

BEHIND THE SOFA

TARDIS LOG #2

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My name is Jeff Greene. I had an accident and burned down my house, then I woke up in my room as though nothing had happened. Am I mad? In a Coma? Or back in time? Whatever's happened, it's like everything's exactly the same. Now maybe if I can work out where Pete is, I can find out what's going on...

I awoke on my bed, sunlight filtering pleasantly through the curtains, and sat up, confused. The last thing I'd remembered was the smoke, then the room began to spin. And then... I was here. I could hear the music. Disturbingly, It was the tune they play in *The Prisoner* when Number Six wakes up in the village. Then it occurred to me, I'd set that as my ring tone. Dom was calling. I couldn't deal with that now. What was going on? I hit the reject button.

I heard movement from the kitchen. Thank God! Pete would know what had happened. I stepped into the living room. It was exactly as it always had been, yet with no sign of a fire. No! Wait... Something was different. Something was missing... Of course! It was Christmas! So where were the decorations? Before I passed out I remembered seeing fairy lights. But everything was gone. The tree, the cards... Even the stack of mince pies. My God, how long had I been asleep! Weeks? Months? *Years?* Oh no! I must be an old man! Like Stuart in 'The Time Monster'. I'd fallen victim to Kronos!

I raced to the bathroom to inspect my reflection. I didn't look any different. Perhaps I'd been quantum locked in some kind of stasis?

I dashed back into the living room, where everything seemed to be incredibly tidy. No doubt Pete'd had another late one. That was it! He'd had one of these OCD moments and tidied away the decorations for being too disorderly. Like that time he set fire to my rug because it wasn't symmetrical. But it wasn't Pete. At that moment, the *A-Team* theme began blasting from the kitchen and a man wearing a red polo neck, dungarees and a huge pair of sunglasses emerged, clutching a ghetto blaster.

'Well, that seems to be everything taken care of!' He brushed his hands in triumph. 'My friend!' He observed me, looking shocked. 'What are you doing up and about? You should be resting after your ordeal!'

'But who.... How.... What?'

'Bombastus Fantastico!' He spun towards me, shaking my hand whilst pressing something into my palm. I looked down to find I was now holding a set of keys with a card attached. It read 'Welcome to your home from home'.

'I'll get a pot of chamomile tea on the go for you sir, and then it's straight back to bed!' He clicked his fingers and pointed at me.

'But... The fire...'

'Yes sir, it was a close one alright. I did warn your friend about that microwave...'

'But the kitchen burned down! I saw it!'

'It did, which is why you've been relocated to the flat upstairs.'

'But... It looks exactly the same!' I gazed about, flabbergasted. 'Who put all our stuff here?'

'We did!' A voice came from the doorway, but all I could see was a pair of shoes beneath a huge pile of boxes.

'That, sir, is my estimable colleague, Mr. Pierson Forbes!' Bombastus clapped a massive arm around my shoulder and pointed to the other man.

'Pleased to be of service.' Mr. Forbes laid down the boxes. 'I'll have these decorations up in no time and then we'll be out of your hair. Mince pie?' He offered me a tray. I was speechless.

'But... But... This can't be a new flat. It's exactly the same, the skirting board is still chipped by the radiator!'

Within an instant, Mr. Forbes was beside me, and whispered in my ear. 'We leave no stone unturned, sir!' By this point, the *A-Team* had ended and the Eleventh Doctor's action theme kicked in as they ran around throwing tinsel everywhere.

'Ahh, Matt Smith!' yelled Bombastus. 'The finest one yet, wouldn't you say sir?'

'Yeah.'

'But, of course, you'll always be a Pertwee man! I can tell from your expression.' Within seconds, the decorations were up exactly the way I'd had them. 'Our work here is done! I suggest you exercise more caution next time you want a sip of whiskey!' He winked. But how did he...? 'Right, we'd best be off! Busy time of year for us. Enjoy your tea.' He pointed to a tray of

crockery I didn't know we owned. That was odd, I didn't remember him actually making any tea. 'And, as I say, get some rest.'

In a flash, they were gone, and I was left standing bewildered, clutching the new keys to my old house. I dashed to the kitchen window (once more framed by fairy lights) and looked out in time to see Bombastus Fantastico and Pierson Forbes vaulting the garden wall and jumping into Adam West's Batmobile. With a cry of 'I LOVE Christmas!' he fired it up and they disappeared down the road, blasting out 'Merry Christmas Everybody' by Slade.

The view from the window was exactly the same, yet somehow not. We really were one storey further up. But two things were still troubling me.

1. Where was Pete?
2. I was sure this building only had *two* floors...

My phone was ringing again. Couldn't it wait?! Something clicked in my brain: the phone. Something about the phone... Oh my God. Rachel! Rachel was *pregnant*. No, surely that wasn't real? Just some kind of fume-induced hallucination? But now I think about it the phone call came before the fire. If only my life was an episode of *Doctor Who* written by the Rod, then we could get away with such glaring inaccuracies.

It was Dom again. 'What do you want?' I snapped.

'Where have you been? I've been calling you for hours! It's Pete...'

Pete: Tuesday 7th December... Maybe

A rush of blinding light flooded my vision, as a series of half-remembered events from my life flashed in high-speed sequence, like a VHS on fast-forward. My barely coherent muttering didn't make much sense and came out in little more than a husky gasp. '...Shoes...'

Suddenly, there was a flurry of noise and activity: lights blinking, babies crying, beeps bleeping. Shock #1: I wasn't at home. Where the hell was I? I poked my stomach a few times to make sure I was still myself... Whoever *I* was supposed to be. I needed a mirror. There was probably one around somewhere, but... Shock #2: I couldn't move! My body felt leaden, stiff, bruised in every possible way, and there seemed to be tubes coming out of me. Tubes! I wanted to cry out, but I couldn't for the life of me think who for. So I flapped my arms about like a pigeon and, by chance, laid my hands on a pocket mirror. Bracing myself, I squinted into the glass to see... A dandy with a mane of white hair, shouting repeatedly, a serious expression on his old-young face. It took some minutes, and a great degree of effort on my part, to realise what he was saying. 'Resist! Channing is controlling your mind!' But what did it mean?

'What?!' I screamed, trying to make it stop... And, mercifully, it did. Or, at least, my hearing came back into focus.

I blinked and a mad-eyed guy with a crazed grin appeared over me, just inches from my face. 'I *said*, looks like you're losing your mind!'

'I... I don't know where I am...' I stuttered helplessly.

'I'm Barry Waterhouse!' A disembodied hand thrust enthusiastically into my line of vision and promptly pulled away again. 'I've got a famous brother, you know!' He spoke with the guarded cheeriness of a total idiot, his accent definitely Geordie, but almost as certainly Brummie too. 'What's your name?'

'B...B... Barry?' I asked quizzically. He spoke so quickly. It was all I'd been able to take in.

'No way! You're called Barry too?' His curly golden hair jumped up and down, as he nodded vigorously, making him look like a cocker spaniel. 'Are you sure?'

'I... I don't know. I don't even know where I am. Where am I?'

'Ehhhhhhh!' His dazed eyes lit up. 'I like your sweater! I found this hard to believe, until I saw that *his* t-shirt had a picture of Bob Marley on it. 'I like sci-fi! D'you like role-playing? We should be friends! I've got a famous brother, you know!'

'What... Yeah?' I wasn't really listening. Looking past the Bob Marley shirt, I could see a line of beds in a long sterile corridor, people in white coats bustling frantically. 'Hang on! Are we in a hospital?'

'Duuuuuurrrrr!' He stuck his tongue out and began slapping his forehead. 'Don't you know what's wrong with you?'

'No... What's wrong with *you*? You seem fine... Ish.'

'Me brother says I'm a moron!' He announced proudly, weird accent coming across particularly thickly. 'Normally 'e looks after me... When e's not busy being famous, like!'

'Then who am I? And why am I here?' I whimpered. 'I don't remember anything.'

'Ah, it'll come back to you, mate.' He slapped me on the shoulder with surprising strength. 'Eh, you've got a nametag on your wrist. It says 'ere that your called... Erm, Mr. R-O-T-H. So your name must be Barry Roth!'

'Yeah, that's right!' I breathed a sigh of relief, and drifted back to sleep.

Pete: Tuesday 7th December... Probably

The next time I came round, a tall bloke with severe eyebrows was leaning over me, wiggling his fingers. Pen clutched in jaw, he scrutinised me critically. I tried to speak, but he reared backwards and cut me off with a clap of his hands. I felt my whole body re-orientate, clicking painfully back into consciousness.

'Marvellous!' He said. 'Welcome back to the land of the living, Mr. Roth. You're making sterling progress... And you've got a visitor.' The man had a badge swinging from his pocket. It showed his picture, except that he was much younger, eyebrows only marginally offensive. Next to the photo was the name 'Dr. Dre'. Of course, I was in hospital! Hang on... *Dr. Dre*??! Now why did that remind me of...

'PETE!' Another man, with a summer fete blazer and silly quiff, leaned in, seemingly about to hug me until Dr. Dre yanked him back. It was only then that I looked down, straining to see past my nose, cross-eyed. The shock hit me in gradual waves of horror, much like a 70s B-Movie where they could only afford a certain quantity of '*horror*' per scene, 'Devil Rides Out' notwithstanding. Shit - my leg was in a cast. Then something else. Shit. Shit... Leg? *Not 'legs', plural???*

'My leg! My fucking leg! What the hell have you done with my leg?!

Dr. Dre chuckled. 'I think you may have miscounted, my boy!' Now, why did that sound familiar? 'Don't worry. You've still got all your limbs intact. The only things you've lost are...' He studied a clipboard. '...A little mobility, and a *tiny bit* of memory function. But it's nothing major. In fact, we've been surprised how quickly you've been healing.' He ran a finger to the bottom of his chart, head shaking as he muttered. 'Temporary surge in intelligence... Possible *extra-sensory* abilities... One might almost say you're recovery is *miraculous*. Say... You haven't been exposed to any radiation recently, have you?' The man in the tweed blazer shook his head vigorously, a finger pressed against his pursed lips.

'No?' I replied, genuinely uncertain. Although I was starting to remember some things. Like... The man in the blazer was... 'Jeff! What's with all this 'Pete' business? My name's Barry.'

'No it's not!' he spluttered. 'Who the hell told you that?'

'That guy in the next bed...' I angled my head round, but he'd gone.

'Now then, Mr. Roth.' Dr. Dre replaced my notes over the bed-rail. 'I must get on with my rounds, but I'll be back to check on you later. In the meantime, I'm sure you'll relish some catch up time with your boyfriend.'

Jeff spun round to call after him. 'He's not my...' But he was already gone. There was an odd silence between us. It was all coming back to me now. Obviously, it hadn't been that long since we'd last seen each other, and already we had so much to talk about. But neither of us had any idea where to begin. It was just too much to take in.

'What *happened* to you?'

'Ah.' I tried to shrug, and found I was unable. 'Don't really wanna talk about it.'

'Alright. Don't you worry. I've just got this feeling everything's going to be okay. And they assure me you're gonna be back on your feet for *Doctor Who* at Christmas. Which is the most important thing, eh?'

'Yeah... Jeff?' I smiled politely. 'What are you talking about?'

'You know... The Christmas Special? That *other* thing we watch after the Queen's speech and *The Royle Family*? He was doing that voice people do when they jokingly play something down.'

'What? *Wallace and Grommit? Only Fools and Horses?*'

'No! Not Only Fools and Bloody Horses!' He spat. 'Autons! Daleks! Cybermen! Yeti! Matt Smith jumping over duck ponds, shouting 'Oh Blimey!'' He grabbed me, panic stricken. 'Amy? Rory? The gang? Off having adventures in time and space? Somewhere the tea's getting cold?!' I shook my head, as he violently shook my shoulders. 'Wibbly wobbly? Timey Wimey!! *Doctor Who*?!'

'I'm sorry... What's *Doctor Who*?'

Jeff: Tuesday 7th December

When I got out of the hospital, the real world seemed sharp and painful by contrast. I stood in the car park, the chaotic noise of nearby traffic all about me. It was too much.

I made my way into town and went to the pound shop, where I stocked up on tinsel and wrapping paper, even though I'd wrapped all my presents and the decorations were already up. I don't know why, but it allowed me to feel as though I were on top of things. I grabbed a handful of little bows, an enormous present bag depicting Santa and some headbands with felt reindeer on springs at either side.

The queue was taking forever. Was it really worth it? Then the thought struck me... I didn't really *have* to pay for them... No, I couldn't steal from the pound shop – what if I got caught? I couldn't face having a criminal record for stealing under a tenner's worth of stuff. But by that point the seed had been planted. I was a rebel! A renegade Time Lord. Without looking back, I ran from the shop, the assorted Christmas paraphernalia clutched to my chest.

The rest of the afternoon was something of a blur. When I came to my senses, I was sat in the multi storey car park crying over a cigarette and surrounded by numerous stolen goods. Some underpants from Primark, a copy of *Doctor Who Adventures* I'd stuffed into my jacket whilst in the customer lift at WH Smiths, four tins of marrowfat peas from the market and a whole chicken from Dr. Muhrder's Butchery Emporium.

I felt so euphoric from the sheer exhilaration of it all. I could barely keep my eyes fixed on the road driving home. My gaze kept darting about, expecting to see police tailing me, or security guards pointing.

Pete: Wednesday 8th December

'PETE!' Someone was calling me from an excellent, and philosophical, dream in which I mutated into a massive dinosaur in an attempt to destroy France. 'PETE!' It was Jeff, towering over me, a large bin liner in each hand. I couldn't understand why his outline shook, like those cheap, seizure-inducing cartoons. Then I remembered I was wearing a cooling gel eye mask that the hospital's complimentary therapist, Marvin, had foisted upon me.

'Take those stupid goggles off. You're in the paper!' He waved a copy of the Gazette in my face, and I took it as quickly as my arms would allow, reading aloud...

SUPERMARKET SUPERHERO

Local shopkeeper Omar Sajid was hailed a hero last night, after playing a brave part in the rescue of a currently anonymous local recluse. The victim – described by disgruntled witness Patricia Krauss as 'out of shape, pasty looking, probably approaching 50' – appears to have fallen from his window whilst playing a deadly 'Piggy in the Middle' style game with friends.

WILD SEX PARTIES

'They were an odd bunch, the lot of them.' Notes Ms. Krauss. '...A sour-faced woman – no doubt a prostitute – and a grizzled hippie, who looked like Gandalf if he injected too much pot. I shudder to imagine the horror of their wild sex parties!'

Events took a turn for the worse when the as-yet-unidentified swinger, 50, caught his prize only to topple catastrophically over the window ledge. 'Perhaps he shouldn't have smoked so many joints,' remarked Ms. Krauss sternly.

ILLEGAL TERRORIST RING

Award-winning community police officer Sgt. Delaney Tank takes up the tale. 'We were on a routine camouflage exercise in McDonalds – sampling burgers for anthrax, securing a potential threat with the fat fryers – when Mr. Sajid's call came through. He told us he *had* thought the man dead, but managed to revive him with a combination of hangover remedy and Opal Fruits. Still, he was in a bad way. Naturally,

we assured him we'd rush over as soon as we got to the bottom of our milkshakes, which might very well have contained nuclear detonators. But his description of a large money sack immediately roused suspicion. Fearing an illegal terrorist ring, we dashed into action.'

POLICE BRAVERY

Paramedics were already on the scene by the time the vigilant police arrived forty-five minutes later, but attempts to rouse the unconscious man were unsuccessful. He was rushed straight to hospital and is presumed to be making a recovery. 'That's all well and good...' Sergeant Tank added this evening, a hint of warning in his voice. 'But you have to wonder how an *apparently* innocent citizen just happened to have such a large amount of cash lying around on the premises. Naturally, the money has been remanded by police, so that forensics can check the notes for hints of cocaine or chemical warfare, but we made sure the hero of the hour didn't go unrewarded. We gave Mr. Sajid a five pound note, and told him to keep out of trouble. I think we can all be reassured, knowing our streets are safe during the credit crunch.'

'Oh my god.' I gasped. 'I'm worse than Rod Stewart!'

'Yeah... Well, they have exaggerated *certain* details. But the point is, you're on the front page. Up there with the Blackpool greats like... Sex-Offender Stanley... and...' He faltered. 'That clown.' I cringed.

'I'm not really in that story though. I'm a factoid.' I scanned the page again. 'Come to think of it, I'm not even *that*, because, by implication, use of the word 'fact' suggests that the journalists were in some way correct, and, should you choose to use this as your point of reference, you'd presume me to be a middle-aged sex-addict-criminal-mastermind.'

'Pete... Are you alright?'

'Yeah. Surprisingly well, actually. Why?'

'It's just... You're using lots of big words, speaking in proper sentences... That kind of thing. It's not like you. They haven't been feeding you dictionary pills, have they?'

'There's nothing wrong with being syntactically correct, Jeff.' I said, not meaning to chastise. 'But I know what you mean. It's like the bit of my brain that's suffered the memory loss was so clogged with nonsense about that TV programme you like that I was unable to function academically. Isn't it great that I've got my intelligence back?' He looked close to crying. 'And at hardly any cost! I mean, I used to enjoy *Coronation Street* when I was a kid, and even though I still remember what it was that made me like it, it's not as though I miss it. So, this *Doctor Who* thing can't have been *that* good, cause I don't remember that *at all*.'

I was trying to comfort him, but he seemed to be on the verge of tears. 'You can't compare fucking *Coronation Street* to... to... to the greatest show in the galaxy!' Other patients were staring. A particularly emaciated man with a kindly face stopped and said, in a defeated sounding voice, 'I quite like *Coronation Street*.'

After taking a few deep breaths to regain his composure, Jeff produced a plastic model from one of the bin bags and waved it at me manically, like a needy child. It was a four inch tall figure in check pants and a jumper covered in question marks. I felt a flicker of recognition.

'Oh my god... You remember him?' He jiggled it hopefully.

'Of course. I used to have an Action Man doll when I was little.'

His whole body became rigid, fists closing tightly, knuckles turning pale. Then there was a sickening snap and Action Man's legs came off. He must have been in a panic when he left. He'd even forgotten his rubbish bags. I rifled through them hoping to trigger some memories, but they were just full of toys and comics.

Jeff: Thursday 9th December

Pete in hospital. Daisy in Prison. Rachel not answering calls. So lonely I actually read my junk mail:

From: EnlargePenis.Hi17@yahoo.com

It's just cool! Have a cool penis!

Uninspired, I compiled a list of the things I have to look forward to.

Cons:

Hair loss

Prostate exams

Weight gain

Parenthood?

Decline in vision

Erectile dysfunction

Pros:

Two new series of *Doctor Who*