

*Hi, yes, make yourself comfortable. Would you like a cup of tea? Coffee? No, it's no trouble, honestly. You're sure? Fair enough.*

*Are you getting your equipment set up? That's an audio recorder, yes? Oh, it's already on. Sorry, I didn't know. Ah, I can see the flashing light now. I'll sit down and we can get started, then. I'm sure you're very busy with lots of other writing you have to do.*

*So you're a journalist, are you? Oh, just a writer. Freelance? That sounds fun. Did the agency explain why they sent you over here? Of course they did. And I'm not surprised they sent someone to write my memoirs for me this time, given what's happened in the past.*

*You don't know? Didn't you read it in the papers? It was all over the tabloids. If you don't know my whole story, you really should check it out. It's not a bad story, if I'm allowed to say that. Quite funny in places, I think.*

*Sorry, yes, I'm rambling. I always do this when I'm nervous. Yes, I am nervous. This is my first interview after—well, since everything happened. Since the truth came out. This new book is my chance to start again. And a fresh start is just what I need.*

*How's this going to work, then? I just talk about what happened, and you record it, and then you'll compile this up into a proper book after giving it a good polish? That sounds fine. You promise you won't just publish it like this, though, will you? I'd be mortified if anyone had to read this, in the sort of convoluted way that I talk and explain things. You really won't? Good. Then we can begin.*

*Oh, stories need titles, don't they? All my other memoirs did. It can come later, you say? No, sir, I always come up with the titles of my adventures first and then write around them. Mind you, that was when I was making it all up. Now I'm being honest—and I really am telling the truth, I promise you—maybe we'll try it your way.*

*I'll let you come up with the title at the end, okay? I trust you. I'm putting a lot of faith in your hands, sir. I hope you understand that. Oh, you do, do you? But you're only a kid. You don't know how much my life depends on all this. If people don't accept that I've changed, if the world doesn't believe that the old Logan Hawk is dead and a new man has risen from the ashes, then I'm well and truly—*

*Wait a minute. From the Ashes... That's not a bad title, is it? Might make people think of cricket, though. Which might, in turn, send people to sleep. But it's dramatic and... Oh, sorry, I promised you I'd let you come up with the title, didn't I? Fair enough. As long as it's not some cheesy phrase or a vague, unfunny nod to popular culture, I'm sure it'll be okay.*

## Logan's Run

by Samuel Marks

---

*Do you think I'll need to recap for people who missed my last adventure? Well, how could they? It was all over the news. Logan Hawk, the man who lied. Who deceived the world and used people's trust to turn a profit. Yeah, the headlines weren't all catchy, were they? But they were truthful—for once. I was a liar, a con artist and a fraud. I regret all that now. I met a man called the Doctor and he changed my life.*

*When the news was about to break and my life was about to break too, I decided to go on one real adventure. I'd heard the legends of the Devil's Rock, the planet where nothing grows. My ship died in the atmosphere, and I fell down to the planet in an escape pod. The Doctor and his friend, Martha Jones, found me and rescued me. Together we battled robotic monsters, found an underground crypt with the final survivor of a dying species, and rejuvenated the planet. All in a day's work for the Doctor, I think.*

*But for me, that was a turning point. His life was the one I wanted, one of true adventure. So when we were done, the Doctor gave me the chance of a lifetime: to*

*travel in his TARDIS and learn what it means to be a hero, and a good man. Looking back, I can see that I was so naïve and so ignorant.*

*I had no idea what I was letting myself in for.*

I remember following the Doctor out of the TARDIS. It had been a particularly turbulent flight and my head was all over the place, so you'll have to excuse any vagueness on my part or what might seem like plot holes. I was a bit delirious.

So anyway, I stepped out of the police box and onto an alien world. I was born here on Earth, in case you didn't know, so seeing another planet always gave me that buzz. You know, the feeling in the pit of your stomach. One day someone will articulate that better, I'm sure. The sky wasn't purple, and the just grass was as green as it was at home, but still... I was excited.

"You look excited," the Doctor said, putting his arm around me.

I nodded. "Yep. What a view!"

We had materialised on a hilltop, and we could see for miles. There was a small settlement in the distance. Nothing grand—no sci-fi spires or fantasy medieval castles—but it was frankly pretty cool nonetheless. I hadn't seen many real alien civilisations, so how was I to know whether this was, in fact, particular exciting?

"Martha would've loved to see this," I pointed out.

"Do you think? Nah! She said she wanted to go to Paris."

"I think, Doctor, she meant *all of us*."

The Doctor scratched his head, making his preposterous hairstyle even more so as he ran his bony fingers through it. "Really?"

"Yes! Who goes to Paris on their own?"

He thought for a moment. "Martha?"

I had to laugh. Martha didn't seem *that* keen to go alone. The Doctor pushing her out the doors and flying away probably helped her to make a decision.

I gave an exasperated sigh. The Doctor had tired me out already, and we'd only just landed. "So, where are we?"

"This is the Peace colony, on the edge of the galaxy. This place used to be a boring old asteroid before the humans came here, terraformed it, and built their funny

little flat pack houses." The Doctor patted me hard on the back, almost winding me, and strode off towards the settlement. "Come on."

I followed close behind. The ground underfoot was hard, rocky, yet somehow felt unstable. The Doctor explained that it was only a simple terraforming process that the humans had used, changing the environment just enough to make it liveable.

"It'll always be an asteroid," I agreed. "You can't change something that much. If it's fundamentally one thing, it always will be. No magic can fix that."

The Doctor smiled, though I wasn't sure why. "Anything can change," he said.

We were approaching the entrance to the town. A lone guard sat by a rusted iron gate, and stood to attention with his hand on his gun when he saw the Doctor and I approaching.

"By the way, what year is this?" I asked. I had my suspicions as to *why* exactly the guard looked so alarmed to see us—or, actually, to see *me*.

"Your year," said the Doctor. "Same year as it was when we left the Devil's Rock. We've only travelled in space, not time."

This wasn't going to be the escape from my problems that I thought it would be. "So people here will know me? They'll know what I've done, how I lied about all those adventures in my career?"

The Doctor shrugged. "Maybe."

The guard strode over to us. The Doctor reached into his pocket for something, but the man's eyes stayed fixed on me. I didn't know what he expected me to say or do, so I looked down at the ground.

"It's you," sneered the guard. "Logan the Liar."

"And I've already got a nickname," I sighed. "Marvellous."

The Doctor flashed a black leather wallet at the guard, who squinted at it. "*Colon Inspector?*" the man said, reading off the paper.

The Doctor looked at the wallet, smiled sheepishly, then shook the wallet vigorously. "Better?" he asked, showing it to the guard once again.

He nodded. "*Colony Inspector*. Yes, that makes far more sense." The guard gestured at me. "And he's working for you now, is he? Now we all know he's a fraud?"

"He is indeed. Do you mind if we have a wander about the place? See what's what?"

"If you like. But try not to make too much noise, eh? It's the Hour of Prayer."

"Fair enough. Come on, Logan."

I followed the Doctor through the gates and into the town. It seemed totally empty and deserted. Not a surprise, if everyone was off praying. "So what do you make of that, then? I don't reckon the idea of gods sits well with you, does it, Doctor?"

The Doctor scratched his head. "Well, I'm not going to start preaching. People can believe whatever they like, I'm not here to judge. Peace is a pilgrim colony. A sacred site. That's why everyone's come here, to get closer to the gods. This place was indicated in their writings and their scriptures. Apparently. This is holy land, you know."

"A holy asteroid?" I scoffed.

"You shouldn't mock these people. Whatever they believe, they're pioneers. They've followed their beliefs and colonised a new world. Now *that's* progress. These people are to be admired." He paused for a moment, as if waiting for a reply, but I said nothing. "So what do you believe in, Logan?"

"Well, umm," I faltered. "Lots of things. No gods. I don't think they could be so cruel. I mean, I used to pray when I was a kid. My mother was..." I cleared my throat. The Doctor said he could see a tear in my eye but I told him that he was mistaken. "She was ill. I asked someone—anyone—to make her better. No one did."

"Oh, Logan, I'm so sorry. I had no idea."

"What about?"

"That you had, you know, feelings and stuff." The Doctor smiled warmly. "So you don't believe in anything?"

I shrugged. "I suppose not. You?"

"One thing, yeah. The power of people. Individuals. No gods for me, but I believe in the good that ordinary, honest folk can do."

I could feel him looking at me. I turned away, glancing at the colony. It was a simple place, as the Doctor had explained. Almost like something out of the Old West, only more plastic-y. Flat-pack houses, he had said. The town that IKEA built.

I'll repeat that: the town that IKEA built.

Huh? I'm saying it twice just in case your audio recorder didn't pick it up the first time. That's good line, I think. Make sure you don't miss that when you write all this up. Got it? Okay, now where was I?

We couldn't find the pilgrims, during their Hour of Prayer. And with no people in sight, the Doctor couldn't spot anyone who needed help. He told me to have a look around, see who I could find, while he did the same. I'd seen enough horror films to know that splitting up was a bad idea—and that the pretty ones always died first, so I didn't fancy my chances much—but I did as I was told.

I wandered around for a little while, unsure of what to do. Eventually I summoned up the courage to pick a random house and see what awaited me inside. If the Doctor was right, adventure would find me. I knocked on the door and waited for a reply.

After a few moments, an attractive, middle-aged woman appeared at the door. She was dressed plainly, but her clothes were still flattering. Her eyes were red, like she had been crying... "Yes?"

"Oh, umm, hi," I stuttered nervously. "I'm sort of new here, and—well, I'm not staying, I'm just visiting, but... I thought I should introduce myself..."

The woman smiled warmly. "Of course. Hey, I know you. I've seen your face. Logan something, isn't it? The explorer?"

I nodded. "That's me. Hello."

The woman's smile grew. "Do you want to come in? Please do."

I followed her into her home, and she told me to make myself comfortable in the living space. She introduced herself as Mara Del-Krah, and went off to get us both something to drink. I slumped down on the sofa and waited, and she returned with two glasses of wine a few moments later. I sipped at the red, because apparently she didn't have any white.

"So tell me about yourself," I said. "What's it like here on the Peace colony, Mara?"

"It's quiet, mostly. That's why we came. It's part of the way of life. The people who live here they—we—call ourselves the Peacefuls."

"And you do that without irony?"

"Yes..."

"Then the Doctor's right, you people really are to be admired."

She laughed politely but I could tell she was suspicious of something—of me, most likely. "Did a new group of pilgrims arrive today, then?" she asked. "I hadn't heard about any new ships coming here."

"No, no. Me and my friend, we're sort of... inspectors."

"And what are you inspecting, exactly?"

"Anything," I shrugged. "Everything. Whoever needs help, we're here to help them."

"Like a gift from the gods," the woman mumbled. She didn't see me roll my eyes, I don't think, as she went on, "If I show you something, will you help? I mean, will you be discreet and help me with it? It's kind of embarrassing and a bit personal..."

I leaned forward. "Of course. What's wrong?"

"It's... It's my son."

"Oh." I sat back again. "What's the matter with him?"

"See for yourself," she said, as she rose from the sofa and led me by the hand to a locked door nearby. "This is his room. I keep it locked for... reasons." She unlocked it with a key that hung around her neck, and eased the door open.

I peered inside. It was a young boy's bedroom, that much was clear. The walls were adorned with posters of pop stars and TV shows and—well, there's no way of saying this without sounding smug. There were pictures of me. Posters all over his room with my face staring back at me. He was a fan. One of *my* fans!

I was so overjoyed that I almost didn't see the boy of about seven or eight curled up on the bed, buried under a mass of covers, shivering and mumbling something incoherent. He was sick. That was what Mara needed help with. Her son was ill, and the gods had done nothing to help, not even on this 'holy asteroid'. And the Doctor wondered why I didn't believe...

"When I saw your face," Mara said quietly, "when I saw that you had come to my house, out of everywhere in the whole wide universe, I knew you had been sent to help us—to help Taro."

"I'm not sure about that—"

“Oh, but it’s true! It must be. I prayed and the gods answered. Why do you look so sceptical? Oh, it doesn’t matter. Can you help him? Tell me you can help Taro...”

I didn’t know what to say. “What’s wrong with him?”

“He’s got a rare blood condition. It causes him to have... episodes. But he’s never been like this before. He just lies there now, all day. He’s been like this for so long. He doesn’t eat. He doesn’t speak, not really. He can only say one word. ‘Sick.’ He knows he’s sick, and he’s asking me to help, but I can’t. I’m...” Her eyes grew misty. “I’m so worried about him. I don’t know what I can do...”

“Well, I’ve got a friend. He’s called the Doctor, and he can—”

“But look at the posters! And over here.” Mara indicated a bookshelf. “Taro’s read all your books, from cover to cover. Every single one! He talks about you all the time. He plays at being you, going on all these adventures around the colony, exploring little nooks and crannies, seeking out adventure. When he grows up, he wants to be exactly like you.”

“No, he doesn’t. He doesn’t know me at all, and if he did, he wouldn’t want to be like me. Not one bit.”

“I don’t know what you mean, sir. If you’ve got troubles and demons, we all have. Look at my son.” I hadn’t taken my eyes off him, but I took her point. “If anyone can save him, it’s you. His hero.”

“I am not a hero.” I took a deep breath. “I’m a fraud.”

“What?”

“All my adventures. I made them up.” I hadn’t said this aloud before since I’d been exposed. The guard knew but it was clear that Mara didn’t. “It was on the news. I’m a liar. *I am a lie.*”

There was a low rumble from the bed. Mara and I looked over at Taro, who shaking almost uncontrollably, it seemed, under the bed sheets. The noise was like a voice. He was speaking, I think, but in some strange language. It wasn’t human, and it sounded pretty damn creepy so I could tell it wasn’t good.

“I’m sorry,” I said, panicked. It must’ve been my fault, I thought. Maybe he had heard me, and I had destroyed his image of me—and with that, his dreams. “Mara, I didn’t mean—”



“Get out,” she said angrily. She hurried over to the bed and held her son. “Just get the hell out of my house.”

I didn't argue.

I closed the door behind me, and wondered how hard I had slammed it: the ground beneath my feet started to shake. It felt even more unstable than it had when I had arrived. I was worried, for a moment, that it was going to give way beneath me and cause me fall into the darkness at the heart of the planet. Maybe it was what I deserved.

“Logan!” It was the Doctor's voice. He came running over to me from across the street of identical houses. “There you are! Where have you been?”

“I... I met a woman and—”

“Never mind that. You need to come with me.”

The Doctor grabbed me by the hand and led me through the colony to where a crowd of people had gathered. It was the pilgrims, I supposed, in their Hour of Prayer. But it wasn't as calm and 'peaceful' as I had imagined. Everyone was in a panic, shouting and screaming.

The Doctor let go of my hand, and I glared at him. “What's up with the hand holding? Don't do that.”

“But I always—”

“Just don't. Anyway, what's all the commotion for?”

The Doctor indicated the ground. Huge cracks ran across the rocky earth, like the asteroid had split. Every now and then it shook with varying intensities.

“Earthquakes,” the Doctor said. “This whole place is falling apart, and the pilgrims are convinced it's the End Time, as foretold by the gods.”

“And aren't the gods going to save them?” I asked knowingly.

“Let's see, shall we?” The Doctor nodded at the crowd, which was beginning to settle. An uneasy silence descended as a man in loud, garish robes stood atop a rock and looked to the skies.

“My glorious, all-powerful gods,” the man called out. “Hear us in our moment of need. Save us! Save! Us! Help us before we—”

And in a flash of light, the man disappeared. Not a trace of him remained. I looked to the Doctor and asked what the hell had just happened, but he said nothing. He only stared ahead at where the man had been.

For a while, there was only silence once again. But then, gradually, more of the pilgrims began to call to the skies and ask the gods for help. And one by one, as each spoke their prayers, they too vanished.

“Doctor, talk to me. What’s going on?”

“They were saved,” the Doctor said, when all the pilgrims were gone. “Saved by... by the gods?”

There was another earthquake, more intense and longer lasting this time. I was nearly knocked off my feet, but the Doctor and I held on to each other to steady ourselves.

“Should we pray?” I suggested. “I mean, we’d be the biggest hypocrites in the universe but at least we’d be *alive* ones—”

“Not a chance,” the Doctor scoffed. “We need to discover the source of these tremors before the damage is too—”

Before he could finish, the ground beneath the Doctor simply fell away, and he was left clinging to the edge of the earth that remained, with a great pit of darkness looming below him.

I grabbed hold of the Doctor’s hand, leaning over the gaping maw. “Hold on!” I tried to pull him up, but he was too heavy. “I can’t... Doctor, you’re going to fall!”

The Doctor strained and tried to heave himself back up, but his fingers started to slip away. I tightened my grip, but we both knew it wouldn’t be enough to hold him there for much longer.

“Ask for help!” I urged. “Pray!”

“Not... Not a chance.”

“Oh, just swallow your pride, you big-haired moron!”

The Doctor shook his head. I could feel him slipping away.

“Fine,” I mumbled. I closed my eyes and looked skywards. “Gods, if you’re there, could you help my friend, please? You know, the stubborn idiot who’s about to die? Yeah, him. Save him.”

The Doctor glared at me. “Oh, Logan, you f—”

There was a flash of light, and then the Doctor was gone. Safe? I hoped so. I looked around. I was the only person left that I could see, but there were still two other people on the Peace colony. And if they didn't get off this rock before it collapsed in on itself, they'd be history.

I ran to the house, to save Mara and Taro.

I was a good distance away from the house when I saw a body lying in the dirt. I knew immediately that it was Mara. I hoped that she was all right. If prayers had done so much, could they save her?

I knelt over her body and checked her pulse. She was still breathing, and still alive, but barely. I looked her over to see what was wrong, and the veins on her arms were glowing a deep, dark red, throbbing under her skin. I'd never seen anything like it.

But before I could do anything to help, I heard a familiar, unearthly voice from behind me. It was Taro. He was on his feet, standing completely still, and staring straight at me. Something was wrong with him. He looked sick, and just plain *wrong*. Mara was right: he really needed help.

"Taro!" I cried out. "We need to get off this rock. Come over here and—"

The boy raised his hand, and I froze on the spot. I convulsed, and a searing pain coursed all through my body. I was on my hands and knees, in the dirt, writhing in pain, when I noticed that my veins, too, were glowing red. Just like Mara's.

Had Taro does this to her, then? To his own mother?

"Oh, dear gods!" I shouted through the pain. "Get us out of here, right now!"

I saw Taro advancing towards me as a great explosion of light gathered around me and Mara. But we didn't disappear. The boy was drawing closer, walking through the glow, and the pain was growing more intense.

"Come on, come on, come on..."

As I willed for someone—anyone—to help, I felt consciousness slipping away from me. The last thing I saw was the boy stood over me, with fire burning in his eyes, and that terrible noise pouring out of him.

Then there was only blackness.

"Is he recovering?"

"Yes, look—he's regaining consciousness."

I awoke to the sound of gentle, musical voices. I no longer was in pain. Everything felt calm and soft and—well, and it was all just lovely. "Where... Where am I?"

A pair of pale, spindly aliens were looking down at me. They had pleasant, warm faces, their heads bobbing about atop a long, thin neck. They were dressed in tunics as white as their skin, and indeed as white as the room we were in.

"This is a medical bay," one of them—the female—explained. "You were unconscious when you arrived. Now you are better."

"Yeah," I nodded. "I am. Thanks for that."

"You are most welcome," replied the male. "I am Lo'kraw. This is my assistant, Gar'lah."

"Hello," she smiled. "You're on a spaceship. In space. Obviously. Sorry, we're not really trained for this sort of thing..."

"You saved us?" I asked. "You saved all the pilgrims? You're the gods?"

"No, they're really not." The Doctor entered the room. He nodded to the tall, pale aliens, and they left us alone. The Doctor sat beside the bed. "Feeling better?"

I really was. "How's Mara? The woman?"

"She's recovering. Still unconscious, but she'll be okay."

"Doctor, can I ask a question?"

"Of course."

"I don't have a clue what's going on."

"That's not a question."

"You know what I mean." My head was still a bit fuzzy from whatever treatment the aliens had given me. I could barely think straight. Taro's face as he loomed over me had become little more than a blur in my memory, for which I was grateful.

The Doctor took a deep breath. "Well, as you know, we're on a spaceship. This is called the *Truth Seeker*. It's part of the Sponnark Discovery Fleet. These creatures who patched you up and whose ship this is—they're called Sponnarks. They're from the most obliging race in the universe. And they are *not* gods."

"The most obliging race?"

“They can’t do enough for you. I’ve had seventeen cups of tea this morning. With biscuits! The Peacefuls asked for help, and the Sponnarks could only—well, they could only oblige. They were just passing through, exploring new worlds, when they overheard people talking on the colony.”

“Asking to be saved.” I understood now. “And they teleported them up to their ship.”

“Because what else could they do? They couldn’t just fly on by, not when the pilgrims needed help. Not gods, just really nice people.”

“That’s one mystery solved, then,” I said. “But what about the colony? What was happening down there with those earthquakes? And Doctor, there was a boy. Just a child. And he was sick...”

“I know,” the Doctor smiled. “I’ll explain it all soon. Just get some rest. When you’re ready, Lo’kraw and Gar’lah will show you to the bridge. We’ll plan our next move from there.”

The Doctor got up and headed for the door. He turned back to me and said, “Oh, before I forget...”

“Yes?”

“Well done for saving the woman. Mara. Without you, she might not have made it out of there. Well, she almost definitely wouldn’t have. You saved her life. Well done, Logan.”

“Cheers,” I said, with a smile.

With that, the Doctor left. The aliens—the Sponnarks, as the Doctor had called them—returned to my bedside.

“Now, Mr Hawk,” Lo’kraw said, “is there anything we can get you? Anything at all?”

I felt a smile creep out across my face. “Just a few things...”

“I feel sick,” I moaned, as Gar’lah escorted me onto the bridge. The Doctor was studying the readouts on a computer console, his glasses hanging off the end of his nose, and he barely looked up to acknowledge me when I entered.

“That, Logan, will be all those sweets you ate. How could make Lo’kraw get you all that liquorice?”

"Oh, it was no trouble," replied Lo'kraw, who was at the Doctor's side.

"See?" I smiled innocently. "Doctor, I have questions."

"Luckily, I have answers. I've been scanning the surface for a few hours. The asteroid—Peace—is an ideal place to settle," the Doctor explained. "And I don't think the pilgrims were the first people to realise that. Under the surface of the planet, there's a whole system of tunnels. There's a decent power supply there too, but it's fading fast."

"Someone's living down there? They've built a subterranean city in the asteroid?"

The Doctor nodded. "And I know exactly who they are."

He tapped a few buttons on the control console, and an image was projected onto the bridge of the *Truth Seeker*. It showed a humanoid creature, with a skull-like exoskeleton covering most of its face.

"The Sycorax," the Doctor went on. "I've encountered them before. They're a warrior race, mostly. Always on the lookout for worlds to plunder."

"So the colony's not safe! What can we do?" I asked the Doctor, but it was Gar'lah who answered.

"Not much, I'm afraid to say," the alien replied. "Our power's low. All these recent teleports, you see. We never expected to have to beam so many people aboard. Please accept our most sincere apologies for any inconvenience this has caused."

The Doctor rolled his eyes. "Yes, but what *can* we do?" He started working at a computer console, and Lo'kraw joined him.

"If we reroute the power from all the non-essential systems," the alien suggested, "we might be able to beam *one* person back to the colony. Do you think that would be all right?"

"I should think so." The Doctor whipped out the sonic screwdriver and buzzed it around the room. He checked his readings and said, "You're right. I could get someone down there."

"Oh, it's all such bother, isn't it?" sighed Gar'lah. "What a work up. I'm so sorry—"

"Blimey, shut up!" the Doctor huffed, half smiling.

I felt useless just stood around doing nothing, so I asked the Doctor what I should do. "I want to help," I said.

"Just get yourself ready," the Doctor replied. "It'll be a big job, saving that colony."

"What?" He didn't mean he was sending *me* down there, did he? I thought he would just ask me to hold things or... something. "You're going, aren't you, Doctor? Surely it'll be you down there..."

"I need to stabilise the ship's systems." Perhaps he saw the worried look on my face, or heard the nervous squeak I made, but for whatever reason he tucked his screwdriver away and came over to me. "Logan, you can do this. We're all counting on you, and we all *believe* in you."

I nodded, dumbstruck, and listened intently as the Doctor told me everything I needed to do. He made it sound simple enough, but I knew it wasn't going to be easy.

"Here, take this." The Doctor tossed me a mobile phone from the twenty-first century. It was such a primitive piece of tech, but anything that would give me a fighting change of, well, *not dying*, I was grateful for. "The contact details of this ship are programmed in. Call me if you get in trouble. I'll help however I can."

"Okay." I started to dial the number immediately, but the Doctor didn't seem to find it funny. So I stood waiting for the teleport to kick in, and took a deep breath.

I took my next breath on the Peace colony, and immediately broke out into a cough, with all the swirling dust and ash that poured into my lungs. I composed myself and looked around. The *Truth Seeker* had deposited me on the other side of the colony, in unfamiliar territory. I gazed around, feeling lost and no doubt looking it too. Much to my relief, the phone started ringing in my pocket.

"Doctor!" I cried out, as I answered it. "Oh, thank goodness it's you! I need you."

"Logan," the Doctor sighed, "we spoke about ten seconds ago."

"Okay." I cleared my throat. "Sorry."

"Listen, just pull yourself together, all right? You should be near to a breach in the landscape, a tunnel that will take you down into the heart of the asteroid. Can you see it?"

I could. There was what looked like a cave in a huge piece of rock, but when I peered inside I saw that the path led *downwards*, no doubt leading me straight to the creature beneath the colony—the Sycorax, as the Doctor had called them.

“Logan, are you there? Do you see the cave?”

“Yeah.” I must have been silent for a while. “Yeah, I see it. You want me to go down there, don’t you?”

“Come on, you can do it,” the Doctor coaxed.

I was about to say that I wasn’t so sure about that when I heard footsteps behind me. I turned to see the young boy, Taro, with his glowing eyes, and muttering what sounded to me now like an incantation of some kind. I didn’t fancy being incapacitated by him again, so it seemed to me that the only option was to run—into the darkness...

As I made my way through the long, winding tunnel, snaking downwards through the insides of the asteroid, I could hear the child’s footsteps pounding against the rocky ground, always close behind me, never letting up. I had to press onwards, and couldn’t even contemplate turning back.

I looked down at the phone to call the Doctor for assistance—well, even just to hear his voice, really, for comfort, even if he started shouting at me again—but I saw that I had no signal. Typical, I thought. I tucked the phone away, and continued to follow the tunnel.

I thanked the gods I didn’t believe in when I saw an end to the tunnel, and I clambered out of the rocky passageway into a huge antechamber. It looked—well, it looked exactly like you would expect the inside of an asteroid to look. There’s only so many times I can describe it as ‘rocky’ before it gets boring. So let’s take ‘rocky’ as a given from hereon in, shall we?

There were computer panels built into the walls, switches made of stone, and video screens showing the surface of the planet. The grainy image showed that much of the surface had been ruined, cracked beyond repair, with what looked like steam or smoke rising up out of the ground.

But of all the things I saw, one thing I hadn’t seen yet was the Sycorax I was promised...



As if to stop me from worrying about that, the devil boy Taro emerged from the rocky passageway and began to march towards me.

"Listen, kid, just stop it, will you?" I pleaded, backing up against a wall (which was, as you will have guessed, made of rock). "Don't you recognise me? I'm that bloke you like, the explorer. You want me to sign something for you? No charge. Just don't, you know, murder me—"

"*Kal-rock! Su-cran-rah!*" It was an alien tongue being spoken. The voice came from behind me, from what I saw to be a Sycorax, just as the Doctor had shown me—but even more unsettling in the flesh. I don't have a clue what it said, but the words stopped Taro in his tracks. The boy froze. Whatever he was about to do to me, he simply *didn't*.

I turned to face the alien creature, draped in blood-red robes, its body covered with cracked bones, a sword—for display only, I hoped—hanging from its waist. "You stopped him. How?"

"He obeys my commands," the Sycorax replied in its deep, rasping voice. "I control his movements. But tell me, human, why should I not tell him to continue his attack?" The Sycorax drew its sword. Clearly not just for show, then... "Or indeed, why should I not just kill you myself?"

I thought about bluffing, lying, telling him that I had some super-duper weapon up my sleeve—or, more convincingly, in my pocket—but lies hadn't served me too well so far in my life. So I told the truth.

"Look, I'm no expert. I'm just a guy. But I've been sent here to help you, to save this planet, and that's what I intend to do. So, come on, tell me. Catch me up."

"This is my ship," the Sycorax began. "What you call a 'planet' or an 'asteroid'—He spat the words back at me—"is my *spaceship*. You humans are all so stupid. My ship was broken, awaiting repair. Everything failed except the life support. My brothers were on their way to help, but they could not find me."

"Because," I realised, "the pilgrims came here, and settled, and terraformed what they thought was a rock."

"Now I live down here, in the dark, a prisoner in my own craft." The Sycorax gave an animalistic cry, pure rage and anger. I felt his frustration. "I have had enough of this. I want to return home."

“But all this technology...” I indicated the array of computer panels. “Couldn’t you have done *something*?”

“You would not understand,” scoffed the alien.

“Try me.”

The Sycorax paused for a moment. “Do you know of Blood Control? Ha! I thought not. Ignorant creatures. It is how we control others. I planned to manipulate the humans, to convince them to leave, to abandon their foolish crusade and relinquish their hold over my ship.”

“And you never thought about, you know, *asking them*?”

“Humans are ignorant and stubborn. They would not have listened. And these superstitious ‘pilgrims’ would have killed me as a demon or a monster.” His stroked his sword. “Well, they would have *tried*. Ha!”

Things started to make sense in my head. Blood Control... That was the clue. Mara had told me one thing about Taro, the thing that made him unique. A rare blood condition, she had said...

“Why this boy?” I asked, crossing the chamber to stay by Taro. I hoped, being so close, that the Sycorax would keep its pet leashed and not tell Taro to lash out.

“Why use your Blood Control on him, out of everyone to choose from?”

“Not intentional,” the Sycorax sneered. “This human wandered into the tunnels. He was the only one who I could get my hands on.”

He went exploring. His mum told me that, too. That he went on adventures around the colony, because... because...

Because of me. That made it my fault, and it made his fate my responsibility. I had to save him. I put my hand on his shoulders.

“I used his blood as a template,” the alien went on. “But it did not match the other humans. Attempts to reach out to control the others caused... not the intended result.”

I looked down at my own hands. The reddened veins, the strange colourings... What had happened to Mara—and to me—was a failed Blood Control effort, a consequence of mismatched blood in the process. Not an attempt to kill.

"Anyway, the humans are gone now," I said. "The colonists are up in the sky. Have your computers detected that ship? Yes, they're safe aboard the *Truth Seeker*, so the planet—your ship, I mean—is yours again."

"Not a moment too soon. My ship is suffocating." The Sycorax ran a skeletal hand over the controls. "The hull is tearing, leaking, trying to cool. It will die soon, I think."

I just hoped that Taro and I would survive, regardless.

"So what I'm getting at is," I sighed, "why is this poor boy is still here? Can I just take him up to the *Truth Seeker*—"

"NO!" roared the Sycorax. He pointed his sword towards me, and I wondered if I was right to be using the child as a shield. "I will harness all the remaining power to launch my escape pod into space. My brothers will find me. It is the worst possible solution. But now, thanks to these humans, it is also the only one available to me." He gestured to a small hole in the wall, leading to the escape pod, I supposed. "Someone must activate the controls from here. The ship will disintegrate, giving me enough power to leave—"

"And killing whoever stays to press it," I worked out. "You're a real piece of work, you know that? You would kill a child for yourself!"

The Sycorax approached me, sword outstretched, and pressed the blade against my stomach. I daren't move a muscle. "You would *die* for this child?"

Without thinking, I said, "Yes." Looking back, I still don't know where that came from. Maybe it was my inner hero breaking out after all this time, or maybe I just panicked and chose the wrong option out of the two. Either way, I had said it, and volunteered myself to die.

The Sycorax bared its yellow, pointy teeth. "Then do it. The child can leave. Send him to your ship." He headed for the escape pod. "And *you*, human, must stay and activate the controls. Set me free."

"And if I refuse?"

Taro looked up at me, his eyes still burning red.

"Blood Control," replied the Sycorax simply. "I must only speak the words." He clambered into the chute, and his voice was distant. "The big red button over there. Press it."

"Just a tick," I said. I reached for the phone. Thankfully I had a signal in here again.

"Logan? How are you getting on? The asteroid's in ruins—"

"Doctor, shut up. I've got one to beam up."

"You didn't find the child?"

"I did." I smiled sadly. Mission accomplished, I supposed. "He's coming up to you, when you're ready. Lock onto my position."

"And what about you, Logan?"

"I made a deal," I said, "for the boy's life. I die and he lives. That's fair, I guess."

"Is it... Have you..." The Doctor seemed flustered, unsure of what to say. "Have you shaken on it?"

"Well," I laughed, "I'm shaking now, if that counts. Hands are trembling like never before." I looked down at Taro, as the boy disappeared in a flash of white light.

"Got him?"

"He's here," the Doctor replied. "He's safe. But you're still—"

"Goodbye, Doctor." I ended the call. "Not room for two in there, by any chance, is there?" I called out to the Sycorax.

"The button," came the simple, firm reply. "Send me home."

I nodded, took a deep breath, and pressed the big red button. I heard the escape pod slip away, and then explosions all around me, growing closer and louder as the seconds passed.

I closed my eyes. I was a good man. In the end, I tried to be good, and I was. I saved the boy's life, reunited him with his mother. Now it was time for me to be reunited with mine.

There was fire, and darkness.

Then there was a tunnel, and a light at the end.

And then I woke up, in the medical bay of the *Truth Seeker*, with the Sponnarks stood over me, and the Doctor by my side.

"Not again," I said groggily, rubbing my aching head.

"Oh, don't complain," the Doctor said, with a smile. "You're alive. No one expected that."

I raised an eyebrow, but even that hurt. "I knew you'd save me."

"Did you? Did you *really* know that I would recalibrate the hyperspace transponders to give us enough energy for one more teleport?"

"Yes," I grinned. "But still, thank you."

"Don't mention it."

"You have a visitor," said Gar'lah. She opened the door and I craned my head to see Taro and his mother, Mara, smiling over at me. "We will leave you to talk," the alien said, as she and Lo'kraw exited the medical bay.

"We just wanted to say... Didn't we, Taro? Thank you, Mr Hawk. Say it, say thank you to the nice man."

"Thank you, Mr Hawk." Taro looked weak, but well. No more Blood Control. And he looked so happy with his mother.

"We'll let you rest," said Mara kindly, as she left.

"That was nice, eh?" said the Doctor. "Makes it all worthwhile. What do you say, then, Logan?"

"He is my biggest fan, you know." I swore under my breath. "That's bad luck, isn't it?"

The Doctor scratched his head, confused. "What do you mean?"

"Well, he's a little kid! It couldn't have been a twenty-something model with loose morals. Or no morals at all! See, I'm not fussy. I wouldn't have even complained if it had been a brunette. Just not a little boy."

"You're despicable," the Doctor said, though I saw he was smirking.

"It's all right for you, though," I said. "You've got Martha."

The Doctor's smile fell away. "What? I don't *have* Martha..."

I realised in that moment just how complicated their relationship was, and I decided not to mention it again. I had my own problems without getting involved in a nine-hundred-year-old man's love life. My headache was bad enough as it was.

The Doctor slapped me on the back, which hurt and made me yelp. "Sorry." He cleared his throat. "So! Everything has worked out okay. The Sycorax is going home. The Peace colony is gone, but no one was hurt. The Sponnarks have promised to take the Peacefuls to find a new home. And you and I..." He drew my attention to the corner of the room, and I craned my neck to see...

“The TARDIS!” the Doctor beamed. “Waiting for us, whenever you’re feeling better. So, Logan, hurry up and get better.”

“Why?” I croaked. I needed sleep, to rest. “What have you got planned?”

“One last trip.”

Within a few days I was raring to go, and the Doctor and I departed the *Truth Seeker*. He led me into the TARDIS, and we set off for our mysterious destination.

I hurried out of the police box as we arrived at what was apparently our final destination. I could only describe it as Paradise. Grassy hilltops rolled far into the distance. Tiny creatures danced and frolicked all around. Mighty trees stood tall and proud as far as the eye could see. And two suns cast their warm glow onto everything beneath them.

“Where are we?” I asked, sensing the Doctor at my side. I couldn't take my eyes off this view.

“This,” the Doctor said, “is the Devil's Rock.”

“What?” I couldn't believe it. Last time we were there it had been a lifeless, empty slice of Hell, and now... Now it was perfect.

“You helped me to discover what had drained the life energy from this place. We found the problem and solved it. With nothing corrupting the landscape anymore, the eco-system returned to normal at an accelerated pace. Isn't it brilliant?”

I could only nod. There were no words.

“It's inspiring,” the Doctor said. “Heaven that came straight from Hell, and it's all the better for it. Does this not inspire you to embark on your new life?”

I looked down at the ground, unsure of what to say. “I'm not sure.”

“Why not? Look at this place!” The Doctor was grinning. “It's beautiful and wonderful and magical. But think of what is used to be. A sad, lonely landscape, empty and barren.” He fixed me a look. “Things can change, Logan. For the better.”

I let out a heavy sigh. He made it sound so simple. And he was convincing too. It wasn't every day someone had a whole planet to back up their metaphor.

“But...” I hesitated. “Everything I've done, Doctor. All those lies I've told... Nothing can make those go away. The terrible man I used to be is still inside me, right? That part of my life won't just disappear.”

The Doctor put his arm around me. "Logan, have you ever heard the story of the Great Axerillion?"

I shook my head, sceptical. "Is it relevant?"

"Yes! The Great Axerillion was a mighty creature, the size of a starship, that roamed the cosmos in search of food."

"You're making this up, aren't you?"

"Just listen, will you?" The Doctor cleared his throat. "But the beast had a very strict diet plan."

"Like Atkins?"

"Even worse than that. It ate *people*, but only a very particular sort. It would only eat the souls of wholly good men. Anyone who was less than perfect was rejected, and the Great Axerillion sailed on by. And do you know what happened to it, in the end?"

"No," I said.

"It died, Logan," replied the Doctor. "The Great Axerillion died because there wasn't a single being in the whole wide universe that it could eat." He looked at me expectantly. "Get it?"

I thought for a moment. "Umm, are you saying that I shouldn't be a fussy eater?"

The Doctor rubbed his eyes. "My point, Logan, is that nobody's perfect."

"Not even you?"

"Definitely not me. So don't think you can't change just because you've made mistakes in the past. We all have, I promise you that. But what matters is how you move on. You have to strive to be a great man, Logan. Because from what I've seen today, I know you're already a good one."

I hoped he was right. He'd taught me so much in the short time we'd been together, and I trusted him. I decided, in that moment, that he was right. I could change. I could do the right thing.

We stood in silence for a while, staring out at the beautiful landscape. After a while, I said, "You brought me all the way here to give me that pep talk?"

“Actually, no,” the Doctor conceded. “Got the landing a bit wrong. I was aiming a few miles *up*. Come on, back in the TARDIS. It's time for one last trip. And I really mean it this time.”

The TARDIS brought us to my spaceship, the *Extravagance*, which had been floating in the planet's orbit. I checked the critical systems, and they were all back online. Good as new. It was like nothing had changed since I'd last sat in the cockpit. But I knew in my heart that *everything* had changed.

The Doctor scanned the controls with his sonic screwdriver. “All powered up and ready to go,” he said. “Better than ever, in fact.”

“Where am I going, though?” I asked, confused.

“Anywhere. Everywhere. Go in search of real adventure, if you want. Do some good in the universe. As much as I want to, I can't keep an eye on all of it at once. You can be my representative in this time zone. I trust you.”

“But—”

“Goodbye, Logan,” the Doctor said. He shook me by the hand, and made for the TARDIS. “Be brilliant. I know you will be.”

“Wait!” I cried out. He didn't stop, and he was halfway inside the police box before I could stop him. “Doctor,” I began nervously, as I held him by the arm, “I'm scared. You've been there for me, and now... Now you won't be there.”

The Doctor smiled warmly. “There's nothing to fear about travelling alone, Logan. In fact, sometimes it can be even more fun. There's no one to tell you what to do or boss you around. You'll love it. I do. When I fly away now, I have no ties. I can do whatever I want.”

I smirked. “What about Martha?”

“Martha?” A look of realisation fell across the Doctor's face. “Oh, Martha! Blimey, why do I keep forgetting? I'd better go pick her up...”

“Yes,” I conceded. “You'd better go.” I couldn't hold onto him forever.

With that, the Doctor stepped inside the TARDIS and disappeared. I took my place in the pilot's seat of the *Extravagance*, and studied the computer screens. My hand hovered over the controls, and I hesitated. I wanted to start the engines—I knew that I *had* to—but I just couldn't bring myself to do it. I started doubting myself and—



*Beep-beep-beep-beep-beep...*

There was an incoming transmission. I checked the ship's computer, and played the message. Someone was calling for assistance, and I was going to answer.

"Don't worry," I said. "Help is on its way."

*From there I went all over the place, from planets at the centre of the universe to the uncharted worlds right at the edge. Wherever I was needed, that's where I'd go. One call, one cry for help, and I answered. No matter too big or too small. Like an intergalactic odd-job man.*

*So that's my story. You will be careful with it when you write it up, won't you? It's my life. It means a lot to me. It's terrifying, sharing it with the whole world. I do hope this convinces people that I've changed my ways and am on my way to becoming a good man.*

*But if that doesn't convince everyone, if they still need a little persuading, I do have one more story. That wasn't, you see, as final an encounter as the Doctor had intended. Because, just a short while later, I heard those wonderful, terrifying words once again.*

*One last trip.*

*But that, as a wise woman once said, is a story for another day.*

# DOCTOR WHO

CLASSIC DOCTORS - BRAND NEW ADVENTURES

## LOGAN'S RUN



by Samuel Marks



THE CCPS VOL III - LOGORRHOEA OF THE LOOKERS-ON

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