

Vital Signs

Written By

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INT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - DAY

Doctors and other staff move around the entrance of the hospital in a calm but busy manner.

DR JACKSON (late 20s, good looking) rushes in. He looks slightly scruffy and dishevelled.

NORM (50s, glasses) sits behind an information desk.

NORM

Hey Jackson, how you doin?

JACKSON

(smiling)

Hi Norm, can't chat I'm late.

NORM

Alright.

Jackson rushes past him.

NORM

Remember bowling tonight though.

JACKSON

(turning round but still walking)

I'll be there

(winks)

INT. DOCTOR'S LOUNGE - CONTINUOUS

DR FOREST (Black, beard, late 20s), DR LING (Female, glasses) and FOURTH DOCTOR (Generic looking man) sit on sofas in the lounge. Jackson rushes in.

FOREST

And here he is! The man, the myth, the legend.

JACKSON

Sorry guys.

LING

Where have you been? I've had to listen to Forest going on about how he almost found a cure for influenza.

Jackson walks up to the coffee machine and pours himself a mug, turning his back to the others.

JACKSON

My alarm stopped working, that's all. How's our patient?

FOREST

Stable. You look remarkably tired for some-one who slept so late. I don't think you went home at all. Those are the same clothes as yesterday and I'm sure your lips aren't usually red... Or on the back of your neck.

Jackson turns around and simply smiles and Forest, sipping his coffee.

FOREST

Who's the lucky girl? Anyone we know.

JACKSON

I'd assume so as she knows a surprising amount about you.

Forest's smile fades.

All four doctor's pagers go off.

LING

Patient is bleeding.

The four hurry out of the room.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The four doctors run through the corridor and to the stairway, Jackson in the lead with Forest, Ling and Fourth Doctor not far behind. Other doctors turn around in alarm as they pass them.

INT. STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

Jackson, Forest, Ling and Fourth Doctor scramble up the stairway.

INT. SECOND CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The four doctors run through the corridor. Norm walks the other way, carrying papers. Jackson slams into Norm, setting the papers flying.

JACKSON

Sorry, Norm.

Jackson keeps running with the others.

INT. STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

The location looks exactly the same as the stairway before.
The doctors climb the stairway again.

FOREST

Remind me why we put our patient so
far away from the office.

INT. SECOND CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The four doctors run down the same corridor. Jackson slams
into Norm again. The papers go flying again. This time he
stops. The other three continue on.

JACKSON

Sorry, Norm.

A pause

JACKSON

How did you get to this floor so
fast.

NORM

What?

JACKSON

Weren't you just on the floor
below.

NORM

At the desk? Yeah I just came to do
some admin. Cathy's covering for
me.

JACKSON

No, the floor just below.

NORM

Your floor?

JACKSON

No my floor's further down.

NORM

I think you got yourself confused,
Jackson. You better catch up with
the others. It looks like it's
serious.

Bemused, Jackson walks to the stairway.

INT. STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

Forest, Ling and fourth doctor all run up the stairs in the same way as before. Jackson did not have to run to catch them up. He walks up the stairs slowly, trying to work it out.

INT. SECOND CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Again, Norm walks in the other direction to the other doctors. They all run past him except Jackson.

JACKSON

I just bumped into you.

NORM

I know. That's what happens when we work in the same place.

JACKSON

How are you doing that?

NORM

Doing what?

JACKSON

You were on the floor below just now.

NORM

Your floor? No I was upstairs.

JACKSON

Do you not remember the conversation we just had?

NORM

Bowling?

JACKSON

No, after that.

NORM

I think you're confusing yourself, Jackson. You should catch up with the others. It seems pretty serious.

Jackson runs to the stairway.

INT. STAIRWAY - CONTINUOUS

JACKSON

Wait!

The doctors all stop.

JACKSON

We're going in circles.

FOREST

I know the way to the patient,
Jackson!

JACKSON

Where do we go, then.

FOREST

This way.

JACKSON

Explain further.

FOREST

We don't have time for this. It's
this way.

JACKSON

Do you even know who are patient
is?

FOREST

Does it matter. They're in need
right now.

JACKSON

But I don't remember ever meeting
this patient. I can't even picture
them.

LING

Is this really the time?

FOREST

What's your point?

JACKSON

Look, I don't know what's going on
but If we go this way, we'll bump
into Norm again, carrying the same
papers and he won't remember that
we already ran past him.

Forest looks unbelieving but carries on up the stairs.

INT. SECOND CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Norm is indeed doing the something as before. The doctors approach him.

FOREST
Were you just on the floor below?

NORM
No I came from above.

FOREST
Thank you Dr...

NORM
Just call me, Norm.

Norm carries on walking.

FOREST
What's his last name?

JACKSON
What's your first name?

FOREST
You don't know my first name?

JACKSON
I should but I don't. What is it?

A pause

FOREST
I don't know.

JACKSON
Exactly. I don't know mine either.

LING
What's going on?

JACKSON
I don't think we have first names.
(to fourth doctor)
I don't know your name at all.

FOURTH DOCTOR
Me?

FOREST
I don't know anything about you.

LING

What do you mean? He works with us.

JACKSON

But then we'd know something about him.

FOREST

(to fourth doctor)

You haven't said anything this whole time until now.

FOURTH DOCTOR

But I know you guys. Your Forest, your Ling and Jackson.

Forest looks around. He turns to a closed door and opens it.

JACKSON

So who are you then?

FOURTH DOCTOR

I don't think I have a name.

FOREST

Guys look.

The others turn to see Forest at the doorway. Behind it is just the same wall that is around the door.

Ling turns to another door. She opens it to see the same thing.

FOREST

I think I know what's happening..... This world isn't real.

JACKSON

What?

FOREST

Only a few places and facts about us exist. We're characters...in a story.

FOREST

We've been going through the motions of the beginning of a doctor show or something like that.

JACKSON

This isn't that interesting a story

(MORE)

JACKSON (CONT'D)

then. We can't get to the patient.

FOREST

I don't think the story was finished.

A pause

FOREST

We're in an unfinished story. We can't get to the patient because there is no patient yet. They haven't been written

(to fourth doctor)

Your character hasn't been written yet. That's why you don't have a personality.

LING

But what about our lives?

FOREST

We don't have lives outside of the story. Think about it. I can't remember anything before Jackson walked into the doctor's lounge.

LING

We talked about Influenza.

FOREST

I know that it happened but I don't remember it happening. It wasn't part of the story.

LING

So we're not going to find out who Jackson's girl is.

FOREST

There is no girl. That was just put into dialogue the writer wanted to develop later.

JACKSON

But what can we do? If the story's not complete..

FOREST

There's nothing we can do. If the story wasn't continued after this part then there is nowhere to go.

(MORE)

FOREST (CONT'D)

We'll just keep going to the same stairway and corridor.

LING

Bullshit. My life was not created by some guy with a keyboard.

Ling runs to one of the passing doctors.

LING

Excuse me.

The doctor ignores her.

FOREST

They're not characters Ling. They're just set dressing.

Ling looks around desperate. She sees an elevator.

LING

If we use the elevator we could get to the patient.

FOREST

There's nowhere for it to go.

LING

IT'S WORTH A TRY!

Ling presses the elevator button and the doors open. She steps inside.

LING

Who's coming with me.

A pause.

Jackson shrugs and follows her into the lift. Fourth Doctor steps in next.

FOREST

It won't do any good.

JACKSON

But there's nothing to lose.

Forest steps in. The doors close.

INT. ELEVATOR - SOME TIME LATER

An arrow pointing upwards shows on the screen of the elevator.

Forest, Jackson, Ling and Fourth Doctor all sit on the floor of the elevator.

JACKSON
It's never going to stop is it?

FOREST
No.

A pause

Ling breaks down and cries.

LING
Why did they not finish the story?
Why did they leave?

Pause

LING
Do you think they're working on something else now? Do you think they even think about us?

Pause

LING
Were we not good enough? Not interesting enough? We could have made a good story! We just weren't given a chance!
(shouting to the sky)
Do you here me! You gave up on us! You left us to rot! Forever!....
Fuck you!

The elevator continues to go up.

JACKSON
Maybe they'll come back. Maybe they'll come back and finish the story.

Forest does not look up from the floor.

FOREST
Maybe...

FADE TO BLACK.

END

