

**DOCTOR  
WHO  
AND THE HORROR  
OF COAL HILL**



**GAVIN COLLINSON**

**DOCTOR WHO**  
**AND**  
**THE HORROR OF COAL HILL**

**By Gavin Collinson**

THE CHANGING FACE OF DOCTOR WHO

The cover illustration portrays the first DOCTOR WHO whose physical appearance was later transformed when he discarded his worn-out body in favour of a new one.

## PART ONE

As he strolled through the foggy streets of London's East End he became aware of the footsteps following him and immediately wondered if it was them. He began walking faster. The footsteps – a soft *pad pad pad pad* – remained close behind. Now, straining to hear them, the old man caught something else. A low, velvety snarl.

Not *them*, then. But who?

Or what?

As he turned a corner he glanced over his shoulder and glimpsed something dark rushing towards him with a sudden flurry of speed...

He moved swiftly, taking a couple of long strides before -

He emerged from the bank of fog. Visibility returned. No more footsteps or snarls. Only his own ragged breathing. He paused. Peered down the street but could barely make the houses that lined it, let alone any pursuer. He shuddered, looked up and noticed the sign that read 'Coal Hill School'. He adjusted his scarf and as he walked on, just for a moment, the old man thought he heard a distant howl.

Shivani Bajwa took one sniff and her hand shot to her mouth. The staffroom was thick with smoke and although Miss Wright would normally have complained about the fug generated by Professor Gibson's pipe, she'd left earlier so the old boy was able to puff away in peace. Shivani almost gagged on the stench of rum-flavoured tobacco and backed away, retreating into the school foyer, moving so briskly she collided into the back of an old man wearing a black cloak and an Astrakhan hat.

She apologised and he whirled around. Something about his appearance caught her off-guard. He had long, white hair and there was a striking intensity to his blue-green eyes. He seemed to be momentarily studying her.

She asked, 'Can I help you?'

'I'm looking for my grand-daughter. She attends this school...'

'What's her name?'

'Susan.'

'We have quite a few Susans. What year is she in?'

'1963, madam.' The old man tilted his head as if he'd suddenly realised he was talking to a simpleton. 'The same as you and I and everybody -'

'No,' she interrupted. 'I meant... How old is she?'

'Ah. She is 73 years old.'

A pause. 'Are you...?' She hesitated, wondering how to finish the question.

'Worried?' he offered. 'Of course! She mustn't try to walk home through that!' He gestured towards the foyer's row of glass doors.

Shivani peered outside. A thick fog curled around the streets of Shoreditch. It looked eerie and impenetrable, but for anyone who had endured the smog pea-soupers of the previous decade, it was nothing more than an inconvenience. 'It's just fog, Mr...'

He was shaking his head. 'How is fog formed? Hmm? What makes the stuff?'

'As I told my Year Two class this afternoon, fog is caused by tiny water droplets suspended in the air, but I don't see -'

'Exactly! It has been dry for days. Not a drop of rain! Clear and crisp!' He smiled. 'Do you see?'

'I thought everyone had left for the evening, but perhaps your grand-daughter is in the school hall, Mr..?'

'Whatever that is out there, it is not fog.' He looked back at the teacher. 'And it is not 'Mr'. Dear me, no.' He extended his hand. 'I am the Doctor.'

'Shivani Bajwa. And you're Susan Foreman's grandfather!'

'What? Hmm? Yes, quite so!'

'She's left, Doctor. I saw her go about twenty minutes ago.'

'Really? That child! I expressly told her to wait for me. Dear, dear, dear...'

'If it's not fog, what is it?'

'I must go!'

He began marching towards the row of doors.

'Doctor! I have a car! It's getting late... I could give you a lift?'

'A motor car?'

She grinned. 'A Hillman Imp. If you fancy a drive home through the...'

'Go to your car, Miss Bajwa. Go immediately. D'you hear me? Then drive from this city. Do not stop until -'

'What are you talking about?'

'Something is coming.' He lowered his voice. 'I only have time to offer you one piece of advice.'

'Which is?'

'Run!'

She looked at him. Perhaps out of nerves, she began to laugh.

*Wham!*

Directly over the Doctor's shoulder, a man's face slammed into the door. His blood-smeared features were contorted as they pressed against its glass. He looked to be in his mid-twenties. Tall, wearing an Army uniform. His face was torn and bloodied and he'd been sprinting too fast to spot the school entrance and - splat! - had careered straight into it.

Shivani screamed.

The Doctor took a step back. 'Quiet!' he snapped.

A couple more people tore from the fog, finding the doors and fumbling for their handles.

The Doctor retreated another pace. Dozens more men and women were emerging. Screaming, yelling, all running towards Coal Hill School for some sort of sanctuary.

Shivani saw the Doctor pull something from his pocket. A small, slender, cylindrical device on the end of a handle. It looked a little like a torch and –

The teacher heard a succession of *click-click-clicks* as the Doctor swept his device in front of the doors and although it seemed unbelievable, his gadget was somehow locking them.

The terrified people hammered on the glass.

Shivani grasped the Doctor's shoulder. 'What the hell are you doing? Why are you keeping them out?'

He spoke forcefully: 'Unhand me, madam!' He nodded back to the doors. 'Look!' Shivani followed his gaze. 'It isn't *them* I'm keeping out...'

The crowd was dispersing fast. They'd realised the school was locked and terrified of whatever was lurking in the fog they quickly skirted the building. One woman, a little older than the rest, paused before fleeing. She stared into the foyer whilst pointing behind her.

Shivani reached the doors but the locks held fast. She shouted to the woman. 'What is it?'

*'They're coming!'*

'Doctor! Open the doors! What right have you to –'

'I have every right!'

'Well, they've gone now. There's nothing out there...'

The silence felt unnerving. Shivani peered into the fog. 'Is there?'

The Doctor's smile looked sinister. 'The night is never empty, my dear. Not completely.'

'Maybe not. But we should telephone for help.'

'I imagine they are quite capable of that. I'm sure there's a police box out there somewhere. And we must look after ourselves whilst...' He trailed off. 'Who are you, sir?'

Shivani span round to see Professor Gibson in the staffroom doorway, rooted to the spot, gawping beyond her, transfixed by something that had made the blood drain from his face. His mouth fell open and his pipe clattered to the floor.

The Doctor and Shivani slowly turned and looked through the doors.

The figure stepping from the fog was not human.

Gibson managed one word. '*What?*'

The creature had yellow eyes that seemed to burn. Grey fur. Sharp fangs. It resembled a large, muscular wolf and it paused in front of the doors.

Shivani heard the Doctor murmur, 'Remarkable... Quite remarkable.'

She sensed the creature was assessing them and she felt herself freeze with fear. 'What...' she began. 'What is it waiting for?'

'Hmm? Isn't it obvious?'

For a moment Shivani thought the fog itself was moving.

'Wolves hunt in packs,' the Doctor concluded.

As the Doctor, Shivani and Professor Gibson watched in quiet horror, dozens more wolves prowled from the fog.

They formed a long, snarling line in front of Coal Hill School. And then...

Then the attack began.

## PART TWO

*'Doctor!'*

*'What?' The Third Doctor stood in the foyer of Coal Hill School, staring through the doors as if trying to remember some distant event. He'd been recounting his adventure with Shivani Bajwa and had paused after mentioning the doors had locked. 'What is it m'dear?'*

*'What do you mean? The doors locked?' With her journalist's intuition, Sarah Jane Smith had spotted a wrinkle in her friend's recollection. 'Doctor...'* She sounded horrified. *'Doctor, did you lock those doors?'*

*The Time Lord wiped a hand over his face. He carried a bunch of white roses and waved them airily as he replied, 'As I said to my old friend, Tim Berners-Lee... Bernie, I said, you mustn't be so cynical when –'*

*'Doctor!'*

Shivani Bajwa watched as the first wolf she had seen padded closer to the school entrance. The mysterious old man by her side had called it 'remarkable' and although it petrified her, she could also recognise its feral beauty. It radiated an almost palpable strength. A majesty that –

It leapt towards her and a spiral of fractures curled around the spot its paws had struck the glass door...

Professor Gibson screamed, 'Doctor!'

*'Locking those poor people out... That's against... Against everything you stand for.'*

*The Doctor took a step towards the doors, concealing his reaction from Sarah.*

The wolf glared at Shivani Bajwa. It snarled, revealing crimson tinted teeth. In her head, the young teacher named the creature Red Fang. For a moment she sensed a connection with it, as if its low growl was somehow directed at her. Could the wolf be trying to communicate with her?

In her peripheral vision she noticed the Doctor backing further away, but she couldn't tear herself away from Red Fang. Its burning eyes had become almost hypnotic. She blinked and realised that rather than attempting to communicate with her, the wolf was doing something far more alarming...

*The Third Doctor stood inches away from the doors. He saw his reflection in the glass and alongside this mirror image, the face of Sarah Jane Smith. She asked, 'Are you going to answer me?'*

*He closed his eyes.*

*'Doctor!'*

*He opened them but instead of his own face, for a second he saw the face of an old man with white hair and intense blue-green eyes...*

Gibson echoed Shivani's thoughts as he said, 'It's speaking to the other wolves. It's worked out that if they pounce at once they can smash through...'

Shivani asked, 'Is Professor Gibson right, Doctor?'

Red Fang took several steps back.

The Doctor nodded. 'The creature is more intelligent than I thought.'

Shivani said, 'They're the second most advanced mammals on the planet.'

The other wolves mimicked Red Fang, withdrawing into the fog.

'Hmm? Oh, I was referring to the Professor.'

They surged forward as one. A sudden tsunami of wolves, howling, screeching and yelping as they raced from the fog and leapt at the thin glass doors...

The glass shattered.

The Doctor looked up from the microscope. At the other side of the laboratory, Professor Gibson stood over the broken test tube. He mouthed the word *sorry*.

'I'm trying to concentrate, young man. You both insisted on following me, but I must have peace for my analysis.'

Shivani wasn't impressed. 'We didn't follow you, Doctor. You needed us to show you where this lab was.'

Gibson stifled a cough and added, 'And if you told us what it is you're investigating, maybe we could help.'

'Don't be absurd.' He returned his attention to the microscope.

'He's a stubborn old man,' Shivani snapped. 'Leave him to it. Let's go, Professor.'

'They're attacking,' the Doctor retorted. 'I'd have thought that much was self-evident. Now, what one factor does every co-ordinated attack in history share?'

Gibson said, 'Whatever you did to the doors, it isn't going to keep them out forever.'

'Well, of course not!' the Doctor said. 'I would say we have ten minutes at most. After that...'

Shivani hadn't had a clue what the stranger had been up to when he'd waved his funny little device at the doors, but as the wolves had slammed into them, their glass panels had become opaque and he'd been as surprised as anyone by the fact they'd withstood the onslaught.

'After that...' she said, 'the doors won't hold and the wolves will storm this place.'

The Doctor nodded. 'And if a single one - *a single one* - gets in... We are lost.'

Gibson looked flustered. 'I'm going to take my chances retreating through one of the fire escapes at the back of the building!'

His anger rising, the Doctor spluttered, 'You wouldn't make it beyond the school walls! You must learn to think!'

'Reconnaissance!' Shivani said. In response to Gibson's baffled expression, she added, 'Every co-ordinated attack in history.'

'Exactly!' The Doctor forgot about his microscope for a moment and smiled at the teachers.

'That fog out there...'

Shivani interjected, 'The fog that isn't fog?'

'Precisely! Doesn't it strike you as odd that it began rolling through the city on the very evening the wolves attack? Hmm? They're connected! Must be! I believe that the fog is some kind of sensor. The fog is carrying out the wolves' reconnaissance.'

'Those creatures arrived minutes after the fog reached here...'

The Doctor clapped his hands together as if applauding Shivani's reasoning. 'Very good, my dear! Meaning whatever the wolves are hunting for is in Coal Hill School and therefore...' He paused. '*Coal Hill School*... I wonder...' He hesitated before crouching over the microscope, refocusing his attention on the slide beneath the objective lens.

Professor Gibson asked, 'What do you think, Shivani? Make a run for it with me, then? Or stay here with Susan's grandfather?'

She looked at the Doctor. 'What exactly are you doing?'

'Like so many of your species...' He popped his head up. 'I'm simply trying to keep the wolf from the door!' His face beamed with delight at his own pun.

'How?'

The Doctor returned to the ocular lens and Shivani thought he was lost to his studies, until he spoke, almost to himself: 'Why is this place called Coal Hill? Hmm?'

Gibson shrugged. 'Mining in the area at some point?' He coughed. 'I don't know! Shiv – come on! If we don't leave now...'

Shivani shook her head. 'Shoreditch isn't exactly known for its coal mining history.'

'I know of two other areas known as Coal Hill,' the Doctor mused without looking up. 'Both in the United States of America. Both named after the mining industry associated with the locale.'

'Is this important?' the Professor hissed. 'Shivani, I'm going now!'

'What's your point, Doctor?'

'The word 'coal' comes from the old English 'col' meaning dying ember.'

'Shivani! I'm leaving –'

'Then go!' she bellowed. 'He's the only one who understands any of what's happening so... Doctor! Dying ember... Go on.'

'Oh, mere speculation, my child.' The Doctor pulled back his shoulders. Lightly gripped his lapels. 'A battle fought on this site centuries ago, perhaps. As the survivors looked on the aftermath – the glowing embers of war – they resolved to remember the event forever and named this place Col Hill. Eventually it evolved into Coal Hill and that became the name of this neighbourhood and latterly this school.'

'Doctor, those wolves... They're not from this planet are they? I mean, they can't be.' She saw him nodding and continued. 'Which means they must be...'

'Yes..?'

'Space Wolves!'

The Doctor closed his eyes. 'Dear, dear, dear...'

'And those Space Wolves were involved in the battle centuries ago. They lost something here. And now they're back for it! But what is it, Doctor?'

'I neither know nor care. I am analysing a small residue of the fog that clung to my scarf. If I can find a way to somehow influence the fog and confuse the creatures out there I may be able to make my way back to Totter's Lane. From there, well, I can leave this wretched place.'

'Doctor, no! You've got to stay and help us!'

'My dear...' He paused. Rested his palms on Shivani's shoulders. 'I am not your protector.'

For a second there was a silence.

'We're not asking for your protection. Just a little help.' Shivani looked into his alien eyes. 'Where is your humanity?'

The Doctor looked stung. He opened his mouth to reply but was interrupted by Professor Gibson. His cough was becoming worse. Shivani and the Doctor turned to him.

He raised his hand in apology. Then a fresh bout of coughing, more protracted this time. Louder. He bent double, clutching a handkerchief to his mouth.

'He must have breathed in some of the fog,' the Doctor said softly.

Shivani asked, 'Are you all right, Professor?'

He straightened his back. 'Just give me a moment. I'll be... Why are you both staring at me like that? I'll be... Be... All... I'll be all r-r-r-r-right! R-r-r-r-right!'

The Doctor squinted at Gibson's face. Or rather, at what it had become. The face of a wolf. Eyes wild. Teeth bared. The Doctor took a step back. 'I think we should prepare to withdraw, Miss Bajwa.'

No reply.

'Miss Bajwa?'

He turned.

Gasped.

The woman he had spoken to moments earlier had transformed. Her face's muscular structure was largely unchanged, but thick, lupine hair had sprouted across her flesh and her lips had stretched to reveal enlarged, sharpened teeth. Her eyes burnt like Red Fang's.

Her voice was low growl. She addressed the figure who had been Professor Gibson. 'Throw open the door so our brothers and sisters can run through these halls...' Now she glared at the Doctor. 'I shall feast!'

She raised her hands. Her fingernails had become long, lethal claws. 'I shall feast on this old meat...'

## PART THREE

She sank her teeth into the meat. Nodded with satisfaction. Then popped the rest of her corned beef sandwich in her mouth.

Sarah Jane Smith wandered around the laboratory. She lingered by a wall mirror. 'So what happened?'

The Doctor hollered a response from outside the room. 'To me?'

'Not to you!' she shouted. 'You're always all right!' No reply. She checked herself in the mirror and murmured, 'Quite suits me.' She adjusted the fez she was wearing, sliding it to one side to affect a jaunty angle.

In the mirror she spotted the Eleventh Doctor loping into the room. He only looked up when he reached her side and watching her face in the mirror, he quietly asked, 'Is that really what you think?'

'Well...' Sarah hesitated. 'It's just...'

Her old friend grinned. 'Nonsense!' he exclaimed. 'It doesn't suit *you*!' He swiped the hat from her head and popped it on his swept back hair. 'This is how you wear a fez! Remember. Fezzes are cool. But people who wear fezzes: way cooler.'

'Brought your flowers, then?'

A bouquet of roses lay on a table by the door. The Doctor nodded. 'As usual.'

'Going to tell me who they're for? They're for her, aren't they? Did she... was Shivani killed on that night?'

The Doctor picked up a book from a bench. *The French Revolution*. 'I didn't know what to do, Sarah. I looked into her face. Saw such hatred.' He tossed the book to one side. 'Such contempt.'

'So what *did* you do?'

'I did what she'd already done to me.'

The Doctor glanced to his right. The figure of Professor Gibson darted across the laboratory. By the time he reached the door his transformation was total. His clothes had been shed, the lupine transfiguration complete. The creature, now moving on all four paws, raced from the room. The Doctor faced Shivani. 'I want you to listen to me.'

She clawed at him. He took a nimble step back.

'Listen to me very carefully.'

'Just cut to the chase!' Sarah implored. 'I'm meeting Luke in twenty minutes.'

'Well, I can't hang about either. Always a danger I'll bump into myself when I make these visits. Best avoided.'

'You did what she'd already done to you. What d'you mean?'

The Doctor held Shivani's stare. 'You are Shivani Bajwa. Miss Shivani Bajwa! You are a teacher at Coal Hill School. This morning you taught your class about fog. They enjoyed the lesson. Children always enjoy the fog. And you enjoyed their reaction because you are a good and caring teacher. You enjoyed their sense of wonder because you have, because you have such...'

Sarah saw the Doctor's eyes remembering. 'I sought her...'

'Humanity!'

The creature paused. Tilted her head. Scrutinized her prey's blue-green eyes. The face reflected in them was feral. Frightening. It seemed to change. She blinked. For a moment she saw another face. Familiar. Owned. And then her normal vision returned and she could only see the old man's eyes, keenly observing her.

‘Welcome back, Miss Bajwa.’

‘So you got her back?’

‘She got herself back, Sarah. She became Shivani Bajwa again. The human side won.’ The Doctor gave a brief, sad smile. ‘How often have I said that in the intervening years?’ He removed his fez. Handed it to Sarah. ‘Give that to Clyde, would you?’

‘Sure.’

‘I returned to my analysis of the fog. Well, that small sample of the fog. And with a little help from a blue ring I used to wear, I was able to transform it.’

‘Into what?’

He nodded at the fez. ‘Do you think he’ll like it?’

‘Oh, you know Clyde. Into what, Doctor?’

‘You know, it’s strangely comforting that you have to ask.’

Shivani Bajwa and the Doctor hurried down one of the main school corridors. Suddenly he stopped. Held up his hand. ‘Listen!’

The young teacher could discern a soft pitter-patter. A footfall. ‘The wolves!’ She wrenched a door open. ‘In here!’

The pitter-patter was growing louder, like the sound of a gentle shower becoming a deluge. She bundled the Doctor into the tiny room, little more than a cupboard. He slammed the door shut and raised his index finger to his lips. Shivani nodded.

Now the sound of the wolves had become torrential. Hundreds of the creatures pelting through the corridor, only inches away from where they stood. Howling, yelping. A deafening cacophony growing even louder... Shivani jammed her palms over her ears. Closed her eyes. Tried to focus on her other senses. What could she smell? Paint. Waxy crayons. Paper. Spilt glue. The smell of a thousand schools. But the storm of wolves remained ear-splitting. She wanted to scream and for a moment felt an insane urge to fling open the door and -

- and it was over. Almost as swiftly as the pack of wolves had swept into the corridor they had left it. The Doctor pressed his ear to the door.

‘Is it clear?’

‘Hmm? I believe so.’

The Doctor swung open the door.

They both stared at the solitary, colossal, grey wolf that stood before them. Red Fang.  
Shivani said, 'Maybe not.'

The creature moved back fractionally, shifting its weight to its hind legs as if preparing to leap forward.

'Now might be a good time to try your potion...'

The Doctor removed the test tube from his pocket and without taking his eyes off the wolf, uncorked it. With a swift, sudden movement belying his apparent age he took one step forward, stamping his foot as he threw the liquid over Red Fang.

The response was immediate.

The wolf recoiled. Shook its head and spluttered.

'Doctor, you did it!'

But his eyes remained fixed on the creature. He watched Red Fang shake its head again and saw its eyes burn more fiercely than ever. The wolf paused. Snarled and let out a huge, terrifying howl.

'To use your expression, my dear...' Dozens of wolves began to answer the call, streaming into the corridor and pelting towards them. 'Maybe not.'

'My parents came to England in the 1950s. I was just a kid at the time. I remember the journey, though. Looking out across the ocean at night and my mamma telling me that the future is what you make it. She said I would do amazing things.' She gave the Doctor a wan smile. 'But this is how it ends. Me still a nobody. Stuck on a roof about to be eaten by a pack of Space Wolves. We've nowhere left to run, Doctor. This is the end.'

They'd slammed the door shut and Shivani had lowered a ladder that led them into a loft. From there they'd scrambled onto the roof of Coal Hill School. It was a wide, flat area that Shivani had tried to turn into a roof garden during her first term. Most of the flowers still survived.

The Doctor said, 'It's nonsense, of course.'

'What is?'

'The adage. *The future is what we make it.* Nobody is the sole engineer of their life. Every future is dictated by a million decisions taken by other people, many of whom we haven't met and never shall. We are adrift on a sea of random. A tempest of chaos rages around us and all we can do is... try to steer through the storm. Paddle with all our strength to where we want to be and resolve to make good progress when the wind is behind us. And to hope – desperately, fervently *hope* – that we're not blown too far off course when the gales conspire to confound us. Hmm?'

Shivani's eyes twinkled. 'Are you trying to cheer me up, Doctor?'

'When I was younger I had a friend. Back home.' He looked to the heavens. 'We promised each other we'd visit every star.'

'You know, when I first met you... I thought you were strange. The way you answered my questions. The way you look. I was a bit frightened of you.'

'Ah. The curse of the immigrant.'

'Me?'

The Doctor looked confused. 'Me.'

'Still think you're strange. But I'm not scared of you, any more. And Doctor. There's still time.'

'Time?'

'To visit every star.'

The Doctor nodded. Smiled. 'And there's still time for you to become one, my dear.'

Shivani beamed at him.

And when the wolves came, when they had found the staircase and clawed through the door... When they padded onto the roof of Coal Hill School and tore, slaving, towards their prey, the Time Lord and the teacher faced them hand in hand.

Shivani looked at the silver disc. Squinted. It became the reflection of the moon, shimmering across the waves at midnight. She asked, 'How much further, mamma?'

'Tomorrow! We reach Tilbury tomorrow.' She reached for her young daughter's hand. Clutched it tight.

Her husband joined them. 'Are you ladies excited?'

Shivani said, 'I'm a bit scarred.'

'Nothing wrong with scared, Shiv! Anything worthwhile is a bit scary. Should never let that stop you.' He looped his arm around his wife's shoulder. 'Isn't that right?'

'Well, I married you, didn't I?'

He grinned. 'Do what I do when I'm nervous, Shiv. What I did the night I met your mamma.'

'What's that?'

'Find a star. And make a wish.'

Shivani looked up. Found a star and squeezed her mother's hand.

Shivani looked up. Found a star and squeezed the Doctor's hand.

The wolves leapt towards her. She closed her eyes and felt a whoosh of air as the creatures attacked...

'You can open your eyes, my dear.'

She followed the Doctor's suggestion. 'What..?' They were alone on the roof. 'What just happened?'

'My 'potion' as you called it was an airborne agent. It simply took a few minutes to react with the fog. As I told you, the fog guides the wolves. My mixture convinced the fog to relay a message to them. A message suggesting that what they sought was elsewhere. A million miles away. They were automatically transported there.'

'You're very good at making the remarkable feel absolutely normal.'

'All it needs is a glib tongue and a vivid imagination.'

'The fog is still here...'

'It will remain thick across the city and then suddenly vanish.'

'And are you going to suddenly vanish?'

The Doctor looked around the roof top. 'My *potion* seems to have had an adverse effect on the flowers. All dead. Dear, dear, dear...'

'I can always grow some more.'

'Yes, indeed, Miss Bajwa...'

'Please, call me Shivani.'

'Hmm? And which were your favourites, Shivani?'

On the flourishing roof garden of Coal Hill School, an old woman sat at a small, circular table. It held a pot of tea, a set of two cups and saucers, a jug of milk and a vase of freshly cut roses.

Dusk was falling across London. The Twelfth Doctor stood a few feet from the table, silhouetted against a deep red sky. Shivani Singh watched her old friend chat away with his back to her as he surveyed the city.

'And he said... He actually told me, *You are not a good Doctor*. I thought that was really funny! I mean, not 'selling out the O2' funny, although Davros doing a gig at the O2... Well, I'd buy tickets to that, wouldn't you?'

'I saw you arrive,' Shivani said. 'Your friend wasn't with you, this time.'

The Doctor didn't look round. 'I never asked,' he said at last, 'what did you do right after I left?'

'I telephoned the police. I was worried about you. I made them promise to send a constable to that old junk yard that was registered as your address. I imagine he just shone a torch around and then got himself home. Oh, and I spoke to a supply teacher who'd been covering that day. Thanked her.'

'What for?'

'Well...' Shivani furrowed her brow. 'Do you remember when we were trapped in that tiny little room? And there was a ladder up to the room above. I always thought that was odd, by the way. Having a ladder there. Anyway, I hadn't even known about it until that day. The supply teacher had mentioned it, quite casually. But as though...' Shivani shook her head. 'I never saw her again. Maybe she went back to Scotland.'

'Scotland?' The Doctor had finally turned around. 'Did she... Was she wearing purple?'

Shivani laughed. 'It was over 50 years ago, Doctor! I can't recall her name, let alone –'

A low rumble interrupted her. The Doctor about-turned and looked down. A bulldozer trundled towards the school. But something else had caught his eye.

Shivani said, 'Ah, the bulldozers. They start work tomorrow.'

The Doctor didn't move.

'This part of Coal Hill School will become Coal Hill Academy.'

Still no movement as the Doctor watched a figure he had spotted below.

'Don't worry, though! The heart of Coal Hill will remain as ever...'

The figure carried roses.

'It's just a bit of restructuring, Doctor.'

He smiled. Turned around and then blinked. Glanced down again. Saw nothing. 'Funny... Anyway, where were we? Actually... It'll have to wait. I have the strangest feeling I must dash. Toodle-oo.'

'What? Why?'

'Haven't the faintest. Sorry. Hate it when that happens. Drives me bananas.'

Shivani narrowed her eyes. 'What did you just say?'

The supply teacher said, 'Wolves?'

'Space wolves!'

'And a mysterious stranger who helped you?'

Shivani Bajwa nodded. 'He just vanished after explaining what happened. About ten minutes ago. Just before you got back.'

'Well, isn't that just *bananas*?' She stood. Walked to the staffroom window. Condensation blurred the night outside. 'What did you say his name was?'

'He didn't tell me.' Shivani saw the other teacher's face reflected in the pane. High cheek bones. And the kind of smile that suggested a private joke. Shivani added, 'Just called himself the Doctor.'

'Really?' The woman at the window wiped her palm across the glass. The blurs of light became a dazzling array of stars. 'Doctor who?'

## **THE BEGINNING**