

It is a field of pinkish, sharpish grass, wild and unkempt, lit by the light of unseen suns which is reflected from a giant moon hanging torpidly in the sky above.

Through the field blows a warm but urgent wind, whipping dead autumnal leaves – fallen from trees I suppose, although there are no trees in sight – up into a fury. They fly through slim, stone columns that proclaim the presence in aeons past of a temple or grotto. No longer, however: the columns lean at improbable angles, half broken and moss covered, mere shadows of prior glories.

In the centre of the stone columns' almost-circle there is a hat-stand, and a low, squat, hexagonal dais covered in lights and levers. At the dais gangles a man dressed in tweed and bow-tie, and mainly made of legs and chins and hair. He dances around the dais, studying and tweaking its controls: pressing a button or two here, pulling a lever there, scrutinising screens and warning lights and analysing readouts. I say dances, but it isn't so much dancing as controlled falling. Semi-controlled falling.

I have a question. *Where are we, Doctor?*

"Hm?" he replies, not really listening. He rarely listens. "Tertiary control room. It's quite big. Bit too big, if you ask me. I've never really liked it."

He flicks another switch, and then looks up, quizzically.

"Why can't I see you?" he demands.

The Unseeable Eye

by Nic Ford

"I need to know," he continues, "why I can't see you."

I'm not sure. Have you ever seen me before?

"Depends who you are," he says, circling the dais, all the while manipulating controls, tripping a lever here, pressing a button there. "Are you House? Are you Sexy? Are you, I don't know, some other kind of unseeny... weeny... thing?"

None of those. But I'm your friend. I'm here with you.

"My *friend*?" he asks. "Really? Wouldn't I, shouldn't I, know who you are, then?"

Possibly you do. I know you, anyway.

"Do you, now?" he demands dourly. "Who am I, then?"

Exactly.

"Hm. Good answer," he says. He visibly ponders. "Been with me long?"

I ponder too. I don't really know.

"Thought as much," he says. "No answer. Well, that narrows it down." He dances some more around the console, pulling the odd lever or two. Suddenly, the noise that envelopes us... falls away.

"Is that a little better?" he says. "Thought it might help us... communicate a bit."

Well, it's less distracting, I say. But I know about the Tardis and her noises. Doesn't it mean you're not going anywhere though?

"Oh, I'm probably still getting where I need to be," he replies enigmatically.

Good, I reply. And I sit back, waiting to see what happens next.

He examines me.

"That's you, isn't it?" he states. "The one that just waits. Sees what happens."

I am a bit taken aback. *Is that what you think of me?* I ask. *I love you! Surely I'm more than that!*

"Like what?" he laughs. "My muse? My guardian angel? My... *destiny?!?*" He visibly snickers, which is a bit insulting. "I mean, I suppose you could decide that you know what's best for me..."

Well, I do!

"Ha! Course you do!" he says. "And how annoyed are you, when I don't follow what you *know* to be correct?"

Um... not sure...

"Or even when I meet people I've met before, and they *look a bit different!!!*"

He has a point. I... get... *livid!*

"Listen," he says, and he sits on the console, facing where he assumes my unseen face might be. It's not a bad assumption: he's unnervingly right on the button. How does he do that?

"You think you know me. And you probably do, to be fair," he says. "And you're with me every step of the way. But does that mean I *want* you there?"

I'd not considered that. It's a bit of a kick in the teeth.

Do you not, then? I ask.

He looks away. Thinks for a bit.

"I don't know," he says. "Maybe, maybe not." And he strokes his voluminous chin. "Tell you what..." he says.

What?! I ask. With an interrobang! Well, I'm getting a bit frustrated; don't you think it deserves one?!

But he looks like he knows I've used it! That's not expected!

"Tell you what, Mr or Ms Incredulous," he repeats, "let's try you out. Why don't I tell you about some of the things that have happened to me, see what you make of *them?*"

I think about this. Surely I know *all* of them?

"Oh, not these," he says – and I genuinely don't know how he knows what I'm thinking.

"These are new!"

And old? I ask.

"Course they are," he says. "Things I've done, all of me. But never seen before."

Whole new adventures? I demand, almost salivating – and, immediately, know I need to play hard to find. Why? What will it prove?

"If nothing else," he says, "it'll prove you've been listening. And it'll be a way to spend the time till... well, you know when..."

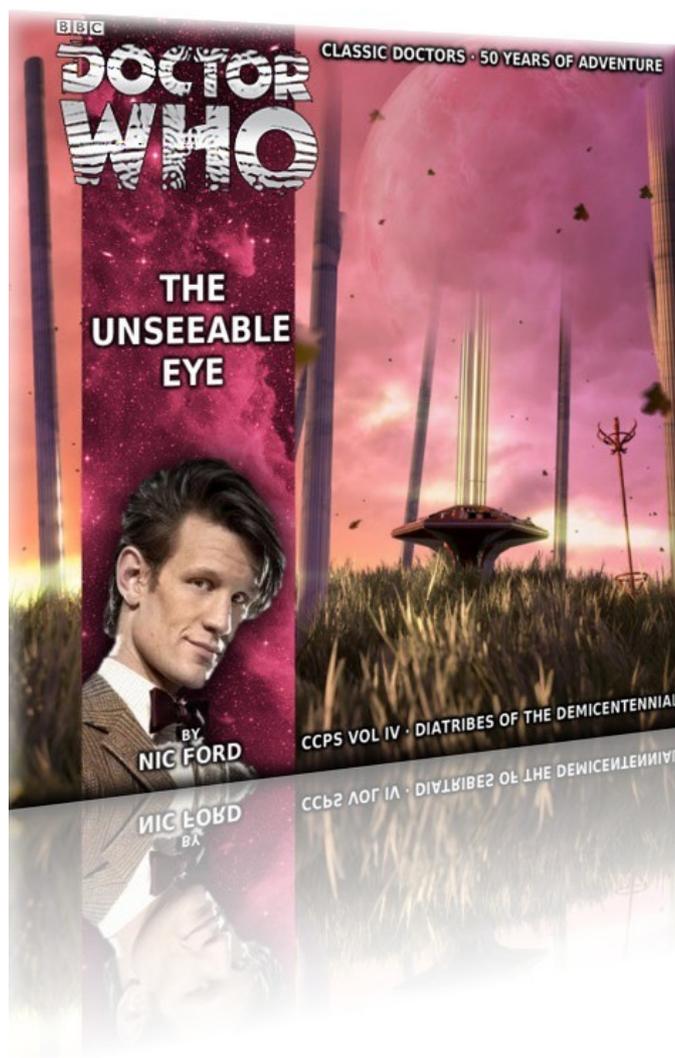
Yes, I suppose I do. And he's right, it'll be nice to have something to fill the gap.

"So, are you sitting comfortably?" he asks.

I nod. No idea where this is going – the way I like it! I nod!

He grins at me.

"Then I'll begin," he says.



Cover art © 2013 Philip Boyes