

DOCTOR WHO



Haunted

By Joseph Lidster

Part One

I wake up. And I'm cold. It's dark and I'm cold.

Where am I?

There's a light bulb hanging from the ceiling and everything smells of damp. I feel like I'm underground. There are old brick walls and no windows. It definitely feels as if I'm underground. But where?

And then I remember. The dare. It started with a dare.

Well, really it started YEARS ago when I was just a little kid and I accidentally called Mrs Latif "mum" in front of everyone and everyone laughed at me and he laughed at me. Dan Hinchliffe, my best friend, he laughed at me and the other kids started to like him and not like me and now I'm 13. My name is Ross McNamara, I'm 13, and I'm weird. I'm clever and the teachers like me but hardly any of the kids do.

And that's why I came to the school basement. Dan dared me to. He dared me to come to the basement to try and find the Ghost. And I did come to the basement but... why am I still here? What happened? Sometimes Mum's boyfriend Terry wakes up and can't remember what he did the night before but Mum says that's just because he had too much to drink which means he didn't mean to do what he did. I think you should take responsibility for your own actions.

Why am I still in the basement? Was I attacked by the Ghost? Do ghosts attack people? No! Ghosts aren't real. Only the Year Sevens really believe in the Ghost and that's just because they're little kids. I don't believe in the Ghost because I don't believe in things that

can't be scientifically proven. That's why I came here. It wasn't because I wanted those idiots to like me. Honest.

Ghosts aren't real and I came here to prove that.

So why am I still here?

I stand up. I walk over to the door and I start to panic that Dan and the others might have locked me in. It's what they do. I reach for the door handle and I turn it and... it opens! I quickly walk out of the basement then stop. What was that? There was a noise behind me. Something... scratching? Scratching on the old brick wall.

Just a mouse. Or a rat. Not the Ghost. Definitely not the Ghost.

I leave the basement and climb the stairs and I'm in the corridor. The lights are on but I can't see anyone. And then I realise I can't hear anyone. And that's weird. A silent school is weird. The corridor is festooned with Christmas decorations. I like the word festooned. I read it once in a book. The corridor is festooned in Christmas decorations and rubbish drawings of Father Christmas and Christmas trees and it's silent. There's no laughing, no running, no shouting... no quiet crying from the toilets. It's like my school is broken. I look at the clock on the wall and it says it is 8:47. It's dark outside so it must be 8:47 at night.

I've been locked in. Everyone has gone home for the Christmas holiday and I've been locked in. I should panic about this but I'm not stupid. I know where the doors are and although the silent school is weird there's also something nice about it. School without the other kids would be perfect.

But, I need to get home. Mum will need help with the presents for Terry and I can't stay in school forever. I start to walk down the silent corridor in the silent school.

Tap. Tap. Tap. My feet echo loudly. At one point I do a little skip to hear the beat of my shoes change. It's funny.

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Tap. Tap. Tap. *Tap.*

That was weird. That last tap wasn't me.

I stop. Then I take one step.

Tap.

I wait.

Tap.

That wasn't me. Someone else is here.

Tap. *Tap.* Tap. *Tap.*

Someone else is here and they're playing with me and I hate that! *Don't hit yourself, Ross. Why are you hitting yourself, Ross?* I won't get angry though. They hate it when I don't get angry and try to fight back. And they're just jealous anyway and who needs them as friends. And, that's not the Ghost. I bet it's Dan.

I reach the main door and look outside through the glass. It's dark and I can't see anyone so I push on the door. It won't open. Obviously. The school is locked up for the Christmas holidays. I haven't got a phone, not since Terry lost mine. But I won't panic. I won't panic even though I can hear *tap... tap... tap... tap...* It's getting close but I'm not scared. I'm not a kid, I'm 13 and I'm not scared.

I go to one of the big windows. It's festooned with paper snowflakes. I look for the catch to open it and... it's gone. I push on the window. I can't open it. I can't open the door and I can't open the window. I won't panic. I'll try every window.



Tap... tap... tap...

But the tapping is getting closer. And now there's a different sound.

Chink. Chink. Chink.

I look down the corridor. I look down past the classrooms and down towards the entrance to the basement. And the lights are going out. One by one.

Chink. Chink. Chink.

And the footsteps are getting closer.

Tap. Chink. Tap. Chink. Tap. Chi-

And suddenly there's a roaring sound and wind is blowing the paper snowflakes all around me and suddenly there's a big blue box in front of the secretary's office and a door's opening and there's this bright light and an old man is standing across from me and he looks angry with me before he smiles.

"Hello," he says. "I'm the Doctor."

He looks down the corridor into the darkness and then he looks back at me with big wide eyes.

"Run."

Part Two

We're running. This man called the Doctor and me. We're running away from the Ghost.

"There's no such thing as ghosts," says the Doctor. I tell him that that's what I thought but what else could it be. The lights are still going out and the *tap... tap... tap...* of footsteps are still following us. We reach a classroom and run inside, closing the door behind us.

"It could be anything. Why do you think it's a ghost?" he asks me. So I tell him.

"Our school is haunted. Well, the basement is. That's what everyone says." He's not looking at me and he's listening at the door so I stop talking. He waves an arm at me so I carry on. "Apparently a boy got locked in here once hundreds of years ago. Nobody knew he was here and he died. He froze to death or starved to death or something. And now the older kids tell the younger kids how his ghost haunts the school. He's always here, looking for a way out."

"Poppycock," snarls the Doctor. "What proof have you got? Has anyone seen it? Have you seen it? What's your name?"

I tell him my name is Ross McNamara and I'm 13 years old.

"Well, Ross McNamara, have you seen it?"

"No, but... the tapping. The footsteps. Something's making the lights go out and-" Suddenly I stop. "Why were the lights on? They shouldn't be on when there's nobody here. We're meant to be environmentally friendly. We've won awards."

The Doctor gives me an odd look. As if I've said something really stupid or really clever. He strides over towards me and kneels down. He stares right into my eyes.

"No..." he mutters before he smiles. "Well done, Ross McNamara. Very clever."

I look at him confused and he waves up at the lights. Then, he looks around the classroom at the tinsel and paper-chains. "Is it Christmas?" he asks.

I laugh. Everyone knows it's Christmas.

"I can't stand Christmas," he growls. "Right, so, it's not a ghost, we're both agreed on that, yes?"

I hadn't actually agreed on that at all but I thought it was best not to argue.

He's standing directly under one of the lights. His face is all craggy, like the surface of the moon, and he's wearing a velvet jacket and he's odd. He's weird. There's something so weird about him. He's looking into the air...

"Could be alien," he says with a shrug. "Or one of your friends playing a trick on you?"

There's a pause as he looks at me.

"It's more likely to be an alien," I say quietly.

He smiles but it's a sad smile like my Mum's. He understands what I mean. Then he laughs. "Well, that's good news, isn't it? Boring friend or exciting alien? But what does it want, Ross McNamara? What does it want?"

I find myself smiling back at him.

And that's when the light above his head explodes and the room is suddenly pitch black. I'm desperately trying not to be a little kid and run over and hug him but I'm scared! Suddenly a pair of arms have wrapped themselves around me. The Doctor. I guess he's scared as well.

"I'm getting better at this," he mutters. "Who needs cue cards?"

Suddenly, there's a loud BANG on the classroom door. It's like someone REALLY big has slammed into it.

"Well, come on in, then," the Doctor snarls. "Show yourself!"

There's a second of silence and then the door slowly opens. I can hear it open but I can't see it open because it's pitch black. I can't see anything. I hold my breath and I think the Doctor's doing the same because I can't even hear him and...

Silence.

Then, a line of fairy lights around the door blink on. Then, they immediately blink off again. But in that blink we both saw it. Something. It looked like.... A ghost!

We move back away from the door. The lights blink on again. And it's not there. It's in the room with us! Over on the teacher's desk a Father Christmas toy lights up and starts playing music. We back away from it.



Behind us, there's a *tap... tap... tap...* and then suddenly the whiteboard falls off the wall and crashes at our feet. I scream and let go of the Doctor. I run towards the door as the fairy lights blink on and off and the musical Father Christmas toy grins at me. I stand in the doorway staring into the classroom.

"Doctor!" I call into the darkness.

"Wait," he says. "I'm just going to try something."

So I stand there. In the doorway. And I wait. I can't see into the classroom so I turn to look back out into the corridor. It's pitch black except... some of the lights in the distance have come back on. Far down, near the entrance to the basement. I stare down, straining my eyes, trying to see if there's anything there.

And that's when I feel the fingers on the back of my neck. Cold fingers. Cold like ice.

"Doctor..." I can hardly speak.

"I've found it," he replies. But his voice is back in the classroom. So far away me, back in the darkness.

They're not his fingers.

Part Three

Suddenly what feels like the entire world is lit up by this amazing bright blue light. I force myself to turn around and there's something in front of me. A boy with a blurry face staring at me. A ghost with arms outstretched, hands on my neck. And through him I can see the Doctor holding up a strange-looking metal device. Blue light is shining from it and he's grinning.

"It works!"

I look at him as he shouts. I look through the ghost at him. I look at him.



“New sonic screwdriver,” says the Doctor. “Don’t just stand there! Run!”

I see him running towards me and I look at the ghost staring at me and I pull free from his icy fingers and I run! And we’re both back running down the corridor. Paper snowflakes are still spinning in the air and we can hear the *tap, tap, tap* of the ghost following us. The Doctor is pointing his device – his sonic screwdriver – up at the lights and they’re pinging on but almost immediately going dark again. *Chink, chink, chink...* We keep running. Running towards the only lights that are still lit.

“We’re going back to the basement!” I cry out.

The Doctor nods. “It’s where it all started.”

“But it’s where it wants us to go!”

He looks at me again. “Clever boy,” he grins. Then he suddenly stops grinning. It’s as if he’s remembering something. Then he shouts. “Come on!”

We carry on running. I turn back a couple of times and see the ghost in the shadows. It’s just staring at me as it walks after us. And suddenly it looks so familiar. But it can’t be...

“Stop looking at it!” shouts the Doctor. “And tell me, what was a clever lad like you doing down in the basement?”

As we run, I tell him. I tell him about Dan and how he bullies me. I tell him about how the others laugh at me. For some reason, I tell him everything. “I just wanted to... impress them. I want them to like me!”

“Then you’re an idiot,” he replies. And that’s that.

We reach the basement and run down the stairs. It's dark except for the single light fitting hanging from the ceiling. The Doctor glances up at it. "Not bad considering that's over a hundred years old. Things were made to last in those days." I look up at the light bulb. I'm not particularly good at history but...

"They had light-bulbs like that in the 1900s?!"

The Doctor stops and stares at me. "What?"

"You... you said that's over a hundred years old."

I feel cold again. The Ghost...

"Ross," asks the Doctor, gently. "What year is it?"

"2015," I reply.

"Ross," says the Doctor. "It's 2115."

The boy. Locked in. Trapped over Christmas. Always looking for a way out. *Tap tap tap. Chink chink chink.* And he looked so familiar...

"I'm... I'm the ghost?" I whisper. "I'm dead?"

There's what feels like an eternity of silence and I remember how the catch was missing from the window. How I couldn't open it. I remember how the lights were on – almost as if they sensed my presence. And I realise... I'm in the future. It's 2115 and I'm dead and I'm the Ghost.

“Oh, don’t be ridiculous,” says the Doctor. “You’re not a ghost, now come on. Where were you when you woke up?”

I close my eyes and take some deep breaths. It was a trick another doctor had taught me for when I found myself getting fixated on things. I point to the far corner and he strides over towards it, taking out his sonic screwdriver. He points it into the darkness, and there, in the blue light is...

A spaceship. Well, one wall of a spaceship.

I start to laugh. There’s the wall of a spaceship in my school’s basement and I’m in 2115 and I’ve been chased by a ghost and nothing makes sense any more but it’s really really funny. And it’s definitely better than being back at home waiting for Terry to come home from the pub and us wondering what mood he’ll be in.

“You know,” says the Doctor, grinning at me as I laugh. “I’ve lost count of the number of spaceships I’ve found in cellars. What is it with you lot and building things on top of crashed spaceships?”

I’m trying to think of an answer but then I’m realising it’s a rhetorical question. The Doctor is analysing the spaceship wall and muttering to himself. Then suddenly he’s standing to his full height and he’s looking down at me.

“Helestican!”

I look at him blankly.

“That there’s a Helestican ship. And do you know what they have?”

I look at him blankly.

“They, Ross, have time travel technology. And what’s happened to you?”

“I’ve...” I pause. But I must have. It’s the only logical explanation. “I’ve travelled in time?”

“That’s it! You see, there’s a hole in the outer casing... just there... and something’s escaped, probably just a bit of chronal vapour, and it’s sent you a hundred years into the future.”

“And the Ghost?”

The Doctor points up at the doorway. The Ghost is standing there watching us. “It’s not a Ghost. It’s an echo. As it accidentally sent you forwards in time an echo of you went back in time, sideways in time, everywhere. For all we know you might be every ghost there’s ever been.”

I don’t know if he’s being serious or not but it’s nice to think he might be telling the truth.

“But what about all the... stuff? The lights and everything.”

“Chronal vapour and human beings don’t mix. It’s like pouring water onto burning oil. Lots of noise and nastiness.”

“So what do we do?” I asked, trying not to sound scared although I was suddenly more scared than I had been before. Was I going to be trapped in the future?

“Oh, I’ve fixed the spaceship so we can send it on its way and then I’ll take you home.”

And it's that simple apparently. The Ghost fades away as we walk through it and we're heading back to the Doctor's blue box. It's called a TARDIS apparently and it can travel anywhere in Time and Space. Before I'd have wanted a scientific explanation but after the last hour I was ready to believe anything.

Oh, and it's bigger on the inside. It's the size of my wardrobe on the outside and it's the size of a city on the inside.

The Doctor closes the doors and there's this noise and shaking and I realise we're moving! I'm grinning and I don't know why. And the Doctor is looking at me and trying to pretend he's not smiling. He presses a button and the doors open again. We go back towards them but then I stop.

WE ARE IN THE SKY!

We're looking down at my school and we are in the sky. The Doctor points his sonic screwdriver down at the school and suddenly there's this huge explosion! The Doctor has just blown up my school! And soaring through the flames... a spaceship! An actual spaceship!

"The Helesticans will be waking up soon..." says the Doctor, waving at the spaceship. I'm too busy looking down at what remains of the school.

The Doctor laughs. "A kids' dream come true, eh?"

"I quite like school," I say.

"Yes, well, beggars can't be choosers!" he says, grumpy again. He closes the door and we head back to the control unit thing. He starts to press buttons and switches.

“2015, yes?” he asks.

I nod. “Christmas.”

As the TARDIS starts shaking again, he comes over to me and he’s suddenly very quiet.

“Your little mate, Dan,” he says. “One day he’ll realise he made a mistake but you... you, Ross, promise me something. Stay true to yourself. Recently I’ve... Well, I’ve tried to be someone else but...” He shrugs. “Someone made me realise I don’t need to be someone else. I’m an old man, messing about in Time and Space. And that’s good. And look at you. You’re clever! You’re brilliant! You might be every ghost that ever was! So no more breaking into basements to try and impress idiots.”

I’m not crying. Of course I’m not. And he doesn’t say anything else but just looks away from me. When he turns back I’m smiling.

“Doctor,” I say. “You could come to my Mum’s for Christmas?”

“Ross,” he says, rubbing the back of his neck. “I don’t really do Christmas. But you go and have fun.”

I look at him and he’s pointing at the doors. They’re open and we’re on the pavement outside my house.

“But... how did you know where I lived?”

The Doctor grins. “Trade secret. Oh, and you might find that Terry might have got himself a job. Who knows, maybe he’ll be a bit nicer to be around... Maybe.”

I stare at him. He's magic. I rush over to him and I hug him because nobody can see us.
And he hugs me because nobody can see us.

And then I leave the TARDIS and I watch as it just vanishes away into thin air.

And I'm home.

The End

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