

COSMIC MASQUE



DOCTOR
WHO
CM XVI

EDITORIAL

By Nick Smith

Doctor Who fans are a creative bunch. I have no doubt that without them, the show wouldn't go on after all this time. Not only have fans written innumerable stories and built complex websites but they've also made more fan films that I can track and have held more conventions that I can afford to attend.

Steven and Erika are two fans who embody creativity, co-hosting not one but three podcasts between them. They tell us about the one you can't set a clock to, Lazy Doctor Who, in this issue.

Fans are also turning their hands to Doctor Who comics, with the help of writers and artists previously linked to the programme. Jeremy Bement, mentions this and more as he talks about his own long-running podcast, Panel 2 Panel.

As if all those media weren't enough, Whovians are also making their own games. Dave Chapman explores the worlds of Doctor Who games and their makers, as well as finding out how the Sixth Doctor is treated in the RPG realm.

Richard D. Rhodes reviews the brand new, official Doctor Who content we're being treated to this

summer in the form of BBC Sounds' Redacted. Rik Moran unpacks a live-audience interview with Kerblam! writer Pete McTighe. Jordan Shortman takes a look at a book that bridges Who with the fiction of Frank L. Baum, and Paul Cooke shows what a sucker he is for Zygons.

While there's much anticipation for Doctor Who's 60th Anniversary, there's plenty to enjoy in the meantime, whether it's from the Beeb or the fans. I hope that one of the examples in this issue encourages you to add your own ideas to the ever-widening world of Doctor Who.



Contents	Page
Magic Monthly	04
Revenge of the Cybermen Review	06
Panel to Panel Interview	07
WHO Makes Fan Games	09
Empire of the Wolf Review	12
Legend of the Sea Devils Review	15
Redacted Review	17
Doctor Who and Other Legends	19
10 Things I Like About Who	21
From the Land of Fiction	23
The Sixth Doctor Sourcebook Review	68
Lazy Doctor Who	71
The Zygon Book	76
The Wonderful Doctor of Oz Review	80
We Hear the '80s	81
The Rittenhouse Conumdrum	83
The Kerblam Man—Myth Makers Review	87
A Guide to Ruling the Universe	91

COSMIC MASQUE XVI

Edited by Nick Smith

Front Cover by Megan Lynn, Rear Cover by James Christopher Hill

Layout by Paul Winter

Fiction Editor: Stephen Hatcher

Published by the [Doctor Who Appreciation Society](#)

All content is © relevant contributor/DWAS

No copyright infringement is intended

CONTACT US:

DWAS, PO Box 1011, Horsham, RH12 9RZ, UK

Any links or details about products are included purely for the benefit of readers and are not inducements or incentives to buy

JUST ANOTHER MAGIC MONTHLY

by Nick Smith

Visiting my son in the chilly wastes of upstate New York, we popped into a shop for warmth. This was no ordinary shop. It had copies of Filmfax, Cinefantastique and, best of all, Doctor Who Magazine – not just recent copies but older ones too, dating back to the Monthlies of the early '80s. I could feel the nostalgia dapple at my bones. Because in my youth the magazine was part of my monthly ritual, sweet meat for a hungry fan.

I'd picked up issues of the weekly – who could resist the vivid Gibbons artwork? – but it wasn't until 1982 that I got hooked on Marvel's black and white monthly. Marvel UK was on a high at the time with reprints of its American Stars Wars, The Avengers and X-Men comics owning the newsstands. But it British writers added weight to the visuals with back-up articles and strips. Editor Alan McKenzie (who later wrote Who strips as Max Stockbridge) was providing consistent excellence and a darn fun read in Cinema and Doctor Who Monthly.

DWM's main competition came from another Marvel publication, Starburst – also edited by McKenzie – which boasted a wider range of coverage and plenty of sci-fi and fantasy movies to cover. But the intention was the same – to bring a quality journalism approach to the escapist entertainment on our movie and TV screens.

From 10 years old on, Doctor Who was my addiction and DWM supplied the word on the street. While previews of upcoming episodes were always exciting, the 45p paragon was also the place to go to find out about the show's history, with black and white stills of all four past Doctors, synopses of old stories (such as The Time Meddler), and opinions about the future of the programme. April issues pulled the wool over some readers' eyes with news of an abandoned Hartnell story (The Phoenix Rises) or a miraculously retrieved, colourised Tenth Planet Part Four.



If some of the pictures from past shows were murky, all the better; that added to the mystique of the '60s episodes. With many stories yet to be novelized, let alone made available to the public, the detailed outlines in the magazine led the way in showing how expansive the Doctor's saga truly was.

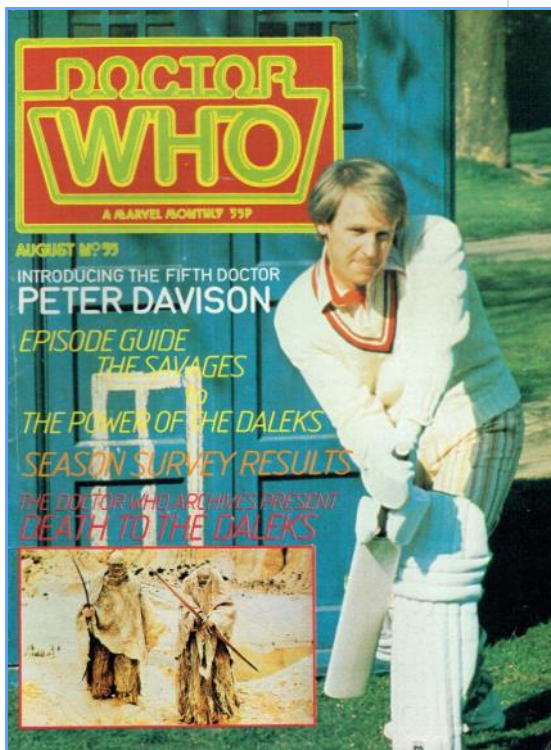
Over the ensuing years I plastered my bedroom wall with pull-out posters and DWM continued to provide trivia with its Matrix Databank feature and visual thrills with its comic strip, which burst free of BBC TV budgetary constraints with epics like *The Tides of Time* and *Voyager*. Not all of the magazine's ideas worked – early additions of colour didn't quite stay inside the lines, giving issues an almost-but-not-quite 3D effect – and with so little archival mate-

rial to refer to, not every fact was accurate.

Beyond that, the magazine was full of rock-solid journalism and opinion and I pored over every page. Through DWM I learned about conventions, production codes, fan groups and missing episodes. I always hoped that my favourite show and magazine would continue but I never imagined that I'd be able to find copies of it in the USA 40 years later. While I always enjoyed reading DWM, what I didn't know at the time was what a great teaching tool it was. The way it was written and compiled, and the information it contained, informed my own journalism and my filmmaking as well. It helped me to understand how to tell a good story with a hook, inform readers, and put care, attention and passion into my work.

Thank you DWM. Go softly on.

[You can visit Doctor Who Magazine online by clicking here](#)



REVENGE OF THE CYBERMEN

Audio Review by Nick Smith

When I think of Season 12 I think of Robot, Genesis of the Daleks or even the tight little 2-parter, *The Sontaran Experiment*. I don't instantly think of *Revenge of the Cybermen*, the silver-handled unsung stepchild of 1975.

There's plenty to remember about the story, though, from the Vogans' constantly surprised eyebrows to the B-movie transatlantic voices of the cybermen and the stock footage used for the Vogan rocket. Growing up near Wookie Hole, I have a soft spot for the locations, and I've always admired the cost effectiveness of reusing the Nerva Beacon in two stories (the other being *The Ark in Space*; incidentally, my first memory of Doctor Who is the Wirrn coming out of a closet).

All the elements that make *Revenge* wonky are lost in this audio. Instead, we get an entertaining story read by Nick 'He Loves Stories' Briggs with the enthusiasm of a ceaseless Who fan. He provides updated cyber-voices that sound more like the NuWho monsters we're used to and less like a low octave Buck Rogers. Original music and sound effects also help to bring the tale up to date.

A big part of *Revenge's* original charm was its cast, especially Tom Baker, Elisabeth Sladen, Ian Marter and Michael Wisher. In fact, the TV version has a strong roster, which also includes David Collings and Ronald Leigh-Hunt. Even a gifted audio actor like Briggs is hard-pressed to authentically capture all their characters. Instead he focuses on nailing the Doctor's personality, giving us a deep,

burgundy Baker voice, recognizable without becoming a parody.

Briggs gives the rest of the characters his own spin. With variable results. While his square-jawed depiction of Harry Sullivan is good – you can imagine his non-plussed facial expressions. Sarah Jane comes across as a wet blanket. Minor characters sound similar to each other. Magrik is still peevish and devious without being a carbon copy of Michael Wisher's memorable role.

There's a good sense of environment, a reminder of the evocative vocabulary and descriptive powers of novelist Terrance Dicks. The prose drags a little in middle but the pace at the beginning and end is fast and exciting.

If you're familiar with the TV story, this will bring back fond memories and bring out the best in the adventure. If it's new, then this will a gap in cyber history. Either way, this audio version provides a different enough experience from watching the story to make it worthwhile and Briggs and the production team do justice to this entertaining novel.

If, to quote John Nathan-Turner, 'the memory cheats,' then this is the right kind bringing out the best in a story to honour a classic era.



PANEL 2 PANEL by Jeremy Bement

I really enjoy doing [Panel 2 Panel](#), it's really become my new hobby. I like to draw, I'm an artist, that's another passion of mine but it takes up more time than doing podcasting.

I love podcasting. I find it relaxing. I'm a Doctor Who and comic book fan and Panel 2 Panel combines the two passions. It's fun to sit and read Doctor Who comics, talk to people who work on them from Doctor Who Magazine or Titan or someone who used to work on them. There's lots to be learned from talking to them.

I started Panel 2 Panel because I wondered what the people were like. Irv Novick [the American comic book artist best known for making Batman gritty again in the early '70s - Ed]. What was he like? Was he young, old, had he drawn other stuff? I wondered about the background of the comic creators, how they got into the business, what caused them to become a writer or artist. The Word Balloon podcast spurred me on. Being a Doctor Who fan I thought there was a niche market; there are so many Doctor Who podcasts but not one geared towards comics.

I always keep current but I run out of time to sit and read past Doctor Who and delve into it more. They've cut comics for a while in Doctor Who Magazine, since they were not being able to get DWM out to newsstands during COVID and the most expensive part to

do is the strip. Six issues without the comic saves a lot of money and keeps the magazine going. Hopefully we're making it so that things will go back to normal.

During the wilderness years while Doctor Who was off the air, comics were the only way you got new Doctor Who adventures, especially before the Virgin New Adventures. Even with the gaps in between series we need something there, we need new stories to keep Doctor Who in the public eye.

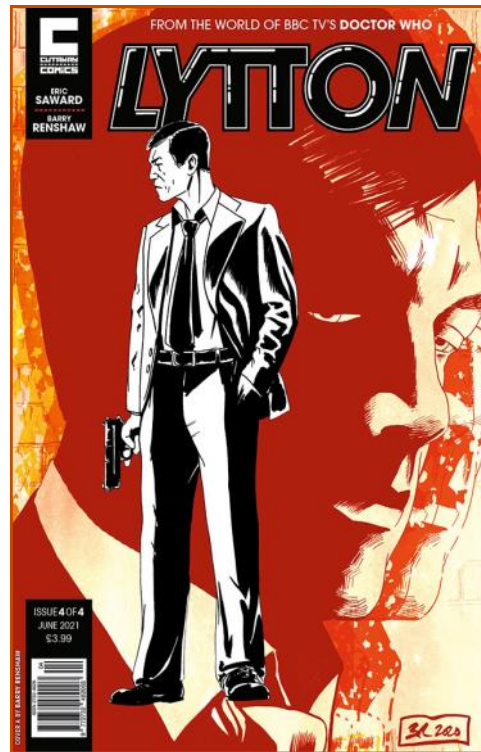
I've covered Lucky Comics' Devil's End,



which was a comic for Free Comic Book Day. There was a Kickstarter for a print run of the first issue. I run special segments about spin-off comics; Image put out a Faction Paradox comic, written by Lawrence Miles. I reviewed the Litton comic from Cutaway, there's Omega, and Vworpl! Vworpl!

I talk to different writers and artists. John Ridgway was a treat. If you've read Voyager, you instantly pull up those visuals in your mind. I interviewed Dez Skinn and found out how Doctor Who Weekly came into being. DWM is now the longest running magazine based on a media property. He came up with the brainchild, deciding there should be a magazine because it was popular with kids.

In the future I want to cover more of



the pre-DWM strips. I really wish Panini would reprint those, delve into older stuff. I like to do stories that are fully accessible to listeners, who haven't read a story for years, and make people want to read it again. I also think Titan should do a comic with the current Doctor and keep it as a regular monthly, but also an anthology book with past Doctors. In that, you could do one-shot stories for classic fans or past Doctor fans; other readers might pick it up or wait until a new Doctor turns up.

There are plenty more interview subjects to track down. I enjoy reading comics and talking to people so I'll do it until I run out of comics or people!

[Visit 'Panel 2 Panel' here](#)

WHO MAKES FAN GAMES

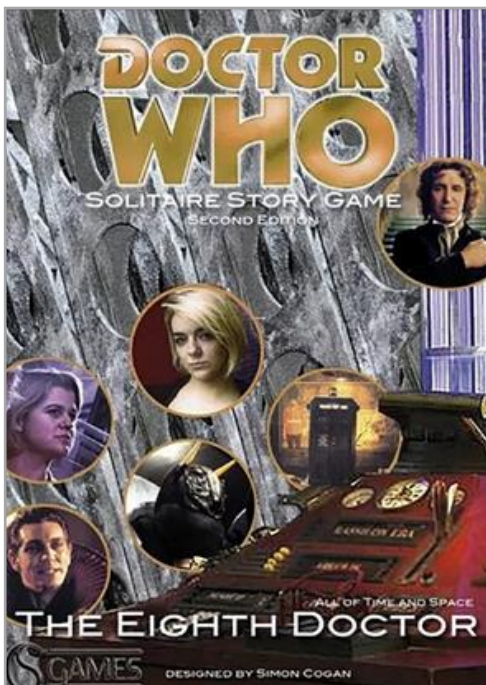
by Dave Chapman

Fanfiction is something that has existed for as long as the written word. Arguably the first "fanfic" was Virgil's *The Aeneid*, which picks up from the end of Homer's famous Greek epic *The Iliad*, which in turn led to Virgil being written into Dante's *Divine Comedy*. All of this has made it into the Whoniverse in some way or another, which brings us closer to the topic at hand: fan-made games based on Doctor Who.

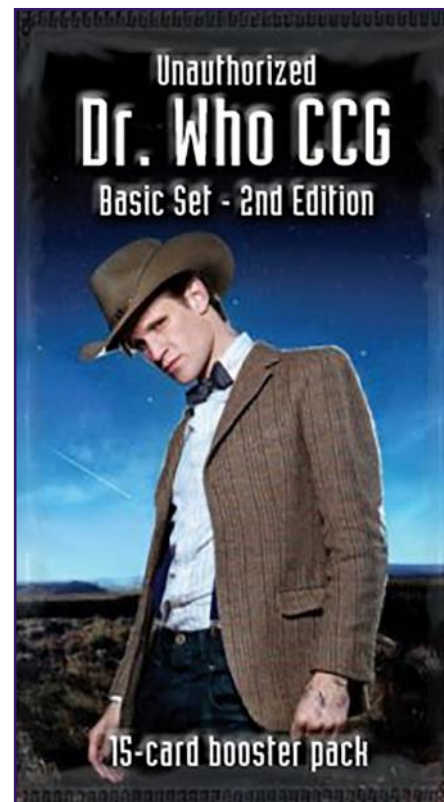
The history of the first fan-made board game is harder to pin down than its literary counterpart, since for centuries all games were handmade. In reality, it was probably a specifically carved/

decorated Chess set, or Senet, or Mah-jong tiles, or something like that. But insofar as modern "mass-market" games, I'm willing to bet the first fan-made game was probably someone painting over a Monopoly board or maybe Clue/Cluedo, or something similar. We are living in a very different era now and, over the course of a generation, society has gone from photocopiers to PDFs; with the click of a few buttons, anyone can publish a print-and-play game, and it only takes a few more clicks to have copies printed. (No, it's not that easy to create a good game, but functionally it really is that easy to get it out into the world.)

Before the turn of the century, there was a phenomenon called 'zines. The term "zine" derived from the term "fanzine", with its overall structure and format similarly shortened. Usually, these were hand-assembled, photocopied, and distributed at little or no cost to the reader. Recently these have come back in style as PDFs that can be assembled and distributed digitally. Games were and are a perfect fit for these amateur (fan) made booklets. I don't have any physical examples of this, just for the record, only PDF scans. The closest relevant example I have might be the [Doctor Who: Solitaire Story Game](#), which is four PDF 'zine-like booklets that let the player create a story and save the universe with the help of a pair of standard dice. A less trademark-skirting example comes in



the modern-zine game [Shadow of Mogg](#) by Leyline Press. This painfully (and delightfully) British 'zine-style RPG includes the character of the Chrono Aristocrat and his SIDRAT (Spacial Ignition Dialect Rotor Amplitude Traveller), complete with artwork clearly intended as an homage to Tom Baker. The original era of the 'zine was a challenging time for fan-made games. But let's be honest, it was a challenging time for all things Doctor Who if you lived in North America.



Other forms of games have seen a similar evolution as technology advanced. Card games which, much like 'zines, could be photocopied and cut manually, were a popular medium for many creators. Even smaller publishers, like Cheapass Games, often went this route.

At its height, Cheapass Games had over 20 employees printing, cutting, and packaging games by hand. 25 years later, they were producing "deluxe" versions of their games, with a wider distribution, with as few as two people. Those same technological advancements let fans produce games faster, more easily, and with higher physical quality. Games like the [Unauthorized Dr. Who CCG](#) (Collectable Card Game) and [The Twelve Doctors](#) both allow players to download fully formatted card images and have them printed on their home printer or an ever-expanding number of print-on-demand services.

The third main type of tabletop game is your typical board game. To use Cheapass Games as an example, their board games were once produced exactly the same as their card games: printed on cardstock and manually cut. This method still works or, for added strength, a person can paste the printed components onto thicker cardboard or foamboard. The French-language game, [Doctor Who: Companions](#), has game boards, cards, and character standees, all easily printed at home or using a printing service. You tend to find less fan-made boardgames, simply because once you start getting into anything more complex than a roll-and-move style game, they quickly become labour intensive, dealing with different components and such.

The final type of game I'll touch on could be an article all itself: the not-so-humble roleplaying game. This is one of the largest and most obvious styles of game that lends itself perfectly to fan-made content. It could be argued that the hobby never would have survived

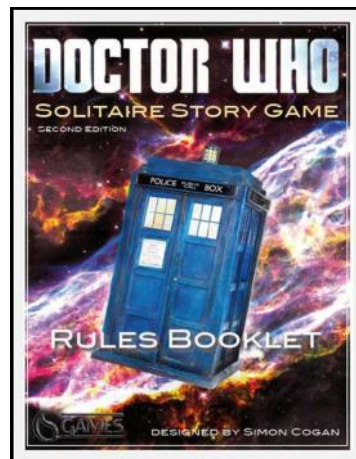


the "Moral Panic" of the 1980s without fan-made content (for more information, read C. Haberman's New York Times retro report [When Dungeons & Dragons Set Off a 'Moral Panic'](#). "Homebrew" (as they would later be known) worlds and adventures are a staple of many gaming groups, but it goes much deeper than that. Steve Jackson Games' RPG system [G.U.R.P.S.](#) (Generic Universal RolePlaying System) was a perfect choice for [fans to play as the Doctor](#), being designed specifically to be whatever the players want. The fanzine [Time Meddlers](#) provided a variety of fan-made content for the original Doctor Who Roleplaying Game published by FASA in the '80s. Later, when Cubicle 7 released the [Doctor Who: Adventures in Time and Space RPG](#), fans took the design and format of the

official sourcebook supplements to create "[Expanded Universe](#)" sourcebooks that included source material that the publisher couldn't licence. Modern digital fanzines, like the [Diary of the Doctor Who Role-Playing Games](#) are also creating content in the same vein as Time Meddlers.

I'm a game player. I'm a game reviewer. I'm occasionally a mercenary demo monkey for game publishers. I am NOT a game designer. I'm not even a particularly good Game Master if we are being honest. I've dabbled of course. I had a great idea brewing for The Doctor's Lucky Adventures in Time and Space (based on Kill Doctor Lucky), but I never had the time to develop anything more than a rough concept. It's important to remember that it takes more than easy access to tools to make a GOOD game, and chief amongst those things is an abundance of time. Sadly I have neither time nor a working TARDIS.

My point is that, when you think of fan fiction, there is a whole universe beyond just prose and, when you play a game, there's more than just what's official.



EMPIRE OF THE WOLF

Review by Jordan Shortman

Titan Comics output has been a little strange for a while. There used to be loads of comics coming out, giving many previous incarnations of the Doctor as well as the Thirteenth, brand new adventures. Then it all stopped and was condensed into one line, Doctor Who Comic. So far, we've seen the Thirteenth Doctor and Tenth Doctor meet the Sea Devils on an alternate timeline and Missy teaming up with Roger Delgado's Master.

Empire of the Wolf ties back to the first storyline of this new volume, which saw an alternate timeline version of Rose

leading the human resistance against the Sea Devils. That story ended with the timeline being corrected, but the Tenth Doctor not being able to resist giving his old companion/love interest a chance at some more travels before dropping her off somewhere she could bring peace.

Right off the bat it makes a change to see that this is a story that the Tenth Doctor isn't involved with and hopefully shows that someone somewhere has a little more respect for other Doctors as money makers and not just the ever popular Tenth incarnation. Here we



have the Eighth and Eleventh Doctors and in its press release, Empire of the Wolf was described as a celebration of twenty-five years of the Eighth Doctor. It might seem strange then that this was a storyline chosen to commemorate this Doctor. He had nothing to do with the Eleventh Doctor nor Rose Tyler. I'm surprised that writer, Jodie Houser, didn't do something with him and the Eric Roberts Master.

Luckily I know not to underestimate Houser's take on various Doctor's and she always manages to hit the right notes, no matter which incarnation she is writing for. Clearly an older Eighth Doctor, she gets Paul McGann's performance correct from his first line. In many ways he is one of the longest serving Doctors with a constant stream of audio drama's coming out. But on the other hand, the Eighth Doctor still feels relatively fresh whenever anything aside from audio comes out featuring him. Aside from the comics from Doctor Who Magazine, I don't really think he's had many comic book appearances. I really enjoyed the Eighth Doctor's limited series from Titan a few years ago, so its nice to know that Houser and the team at Titan haven't lost their handle on this Doctor.

I'm going to upset a few people here and say that while I love the Eighth Doctor, I really don't like the Eleventh Doctor. I remember watching his series live and never really taking to him and his appearances in comics and books have come across and are even more annoying. I think I didn't take to this bow-tie wearing, fez sporting incarnation thanks to the convoluted plots, though I never struggled to keep up with them, I also didn't like Amy and Rory so there wasn't a lot for me to rec-

ommend. Here, he does come across as a cardboard cut-out copy of his on-screen persona, sporting a fez and rushing around the TARDIS talking to himself - its all very annoying. Unfortunately it also doesn't help that his part in this opening issue is the most boring bit of all. Finding himself in the middle of a war with the Sontarans and the race of aliens that Empress Rose as the Bad Wolf variant is now calling herself, should be a lot more interesting than it was. Unfortunately, Houser decides to spend much of this issue handling the interaction of the real Rose Tyler, her human Doctor and the Eighth Doctor.

When I said that the Tenth Doctor isn't involved in this storyline, that wasn't entirely true, the human-Doctor we see leave with Rose at the end of Journey's End features heavily in the opening pages, describing what happened between him and Rose following their defeat of the Daleks and Davros. Again it's unfortunate that the Rose/Human Doctor thing still feels as strange and cringy as it did in 2008. Rose finding herself to being a mother is an interesting twist and it seems she's done a little growing up since the last time we saw her, with her only joining the Eighth Doctor to get back to her family and not to escape from them, like she did in the 2005 revival.

All this makes me sound a little harsh, there was also a lot to enjoy, Houser's handling of all the characters felt like they had been taken from the television series. Even the Eleventh Doctor, who I don't like, felt obnoxiously like the on-screen one! Empress Rose continues to be a strange choice and I'm not sure Rose is the companion I would have picked to have an evil doppelganger of, but I'll credit Houser with giving her



character something new and interesting to do, which Rose hasn't felt since her Bad Wolf days.

Artist Roberta Ingranata continues to be a delight with her depictions of our familiar characters, doing a great job of mixing original depictions with artistic renditions of iconic character poses. There's a different colourist for this series too, but Warnia K. Sahadewa compliments Ingranata's artwork nicely, even if the Titan team did choose a slightly less vibrant colour palette to play with. But Ingranata's artwork always looks stunning, and is made even better by the glossy paper the comic is printed on. I've no doubt she will be considered the face of Doctor Who comic artwork in the future in the same way legends like Chris Achilleos, Steve Dillion, Alistair Pearson and Colin How-



ard are now highly regarded for their depictions of our favourite characters.

Empire of the Wolf #1 is a mixed bag for me, with plenty that I liked and disliked. But Houser and Ingranata continue to make fantastic storylines even if the meeting of different incarnations is getting a little boring now and could be argued that it is taking the excitement out of the notion. Empress Rose is a character I'm interested to see more of and if I can, I'll be picking up future issues. While this isn't Titan's best, it is a far from their worst.

[To visit Doctor Who at Titan Comics, click here](#)

[To buy Empire of the Wolf from Amazon UK, click here](#)

WARRIORS OF THE SHALLOW

Legend of the Sea Devils Review by Nick Smith

Doctor Who has always had a split personality, visually and thematically bold enough to educate and entertain kids, with an intelligence and wit that appeals to adults as well. The result is the ultimate family show. Certain adventures, specifically pure historicals like The Reign of Terror, have informed us first and foremost. Others, like The Smugglers or World War Three, have focused on thrills. Legend of the Sea Devils belongs in the 'fun and aimed at kids' department rather than the 'nuanced and complex' adult feel of its primal ancestor, Doctor Who and the Silurians.

There's nothing wrong with aiming Doctor Who at kids – the Sarah Jane Adventures did it successfully for five years – but because of its ties to previous stories, there could have been another way. Legend of the Sea Devils would benefit from some of The Silurians' Season 7 grittiness. The effects have improved – the monster does not look like a Nightmare Fingerbob and the antagonists do not wobble their heads around when they attack someone – but Legend lacks the deft narrative twists and character quirks of the Third Doctor's clash with the cavernous ones. The all-too-human traits of greed, ego, fear or xenophobia drove the wrong-doings of characters like Major Baker (Norman Jones) and Dr. Quinn (Fulton Mackay). Now characterisation takes a back seat to spectacle.

The Silurians had distinct personalities. Part of the reason why Legend seems simpler is because it has one Devil with a name and persona (Marsissus, played by Craig Els), the others are just red shirts. Or green shirts.

Human characters pop in and out of the narrative and the heroes arrive in a village in the blink of an eye. There's a sense that a couple of scenes are missing, including a fitting end for Marsissus' sea monster which fails to live up to its build-up. Most of the rushed feeling of Legend results from a failure to establish geography rather than a flux in the storytelling.

The Sea Devils' technology seems higher than ever before, even though this story is set long before The Sea Devils. We don't have the science to put ourselves in suspended animation for millions of years, so they're obviously far more advanced than us. But there was a wonderfully primitive, organic feel to their technology in previous stories. It's great to have some of the science examined but the tech we see in Legend all looks so... digital. Perhaps different kinds of innovation happen on different parts of the planet, with the star-spanning-flying Silurians of Dinosaurs on a Spaceship being the most advanced.

The compression of an epic adventure into 48 minutes is certainly detrimental to any attempt at character develop-

ment. It's unfair to compare it to 1972's The Sea Devils, which had 150 minutes to show different facets of The Master (Roger Delgado) and Trenchard (Clive Morton), as well as the Third Doctor's allies. The Sea Devils was full of set pieces – a mysterious creature lurking on a sea fort, a tense submarine attack, the Doctor disappearing from a diving bell – but there were plenty of human moments between the plot mechanics. In this year's Easter special there's hardly a chance to catch breath before the adventure's over. The main dramatic scene, a culmination of the Thirteenth Doctor and Yaz (Mandip Gill)'s relationship, is left for the bittersweet end.

We live in an entertainment-packed world with great demand for special effects sci-fi, wall to wall music, whip-lash switches from comedy to serious situations. Yet the most successful movies and TV shows in any genre, from cop plodders to superhero smashers, the ones that stand long-term scrutiny, manage to find time for strong

character development, giving us people to care about and root for.

Fortunately we have the Doctor's own arc to enjoy, as she navigates the way towards the end of her thirteenth official incarnation. As she wishes her current situation would last forever, there are echoes of the Tenth Doctor's, 'I don't want to go' speech. Life and our media might be moving faster but for a moment, on an ancient shore, Thirteen has all the time she needs.

Click image below for trailer:



DOCTOR WHO: REDACTED

BBC Podcast Review by Richard D Rhodes

Redacted: past tense and past participle of the verb redact; to edit for publication, to censor or obscure for security or legal purposes.

In narrative terms, the BBC Sounds production of *Redacted* lands us in a recognisable Whoniverse: the lead protagonist was raised on the Powell Estate, various alien incursions (from the Adipose to the Daleks) are name-checked and the role-call of characters from the parent show's history is considerable, with cameos from UNIT (Kate Stewart and Osgood apparently in good health and no sign of ever having been shut down) and Sarah Jane's own Rani Chandra amongst others. For those keen on continuity reference spotting, *Redacted* has much to offer.

If you crave Doctor Who stories being wrapped up in 45-or so minutes, *Redacted* is probably an exercise in frustration: running at more than 3 hours over its 10 episodes, the story is quite a slow burn, which is no bad thing. It is very much a character-driven piece, narrating the lives of three queer women (one of whom is trans, with the focus very much on her), mixed satisfyingly with mounting levels of menace as the nature of the threat is revealed episodically, layer by layer.

The announcement of *Redacted*'s existence in April 2022 surprised many with some interpreting it as a threat to Big Finish's ongoing licence to produce audio-based Doctor Who, fearing this would be Virgin and BBC



Books all over again. They shouldn't worry: these are complimentary but very different beasts which, hopefully, co-exist without either being threatened. The announcement also reignited accusations of the show's wokery, in some quarters. The publicity's focus on queer and trans themes was prominent, coinciding with the UK Government's decision, after considerable delay, to exclude trans people from its proposed ban on conversion therapy and all of this only months after the BBC controversially withdrew from Stonewall's workplace equality scheme which, amongst things, championed trans rights.

That *Redacted* landed when it did, giving prominence to Cleo Proctor, a trans woman, is quite remarkable. One of the BBC's flagship shows has an extended trans narrative at a challenging time for LGBT rights: Cleo's life experiences, coming out, losing (and gaining) friends and family is on

a par with the fantastical elements. It is engaging and credible, told with authenticity by Juno Dawson and her team of writers while performed with equal integrity by Charlie Craggs and the wider cast. Notably, *Redacted*'s characterisation is deeper and more nuanced than in the parent show of late.

Whether by accident or design, *Redacted* paves the way for Yasmin Finney's Rose in Russell T Davies' continuation of Doctor Who. Finney, in turn, is the gateway (alongside new Doctor, Ncuti Gatwa) to a young Netflix generation and its massive Heartstopper audience. As much as anything, *Redacted* points to RTD's promised, multi-platform version of Doctor Who: inclusively bold, never obscure, sometimes a little risqué and resistant to censorship while steeped in its own, rich heritage. Here's to that future!

DOCTOR WHO AND OTHER LEGENDS

BY Nick Smith

A rebellious time traveller breaks the rules of his superiors and gathers a motley bunch of companions. They visit historical milestones and future conflicts, setting potential temporal anomalies to rights as they reluctantly band together as a family. The time traveller is mysterious, devious and has his own agenda, which places his companions in danger.

The companions don't all survive but those that do learn to trust their pilot and call his amazing, if not always reliable, timeship their home.

The pilot is called Rip Hunter. His superiors are the Time Masters. And the miraculous ship is called the Waverider in a CW show called DC's Legends of Tomorrow.

Legends has been on air for seven seasons and shows no signs of running out of steam. Its parallels with and homages to Doctor Who are fun to spot and always respectful, despite the show's irreverent tone. Rip is played by Arthur Darvill, better known to Whovians as



Rory Williams. Dr. Davis, a scientist who needs new parts to fix his time machine, is played by Matt Ryan.

Lest we cry foul, it should be noted that Rip Hunter is four years older than our own favorite Time Master – er, Lord. Rip first appeared in DC Showcase #20, a comic book from 1959. Granted he was a human who invented a 'time sphere' and his preface as Time Master was more of a superhero mantle than an aristocratic right. And although Legends of Tomorrow occasionally apes the wit and style of Doctor Who, it does it with its own characters – and Rip relinquishes his captaincy after the first season.

Legends is fast-paced and glossy, populated by good-looking heroes and dark-hearted villains. With each episode costing at least double the budget of Who, Legends is cinematic, entertaining bubble gum entertainment. It gives a fascinating glimpse of what might have been if Paul McGann's feature length adventure had been picked up and developed as a series for US audiences.

American shows focus on colorful visuals and good-looking leads who embody archetypes, if not stereotypes. TV's overarching themes are the importance of hope and family. Not only do these themes help maintain the status quo but they also click with the lowest common denominator audience all networks crave in a nation of some

330 million potential viewers. Legends is no exception.

Historical periods are portrayed with broad strokes – the Legends meet hippies, punks, Wild West cowboys and Chicago gangsters). While gender politics are addressed, racial issues are examined far less frequently. Since the show keeps its plots and history lessons relatively simple, it's the characters who bring us back for more, most of them based on DC comic heroes. Sarah Lance (Caity Lotz), Ray Palmer (Brandon Routh), Mick Rory (Dominic Purcell), Nathan Heywood (Nick Zano) and their friends all have superhero identities but they are far from batmen (or women). They're celebrated misfits who mess up their missions but always come through in the end.

That message of hope is highly evident in a series where bad guys can be softened or reformed, the dead can be resurrected, and lovers can reunite across dimensions. Mistakes can always be fixed, though there are consequences. Historical notables can be battled or abducted, Bill and Ted style. In some episodes, time travel isn't so much of a plot device (although it drives the season arc) as a chance for us to visit different periods of history and see how the heroes clash with antiquity, with a few sight gags thrown in (such as the Legends in disco dancing garb). In that regard it's more Excellent Adventure than Doctor Who, Dan's recent pirate dress-up excluded.

While '60s Who focused on the events that 'every schoolchild knew,' such as Marco Polo's journey to Cathay and the mystery of the Marie Celeste, it also explored lesser-known – and decidedly grim – events like the Massacre of St.

Bartholomew's Eve. The Legends prefer to visit the 'rock stars' of history – Genghis Khan instead of Kublai, Rasputin instead of Robespierre. Both sets of travellers land in hot water regardless. Legends tends to be more global in its traveling, encompassing a Bollywood musical number and the depths of hell.

Recent Who has worked to redress its parochialism with trips to Alabama, USA (Rosa), the Great Victoria Desert of Australia (Spyfall) and the Crimean peninsula (War of the Sontarans). The Legends can afford to go a bit further and their destinations don't all look like the film crew's taking a quick holiday away from Cardiff.

Doctor Who's focus on and appreciation of Britain's history and varied landscape is understandable. The production team has rarely been able to trot around the globe, especially in its classic years, stamping a quaint sense of place that's part of the show's identity and hard to shake. Legends has its own, lengthier background, in the realm of comics, where budget is not a factor and characters can travel anywhere on Earth and beyond.



Whether we would have seen an all-singing, all-joking American Doctor Who or its own witty, emotional core would have won out, Legends shows how time travel can spark the imagination of writers and viewers. If nothing else, a US Who series would have been vivid, entertaining and long-lived.

10 THINGS I LIKE ABOUT WHO

By Sam Mackintosh-Smith

1. The show is always changing.

The look, tone, music and companions of Doctor Who never stay the same for long.

2. The moon is an egg.



When my friend Seamus saw Kill the Moon he remarked, 'the moon is an egg, that's amazing.' Yes, a moon egg is amazing. Some of Doctor Who's crazy concepts work better than others but it feels good to look up at the moon and imagine dragons inside.

3. Staying grounded.



2005's Series One feels so epic even though the Doctor and Rose never leave earth's orbit. This is because we see it through Rose's eyes; there are mysteries yet to be unveiled about what's happened to the Doctor since 1996; and the world is full of possibilities.

4. Visiting the far future of 2012.

Daleks in 2012! Why is the Ninth Doctor episode Dalek set in the future? So they could show a Slitheen arm in the museum?

5. The Marie Celeste mysteries.



There are five explanations as to what happened to the Marie Celeste in comics, books and on TV (in The Chase). History is full of different theories, so why shouldn't sci-fi history be the same? See also: Atlantis.

6. So many prologues!

We are lucky to have prologue mini-episodes, especially during the 11th Doctor's era. They might not have expanded the main characters but they gave us

different perspectives on adventures.

7. No official stance on canon.



The Sixth Doctor has multiple regeneration stories. The Second Doctor's regeneration is shown in a comic. Is Shada canon? Does it take place during the Five Doctors? Or is the Eight Doctor version the canonical one? It's up to the fans to decide. Sideways universes got a mention during Battlefield but Flux showed us a greater glimpse of the multiverse, or at least a map. Thus we have a show where the Doctor can be a human scientist or an alien Time Lord, Ace can have multiple fates and we have innumerable stories to enjoy.

8. The crossover with Eastenders.

Are the Doctors trapped in a 3D soap opera in Dimensions in Time? Is Dot Cotton a reincarnation of The Time

Warrior's Lady Eleanor? We need answers.



9. Sil and the Devil Seeds of Arodor.

There's a novelisation of a movie about Sil. In other franchises you don't get movies about villains most of the audience wouldn't even remember, written by that monster's creator. Philip Martin's novelisation of Sil and the Devil Seeds of Arodor provides a slimy exception to this rule.



10. The endless possibilities for stories.

Mind games, cave monsters, dream attacks, alien invasions, Fortnite cross-overs... the possibilities for Doctor Who stories are infinite.

FROM THE LAND OF FICTION

Editorial by Stephen Hatcher

Welcome again to another Cosmic Masque Fiction Section. After the excitement of the Fiction Special, which was Cosmic Masque XV, (which I hope you enjoyed), we return to our usual, more limited selection of Doctor Who stories, written by our members and readers. I am delighted to present five top quality stories in this issue, all but one (I think) by writers new to this magazine.

That most prolific of fan authors Paul Burns gives us another of his stories featuring the Thirteenth Doctor – whose character he captures so delightfully well. Bah! Humbugs is a Christmas story, which you can either read now, or save up for a more appropriate season, in which the Doctor's encounter with an old foe does not leave a sweet taste in the mouth.

Alex Shewan is an English teacher, who has recently had a career change, and has responded to my urging her to write a story for us, now that she has a little more time to breathe. The Key Within is as well crafted a first story as I might have expected from a writer with Alex's background and training; and sees the Second Doctor, Jamie and Victoria find a new ally in their fight against an old enemy.

Michael Crouch has sent us several of his stories, all of which I was delighted to read and to accept for publication in future issues of this magazine. This first one, The Oyster Pirates is a well-written and exciting adventure for the First Doctor, Steven and Dodo, which expertly captures the feel of that particular era of Doctor Who.

This issue we have two stories, which previously and very briefly appeared in the short-lived charity anthology, which I edited a few years back, Time Shadows: Second Nature. The first, Planet of the Doctor by Paul Driscoll sees the Eleventh Doctor arrange an ill-fated work experience placement for Clara. Paul is one of the leading names in Doctor Who fan writing -- you will have come across his name in any number of publications both factual and fictional, including the Black Archives series for Obverse Books, of which Paul is one of the editors. It is a particular delight to welcome Paul to the pages of Cosmic Masque.

Our other TS2N piece is a delightful Seventh Doctor and Ace story by Grace Hadron. In Unexpected Item in Bagging Area the Doctor's companion has some surprising encounters in the aisles of a supermarket.

And those are our stories for this issue. There will be more fiction in CM XVII – that I can guarantee because I have stories queuing up, waiting for a space in the magazine – including several more from new writers. But don't let that put you off. If you have a Doctor Who story that you want to tell, get in touch – as Alex and Michael did. It may take a few issues before they appear, but we want your stories. Keep them coming in.

Steve

BAH! HUMBUGS

by Paul Burns

“PC Rawlings? You're Next!”

The young constable jumped and loosened his collar, which he felt had been strangling him during the seemingly endless wait. He slowly got up from his seat, his legs suddenly feeling as though they would not support his weight. He opened the door of the room and nervously smiled at the sight of a pretty young nurse within.

“PC Fred Rawlings?” The nurse beamed, her ebullient manner briefly calming the anxious policeman. “I'm nurse Smith. Lovely to meet you; and thank you so much for volunteering to give blood. Believe me, we need more blokes like you through those doors. Sit down, won't be a jiffy.”

Fred sat down and began rolling his sleeve up. Outside the window he could hear a transistor radio playing the latest No 1 hit, You'll Never Walk Alone by Gerry and the Pacemakers. He focussed on that as the nurse got the needle ready.

“I'm gonna take very nearly an armful.” she grinned. Fred looked at her and gave a nervous giggle. “Sorry, Tony Hancock, total genius. Hancock's Half Hour? Not long enough, in my opinion.” The nurse brought the needle closer to a trembling Fred.

“Now then, fingers crossed, never done this before. You'll be my first.” Fred looked alarmed.

“Only kidding.” she beamed. “Honestly, PC Fred Rawlings, I can guarantee your blood will one day save a life. How brilliant is that?” Fred smiled.

“Oh, and best of all, there are biccies after. Custard Creams all round!”

Harvey Fisher looked at the clock. Time had crawled this afternoon. He sighed and looked out of the window at the frosted landscape outside his sweet shop. It was usually a fifteen-minute walk to the tube station, but at this time of year it was a walk hampered by icy pavements and lampposts that cast threatening shadows onto the snow. He shivered as he walked towards the door of the shop, ready to turn the ‘closed’ sign round to face outwards. He jumped as a figure appeared at the door, knocking furiously.

“Open up! Your life may depend on it!” came the voice from outside. Harvey was about to shout ‘we're closed’ before the door was flung open and a blonde woman in a big scarf entered.

“Harvey Fisher? You're needed at the hospital urgently. Message from Yaz Khan: get your shop phone fixed and get yourself a mobile. Not useful to be uncontactable, especially when there's an emergency. And I am totally multi-tasking because you're currently sandwiched between two emergencies!”

Harvey stared at the woman, unable to process thoughts, let alone words at her babbling. She placed her hands on his shoulders.

“Don't panic, well, panic a bit. Panicking is sometimes your body's way of telling you you're still alive.”

Harvey stood open-mouthed as the woman waved an electronic device in

the air and looked at the readings. "He's definitely here." she solemnly told Harvey, who attempted to reply that he was alone in the shop and there hadn't been a customer in hours. "And why wouldn't he? It's a sweet shop, love a sweet shop. Jelly babies, natch; Fizz bombs, Sherbet Lemons, Gobstoppers....actually not too keen on those, Need to talk too much!" Harvey stared at the seemingly unhinged woman and went to speak but was cut off before the words came. "I'm the Doctor and I'm guessing you're still confused why you suddenly had a vast oversupply of humbugs today, am I right?" Suddenly, a crash was heard from the stock room. "Right, Christmas ghost story time. Well, not really a ghost, more a consciousness stretching into space and fusing itself to an alien concentrated Mentha x piperita stream" Harvey stared at the Doctor with confusion. "Mentha x piperita. Peppermint, the flavouring used in humbugs, which I'm guessing is the current sweet of choice for..." With that, the stock room door flew open and a shambling, unsteady creature, composed entirely of fused together humbugs in the shape of a man emerged. It moved the sweets into an approximation of a human face and its crudely shaped mouth spoke, filling the air with the sickly smell of peppermint. The voice was childlike and brittle, like the sound of sweets crunching in the back molars of your mouth. "Only one person on this planet would be stupid enough to face me with that imperious stance. It's you, isn't it Doctor? it has been a long time." The Doctor stood in front of a terrified

Harvey Fisher. "Harvey, meet an old friend of mine, the Kandyman." "Always meddling Doctor," the Kandyman squeaked. "Always thinking you have the right to protect life. Life is transitory, Time Lord, and I can end these pitiful humans' existence with a smile on their faces. What I do is a kindness." The Doctor scrunched her nose up. "Blimey, Sontarans now the Kandyman, sweet shops are definitely becoming the most dangerous places in the universe." The Doctor moved a terrified Harvey to behind his counter as the Kandyman flailed around, finding his balance as the humbugs moved and crunched around his crudely arranged torso. "The Kandyman, really he's a scientist called Seivad, who can beam his mind into sweets and he's here presumably to kill everyone in this area using..." the Doctor cast her eyes round the shop. "Well, sweets. This place is like an armoury to him. But I can stop him. Tell me Harvey, and I am keeping my fingers crossed very tightly here, I can smell vegetable on your breath. Please tell me you didn't eat all your lunch today." Harvey swiftly produced his thermos and whispered. "Vegetable soup..." The Doctor punched her fist in the air. "Yes! Thank goodness for a healthy owner of a sweet shop!" She took the thermos and aimed her sonic at it. "Soluble fibre, perfect for sugar blocking. And when super charged by a sonic..." The Doctor leapt over the counter and faced the Kandyman. "One chance, Seivad, leave this planet in peace and you and I won't have a problem."

The Kandyman shrieked in defiance. "Time Lord, I aim to lay waste to this planet. Death by confection!" "Clearly mad, not to be reasoned with, and I do not have the time for a lengthy debate," the Doctor said to herself. She looked steely eyed at the Kandyman. "Mate, you definitely need a better diet." With that, she aimed her sonic at Harvey's flask and its contents exploded, drenching the Kandyman. It screamed in pain, as the liquid began eating into the humbugs and destabilising the already unstable confectionary form it was desperate to hold onto. The Doctor wasted no time in aiming her sonic at the Kandyman and it fizzed and bleeped. "Got him!" she smiled, as the humbugs scattered onto the floor of the shop. "Seivad's consciousness now trapped in my sonic. That should keep him out of trouble." She turned to a dumbfounded Harvey Fisher. "Now, Harvey, I said two emergencies. Your brother needs you, and I've got my motor outside."

Harvey Fisher waited in the visitor's room of the hospital. Yaz Khan held his hand and spoke to him comfortingly. "You've had quite a night haven't you Harvey?" she said. "I can't process it all, Yaz, is David going to make it?" He said, his voice breaking with emotion. "They're doing everything they can, now they have the blood." "But how?" asked Harvey. "David is AB negative, he's always so careful because he knows this hospital doesn't have an immediate supply of it." The Doctor entered the room. "Harvey? Operation went well, that blood saved David's life. The surgeon wants to speak with you." Harvey

walked towards the Doctor. "Thank you, Doctor. Sorry..." Harvey wiped his eyes. "That monster... that spaceship..." "See to your brother first, then we can have a chat." The Doctor replied. Harvey left the room. The Doctor smiled at Yaz and slumped into one of the chairs. "I worry about you Yaz." the Doctor said. "The job you do, the dangers you face. What happened to David tonight could easily happen to you..." "So, what's the difference in facing a nutter with a knife and a nutter with a ray gun?" snapped Yaz. "Doctor, the job you do is exactly the same as mine. We protect people, putting our lives at risk, because we know we can never let the bad guys win. The only difference is, I wear a uniform and you wear a coat." "It is a nice coat though." the Doctor replied with an awkward smile. Yaz returned the smile, then buried her face in her hands. "David and I have been walking that beat for months, not a hint of any trouble and when I saw him lying there..." The Doctor held Yaz's trembling hand. "Y'know," said Yaz, "you are the best friend I have ever had. You stop monsters and you go back in time and get David's grandfather's blood. You make such a difference to people's lives, and you have no idea how amazing you are." The Doctor shifted uncomfortably, uneasy with taking compliments. She pulled back her coat to reveal a name badge which read 'Nurse J. Smith'. "Wasn't easy, getting a job as a blood donor nurse visiting a police station in the nineteen sixties. Lucky David went into the family business." "Well, he didn't know he had. He was adopted." said Yaz. "Couldn't find a

trace of his parents after the adoption. No family, apart from his adopted brother. Just a warrant card that he remembered this old guy who visited him in the children's home giving him. David showed it to me. PC Fred Rawlings."

"Fred was lovely," replied the Doctor. I met him before when I first landed in that junkyard. Only I was a lot grouchier back then. And a man, so he didn't recognise me. Wolfed down the biccies after I took his blood. I'm quite good with a needle. Who knew?"

"You saved David's life." Yaz smiled.

"Well, me and Fred," replied the Doctor. Yaz fished around in her pocket. "Haven't eaten since breakfast, got some sweets though. Want a humbug?" The Doctor winced. "No thanks Yaz, think I'll pass. Don't suppose you have any jelly babies?"

There was a ping on Yaz's phone. "Message from Dan. Happy Christmas, with Christmas tree emojis." This was followed by a second ping. "Apology from Dan as he doesn't know if it's appropriate to wish me a Happy Christmas. Sad face emojis."

The Doctor smiled. "Well, I'm going to say it. Merry Christmas Yasmin Khan." "Merry Christmas Doctor."

The TARDIS materialised outside the gates of the graveyard. The Doctor opened the door. She beamed appreciatively. "Love a Christmas morning. Totally different smell to any other day of the year. Utter whiff of joy."

Yaz emerged from behind her. "Odd thing to say at a graveyard," she noted. Harvey was the last to walk through the door. The Doctor produced a bunch of flowers.

"Thing about Christmas Day, little shop in the hospital closed. Luckily, I have

loads of little shops, and a botanical room in the TARDIS."

Harvey gratefully took the flowers. "Thank you for finding him, Doctor."

The Doctor smiled, patting the side of the TARDIS. "Best sat-nav ever. And don't worry about time, I can have you back at the hospital seconds after you've left. Meanwhile I've got a Kandymen to stick in a time lock."

As the Doctor disappeared back into her ship, Yaz took Harvey's free hand. "Come on, the Doctor told me where to find him."

Harvey and Yaz walked into the graveyard, their shoes crunching on the brittle snow.

"Here it is." said Yaz, her breath escaping in a ghostly mist. Harvey read the inscription on the tombstone.

"Frederick Peter Rawlings. Beloved father of Grace. 1939-2018" He delicately placed the flowers on the grave. "No mention of him being a loving grandfather," Harvey sadly said. "But whatever made Grace give David up, it's good to know that grandad was there for David when he needed him."

"He's a hero." said Yaz, rubbing Harvey's arm.

"Like your Doctor." Harvey replied. "Merry Christmas PC Fred Rawlings. And thank you for helping to save my brother's life."

Yaz looked at the headstone. "And thank you for your service."

From the church, they heard voices, united in celebratory song during the Christmas morning service. Yaz hugged Harvey and they walked silently out of the churchyard and back into the TARDIS, which quickly disappeared.

PLANET OF THE DOCTOR

by Paul Driscoll

Sonny "Survivor" Sanders had no idea just long he'd been living on the notorious prison moon of Delta4. He was pretty confident however, that he'd broken the nineteen-week record set by notorious bandit Frank Foulds before he'd fallen victim to the moon's deadliest species – the beautiful yet terrifying Scarf-dragons. Only a week before Sonny had been framed for murder and banished without trial, he'd watched Foulds' gruesome death on the reality show Hellborn, boasting that he'd be able to survive far longer than even the most hardened of convicts. The programme had become so popular that the moon had been officially renamed after it. Sonny suspected it was his outspoken comments about the reality show that had led to his incarceration. He used to complain about how the exiles had given up before they'd even started. The way he saw it, they had played into the government's hands by believing its propaganda and the heavily doctored scenes so prevalent when the broadcast started twenty years ago.

Sonny was determined to see Hellborn as a home and not a freak show to titillate the holier-than-thou majority on Delta4. That didn't stop him playing up to the cameras – a bewildering array of powerful and intrusive lenses operated from a fully automated network of satellites. Sonny waved at his unseen audience as he worked on finishing yet another shelter. He'd been building the makeshift homes using materials that

for centuries the government of Delta4 had been dumping off-world. The introduction of prisoners was treated like an extension of the moon's waste disposal function. This was the planet of the unwanted.

"There he goes again, the arrogant sod." Del Myers, acting head of St. Branson's school, despised Sonny's habit of waving at the cameras.

"Oh, come on Del, this is TV gold. No one, nothing comes close," said her deputy, Mike Crompton, mesmerized by the screen.

"Stop making him out to be a hero," retorted Myers. "He'd better die before Friday; we need another deterrent to show the kids in assembly, what with that school inspector on the prowl." She sauntered up to the window and looked down at the school field. The inspector, surrounded by a bunch of disinterested pupils, was running around with his trouser legs rolled up above his knees and his jacket tied to his waist. "What does he think he's doing?" she said.

"I believe it's a quaint team sport from Earth's golden age," replied Crompton as a football collided into the window. "Probably using it to lure the kids into giving him information. At least he hasn't noticed that we're late for the next classes."

"A sport? Good luck to him if he thinks he can get that shower to work together. Still, I suppose it explains one thing," Crompton frowned, "That funny little bow around his collar. It might not be a spying device after all – it could be part

of an authentic kit. Come on everyone, back to work.”

“What happened to the new teaching assistant?” said Crompton as they filed out. “She didn’t even make it to the first lesson. Lightweight.” The irritatingly pretty, elfin-like girl, with a round face and gorgeously dark eyebrows, had been introduced to them earlier in the day by the school inspector, who claimed to have found her loitering in the reception. The strangest thing was that nobody had been expecting the girl, and yet she had all the paperwork to confirm that she was due to start her induction. With the headmaster off that day with stress, it was impossible to verify. “So where on Delta4 is she?” said Crompton suspiciously.

“Locked inside some kind of walk-in closet, that’s where,” said Clara into her mobile, more than a little embarrassed at having to call upon the Doctor for help. She was sure he was pretending not to hear, just so that she would have to sound like a total klutz once again. “So, are you coming to get me, or not?” she added. All she could hear in response was a shrill whistle and a scream of delight, pain, or both. It was impossible to tell with the Doctor. “Doctor!” she shouted again. Some teaching experience this was turning out to be. No doubt she’d be sacked before the day was out.

The Doctor had taken her to Delta4 to build up her CV, yet it didn’t seem to have occurred to him that Coal Hill would be unable to verify her employment history or obtain references from the future. When she’d suggested borrowing the psychic paper to fast-track her way into the Shoreditch teaching job, he’d infuriatingly suggested that this was an inappropriate use of the technology. Apparently, under no cir-

cumstances should it be used as a shortcut. As if, she thought.

Clara wasn’t quite sure what the Doctor wanted from her anymore. He’d solved the puzzle of the Impossible Girl, so perhaps setting her up with a job was his way of getting rid of her. It was OK for him – he could probably move on and forget, but her life would forever be defined by their relationship; and their adventures had made a lasting difference. Among other things, she had become an expert computer hacker, an effective counsellor and an army leader. The Doctor should have picked an escapologist or a lock picker as a companion, because right now none of her newfound skills were of any use.

Two hours earlier, Clara had been waiting to be taken to her assigned classroom, but when Myers didn’t show up, she decided to find it the long way round via a tour of the campus. Outside, Clara was amused to find what looked like a row of bike sheds in one corner of the playground. This might be an Earth colony two thousand years into the future, but it still reminded Clara of her Blackpool comprehensive and of days when, instead of smoking and kissing behind the huts, she would assume the role of teacher while carrying out her prefect duties. Yes, she thought to herself, she was a control freak even back then.

Clara walked to the back of the sheds, half expecting to bump into some of those notoriously wayward students the Doctor was so eager for her to meet, but instead she was astonished to find a space shuttle docked on a raised circular platform. “Bike sheds, tick. Smell of urine, tick. Climbing frame shaped like a space rocket? Not quite,” she said to herself. Spotting that the hatch was open, Clara climbed on

board. She hadn’t even got to see the engine room or the flight-deck when she’d somehow managed to lock herself in the storage room.

“Clara Oswald, I specifically told you not to go wandering off,” shouted the Doctor into his bow tie, as he mis-kicked the football.

“What in the stars are you doing, Doctor? And why so breathless?”

Considering Clara’s current predicament, her tone of mild amusement was another example of that reckless streak that so irritated the Doctor. He adjusted a TARDIS-blue earpiece. “Football. I play football now. Getting down with the kids, using a few moves I picked up from an old friend. They’ve never even heard of it, and that’s... well that’s just not cricket.”

“OK, Doctor, I’m glad you’re having fun, but hello? A little bit of help needed here.”

“Hang on a minute,” replied the Doctor, conscious of potential eavesdroppers. He picked up the ball and, with a flick of his sonic screwdriver, sent it soaring off to the other end of the field. “First to the round thing and back gets to go home before lunch!” he shouted excitedly. The teenagers sat down, making their intentions clear. The very idea of walking a mile to fetch a ball was clearly as unpalatable to them as his earlier suggestion that they should always kiss their mothers goodbye in the mornings. “Okay, you’ve made your point,” said the Doctor in resignation. “You wait here. I’ll fetch the ball. And don’t think I won’t be telling your parents. You mark my words, you ungrateful... meteorites, there’ll be no custard on your fish fingers tonight.”

Looking every bit like a sulky child, he headed across the field. “Clara, I thought teenagers were supposed to

talk incessantly. Can’t get a word out of them. Any ideas, Teach?”

“Doctor!” said Clara, assuming her sternest teacher’s voice. “The air inside this place, it...”

The Doctor pulled out his earpiece and scanned it with the sonic.

“...smells like the inside of an Ice Warrior’s suit.”

“How can you...?”

“The wonders of Time Lord engineering. I’m using the TARDIS phone remotely, remember. She doesn’t just pick up sounds, no siree. She can detect the dimensions of the room you’re standing in, the atmospheric conditions, even your emotions. How cool is that?”

“Cooler than I’m feeling right now, Doctor. And no – that’s not an invitation for you to go routing around inside my head.” It really wasn’t the time to worry about having her private space violated, but for Clara such a degree of vulnerability was a more disturbing prospect than coming face to face with another Ice Warrior. She was absolutely certain that even if he left it until the last minute, the Doctor would get her out of there. “So, come on, Doctor. How do I save myself from the Ice Warrior this time? There’s some kind of ventilation unit in the ceiling, but it’s been filled in. Apart from that, I’ve got nothing.”

“Oh, the smell’s too intense for your bog-standard Ice Lord, and there’s a hint of liquorice that can mean only one thing.”

“He had a sweet tooth?”

“Ice-Sheet. A recreational drug made from Ice-Weed spores, quite unique to Delta4. At the very worst, the fumes will enhance your sense of superiority. Not that you’d need it.”

“Oh great, so I’m about to get stoned on my first day in the job. No sign of any drugs here.”

“Smoked over a long period of time in such an enclosed space, ice sheet will have permeated the walls. Just keep breathing. Deep and heavy. Into the phone.”

“Oi, Mister ‘I’ve-got-a-snogging-booth’. Enough of that.”

“All I have to do is reverse the polarity and whoosh, fresh air on demand.”

Clara held the phone close to her mouth like a gas mask, taking several welcome breaths. “Thanks. I owe you one.”

“I owe you several hundred more, Impossible Girl.”

“Doctor, let’s not go there, eh? I don’t want you to feel like you’re forever in my debt. Just you taking me to the stars – that’s reward enough.”

“You ain’t seen nothing yet, Miss Oswald. So many places to go, all those weird and wonderful creatures. The levitating ducks of...”

“Just promise me one thing.”

“I would, but you probably ought to know, I’m not that great at keeping them. Just ask Amy, Sarah or Susan.”

“This one’s a doddle, even for you. How about you ring me for once, on that TARDIS phone of yours. One day, when you find yourself in trouble, instead of trying to sort it out yourself, just call me, yeah?”

“Clara, I’ve taken the earpiece out again; the air quality between my ears isn’t the greatest. Keep breathing through the phone. I’ll be five minutes.” Clara sighed; she had no idea whether or not he’d heard her heartfelt request. The unexpected sound of approaching footsteps nearly made her drop the phone. Quite a racket for one pair of shoes, but then again, the Doctor wasn’t one for subtle entrances. “I thought you said five minutes?” laughed Clara, wondering if her sense of time had

been affected by the drug. Excitedly, she stood up and straightened her disheveled hair, practicing her teacher look in the reflective surface of the door. “Miss Oswald to you. The Anatomy of a Levitating Duck. I want a three-thousand-word essay on my desk by 9 a.m. tomorrow, and if it’s not there, well... you’ll wish you were in hell. Now, off you pop.”

Surrounded by four of his peers, Bobby Clarke hovered his fingers excitedly over the controls of the school minishuttle. So far this was proving to be the easiest joyride ever, what with the hatch having been left open. “This is more like it,” he said. “Who wants to be kicking balls when this little beauty’s begging for a spin, eh Dazza?”

“Sssh, I’m almost done,” replied Dazza, tinkering with a faulty light fitting.

“You and that solder of yours, I’ve a good mind to stick it up your—” Girlfriends Javinder and Sadie sniggered as if they were half their age. “So, where you taking us this time?” Dazza asked, mimicking their sing-song voices.

“Just enough fuel to get to the Snowcap Dam,” Bobby replied.

“Not again!” said the girls in unison. Suddenly, it wasn’t quite so exciting after all.

“If I could, I’d take you to Hellborn and back, but there’s only enough fuel for a local outing,” said Bobby.

“He’s lying girls.” The fifth member of the gang, Wendy Martin, spoke in her usual disinterested, clipped tone. She was cold, cynical and the antithesis of the swooning Javinder and Sadie.

“Who asked you to come along anyway?” said Dazza. Everyone looked at him, shocked by his forwardness. He immediately regretted it. Slowly, Wendy walked up to him and gave him the

stare. They all knew what was coming next... one almighty, sickening crack. The force of the headbutt knocked Dazza to the ground.

“If anyone’s going to leave, it’ll be you. In mid-flight,” snarled Wendy. “What do you say, Bobby? Dare you to take us to Hellborn?”

Javinder and Sadie looked positively unsure. “I think he’s scared,” teased Sadie, attempting to mask her own fear. “How about you?” she added, nudging Javinder.

“I’m not scared,” said Javinder unconvincingly, before she realized what Sadie meant. “But he is.”

“Can’t we just get on with it; at this rate, we’ll be caught before we’ve even started up the engines,” said Dazza impatiently.

“Don’t know what you’re moaning about. You’re already seeing stars,” said Wendy with rare humour.

“I’m not scared, all right?” said Bobby finally. “But I might have exaggerated how good a pilot I am.”

“Oh, give it here,” said Wendy, taking the controls. She started up the ship like it was second nature. “Dad’s an interstellar long-distance truck driver. I learnt to fly those things when I was seven; this is a piece of cake in comparison.”

The Doctor, still on route to the sheds, watched in horror as the minishuttle soared over the school playground, before shifting to a vertical axis and flying straight up into the clouds. “Clara,” he shouted frantically into the bow tie. “Clara, can you still hear me?” Back in the drug-infused closet, Clara was lying unconscious, knocked out by the force of the take-off. Her phone lay in pieces beside her.

Predictably, a crowd of students and

teachers had congregated outside the school. Myers approached the Doctor. “Rest assured, inspector, the pupils responsible will be duly punished... their parents and the police notified,” she said.

“Pupils. That thing’s being flown by pupils?”

“With respect, sir, it’s hardly going to be a teacher.”

“Where are they going? There’s plenty of Ice-Weeds locally.”

“Joyriders. I know it looks bad, but the problem isn’t unique to us.” It was clear that the teachers were completely out of control as the pupils cheered the miscreants on. The Doctor, brow furrowed, chewed his lip before going on the attack. “When you say joyride, I’m thinking, you know – a little trip to the local chippy and back. Or a couple of circuits around the school field. Not an interstellar hyper-speed jump!”

“I know. The youths of today, sir.”

“Personally, I blame it on the parents,” chipped in Crompton.

“And I blame it on you. All of you. What were you thinking leaving a ship with such capabilities unlocked?”

“Unlocked, sir? It most definitely wasn’t. The auto-locking mechanism will have been triggered on touchdown. When docked, the shuttle can only be opened from the inside,” said Myers.

The Doctor started to pace up and down, clearly agitated. There was nothing childish about his demeanour now. “So how do you account for my assistant being able to walk casually on board?” he said.

“Miss Oswald is working for you? I knew it!” said Crompton.

Myers was more than happy to start taking the moral high ground. It all made sense now: for once this had nothing to do with the errant children.

"It's a setup, isn't it?" she said. "How much did Wesley High pay you this time? Trust me, I'll be reporting your unorthodox methods to the education commissioner. I suggest you call your assistant back at once, or the next thing you'll be inspecting will be your own excrement."

"And there's me thinking that all this place needed was a new teaching assistant to turn it around. I couldn't have been more wrong. The problem here isn't a failing school, it's a lost planet. Another planet of the dullards," railed the Doctor. "You actually enjoy watching your children fail, don't you? Does it make you feel better about your own pathetic lives? No wonder they're rebelling."

"I think you'll find they are more than willing to obey orders." Myers called over some particularly thuggish-looking senior students. "Dunstan, lock him up in the Student Union until the police get here," she said. "And you have my permission to do whatever comes into that twisted mind of yours. Use any means necessary to get him to talk and return our ship."

Dunstan and his lackeys dragged the Doctor inside, just as another teacher came rushing out. "It's Hellborn, Mrs. Myers, you are not going to believe it," he spluttered.

Hellborn was hardly a tourist destination, but nevertheless the moon attracted its fair share of daredevils, overzealous fans of the show and, as in the case of wheeler and dealer Max Stone, fortune seekers. Most scavengers were from the lower echelons of Delta4, desperate to source recyclable waste materials, but Max was a self-made millionaire, dealing in high-end products from across the galaxy. His mission to Hell-

born was quite specific. He was hunting the rarest of prizes: a Scarfdragon egg. Since nobody had ever managed to smuggle one off-world, the trade value would be astronomical and, more importantly, Max would gain the adulation he so desperately craved.

Slightly built, clumsy and scatter-brained, the bespectacled treasure hunter was hardly cut out for fieldwork. Usually he relied on hired hands, but despite the generous wage offer, all the usual suspects had turned him down this time. Instead, he'd come armed with an array of weapons and the high-tech Insurve tracking discs. Used by conservationists and hunters alike, the artificially intelligent Insurves had been specifically built to bore through the hardest of skins.

After a couple of near misses from creatures far less threatening than the Scarf-dragons, Max had decided to find a new recruit from among the convicts. Surely the promise of escaping from Hellborn in his shuttle would seal the deal? Apparently not. So far everyone he'd asked seemed to prefer to hide in caves rather than risk their lives on such a foolhardy quest.

He was considering abandoning the quest, when he'd spotted Sonny brazenly building a shelter on the hillside. Max had been tracking Sonny with his PDA for a few days now, waiting for the right moment to approach him. He couldn't be too careful, especially after he'd almost become breakfast for one hungry prisoner, a hulk of a man who looked anything but malnourished. He'd only just got over that near miss when he'd lost all his weapons to another convict. The sleek and alluring woman claimed she didn't want to leave Hellborn. Instead, she proposed an exchange. One dragon egg for all Max's

weapons. On closer inspection, it turned out to have been a dummy, the kind used to distract attacking Scarf-dragons, who were quite prepared to sacrifice a meal in order to take an orphaned egg back to their nest.

As he contemplated knocking on Sonny's door, Max twirled the egg on the flattened slab of rock that he'd been using as a viewpoint to the hut below. "Oh, bother and damnation," he shouted, as one final, overenthusiastic spin sent the egg tumbling down the rock face. It bounced all the way down, careering into Sonny's hut. Max hid behind the slab as Sonny stepped out, picked up the egg and scanned the area. Shrugging, the convict returned inside.

Wendy had been showing off her skills by weaving in and out of the satellite network above Hellborn. It was all too much for Dazza, whose head was hurting. At least he had the perfect source of pain relief on board the mini-shuttle. Skulking away from the others, he made his way to the drug den. The door slid open, and he stepped inside, inhaling deeply. It was only then that he noticed the broken mobile on the floor. Puzzled, he bent down to pick it up. Cat-woman-like, Clara leapt down from the ceiling and landed in front of Dazza. "I think you'll find that belongs to me," she said.

"It's a bit of an antique, but with the right tool..." replied Dazza producing his pocket solder. "Put in a good word for me with Myers, and I'll get it up and running again."

"If you value your life, you'll fix it for me anyway."

The Student Union was decked out like a torture chamber. Two of the boys were strapping the Doctor to a tall-

backed metal chair. Fitted with an array of wires and cutting implements, it looked like a gruesome cross between a barber's chair and an electric chair. "Don't really want to hurt you. Not after you put Smelly-Delly in her place," said Dunstan, watching on. "That was classic."

"You deserve better than this," said the Doctor.

"This is as good as it gets for us, mate," replied Dunstan. "Knock him about a bit, just enough to show a few bruises." They were about to lay into him, looking far from willing to hold back, when the wall terminal alerted them to an incoming video message. It was Myers.

"Release him at once. The inspector's story checks out," she urged.

"Has the shuttle come back?" said Dunstan with keen interest.

"Not exactly. I suggest you tune into Hellborn."

"Hellborn? What's Hellborn?" said the Doctor, as Dunstan changed the channel. The mini-shuttle was performing a series of stunts over Hellborn. There was something eerily familiar about the planetary body, but the Doctor couldn't quite place it. At first, he thought they were watching a newscast, but just before cutting to an ad break, a series of tacky captions overlaying clips from the day's events so far told him all he needed to know. "So, this is what passes for entertainment here. Why am I not surprised?" said the Doctor making for the door.

"Bobby, you idiot," said Dunstan to the screen. "How am I supposed to get my next fix now?"

"You don't need to get high on Ice-Sheet and you certainly don't need these torture toys. Here..." said the Doctor, rummaging in a pocket. Dunstan puzzled over the unfamiliar object the inspector

had just launched at him. "It's a Rubik's Cube, an ancient stress-management device," explained the Doctor. "Legend says that the real treasure lies within, but that it will only open once you've matched all the colours. A word of advice: cheat and the whole thing goes up in smoke. Should keep you out of mischief for hours." And with that, he hurried away.

Inside the flight deck, Bobby's grudging admiration for Wendy had given way to sheer panic. "Come on, Wendy," he said. "Playing chicken with the satellites is one thing but chasing after a Scarf-dragon? You're out of your mind." "Or off her face on Ice-Sheet," said Clara, striding in purposefully with a sheepish Dazza in her trail. "I'm from the agency. Miss Oswald to you. When your school said they needed a supply, I don't think this is quite what they had in mind. Now come away from the controls at once. It's my turn to drive." "Like I'm going anywhere. Dazza, sort her out," said Wendy. Dazza looked at Clara, but all it took was one raised eyebrow and he was putty in her hands. He nugged Wendy so hard that her head hit the control panel, knocking her unconscious. "Yea, a little bit overenthusiastic, but you'll do," said Clara. "Now what about you three?"

Bobby and the girls obediently pulled Wendy away from the controls, and Clara took her position at the helm. "Don't think for a moment that this gets you all off the hook," she said. "But it's like I told you, miss, she made us do it," complained Dazza as he got to work on repairing Clara's phone. But Clara wasn't listening, she was dithering over the controls, wondering why on Earth she'd thought she could fly the

thing. She pulled a lever, assuming it to be the steering mechanism. The ship accelerated towards the Scarf-dragon, clipping its tail. As Clara pushed the lever back, the shuttle slowly came to a grinding halt. In horror, the students looked through the cockpit as the angered Scarf-dragon twisted its body 180 degrees to face them.

"It's beautiful, the Doctor would so love this," said Clara, marvelling at the creature's mane of multicoloured stripes. "I see why you call it a Scarf-dragon." "I'm not so sure you do, miss," said Bobby, quickly coming to her aid with the flight controls. The ship was in mid loop when the Scarf-dragon began to extend its body, wrapping itself around the stricken vessel and pulling it violently towards the moon's surface. Cracks began to form along the ship's hull as the Dragon tightened its grip.

The Doctor had returned to the TARDIS, armed with enough information for him to track the mini-shuttle. But his mood had certainly not improved. "I get it, missy. You don't like her. What is it? Trying to get rid of me at last? Jealous that she's saved me more times than you have? I don't really care, but if I find out that you're the one responsible for getting Clara onto that ship then... I'll fill your fluid links with liquid Ice-Sheet."

"Jump!" Clara ordered as Dazza hesitated over the hole that had opened up at the bottom of the mini-shuttle. He looked down at the others who were already jet-chuting to Hellborn. "Here," said Dazza, handing the mobile back to Clara. "Please don't tell." "Sometimes all you kids need is a little push," said Clara, repeating a well-remembered saying from her favourite teacher. Dazza had no time to protest

as she bundled him out. Her plan was then to tie herself to the unconscious Wendy and leap out together. But the Dragon had other ideas, blocking the hole as it performed another loop around the shuttle. Reluctantly, Clara switched on the repaired mobile. If truth be told, she'd been getting quite a kick from going it alone.

On Hellborn's fully automated prime-satellite, the unauthorized jet-chuters had been detected. A pilotless maintenance ship was immediately dispatched to their location. The Doctor danced with delight as the call came through on his earpiece. But at that very moment, the TARDIS cloister bell began to toll. "No, no, no..." There was no way he'd be able to hear Clara now. He'd been placed in an impossible position. The cloister bell was probably another sign of the TARDIS's disapproval of Clara, but with the old girl clearly not in any present danger, it was possible that via the phone link, she was reacting to a situation inside the mini-shuttle. Traveling to the ship could be suicidal, but that wasn't going to deter him. "Let me do the impossible thing for once," said the Doctor. "Geronimo!" he cried, like a man possessed, as the TARDIS dematerialized.

Max had watched with interest as the passengers bailed out onto a nearby hill. He couldn't believe his luck when the Scarf-dragon headed towards him. If he could track the creature to its nesting grounds, he might finally be able to locate his prize. Using a hand-made catapult, he fired his one remaining Insurve disc at the dragon. "Damn it," he said, cursing his rubbish aim. He was about to recover the tracker and try again, when at the foot of the hill,

Sonny emerged from his shelter with the dummy dragon egg in hand.

More concerned about losing a means of escaping Hellborn than the fate of the mini-shuttle's remaining occupants, Sonny ran towards the Scarfdragon, waving frantically. "Hello my lovely," he said. "I've brought you a present." He threw the egg into the Scarf-dragon's eye line. The dragon stopped in mid-flight, as if contemplating its next move. Then without warning, it released the mini-shuttle and nosedived towards the egg, sweeping it up in one clean movement.

"As dumb as she is beautiful," Sonny muttered as the dragon flew off. To Sonny's relief, the ship was still intact, but worryingly it was now in freefall. "Come on," he said, hoping that the pilot was still on board and conscious. "Pull it up, pull it up. Easy now... easy."

Once the Scarf-dragon had released its grip, Clara had a choice: she could jump through the re-exposed hole or try and save the ship. "Jumping is for cowards," she declared. Struggling to get the ship back under control, she cursed as her mobile flew off the side of the control panel. She'd left it on, despite the din of the cloister bell, in the hope that it might help the Doctor to find her. "Okay, Doctor. This is where you're supposed to come in. Last minute... and this really is the last minute," she said. Miraculously, she managed to steady the ship. "On second thoughts, you know what? Don't bother. I can do this. Just need to figure out how to land the thing." Thinking on her feet, Clara dragged Wendy's body into the druginfused closet. "If it worked for me..." she said. Within seconds Wendy came to. "Miss?"

"I'm not too proud to admit that I made a mistake. The best teachers let their students learn in action," said Clara. "So, I'm putting you back on piloting duties. Oh, and just to make the test that little bit harder... we appear to be crash-landing."

Sonny's initial relief as the mini-shuttle's pilot appeared to have regained control turned to panic. It wasn't going to slow down in time. He ran back into the hut, but seconds later the ship careered straight through it. Max flinched as the mini-shuttle collided into the hill, but quickly returned to the task in hand: recovering the Insurve. He located the tracker using his PDA and was about to pick it up when a gust of wind pulled him back. Sheltering behind a rock, he watched in utter disbelief as the TARDIS materialized.

The Doctor stepped out purposely and frowned. "You've done it again, haven't you? This isn't the mini-shuttle. You're supposed to be taking me to Clara." he complained.

"Wait!" shouted Max as the Doctor marched angrily back into the TARDIS, slamming the door behind him. Tentatively, Max knocked on the door, but after receiving no answer he walked around the TARDIS, scanning the object with his PDA to assess its value. "A painted wooden box. Worthless," he said, puzzled. He tried pushing the TARDIS off the Insurve, but the door opened causing him to fall at the Doctor's feet.

"Well, that's new, but really there's no need. I'm not the Lord of this manor," said the Doctor. He crouched down in front of Max, his face full of urgency, which given the delay in responding seemed bizarre to the treasure hunter. "So, weight? Oh, I don't know, fifty kilograms give or take a Jammie Dodger or

two. It's not really something we've ever discussed," said the Doctor, pulling Max up. "Have you seen her?"

"If she was on the mini-shuttle, then you're too late," replied Max, pointing to the crash site. The Doctor immediately ran towards the smouldering wreckage. Max hurried after him. "You didn't let me finish. It's okay... the crew bailed out. Unless like me they've got jamming software fitted into their PDAs, they'll have been picked up by a maintenance craft. Those things don't hang about," he said breathlessly. The Doctor stopped in his tracks and turned to face Max. "You wouldn't mind moving your teleporting box, it's just...?" said Max, provoking a stern and unsettling stare. He tried a different tact. "Is this Clara your daughter?" The Doctor's stare turned to puzzlement, but he seemed more interested in the view behind Max. "I mean, to come in person to Hellborn to bring her home. That takes a special kind of commitment." Max was now beginning to lose patience with the silent visitor. "Look, she'll be on the prime-satellite with the other kids. So do us both a favour and take your box there." The Doctor, continuing to ignore Max, knelt down to pick up a fallen leaf. He licked it and grimaced, before scanning the ground with his sonic device. Max reasoned that this must be the device that had given the wooden box its powers of teleportation. It would no doubt be a poor substitute for a Scarf-dragon egg, but it could still be worth a small fortune.

"Kids. You said they were all kids," said the Doctor, suddenly rising to his feet. "As far as I could tell," replied Max. But the Doctor was already on his way again. "I'm guessing it's a weapon too?" said Max, catching up with the Doctor at the crash site. "It would need to be

effective against Scarf-dragons." Spotting a trapped, dust-covered body face down in the wreckage, the Doctor frantically moved the debris, splitting apart the bigger obstructions with the sonic. "This is for fixing lives, not killing them," he said angrily as he turned over the body.

"It's one of the students." "Can you bring her back?"

"The sonic can do practically anything. Apart from raise the dead," said the Doctor. "For example, it's great for soothing a ravenous beast."

Max turned around nervously. A Scarf-dragon had glided down behind him. But this was no ordinary dragon. Bigger and fiercer than any he'd seen, this had to be a queen. Suddenly, it dawned on Max that he was already in the heart of the nesting grounds.

After pulling Clara out from the wreckage, Sonny had taken her through a tiny opening in the hill against which he had built his hut. It was how he'd survived every Scarf-dragon attack. He promised Clara that the next day she'd be extracted from the moon like the others, but that with nightfall approaching, they'd be safer underground. Surprised by her ignorance about the moon, he'd been filling her in as they walked deeper into the cave network. Clara carefully wriggled her way through the fluorescent green weeds that lit the caves. "Don't worry, they're safe to touch. Alien in origin, like most of the organic life forms here. But completely harmless," said Sonny.

"Alien?" said Clara, not expecting a local to make such a distinction. From her perspective, the whole place was alien. "Dumped here like the waste from Delta4, just to add colour to the entertainment. No one knows how the producers

got them here, but they're all victims of this sick game show. Even the Scarf-dragons."

"I don't get it. If you wanted to stay hidden, why build a conservatory and a front door? It's a bit of a giveaway," asked Clara.

"Why should I live in fear and shame? This world should belong to us, not the mindless audience and certainly not the TV executives. Anyway, they don't like us being underground... Terrible for the viewing figures. They have a nasty habit of dropping vampire badgers into the caves to route us out. Nowhere is safe on Hellborn, but all the while I'm building huts, they haven't got a clue that my base of operations is down here. My huts are quite literally a front."

Eventually the path opened out onto a vast chamber. "You get some rest and I'll keep watch," said Sonny. "It'll be hard but try to sleep. There's nothing you could have done to save her."

It was small comfort, thought Clara. Ridiculously, she could save a Time Lord, over and over again, but a child who should have been in her care?

The Doctor tried various settings on the sonic to tame the Scarf-dragon, none of which were having any noticeable effect. His Venusian lullaby was even less helpful, agitating the creature further. Fearlessly, the Doctor went nose to snout with the dragon. "Haven't we met before somewhere?" he said. "It's just... you seem familiar, if a little out of place." The creature wrapped itself around Max, forming a snake-like grip and stretching to impossible proportions. The very specific method of attack triggered long-buried memories in the Doctor, as the penny finally dropped. "Oh... Ohhhh. You're not a Scarf-dragon. You're a Dimension Twister!"

"Help me, for God's sake man," squealed Max.

The Doctor was still holding out his sonic, but in truth he didn't have a plan. The dragon sneezed, loosening its grip enough for Max to break free.

"Of course - dust," said the Doctor, frantically searching through the debris and sniffing for the familiar smell of an Ice Warrior. With a cry of triumph, he waved his arms about wildly, drawing the dragon's attention away from Max. "Oi, Puff the Magic Dragon. Over here. Come and get a sniff of this," said the Doctor, exploding another wall with the sonic, and showering the dragon with a layer of thick dust. The dragon appeared to smile as it spread its wings and flew straight up.

"I've never seen a Scarf-dragon reach such heights before; is it a unique gift of the queen?" said Max in relief, as the dragon disappeared into the sky.

"She's high as a kite. It was just a confidence issue," replied the Doctor, picking up the remains of Clara's phone as the dragon swooped back down. "Confidence: the double-edged sword that can save your life or place you in the greatest danger. So, which was it for you, Clara?"

"The owner of this joint's missing too, Doctor. But I think I know where they've gone," said Max, sticking his head through the hillside opening.

"You get some rest," he said. Was there anything more pointless than a chivalrous man? thought Clara, as she watched Sonny dozing. Restlessly, she walked around the cave, wondering whether or not to just leave him there and return to the surface. But there was a mystery to solve, and this cave of treasures seemed as good a place as any to start. If the prison freak show had

only been going for twenty years, then why were some of the alien life forms already so virulent? As if to confirm her suspicions, she spotted what appeared to be the fossilized remains of a baby Scarf-dragon in the rock face. It just didn't add up.

"Sonny, you're a Womble," said Clara to herself as she rooted through the various odds and ends he'd gathered from the dumping grounds. She had no idea what she was looking for, and most of it seemed predictably useless, until she found a trinket box decorated by a series of Gallifreyan symbols. She recognized the language from the history books in the TARDIS. "OK, I so wasn't expecting that," she said, wondering now if Sonny was another Time Lord. Banished for interfering in the affairs of state? If he was a Time Lord, then he was a renegade like the Doctor. Perhaps it was the unavoidable destiny of all rebel Gallifreyans, to become the archetypal outsider. No, it was a stupid idea. A Time Lord like the Doctor wouldn't be trying to make this world his own, he'd be finding a way to get off it.

The box contained a notepad, its pages brittle and dusty. She was used to the TARDIS translating alien languages, so initially the fact that she could read its contents gave her hope that the Doctor had followed her here. But it became apparent from the spelling mistakes that the notes were originally in English. There was only one Time Lord who would prefer modern English over ancient Gallifreyan.

"Clara, don't hate me." She barely jumped at the Doctor's entrance.

"How did you know where to find me?" she replied with her back to him. "Oh, don't tell me, you've been pulling all the strings from the start. This was never about my CV, was it?"

"Clara, I had nothing to do with getting you here; those strings belong to another. A person died today; do you really think... You of all people should know me better."

Suddenly Clara turned around and threw the notepad at the Doctor, its pages flying out. "But I didn't know about this place," she said. "I thought that turning a moon into a freak show was bad enough, but what you've done..."

"Can one of you tell me what on Delta4 you're talking about? Who is this man, Clara?" said Sonny, woken by the fierce exchange.

"Yeah. I'd like to know that too," said Max, quickly introducing himself to Sonny. "Max Stone by the way. Treasure hunter and all-round entrepreneur. I'm a big fan of yours."

"So, you're the one who's been stalking me? Well, if you're such a fan, then how about you get me off this godforsaken rock?"

"I barely know him," said Clara, storming out of the cave. The Doctor chased after her.

"Planet of the Doctor?" said Max, reading the discarded front cover of the notepad. "Sounds like the title of some corny sci-fi show."

Sonny gathered up the other pages. "It's a catalogue of some kind. Listing various species, their place of origin and date of extraction."

"Clara. Stop. It was a pet project of mine, but in my defence, I was young and idealistic," said the Doctor.

"Pet' being the operative word. How could you have been so stupid? Why, Doctor? Did it make you feel like a god?"

"I was saving them, Clara."

"Stealing them more like."

"Every single species was on the verge of extinction. I gave them a new home."

"And then what, you abandoned them?"

How can you forget a whole planet like that?"

"They weren't monsters when I brought them here. Take the Dimension Twisters," replied the Doctor as the queen dragon flew past. "Peaceful creatures, harmless unless threatened. They should have grown in intelligence, spread their wings like butterflies, not devolved into giant hungry caterpillars. How was I to know that humans would come along and ruin it all?"

"Blaming humans again. You're good at that."

"It must be the contamination from the waste they've been dumping here."

"You said the strings belong to somebody else, what did you mean? Isn't this just about you and me?"

"The TARDIS used you," said the Doctor pointing out the familiar blue box on the hill. "She played us both. Boy, she's good."

"Nope, still not getting it."

"She brought you here and made sure I couldn't stop you."

"So why didn't she just drop us off on Hellborn in the first place? Or write you a memo? 'Hey, Doctor remember that planet of yours?'"

"The TARDIS moves in mysterious ways, Clara. You'll get used to it. All that matters now is putting an end to this."

Clara wasn't having any of it. "If the TARDIS took advantage of those children, then she's responsible for Wendy's death. I'd rather stay here than put my life in her hands again."

"No, that's not how it works. With or without us, those kids were always going to try out a stunt like that. And if you hadn't been there, it wouldn't have just been poor Wendy coming home in a body bag. We can save the school, save this planet and..."

"Listen to yourself, Doctor. You're at it

again, playing god. Enough already.” The Doctor gave Clara the TARDIS key. “What’s that for?”

“If you think she’s that bad an influence then throw it away. Otherwise, go and talk to her, make your peace. And while you’re busy doing that, I’ve got a TV show to cancel.”

“Doctor, stop. Don’t you dare walk off when I’m talking to you...”

The Doctor grinned as he walked back for Max and Sonny. “One hundred per cent teacher, of course she is,” he muttered.

“This moon... we could be sitting on a small fortune,” said Max. “What else has this Doctor fella been breeding here?”

“And just how old is this place?” added Sonny.

“Your people have made it worthless,” said the Doctor joining them in the cave. “But it’s time I reclaimed my property. If you’re both hoping to make it out of here alive, then you might want to come with me.”

“What are you planning to do?” asked Sonny.

“Why, hitch a ride of course. Do keep up.”

Back outside the cave, the Doctor waved his sonic screwdriver at the queen Scarf-dragon who, still high on Ice-Sheet, was whizzing around manically. Assuming the sonic was the source of her fix, the queen approached him to be fed. He leapt on her back and aimed the sonic at the primesatellite, causing the installation to light up. Sonny and Max watched on agog.

“Hop on, you two,” said the Doctor gleefully.

Back in St. Branson’s staffroom, Myers and the other staff were beside themselves, when the unprecedented hap-

pened. The show which had been broadcast continuously for twenty years had lost the feed. It had all started with the incredible sight of three people riding a queen Scarf-dragon. At first there was only the strangest bit of interference – dark lines bouncing across the screen and splitting the images, but within minutes the whole picture had gone black. The Scarf-dragon had wrapped itself around the prime-satellite.

“What are we supposed to do for lunch, now?” said Crompton, considering the unthinkable and switching channels.

“Stop... there’s another picture forming,” said Myers. It was the Doctor, flanked either side by Sonny and Max, sitting in the control room of the prime-satellite. Behind them, the staff could just about make out four of their runaway pupils, including Dazza who was destroying Hellborn’s master recordings with his solderer.

The Doctor addressed the camera. “People of Delta4, this is your Doctor speaking. Hellborn is closed for business. I repeat, closed for business. You need to return the remaining prisoners to your world where I expect you to treat them humanely. Pardon the pardonable, mend the broken and rehabilitate the offender. And for goodness’ sake, stop dumping your waste on somebody else’s backyard...”

Clara missed the Doctor’s dragon-riding exploits, but she had watched in awe as, soon after, hordes of Scarf-dragons inspired by – or perhaps called by – their queen turned the skies above Hellborn into an array of colours, before worming their way around every single satellite installation. She hesitated outside the TARDIS, unsure of whether or not she’d be welcomed, but

instead of using the key, she decided to put her to the test. Clara clicked her fingers. “No. Thought not...” As soon as she turned away, the doors opened. “And he calls me his Impossible Girl!” Inside the TARDIS, the transmission from the prime-satellite was playing on the monitor.

The Doctor was still in full flow: “Why should we, I hear you ask? The Scarf-dragons are having a ball crushing the waste you dumped here. But turn their generosity into an act of slavery, and they won’t hesitate to take it back to where it came from.”

“Go, Doctor,” said Clara. “Give ’em hell. But come on, seal the deal. Use the psychic paper.”

The Doctor flinched and adjusted his earpiece. The broadest of grins filled his face as he pushed the psychic paper against the camera lens. “My credentials. As you can see, this is my planet, and you have no right being here. Teacher’s orders.” The Doctor turned off the signal. His worried expression was in marked contrast to his triumphalist camera face.

“What’s wrong, Doctor?” said Max.

“Don’t tell the kids, but we haven’t got long; it’s only a matter of minutes before the Scarf-dragon squeezes the life out of this installation. I’m beginning to fear I’ve made a grave miscalculation.”

“Can’t we all ride the dragon back to the surface? She’s big enough,” Max asked, panicking now.

“She won’t leave until this whole satellite is destroyed. I lured her here under the false pretence of the abandoned young. Now the drug’s worn off, she’s not happy to find out that it’s her lunch and not her children waiting for her here.”

“If we are to die, I’m ready, Doctor,” said Sonny. “At least ours will be the

first meaningful deaths on Hellborn.”

“Meaningful death? That’s a contradiction in terms, Sonny,” replied the Doctor. “I was banking on my best friends burying the hatchet.”

They all dived for cover as the Scarf-dragon violently pulled the satellite towards the moon’s surface. The TARDIS materialized over the Doctor and the others, a split second before the Scarf-dragon dropped the broken satellite, sending it crashing to Hellborn. “Did you have to leave it until the last minute?” said the Doctor. “Now he knows how I feel,” joked Clara.

Dazza smiled. “Thank you, Miss, that’s twice you’ve saved our lives today. We all thought you and Wendy were goners.”

Clara glared at the Doctor for leaving her to break the news. “How about a tour of the Doctor’s ship? It’s bigger than you think,” she said, ushering the pupils out of the console room. There was no way she was going to tell them in the presence of the Doctor, not with his lack of tact.

“You’re not kidding,” laughed Bobby.

“Great idea, Clara,” said the Doctor with misplaced cheer. “Be sure to check out the football pitch. But Dazza – no soldering, eh?”

“We’ll talk along the way,” Clara added sombrely as she left.

“Time to take you all home,” said the Doctor.

“I already am, Doctor,” replied Sonny. “I’d like to stay here... Manage your gaff while you’re away.”

“If you’re sure you can handle an angry dragon queen,” said the Doctor. “And you Maxtible? Or is it Maximillian?”

“Just drop me off near my ship,” said Max shiftily. “Can’t afford to leave her behind: she’s a top-of-the-range mod-

el.”

The TARDIS materialized as far away from Max’s shuttle as was possible. “Aren’t you forgetting something, Max-ine?” said the Doctor as the treasure hunter followed Sonny out. The Doctor held out his hand.

“Er...”

“It wouldn’t do to go pressing the wrong button. You might just find your precious shuttle gets reduced to the size of a pea.”

“It was worth a try,” replied Max handing the sonic back to the Doctor.

“And no more egg poaching, eh? I prefer mine scrambled anyway. Just like your tracking disc...” Max tried to look all innocent. “...crushed by the full weight of the TARDIS.” The TARDIS materialized outside Coal Hill School.

The Doctor spotted Clara walking purposefully towards the front gate, ready to start her first day. “Clara,” he shouted. “Give ’em hell!”

Clara rushed over. “I don’t know if I’m ready, Doctor,” she said.

“The best people never are.”

“We did good on Delta4, didn’t we? I mean the psychic paper, genius, eh?”

“You were almost brilliant.”

“Only almost?”

“They saw through the paper. If it wasn’t for Sonny and Max...”

“And there’s me thinking we were the odd couple.”

“Come on, Clara,” the Doctor urged.

“The best workers always arrive last minute. I’ve got something to show you.”

“Better make it quick,” said Clara, following him inside. The Doctor swivelled round the monitor.

“Delta4 thirty years on from our arrival.

The Sonny and Max natural history show – Life on Hellborn. It will be the most watched programme since Hell-

born at its peak.”

“And the school?”

“Still struggling. But on the plus side, instead of worrying about kids hijacking mini-shuttles, they’re busy banning the latest craze. All that clicking, terrible for concentration. They call it the Dunstan’s Cube. He made a small fortune from designing the toy and donated seventy per cent to the Wendy Memorial Centre.”

“Don’t tell me, it’s some kind of drug rehab centre?”

“Whatever gave you that idea? No, the Dunstan’s Cube has practically wiped out the market for Ice-Sheet. The centre is a teacher training facility, with a very specific remit as laid out by the original trustees, led by Bobby, Dazza and Co. Experienced-based learning, right up your street. Now run, you clever girl, and go and be a teacher.”



THE KEY WITHIN

by Alex Shewan

Petra lay back, staring through the glass window, eyes searching outwards into the starry night. The hazy aura surrounded the moon, almost hypnotic. Petra’s sleepy eyes battled to stay open but she knew she had to stay awake. It was a battle she could not win. Sleep played with her but eventually it would take her. Despite her struggle, she closed her eyes and drifted. Drifted into the nightmare; the nightmare which claimed her every night.

Jamie sat in the corner of the console room, watching Victoria. She appeared to have drifted to another time and place. Wherever she was, her mind was not in the TARDIS. He watched her as she smiled vaguely to herself. She appeared oblivious to the tears which rolled down her pale, lifeless cheeks. “Dearest Victoria,” Jamie thought to himself. “So much sadness. So much loss.” Jamie held back an urge to reach out to her. This was a journey she had to go through alone. Since her father’s death, loneliness appeared to be Victoria’s path. At least that’s how it seemed to Jamie. Perhaps one day that would change. “Jamie! Victoria!” The stillness was interrupted by the excited exclamations of the Doctor, a scruffy yet striking looking man, with his shock of dark hair adding to his eccentric appearance. “Did you hear it?”

Victoria suddenly returned from her reverie. “Hear what, Doctor?”

The Doctor closed his eyes and dropped to the floor, sitting cross legged in the middle of the room.

“Oh, here we go,” sighed Jamie as he resigned himself to the fact that getting a straight answer from the Doctor was almost certainly an impossibility.

The Doctor opened his eyes. “Someone needs our help, but I can’t locate them. A woman, I think.”

Victoria stared intently at the Doctor. She felt herself being consumed by an unfamiliar energy. An energy which did not belong to her. A power she did not recognise yet which engulfed her. “Doctor. I can feel it.” The Doctor and Jamie watched Victoria as she closed her eyes and drifted. Victoria heard the voice. A non-threatening voice. She tried to make out the words, but they were distant, vague.

“Concentrate,” instructed the Doctor. “Listen to the voice, Victoria. Allow it into your head.” Victoria focused and one word became clear. Mondas.

Ever since Petra could remember, she had been plagued by an inner horror. A horror which she could not place. A horror with no form. She racked her brain, but her efforts were futile. She had no memory of any previous life. All she knew was the desolation around her. She was alone. Always had been. Yet how could that be? She must have known other life forms at some point. She must have come from somewhere. She must have an origin. Yet the answers would not come to her. Loneliness consumed her yet she knew nothing else. Loneliness was her being, her existence.

Every night, Petra felt an energy. She would not give up. The only relief from

the horror of her nightmares was the feeling of an omnipresent energy. A force for good. She knew it was there; she sensed it. Every night, she called out to it. Last night, it located her. She knew she would not be alone for long. Petra's nightmares had become stronger and more lucid. The images, the voices, the pain scrambled her mind. A force called to her. Not the force she longed for but a tortured force. A force which knew cruelty and evil and longed to be set free. Something within her was struggling to break free but she was afraid. She would not succumb to its power. Petra knew the key to her existence lay within this energy, but she was afraid, for she knew not what she would find. Good or bad, she was afraid to find out.

Meanwhile, an army was raging. An army under threat. A metallic army. On a distant planet: Telos.

Petra scolded herself for her reluctance to face her fear. She knew the truth lay within her, but she was not ready to face it. As she sat with the darkness of her thoughts, a strange whirring noise took over her senses. She got up and faced the direction of the sound. As she focused, an unfamiliar object materialised in front of her, and three beings emerged. Humanoid it would seem. Like herself. Another nightmare? Yet she felt a connection. An energy. The energy. Was she found?
"Hello, there!" called the strange little man, with a vibrancy in his gait and his manner which overwhelmed her. "I'm the Doctor. And this is Jamie and Victoria. You called; I believe?" Petra gazed unbelievably. Was this her salvation? Was this her answer at last?
"Well?" asked the Doctor, somewhat impatiently now. His manner had

changed. Petra felt that questioning him would be futile. She fell to the ground and told her story.
Petra had woken up on this planet when she was a child. She had no memory of her existence beforehand yet something within her knew that she had a history. She had lived a life of solitude with only her nightmares giving her a clue to her previous existence. If she could discover her origins, she would find the key. A key which she felt lay within her; once she found the key, she would have the answers.
The Doctor listened intently. "You do realise that you contacted us via a telepathic link?" Petra nodded. It made sense. The energy. It felt so powerful. "Does the name Mondas mean anything to you?" Petra started. Mondas. She shook her head. Yet, as she did so the name raised a feeling of terror within her. Terror yet, paradoxically, a feeling of familiarity. Belonging.
The Doctor looked at her. He was satisfied she was telling the truth, yet something did not make sense. "Was this the key?" he wondered? "Mondas."
As the Doctor studied Petra, he noticed a pendant around her neck. "Have you always worn that pendant?" he asked. Petra nodded. Speech evaded her now. Her saviour was not what she had envisaged, and she was beginning to feel herself fall apart. "It contains a vial of gold dust," Petra explained.
"A clue to your previous life?" asked the Doctor. The pair sat in silence, studying each other intently.
Jamie and Victoria sat quietly, witnessing the exchange. "Cybermen" whispered Victoria. It's coming together."
"Aye," agreed Jamie. "I don't like this, Victoria." Victoria studied her environment. It was she who had made the contact with Petra, and it was she who felt the evil surrounding her. She leaped off

the ground as she heard the blast. The sky was on fire and the craft emerged from the distance. All four of them looked in horror as the army of metal emerged from the flames and marched steadily yet determinedly towards them. "Run!" cried the Doctor and they made their way as speedily as they could towards the sanctuary of the TARDIS.
Once inside, they found relief in their position of safety, albeit temporary. Petra collapsed in a heap of terror, relief, and horror. The sight of the Cybermen had triggered something in her mind and images began to piece themselves together.
"Petra, whispered the Doctor, the calmness of his voice, soothing her. "Do you know who you are?" Tears flowed down Petra's cheeks. Jamie and Victoria both moved the console for her. The Doctor made a sign for them to stop. "Petra. You are from Mondas." Petra raised her head and gazed into the Doctor's eyes. Thousands of years of history stared back at her. Who was this man? This man whose knowledge was infinite?
Petra closed her eyes and began her story as the memories came back to her. "I was born on Mondas. I was a child. My parents saw what was coming. We got on a ship and made our escape but there was an explosion. They died in the crash, but I survived. And here I am."
"And the vial?" asked the Doctor. Petra shrugged. The Doctor leapt up excitedly. "Your parents knew that gold dust is lethal to the Cybermen. That is your protection. If we can release it into the air, we can defeat them. You can defeat them. They have come for you because they see you as one of their own. You escaped and they want you back; to turn you into one of them. And they will not stop until they have you. It is a matter of duty. But you will defeat them. You will win, Petra."

Yet, despite his outward confidence, the Doctor was not so sure. He sat and closed his eyes. He knew the Cybermen and he knew they would not stop until they had reclaimed Petra. As long as she remained free, she was a symbol of failure for the Cybermen. Her escape from Mondas had secured her freedom but for how long and at what cost? Petra had lived a life of solitude and loneliness. Even if she defeated the Cybermen, her journey remained unclear. The Doctor feared for her future.
The Doctor's eyes snapped open, emerging from the darkness of his thoughts which had clouded his thinking. He made his way to the TARDIS door and opened it cautiously, a mixture of trepidation, excitement, and fear. Yet fear never lasted long in the Doctor's heart. Fear was a debilitating barrier which must be felt and acknowledged, but quickly discarded. For fear would not defeat the sight in front of him. An army of Cybermen prepared to take back what was theirs. The Doctor closed the door. Approaching the Cybermen at this point was futile. He knew their intention but he needed a plan. Underestimating the strength of the Cybermen was arrogant folly. Petra stepped towards the door, overwhelmed by the sight of the army. As the Doctor had been speaking, a memory within her had been triggered. Something vague. Yet the feeling was strong. The feeling that she had a purpose to fulfil. He parents had escaped Mondas for a reason. They died before they were able to accomplish their goal but Petra was still here. She had a legacy to uphold and she would do it. Her presence had put the Doctor, Jamie and Victoria at risk; Petra would not have their deaths on her conscience. Surrendering herself to the Cybermen could be her best chance of finding some an-

swers. It's me they want, Doctor, and my answers lie with the Cybermen. If I go to them, they will leave, and you will be safe. I won't endanger you for a fate that is mine." Before the Doctor could act, Petra was gone.

Jamie and Victoria could not hide their helplessness and astonishment at Petra's exit. "I don't understand," Jamie lamented. Victoria raised her eyes. "I do." Victoria understood all too well that desire to avenge a parent. She knew that foolish as it was, Petra needed to do this. She glanced at the Doctor who was deep in thought.

The vial of gold dust was their best hope. Gold was lethal to the Cybermen but how to use it? "Doctor, what are we going to do?"

The Doctor suddenly became aware of Victoria's presence. Dearest Victoria. On the surface so fragile and dependent. Yet she had had a strength, intelligence, and courage which he had never seen in anyone before. This extraordinary paradox of a woman.

"We are going to make a weapon, Victoria. And then we are going to defeat the Cybermen." The Doctor grinned and leaped to his feet. If we create a weapon to distribute the gold dust into the air, the Cybermen will be defeated. Gold is toxic to them. Simple!"

Jamie sighed. "Not so simple!" he thought. Yet he knew victory would be theirs. There was no doubt of that.

The four of them got to work. Jamie, Victoria and Petra watched as the Doctor immersed himself in his work. His skills seemed to be infinite. Eventually, the Doctor gave a victorious exclamation. "Success! I knew it! We have our weapon!" The Doctor proudly displayed a small device which hardly looked as though it could defeat a cyber army. "One emission of gold from this machine is lethal to the Cybermen. If we can find

a way to inject it into their system, we can destroy them." The Doctor danced with delight. "But first, we must find Petra."

The reality of Petra's situation had become all too painful and as she sat in the prison cell, she knew she was out of her depth. She had underestimated the cold, ruthlessness of the Cybermen and it now appeared that her bravery had been unwise and misplaced. If only she had stayed with the Doctor. His knowledge was beyond anything she could comprehend. Why had she not stayed? He was her best chance. Her impetuosity had failed her this time. If she was lucky, she now faced death. If she was lucky. Petra tried to put the idea of conversion out of her head. That was not an option. As Petra berated herself, her consciousness was suddenly brought back to the present.

The metallic voice, devoid of emotion or humanity pierced through her. Could this monster at any time really have been human? Did it have any memory of what it used to be? Was there a lost soul somewhere inside of it, crying to be free? Petra closed her mind to such thoughts. "You will be converted," stated the Cyberman, "you are one of us." Petra screamed as electrical charge seared through her brain. And darkness.

As consciousness returned, Petra felt pain flowing through the entirety of her a body. A pain she could not define. As she attempted to move her head, the realization came to her that she was experiencing some kind of paralysis. No. It was not paralysis. She had been restrained. And the horror consumed her. She was surrounded by pods of Cybermen. Pods which revealed her new situation. She had been prepared for conversion and the process was about to

start. Petra strained her body in an attempt to release herself from her shackles, but it was useless. She was to be converted. Terror consumed her. He screams engulfed the Cyber-Station but there was no one to hear. Petra was alone with her nightmare. A nightmare from which it appeared she would never awaken.

The Doctor, Jamie and Victoria emerged from the TARDIS, surveying the scene in front of them. All quiet. Empty. This was not what they were expecting. The Cyber army with which they expected to be faced had vanished. And with it, Petra. "They have succeeded in seizing their target," sighed the Doctor. "My guess is that they have taken her back to their ship."

Victoria shuddered. "For conversion, Doctor?". The Doctor lowered his head. Words were superfluous. Victoria was given the answer she feared.

Jamie's impetuosity and determination to act forced Victoria back into action. "Then we must find them! Why are we standing here?" With Jamie's cry, they headed into the darkness of the unknown in search of the Cybermen's ship.

Their journey felt interminable. The Doctor's energy appeared to be limitless, but Jamie and Victoria felt the physical demands of the search. About to collapse, Jamie shouted with a mixture of relief and delight. "Look!" In the distance, a glimmer of light. Ironically, their glimmer of hope was emitted from the cyber ship. The three of them continued their journey, working through the pain and exhaustion. As they approached the ship, they noticed an opening which would give them a way in.

"Easy," smiled the Doctor. "The complacency of the Cybermen may eventually be their downfall," he grinned. As they

entered the ship, the sense of danger overwhelmed them.

Victoria's courage floundered but she was determined not to give in. Petra needed her to be strong. They made their way cautiously around the maze of steel corridors, every path seemingly identical. Not a Cyberman to be seen.

"I expect they are focused on the conversion process," whispered the Doctor. If that is the case, we may have half a chance." He gained a spring in his step which suggested a newly found optimism. They came to a door and peered through.

Victoria was seized by horror at the image in front of her. Pods of Cybermen surrounded the chamber. Yet the real horror was the sight of Petra; entombed in a throne, part Cyberman, part human. "The conversion is in process," said the Doctor, "we have very little time. We need to move."

Jamie and Victoria felt a juxtaposition of helplessness and determination. They would never give up. It was not in their nature.

"Listen to me," hissed the Doctor urgently. "There is a current which is running from the Cybermen into Petra through a conversion machine. If I can deposit this gold into the conversion machine, it will halt the conversion and transfer into the Cybermen. They will be destroyed and, hopefully, Petra will be free. It's a theory but I believe it can work. It's Petra's only chance. Jamie, Victoria, I need you to distract the Cybermen who are guarding Petra so that I can get close to her."

Jamie and Victoria acted quickly and did the only thing they could think of; they ran. As expected, the Cybermen spotted them and began their advance. "What do we do now?" shouted Jamie. Victoria surveyed their surroundings, "over there!" she screamed and made her way

towards a narrow opening. "We can hide in there!" They continued to run, their hearts pounding, fear running through their veins. They reached the tiny doorway and scrambled inside, watching in terror as the Cybermen approached. "We're trapped," exclaimed Jamie, "there's no escape for us!"

In the chamber, the Doctor felt the surmounting pressure. He knew that Jamie and Victoria stood no chance against the Cybermen, and that time was short. He must act now. With the Cybermen seeking Jamie and Victoria, he had his opportunity. The Doctor approached Petra whose conversion was well underway. He pulled the vial of gold dust out of his pocket. Inside the metallic casing of Petra's arm, he found a socket. Swiftly he poured the gold dust inside. Immediately, the gold dust started to take effect. The Doctor danced with glee as he watched the Cybermen drop like tombstones from their pods. The poison worked its way through the robotic network, bringing death to the metallic evil.

As Jamie and Victoria accepted the prospect of death, something changed. The chamber suddenly flared with an incandescence they could never have imagined. The Cybermen abruptly ceased their terrifying advance and collapsed to the ground. The Doctor had succeeded! Jamie and Victoria looked out from their place of refuge and watched as each Cybermen fell from their once deadly pods. A force which seconds earlier had been invincible was now powerless in the face of defeat. Once again, the Doctor was victorious. "He's done it, Jamie! We've done it! We've won!" Victoria and Jamie danced in celebration, a celebration which paused as they remembered Petra. "The Cybermen are beaten but what about Petra?" contemplated Victo-

ria. She was going through the conversion - will she have died with them?" Victoria's question was immediately answered as the familiar forms of the Doctor and Petra emerged.

"Petra!" Victoria could not conceal her relief and delight.

Petra stood in front of her, physically the same but something behind her eyes had changed. Victoria could sense a certainty that was not evident when she had first met her. Petra's questions had been answered yet her mission was only just about to start. Petra had discovered that the key to her future lay within her all the time. The answers were there; she had to uncover them for herself. "I can't put the depth of my gratitude into words," said Petra. "The answers were in my sub-conscious all the time; you helped me to find the key. Now it's unlocked, I know what I have to do. My future lies out there. The Cybermen failed in converting me but there are armies of them still out there and they will try again. I have a purpose and that is to continue my parents' fight. I have a journey to begin. I don't know what that journey entails but, now I have the key, I know that all I have to do is trust in the path and it will take me to where I need to be." With a thankful smile, Petra shook hands with her new allies, turned and commenced her adventure.

The Doctor watched, knowing he would see her again. "Well, Jamie, Victoria. Petra's not the only one with a journey ahead of her, you know!" Gleefully, they stepped into the TARDIS and disappeared into the star-filled night, trusting in wherever the universe was to take them next.

THE OYSTER PIRATES

by Michael Crouch

It might have been the coast of Devon or Cornwall had I not already walked around the bay from San Francisco where the TARDIS had landed just a couple of hours earlier. Away from the new high rises and expanding skyline, the land was green, rolling hills leading down towards the rocky shoreline where large nets bobbed up and down on the gently lapping sea.

Dodo had become excited, perhaps overexcited at the sight of the city growing up out from its rural roots. There were colonial-style edifices, columned civic buildings of the classical style and dotted about there were stone-built churches looking much like those I had seen in Northumberland back in 1066. There was no sign of the famous bridge yet but from the rise of Golden Gate Park, it was like looking down on Rome.

Dodo was eager to go and explore and the Doctor too was intrigued to view this pre-earthquake version of the city. He eagerly took her by the arm to go and tour.

I declined.

There was something irking me lately, an unknown something that I couldn't quite shake off. Life with the Doctor was anything but uneventful, frequently life-threatening but life-affirming too. Even so, the uncertainty of travelling in a time machine with no steering was beginning to take a toll on me. I was starting to feel a need to lay down roots, to find some certainty and discover for myself a role I could fulfil. I didn't think I was going to find it in San Francisco.

"Well Dodo and I are going to take in some of the sights," the Doctor mused.

"I'm especially keen to take a closer look at some of their marvellous locomotives. I believe the Central Pacific Railroad has some marvellous examples of steam engines that I would very much like to see." He looked at me for a moment as though contemplating something and then added, "Why don't you take some time for yourself, Steven, my boy?"

He patted my arm and nodded as if he understood what was going on in my mind. I accepted his gracious offer over Dodo's protestations. She was still relatively new to this life and couldn't understand my need to be alone. I watched them go as I stood on the shore and breathed in the salty tang of sea air.

"You just gonna stand there or are you gonna give me a hand up, pal?" a gruff American voice woke me from my thoughts.

The weight and world-weariness of the voice belied the appearance of the man, no, the boy, who gazed up at me from the shoreline. Fifteen, sixteen maybe, he was a cherub-faced boy with a mop of brown curls and a beaming smile showing off an alarming lack of teeth. He was broad-shouldered, well-built like a boy in the body of a man. He thrust his hand forward again and called, "Well?"

"Yes, sorry," I replied and took his hand in mine, hauling him up over a slippery, rocky ledge onto the shore. He brushed himself down and said, "Thanks." Without any further attention to me, he turned and began hauling in a heavy net laden with oysters which he began plucking and dropping into a bucket of water. There were several more buckets

already full standing nearby. He had evidently been having a productive morning.

"Okay," he said dropping the last oysters into the now full bucket. "Grab a couple of pails and help me load them onto the truck. We ain't got much time."

"Much time until what?" I asked him.

He looked at me like I was an alien from another planet. Come to think of it, I suppose I was. This young boy couldn't have dreamed of the future worlds and wonders that I had witnessed. Even so, there was something in his eyes which suggested that he had seen and experienced more in his young life than I had in my long years.

"Much time until the Fish Patrol turn up," he replied, "and you don't want to be around when they do."

"Why, what will they do?" I asked, wondering what a fish patrol was.

"Jeez, you really ain't from around here, are you?" he scorned. "They'll shoot you without asking questions is what."

"Shoot me?" I exclaimed. "Why, is oyster fishing illegal here?"

He scowled at me as though I were the village idiot and gestured to the length of the bay in which we stood. "All this is owned by the big rail companies," he explained. "And when I say owned, I mean stolen. Stolen from the workers. The companies laid the tracks and the arteries that brought people to California and before anyone could lay claim to it, they took all the profitable lands for themselves. And there ain't much land so profitable as the oyster bays of 'Frisco'. By now he had single-handedly loaded the buckets onto the back of a truck which he then secured into place, throwing a large grey blanket over them to hide them from view.

"The railroad owns the oyster bays?" I asked.

"All of them and more. Fat cats keeping themselves in finery while the rest of us

toil for next to nothing." He left me in no illusion about his opinions of the upper classes and business elite. "Now get in the truck and let's ride," he barked. He ordered me with a brash confidence that made me feel like I was the child here.

"What makes you think I want to go anywhere with you?"

He spat at the ground and made a grunting sound that might have been a laugh. "Boy, you don't wanna be around here when the Fish Patrol arrives and find half their nets are empty. Remember what I said about shooting and not asking questions?"

I remembered. They were going to think I had raided their nets and shoot. I didn't give any thought as to where we were going or how I was going to get back to the Doctor and Dodo. All I could be certain of right now was that I shouldn't be found here. I squeezed in alongside my new companion. Another man, older, chiselled, his face lined with years of hardship, didn't give me a glance but put his foot down and drove.

Despite the privation and the bands of itinerant workers we saw along the way, the views along the coast were spectacular, a tonic for the soul. For my soul, at least. My two companions seemed fixed, focussed, nonplussed by their surroundings.

Thankfully it was a relatively short trip to a coastal town called Oakland. We took a few side streets down towards the jetties and warehouses along the sea front. "We can sell the oysters to the restaurants and bar owners from here," the boy-man said. "See, we sell at about a fifth of the price of the big corporations. That makes the oysters available at a reasonable price to the poor and the hungry and still earns us as much money as we could earn in a month in the factories."

I cannot deny, I was shocked. Not that I was getting involved in some kind of

criminal enterprise, but that I was in a society where communities were allowed to go poor and hungry while others thrived on riches and luxuries. I had witnessed a lot in my time travelling with the Doctor but the barbarity and primitiveness of some of the societies we visited could still shake me to the core. Somehow, illicit oyster fishing didn't seem quite so big a deal.

Without thinking, I hopped out of the truck and began to unload the produce ready for selling. My young companion stood and watched. He flashed a toothless grin that seemed to be saying, "Now you're getting it."

And I think I was.

Another man began transporting the buckets away and handed the boy a handful of bank notes. He waved them under my nose with a smile and said, "See, a month's wages and we didn't get shot. Come on, let's go and pay John Barleycorn a visit."

"Who is John Barleycorn?" I asked as we wandered back towards the main street.

Again, that grunting laugh and he replied, "Hah, just you wait, you're gonna love him." Then he stopped and proffered me a hand. "London's the name," he said cheerily. "Jack London."

I shook his hand and said, "Taylor, Steven Taylor." Without another word we walked on towards our meeting with the mysterious John Barleycorn.

Nothing could quite prepare me for the name of our destination. A bar, Jack's favourite apparently. At sixteen he was known by one and all at Heinold's First and Last Chance Saloon.

Now there was a name I hadn't expected to see again so soon. It was at the Last Chance Saloon in Dodge City that I had encountered the Earps and the Clantons. I wasn't eager to be reminded of my ordeal there, even less to hear that benighted ballad again. But it wasn't the same bar, even if it did have a similar

name. What were the odds of it being the same kind of joint?

Pretty good odds as it turned out. The First and Last Chance Saloon was a spit-and-sawdust establishment frequented by hardened sailors and fishermen, all of whom welcomed Jack and his new friend with open arms.

Laughter erupted when I enquired which one was John Barleycorn. They all raised their glasses and cheered as Jack brought me a small tumbler filled with a silky brown liquid called whiskey. I'd seen it in the bar in Dodge but sensibly hadn't partaken of it back then. Apparently, John Barleycorn was a nickname derived from its origins as a field crop.

I took a sip and winced as I felt the liquid trickle down and burn my throat. "My God, what is this poison?" I yelled.

"The best moonshine this side of the Sierra Nevada," Jack replied and swallowed a tumblerful in one gulp before ordering another. "Don't try and taste it," he advised. "Swallow it one go. It won't burn but you'll feel warm and satisfied once it's down."

I was dubious, but egged on by the raucous crowd, I duly knocked it back. Curiously enough it did feel quite comforting, though I was in no hurry for another. Jack and his cohorts were none too shy and there began several hours of heavy drinking. Every time I got up to leave, I was hauled back down into my seat though mercifully they never forced me to drink any more.

Despite the broad humour, loud songs and occasional fisticuffs, the camaraderie between the men was strong. It was sociable, a place for the men to bond and forget the difficulties of their day-to-day existence. As one by one the men began to fall and slumber from the effects of so much alcohol, I was surprised to see that young Jack seemed to hold his own. Inebriated certainly, slurring his words and shaky on his feet but

still conscious and capable of deep conversation. He had the face of a young boy, the body of a grown man and the constitution of an ox. It was as admirable as it was sad.

"Come on, Taylor Boy," he addressed me with a hard clap around the shoulders. "You can help me get back to my folks' place. They need money too and I don't intend to let old John Barleycorn have it all." He staggered towards the saloon doors as I struggled to hold him upright. "Taylor Boy," he laughed uncontrollably. "Did you see what I did there?"

"Not really," I murmured.

"Taylor Boy," he yelled almost waking up half the main street. "See, my nick-name around here is Sailor Boy. And your name is Taylor so you're Taylor Boy. Now do you get it?"

"Yeah, I get it," I replied without mirth. "You're a real man of words."

"Gee, you really think so," he said so clearly that he might have been sober. "I hope so." For a moment I glimpsed another Jack London but as quickly as I'd seen it, it was gone.

He fell into a half-walking slumber as we ventured into the darkness. I had no idea where we were going but right now all my thoughts were on keeping him upright. I should have just dropped him there and returned to the TARDIS but despite his uncouthness and raw character, there was something I rather liked and admired about my young friend, and I wasn't keen on abandoning him to the night.

I don't know how long our journey took. We followed dust roads, old tracks and part of the Central Pacific railway lines that led into town. Despite numerous obstacles and the enveloping darkness, I somehow managed to haul Jack London up to Oakland and an area of shacks and hovels off one of the main streets. The houses were wooden, makeshift affairs, practical if not luxurious but after a long

day it still made for a welcome respite.

Jack appeared to have gathered some of his strength and sobered up in the night air. At the sight of home, he became more alert and active, dusting himself off and kicking the dirt from what was left of his tattered shoes.

The neighbourhood did not speak of the wealth or prosperity of the houses along San Francisco bay. The working classes here had little to show for their hard graft and long hours beyond the shacks that they lived in. As we went indoors, Jack pulled a chair up to the dining table, which was covered neatly in layers of newspaper, and gestured for me to sit.

"Ma's got a tablecloth, but she don't like to use it except on special occasions," Jack said by way of explanation. "She'll be long to bed by now," he added and laid down a tied up cloth filled with coins from the day's business. He then set about laying two plates out with some bread, cheese and scraps of meat and we ate without another word.

Only when we'd finished our supper did Jack speak again. "It's a mild night. Let's go sit out on the porch and talk some." I followed and we sat on a crude wooden bench as Jack brewed some coffee. In the distance I could hear a low, rumbling sound like motors which I took to be the fish factories or rail yards working through the night. I wondered if the Doctor and Dodo were staying in the city, or had they returned to the TARDIS wondering where I'd got to? I paid the thought no heed. I'd known the Doctor long enough to know he'd wait for me.

"Cassiopeia," Jack said absently.

At first, I thought he was talking about somebody but when I looked at him, I followed his gaze up. There, twinkling in the night sky was a vista of stars, burning in the darkness. The constellation of Cassiopeia was burning bright amongst them.

"The ancient story goes that Cassiopeia

angered the sea-god, Neptune, who took his revenge by tying her to a rock on the shore and leaving her as prey to a monster called the Kraken. If you want the happy ending, she was freed by the Greek hero, Perseus. If you prefer the cold, hard reality, she got eaten." By his tone, I could guess which ending Jack favoured.

"Oyster fishing, politics, constellations and now ancient myths," I said. "You must have had a good education to know so many things."

"I had a basic education," he spat, "Math and English; not much else. The stars I learnt by navigating the sea at night. I'm not called 'Sailor-boy' for nothing."

I nodded, half-disbelieving that someone so young had so much experience of sailing by night. But there was something so intense and sincere about him that I did believe. "And the ancient myths, I asked?"

"I've spent hours in the library scouring the books, reading everything I could, learning everything there was to be learnt. Nearly exhausted myself spending all of my days between school the factories and the library at night when I should have been sleeping. But I gotta do better than all this," he said, gesturing to the hovels and shacks around us. "We've gotta lift our working classes out of the mire, show the world we're just as good as everybody else. We can't stay downtrodden by the jackboots of the corporate elite. They gotta be fought and we've got fight 'em, and all those like 'em."

He was growing angry, louder and I wondered if he was still being influenced by the effects of John Barleycorn, but no, I think he meant it. He was one of life's battlers who was going to fight on, no matter how big the monster that faced him. I thought about introducing him to the Doctor. I had a feeling the two of them would find a lot in common.

"What the hell?" he called out suddenly and was up on his feet in the middle of the dust road. For a moment I was uncertain what had alarmed him but then I heard it too. The distant motors were not factories or rail yards, they were motor vehicles. The roar was growing louder, closer and Jack realised before I did that they were coming here.

"What's that?" I called out. "Who are they?"

Jack looked me squarely in the eye and without any humour said coldly, "The Kraken!"

He saw the look of confusion written across my face and explained, "The moguls have sent their heavy mob out to come and beat us into submission. They like to dish out a bit of punishment to the workers by way of an example to others, teach the little people not to take their oysters. Or their profits."

The next few minutes passed by very slowly as the approaching engines grew louder and the anticipation, and yes, the fear, swelled up within us. There was another sound, more distant, of steam and pistons and squealing brakes. A locomotive was on the move and with the Central Pacific tracks running right through the backyard, it wasn't difficult to figure out which way it was coming.

"More of their goons, I expect," said Jack. And Jack London, this erudite, educated, small, scruffy, cherub-faced man-boy quashed his fear and stood his ground. There was a monster to be vanquished and he intended to vanquish it. How could I retreat from that? I stood up and walked up alongside him. He gave me another of his youthful, toothless grins and we waited.

"You up for this?" my young friend asked me, detecting my nervousness. He looked like he was relishing the prospect. "I'm not sure what 'this' is," I replied. "But I've faced off bullies and monsters before, so yes, I guess I'm ready for this."

He eyed me up and down for a few moments as though he couldn't be sure what I was. Then he said, "Bullies and monsters, huh? You sure you're not from around here?"

"No," I laughed, "I'm not from anywhere around here. I'm a space pilot from the twenty-third century. I've visited other worlds and fought off alien armies; Daleks, Mechanoids, Monoids, not to mention the forces of Napoleon, the Spanish Inquisition, French Revolutionaries and more besides. I know a bully when I see one."

"Whew!" he exclaimed, "I think you might even be crazier than I am. You sure got a vivid imagination. Maybe I should use some of that in one of my stories."

"You're thinking about writing stories when we're about to be assailed upon by who knows what?" I could hardly believe I was having this conversation at a time like this.

"All life is grist to the mill when it comes to being a writer," he replied. "And I think the 'who knows what' are here!"

At that moment a group of antique motor vehicles rounded a corner and came to a halt sending a cloud of dust into the air before them, visible only from the yellow headlamps that half-blinded us. There followed a number of thumps and heavy footsteps as several dozen men armed with bats and clubs alighted and approached menacingly towards us. With their engines switched off we could hear more clearly the distant sound of another engine approaching. Even with other local workers and friends of Jack waking and coming to join Jack by his side, it was obvious that we were going to be heavily outnumbered.

"Ever fought the armies of the robber barons?" Jack asked me.

"The robber barons?" I asked.

Jack laughed and said, "Oh yeah, I forgot. You're a space pilot! The four big railroad

companies pretty much own the industries, the land, the work, the local government. Their workers do all the graft but it's their bosses, the barons who rob from society to make themselves rich. But their days are numbered. Old Roosevelt is gonna break up their monopoly one of these days."

Old Roosevelt? "Franklin Delano Roosevelt?" I said.

"Who's he?" Jack called out. "I'm talking about Teddy. Theodore Roosevelt."

"Oh, right," I nodded. I made a mental note to brush up on my Earth history.

By now, the gangs were circling our group, waving their bats and sticks and moving menacingly closer by the second. Jack spat at them in defiance.

"These thugs are in the pay of the railroad bosses. As long as they get their money, they don't care whose side they're on or what they're fighting for. You still want to do this?" He looked at me hard, unflinching. I understood his question. He was giving me the option to scarper, to mind my own business, to get away from something that did not really concern me. He was actually willing to handle this alone. I had my answer.

"I still want to do this," I said and tensed, fists clenched as the band of thugs drew within feet of us. Everyone was on edge, all eyeing each other up to see who was going to be the first to strike. This was going to be bloody and violent but as I watched closely, one of the thugs raised a baseball bat high and was about to bring it down on me when...

"Stop!"

One of thugs waved his gang to hold off for a few moments. It was no halt to proceedings, merely a lull as they waited for more of their number to join them from the approaching train.

By now the growing thunder, rumbling, screeching, and whistling was reaching a crescendo. It stopped all of us in our tracks as an arc of light swept over our

ensemble. Through it was visible the gleaming metalwork of some industrial behemoth. A locomotive. We all instinctively stepped back a few paces as the roaring, belching iron giant pressed into view.

As the oncoming storm grew louder, the air become bitter with the taste of burning dust. Huge plumes of black smoke belched forth, swirling and dancing in eddies ahead of the iron giant's approach. Finally with a noise like thunder and the screeching of brakes like dozens of nails being drawn down blackboards, it ground to a halt.

Men immediately began dropping down from the carriages and freight trucks onto the ground, and assembled on mass. Surprisingly, they were not the private army of the railroad moguls but itinerant workers from the factories and the yards. Many of them were Chinese, for it was their labour which had built most of the network and who had suffered much of the privations imposed upon them by their ruthless employers. Each side eyed the other suspiciously, weighing the opposition up, determining who was friend and who was foe. Finally, from the driver's compartment of the engine there came a final blow of the whistle and from it stepped the Doctor and Dodo.

"We thought you might need an extra pair of hands or two," the Doctor chuckled, evidently amused by the shock and surprise on my face.

"Doctor! Dodo!" I cried with more relief than I had expected.

"We had word of the little fracas going on down here and I had an inkling that you might be involved in it, my boy," said the Doctor.

"When the rail yard workers heard about it, they wanted to come to the aid of their colleagues," Dodo said excitedly. "It was the Doctor's idea to borrow a train and ferry them in."

"I thought the weight of numbers might

reverse the intent of these savages and I'm pleased to say I think I was right. Besides," the Doctor added, "I've long had a yearning to drive a steam locomotive," and he patted the side of the engine with an affectionate tap as he often did the TARDIS.

The engine seemed to exert a presence over the ensemble that served to calm everyone down. The locomotive stood about the height of two or three men. An American Standard 4-4-0, flanked by a pair of drive wheels over a metre and a half wide. The whole thing weighed about 30 tons and the engine was topped by a huge smokestack like a funnel, topped with wire mesh to stop the dancing and blowing embers from the fire below escaping. At the front at ground level was a kind of outward V-shaped protrusion of iron bars, nicknamed a 'cow-catcher' for obvious reasons. The whole thing was painted in glossy black, with gold trimmings and bright red wheels. It was lavishly embellished with highly polished brass and iron parts. It was as much an artistic achievement as it was an industrial one.

"A bit highly ornamented and rather exuberant for my taste but there is no denying it's power," the Doctor continued to chuckle. "It certainly seems to have brought your little party to an end," he added.

I looked about me and saw that he was right. The railroad gangs had returned to their vehicles and scarpered against such overwhelming odds while the workers clapped and cheered one another for their victory.

"I have never been so glad to see you," I stammered with relief. "I might have known a city tour wasn't going to be enough for you."

The Doctor's face grew dark and in one of his stern, lecturing tones, he said, "How often have I told you not to go around involving yourself in the affairs of

other times and places? It wouldn't do to let people like these know who we really are," he chided.

"Is he a space pilot too?" Jack laughed as he slapped a hand across my back.

The Doctor shook his head in mild annoyance and leading Dodo away, said, "Oh I give up. Come along, Dodo, my dear, let's get back to the TARDIS and leave these two young men to say their goodbyes."

"Goodbyes?" Jack looked at me with a sadness in his eyes. "Aren't you gonna stick around for a bit. I sure would like to hear a few of the stories you got."

"I'm sorry, Jack," I replied, and I was genuinely sorry. "I can't stay. There are other bullies and monsters to be fought. Besides, I got a feeling you've got quite a few stories in you anyway."

"You do?" he smiled.

"Jack, when I arrived here, I was at a crossroads. I kind of felt I'd lost my purpose, that I was just travelling aimlessly without a goal. But you've made me re-think all of that. I do need a place, a time of my own, to settle down, to utilise my skills and knowledge to some higher purpose. Maybe there is a world out there like this one, inhabited by those who have and those who have not. Or maybe one race enslaving another. The strong always seem to prey on the weak. Somewhere there's a place where I can make a difference and put things right."

Jack listened intently as I poured my soul out. He hung on every word, nodding and smiling as I spoke. When I'd finished, he said, "Taylor Boy, you and me are kindred spirits. We both want to settle down but we both feel that urge to go out and affect the world beyond us. I like to call it the call of the wild."

I laughed. "You know, Jack, I think that would be a great title for one of your stories."

We shook hands firmly and with a last nod, we turned away and followed our

respective calling.

"Well, Steven, my boy, did you have ample time to work through your thoughts?" the Doctor asked as I stepped back into the bright white environs of the TARDIS.

"Yes, yes, I did," I replied with certainty.

"Good, good," he nodded. "All of this won't be here forever," he went on gesturing to the time rotor, the console and TARDIS interior. "It's important you understand who you are and what you stand for, Steven. We all of us have to find our place and purpose within the bigger scheme of things." There was something knowing about the way he spoke, as if he knew that things were coming to an end.

"Do you want me to leave?" I asked.

"Good gracious, no," he said. "Dodo and I enjoy your company very much. I'm merely suggesting that it is important to have an understanding of what we are doing and why, to be ready for new opportunities, new destinies."

"The call of the wild?" I replied.

"Hmmm, yes, if that's what you want to call it. Now, let me set the controls and find out where the TARDIS will send us next."

I could see from the settings that he was guiding the TARDIS towards the far future. A time of great advancement, peace and prosperity, the Doctor said. But I was beginning to suspect that even in paradise we would find the savages.



UNEXPECTED ITEM IN BAGGING AREA

by Grace Haddon

"PLEASE SCAN YOUR ITEMS."

"I'm doing it," Ace muttered, waving a tin of beans at the self-service machine for the third time. "See? Barcode!"

Finally, it beeped. "PLEASE PLACE YOUR ITEM IN THE BAGGING AREA."

She sighed and stuffed it into the carrier bag. A normal shop, she'd told the Doctor. No supermarket planets, or shady kiosks where you paid with memories, just a nice, normal shop so she could buy toothpaste and stuff. But the TARDIS was being its usual self, and after landing in the twelfth century and then the fifty-first, they'd overshot the eighties by a few decades. Not even far enough in the future to be interesting.

"UNEXPECTED ITEM IN BAGGING AREA."

"Oh, shut up." She pressed pay and searched her pockets. She'd filled three bags; you never knew when you'd next see a shop. The other week she'd asked the Doctor if the TARDIS had a sanitary towel dispenser and his eyebrows had nearly fallen off in puzzlement. Never again. There wasn't even a vending machine in there, yet there were at least three swimming pools. Time Lords had weird priorities.

Chocolate milkshake powder, pasta, bubble bath... why, in the future, did things have stupid names like Dia-

mond Shine and Choccy Nut Crunch? And everything came in a dozen different flavours. Even the bubble bath was Peppermint Peony Tropical Soak.

"UNEXPECTED ITEM IN BAGGING AREA," the machine barked again.

"Just let me pay, will you?" Ace snapped, her face warming as she glanced at the growing queue behind her. Where was the Doctor when you needed him?

The screen flashed red. "PLEASE WAIT FOR ASSISTANCE."

So, she had to stand and wait until a cashier took pity on her. "They're a bit temperamental," said the girl, about her age, as her manicured nails clicked over the screen. Her black hair was poker-straight, just like her winged eyeliner which seemed almost too glamorous for work. "There you go."

"Thanks." Ace suddenly felt scruffy in her puffy jacket and skirt. She hoped she didn't notice the twenty cans of men's deodorant she'd bought. But she couldn't make Nitro-9 that smelled of citrus burst. No one would ever take her seriously again.

She fed the machine the plastic notes the Doctor had given her and it spat out some change. Pound coins had been pretty new back home. She studied the shiny silver and gold coins. Different again. She'd better go and find the Doctor before he found

some aliens plotting world domination. Sentient milk bottles, maybe?

They'd parked in the pet aisle. Her first step into the twenty-first century had been onto a squeaky rubber chicken and she'd nearly broken her neck. Ace stepped around a corner – and collided with someone running the other way. She stumbled against a shelf and fell, triggering an avalanche of cereal boxes. Her bags of shopping spilled over the floor.

"Why don't you watch where you're going?" she groaned, sitting up and clutching her elbow.

A giant man in armour glared down at her. "You dare strike me, girl?" He rose to his feet and towered above her. His chainmail was flecked with rust, but the sword at his hip gleamed.

Ace snatched up her shopping and stood, watching him bend down to gather up boxes of cereal. "Nutter," she said under her breath.

The knight drew his sword and brandished it at her. "Do not tempt the wrath of the brave Sir Bartholomew," he breathed, and a bit of cereal fell from his beard. Then he threw down the boxes and marched towards a spotty teen who was stocking shelves. "VENDOR! FETCH ME MORE OF YOUR RAINBOW HONEY FLAKES!"

Ace hurried away before someone could blame her for the mess. Maybe re-enactment was popular in this century, but something about him seemed a little too... convincing. She should find the Doctor.

But the TARDIS door was locked, and when she knocked there was no reply.

Right on cue, the supermarket tannoy crackled into life. "Could Ace please come to the entrance? Your... uncle is waiting for you to collect him."

"Great," she muttered.

At the entrance, the Doctor stood sheepishly beside a security guard who probably wasn't paid enough.

"You're Ace, then?" he lowered his voice. "He was counting the vegetables."

"Fruit, actually," the Doctor corrected. Ace grabbed his arm. "Nice to be out of the hospital for the day, isn't it?" she said loudly, leading them away.

The Doctor frowned at her. "Why are you covered in cereals?"

She shook her head. "Long story. What were you doing messing with the veg, Professor?"

He smiled mysteriously and leaned in close. "Avocados, Ace," he murmured, tapping her nose with a finger. "Avocados."

Someone shouted behind them. Ace turned and saw the security guard standing in the open doors. His eyes were wide, and his lips formed words, but no sound came out. There was a crack like a gunshot, then he disappeared in a flash of blue light.

Travelling with the Doctor had shown her amazing things, and she wouldn't trade a single second of it. But the fun ended when someone got hurt. Nowhere was truly safe. Blood roared in her ears and her mouth went dry. Even after so much time with the Doctor, death always came as a shock to Ace.

"What was that?" She stared through the open doors, now sliding closed. "Daleks?" The blue light reminded her of their death rays. The car park be-

yond was clear, but the air rippled slightly as if in a heatwave.

The Doctor's face was grave. "No, worse. Back to the TARDIS, now."

They hurried back, weaving between groups of shoppers. "Why aren't they panicking?" she asked quietly. "Surely, they heard it?"

"We're time travellers Ace, we see things differently." His umbrella clicked against the floor with every second step.

Ace tried not to think about the security guard's terrified face. After all the Fenric stuff, she'd wanted some time to reflect. Why couldn't they just have a quiet day for once? She took a deep breath (which smelled a lot like laundry detergent), then they rounded the corner to the pet aisle.

The TARDIS rippled behind a wall of blue light.

"A forcefield?" Ace backed away.

"Look." He pointed with his umbrella. Tins of cat food and bottles of flea spray crowded every inch, but beyond the blue wall the shelves were empty.

She swallowed. "Disintegrated?"

"Time energy." The Doctor reached out as if to touch the light, then snatched his hand away. "Which is why the others can't see it."

"So, there are aliens? Here?" She looked back. "Bet it's the self-service machines."

"This is serious, Ace."

"Right." She bit her lip. "I saw someone earlier. A knight in armour. He was very... realistic."

"That's even more concerning." They stared at the TARDIS, only a metre beyond the wall. "Don't go near the light. In fact..." From his pocket, he

produced a roll of tape. "Cordon it off. We need to know where its edges are."

She took it. "But who did this?"

"I think perhaps... the TARDIS. Keep everyone away from it. Don't let them go outside. I'm going to warn everyone."

Confused, Ace watched him march away. A time field, in a supermarket? She pulled off a strip of tape and stuck it between two shelves, cordoning off the TARDIS. Then she wandered around the shop in search of blue light. It stretched across the aisles, blocking off one end of the building, and everywhere it touched the shelves were empty. She taped them all off. Unfortunately, the self-service machines were unaffected for now.

There was a commotion at the entrance; the knight was standing in a shopping trolley by the groceries. "You cowardly knaves! Will none fight me in a duel? What say you, peasant?"

A balding man with tattoos merely pushed the trolley a few inches to the left and reached for a punnet of grapes.

Ace crept past them and taped across the entrance, then searched her pockets for some paper. Amongst sweet wrappers and deodorant lids, she found a very crumpled bus ticket. She scribbled DANGER as large as she could and stuck it beside the doors for good measure.

Keeping people in wasn't easy. She negotiated with bossy mums, bafflegabbed suspicious teenagers and threatened a persistent elderly woman.

Just as an angry man with a name badge and tie came striding up to her, the Doctor's voice echoed through the shop. "Hello everyone!" he said chirpily. "I need to speak to all staff and shoppers, so can you all come to the freezer aisle? Something very serious has happened that could endanger your very existence." Click.

"Could have toned it down a bit," Ace muttered as everyone looked about in alarm. Even the man in the tie reluctantly nodded to her and turned away. She followed the flow of people to the freezer aisle.

The Doctor stood on a stool used by staff for stocking shelves, somehow managing to look authoritative and politely expectant at the same time. Already a small crowd had gathered: families, couples, elderly people, and a handful of nervous-looking cashiers. "Right, is everyone here?"

The man in the shirt and tie pushed to the front. "What's going on? You're not staff. If you're here to fix the lighting you should have talked to..." "I'm here to warn you that anyone who tries to leave will be vaporised."

A few worried looks.

Ace rolled her eyes. Before he could go on about the fabric of space/time she called out, "Something's wrong with the electricity, so you need to stay in here until we sort it out."

"So, you are here to fix the lighting?"

"Yes, if you like." The Doctor stepped down. "But under no circumstances is anyone to step past the tape lines, or to touch the outer walls of the building. Is that understood?"

A young woman put her hand up. "My parking runs out in half an hour. Will this take long?"

"Mummy told me to come straight back," said a little boy clutching a newspaper and a bag of sweets.

Others chimed in with excuses until the Doctor couldn't even shout over the noise. Ace dug an ice cream out of the freezer and lobbed it down the aisle. Blue light flashed, and with a bang it was gone before it touched the floor.

"Point proven?" she snapped. "Do what he says and then we can go home."

She was met with terrified stares and silence except the hum of the freezers. Maybe she'd overdone it a bit.

The Doctor clapped his hands. "Now then, I have work for you all." He pointed at the man in the tie. "Dog food."

He frowned. "I'm sorry?"

"I need a tin of dog food. Any kind will do, though I've always been rather partial to the beef."

The frown became a scowl. "I'm the manager."

"Even better, you'll know where it is. Now let's see -"

"This is a prank, isn't it? Stick it on YouTube, get lots of views?" He rounded on Ace. "Well?"

She shrugged. "What's YouTube?"

A cashier stepped forward. It was the girl with winged eyeliner from earlier; her name badge read Dhanya. "I'll get it."

"Thank you. And after that, I need you to count the number of avocados you have in that box by the entrance. Three times. Any more volunteers? I also need washing up liquid, clingfilm, teaspoons, a calculator, coat hangers..."

The crowd slowly trickled away to

fetch things, a few throwing fearful glances back at them.

Ace struggled to hide a smile. "You're not just making them get your shopping, are you?"

"It keeps them busy." The Doctor wandered out of the aisle and over to the front window. The glass was shimmering gently.

"But we don't have a dog! And what's your obsession with avocados all of a sudden?"

"I counted them earlier. Each time the number was different."

"Schrödinger's Avocado?" Ace scoffed. "Maybe you just can't count."

"The time bubble was causing them to rapidly exist and then not exist." His reflection warped and flickered in the window.

"Doctor, the bubble..."

"Has got smaller, yes." Earlier it had been barely visible through the doors, now it was in front of the glass. "We need to act quickly."

One by one the shoppers returned, grumbling as they handed in their items.

"I hope you're paying for all this," said the manager.

"Oh, I'm sure of it," said the Doctor distractedly. He took the TARDIS key from his pocket and began untwisting the wire coat hangers.

Someone nudged her. "Is he always like this?" Dhanya asked.

She smiled. "Oh, all the time." They watched him pour washing up liquid over the coat hangers and wrap them in clingfilm. "But he knows what he's doing."

"If you say so." Dhanya pulled out a

pocket-sized screen and began tapping at it.

"That's a phone!" Ace exclaimed before she could stop herself.

She laughed. "Yeah, and I'm not even on break. Such a rebel, I know." She started typing out a message. "Guess I'll be late home, I was supposed to finish half an hour ago." She frowned. "Weird. There's no signal here."

"Right, everyone!" The Doctor straightened up, brandishing his coat hangers-and-string contraption. "Ace and I are going to investigate. In the meantime, wait by the entrance but stay away from any blue light. We won't be long."

Ace's stomach churned as they walked back to the pet aisle - or what was left of it. The shelves were empty, pixelating like an arcade game. The TARDIS was only ten metres away, but its outline was barely visible, blue blurring into blue. The Doctor knelt down and resumed taping things to the coat hanger.

"How is that thing going to get the TARDIS back?" She folded her arms. No reply. "Can Daleks time travel? Or could it be something to do with Fenric...?"

"It isn't Fenric," he said quietly, not looking up.

"Alright so who did this, the knight?"

"Our friend Sir Bartholomew? He wouldn't recognise a time field if it challenged him to a duel." He picked up the teaspoons, tapped out a brief rhythm, then attached them to the contraption. "When we left World War Two, we may have hit a... bump, chronologically speaking. It created a 'hole' in one of the systems. That's why the TARDIS has been unreliable

lately.”
“More than usual, you mean?” She stuck her tongue out as he glanced up, offended.
“... and when we landed here it... sprung a leak.”
“So, we did this?”
“Indirectly, yes.”
Ace chewed her lip. Pure time energy, in a bubble around the building. And it was getting smaller. “So, what do we do?”
“Well, we have all the tools we need. I just need to get back inside the TARDIS, then I can fix this.”
She huffed. “You make it sound so simple.”
“Just be grateful we didn’t land in the thirteenth century. Try fixing a TARDIS with cabbages and sheep droppings.”
Ace leaned against a shelf, listening to the distant hum of fridges. Then she realised she couldn’t hear any voices. “Professor...”
She stepped forward and nearly walked into a rippling wall of blue light. Beyond it, the shop was empty. “I told them to wait near the entrance,” the Doctor murmured, already beside her with a hand on her elbow. “The bubble is accelerating. It’s closing in fast.”
“All those people...” Her throat closed up. “We were only gone five minutes. There was a kid there...”
“Standing here won’t help them. I might be able to reverse this but only if we act quickly.”
Why had they come here? She’d seen the world gripped in wars past and future and they would always give her nightmares. But here there were

no monsters, no armies, no one to blame. Just an accident with terrible consequences.
“Come on Ace, I need you with me.”
“The hand on her elbow tightened. She wiped her eyes. “What are you going to do?”
“Put this right.” He handed her the coat hanger, slippery with washing-up liquid. “I’m going to anchor myself to the present, then it should be safe to walk out of the bubble.”
She swallowed. “How?”
“Through you.” He put down his umbrella and rolled up his sleeves, then took the coat hanger back. “Hold onto this and don’t let go.” The hanger was tied to a ball of string, which he pressed into her hand. “I’m going to try to get inside the TARDIS. It’s the only way we’ll be able to leave.”
Ace looked down at the string, pulling taut as the Doctor stepped away. “What if you’re erased too?”
For a fleeting moment he looked old again: all those centuries of life. All of it could be gone in an instant. Then he smiled sadly. “I’ll be fine, Ace. Watch my back.”
So many adventures she’d never have had without him. If the bubble took him, she’d be back on Iceworld, waiting for the rest of her life. Or would she even exist, if she hadn’t helped Kathleen escape the Haemovores and saved her mum in the first place? It made her head hurt. She couldn’t lose her best friend, who had taught her not to be afraid of fear, to be proud of the drop-out teenager she was and the fighter she’d become. If all of it was undone... all of the worlds he’d saved would be too.

And all because of a stupid leak.
The Doctor took one step, then another. The air rippled and shook around him, but behind the wall of light he was still there. Ace gripped the little ball of string tight enough to hurt; and hoped.
“We meet again,” boomed a voice behind her. Sir Bartholomew stepped out from behind a shelf, but he seemed calmer than usual. “Your bravery is admirable,” he told her. “Worthy of any knight.”
“How come you didn’t get erased?” Ace glanced over his shoulder, but he was alone. “I thought knights were supposed to save people.”
“They were but cattle. I saw to it that the magic wall took them first, but it matters not...”
“You did it? You made them walk out of the bubble?” she thundered. “You maniac!”
“Doctor!” he bellowed, “I wish to duel!”
“I’m a bit busy at the moment!” The Doctor’s voice sounded far away. Ace could barely see him now, his outline wobbling as if from the bottom of a swimming pool. “Can it wait?”
“I shall duel you for Ace’s hand!”
“You what?” She laughed hollowly. “You want to marry me?”
“Your father must face me in combat, for I sense he dislikes me.” He looked down at the ball in her hand. “Ah, the magic is revealed!” He pulled on the string and looked towards the TARDIS. The Doctor’s echoing steps faltered.
“Oi, pea brain!” Ace snatched up the Doctor’s umbrella and wielded it by the handle. “If you want to duel, duel

me.”
He didn’t turn around. “Pah! I would not fight a fair maiden.”
She whacked him over the head with it. “I’ll show you how fair I am.” Her hand was slippery with washing-up liquid. She wiped it on her skirt. “Come on tin can, if you’re brave enough!”
Sir Bartholomew dropped the string and drew his sword with a whine of steel.
“Don’t let go of the string, Ace!” the Doctor called, his voice distorted. “It’s all we have!”
She wound it around her fingers and clenched her fist tighter. She would not let go. With the same hand she reached for the canister in her inside pocket, cold as it pressed against her ribs. After she’d done her shopping earlier, she’d made a detour to the ladies’. She twisted the nozzle. Forty seconds.
“Will you surrender, Lady Ace?” he murmured, the blade shining under the electric lights.
The string yanked as she backed away, so she let out a little more and held her ground, even as her heart thudded in her throat.
Thirty seconds.
“I don’t surrender to bullies,” she said. The sword came down. Ace dodged and it whistled past her ear.
“How much longer, Doctor?” she shouted, letting out more string. Everywhere she looked was the edge of the bubble, shrinking so fast that she could see the blue light creeping across the floor.
A feint from the left, slashing to her right. She held up the umbrella to catch the blow, the impact unbalanc-

ing her and sending spikes of pain down her elbow.
Twenty seconds. Ish.
She staggered backwards, the string unravelling until she held only the very end. It had to be enough.
"You have such fight in you." The knight laughed, not even out of breath. "I admire your spirit."
She dropped the umbrella and pulled out the canister of Nitro-9. "Sorry face ache, the answer's still no." And she hurled it past him.
It was supposed to be a distraction. An explosion not close enough to harm but enough to buy them time. But Ace's arm still ached from the blow, and she fumbled it. The canister landed at his feet, bounced and kept rolling.
At the edge of the bubble, it exploded.
Blue fire roared up, blasting open the fire exit and sending lights crashing down. Ace dived to the floor, trying not to breathe in the fumes.
"SORCERY!" bellowed the knight over the shriek of the fire alarm. And he stumbled into the shrinking bubble and disappeared from existence.
Ace raised her head and saw that the bubble was now barely five metres wide. The flames were soon smothered, the smoke swallowed. Blue light filled her vision, creeping closer. Keep hold of the string. That was all that mattered.
What did it feel like to be erased? Would it hurt? She curled into a ball and shut her eyes tightly. After all the amazing places she'd been, the last thing she was going to see was the half-price sale on flea spray. It wasn't fair.

There was something important she had to do. Something about... apples? Watermelons? Counting string perhaps.
A great whooshing sound enveloped her, reverberating through her bones until she could barely hear her own thoughts. The string was still there – no, it was gone! She clenched her first but her hand was empty. Everything was gone...
Then the noise faded, replaced by a gentle hum. She felt warmer, lighter. Ace opened her eyes and saw a pair of spats. "Nice of you to join me," said a familiar Scottish lilt.
She breathed out shakily as her memory returned. "Thought we weren't going to make it."
"We almost didn't."
She tried to stand up and smacked her head on the underside of the TARDIS console. "Stupid knight nearly ruined everything." Bruises throbbed everywhere. Right now, she'd even settle for a Peppermint Peony Tropical Soak.
The Doctor smiled. His face was smudged with dirt and string tangled around his arms, but he was as alive as he'd always been. She hadn't lost a single second of him.
Ace threw her arms around him. "Next time we're shopping in the eighties."
He laughed. "I promise."
She rested her chin on his shoulder. "You smell of dog food."
"Well, I made do with what we had."
She glanced up. String spiderwebbed the console, and an open tin of Beefy Bites was secured against it with rubber bands.
"I'm not even going to ask." She

pulled away to look at the scanner screen. "So, what happens now? Have you fixed it?"
He shrugged out of his coat and hung it on the hat stand before pressing some buttons. "It's a little basic, but I'll make some proper repairs once I have the parts." The TARDIS hummed, the time rotor flashed, and then they landed. "A short trip, to reset the leak."
The scanner screen opened to display a bustling supermarket on a Saturday morning. Ace spotted the security guard, sneakily checking his phone, and Dhanya helping an old lady at the self-service machine. "Everyone's back!"
"The time leak never happened. Sir Bartholomew is back in the twelfth century where he belongs, and eve-

rything is as it should be." He pointed at a pile of carrier bags on the floor. "But I saved your shopping before the realities snapped back into place."
Ace grinned. "You're the best."
"Well, after all that excitement it must be time for lunch." The Doctor cracked his knuckles then hovered his hands over the controls. "Where to?"
Ace crouched down to rummage in the bags. "Somewhere quiet. No knights, no monsters, and no self-service machines."
His face lit up. "A picnic! Yes, why not?" And then he was off, pulling levers and pressing buttons. "I know of a lovely afternoon in nineteen twenty-two..."
"Sounds great." Ace straightened up and held out a small green fruit. "Avocado, Professor?"



THE SIXTH DOCTOR SOURCEBOOK

Review by Dave Chapman



So, while I was working on this sourcebook review I had a few really cool things happen. I had a short article entitled "Classic Who is Best Backwards" published in the Celestial Toyroom magazine and I was invited to return to the [Earth Station Who](#) podcast to chat about the Sixth Doctor story, *Vengeance on Varos*. My process for many reviews for TheRatHole.ca is that I sit down and binge on-topic media. In this case, that obviously meant binging Colin Baker's stint as the Doctor. I made a very conscious decision that unless I had a specific reason for it, I would spread my Classic Doctor experiences to coincide with these sourcebook reviews. So I was Binging Baker for the first time.

His Doctor holds a unique place in pop culture history. After Tom Baker's scarf-wearing Fourth Doctor, Colin Baker's eccentric style as the Sixth Doctor may well make him the second most recognizable classic iteration of the character. However, he is also generally considered the least popular Doctor of all time. The Sixth Doctor is bombastic, garishly flamboyant, unstable at the best of times, and unhinged at the worst of times. The biggest problem with Colin Baker's Doctor is that Colin Baker is a really good actor. He puts his all into a character that was meant to be a bit edgy before being edgy was a thing but ends up written in a way as to be almost completely unlikable.

Then, just as the writing was beginning to stabilize, he was saddled with Melanie Bush. Bonnie Langford's companion was also terribly written; a supposedly brilliant computer programmer who didn't touch a computer for the entirety of her time on screen in the TARDIS. She had a scream that would make Hollywood horror queens jealous and wore puffed sleeves so big that Anne Shirley's gables would be green with envy. (If you don't get that last joke, look her up and don't forget to spell Anne with an E.)

Thankfully both actors (and their characters) have found redemption thanks to Big Finish Audio and are continually fan-favourites there. However, the Doctor Who Roleplaying Game only includes the television adventures, so this is the Doctor we have. In fact, the sourcebook introduction fittingly begins with the quote, 'I am a living peril to the universe!'

The first chapter, as is usual, talks about what makes a Sixth Doctor adventure unique. It points out that, much like the Doctor himself, his adventures are vividly melodramatic in every way. Colourful locations filled with even more colourful characters. Sabalom Glitz schemes his way into several stories, before later returning to 'help' Sylvester McCoy's Doctor on the Iceworld of Svartos, taking Mel with him when they parted ways. It is

only in this sourcebook that we get his stat block, much to the frustration of Seventh Doctor fans. No mention of 'colourful characters' would be complete without bringing up King Yrcanos of the Krontep, played by the one person who truly makes chewing on the scenery seem regal: Brian Blessed. That man is a legend who can do no wrong.

The second chapter is short, with character sheets for The Doctor and his companions. The Sixth Doctor wasn't one to attract many companions. Peri was with the Fifth Doctor when he regenerated, and despite her treatment at the hands of Six, she remained with him in a tragic attempt to save the man he was and she believed he could be again. Her fate ended up being a major character shift for the Doctor.

We never actually see how the Doctor meets his next companion, Mel. Our introduction to her comes during *The Trial of a Time Lord* storyline, in the form of an adventure from the Doctor's future. In one of the more timey-wimey plot points of Classic Who, she would soon be pulled out of the Doctor's future by The Master to testify for the Doctor who had yet to meet her. This giant hole in their time together is part of what has allowed both characters to flourish in audio, and similarly opens the door to near-infinite potential adventures at your gaming table. This is also the chapter that discusses the Doctor's relationship with his TARDIS. This Doctor is continually working to correct the perceived neglect of his previous incarnations and for a short time, he even managed to (sort of) fix the perpetually

broken chameleon circuit.

Chapters 3 and 4 would normally be combined into a single chapter if this was most other incarnations of the Doctor. The third chapter examines the adventures after Peter Davidson's regeneration at the end of *The Caves of Androzani* at the end of Season 21 (1984), through Season 22 (1985), but Season 23 (1986) gets its own chapter. The entirety of Season 23 consisted of a single story arc: *The Trial of a Time Lord*. This storyline was a major event in the Doctor Who series, a major event in the lives of the Doctor as a character, and a major turning point for the Sixth Doctor's personality, specifically. It also represented a very different way of framing the stories told during that season, which can create a bit of a challenge to translating those stories to the gaming table.

The book closes with an Appendix that covers different ways you could integrate the Time War into any of the Sixth Doctor stories, and to a lesser extent link them to the later Trail arc. It's a short chapter, that touches on each story with some hypothetical musings to connect the dots, followed by a specific Adventure Seed. For example, perhaps the Rani isn't a Renegade, but rather a deep cover agent under the control of the Time Lord High Council. A proposed Adventure may have her revealing all of this to the Doctor and asking for his help.

The personality of the Sixth Doctor lends itself incredibly well to being a non-player character, or even just a story catalyst, rather than an actual player character. His unstable arro-

gance can easily leave behind a trail of displeasure. His penchant for tinkering with his TARDIS, and often not with particular success, can easily set up any number of awkward situations for the players to clean up after. Would I personally use this Doctor, or any of his companions, as anything more than background? Unlikely. Would I drop elements and characters from this book into other eras or non-Doctor-centric stories? You bet I will! I've already got ideas flowing for a Groot-ish Vervoid character. There are several non-televised accounts of Yrcanos after the Doctor left, and I would love to explore his life before and after Thoros Beta. While I would never call the Sixth Doctor Sourcebook necessary or vital other than for completionist reasons, it is an interesting timeframe to study.

Completionism aside, Cosmic Masque editor Nick Smith asked me what about these sourcebooks keeps bringing me back to them. I review boardgames in general, and TableTop RolePlaying Games (TTRPGs) specifically, as my regular work. If I decided to never review another Doctor Who Roleplaying Game sourcebook, I would professionally still have a constant stream of games coming across my desk. With so much new material coming out of so many different places, why do I keep going back to review these comparatively older books? The answer isn't terribly exciting. The answer is that these sourcebooks are exciting. They are well researched and can give you an interesting perspective on each Doctor's character. I think it was my Twelfth Doctor sourcebook review that I said if someone asked me

for reference material to use in writing a biography of a fictional character, these sourcebooks are where I would tell them to start. Even if you don't play the Doctor Who Role Playing Game, or any TTRPG for that matter, you can pick up one of these books and free read it. You can just ignore what little game mechanics and rules are anthem, and just immerse yourself in the world of the Doctor.

You can find Cubicle 7 online at www.cubicle7games.com or on Facebook at facebook.com/Cubicle7Entertainment. A shorter version of this review first appeared, along with many other Doctor Who tabletop reviews, at TheRatHole.ca/WHO.



LAZY DOCTOR WHO

In Conversation with Steven Schapansky and Erika Ensign

Husband and wife podcasting team Steven Schapansky ([Radio Free Skaro](#)) and Erika Ensign ([Verity!](#)) have set themselves a challenge – to watch every single Doctor Who story in order and record their reactions in a podcast called [Lazy Doctor Who](#). The release schedule is as lackadaisical as the title suggests, when they have time, when they feel like it.

Talking to them is a joy and there's one thing the following transcript doesn't convey. There was a lot of laughing going on between the words. There's a sheer sense of fun emanating from this couple, and their podcasts.

ERIKA: We are two Doctor Who fans who met through Steven's podcast which has been going since 2006, Radio Free Skaro. When we finally got married and I finally moved to Canada, it was just taken as read that we were gonna sit down and watch all of Doctor Who together. That's what you do when you're two geeky Doctor Who fans in love.

STEVEN: I had been on the pilgrimage a few times and I suggested we'd better watch it and Erika suggested the podcast angle.

ERIKA: Steven was not happy about that.

STEVEN: 'Not everything has to be a podcast,' is what I was thinking.

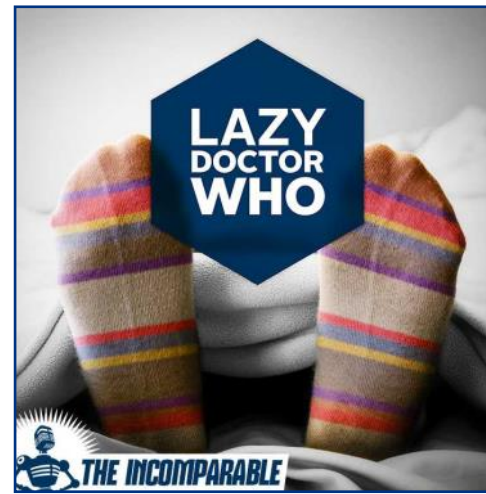
ERIKA: And I was thinking, 'yes it does!'

STEVEN: Making it into a podcast committed us to some sort of schedule or at least committing to watch the whole

thing. Calling it Lazy Doctor Who meant that we could go at our own pace, which is what we wanted to do. With Verity! going every week and Radio Free Skaro going every week, we already had enough weekly Doctor Who podcast duties to deal with so we thought, we'll watch one or two episodes, we can wait weeks in between episodes and if anyone ever asks, 'hey, why don't you put more episodes out,' it's in the title. Lazy Doctor Who.

ERIKA: Just read it! Steven really balked at first, in part for the reason that he just said – he didn't want another weekly or regular thing that he had to do, specifically related to Doctor Who. It was definitely my idea to say, 'we will do this at our own pace. Whenever we feel like watching Doctor Who we'll watch it and then we'll talk about it.' That's baked into the premise of the show.

STEVEN: Lazy Doctor Who also refers to the way we record it because that was another thing we didn't want to have to do, a bunch of editing. In the very early days, the first few episodes, we actually watched an episode, came into the podcast room and sat on either side of a Yeti microphone and did it that way and within three episodes we stopped and were just sitting on the couch right next to each other, one microphone, I pass it back and forth and sort of point it at Erika and that's it. One microphone is all we use to do this podcast. It takes no time to edit, it takes no time to post, because of those parameters that we laid down, mostly at



Erika's...

ERIKA: Behest.

STEVEN: ...Behest. I was a bit worried, Erika had hardly seen any black and white shows apart from the odd episode that they were going to review for Verity!, and I was wondering how is she going to react when the first missing episode comes along? We watched a bunch of recons, I think we read scripts as well? Shooting scripts for Marco Polo?

ERIKA: You had shooting scripts, which was helpful because not only did I have the few pictures to look at but also stage directions so I would be told what the actors were doing and where cameras were moving. That was fun! It was like a science project. You put this visual together with this written document and create this written presentation in your mind.

Lazy Doctor Who is so lazy, it doesn't even have a theme tune.

ERIKA: We didn't want a song. We just wanted a sound. Steven, who has a complete knowledge of Doctor Who and has a catalogue of Doctor Who sound effects in his head, flicked though the rolodex in his brain and

landed on one that he liked and I said, 'perfect!'

STEVEN: TARDIS landing, 'cos that's what we do! I think we toyed between that and the TARDIS scanner opening. Or maybe it was the TARDIS door.

ERIKA: Yeah. There were a few things but this was, 'hey, the TARDIS just arrived, let's go. Let's talk.'

STEVEN: The Doctor Who Sound Effects album [released 1982 – Ed] has basically been our soundtrack.

ERIKA: Surprisingly, the show received way more feedback than expected. We were starting to do this podcast for ourselves, just a fun thing. I was surprised at how many people followed us on Twitter and would be actually interacting, tweeting back at us after every episode. We've gotten some lovely emails from listeners. My mom listens religiously and if it's been a while since we've done an episode and I happen to be talking to her she'll say, 'I see you don't have anything going on on Saturday, do you think you might record some Lazy Doctor Who?' It's adorable. And some of our podcast friends are also like that - Liz [Myles] and Paul [Cornell], who are both hosts of Hammer House of Podcasts, are listeners and occasionally will give us grief if we take a long time between two.

STEVEN: I'm not surprised because Radio Free Skaro and Verity! eat up a lot of podcast landscape and I assumed people would just gravitate towards Lazy Doctor Who through either of those. But a surprising amount of people have discovered Verity! and Radio Free Skaro through Lazy Doctor Who.

ERIKA: Yeah.

STEVEN: I'm happy about that.

ERIKA: Yeah, it's gratifying.

STEVEN: Radio Free Skaro is the oldest ongoing Doctor Who podcast at this

point. I think there's maybe one in Germany that started a year before us but we've been going non-stop since 2006. We kind of started as a magazine type show where we'd talk about something and then have a segment feature, commentary, interview or something like that. It's me, my two co-hosts Warren [Frey] and Chris [Burgess], all three of us Canadians, and we've been going for well over 850 episodes now and coming up on our 16th anniversary in August 2022.

ERIKA: Verity! started quite a few years after but really is almost a sibling podcast to Radio Free Skaro. My co-host Deb [Stanish] and I had been going to Doctor Who conventions and talking about how there are great podcasts out there that we love but at the time the landscape was almost entirely men. There was I think one other podcast besides Verity! that was all women when we got started. We said, 'we are already having ridiculous conversations about Doctor Who in the bar at conventions but I don't think a lot of people recognise [these conversations](#) are going on between women fans. So let's just record some of them and put them out there as a podcast.' We gathered together Kat [Griffiths] and Liz [Myles] and Lynne [M. Thomas] and Tansy [Rayner Roberts] and all of us together make up Verity!. We mix and match hosts and talk about whatever topics are going on and the idea is, it's a conversation and whatever we say stays in the podcast with minimal editing, kind of Lazy Doctor Who-style. We try to have a good time and keep on talking about Doctor Who week after week after week, even when there's no actual new Doctor Who. With a show that's been around since 1963 you can always find something to talk about.



STEVEN: Radio Free Skaro focuses on news more than Verity!, which works more on creating topics for each week.

ERIKA: Yeah, we play silly games, we dive into themes of Doctor Who over the years. Every year has a theme.

STEVEN: Whereas with Radio Free Skaro, a lot of people come to us because we're the weekly talk show about Doctor Who. Whatever is happening in the world, even when there's no new episode, people like hearing chatter for an hour, an hour and a half, which is kind of freeing 'cos we know that after 16 years we can pretty much banter about anything when it comes to Doctor Who... if nothing is happening in the world of Doctor Who we can throw in a feature. It's a flexible format.

ERIKA: It's part of the fabric of our lives at this point.

Would Steven and Erika skip covering a story in Lazy Doctor Who?

ERIKA: Never!

STEVEN: Never.

ERIKA: We factored it in timewise. If we're going to watch an episode or more of Doctor Who, we make sure there's a cushion of time afterwards so we always have time to record the podcast, then the five minutes it takes to put it on the internet. So I cannot imagine just watching something and deciding to skip it. Also I feel like we would be letting our listeners down and people would be sad and that would make me sad.

STEVEN: I'm watching my own little pilgrimage, one episode a day leading up to the 60th Anniversary... because I'm doing it every single night I'm getting close to overtaking Lazy Doctor Who, which is good because during this pilgrimage I'm watching every episode with the production subtitles on. The format for Lazy Doctor Who is that Erika for the most part is new to a lot of the episodes that we've been watching up until now, so I like to ask her about what her fresh first viewing hot take opinions are and then I like to chime in with boring facts.

ERIKA: They're not boring!

STEVEN: They amuse me. Now I'm getting ahead, I can preview the information -

ERIKA: More facts!

STEVEN: That I will pluck and insert into episodes of Lazy Doctor Who.

ERIKA: We probably need to speed up on Lazy Doctor Who so you don't forget all those facts.

STEVEN: I will never forget, it's locked in!

ERIKA: I know a lot of random Doctor Who facts. Guess where I learned them from? Either from Steven directly or from listening to years upon years upon years of Radio Free Skaro. I have become a bit of a Doctor Who random fact nerd myself but I never get to show off in my own home because Steven already knows them all and then some. Sometimes I'll say something to my co-workers and they'll say, 'oh that's interesting,' because none of them watch Doctor Who.

STEVEN: You can surprise me by showing me what you remembered things from what I've said, which means she hasn't tuned me out.

ERIKA: I discovered Radio Free Skaro, actually through a friend Kyle Anderson

who is editor for the Nerdist website. He did a guest spot on Radio Free Skaro and I gasped, 'there's a whole podcast just about Doctor Who?' Little did I know at the time there were probably 80, it was the first one I'd heard of. So I started listening and even at that time, RFS had created a really great social circle of fans and listeners on Twitter. I started talking to all of these people who were fans of the podcast and the hosts, and Steven and I just sort of hit it off on Twitter. We just really connected and ended up going to Chicago TARDIS in 2011, that was the first time we actually met in person and the chemistry was good in person too! We actually got married at the Gallifrey One Doctor Who convention - technically before it started - and a year later I moved to Canada to live with my husband. *Steven and Erika use Doylist and Watsonian viewpoints to analyse their episodes.*

ERIKA: They're two media criticism lenses, so the Doylist view is like Arthur Conan Doyle looking at the story from the outside, from the perspective of the production and the writer. Watsonian - y'know, Watson - is the interior character. He exists in the fiction of the show,



the Sherlock Holmes universe. The Watsonian view is the in-universe, in-world view, the reason for why things happen.

STEVEN: I am a Doylist through and through. I like to look at the show as in the context of history of when it was made, where Doctor Who was at the time, where people were in their careers when making Doctor Who.

ERIKA: Was there a strike?

STEVEN: Was there a strike, what was TV like in those days. That's my common theme. I find it fascinating to find out where Doctor Who exists in the greater universe. Watching some fairly creaky-looking sci-fi TV from 50 years ago, you can come to terms with it more knowing what the TV industry and what the technology was at the time, to accept things for what they were. When I was a kid watching classic Doctor Who it's was, 'this just looks cheap,' like people wanted to make it look cheap. But that's just where TV was. I find it more fun – watching Doctor Who is fun but also watching culture and television evolve through the years as we watch each episode.

ERIKA: Whereas I'm more on the Watsonian side. I like to watch the storytelling, the story itself. I like to think about the characters, their inner lives, their motivations, why they do the things they do, from within the fiction of the story. It's interesting watching how that evolves, how much character development you get from era to era, and which characters get developed – is it more side characters or main characters? That always makes it interesting for the podcast, because we have different lenses that we're viewing the show through, to be able to bounce off of each other and talk about.

ERIKA: [Emerging podcasters] should do it if they're doing it for love. Doing it for money or listeners? Don't bother.

STEVEN: An irregular release schedule hasn't helped us with Lazy Doctor Who. People knowing us from Radio Free Skaro helped us build a bit of an early audience.

ERIKA: Setting expectations that are realistic for your listeners is helpful.

STEVEN: I didn't think we needed another podcast in our lives.

ERIKA: But we did!

STEVEN: By the time we come to talk about an episode we're all perked up and happy and we have fun. A lot of people comment about how it's just nice to hear two people who get along and get together to talk about Doctor Who. What they hear is pretty much what happens.

ERIKA: Yeah, what you hear is what you get on Lazy Doctor Who. That's us!

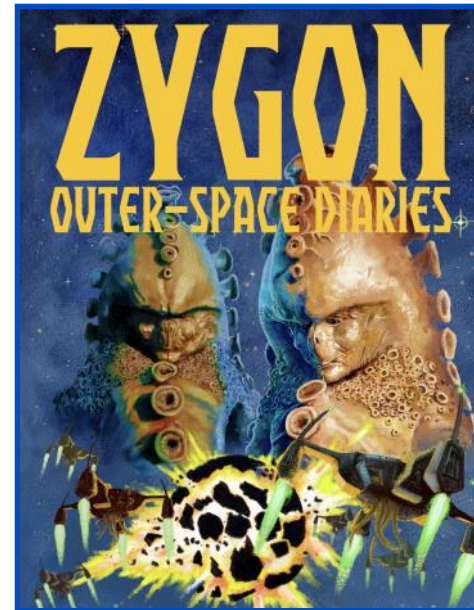
Steven and Erika, thank you so much!



THE ZYGON BOOK

Preview by Paul Cooke

I've been a fan of Zygons since I first saw them on tv. They are the magic that happens when every department of Doctor Who gets things right.

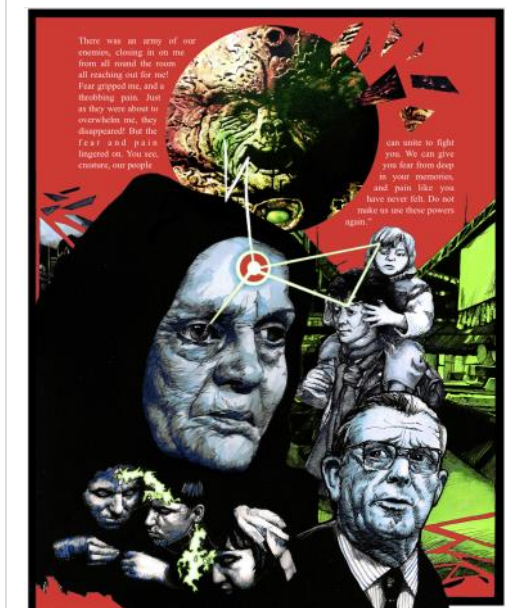


I'm also a big fan of expanded media such as the comics, annuals, the novels. Since I was a kid I've wanted an illustrated storybook along the lines of The Dalek Outer Space Book but for the Zygons; I thought the idea of a fleet of these horrors heading for Earth was fabulous. In fact as a kid I would watch Battlestar Galactica and imagine they were Zygons in disguise!

A few years ago I put my idea to a friend, Gareth Kavanagh (of Vworp Vworp! and Cutaway Comics), and he encouraged me to do one myself. I laughed it off at first, but the idea nig-

gled away and the more I thought about it, the more I wanted to do it. After a lot of thought, I decided that I would try and do this book, and I would do it to raise money for Cancer Research UK. We all, unfortunately, know someone who has suffered from this dreadful disease, and indeed, the Zygons' creator Robert Banks Stewart died from it.

I wanted to keep this low-key until it was ready to publish so decided that the only people to work on the book would be people I know or who I like the work of. I asked my friends if they wanted to contribute and was heartened at the positive response. This gave me confidence to approach some of my professional friends. Again, the re-



sponse was wonderful and very humbling. As an example, from the fan community we have stories from Jenny Shirt, Nathan Mullins (who have written fiction for DWAS) and Steve Hatcher (Big Finish, DWAS fiction editor and many anthologies) who has been wonderfully supportive all way through.

There is a comic strip written by Matt Garvey, winner of Indie and Small Press Comic of the Year 2018. Professionals who have contributed include Eisner Award winner and DW comic author Nick Abadzis (who has been very supportive all way through) and author Trevor Baxendale. Artists include Adrian Salmon and Martin Geraghty who will be familiar to readers of DWM, Andrew-Mark Thompson, Martin Simmonds, Smuzz, Richard Young, Graeme Neil Reid and some of the top fan artists such as Jeff Goddard and William Thompson. My friend Mark Worgan (editor of the Unofficial Dr Who Annuals) has been invaluable in his support in getting the book ready to publish (and he's provided some fab illustrations, too)

The book has strands that weave throughout; there is the story of the fleet, but the fleet is plagued by mishaps and bad luck.

Or is there something more sinister afoot? We find out a little about the history of the Zygons, too. The book only takes as canon what was seen in Terror of the Zygons or what was written in Doctor Who and the Loch Ness Monster. Just like the Dalek books, we've made our own universe, as it may have looked in 1976. I'm genuinely thrilled about the book and can't wait for people to see it.

[The Zygon Outer-Space Diaries are available from Lulu.](#)



THE WONDERFUL DOCTOR OF OZ

Review by Jordan Shortman

When the TARDIS brings the Doctor and her companions to LA in 1939 for their regular movie night, they are dismayed to find that no one has ever heard of The Wizard of Oz, the book, movie or the author. Deciding to investigate, the Doctor and her companions are swept up in a tornado and dumped in Oz itself. To escape and stop whatever is going on, the Doctor, Ryan, Graham and Yaz have to face the Wicked Witch of the West and find a way of getting to the Wizard of Oz, while encountering some familiar faces along the way.

Jaqueline Rayner is well known for writing some of the more 'off the wall' Doctor Who stories either in prose, audio or on screen. She isn't afraid to give the characters some truly wacky adventures. Luckily that trend hasn't left her writing and The Wonderful Doctor of Oz plays out exactly how you'd expect. Thrown right into the action, we skip a lot of the unnecessary bump that can sometimes litter the opening chapters of Doctor Who books. That was something that was certainly appreciated, though it does mean that one needs to have at least a small knowledge of the characters involved.

Just from the cover art alone, it was clear this book was pitched as a crossover between The Wizard of Oz and Doctor Who. For the most part, Rayner sticks closely to the storyline from Oz but throws various Who references at us from the very beginning. Rather than

Munchkins, the Doctor and her friends are greeted by Chumblies, yep - those robots from Galaxy 4. While younger fans will probably have no idea what a Chumbly is, they will know K-9 who stands in for Toto very nicely. These nods to the classic series will no doubt provide the hook for older fans while younger fans and readers will probably be inspired to seek out and learn what a Chumbly, Ogron, Krynoid and Myrka are.

For anyone who has read the original Wizard of Oz, you'll know that the book is about Dorothy discovering the inner strength she always had. Much of the first two acts see Rayner flipping that aspect on its head with the companions getting their characters stripped away. Graham loses his wisdom, Ryan his heart and Yaz her bravery. While this idea is good in principle, in practice, there are passages in this book where this aspect of the book just doesn't work. Ryan in particular suffers, coming across as even more unlikable than normal.

Unfortunately with all the Doctor's companions losing what makes them them, if you follow my drift, none of them really get a stand-out moment. Instead, much like some of their television appearances, they are reduced to standing around and doing nothing. Though I will give Rayner credit for at least trying to give each character something worthwhile to do.

With the Doctor's companions out of

action for almost the entire book, much of the plot falls on the shoulders of the Doctor and a stowaway called Theodore. Theodore is a much better companion for this type of story. Rayner goes to great lengths to explore some of Theodore's background, including some passages and comments on what home life was like that I thought might be a little too strong for a book aimed at a younger audience. But Doctor Who hasn't ever shied away from tough subject matters like that and it's important to remember that life in the 1930s was a completely different kettle of fish than it is nowadays.

It's thanks to Theodore that this book is the good read it was. Had it relied on us following the story through Ryan, Graham and Yaz after their characters are taken away from them, it would have been something of a dull read. Luckily Theodore is likable enough that any time with him and the Doctor alone is a worthy read. It's Theodore who works out how to deal with the Porcelain People they meet and how to help them and it's Theodore who works out how to give the Doctor's friends their characters back.

To any reader who is paying real attention to the book, the final part of Theodore's character arc won't come as much of a surprise, the clues are all there, but it's still a touching moment. Upon finishing the book I did muse on the fact that this was Theodore's story, not that of the Doctor or her companions, and that was right, with Theodore finally finding the courage within to be their true self.

While I've no doubt some older readers will probably not appreciate the

'wokeness' of this aspect of the book, it isn't an aspect that is shoehorned on in the final few hours of writing. As I said above, all the clues are there, it's just a case of piecing them together. Personally, I thought it was brilliant and was pleased to see Theodore getting a happy ending.

While the aliens that cameo throughout the book are all old school, the location of Oz returns the characters to somewhere I'm surprised the modern series hasn't done yet, The Land of Fiction. First seen in the Troughton story, The Mind Robber, and seen a few times in various pieces of spin-off media, Rayner manages to inject new life into this old location, proving why The Land of Fiction is ripe for a revisit sometime soon.



There were times when I did wonder how they were going to explain going to Oz and as much as I love The Mind Robber, reading this book, I'd completely forgotten about its setting. So it was a nice surprise to find out where they were and I was in good company in forgetting about it, as it takes the Doctor a while to work it out too.

Let's now talk about the returning villain. It's a shame that the cover spoils who it is, because there were genuinely great passages where Rayner tries to misdirect us. Does anyone remember land mines that turn people into trees? For a brief few moments Rayner succeeds in making us hope that the Rani has returned to the Doctor Who mythology. While the cover depicts Missy, one does wonder if it could have been a little misdirection. But the reveal of Missy is handled excellently, with the Doctor preparing herself for another confrontation with the Rani, right up until Missy is revealed and the Doctor doesn't know what to do.

Here Missy is handled wonderfully, and again, ignoring the cover, all the clues are there for the Doctor and a reader who is paying attention to follow. Ogrons are a really big clue! While I'm still a little unsure about what Missy's motives really were here, apart from wreaking total havoc, Rayner manages to nail the character so perfectly, it's possible to imagine Michelle Gomez having written the lines herself.

But a question one might have is why Missy is here and not Sacha Dhawan's Master. I think it's down to the BBC's media engine, which seems to churn out content where the Thirteenth Doctor is always paired off with aspects

and characters from the show that have been popular in the past. How many Titan Comics have we had now where the Thirteenth Doctor is paired with the Tenth? It seems that the BBC are now a little uncertain as to whether the Thirteenth Doctor is capable of getting stories without anything from previous eras of the show. It's a shame but it's a topic for another conversation. While I love Dhawan's Master, I don't think he was suitable here, so Missy fills his shoes quite nicely.

While much of this review made it seem like I didn't enjoy The Wonderful Doctor Oz, as an end product the book is a delight. While the mystery and the main villain reveal is a little subpar than what we've come to expect from the Who books output, it's clear that Rayner is still bursting with creativity. The similarities between The Wizard of Oz and Doctor Who have always been there, from the moment the show was first conceived, the Doctor is the Wizard, the TARDIS the tornado and the companion, Dorothy, but the blending between the two has been so brilliantly done here that one wonders why a proper crossover had never been attempted before, either in prose or on screen. There are some parts of the book which are a little disappointing but you'll struggle to find anything with at least one aspect you don't like. For me, the character arc that Theodore goes through more than made up for any little niggles I had with the book. And Rayner manages to nail the Thirteenth Doctor's era in a way that not many writers have done before. It's bright, light, fun and energetic with plenty of helpings of hopefulness.

[To buy from Amazon UK click here](#)

WE HEART THE 80S

By Nick Smith

Billed as, 'the Thirteenth Doctor's Final Adventure,' the BBC's centenary Doctor Who special risks being overshadowed by the glimpses we've been given of next year's 60th Anniversary celebrations, abjuring a total revamp for the nostalgic return of some of RTD's most popular characters. The Tenth Doctor, Donna and Wilf are all set to return. But they're not the only characters making a comeback in the near future. Whatever your taste, there's plenty to celebrate in the future of Doctor Who as it honours its past and prepares for an open-minded future.

The show has looked to its laurels a lot lately, with Daleks, Sea Devils, Son-tarans, Weeping Angels and Cybermen all appearing over the past year. Luckily the nostalgic elements have been balanced with new characters, fascinating worlds and concepts, a cute dog-faced bloke and the promise of a brand new Doctor to come.

Straight after Legend of the Sea Devils broadcast, a trailer for the centenary special could have focused solely on the Doctor's regeneration. Instead it teases us with previous companions Tegan and Ace, Flux's Vinder and UNIT's Kate Stewart, as well as a peppering of Daleks and Ashad the Lone Cyberman. Tegan and Ace make a point of telling us how long it's been since they've heard from the Doctor – four and three decades, respectively.

Cue an outpouring of excitement from

fandom, with far more excitement about the cherished '80s companions than any other element of the trailer. One social media wag remarked that for a time travel show, Who's fans sure are obsessed with nostalgia.

So why are Tegan and Ace so special? Is this just a case of hearting the '80s? Are the young fans who grew up with these characters, now all grown up, craving more?

The answer is yes – but the fanfare is also a testament to the actresses and the remarkable heroines they helped develop.

Tegan Jovanka challenged the Doctor like no companion had before. Since we were used to the first four Doctors being authoritative and unimpeded by their companions, this was something fresh and different, although Tegan's distress and the conflict amongst the TARDIS crew were stressful and not always fun to watch, as with any good soap opera!

While Dragonfire's Ace was a cliché version of a teenager with her slang and bravado, Sophie Aldred took the character beyond her trappings and made her someone we rooted for. The Pygmalion factor of her relationship with the Doctor – his aim is to help her grow, evolve and survive. Stories like Ghost Light took this mentor-and-learner theme into dark, twisted territory, as the Doctor puts Ace in psycholog-

ically harmful situations out of curiosity as much as to help her get over a childhood trauma. As the Fourth Doctor tells Professor Kettlewell, the ends never justify the means – unless, it seems, you're dealing with the catharsis of spurious morality.

These two strong personalities promise to create a fascinating dynamic in the Thirteenth Doctor's Final Adventure. But there are many other elements in this mix. Vinder is half of the 'love will find a way' duo with Bel, that provided Flux with an emotional core. Along with Yaz and Dan, Vinder represents the current era of Who. His appearance promises that the story won't just dwell on decades-old reminiscence.

Like her father before her, Kate Stewart has been a mainstay through the lives of multiple Time Lords; Kate has fought alongside most of NuWho's Doctors. Played with great confidence by Jemma Redgrave, she is always a joy to watch, even when underused as in Flux. We

hope that she continues to appear in the next era of Doctor Who.

And then there's the Doctor herself as portrayed by Jodie Whittaker, getting a send-off that promises to give her a well-earned, highly rated spotlight. The conclusions of Flux and Legend of the Sea Devils provided her with the chance to strut her dramatic acting stuff. Hopefully she will have the opportunity to dig deeper in the special.

This is a last hurrah for Chris Chibnall's imaginings, which have taken on the difficult task of shaking up our venerable programme, throwing us for a loop with his contentious Timeless Child twist. With so many past friends and enemies and a new story to tell, this is one time we may benefit from Chibnall's grab-bag approach to storytelling. Hopefully he has one more trick up his sleeve – even with a regeneration incoming, perhaps we haven't seen the last of the Thirteenth Doctor...



THE RITTENHOUSE CONUNDRUM

Collecting Season 11 and 12 Trading Cards with Richard Unwin

I had dabbled in Doctor Who trading cards before this latest lot came out earlier in the year. I'd dutifully collected all of the Battles in Time sets in the noughties, and had even owned a few autograph cards from the Cornerstone collections way back when. But none of this gentle flirting had prepared me at all for what I was getting myself into by deciding to collect the Rittenhouse Series 11 & 12 cards...

Having been quite underwhelmed by the pretend 'virtual' cards issued as NFTs under the 'Worlds Apart' banner, the news that there would be a return to actual physical product was most welcome - but when they were first announced, I imagined that collecting these shiny pieces of cardboard would be something that I would leave to others... Not for me the tempting trap of completist compulsion. My downfall, however, was the free promotional card given away with Issue 530 of Celestial Toyroom. Curse you DWAS...! That one little rectangle led me down a rabbit hole and into a weaving warren of wonder that I'm still attempting to navigate!

Although I suppose that it would be technically *possible* to collect every single variant of every single card issued - that would be ludicrous. Honestly. Here are some of the things that I have learned on my adventure so far, and why assembling a full set of these things would be a truly Sisyphean task:

1. UK & Hobby editions

Yes - there are two 'editions' to collect

- for no real reason that I can discern, other than to give us even more shiny pieces of card to hunt down. While the core set of 80 'standard' cards remains the same in both editions - the many, many 'chase' sets and exclusive variants differ considerably between the two. They even come in differently designed packets and boxes, with different coloured stripes. In reality, however, the specialist shops that sell these things seem to be stocked equally with both versions, on both sides of the pond...!

2. The 'Base' Set

Sixty cards with images from Seasons 11 & 12 - each of the twenty episodes illustrated by three cards. Simple, right...? No - not really. Although most of the cards in each individual pack are ones from this central set, there are some complications... I was quite confused when opening my first few packets - I seemed to have some production errors. There were a handful of cards that were printed on considerably lower grade card, rendering the images and text on the reverse notably dark and grainy. It took me some while to discover that this is actually a design feature...! They are known as 'Base Parallels', and a single example can be found in each pack of five cards. So once you've completed the regular set you can then have the thrill of spending lots more money and time on assembling an identical but lower-quality collection...!

And that's not even the end of this section. There are also versions of these base cards with foil-stamped TARDIS logos on them. These are much harder



to find - I only managed to locate two of them in a whole box of 24 packets. And to make matters worse - there are gold and red TARDIS logos to find in Hobby edition boxes, and teal and orange ones in the UK versions - four entire sets. So that's already an extra 240 rare variant cards to track down. (They tend to go for between £10 and £15 each on eBay - so you'd be looking at splashing out around two and a half grand on the foil-stamped Parallel Bases sets alone. This is where I personally drew the line!)

3. The Autograph Cards



These are what really attracted me to

this collection more than anything else. Cards that are actually physically signed by stars of the TV show - produced in small quantities and inserted randomly into lucky packs. Exciting! Previous Doctor Who sets from other companies had come with around a dozen of these to collect, and are still extremely popular with fans. As someone who has very much enjoyed this recent incarnation of the program - especially Series 12 - I thought that a collection of genuine and officially released autographs would make a really splendid souvenir of an era that I'd loved. A first glance at the list of available autographs, however, nearly put me off completely - just because of the sheer size of it. It's essentially a cast-list of every character from those two seasons! From Jodie Whittaker to Kirsty Besterman. (The latter of whom apparently played 'Solpado' in The Timeless Children...) Over 60 actors have taken part! And that's just the start, naturally...

There are two designs of autograph card - 'full bleed' and 'bordered' - and the distribution of these is the main difference between the UK and Hobby signed card lists. I plumped to collect the UK set of 60 autograph cards. So far I've found all but four of them - almost entirely on eBay, and from various countries. (Oh - hello import taxes...!) I'm not telling you how much I've spent on them. But because they're a mix of the two designs - it still doesn't quite feel like a 'complete' set... and I may yet be tempted to attempt to assemble the Hobby list as well. (There is a fair bit of overlap, and not all actors have both designs - I've not yet actually sat down and worked out exactly how many distinct different cards there are in the entire autograph collection.)

What I am very firmly ignoring for the

moment, however, are the 'Inscription' cards. Yup – there's another whole set! Surprise! These are a third design of autograph card, but on these ones the actors inscribe a little slogan or their character name, as well as their autograph. Sometimes they just write 'Doctor Who'. And there are different versions with different slogans from the same performer. Sighted examples of the Mandip Gill card include: 'Yaz', 'Explore!', 'More of the universe', 'Doctor Who', and 'The universe is calling'... Collecting all of these would theoretically be possible, but that way madness lies. The only one of these that I have purchased for myself is a card featuring Julia Foster as Vilma from Orphan 55 on which she has written 'Where's Benni?' – because it made me chuckle and I desired it as an artifact in its own right...!

4. The 'Incentive' Autograph Cards

What...? There are more of these things...?! Yup – there are three very special offerings that are known as 'retailer incentive' cards. These are bonus items that are only awarded when a retailer purchases a certain number of cases of the cards. (Twenty four packs per box, twelve boxes per case.) Each one of these sports not one but TWO autographs – and they're the posh ones. The combos are: Sacha Dhawan and Patrick O'Kane (Ashad), Sacha Dhawan and Jodie Whittaker, and Jodie Whittaker and Jo Martin. These are some of the most desirable cards in the collection, and they're not made availa-



ble for the general public to find – if you want to add them to your collection then there is literally no option other than to resort to spending vast quantities on eBay. (Or start your own trading card store, I suppose.) The 'incentive' to the retailer is being able to sell them for a fortune! Are you still with me...? Coz we've still barely scratched the surface...

5. The Archive Box

The ultimate 'retailer incentive', for those who purchase a full 12 cases, is the 'Archive Box'. This is a special carton that is guaranteed to contain most of the chase sets, 60 autograph/inscription cards – including at least one of every signee, and several exclusives – such as a Brett Goldstein inscription card that can only be found here. (Possibly making it the rarest individual card of the lot...? I'm not sure. I certainly haven't got one!) The archive box also includes a set of four print-plate cards used in the manufacturing process. This impressive collection is not cheap, however – and as far as I can see usually goes for around £1000. In retrospect, however – that would probably have been a more cost-efficient way of filling my album than buying everything in individual dribs and drabs. But hey ho – live and learn.

6. Promo Cards

Promotional cards are given away in the run-up to a range's full release – to entice people into collecting a full set. (It worked with me...!) There were five different ones for this collection. As far as I'm aware the 'UKP1' card featuring Yaz was only ever available as a free gift with Issue 530 of our very own Celestial Toyroom...? (It's listed as 'general distribution', but I never saw it anywhere else.) There was also one that came with the collector's album, and the hardest to track down of all was card P2 – which

was exclusive to the Philadelphia 'Non-Sport Show' – whatever that is. (Again – eBay is our friend/enemy.)

7. Shiny Cards

Among the countless rare 'chase' mini-collections to look out for are two shiny ones. Mmmmmmm – shiny. There's an extra-thick cardboard set of 'Character Mirror' cards, as well as a 'Space for All' collection of metal cards. (Their oxymoron – not mine!) These four 'metal cards' are really lovely quality and very collectable, but are distributed at a ratio of one in every two hundred and eighty eight packs. So it's not easy... There is absolutely no way that a kid is going to get a set of these by buying packs from the newsagent and opening them in the schoolyard. But I'm guessing that kids aren't the main target market for these things any more.

Wait! There's a fifth 'metal card'! But this one is exclusive to 'Rittenhouse Rewards' – a loyalty scheme that involves sending 'points' in the form of empty card packs to an address in the States, in exchange for rare and exclusive cards. To obtain this particular one you need to send them 1500 points – and with 3 points on each pack, that's 500 empty wrappers that you need to send in!

8. Case Toppers



This is a common feature with trading card collections – a 'case topper' is an extra bonus card

included with each case of boxes purchased by retailers—another incentive. But, of course, for this collection there are two available – a TARDIS one for the Hobby set and a Dalek one for the UK collection. These are made of some sort of vinyl and have a raised '3D' effect. They also smell lovely. But again – only obtainable from eBay or by arrangement with the retailer.

9. Chase Sets

I'm beginning to near the end of my word count... I'm not going to list every other single chase set that there is in this collection – but needless to say, there are loads. There are 18 'Allies & Enemies' cards. (Plus a different 18 for the UK edition, obv.) The 'Universe is Calling' set. The two versions of the 'Asia Posters' set. The New Year's Specials sets – which include subsets of their own, as well as special 'poster' cards... You get the idea. The whole thing is ludicrous! It's almost impossible to gather a 'full' collection – but it hasn't stopped me having a damned good go. I've enjoyed collecting these – and the autograph cards in particular will have a special place in my archive, but the cost of collecting anything beyond the basic set would seem to be prohibitively expensive – which seems a bit of a shame. There are rumblings of Rittenhouse releasing a Series 1-4 collection next year – but I really can't afford to go down this road again so soon...! (Famous last words...) I'm of the opinion that the Whittaker era is destined to age like a fine wine – so maybe these will become highly sought-after in the future, and will turn out to have been a very wise investment indeed... Ha! Time will tell.

Verdict: A delightful and very handsome collection that's just a bit too hard to get hold of. Engage with it at your own peril!

MYTH MAKERS: PETE MCTIGHE

Review by Rik Moran

I've loved the Myth Makers series of interviews since I first discovered them on VHS in the early 90's. Over the years these interviews have adjusted their formats slightly, with a few variations happening but always delivering good, in-depth interviews with their subjects.

This volume is no different. The interview with Pete McTighe is the first with someone from the Chibnall era of Doctor Who and is also the first with the latest format change; this time the interview has been recorded with a live audience in attendance.

I wasn't sure how the audience would affect the interview, and the truth is, they don't. The audience members were respectful, remaining quiet, raptured and engrossed listening to the conversation on stage between interviewer Sophie Aldred and subject Pete Mctighe, laughing in the right places and giving appropriate applause. I think the audience format has been a big success and hope that Reeltime will continue to do more Myth Makers with live audiences.

I didn't know anything about Pete Mctighe other than his work on Doctor Who, so everything was new information for me and he gives it freely to Sophie Aldred, who is comfortable with her interviewer role.

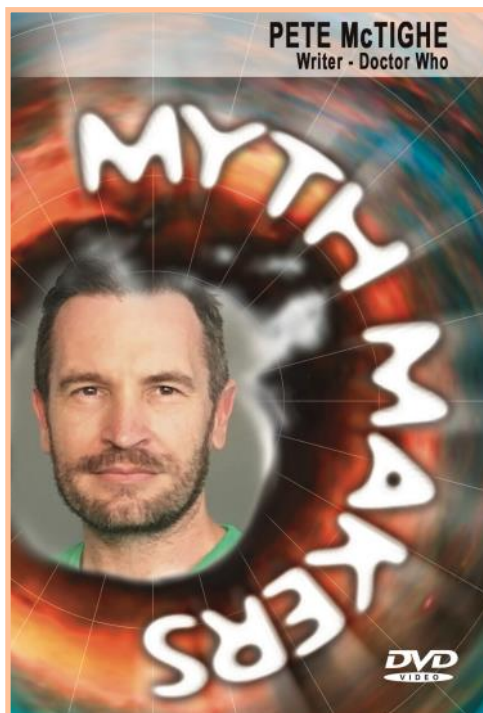
I'm not going to spoil the interview and tell you what it contains, what I will say is that there's a lot to discover both

from McTighe's personal life and career so if you're someone like me who loves to learn about the people involved with Doctor Who, then this volume of Myth Makers really is for you.

8/10

Myth Makers 158 with Pete McTighe is available to download or stream at the [Time Travel TV website by clicking here](#)

You can view the full range of Myth Makers [titles here](#).



A GUIDE TO RULING THE UNIVERSE

"Interview" by Nick Smith

Recently we were forced at staser-point to interview 'conquering entrepreneur,' Victor Samret, about his plans for the future.

COSMIC MASQUE: *What are your plans once you've taken over the universe?*

VICTOR SAMRET: Make everyone bow down before me.

CM: *And then what?*

VS: Er, lots of bowing. Maybe some scraping.

CM: *Any executions?*

VS: Only if someone doesn't bow.

CM: *How will you govern all these untold trillions of subjects?*

VS: My Mousse Guards will keep them obedient. Yes. Mousse Guards and a little mind control.

CM: *What if they revolt?*

VS: They're revolting already.

CM: *Specifically, what if a freedom-loving, time-traveling cosmic troublemaker foments rebellion?*

VS: Mousse Guards. Definitely.

CM: *Wouldn't Gel Guards be more effective?*

VS: I tried hiring some of these. They kept disappearing mid-glob, and to be honest, we didn't really connect. Surprising considering their name. So I switched to Mousse Guards. They have tastier slime trails.

CM: *What should we expect our lives to be like under your reign of terrifying chocolate pudding?*

VS: Not that bad really. A little bit of bending to my every whim, expect to hear some terrific evil laughing and being told everything you know is wrong just for the hell of it. Mainly I'll just be evil. Would you like to hear my plan?

CM: *You have one?*

VS: It's a doozie.

CM: *Are you sure you want to share your nefarious secrets with our readers?*

VS: Oh gosh yes!

CM: *Oh, go on then.*

VS: It involves an alliance with aliens who use memorable South African accents.

CM: *And if your plan succeeds?*

VS: I've never got that far. But mark my words, when I do there will be mayhem! CVEs! Cunning disguises! Tissue getting compressed all over the place! With my slimming black outfits I will be the most stylish despot fathomable!

CM: *Mr. Samret, thanks for your time and your fashion tips.*

Next issue: the First Doctor gives us horticultural advice from his rose garden, with bonus topiary tips from Tremas.

