

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Doctor Who: The Krillitane Storm

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About the Book

When the TARDIS materialises in medieval Worcester, the Doctor finds the city seemingly deserted. He soon discovers its population are living in a state of terror, afraid to leave their homes after dark, for fear of meeting their doom at the hands of the legendary Devil's Huntsman.

For months, people have been disappearing, and the Sheriff has imposed a strict curfew across the city, his militia maintaining control over the superstitious populace with a firm hand, closing the city to outsiders. Is it fear of attack from beyond the city walls that drives him or the threat closer to home? Or does the Sheriff have something to hide?

After a terrifying encounter with a deadly Krillitane, the Doctor realises the city has good reason to be scared.

Featuring the Doctor as played by David Tennant in the hit series from BBC Television.



Medieval etching (c.AD 1140)

DOCTOR·WHO

The
Krillitane
Storm

CHRISTOPHER COOPER

BBC
BOOKS

For Jo

Brother Neame lay still where he'd fallen, conscious that any hint of movement might reveal his hiding place. He fought to stifle the desperate urge to suck in lungfuls of air, each breath roaring in his ears as if screaming, 'Over here.'

With the passing of each agonising moment, he could feel the dampness of the sodden grass, soaking through his robes until it met his trembling body, the icy chill flooding over his skin with such ferocity that his pounding heart could do little to fight it.

Yet the monk remained still, listening desperately for any sign of pursuit.

The coming dawn would see a deep frost spread across the county like a cotton shroud. How beautiful it would be. Crisp, white, clean. Would he live to see that morning? Or would the Devil take him first?

Silence.

Neame lay there for a moment longer, exhausted. The pain in his ankle was excruciating. He must have twisted it as he fell. Would it still bear his weight? Could he still run?

The horse was dead, of course. It could not have survived the attack just moments before, from whatever it was that had sprung out of the night, like the Devil incarnate, sweeping the doomed animal from the track and into the darkness in a mess of limbs, out of sight. Neame shuddered at the recollection – the horse's terrified whinnying followed by the crack of bones, snapping like dry wood.

Then came the roar, the sound of the Devil himself: a scream that ripped through the air from the depths of Hell itself; a noise not of God's creation. And Brother Neame had fled into the night.

Tentatively lifting his head, Neame could make out the reassuring tower of the Cathedral in the distance, silhouetted against the heavy clouds, standing tall above Worcester's rooftops, a vision of hope.

The town was so close. Even with his injured ankle he could make the distance, he felt sure of it. All he had to do

was get close enough to scream for assistance, and help would come. Even in these dark times, help would come. Wouldn't it?

One thing was for certain, he couldn't stay lying in this muddy field. If the Devil didn't get him, then the bitter winter cold certainly would.

Gathering his last reserves of energy, Brother Neame made a run for it.

Pain seared instantly through his leg, his ankle threatening to buckle beneath him. Neame gritted his teeth and carried on, limping badly, fighting back a wave of nausea. His single thought was to reach the city gate. The fear drove him on, running, running, resisting the urge to look back.

When it came, the force of the impact was as powerful as it was unexpected, and for a few moments Neame couldn't move from the shock. Shaking his head to clear it, the monk struggled to his feet, spinning around in search of his assailant, but there was nothing.

Absently, his gaze fell upon the shredded shoulder of his robe, which had borne the brunt of the attack. Beneath the tattered remains of cloth, blood flowed from a deep wound. Strangely, Neame felt no pain. It simply didn't matter. He would be fine, he just had to keep moving. Drawing breath defiantly, he turned towards the city and staggered on.

Barely had he taken a dozen steps when he was hit again, a heavy weight slamming into his head, jerking his body awkwardly and hurling him through the air into a twisted heap.

This time there was no choice but to stay put. His body was broken, his spirit too stunned.

More blood now, from somewhere just above his right eye, clouding his vision with a crimson hue. His head spun.

This was just a bad dream. It couldn't be happening. There was no reason for this to be happening.

And then the Devil looked down upon him, head cocked ever so slightly to one side, deep-set orange eyes glaring hungrily at its prey.

'Lord have mercy,' whispered Brother Neame, as the jaws of death opened wide and moved in for the kill.



THE STREET WASN'T much more than a narrow alley, winding its way behind a row of wooden dwellings, deserted save for a couple of rats foraging through a pile of fetid rubbish.

Suddenly the rats scattered, diving for cover in the secret nooks and crannies that were their city, and the alley was empty.

Or was it? From nothing, a miniature storm sprang into turbulent life, accompanied by a straining, thumping, thunderous echo, and then, tucked away in a discreet corner, a shape slowly took form. Impossibly, out of thin air, a large box topped off with a flashing beacon became solid.

As quickly as it had begun, the wind dropped and the street was silent once more, except for a barely perceptible hum, emanating from the battered blue police box that was now sitting there, as if it were a permanent fixture.

The TARDIS door creaked open, and the Doctor stuck his head out, breathing in enthusiastically.

'Ahh, pre-industrial, unrecycled fresh air. Nothing quite like it.' Wrinkling his nose, the Doctor noticed the stinking heap of rotting vegetables to which the hungry rats were now returning.

'Ew. And this is nothing quite like it.'

The tall, skinny man stepped out into the alley, ruffling his spiky brown hair, and pulled the door closed behind him. 'I'd

avoid the salad if I were you, I think it's off,' he advised the rodents. They didn't seem too bothered.

Adjusting the collar of his long coat against the chill evening air, the Doctor paused to get his bearings before amiably wandering off in a random direction.

The medieval city would have been considered little more than a town in twenty-first-century terms, but this was 1139 and, with a population of around two thousand souls, Worcester was a successful and rapidly expanding conurbation.

There was something irresistibly charming about this period in English history, thought the Doctor as he strolled along. Day-to-day life was undeniably hard, the political situation was all over the place, what with the Empress Matilda forcibly attempting to swipe the throne from under King Stephen, and there was a good chance you might be accused of witchcraft at the drop of a hat (pointy or otherwise), but people soldiered on regardless, indomitably, and the Doctor found this heady mix quite thrilling.

There were no high-tech lifestyle solutions here, no celebrity-obsessed mass media, not even those little, bite-sized packets of exotic cheeses that the future held for the descendants of these people. This was the real deal. Life without the custard.

Funny thing, though, there didn't seem to be anyone about.

Every street he walked through had an aura of defensiveness about it, as if the very fabric of each building were colluding with its inhabitants to pretend it wasn't there.

The sky, heavy with thick cloud, had turned from deep grey to dusky blue by the time the Doctor reached the main thoroughfare, and here again all was quiet. Snowflakes began to fall.

In a thousand years or so, this place would be thronging with Christmas shoppers, hurrying from high-street chain to high-street chain, weighed down with gifts destined for online auctions come January. But even here, in the early twelfth century, you'd expect some bustle of activity, some sign of life.

The Doctor liked places that were supposed to be busy to be busy, and if they weren't then there was a good chance that something was up.

Still, if something was up, then he quite liked that too.

There was nothing for it, he'd have to knock on a door and ask what the problem was.

A door slammed somewhere along the street to his left, and in the distance he glimpsed a figure walking hurriedly away from a nearby inn. For a moment he considered trying to catch up with the fast-moving figure, but the inn was much closer, and the warm glow of a fire flickering through its windows offered a more immediate escape from the chilly weather.

The Doctor liked a good inn. Inns were friendly places, always welcoming, full of life, of local colour, and a useful mine of local knowledge for a weary traveller. Maybe he could even get a light snack.

As he approached, he noticed the ground-floor windows were now shuttered securely, blocking out the friendly orange light that had drawn his eyes to the inn in the first place. When he tried the heavy oak door, he found it was bolted. It wasn't closing time, surely? Very odd.

The Doctor shrugged and rapped out what he hoped was a friendly knock on the door.

'Hello, anyone at home?'

No response.

Stepping back, he looked up at the first-floor windows. Was that movement? A pale face, hurriedly darting backwards into the shadows, out of view.

'I don't know which is colder, the weather or the welcome,' he commented to no one in particular.

Not to be deterred, the Doctor knocked again, less jauntily this time. He didn't plan on stopping until someone took notice.

'Come on,' he muttered, 'it's chillier than the Ood-Sphere out here. Open up.'

'Why won't he give up and leave us in peace?' grumbled John, taking another cautious glance at the annoying figure in the street below.

His wife cowered behind him, clutching a carved wooden candlestick in her hands as if it were a deadly weapon. Wax from the thick white candle rammed into it splattered messily on the floorboards.

'See him off, John. The patrol will be here soon, and we don't want them thinking he's anything to do with us.'

John gave his wife a withering look, which he hoped would disguise his unease. 'You see him off, woman. One look at your grotty old mug and he'll be gone like lightning,' he growled, ducking to avoid the back of her hand as she gave him an angry slap.

'You get down those stairs right now, John Garrud, or so help me I'll brain you with this thing,' she said, wielding the candlestick as proof that she just might.

After a few minutes, the Doctor's persistence was rewarded by the clatter of bolts being thrown back impatiently. The door opened, only a crack, but enough to reveal the red face of a great bear of a man, frowning and unshaven, obviously someone who knew how to handle a troublemaker. Yet the Doctor noted more than a hint of fear in the man's tired eyes, as they furtively scanned the street, making sure this unwelcome stranger was alone.

'We're closed. Go away,' grumbled the man, trying to force the door shut but finding the Doctor's foot blocking its

way.

Has to be the landlord, thought the Doctor, wincing. Try flattery and then a brazen lie if need be. That normally does the trick.

'Hello, you must be the proprietor. I'm the Doctor. I've heard great things about this place.' He grinned, grabbing the landlord's hand and shaking it, warmly. 'Been looking forward to popping by for ages. Do you mind if I come in?'

'We're full. Leave us alone.'

'I thought you said you were closed? You can't be closed and full at the same time.'

'Erm, family visiting. Big, big family. All the rooms are taken.' The landlord was flustered, aware that the stranger wasn't going to be given the brush-off. He resorted to pleading. 'Look, please, just go. We don't want any trouble.'

'Honestly, I'm no trouble. Glass of warm milk and straight off to bed, that's me.' The Doctor smiled.

John didn't know what to do. He couldn't let this odd man take his chances out there, could he? Not in good conscience, not with things the way they were.

Then, from further along the street, drifted the sound of heavy footsteps, armour and chain mail slapping against leather, and John began to panic. The first of the night patrols. The Doctor heard it too, and glanced up the street, curiously. Making up his mind, John grabbed the stranger's collar and dragged him inside, bolting the door firmly shut.

John stared at this 'Doctor' fellow, who'd managed to make himself quite at home already, dumping his overcoat across the back of a tall chair then perching comfortably on the edge of a long table.

'How am I going to explain this to the wife?' thought John.

'Nice decor. Very woody.' The Doctor broke the uncomfortable silence with a disarming grin, looking around the inn's simple interior with interest. A bar and some tables were bathed in the glow of the hearth, where a wood fire

crackled and spat. He was just beginning to feel warm again.

A sharp voice cut through the air from the top of the stairs.

'John, is that you? Who are you talking to? Has he gone?'

The staircase creaked as the landlord's wife crept down, still clutching her makeshift weapon. When she caught sight of the Doctor, she froze, glaring several certain deaths at her husband.

John decided to act as if everything was normal. Some hope.

'Gertrude, we have a guest. Can you make up the small room?'

His wife was having none of it. 'No,' she spat. 'I told you to get rid of him.'

'Gert, please. We can't send him back out there. It's too dangerous. The patrols are afoot. He'll only get himself arrested, or worse . . .'

'Not our problem, John. You don't let a stranger in the house. What if . . .'

She caught the Doctor's eye and looked away, ashamed.

'What if . . . what?' asked the Doctor. These people weren't being unfriendly, they were genuinely terrified.

'Look, I don't want to cause any trouble. I'll just get my coat and I'll be on my way.' The Doctor hopped off the table and reached for his coat, missing nothing of the quick, silent exchange taking place between the married couple while his back was turned.

Gertrude threw a look of thunder in John's direction, nodding from the Doctor to the door. She wanted him out. Now.

John scowled back and crossed his arms defiantly. 'There'll be no need for that, sir. We'd be happy to accommodate you. Gertrude, the room.' Whatever the danger, he was not going to be responsible for any harm that might otherwise befall this man, whoever he was.

And anyway, they hadn't taken in a paying customer for months, and needed the money. It wasn't as if he had anywhere else to go, so they could pretty much charge him what they wanted.

'Splendid.' The Doctor was pleased. Perhaps now he'd have a chance to ask a few questions. 'Any chance of a bite to eat? I'm famished.'

Gertrude fired a few more imaginary daggers at her husband, and stormed back upstairs.

Outside, the snow was now falling heavily, and a strong wind whipped it past the window.

The Doctor, mopping up the remnants of stew with a chunk of crusty bread, shivered and was rather glad the landlord hadn't turned him out, as his wife had demanded.

Wandering over, carrying two flagons of ale, John Garrud groaned with the strain of middle age, as he lowered his bulky frame onto a stool opposite the Doctor.

'On the house, sir, by way of an apology, for earlier. The missus . . . ' John rolled his eyes, shrugging. 'You know how it is.'

The Doctor eyed his host carefully. 'And quite understandable, what with all this business going on.'

'Mm. Terrible business. These are dark times we're living in. Hard to trust even your regulars, let alone a stranger, such as yourself. No offence,' John stressed. 'Not that I trust some of my regulars at the best of times.'

'None taken,' replied the Doctor.

'If you don't mind me asking, sir, what were you doing out on the streets past the curfew?' the landlord asked, tentatively. 'It's not exactly been good for business, but we've gone a week now without a disappearance, so it must be working.'

A curfew. That at least explained the lack of people out and about, thought the Doctor. But what was it that had this city hiding itself away as soon as night fell?

‘Well I’d heard rumours, obviously. That’s why I didn’t want to risk travelling at night,’ the Doctor said, leaning forward, conspiratorially, hoping to coax more from his host.

‘Very wise, sir. Who knows when the Huntsman will strike again,’ replied John, and the big man shuddered, glancing almost without thinking at the window, as if this Huntsman were hovering right outside, ready to strike.

The Doctor thought for a moment, wracking his brain trying to remember the local legends of this period, the kinds of scare stories parents would tell their children in hushed tones, the implied threat that if they didn’t behave then some hideous beastie would creep up and get them . . .

‘Of course. The Devil’s Huntsman,’ he exclaimed, pleased with himself. ‘That’s the one with the hellhounds, isn’t it? Hunting down lost souls in the Clent Hills, and condemning them to eternal damnation. I love those old ghost stories. What was his name again?’

‘Harry Cannab,’ John told him, deadly serious. ‘And it’s no story, Doctor. He’s come back. And if Harry Cannab has set his will on hunting your soul, then your fate is sealed, sure as day turns into night.’

‘Still, Worcester is a long way from Clent, isn’t it? More than a day’s ride,’ pondered the Doctor. ‘Why would he bother travelling all this way south? Aren’t there enough souls back home to keep him busy?’

John took a long swig of his ale, and stared glumly at the table top. ‘It’s a question we’ve all been pondering, Doctor. All I know is people have gone, disappeared without a trace.’ He sniffed. ‘Even lost one of my regulars, I have.’

‘How long has this been going on?’ asked the Doctor, all hint of joviality forgotten.

John had another drink. If there was one thing to lift the spirits of a good innkeeper, it was spreading local gossip to his customers.

‘Been nigh on three months, since that monk fella didn’t turn up when he was supposed to. Caused a right stink up at the Cathedral, it did. Then we started to hear about them as had gone missing in the villages hereabouts. We thought we’d be safe in the city, but then people started talking about the Huntsman . . .’ John paused, and the silence was deafening. ‘I suppose it was only a matter of time before he struck again. Not three streets from here. Robert Marsh, his name was. Didn’t know him, but they said he deserved better. When they found him, down Sidbury way, his body was turned inside out.’

They sat quietly for a few minutes, lost in their individual thoughts.

Whatever it was out there, it was no phantasmagorical legend, the Doctor knew that much.

At the heart of every myth there lay some grain of truth, some real event that had had a profound impact on those involved. He should know, having played a part in creating a few himself. He was the Oncoming Storm after all. Even his own race had passed into legend. Tales of mythical monsters somehow became more ‘real’ as each generation passed the story on to the next. Something that happened to a friend of a friend, who’d heard it from someone, who’d heard it some place else, until the myth gained a life of its own. But rarely did the original actually turn up in person, centuries later.

Ignoring himself, of course.

No, outside there was a blood and bone creature, stalking this city and the surrounding countryside. It was probably nothing more than a wild animal, but it was as real as it was deadly.

A few hours had passed since their talk, and John had long since drifted off to sleep, snoring gently.

The Doctor stood by the shuttered window, listening intently to the quiet stillness of the night, all sound