towards Craig from the left, he caught a slight movement just below the brow of the mound.

"Wait!" he hissed. "I think there's someone there!"

The picture from the camera painted the night in shades of green from light to dark. Just beyond the brow of the sloped hill, he saw two small luminous orbs breaking through the green shades. They were joined by two more, then two more. He adjusted the zoom and focus of his lens to make them clearer.

The display framed the faces of three men with broad bone structure and facial hair crouching low to the ground, the lights from their eyes shining brightly in the dark. More eyes came into shot, their figures cresting the hill.

Andy's first thought was that some locals had come to disrupt the shoot, but he quickly reassessed as he noticed they were carrying weapons. One held an axe, the two nearest carried hefty broadswords. Rain battered down on them, slicking their hair and features, and exaggerating their other-worldly appearance. There was a wildness entirely alien to the calm and polite English people. These haunted faces reminded them of the vast distance between them and the past.

"What can you see?" Craig strained to be heard without making too much noise.

"Er, there is someone there – and I think they're *Vikings*!" Andy said in alarm.

"They're what?!" Craig snapped back – loudly, his voice nearing hysteria.

There was no time to answer, as almost in response, the men sprang from a crouch and leapt the crest of the burh towards them in terrifying silence.

"Oh God – run!" Andy shouted, turning away from the oncoming attackers and breaking past his dumbstruck colleagues.

Craig and Frank stood for a moment with their hand-cams raised – a moment that seemed like an age, as the Viking vanguard came into eyeshot with their weapons brandished and teeth bared. It didn't matter who these people were. From their expressions and their demeanours, they meant to do harm, so without any further conversation Craig and Frank followed Andy as fast as their feet could carry them.

Behind them a blood-curdling cry went up from one of their pursuers – a battle-cry answered by the others.

"Don't look back – just run!" Craig shouted to Andy and Frank. "Get back to the castle!"

Their hearts pounded in their chests, their lungs burning from the strain. Adrenaline induced by fear and instinct kept them speeding onwards. They could hear the loud footfalls of the warriors pounding into the wet ground, they could hear them breathing, growling and grunting like a pack of ravenous dogs.

Andy felt the weight of the camera dig into his shoulder – but wouldn't allow his legs to slow as he pushed himself forward. He was overcome by the urge to look back, almost as if he expected them to have vanished. He took a glance over his shoulder, which confirmed they were still there – and getting closer!

He turned his focus forward – *where was the castle?!* They hadn't gone that far, and yet he couldn't make out the gateway, or any of the castle in fact, in the dark.

"Frank – look out!" he cried as one of them reached within a length of his elder companion.

The Dane nearest Frank had a thick beard of deep red hair with two elaborate braids at the end. He didn't wear a helmet like the Vikings in TV shows – Frank would have been the first to point out that was a convention dating from the early days of opera – but he bore a look of confident determination. He swung his sword deftly without breaking stride, and then brought it forward towards Frank.

Suddenly Craig smashed into the bearded attacker from the right, knocking him off balance, the sweeping blade narrowly missing Frank. The ghostly warrior was knocked to the ground, taking two of his group with him.

Suddenly the archway into the castle was in sight – they ran through it breathing heavily and soaked with rain. At the door to the castle, there were a couple of the support crew moving equipment to and from their branded *Ghost: Haunted* vans – the courtyard was well lit by their portable lighting.

"Get inside!!!" Craig shouted as they spilled into the courtyard at full speed. He lost his footing in the wet and tumbled onto the gravel floor. At the same time Frank and Andy's feet gave out and they tumbled as well.

They spun around in terror expecting to be overrun by the advancing horde – but all they saw was the carefully curated courtyard and two crew members standing with their mouth agape. There were no loud battle-cries and no pursuing Norsemen, and no rain. Just the three of them, soaking wet, wide-eyed and scrambling around in the dirt.

"Are you all right, Craig?" a young woman in her early twenties asked, a puzzled expression on her face. "Did you have an encounter outside?"

Craig looked around in disbelief. What had they just seen? Was it a hoax? A practical joke? Or had they just been chased by the ghosts of a raiding party?

He looked over at Andy and Frank, and he didn't need any additional senses to tell that they were asking themselves the same questions. Andy picked up the camera and turned it over in his hands as he assessed the damage from the fall.

Craig sat upright and felt a burning sensation on his upper right arm that had gone unnoticed until the adrenaline receded, sliding his hand out of his jacket he noticed a tear in the sleeve, mirrored in his shirtsleeve, under which was a large, angry looking cut.

"The sword – from the guy that was about to slash at Frank!" he exclaimed, suddenly recalling the event in slow motion. "It glanced off my arm when I ran into him."

"Does ... does this mean that they were real?"

Craig remembered the feeling of colliding into the warrior bearing down on Frank. It certainly felt real enough.

"Or are these entities that can harm us?"

Frank crawled to his feet with a groan and walked gingerly towards Craig, looking down at his arm. "I don't know what is happening here. But I need to tell you both about something that happened to me earlier."

Chapter Five

Inside the Great Hall, the lights were on once more and the broadcast crew gathered in the centre of the room, awaiting the end of a commercial break. Craig and Andy concluded their retelling of the events that had unfolded outside, as they attempted to dry themselves off with towels.

Craig had immediately asked about the footage captured by Andy's camera, but the studio team had confirmed that even though they could see 'someone' in the dark, there was not enough to positively say who, or what, had chased them. The camera hadn't seemed to be able to focus properly on their assailants.

"Two minutes everyone!" one of the crew shouted from behind them, counting down the commercial break.

"And this swordsman actually wounded you?" the Doctor asked, from his perch across the room, sitting cross-legged on the wooden floor, listening intently, but also somewhat detached from the bustle.

"Yes, he caught me right across the arm – here." Craig presented his arm to the group, rolling his sleeve up to get a better look at it. He dabbed at the wound with the damp towel.

"And you were shot?" the Doctor asked Andy, his eyes focused on the cameraman without moving his head.

"Right, those blokes looked like soldiers from the Civil War," Andy confirmed, covering himself under his sweater once more, "And yeah, well, sort of shot. It felt both real and not real at the same time"

"So, two completely different periods in time – with no connection other than this place," Matt Thorne said.

"One minute!" the crewmember shouted.

"Interesting, though one could argue you aren't entirely credible witnesses given, ehm, your long-standing association with a show about ghost sightings." The Doctor arched his left eyebrow.

"There was the woman in white, *and* the woman in black I saw on the stairway..." Frank said, staring at the ceiling.

"What?" The Doctor kept his voice flat, trying not to give anything away in his reaction.

"I've been taking medication for headaches, I thought maybe I'd had a funny turn, but it certainly seems real now I look back on it," Frank replied quietly. "I was taken by surprise by the lady in white, it wasn't fear I felt, she didn't make me feel threatened, just surprised. But I felt differently about the one in black – her features were distorted and chilling, she was simply terrifying."

"Thirty seconds!"

"Did she speak?" the Doctor asked calmly.

"No, but the lady in white did, I think she said – 'she is awake', or something along those lines," Frank responded.

The Doctor was on his feet so quickly that the movement was barely perceptible to the human eye, his face set in quiet determination.

"Ready Crystal in..." the crewmember broke in once more. The lights went out again.

"Five – four – three..."

Crystal stood in front of the camera and smiled warmly, a study in professional composure as the live transmission started again.

"Thank you, Julian and Caroline in the studio, and welcome back everyone at home to Tamworth Castle on this special All Hallows' Eve broadcast of *Ghost: Haunted*. We've already seen dramatic events unfold in tonight's investigation, with shadowy figures chasing our team through the dark outside, and doors slamming throughout the castle's interior. Stay with us as we continue to explore this extremely active environment and find out who is sharing the castle with us tonight."

Crystal turned to Frank on her left as Andy moved his replacement camera nimbly around her to get them both in shot.

"Frank, earlier this evening you say that you came face to face with the fabled 'Lady in Black'. Please can you lead us back in the direction of that encounter and tell us what you saw?"

The prompt was disguised as a question, and Frank duly responded, "Of course, my dear – I was looking to get a feel for the location..." His voice trailed off as the group moved out of the hall in the direction of the staircase.

The Doctor lingered behind, mulling over the accounts from the crew and Frank's description of the ghostly women that seemed a spectral ying and yang – one calm, almost consoling, the other raging and tempestuous.

"Do you believe them, Doctor?" Maggie asked from by his side in a whisper.

"It all sounds utterly incredible – the fantastic ravings of hysterical children in a haunted house – until you consider one detail."

"What detail Doctor?"

"I saw almost exactly the same thing as Frank – only I had told no one, not even you Maggie." The Doctor rested a hand softly on her shoulder. "We should keep up with the others, the night is still young and I have a feeling it is not done with us yet – not by a long way."

"Could these women be the cause of the disturbances you felt?" Maggie felt sure she knew the answer already.

She couldn't make out much of the Doctor's expression in the darkened room, but she could imagine its gravity as he replied: "They certainly seem at odds with each other. Frank was right, one seemed calm, almost apologetic, and the other like she wished to do me harm, but it remains to be seen if they are the cause or simply caught in the web of whatever is at play here. And if Crystal and our new friends are going to try and summon their spirits – then they might just get them."

The Doctor reached out and held her hand gently as they set out after the group. Maggie found the gesture both comforting and unsettling. The Doctor had become the very greatest of friends – but for him to hold on to her like this, she knew that for the first time since they had

arrived here, that he was taking the situation seriously – and he was concerned, perhaps even worried.

The short amble along the corridors of the castle to the staircase where Frank had met the opposing female spirits was awkward given the large combined groups and that they were being guided by night vision cameras. This seemed more ridiculous by the minute, causing a few bumps and curses along the way. Few of the crew had seemed as eager to divide into smaller teams after recent events. This meant that it wasn't long before the Doctor and Maggie joined them.

When they arrived, Frank and Crystal were at the bottom of the staircase with the group and the cameras firmly fixed on them. Craig and Dina were at the top, with another camera pointing downwards.

When Crystal spoke, she did so in a quiet, reverent tone: "Frank, can you tell us what you were doing when the spirits of the ladies in black and white made themselves known to you?"

"Nothing out of the usual, to be honest ..." Frank sounded wary, struggling to keep his voice above a whisper but haunted by the recollection, as he glanced past her up the stairs. "I was trying to get accustomed to the layout earlier before the investigation began in earnest. And as I made my way upstairs, I paused to look at the artwork on the wall."

Frank placed one foot gently on the first step and as it did the last time, the old wood creaked with age. He took a long breath in, and alighted the staircase slowly. Crystal followed a step behind him.

"Once I arrived in the middle of the staircase where it opens out, I paused to look at this painting." Frank gestured towards the ominous image, which in the darkness looked a mere smudge of oils. It already had a violent air to it, as if the artist was caught up in the violence he was commemorating. The memory of the violence, and of the face it unleashed, made him shrink away from focusing on it. As his fingers hung over the oil, Crystal slowly moved beside him, flanked by Andy and his camera.

"Come to think of it, nothing really happened at all until I, well ... I touched the painting." He wasn't sure how this admission would be received, what with the guidelines about not damaging the National Trust site. But the crew were so enraptured with the story that he knew what he had to do next.

Frank held his breath as he reached out towards the painting as he had before. He became conscious of the silence and stillness around him, and concluded that the whole crew had done the same in anticipation.

His finger came to rest on the painted canvas and he traced the lines of the centuries-old oil paint – suddenly there was a flash of an image in his mind's-eye; men shouted and fire blazed while the air was thick with the evil emanating from the crooked woman looking out hatefully at the

centre. It was so real, he could not only see it but smell and feel it too. Fire and blood, roaring and chaos, the barbarity of his ancestors blazed around Frank.

He blinked hard but the image was as clear as anything he had seen with his own eyes. The skies above were cloudy and grey, with the threat of a rainstorm. He looked around for the woman dressed in white. A man to his left let out a cry of terror which he thought was attributed to a grievous wound or the death of a comrade – but when he turned to look, there instead was the figure of the lady in black hunched low in front of them. Frank felt the blood in his veins chill, and he felt transfixed as she drew herself up to her full height. She was tall and slender, but he couldn't make out her features. He opened his mouth to speak, but he couldn't. Though he felt apart from the scene, as if observing it from far above, he still felt vulnerable to harm. And she looked as if she meant to do him harm.

The woman in black let out a terrifying and tortured scream that sent the men on both sides scuttling backward. It was a hellish sound that seemed to fill his ears and head. He reeled and just managed to steady himself when she turned to him and raised a hand, pointing a slender pale finger at him.

He felt an icy grip tighten around his heart and chest and he struggled to breathe. This page of the past, come to life all around him, was as real as the TV crew in 2004. He was frozen to the spot, not knowing how to leave this place and return to the relative safety of the castle and his friends.

The second scream knocked him clean off his feet.

He crashed to the wooden boards beneath him as he found himself back in the darkness of the castle once more.

"Did – did you see it?!" he shouted, pointing back at the painting.

Matt Thorne was the first to his side, and held him steady until he found his feet. His face was etched with confusion and concern at the same time.

"We didn't see anything Frank. You were talking about the painting and then you shouted and fell backwards. Are you all right?"

He still felt the smoke in his lungs, still felt the cloying grip on his chest. It couldn't have been imagined. "No, you must have seen it," Frank replied in disbelief. "The battle – the woman in black, you must have! I was there, dammit, I was there!"

Crystal matched Matt's concern for their friend and colleague and laid a hand gently on his shoulder. "Perhaps you need to take a break Frank. Just until you feel a bit better, you've been quite shaken."

"No – NO! I'm fine, I am. I just know what I saw," Frank snapped back, irritated. "I know what I saw, and I don't know how, but it was real."

Matt looked towards Crystal and shrugged. "Sometimes the atmosphere of an investigation can lead to distress. It's important that we..."

His words trailed off as suddenly the interior lights turned on, a few of the crew gasping as they flickered off and on for a few moments before going dead again.

They all stood for a moment in stunned silence in the dark, but for the sound of their collective, heavy breathing.

Andy turned his camera slowly to get a shot of the top then panning to the bottom of the staircase. Even the Doctor was stock-still in the silence that stretched out in front of them, listening and waiting.

In response there was a loud burst of music over the PA which shook them all. It was a guitar, violently loud, the reverberation hitting the eardrums with each chord struck:

"Where our love used to be, only the shadows of the past I see, time can't seem to erase – the vision of your smiling face..." a male vocalist boomed.

"What on earth?!" the Doctor shouted above the din.

"It's R. Dean Taylor!" Andy shouted back, focusing the camera on the Doctor.

"Who?"

"There's a ghost in my house – I can't hide, from the ghost of your love that's inside... it keeps on haunting me..." the vocalist boomed through the corridors.

As a stark contrast to the silence that had preceded it, the music sounded brutal, visceral even. Maggie was sure she'd heard the song before, but in this context, it seemed laced with an implied menace.

"Where is it coming from?" the Doctor shouted his question at Andy, growing more frustrated with every note.

"The manager's office!" Andy replied, straining and pointing in its general direction.

"WHAT???" The Doctor's yell gained sudden emphasis by the abrupt stop to the music.

"I said, it is coming from the manager's office, there's a record player. No need to shout, mate," Andy replied with a half-chuckle.

Crystal smiled shakily as Andy's camera turned back towards her; she cleared her throat quietly as she unfolded her arm from Frank's. "We should get a camera to the manager's office, I think, Craig," she instructed.

The lights over the stairs flashed on and off rapidly and amid the flickering shadows, she saw the long, slender figure of the Lady in Black standing on the stair above her. She writhed in what looked like a twisted agony, contorting and twisting in a silent pain as she stretched to her full height.

Crystal tried to scream but no sound left her throat as the flickering increased, the spectre's head snapped towards her violently and its right arm shot out from its side and grasped her by the nape of her neck. She choked in the icy grip of the phantom and felt paralysis grip her entire body. Her eyes widened in terror as the featureless spectre drew level with her, its long hair straggling down in front of it. It was nothing but black, the tarry lengths of greasy hair, the kohl eyes, the mouldy dark hessian clothing ... all of it so old ... old as cobwebs and festering with evil...

In the midst of her terror and despite the fact that she couldn't even make out the mouth of the figure, Crystal was briefly struck by the notion that the entity that held her in its grip was trying to say something. Despite the ordeal and the pain, she strained to listen.

Matt rushed towards them but as he got within reach, the dark figure snapped her head towards him and he went sprawling over the banister and down the floor. Its head jerked back to face Crystal.

The shadow suddenly let out a high-pitched scream, which seemed to trigger a surge in electricity. The lighting around them fizzed loudly in a violent crescendo before going out, leaving them swathed in darkness again.

Crystal felt herself released instantly from the grip of the spirit and her faculties returned. Even though she couldn't see in front of her as her eyes readjusted to the dark, she somehow knew that the lady in black was gone again. She registered that her teeth were set on edge, and she had a metallic taste in her mouth, her legs felt unsteady in a way not dissimilar to ground-shock when rapidly dismounting a horse. She staggered briefly to one side as she regained her balance.

Suddenly Craig and Frank were by her side, Craig looking down the lens of Andy's camera. "Maybe we should go back to the studio for a while so we can get our bearings." It was more of a statement than a question.

The lights powered in response and the Doctor's attention was instantly drawn to the top of the staircase where Dina looked down at the chaos below. Standing beside her was the shadowy female figure, an arm's length from her side.

"Ms. Ancona! Look out!" the Doctor shouted, the lights flickering again violently.

Before he could sound a warning, the figure reached silently for Dina in the strobing light as the psychic turned. A slender finger touched Dina's forehead, and she convulsed violently.

The Doctor bounded the staircase to reach them, but at the top, Dina's face contorted in a silent scream and the lights exploded, scattering small shards of glass in every direction of the inky darkness.

"Can we go back to the studio – please?!" Craig shouted.

Producer Dave replied to the affirmative in his ear, and he turned his attention to Crystal, who was beside him on the floor: "My God – are you OK?" he asked, hugging her.

"I think – yes, I think so," Crystal wasn't sure that she believed herself.

"What the hell is going on here?!" Craig looked towards the handrail at the side of the stairs. "Matt!"

Maggie rushed around the side and found Matt lying flat on his back with his small camera on the floor next to him.

"Mister Thorne! Are you OK?" she exclaimed, kneeling at his side.

"Ha! I'm quite all right Maggie, thank you. I didn't have very far to fall and not just that, listen to this!" He shifted onto his side with a slight groan. He pressed the playback button on his recording device, a crackling, coarse female voice could be heard above a slight background static: "...Never leave..." the voice said, unsettlingly. "I think that's her, the lady in black!" Matt said triumphantly, "And all I had to do was throw myself from the stairs." He chuckled wearily as he climbed to his feet with Maggie's help.

On the floor above them the Doctor held Dina, whose feet had collapsed from under her, he whispered quietly to her with no trace of malice as he steadied her: "I have you, you're safe." He could feel her tremble as he helped her to her feet, but noted that it didn't feel like fear – more like the residual effect of being electrocuted. "Can you hear me, Dina?"

"Wh-what was it that hit me?" she replied shakily. "I want a rematch."

The Doctor smiled as she straightened, feeling respect for her resolve, her fighting spirit as it were. "I'm afraid I'm not sure, but I am determined to find out."

“Great.” Dina’s slurred speech was still tinged with a heavy dose of Liverpudlian sarcasm. “D’you reckon that you can do that before she brains me again?”

The Doctor examined the faces of the crew as they regrouped again in the Great Hall under the reassuring glow of the production lights. The main lighting across the castle was out due to the surge blowing the bulbs, and the lights rigged by the crew created a bright island in the sea of night around them. In some ways this made the darkness beyond that circle more menacing, because more unknown and unknowable. He perceived a mixture of excitement, apprehension and terror – some cycling through all three emotions rapidly.

He had seen countless things in his adventures across space and time. A great deal of those awesome sights would be improbable to those who hadn’t themselves witnessed them, taken part in them. In his time, he had seen manifestations that seemed to be ghostly of course, but usually the source was misidentified species, or some kind of psychic phenomenon. But actual ghosts? Spirits of the dead, restless in their graves and out to enact violent revenge on the living for disturbing them?

As he replayed events in his mind, he looked for clues about what they had experienced – anything that might help him identify the race responsible, or an underlying scientific reason for what had happened. But so far, he had come to a stalemate. The Lady in Black certainly fit the bill of a ghostly apparition – almost too well, there was something about her that even he found was unsettling.

But the woman in white – she didn’t feel like a ghost, she felt tangible somehow – and the place he’d suddenly found himself transported to, that lonely outdoor setting with petrichor in his nostrils and the cold air ... that was real, he was certain.

“Perhaps there is more than one phenomenon at play,” he said aloud as he mused. “Could it be that this place is somehow a nexus for different influences? Perhaps it is the place itself?”

“Are you familiar with the concept of the ‘Stone Tape Theory’, Doctor Alderman?” Matt Thorne interrupted.

The Doctor’s attention turned to the bearded man, mildly irritated by the intrusion, and forgetting for the moment the name he had taken. “Who, me? Oh yes, of course I am. It is the theory that past events can be recorded as energy imprints in physical materials, particularly stone, and replayed later. Especially if those events were traumatic or violent in nature.”

Matt nodded approvingly. “Correct. What if that is the cause of the phenomena we’re seeing tonight?”

“Well, that isn’t a terrible proposition, but isn’t the idea behind the theory that events are replayed back – like a video recording, or audio track? Not the interactive experience we seem to be having, the mysterious shadowy woman affecting the environment around her – particularly you, Miss Ancona, and Miss Forrester as well. If anyone’s playing the stone tape, it’s them, not us.” The Doctor stroked his chin, considering the suggestion even as he spoke.

“It felt a little *too* interactive to me,” Dina said from her position on the floor, seated between Crystal and Craig. Her face had not regained its natural colour palette, and her

demeanour was devoid of theatrical bravado, shaken by her experience. Crystal laid a hand on her shoulder and patted her gently in support.

"Agreed. It all felt very real to me too." Crystal nodded slowly as her right hand drifted subconsciously to her throat.

"I suppose you're right, Doctor Alderman." Matt nodded his assent. "This does feel a little more powerful than residual energy."

"But Matt, it's *part* of the answer, I'm sure, but not the whole answer. Residual can only be considered so if it doesn't affect the material. However, the experiences so far are amplified by the castle around us – like a lightning rod for this strange energy."

"Then what do we do now, Doctor? Do we carry on? Or do we leave?" Craig asked, climbing to his feet. "The studio are asking to cut back – they've reviewed the footage and spoken to audience. They will cut to one more commercial, but then they want us back on air. As for me, I'm inclined to pack it in. This is all too much. They've got some back-up footage they can run to fill the hour if need be."

"Leave?" Crystal repeated indignantly. "How could we possibly leave? This is everything we have ever wanted – and it is happening to us live!"

"OK, saying we don't leave – the things happening to us seem to be getting more ... explosive to say the least. Who's to say what might happen from here?" Craig tried to tamp down the agitation he felt shuddering down his neck. It was a rational decision he was trying to argue; he didn't want to sound like he was hysterically running for the hills.

"I agree with Craig," the Doctor said, pacing between them. "The lady in black seems to be getting increasingly more visible and violent. I've been concerned for your safety since I set foot in this grim castle."

"You, Doctor Alderman? Surely you don't think you brought this on?"

"I don't want to take any chances. You should all leave. But I am staying – I need to find the cause, which is connected to something larger that brought me here. And I need to be sure that no one comes to serious harm here. Both tonight and on any other night."

Maggie took his hand in solidarity, and said quietly, "If you're staying, then so am I."

"OK, so now what? The studio team are saying they haven't had a clear shot of the ghost – they're asking us what's next," Craig said with a finger pressed against his earpiece.

Frank shared a tight smile with the Doctor, and declared, "We press on – we head into the heart of the castle, and we see what we can find."

"Agreed!" Crystal sounded stoic and more than a little excited. "This is what we have been waiting for, and I am not leaving now."

The Doctor pursed his lips, ambivalent about their pluck. On the one hand, it was rather comforting to have others to share the experience and talk through things, especially given his uncertainty. On the other hand, the danger spoke for itself. "Very well then, it is your decision at the end of the day. If we're all staying together, we keep it to a tight group. Crystal and Frank, Matt and Maggie – and of course, Dina Ancona."

"Who said I was staying? Don't I get a vote?" Dina questioned, looking at him wearily.

"How can we continue without our psychic?" the Doctor replied as he offered her his hand.

Dina took his hand and stood gingerly, still exhausted, suddenly a small and ordinary person rather than the two-fisted grand dame from earlier.

"Andy – I trust your steady hand will accompany us with your camera?" the Doctor said turning to the cameraman, who was already getting ready.

"Yep, and Curly too, for the sound."

"Great – well, we'll all continue blundering around in the dark waiting to be gruesomely murdered then," Craig said bitterly.

"That's the spirit!" the Doctor exclaimed, either choosing to ignore, or simply not detecting, the thick sarcasm. "We'll make our way to the office, where the record started playing, and go from there."

Craig shook his head dolefully before placing his index finger on his earpiece and turned his back to the group, speaking indistinctly into the microphone fitted to his shirt.

"Doctor, why the sudden desire to keep Dina around?" Maggie enquired quietly as the crew prepared.

"I'm interested in her. She had contact with our ghost – and ever since then that static I mentioned seems a little more intense around her."

"But you thought she was a fraud, earlier."

"I know. It troubles me how wrong I may have been ... but with the static field, and the interest the ghost paid her ..."

"... you think that it'll come back – for her? She's bait?"

The Doctor responded only with a sly smile as he adjusted the collar of his coat.

After the frantic chaos of the encounter with the spectral woman in black with the ear-shattering sound and the blub-shattering light display, as the large crew ventured into the castle's depths, it felt like the hulking and haunted structure was holding its breath. Crystal had admirably conducted a brief exchange with the hosts in the studio, who had thrown them some questions from fans watching the live broadcast and others sent by text message – many of them about the haunting they had encountered and one about the current relationship status of 'Doctor Alderman'.

Now that the outside world was back on the other side and they were alone with this unknowable something, the team were on edge. Every movement was met with an exaggerated jolt or shudder – something that Matt had noted to the camera before they had set out. In truth, the more he thought about it the more the Doctor wished they had not stayed, especially given their current collective hyper-tension, but seeing as the lights were inoperable and they had all the equipment, there was an undeniable utility in having them by his side a little longer.

He and Maggie proceeded either side of Dina Ancona as the team made their journey, both keeping half an eye on her – or as best they could in the present conditions. The self-proclaimed psychic had remained a shell of her former self, so much that Maggie had begun to feel it was a little cruel to make her endure a further trip through the castle – especially as a worm on a hook for the Doctor to reel in this ghoul.

As if on cue, Dina staggered slightly to the right and Maggie caught her arm. She held her gently to ensure she remained upright.

"Sorry," Dina whispered, a little too loudly, "I just can't seem to find my feet."

"That's OK," Maggie whispered, "We've got you."

Dina tried to force a smile, not knowing if Maggie could even tell in the dark, feeling drained to her core.

"Dina ..." a voice whispered to her over her shoulder.

"What?" she replied aloud.

"I'm sorry, what?" Maggie returned the question, confused.

"Did you just say my name?" Dina asked calmly.

"No, not me," Maggie replied with a due feeling of dread.

Dina responded with a lazy nod, her feet felt heavier with every step, her head so fuzzy she thought she might pass out. The voice whispered again, this time feeling like it was in her right ear:

"Tell them, Dina. Tell them."

"Tell them what?" she hissed back at it.

"Tell what?" Maggie asked her.

"Nothing," Dina replied, slurring slightly.

"Doctor," Maggie whispered to the Time Lord, "I don't think Dina is doing very well."

"We'll keep an eye on her, she'll be all right." The Doctor sounded distracted.

The group halted outside the manager's office with Crystal and Craig at the head, Andy close by with the camera trained on them, and Curly with the boom mic. The Doctor and Maggie brought up the rear with Dina in between them, and Frank and Matt in the middle.

"This is the office where the record player is – we believe the song that was played over the P.A. system earlier came from here," Crystal said to camera quietly. "We're going to take a look inside and call out to the spirit again – perhaps she can move the needle or play the record for us."

The door to the office was ajar. Craig moved out in front and pushed it gently open; as he did, Andy navigated around him adeptly to get the right angle of them entering the room, then followed. There wasn't a sound other than their footfalls and their increasingly ragged breathing. Still, the castle listened and waited.

"If the spirit of the woman in black is with us – or any other spirit, please let your presence be known," Crystal called out into the darkness from the office. "Can you move something – play the record again, anything?"

Andy turned the night-vision camera to focus on the record player, the arm with its needle was sat up away from the large vinyl disc and the record was still. Andy panned around the room slowly, coming back to Crystal who stood listening intently, her eyes fixed on the record player.

A door slammed down the corridor behind them loudly, and the group spun around in its direction.

There was no movement, no spectre, just silence.

Then there was another loud bang nearer, then another – with the last slam there was loud creaking from the walls and floor, the framed paintings and portraits rattled as the clamour grew louder and closer. Meanwhile, they all stood frozen in place, watching and listening.

The door to the office slammed shut with Craig, Andy and Crystal inside, Craig rushed over and turned the old handle, pulling hard against the door. "It won't move! It's stuck!" It felt like Maggie, Dina, and the others were across an ocean, not just a single door.

Andy turned the camera from the doorway to Crystal who still stood quietly. Silence took hold again. Crystal opened her mouth as if to speak but she was interrupted by the loud music from the record player which filled the room, hurting their ears:

"All alone in my gloom – your voice echoes through the room, there's a ghost in my house...And I can't hide..."

Outside the office Dina, still standing next to Maggie, stood bolt upright, her spine rod-like, and her head snapped back and her mouth opened. She let out a weird croak from deep in her larynx, that sounded so painful that Maggie's hand instinctively went to her own throat and pressed against it. Dina's head lolled forwards loosely before settling with her chin on her chest, still making the strange creaking sound from her throat.

"Dina, can you hear me?" the Doctor shouted over the music, moving towards her with his right palm opened towards her. He produced a small pen torch from his coat and clicked it on – the beam highlighting her eerie stance.

The music stopped abruptly, there was no other sound than their collective breathing, most of it ragged and shaky. Craig stood holding the door handle, daring not to move.

As the Doctor moved within a foot of Dina, her head shot up and her gaze met his, somehow appearing both intense and far away at the same time, she produced another loud croaking sound and then a few hoarse words that he couldn't make out.

"Dina, are you all right? We can't hear you, what are you trying to say?" the Doctor enquired, slowly and deliberately.

"SHE IS AWAKE, AND WE WILL NEVER LEAVE!"

The Doctor noted that when there were two voices: another voice in a lower pitch overlaid with Dina's. It was a grotesque combination of discordant sounds. Undaunted, he stepped towards her, closing the gap.

"Enough mysteries and games! Who is awake? Who is here with us?"

*"We are *all* here with you, all at once – we can never leave, she won't let us leave."*

"Who?" the Doctor asked again.

No answer came from Dina directly, instead another loud rattle and rumble from down the corridor rippled towards them. All the shut doors flew open – the glass covering the various artworks on the wall shattered from their frames. When the clamour reached the group, it felt as though they were in the middle of an earthquake. The door to the office flew open with force, knocking Craig to the floor with a crash. Crystal screamed as the small table holding the record player tipped and the player flew from it, smashing against the floor.

"Who is doing this?!" the Doctor shouted at Dina over the din. *"Why are you here?"*

"I AM HERE BECAUSE I CANNOT LEAVE!" a new voice screamed out of Dina's mouth—a voice he surmised must belong to the woman in black.

"I AM HERE -ALWAYS HERE...."

The office shook violently and through the night-vision Andy caught sight of the black-clad lady standing in the doorway. She passed between Matt and Frank and stood beside the Doctor and Dina in the darkness.

"She's here!" Andy shouted, "Doctor – she's here!"

The rattling grew so intense that the Doctor thought the castle may fall into the mound beneath them. Matt and Frank were sent crashing against opposite walls with loud thuds, sending framed pictures clattering to the floor. The Doctor turned his flashlight to her as the apparition reached out and touched Dina on the forehead once again.

"And you will know my pain," the Lady in Black croaked.

With that Dina fell to the floor and the air around them rang with a terrifying scream. Each of them covered their ears in fear of the chilling sound and what damage it might do to their ears. They all fell to their knees, and Andy somehow managed to hold the camera, though lost the shot.

Maggie raised her head slightly to see that only the Doctor remained standing, his eyes unblinking as he stared down the woman in black.

"What are you?" he whispered toward her.

Suddenly the light from his flashlight intensified and the blub blew out with a crack.

There were a few moments of silence, followed by Crystal's panicked breathing. The lights in the corridor flickered on in the few fixtures with intact bulbs, then they too went out leaving them illuminated only by flashlight, which was welcome as an opposition to the dense darkness or the intense brightness that had preceded it.

The Doctor scanned the group quickly trying to sight the apparition again, and he noted with relief that everyone was present, apart from Dina.

"Ms Ancona? Dina!" the Doctor looked around, unable to locate her. She had been standing so close to him that he felt moisture on his face when she'd spat the woman in black's reply, but she was nowhere to be seen. As if she had vanished without a trace.

The Doctor winced at the strong metallic taste in his mouth, running his tongue across his teeth. He cleared his throat and helped Maggie from the floor.

"How can she have vanished, Doctor?" Maggie's eyes darted around trying to get a sense of what was happening, "She was standing right between us, she didn't come past me, I am sure of it."

"Nor me," the Doctor agreed, "and vanishing so thoroughly is a rare trick indeed. Matter doesn't simply *vanish* – it can be transformed if you like, changed, or transferred. Displaced perhaps – moved!"

"Moved where?" Maggie asked, suddenly conscious that the ghost hunters were completely focused on them. No cameras were raised; there were no other voices to be heard.

The Doctor paused for a moment as if deciding how to answer, then sucked air through his teeth as if he wasn't completely satisfied with the one that he'd selected. "No. I know what I felt. Chronons in the air. Perhaps the question isn't where, Maggie, but *when*."

Back in town, the Royal Oak's All Hallow's Eve party was, if anything, even less impressive than promised. The few loyal patrons—several of whom had only come for a game of darts, only to find the board decorated with fake cobwebs—had all left by eight, grumbling about tacky American holidays, one quipping heavy-handedly: "I hope by next Sunday, the only spirits in this pub will be served in a brandy balloon."

By nine there was only an inebriated Wally, who was even more cantankerous in his opinions on the soundtrack for the evening, and the odd group of teenagers that he'd had to turn away for lack of I.D.

For his part, the barman had a low-stress and even enjoyable time of it, despite his wife's insistence that they should have stuck to Guy Fawkes Night (or 'Bonfire Night' as she referred to it). He enjoyed wearing his tricorn hat and eyepatch, for one thing. It was merely bad luck that Halloween happened to fall on a Sunday this year. The barman was ruminating on a pint of his beloved Guinness when he idly flicked on the telly. From his stool across the bar, Wally groaned as he saw the nauseating swings of the handheld cameras and the indiscriminate yelling that could be heard even over the pub's *Spooky Soundtracks: Eighty-One Spine-Tingling Halloween Hits* CD, currently blasting out 'I Put a Spell on You' by Screamin' Jay Hawkins. "It's that bloody show, up at the castle, isn't it?" He removed his flat cap and tousled his thinning thatch of hair. "Should've cleared out for the weekend with the rest of my mates."

In the chaos on screen, the barman found himself unsettled. One image seemed indelibly clear, and he pointed at it. "Did you see that? In the corner of the screen? Sort of a ... woman ... wearing black ... but she didn't seem quite there ..."

The image triggered an uncomfortable shiver up his spine and the back of his neck which he tried to shake off.

Unfortunately, the moment passed, and Wally was having none of it, and was listing off his favourite horror films, in comparison with which this was all cheap, sensational junk. But the barman noted the concern in the crew's face, and the quick cut back to the W.T.V. studio in York.

"You know," he told Wally, "I don't think this was supposed to happen ..."

Suddenly the Royal Oak, and the town outside, seemed a great deal colder and darker than it had before.

To be continued ...

On Halloween night, 2004, the Doctor and Maggie arrive in Tamworth to investigate a temporal anomaly so powerful it has unsettled the TARDIS. Their search leads them to Tamworth Castle, where the crew of live television programme Ghost: Haunted is preparing for its most ambitious broadcast yet. What begins as a clash between sceptics, showmen and self-proclaimed psychics soon becomes something no one can explain—or control.

As doors slam, long-dead warriors draw blood and figures from the castle's violent past emerge into the present, the Doctor realises that these are no ordinary hauntings. Stone and memory have become dangerously entangled, replaying centuries of terror with deadly force. At the center of it all stand two spectral women: one offering a warning, the other awakening in rage.

With the live broadcast descending into chaos and psychic Dina Ancona pulled into the heart of the phenomenon, the past is no longer content to remain buried. To save the crew—and discover what is trapping the dead—the Doctor must uncover the truth before the castle's memories consume the living. But when Dina vanishes without a trace, the question is no longer where she has gone, but when ...

This is another story in a series of original fan authored
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