

# COSMIC MASQUE



*What is it to 'be a fan'? That is what Cosmic Masque is about.*

In April I was invited to join a bunch of fans on a podcast called [The Legend of the Traveling TARDIS](#). I'd moved to Nashville, Tennessee or as I call it, Nashers, and I didn't know many people there, so this was an opportunity to make new friends and avoid listening to country music for one evening a week.

I'd been following the adventures of Christian Basel's miniature TARDIS for years as he took it around the US, photographing it in different locations, at conventions and with celebrities from Doctor Who and beyond (you can read more about the Legend in Cosmic Masque 13). More recently, the wandering TARDIS spawned a podcast with a group of entertaining hosts. I had no idea the world of Doctor Who podcasting had fostered such a large and creative community until I got involved.

At the beginning I was respectful, not wanting to be a know-it-all barging in on someone else's airtime. Now I jump in whenever I have an opinion, which is all the bloomin' time. In this issue of Cosmic Masque, Legend co-host and gaming guru David Chapman brings us an in-depth Q&A with Magic: The Gathering Senior Designer Gavin Verhey, who spills all conceivable beans about the upcoming Doctor Who: Universes Beyond game.

I was also fortunate enough to attend

the last (for now) [Con Kasterberous](#), an intimate convention in North Alabama, right near a NASA space centre. As soon as I turned up I overheard folks talking about their favourite Tom Baker episodes, the comparative weight of characters' hats (really!) and other fan minutiae that I don't hear in Nashers. The blood, sweat and more sweat that the organizers put into this event made me wish I'd heard about it sooner. In this issue, author and co-organizer Matthew Kresal describes how it felt to get involved and see Con Kasterberous through to its bittersweet conclusion.

As a Doctor Who fan I'm used to being patient; I lived through the Wilderness Years, lost and confused like the Tribe of Gum's village idiot. But the lead-up to *The Star Beast* seems SO LONG! Luckily, talented writers like Jordan Shortman, Geoff Stephens, Ramona Schnitger, Philip Dalton and Richard D. Rhodes have written some fascinating articles, and Stephen Hatcher has gathered a brand new batch of thrilling fiction to keep us occupied until the Fourteenth Doctor pops out of his very own traveling TARDIS.

Nick



Contents	Page
Brought to Book	4
Magic the Gathering	17
60 Years of Doctor Who	28
The Television Companion	34
Ninth Doctor Sourcebook	35
10 Things I Like About Who	38
New Frontiers Review	42
The Robots Vol. 6 Review	44
Rani Takes on the World Review	45
A Doctor in the House Review	47
 <u>FROM THE LAND OF FICTION</u>	
Fiction Editorial	51
Divergence	52
Déjà Vu Part Two: Tricks of the Mind	69
Déjà Vu Part Three: Like Minds	92
Ian Chesterton in an Exciting Adventure with the Martians	105
The Outsiders	115
The Davros Diaries: The Dalek Factor	131
 Remembrance of a Convention	 134
Conflicts of Interest Review	140
Pioneers Review	142
Thoughts About The Reign of Terror	144
City of Death on DVD	145
Quarry of Death	148

## COSMIC MASQUE XVIII

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Published by the Doctor Who Appreciation Society

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# BROUGHT TO BOOK: TARGET'S GOLDEN YEARS

by Richard D. Rhodes

I moved home recently. Yes, really, I did.

The thing is, my new place – compared to my old gaff – is *bigger on the inside*. Not trans-dimensionally so, more's the pity. This is common-or-garden bigger but bigger nonetheless and with extra capacity there comes opportunity. After years of being boxed away, hidden from sight in the loft, my Doctor Who books can, finally, be restored to their rightful place on display for all the world (well, the occasional visitor) to see.

But should I do it? I mean, do I have the right? My partner of the last several years is aware that there were *some* crates of Who books in the loft. Just one or two (five). He's aware that Doctor Who is my thing and has quietly suffered the solitary bookcase containing a full set of classic series DVDs and Collection boxsets without too much fuss (generally hidden from view by a Ficus which wouldn't be out of place in Harrison Chase's orangery). What he's not aware of is quite how extensive a full set of Target novelisations, Virgin New & Missing Adventures and BBC Eighth Doctor Adventures & Past Doctor novels can be, let alone how many shelves (actually, bookcases) they would consume. Fortunately for him, I obtained the subsequent New Series titles as e-books so not to make the collection larger still (or, in his eyes, worse). Even then, my heart hankers for those as physical titles but – for now – my head still says no. My head winning

was probably for the best as, without doing so, the loft of our old place would have long-since collapsed under the combined mass of many, *many* texts.

Anyway, I digress. The thing is, should I? Should I release these books back into the wild? They've been safe from light fading their spines these last few years, not to mention derision being piled upon me from various NotWe. However, there are few things in a Doctor Who fan's life – particularly a fan of my certain age – more comforting than the sight of a full collection of Target books, neatly displayed (followed, naturally, by the New Adventures, *et al*). There are similarly few things in this life that are more likely to trigger varying degrees of OCD in their owners. The spines aren't consistent, neither is the Target logo or the fonts used; the books vary annoyingly in height and width, meaning some poke up or out more than others... but, there is joy to be had in those books being displayed and in that commonality to be found with like-minded others.

Conversations have been had about *those* crates which I try and hide in the corner of the spare bedroom, my new office. They are eyed suspiciously on account of there already being multiple bookcases creaking under the weight of non-Who books (yes, my obsession with bound volumes of paper is not confined to the Doctor's journeys in print). Even before moving in and at several times as we journeyed, slowly,

through the deepest recesses of conveyancing hell, I pointed out swathes of wall space just gagging for floor-to-ceiling shelving in my office-to-be, not to mention those two large alcoves in the lounge and... Anyway, now that we are in and long-story short: new, copious shelving is on order, but this has set me thinking. Am I unusual in wanting to put my 'childish things' back on display? Surely, there's no point in being grown up if you can't be childish every now and again – but all the time? Is surrounding myself in books (whether Who or not) which go back decades more about me trying to recapture yesterday, an almost worshipful act of concrete nostalgia? And, sitting there in my office, is there a plea to some kind of higher power, as I try and absorb the words that surround me, by some kind of osmosis, hoping that they will make me an actual writer?

Probably all the above and more besides.

There is something very particular about the Target range of Doctor Who books which, since the 1970s, has immortalised every single Classic series story (pedantry alert: the Troughton Dalek stories, although novelised, never saw the light of day as Target books – they were Virgin Doctor Who books – and neither did *The TV Movie* as originally released) and, in more recent times, as a BBC Books imprint, those Classic stories which were out of reach during the original run (Douglas Adams' 70s stories and Dalek stories from the 80s) have seen new life in print under the red, yellow and blue logo with an ever-increasing run of NuWho episodes being preserved in paper and ink too. The new releases are catnip for me (and

I suspect many others), just as the originals were in the last century. I am often left wondering what these titles mean to the writers who produced them and decided to ask some their thoughts on the matter.

Of the latest crop of Target releases, Stephen Gallagher is, perhaps, the most familiar of the authors to the wider book-buying and -reading public. Since the later 1970s, he has been making a name for himself as both a novelist and scriptwriter and, when it comes to his books, he has a penchant for modern thrillers and period horror. His extended novelisation of *Warriors' Gate* is one of 2023's crop of titles and goes *Beyond* the original television episodes by including new material born out of the worlds created for the final story of the E-Space Trilogy.

Phil Ford may not be a name that's especially familiar to the book-consuming public (yet) but the wider public is probably very familiar with his television work, whether as a writer or producer. In the extended Whoniverse™, he contributed significantly to Russell T Davies (RTD)'s first coming as showrunner as well as during Steven Moffat's time at the helm: he was head writer and co-producer of *The Sarah Jane Adventures* (the most 'classic' version of Who to ever be produced outside the original run), contributing as well to *Torchwood* and the parent show, penning animated episodes as well as games for BBC Online. With credits on *Coronation Street* (don't worry, it was post the cancellation in the 80s: Ford didn't help bring down our favourite show), *Taggart*, *The Bill*, *Heartbeat*, *Bad Girls*, *Footballers' Wives* and *Waterloo Road*, Ford's CV catalogues many of the top

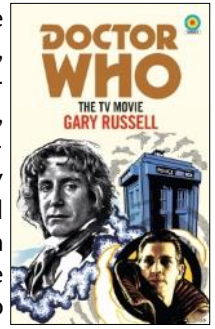
British television dramas of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Genre fans will also recognise him from New Captain Scarlet and Wizards vs Aliens. Of the recent Target releases, *The Waters of Mars*, Ford's adaptation of the episode he co-wrote with RTD, is highly acclaimed with many 5-star reviews on Goodreads and Amazon.

In Doctor Who circles, the name Gary Russell has been associated with the show and its various licensed publications for decades. Whether editing *Doctor Who Magazine*; helping establish Big Finish; writing novelisations, original novels, audios and comic strips; script editing; directing and producing animations, Gary Russell has been involved with Who across a plethora of platforms and is of that legion of professional fans who helped keep Doctor Who alive, in various formats, throughout the Wilderness Years and has been an enduring part of its multimedia presence since. 2022 was a good year for Russell as he was awarded the inaugural Terrance Dicks Award For Writers by the DWAS and, on the Target front, the revised version of *The TV Movie* novelisation was one of the year's Target releases while his adaptation into print of the forthcoming 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary episode, *The Star Beast*, is due hard upon the heels of the episode's scheduled broadcast in November 2023.

My opener for my three Doctor Who writers is not about their Target books or anything Who-related. More simply, are they book people?

'I am, always have been,' is Stephen Gallagher's response. 'A couple of years back we had the house remodelled and

had to move all the books into storage, then back again. Nothing of great value, just... well, a book lover will know. My study's book-lined with a rug and sofa and two PCs. The computers are on two desks, face to face, with a Captain Kirk chair in the middle so I can swivel from one to the other.'



It seems that it's not just me and Stephen Gallagher who go through periods of their books in storage. Phil Ford has moved home recently and his books are still boxed away. 'I always did work like that [surrounded by books] and all my books are still in boxes! But I turn to books for research and inspiration. These days, I sit at a small table overlooking the balcony. I always like to have a view, a view is important.' On one level I don't disagree: my new place, as well as having room for books, looks out on immense skies, fields and horses. Phil Ford continues: 'Even now, I'm still one to turn to books for research and inspiration rather than, necessarily, the internet. I always like having books around. Books are like slices of your life. I often remember things by what I was reading at the time. When we got married and moved into our first house it was *The Magic Cottage* by James Herbert. Seeing that on a shelf now reminds me of then. Find me a writer who isn't a book person.'

This is a sentiment Gary Russell shares as he effuses over his love of books (he has copious volumes of them) which, to him, are 'like Art Deco,' being as much there for aesthetic pleasure as anything

else. He admits to being joshed by friends for the number of unread texts on his shelves, noting there's never enough time to read everything you want. At this, I nod ruefully, being just the same. His passion for books goes back to childhood and the titles from those formative years are hugely important to him, with a passion for Lewis Carroll's Alice books and other titles inspired by them, together with tales from L Frank Baum's Oz and the worlds of Hugh Walters. The latter, of his material said: 'I believe a good SF story should (1) entertain, (2) educate painlessly, and (3) inspire the young people of today...' and I can't imagine the young Gary Russell or his current version disagreeing. Then there are his Doctor Who books. In particular, the Targets are kept in a twilight world of their own, in the hallway, to avoid the daylight bleaching the spines further with the New Adventures and their successors displayed in his bedroom.

Talking about books in writers' lives brings me on to their early careers as writers – given what they did then and what they do now, do they have any advice for budding writers?

Stephen Gallagher is reflective: 'Much has changed since I started out but the advice I still offer is to create something with like-minded friends. Doesn't matter how, doesn't matter what, but be doing it for its own sake. It's like groundwork for a life. I can draw a straight line from my first directing gig back to staging plays in the classroom and the magic lantern I made out of a torch and a shoebox when I was 9. Things build on things while you're doing it for the joy. My professional "in" was with a radio drama cobbled togeth-

er with co-workers that paid off in several ways. We got it onto local radio, I novelised the scripts and hooked a publisher, and it gave me enough of a skillset to start selling plays to Radio 4. My producer there passed the script of an SF drama to the Who office and that got me an invite to meet with Chris Bidmead [script editor, Season 18].'

This sets me off at a tangent. When Gallagher was commissioned to write for the TV series back in 1980, had he been given free rein with the script or had the production team imposed tight requirements? He remembers being given, pretty much, free rein: 'The show was gloriously flexible and there was very little in the way of canon or backstory to service. I was given my basic cast and E-Space and I had a free hand for the next two hours. The only requirements were to provide exits for K9 and Romana and get us back into our known universe.'

Reflecting on how he became a writer and script editor on Doctor Who, Gary Russell notes that 'there has never been a plan. It's all been luck with no talent involved!' His progress from producing fanzines to joining *Doctor Who Magazine*, eventually becoming its editor, was always a case of being in the right place at the right time and a tendency never to say no. I am put in mind of the Doctor explaining to Jo Grant, in *The Green Death*, what serendipity is. 'This used to bring me into contact with people like Peter Darvill-Evans [editor of the New Adventures for Virgin] who said that he was looking to use fan writers for things – I thought I'd give it a go and did! I've had the luckiest career in the world and a life of having fun, never having to go to work every day.'

Russell considers that writing and reading are two separate things. 'I was inspired by those early Target writers: there is the trinity of Hulke, Hayles and Dicks... but especially Malcolm Hulke - his writing was very much the reason I wanted to write. I used to visit WH Smith and look at the Doctor Who books and wish my name was on them - and years later it was. When *Legacy* [one of the earlier New Adventures] came out, I, again, went into WH Smith and saw my name on it - adjusting it on the shelf so it faced with the cover forward; it's exciting to see it out there in the wild. A book is your soul, your heart and your blood, sweat and tears - the most exciting, thrilling moment, to see it on a shelf in a bookshop. But when it comes to reading, I often turn to children's books, the Alex Rider series is a recommendation, murder mysteries and thrillers - I love an Agatha Christie. Ironically, I tend to write in a genre I tend not to read!'

Had the books been as instrumental for introducing the young Russell to Doctor Who as the TV series? At this suggestion, the response is a little rueful. 'I'm nearly 60, the books weren't around when I was young! It was very much the TV series - my older brothers watched Doctor Who every Saturday and, from 3 years old, I was taking notice of it. From my point of view, the books came along in '73 when, on a visit to Woolworths, I realised, "Oh my God! There are Doctor Who books!".' As they say, the rest from that point, was history and, clearly, Woolworths played a major role in introducing children of the 1970s to Who: my first was *Doctor Who and the Green Death*, bought by my Grandmother at the end of a family outing to Blackpool in 1975,

presumably to shut me up. Little did she realise what she started...

Taking up the thread of how writers get the opportunity to write for Doctor Who, Phil Ford's initial response is, with a chuckle: 'I got an agent!' before reflecting on how his Coronation Street episodes, due to the rapid turnaround on soap-opera production, screened before his Taggarts, even though the latter were produced first. Moving on to Doctor Who, Ford explains that, when he was working on the New Captain Scarlet with Gerry Anderson, *Parting of the Ways* was being previewed at BAFTA and, basically, he begged RTD for a job. He also reflects on RTD's generosity of spirit, saying that the showrunner, in his telling of how Ford joined the team, suggested the reason was that, as he and Ford knew each other from Corrie, that they had met up and thought that they must do something together. Ford laughs jovially at the memory: 'The truth is that I begged him! That was my reason for going to BAFTA - to get a job! Shortly after I got a call, asking me to join The Sarah Jane Adventures.'

It turns out that, at the time, pitching a story for The Sarah Jane Adventures was not an easy sell. With three series (Doctor Who, The Sarah Jane Adventures and Torchwood) in production, duplicated themes had to be avoided and, with several ideas rejected, desperation gave rise to Ford suggesting a story featuring a gorgon. The resultant *Eye of the Gorgon* was novelised by Ford himself for BBC Books and was followed by *Day of the Clown*, a story which Ford recalls with a thrill: 'One of my favourite episodes. I fully remember going down onto the set and having the



b'Jesus scared out of me by Bradley Walsh when he was playing Oddbob. I'd only met him an hour before and he was already in make up as the clown and then we were filming the scene in the laboratory. I was behind the camera when he appeared - he was terrifying and *that* good! Our shows got tremendous people, people you would not expect to do a kids' show.'

Ford explains the encouragement RTD gave, both on the Doctor Who related shows and their subsequent co-venture, Wizards vs Aliens. Ford explains how supportive RTD was over including 'adult themes' within the stories of a children's show, as was the case with the dementia subplot in *Eye of the Gorgon*. 'It would have been a cheat to cure dementia within the story. There couldn't be a magic cure for it. Kids would have been watching whose grandparents had dementia.'

Ford recalls the Wizards vs Aliens episode, *The Thirteenth Floor*. 'The other thing that Russell always said is that there was no story you couldn't tell for kids as long as you told it properly. When I was writing *The Thirteenth Floor*, I phoned up Russell to say that the ending is so bleak, I wasn't sure I could do it. Russell said, "Make it bleak! Make it as bleak as you can get - there's nothing wrong with bleak." It was always a wonderful freedom to work with Russell on those shows.'

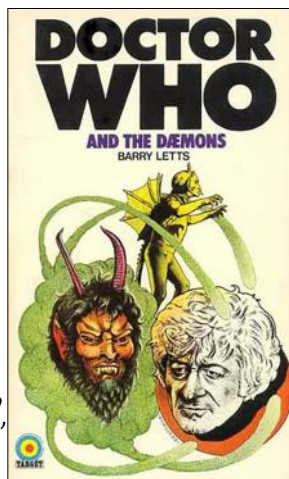
Talking of Ford's novelisations of *Eye of the Gorgon* and *Day of the Clown* and Gary Russell's original adaptation of *The TV Movie*, were either disappointed that, as originally published by BBC Books, the editions appeared without the Target logo? Ford guffaws immedi-

ately: 'Oh, definitely!'

In Russell's case he remembers that, at the time of the original publication by BBC Books, it was a fractional disappointment for it to have no Target logo. The fact that he had written a novelisation - with *his* name on it - of a legitimate TV episode and that it sat, in bookshops, alongside those few remaining Target books which were still in circulation and the Virgin New and Missing Adventures was lovely, an ambition fulfilled, especially when he thought about the writers' names that would have been on the adjacent book spines including the likes of Ben Aaronovitch and Marc Platt. That, however, did not diminish how excited he was, over 20 years later, to see the revised version of *The TV Movie* novelisation released: 'that was *emotional!*'

While both have strong formative memories of the Target range, for Ford it is very much of *Doctor Who and the Dæmons*: the young Ford being consigned to his sickbed, probably with mumps, while remaining sufficiently astute to realise that the Master's invocation of Azal was simply *Mary Had a Little Lamb* in reverse. 'It is one of my favourite stories - I'd love to have a go at something like that again!'

Looking back on the original Target release of *Doctor Who and Warriors' Gate* in 1982, it



came after a time when the publishers had been in dispute with the Writers Guild about how they handled the adaptation of TV episodes: often they were novelised by people who did not write the original teleplay and at least one writer had complained about missing the opportunity to adapt their own work (David Fisher re his two Key to Time stories). Gallagher's involvement with the novelisations marked the start of it becoming much more commonplace for the screenplay writers to adapt their own material, so what did Gallagher himself recall of this period?

'I'd just joined the Guild and I remember the dispute, but my recall is that it was over broader publishing issues with the lucrative Who titles being weaponised by the Guild as leverage. Chris [Bidmead] had made an offhand mention during one of our script meetings that we writers had the option of turning our scripts over to Terrance if we didn't care to tackle the books ourselves. I'd already novelised my early radio serials, so I just put my agent onto it. But I wasn't aware of any controversy over who got to adapt what. It would have been Target's call on who got the assignments.'

Another notable feature of the original publication of *Warriors' Gate* (and, subsequently, the Fifth Doctor tale, *Terminus*) was the use of the pseudonym John Lydecker. Lydecker was also used by Gallagher when novelising *Silver Dream Racer* and was one of three aliases Gallagher used, including Stephen Couper and Lisa Todd. 'The pseudonyms were like firewalls between the different parts of my career,' confides Gallagher. 'But as I grew in confidence and stability I let them all go. There was

some logic to making a distinction between original work and prose-for-hire from source material, but I don't think I varied my style that much. If at all. I don't have a conscious style anyway. Whenever I'm asked about Lydecker, I say that he's happy in retirement on his private island!'

What of recent commissions? How did the opportunities arise to contribute recent Target novelisations? Regarding *The Waters of Mars*, Ford explains it started – as often seems to be the case – with a phone call. 'I don't know if they asked Russell first – he was probably too busy – and I was just delighted to do it. *The Waters of Mars* is, personally, an important story for me, so it was great to get a chance to go back to Mars.'

Ford very much wanted the TV show and its novel to be scary. Ford's favourite Doctor Who stories are those which are dark, bringing us back to Doctor Who's own slice of Dennis Wheatley style-occult, *The Dæmons*. This, in turn, has Ford recall how one element in the original production of *The Waters of Mars* was felt to be too scary for the family show: the eyes of the Flood. It was the only time Ford knew of RTD and Julie Gardner stopping recording because of their concerns: the novelisation does not pull such psychological punches.

As far as adapting the script went, Ford felt it was an easy process. 'It would have been a lot more difficult had I not written the script in the first place. I already knew all the characters. When you write something for television, I think you often know more about the characters than you're going to be able

to say in the script. So, it's a great chance to put all of that onto the page, to give the hidden stories if you like. For instance, I knew about Andy Stone and his Dad because, basically, I based that on me. My favourite part was taking something that Russell had added which was the whole element of Adelaide having seen the Dalek at her window and expanding that. The other thing was adding the bit about the Ice Warriors, which is something Russell said I must do!

'I hadn't actually watched *The Waters of Mars* since it went out originally. A great experience after 14 years - and I also watched *Planet of the Dead* and David's final episodes. It was great to travel back to all that, using it to contextualise *The Waters of Mars*. The scene in the airlock, the two-hander between the Doctor and Adelaide, made me cry. I'd forgotten how intimate and powerful it was. It was a joy to go back.'

Talking of *The Waters of Mars*, wasn't Gary Russell of help to Phil Ford? Russell gleefully admits to being a paperphile: 'I kept lots of stuff - call sheets, every draft, every version of the scripts. I sent Phil everything over. Someone needs to keep all this stuff. There will always be an Andrew Pixley who will want it for research.' Certainly, future compilers of The Collection Blu Ray sets, assuming they eventually cover the NuWho series, will be glad that such material was retained by someone. Indeed, not so long ago, RTD himself was helped out by Russell when he was looking for something from their era on Doctor Who: 'I've lost it - do you still have a copy?' Of course he did. 'I am a researcher at heart!' Listening to Gary Russell talk so enthusiastically about

this, I can't help but think that Bad Wolf should be retaining him as an archivist - or should that be Curator? - on the current production. Someone, somewhere, will want that lovingly collated information someday.

In relation to forthcoming Target releases, what can Russell say about being commissioned to write the novelisation of *The Star Beast*? He got a phone call from editor Steve Cole, inviting him to do it and, indeed, had been tipped off by RTD that a novelisation was in the offing but as to whether his name had been the only one suggested or there were several on a list he doesn't know. He is, however, thrilled to be, vicariously, part of RTD's return to Doctor Who. His career highlight was working in Cardiff with RTD and Julie Gardner. 'Life doesn't get better than working for them,' and their return to the show is truly exciting. A thought occurs to Gary. 'Do you know Pigpen from Peanuts?' I wonder where this is going. Yes, the kid with the buzzing cloud of uncleanness around him? 'That's Russell!' I am left wondering if this is a hither-to unreported scoop with regards to the showrunner's personal hygiene. 'No - not at all... but in Russell's case, the cloud is his genius, it just spreads around him, his creativity. People pass through that cloud and they get infected by it - they raise their game because they want to work for him.' Gary Russell is emphatic regarding the second coming of Russell T Davies and Julie Gardner. 'It's going to be brilliant!'

Obviously, having novelised it, Russell is privy to what happens in *The Star Beast*, but he has no knowledge (until they are transmitted) of what happens in the second and third of the anniver-

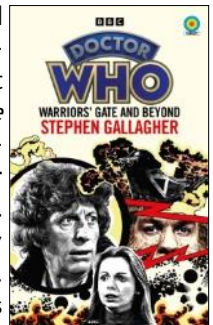
sary specials. He and his fellow writers of the novels for the three stories, the others being Mark Morris and James Goss, have been very disciplined, avoiding any temptation to confer in search of spoilers. When he and Mark Morris met recently for dinner, they felt that, perhaps, there was something of an elephant in the room but they behaved impeccably and, indeed, when Steve Cole (who, presumably, does know what happens across all three) joined them at the meal, they were happy to report that no story details had been exchanged. And is there *nothing* Russell can say about *The Star Beast*? He pauses, considering the legal and professional implications of disclosure and then, very briefly, he expands on the story's much-trailed antagonist, Beep the Meep. 'Strictly speaking, his name is not Beep the Meep! His title is the Most-High!'

In 1982, the Target range was reputed to have a strict word-count and page restrictions and, around the same time, Ian Marter bemoaned his adaptation of *The Enemy of the World* becoming little more than an abridged version, it was cut so heavily, and vowed that, one day, he would publish the unexpurgated version. (Target/BBC Books: how about that for a future restored-text publication?)

I wonder if Stephen Gallagher felt vindicated to see *Warriors' Gate* published in full: 'Target were fine with the book as written. My editor, Christine Donougher, got special clearance and a bump to the budget from W H Allen's production department for the extra page count. It was JN-T [John Nathan-Turner, producer at the time] who vetoed it for not reflecting edits that had

been made to the scripts after I'd delivered the manuscript. Target didn't take the scissors to it, I did. But I kept everything I cut. There was talk of a restored version over the years and it was pitched to Target in – I think – 2018, but their slate was full. BBC Audio got wind of it and made it happen, and invited me to follow up with an original novella for them. I chose to extend Romana's story after she headed off into the Gateway with Laszlo. I had a bit of a dream of seeing the two stories published together as a single work, and last year I dug out my Target contacts to find out if the door was still closed. It's not really an issue of vindication. More the satisfaction of something that's finally complete. More than complete, if anything, because I got to add a third story to round everything off. That's why it's called *Warriors' Gate and Beyond*.'

Talking of changed and extended versions, we are brought back to *The TV Movie* and consider the revised version's cover by Anthony Dry. 'Perfect!' is how Gary Russell describes it. Cover design is always something he likes to have input in and, of his back-catalogue, *Divided Loyalties* is a favourite, others... less so, with some of the later 90s covers singled out for a little eyebrow-raising, including the silhouetted, Bugs Bunny-styled Wirrn adorning the cover of *Placebo Effect*. As for the design for *The TV Movie* re-release, Russell remembers talking it through with Anthony Dry and agreeing that – as the novel of what became the last



episode of the Classic series – it should invoke the cover of the first Target book, *Doctor Who and the Daleks* (or *Doctor Who in an Exciting Adventure with the Daleks*, if we are to free our inner pedants), with elements of *The TV Movie* book echoing positioning from the original – with the TARDIS reverted to blue, rather than pink.

It's clear that Stephen Gallagher is not a fan of Target's decision to use photo-montages in 1983: 'I didn't love the original *Terminus* cover and I much prefer Alister Pearson's skull design for the audio sleeve. And I think the Blu Ray season sets are brilliant packaging. With my solo stuff I'm always ready to be involved in design but with *Who* I have no influence at all and that's fine, we're talking about a line of product in a house style where a certain uniformity is a commercial given. When it comes to publicity, if I'm wanted, I'm there. It's the job. But it's largely the actors who draw the attention.'

And what does Stephen Gallagher think of his two slices of 1980s *Doctor Who*? 'I was about to say that they kickstarted my career but that's not really the case. I barely worked in TV for the next decade until things took off with *Chimera*. But it's like having a couple of original Apple shares in your portfolio. I don't mean financially, God no. No writer's getting rich off classic *Who*. But as a life thing, part of your sense of self, knowing you took a stake in the future and still staying part of the conversation, it's been a good investment.'

I admit to having a fondness for the novelisation of *Terminus* – longer than

the usual Target book at the time, it was richer, darker and more vibrant than what appeared on television. In the writer's notes of his third 'lost' serial, *Nightmare Country* – released by Big Finish in 2019 – Gallagher explained that the television producers had rejected it as too expensive to visualise. Given how TV production values have continued to evolve, had he been leading the way to what would come next, once the show was revitalised under RTD and those who followed?

'Well, I'm not sure about leading the way to anything, but thanks for that on *Terminus*. It doesn't always get a lot of appreciation though when it does, it's quality love. When novelising my own work, I'm doing my best to give you the unfiltered show that was in my head. With *Nightmare Country* the action's taking place in your head, the listener's head, with something of the same effect. In both cases the layers that are added depend on your complicity. Compared to watching, I see it as the difference between a spectacle and a dream. I think modern *Who* is visually terrific but one thing I've noticed over time – and this is a broader issue in genre, not limited to our show – is that as the spectacle gets grander there's a body of fandom that consumes it without dreaming. You know the ones, can't wait to list the things they were dissatisfied by, even when all they've seen is the trailer.'

This is a point that Gary Russell picks up on too, how some act as self-appointed gatekeepers to all things *Doctor Who*-related, where dissatisfaction or disappointment with something moves from considered, if critical, commentary over what has been produced

to scathing personal attacks on individuals. Russell is glad that he, as a fan, hasn't become one such gatekeeper. 'It has never been the case that the franchise dulled in my eyes. I have never been over Doctor Who. I am genetically disposed to want to watch it and love it.' Consequently, he doesn't have enormous regrets about things he has created for Doctor Who or otherwise and he quotes something Katy Manning told him when he first met her, something that has always stayed with him since. 'Never regret what you do, only what you don't.'

While I am left to ponder the tendency towards pillorying individual contributors and self-destructiveness in various fandoms, not just Doctor Who, I follow up by asking whether, with NuWho in mind, Stephen Gallagher would return to the show now. 'If Russell [T. Davies] gave me a shout I'd be there, no question. He's the best in the business. But he has his agenda and if such a thing was on his mind, it would be happening already. What I won't do is seek a place where there's none for me and then have to bear the rejection. I'd rather stand aside for new talent.'

In responding to the same question, Phil Ford is unequivocal while laughing heartily at the image that's flitting through his head: if invited back to the Whoniverse™, he would happily chop or, indeed, bite RTD's hands off to do so. And what would Gary Russell like to do if given carte blanche by the folks at Bad Wolf, the BBC and Disney? 'I would love to do an animated Doctor Who-related series for children.' The recently cancelled Star Trek series, *Prodigy*, is mentioned and how clever, smart and intelligent it was. Russell rec-

ognises that, when considering a parent series and its spinoff universe, the bottom-line is a fundamental consideration for those holding the purse-strings. Animation is expensive, much more so in the terms of cost per screen-minute compared to live-action. Perhaps that's what did for *Prodigy* in the end – finances – and whether animation graces the Whoniverse™ will just have to remain to be seen.

Equally, with many NuWho stories yet to be novelised, would any of our writers return again to the Target fold? Not Stephen Gallagher, novelising someone else's material is not on his agenda. Ultimately, he has his own fictional creations to serve and isn't yet finished with the worlds he created for *Warriors' Gate*: from that universe is the continuing story of *Faustine, Princess of Tharil* – a Prestige format graphic novel set against the Tharil/human slave rebellion with art by Who comics legend Martin Geraghty and published by [Cutaway Comics](#), the second part of which landed recently.

Having clearly enjoyed the experience of writing *The Waters of Mars*, Phil Ford is keen to take the opportunity to adapt *Into the Dalek*. 'I love a bit of Rusty!' The story originated out of Steven Moffat's brief to write about the Doctor being miniaturised inside a Dalek, it then evolving as Ford explored *why* the Doctor would do that. Beyond that, I reflect that there is always the 2009 animated serial, *Dreamland*, that Ford wrote and could yet be tackled. As for adapting other people's screenplays, Ford is not averse but is of the opinion it would be easier for the original writer, effectively, as they have worn in the shoes and done the hard work with the

characters and storyline. That said, Ford is interested in what would come from such a novel, as long as he enjoyed the original story. Regardless, his philosophy remains that the novelisation should be faithful to what was originally seen on screen.

Considering further novelisations, Gary Russell is hopeful that – with BBC Books breaking from its usual pattern of several novelisations being released in the summer each year – by releasing adaptations of the three anniversary specials hard on the heels of the episodes’ transmission, a more frequent publishing schedule might be evolving but recognises this might be no more than wishful thinking. He certainly has no insider knowledge (or, if he does, he’s not saying) but he does think that an attempt should be made to novelise all the episodes made since the triumphant return of Doctor Who in 2005, all with beautiful Anthony Dry covers. ‘Kids love books – just look at the children’s department in any Waterstones – and Target should be making these books accessible to them.’

What else do our writers have lined up?

In the coming months, *The Star Beast* novelisation aside, Gary Russell has a couple of Doctor Who audiobooks due, both featuring the Tenth Doctor: *The Lagoon Monsters* and *The Demons Within*. ‘Daily, I think about creating my own original material, away from media franchises – I do want to write novels of my own, definitely. One day!’ His literary agents certainly would like him to do so. It is nearly 30 years since his first novel – *Legacy* – hit the stands and, three decades on, ‘the absolute thrill has never gone away to see your

book in a shop, where someone will pay money for it.’

Talking of being in the Doctor Who book business for 30 years, it would be remiss of me not to mention Russell being the first recipient of the Terrance Dicks Award for Writers. Russell is immediately humbled: ‘Seriously, I would have assumed I would have been the last person to get it.’ The reward was presented by Dicks’ widow, Elsa. ‘It came from the family and is such an honour and privilege. Terrance was a professional writer and I’m a professional fan. It was so flattering to get something with Terrance Dicks’ name on it. I was over the Moon.’

Meanwhile, Phil Ford has a novel in progress, something that was delayed temporarily while he was working on *The Waters of Mars*. It is something completely different and not sci-fi. Incidentally, he has been reading Stephen Gallagher’s works since he was a young man and enjoys fantasy in all its forms, including dark fantasy and horror. He became a writer to write fantasy but, as there wasn’t much of it in production in the 1990s, his career took the route it did. Ultimately, Ford doesn’t want to be pigeon-holed, with future projects including light comic crime and something that’s very dark and very adult. The main thing is for him to write projects that appeal. Before writing it, he would not have seen himself writing *Bad Girls* but it became something he really enjoyed and no-one was more surprised than he was when, in his early career, he landed jobs on *Coronation Street* and *Taggart*.

As for Stephen Gallagher and, Tharils aside, what’s happening under his

skies? 'This year saw the publication of *Comparative Anatomy*, a career-spanning collection of my short fiction. Beyond that I've a crime novella coming from Subterranean Press and then the usual, a range of projects I can't talk about. Always, always, something on the go.'

It turns out that my new shelves are now just a few weeks away and, while I slip the newly released Targets into a crate to join their fellows for when they will finally see the light of day, collectively, again, I am left to ponder those who have brought us these books over the years, all of them real people with stories of their own to tell, jobbing writers with their own sources of inspiration and philosophies regarding what they were producing. There are the legends of yesteryear – Hulke, Hayles, Marter and Whitaker, not forgetting, Dicks – who are no longer with us but established and kept the range going in the first decade or so; then the influx of original screenplay writers who spun their own screenplays into prose followed by the next generation of writers, a mix of original screenplay scribes and those who cut their teeth on New Adventures and the ranges that followed. All (along with their editorial teams, art departments and publicists) gave us these much loved, handy little books that allow the reader the opportunity to relive or encounter afresh a Doctor Who story pretty much anywhere. As long as there's light to read by, distant worlds are yours for the taking, regardless of whether your device of choice has power, the WIFI's working or your long-suffering disc-player is being cooperative.

I realise that bringing these, in some

cases decades old, Target books onto display in the daylight isn't just about nostalgia and a Peter Pan desire to be ever young, reliving childish things (but that's probably in there too); it's about celebrating what's been given to us in these books, themselves a paper and ink tribute to the original television stories; the books have now endured for a half-century, only a decade short of the parent show. Hopefully, the Target imprint and the ongoing range of adaptations will continue indefinitely and, given Russell T Davies' current input, it strikes me that we are assured that the Target brand will have many potential titles to extend their range for years to come. It's also heartening to hear, first hand, just how inspiring Russell T Davies and Julie Gardner are to work with and that, even now, a whole team of people – writers included – are being encouraged to go beyond their best in the service of one very daft old TV show, which, in turn, will inspire another generation of creatives to come through, inventing further adventures yet. Good old Doctor Who, good old Russell T Davies and good old Target – may their legacies endure, a dreaming window onto eternity. 10-year-old me in 1975 would be thrilled to know how it was all turning out.

As Gerard Garrett, of *The Daily Sketch* and oft-quoted on many jackets of the earlier Target books, once put it: "DOCTOR WHO, the children's own programme which adults adore..."

*With sincere thanks to Phil Ford, Stephen Gallagher & Gary Russell for their time and insights.*



# MAGIC: UNIVERSES BEYOND

## AN INTERVIEW WITH GAVIN VERHEY

By David Chapman

*Hello fellow Whovians. What you are about to read is part of a terrific interview. As a fast introduction, my name is David Chapman and I run things the tabletop gaming website [TheRatHole.ca](http://TheRatHole.ca) as well as being one of the co-hosts on The Legend of the Traveling TARDIS. Often, when TLTT has a guest from the gaming world, our showrunner Christian Basel will ask me to step in and take point on the interview. That's what happened on July 4, 2023, (right before leaving on a 7-week road trip) when Cosmic Masque's Nick Smith joined Christian, Melanie Dean, and myself for a sit down with Gavin Verhey from Wizards of the Coast to discuss the Doctor Who: Universes Beyond set for the collectible card game, Magic: The Gathering.*

*The live interview was about 90 minutes long and can be found on my [YouTube channel](#) but for today I need to point out that I've edited the following interview transcription for length and clarity. Enjoy. I certainly did.*

**DAVID CHAPMAN:** Welcome. We have an amazing show for you today. I am so excited to be taking the reins. We've got Gavin here from Wizards of the Coast to talk a little bit about the Doctor Who Magic, The Gathering set. I know a few of you guys have asked about it in the comments in previous shows, so we worked our little magic, if you will, ba-dum-dum.



**MELANIE DEAN:** Boo.

**DAVID CHAPMAN:** Let's meet the rest of our panel starting with –because she always wants to be last– hi Melanie Dean.

**MELANIE DEAN:** Yeah, hi. Hello everybody. So yep, we've got another interview this time around. More gaming stuff, hence why we get Dave, which means we get segues like this and they're good, which is a miracle since Christian can't do them. But yes, we're excited to be doing this. So super excited. Who else is on the panel, Dave?

**DAVID CHAPMAN:** Who else is on the panel? Why, we've got from Cosmic Masque, Mr. Nick Smith. How you doing?

**NICK SMITH:** I'm doing great. I'm a Whovie, but a Magic newbie, so I'm excited to hear more about the game and get to know Gavin.

**DAVID CHAPMAN:** Of course, we've got our usual host. Mr. Christian Basil.

**CHRISTIAN BASEL:** Yeah. Welcome to this special episode. We're going to be interviewing Gavin from Magic: The Gathering, from Wizards of the Coast. Dave is taking over because my first question is going to be, "What is Magic: The Gathering?" I know there are a lot of you out there may not be familiar with this game. We're going to make sure that we educate you and tell you about what's coming down the pipe. Thank you all for joining us, take it away to Dave.

**DAVID CHAPMAN:** Excellent. Let's bring in Gavin, because why not.

**GAVIN VERHEY:** Hey, everybody. My name is Gavin Verhey. I'm a Principal Game Designer on the Magic: The Gathering at Wizards of the Coast and a huge Doctor Who fan. In fact, my favourite story to tell – I've told this story a few times now – is that we started doing this Universes Beyond line for Magic, where we combine Magic: The Gathering with other properties. So, for example, we just came out with our The Lord of the Rings set a couple of weeks ago, and I knew we were doing a few of these. One day I get called into the office and they're like, 'Hey, we want you to lead an upcoming Universes Beyond product, and it's going to be Doctor Who.' And I laughed at them because I was like, 'Oh, well, everyone knows that's my favourite IP, that's a funny joke, what are we actually doing?' And they're like, 'No, no, no, no, really. We got we got the rights to do this. We're going to be doing it,' and I'm over the moon, right? I have slept on the sidewalk to get into Comic-Con so many times. I have a Tenth Doctor cosplay, I've seen the panels, I've met a lot of the cast, I am a gigantic fan, and to

get to do this is truly a dream come true. I'm so stoked for what I got to create for everyone. It is a really, really, really, really, really amazing love letter to the to the IP.

**MELANIE DEAN:** That's awesome.

**DAVID CHAPMAN:** Well you sent chills down my spine, Gavin.

**GAVIN VERHEY:** Good. That's what I was aiming for.



**DAVID CHAPMAN:** Oh, my goodness. So yeah, this is not the only one coming out. You said you just dropped Lord of the Rings, Warhammer 40,000 won an Origins Award this year. (Kind of jealous because I didn't win my category.) You guys have just been rolling over everything with this new Universes Beyond stuff and I'm really excited to learn about it.

**CHRISTIAN BASEL:** Okay. So, Gavin, I'm somebody who has heard of the game, but has never dabbled into it. Actually, I've got a roommate who knows about it pretty darn well, but I've just seen cards and that's it. Could you explain to some people who may not be familiar what Magic: The Gathering is? How would you describe somebody off the street who is playing for the first time?

**GAVIN VERHEY:** Magic: The Gathering is so many different things. But to boil it down, it's a card game, you collect cards to build your deck out of and you play with one person or sometimes multiple people. In the case of these Doctor Who decks, it's actually for a four person game. You play and everyone starts with 20 life points – if you're playing Commander, that's what these Doctor Who decks coming out are, you play with 40 points – and your goal is to get everyone else's life down to zero before they get your life down to zero. You play out creatures which are like kind of your characters. You use some spells to do that, and it's basically a strategy game. So think about chess with a bit of bluffing and you get to build your own deck. Imagine chess but you get to bring all your own pieces. Instead of always using the king and the queen, you go into your library of 20,000 different pieces and you bring your own to the table. Everyone's decks feel a lot different. There's a lot of creativity, ingenuity, it's easy to do, and you can play in all kinds of levels.

Before coming to Wizards – I've been there for 12 years now – I was actually a professional Magic player, so I travelled around the world playing in tournaments. Then I got hired to go work on the game so now I help actually create what it does. There's all kinds of backgrounds, you can be a really competitive player and make that your



life. You can be a casual player, play with your friends at the kitchen table. It's all there, it's all wonderful, it's all valid.

'Commander' is less about winning. It's not really cutthroat. It's nothing like that. It's about hanging out, playing games together and having a good time. Yes, there will be a winner at the end. Yes, you are trying to win, but it's about seeing big, splashy plays, having cool moments, and to bring it all back around. My favourite thing about the Doctor Who Commander decks is that we came up with a tagline early on in the design of the product that I called 'Build Your Own Episode.' Every time you play these decks together, it feels like you're watching your own episode of Doctor Who. I remember the first playtest we ever did. Rose Tyler was about to get converted into a Cyberman. Then the Seventh Doctor showed up with a dinosaur to save her. This is what the cards were doing, they're the mechanics. But it was awesome to see this Doctor Who episode play out in front of our very eyes, even though it's actually not ever happened anywhere in canon. It's a tell your own story, build your own adventure kind of thing through a strategy card game. And I love to get both that strategy and gameplay element as well as the cool flavour elements in there too.

**DAVID CHAPMAN:** Excellent. That answers a lot of my next question, which was what exactly is the Commander format? You were well ahead of us.

**GAVIN VERHEY:** Yeah. Commander has grown. You know, this is Magic's 30th year. When a lot of people think

about Magic, they think of, like, two people across the table from each other, brows furrowed a little bit, deadlocked and playing this intense game. Commander is the opposite of that. It's laughing around the table, having some pretzels and soda or whatever, and just enjoying being interested in each other's company. A Commander is like Magic's version of a board game where you go over to someone's house, bring your Commander deck and you sit there; a game takes an hour and a half, 2 hours sometimes, and when it's not your turn, you're catching up with your friend.

So it really feels a lot different than traditional Magic. Which makes it such a great fit for this Universes Beyond line because, 'hey, you don't know Magic super well? Grab a deck, come on in and play, we'll help you out.' It's not super cutthroat. In fact, it's pretty common for players to enter through Commander so they can help each other out as you're playing. "Oh, hey, you should do this." There's no stakes. Everyone's just there to make sure everyone else has a good time. So it's a really cool thing for the Universes Beyond Commander decks to be a great fusion of those two pieces.

**DAVID CHAPMAN:** 30 years... Thanks for making me feel old. I started playing the tail end of The Dark.

**GAVIN VERHEY:** Oh, wow. And that was like '94 or so.

**DAVID CHAPMAN:** I actually kind of mostly retired around Mirage. So, I mean, there's my timeframe of regular playing. I still have a deck. I still play occasionally, but I've never played

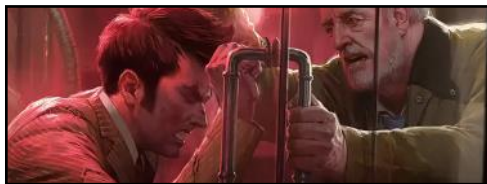
Commander format. So I was really quite curious as to how this is working.

**GAVIN VERHEY:** Definitely. I mean, Commander's really unique. I'll just say a few other things in case folks don't know some unique things about Commander. The games are longer, because you start with 40 life. B: your deck is 100 cards instead of the normal 60 cards and you can only play one copy of each card, so there's a lot of variance. Every game is a little bit different and really makes these different stories happen. Then the big thing about Commander, and why it's such a great fit for Doctor Who, is you build your Commander deck around legendary creatures. So in Magic, you have your normal goblins and elves that are hanging out. Then you have your named characters, right? So in The Lord of the Rings, that's Frodo and Gandalf and Sauron and whoever. Well, in Doctor Who it's going to be your Doctors and your companions and The Master and so on and so forth. You actually build your deck around a specific character that you always have access to. You could build your 10th Doctor deck, or you get to build your Davros deck. And it's cool that you actually get to be like, "this is my personification of this character" and I think that's rad.



**DAVID CHAPMAN:** Perfect. So what *are* the decks? Just very brief, because I

know there's more information coming in over the next few weeks, what's the basics of the four decks that you've got?



**GAVIN VERHEY:** When we build Commander decks, we try and figure out ways to divvy them up, right? We're going to do four Commander decks. We knew we were going to do four Commander decks, and we usually find some kind of faction. For example, with Warhammer 40,000 we did four different Warhammer factions. Makes a ton of sense, right? With Lord of the Rings, we did different areas of Middle Earth. So you got your elves and your forces of evil. With Doctor Who we're like, okay, well, we'll try the same playbook. We'll try to divide it up by what these things are. So we'll have a Doctor deck and a companion deck and a Cybermen deck and like a Dalek deck, which was okay. But we found it just wasn't really gelling. First of all, it was weird that the Doctors and the companions weren't being played together. Second of all, are there really enough different Daleks to fill a whole deck? There were all these challenges, and we could not find anything that worked. Then one day I said, 'we've got to get this figured out.' So I took one of the other designers after work, we locked ourselves in the room for an hour and a half and we hammered on it. What we realized was, there's one question that almost all Doctor Who fans ask each other, and once we figured that out, it all came together. That question - I'm sure you have all asked each other this before - is Who's your Doctor, right?

**MELANIE DEAN:** Yep. Ding ding ding ding.

**GAVIN VERHEY:** When did you start watching the show? Who is your Doctor? And we're like, 'this is it.' We divided the four decks up into different eras of the show. That way no matter when you started watching, you're like, 'Oh, this is the one for me.' We've got one that's the classic deck, which is the First through Eighth Doctors. We've got one deck, which is like the relaunch deck, which is the Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Doctors. And we've got one deck that is the Twelfth and Thirteenth deck. So the newest Doctors, the newest material. Then there's the fourth deck...

Just as well known as the heroes of Doctor Who are the villains. So we have one deck that's dedicated to all the villains from across space and time. From things you're going to expect to be there like Davros and the Master, all the way to some pretty deep cuts. So there's all of that too. I'll also call out really fast that I didn't mention the upcoming Doctors at all. I'll just say that we do have a plan for that, but I can't talk about that quite yet.

**CHRISTIAN BASEL:** Oh wow.

**MELANIE DEAN:** That's typical, and I mean that nicely not mean, but that's very... NDAs will make you go <slightly crazed laugh>.

**GAVIN VERHEY:** It's one of those weird things where with Magic we work on our sets years in advance. We got to work with the BBC on this, which

was incredible. Talk about a dream come true, to be on calls with them, to have them telling us stuff about the future. It was really amazing. Normally I'm the one to tell people about the future. So someone told me about the future and I was "oooooh this is super exciting." But even with our timelines, we had to be very careful when we did certain things. The decks only comprise up through the Thirteenth Doctor story. But like I said, we've got plans for some future stuff, so you'll find out more about that down the road.

**NICK SMITH:** I'd love to know more about how this game came about. Did the BBC approach you to do it? Did Wizards of the Coast approach the BBC? How did that work?

**GAVIN VERHEY:** That's a great question. We have a whole team that's like a Universes Beyond licensing team and they are always reaching out to folks, or having people reach out to them. I don't know exactly how this one came about because I'm on the design side, but I believe it was us reaching out to the BBC. We looked at properties we thought would be a good fit for Magic and I think, I'm not sure on this, we reached out to them.

One thing that's really interesting is when I was first told about doing Doctor Who, obviously I was very excited. I'm a huge Whovian, so yeah, thumbs up, I'm on board. But I was like, 'that's kind of strange fit.' My first thing was, it feels kind of weird, right? Magic is a fantasy trading card game. This

is a real world show, does that really fit? But once I started designing, it was clear to me that this is actually a really good fit. I'm super glad we chose it because we go with new sets all the time and each Magic set goes to a different world with a new cast of characters. The world has some new problem that our heroes have to solve. Sound familiar? You know, like every episode of Doctor Who? You go to a new world and there's some people that the heroes have to save. So, it really lined up nicely.

In fact, I may be skipping ahead a little bit, but whatever, it's a time travel show. I'll skip ahead to one of the things we did that was really cool. There's a variant of Magic, a special way to play that doesn't happen very often - or we don't have many products rather - but is very popular, called Planechase. The way that Planechase works is along with your decks, you bring these oversize cards that are about twice or two and a half times the size of a normal Magic card and these represent locations. In Magic, they represent the different worlds of Magic. Then over the course of the game, you



will flip them up and you will be in that location for a little while.

Before design on the Doctor Who deck even started, I was like, this is perfect for Doctor Who. What better thing for Doctor Who? You know, literally travel throughout space and time as you're playing your games. So we got the thumbs up on that before we even started the design process and we baked it in from the very beginning. So, as you're playing these Commander decks, every game you'll start off in a different place and you'll travel to many more places as the games go on. You might start on Earth and then go to the Lux Foundation Library and then go from there to the Dalek homeworld and who knows. It's very, very cool and it really makes you feel like you're part of the show.



**DAVID CHAPMAN:** Everything ties perfectly together there.

**GAVIN VERHEY:** I think the game is great, I love Magic. Obviously I'm a huge Magic fan, you'll see no disagreement with loving Magic here. But, if you're just a fan of the show and you just want some cool Doctor Who collectibles, not only is the art amazing, but the art on these Planechase cards is especially cool because they're over

double the size of a normal card and the art piece takes up most of the card. You get these great panoramas of landscapes. You get to see these things from Doctor Who fully realized, like the Lux Foundation Library.

**DAVID CHAPMAN:** We've played Worlds Apart on the show a few times, that's a digital card game, sometimes compared to Magic. You guys have your own digital format, so are any of the Universes Beyond, but especially Doctor Who, going to be going online to Magic Arena?

**GAVIN VERHEY:** Yeah, it's a great question. Commander is what these decks are, and this way to play is not something that's on Arena. Arena is more about one-on-one play. It doesn't really have that multiplayer element as much. But also in part because so much of the multiplayer nature of Commander is sitting around the table and laughing with your friends and making jokes and wanting to have that communal board game experience. It's not going onto Arena; I'm not saying it couldn't ever someday if there was a right reason to. But for now it's going to be paper only.

**DAVID CHAPMAN:** Okay, that's fair.

**GAVIN VERHEY:** Which is nice because there are some very strange things I did with the cards that would be very hard to code.

**DAVID CHAPMAN:** Ooooh I like that. Can you play regular Magic with this? Are these cards going to be tournament legal?

**GAVIN VERHEY:** Oh, yeah. The way our Universes Beyond cards work is they're just like normal Magic cards. You can play them and mix and match them with your other decks. One of the great things about Magic is it's something that you get to take all the pieces you've collected over the past 30 years and tell your own stories and build your own decks with them. You can absolutely take these cards and put them in your other Commander Decks. What we found with the Warhammer 40,000 decks that I thought was really interesting is some people took their favourite cards out, put them in their other decks, but a lot of people just kept them together as this perfect little capsule. Right? 'Hey, we're gonna play Warhammer 40,000.' I think with Doctor Who you're going to see a lot of the same where there are some cards players take out, putting them in their decks, mix and match. But also a lot of people will say, 'this is my Doctor Who Magic. This is perfect. I want to keep these together and play with them.' And that's really cool. But yes, and they can be played in tournament play in some of the older formats and playing Commander as well. You never know, maybe the Tenth Doctor is going to be the hot new tournament card. It is possible I guess.

**DAVID CHAPMAN:** Drop a Force of Nature in there.

**GAVIN VERHEY:** Well, there's something funny, you know. To be to throwing in your classics, Serra Angels and Shivan Dragons and Dark Rituals, next to, whatever, an Adipose. But that's the delight of the game I think.

**DAVID CHAPMAN:** We'll just Tim David Tennant to death. If you know, you know... Let's look at some of these questions from the audience. I want to start near the bottom [of the chat] with Scott. 'If the next Doctor was chosen from a Magic: The Gathering character who would make the best choice?'

**GAVIN VERHEY:** Wow. What a great question. Magic is full of these characters called Planeswalkers and Planeswalkers are like our title characters. In fact, they're like our Doctors because they have the ability no one else has, which is to travel between worlds. So for a Doctor, I think they would come from Planeswalkers. I'd guess one of our most popular Planeswalkers, maybe someone like Jace, who's a very blue, thinky kind of wizard. But definitely I think one of our Planeswalkers would be the choice there.

**CHRISTIAN BASEL:** Mark Robinson: 'Will the Doctor still have a Mana element?'

**GAVIN VERHEY:** Yes. I'll explain this for a second. In the game of Magic: The Gathering, there are five colours. You've got white, blue, black, red and green. These are like the building blocks of our game. White is about community and working together and healing and angels and soldiers and that kind of thing. Blue is about knowledge and learning and air and water and deceit and trickery and cunning. Think, merfolk, that kind of stuff. Black is about ambition and death and zombies and swamps and noxious fumes. Red is like passion and lightning and fire and quick and impulsiveness and, you know, your goblins, that kind of thing. And then



green is about forests. You've got trees and elves and elementals and nature and nurture and growth. These are the five colours that Magic is built on, and I think if you take away nothing else, knowing about those five colours is really the key part of Magic. Because most of our cards fall into one of those colours.

One of the things that our fans love doing is debating which colours are certain characters going to be because, you know, what colour is the Doctor?



Are different incarnations of the Doctor, different colours? What colour is Davros? So, yes, of course there'll be Mana in the Magic: The

Gathering Doctor Who experience and I think it'll be a lot of fun if people try to figure out which colours certain characters are going to be. What colour do you think the Tenth Doctor is?

You can look at each of the Doctors, and some of them are probably the same. But also, if you look at the War Doctor, that's a very different kind of philosophy. So there's a wide variety of things you can pull from, and it was really fun trying to put that into Magic. In Commander, as I mentioned before, you can only pick one legendary character to be your Commander. So you have a Thirteenth Doctor here to be your Commander or the Tenth Doctor

or so on and so forth. But one thing that we found is in Doctor Who, there's nothing more iconic than the Doctor and their companions together. That is what the whole show is built around. So we designed a special mechanic that allows you to actually use two Commanders. You get to have what's called a Doctor's Companion, fitting enough, you get to use one Doctor and one companion as your Commander. If you want to play Sarah Jane Smith alongside the Fourth Doctor, you can absolutely do that. But once again, tell your own stories, right? If you want to build your deck, have it be Sarah Jane Smith and the Tenth Doctor. You can do that if you want to. Sarah Jane Smith and the Thirteenth Doctor? Go nuts, you get to build your own deck, tell your own story. Which is fantastic.

The companions in the decks are all one colour and the Doctors are all two colours. That way you get up to a three colour deck and you get to see how the companions augment the Doctor. So for example, the Fourth Doctor we announced is blue and green, and then Sarah Jane Smith is white. So you get that kind of blue green from the Fourth Doctor, plus investigative journalism, like the core of good, from Sarah Jane Smith, and that makes your white blue green back. It's really fun to make that all come together.

**MELANIE DEAN:** Every artist, has their own process. But what is the process behind the design and art direction? I mean, is it all original art?

**GAVIN VERHEY:** Yeah. Yeah. It's all original art. I feel like with this product, we've probably created some of the coolest pieces, or the biggest collection

of Doctor Who official art probably anywhere. I don't know. There's so much good stuff here and it is awesome. We have a very deep process in house. It's all done bespoke for the set, we're not grabbing from anywhere else. We don't use anything AI generated; this is all from our awesome stable of Magic artists. It's a very long process.

First in the design process, we decide what each card is going to be, what character it's going to be, or something like that. We work with the team on that. Then a writer writes a description for the artists, a long description of what we want and what it looks like. Keep in mind that not every artist is going to be a Doctor Who fan, so we need to make sure to get all the elements in there. Then it's a long back and forth process as the artist starts working. They send us sketches. We send the feedback on the sketches. Also we send it over to the BBC because they'll have notes too. It's a very long, iterative process but ends up with incredible pieces. And this has so many cards in it. I mean, each deck has 100 cards. There's a couple that overlap, but not many, so, you're looking at almost 400. You know you'll get a ton of unique Doctor Who artwork.

As we all know, early Doctor Who used whatever they had access to. It was very low budget and one of the things that we took great joy in, that made us really happy, was we're able to take some of those really early Doctor Who episodes and illustrate them. There's no special effects budget when you're illustrating, right? You just draw whatever you want. We got to really bring some of those early episodes and aliens to life. There's one in particular that is so

cool. We got to make them look awesome because they're a very early alien you find in early Doctor Who and they were very janky-looking on the show, with respect, given the budget. We were able to make them look really cool. There's some cool stuff that we were able to update and do. I was really glad to bring that modern art sensibility of, 'hey, we can draw whatever cool stuff we want' to make this stuff look really awesome.

**MELANIE DEAN:** I just want to see the artwork for the Sixth Doctor – for every piece – because bless whoever was tasked that... My Lord, I hope that something was shown in the blue coat.

**DAVID CHAPMAN:** So many options.

**MELANIE DEAN:** There's a vast array of lore in Doctor Who and clearly a lot of it's canon, some of it less so. Some of it kind of has an asterisk mark on it, like Titan Comics. They've got Jo Martin's Fugitive Doctor that they are running and it's supposedly canon. The upcoming Star Beast special is, as you know, in part based on the older comic story of the same name. Night of the Doctor references several Big Finish Audio characters. Have you kept to just the televised work or are we going to see some other easter egg surprises from other areas?

**GAVIN VERHEY:** Here's what I'll say. I'll say it straight, it's all from the televised show. Okay? If you are in the world of, you know, Big Finish and comics, we already can't cover everything in the TV show. There's so much to cover. We don't go further than that. But what I will say is, I certainly looked into all that stuff and there's probably a few charac-

ters that I chose to include in the set who might have not been as popular in their initial runs, but have a had a great second life in other places. So I guess that's what I'll say there. So it has to have shown up in Doctor Who and the TV show to be eligible. But sometimes you put the thumb on the scale a little bit for people who are going to be popular later on.

**MELANIE DEAN:** Okay.

**DAVID CHAPMAN:** I wonder if Mags is going to be in there...

**MELANIE DEAN:** Frobisher, damn it...

**DAVID CHAPMAN:** If you ever do a Marvel set, Death's Head has to be in there just to connect back to the Doctor Who set. That's all I've got to say on that. Gavin, we've only got a couple of minutes left here, so what else do we need to know?

**GAVIN VERHEY:** Be sure to be following social media. As we show off more, I hope you all get the chance to enjoy it.

It's a real labour of love for me and my team of Doctor Who fans at Wizards. I think it's going to be really special and whether you play the game or not, just looking at the cards is a real love letter to Doctor Who.

I also have to say that I have – just for a shameless plug – I've got a YouTube channel that I post to two or three times a week covering Magic design. Of course, I'm going to have Doctor Who stuff on there as we get closer to the decks releasing on October 13th, 2023. So feel free to go check it out. It's called [Good Morning Magic](#).

Thank you all so much for the great time today and see you elsewhere in time and space. I'll try to catch up again, maybe closer to the release. We can talk to some of the art in the stories that we did.

**DAVID CHAPMAN:** Thank you, Gavin.



# 60 YEARS OF WHO

*60 years is a mighty long time. Long enough to raise a generation or two, explore a solar system, bring digital tech to most UK homes, and weave a time travel saga that has instilled feelings of excitement, fear, pleasure and anticipation in millions of TV viewers.*

*Whether you've been watching since the get-go or are joining us for David Tennant's new reign, six decades are not to be sniffed at. When we asked fans, 'what does the 60th anniversary mean to you?', we received an incredible number of erudite responses - more than we could squeeze into this issue. Here are just a few of their thoughts on Who's diamond jubilee.*

## Matthew Rose

60 years of a show celebrating all of time and space and it means the world to me. Growing up learning about it from school and seeing *Scream of the Shalka*, to the theme blasting on television with Christopher Eccleston. Listening years later to Big Finish and meeting actors at conventions. Doctor Who helped grow my confidence to make friends as the years have gone by, and I wouldn't want it to have been anything else.

This year, I have delved more into the classic side of William Hartnell and Patrick Troughton by exploring the lost stories both via telesnaps and the lost story audios.

What a thrill the journey is. Bring on the return of David, Ncuti's Doctor and the exciting future of the show on screen or off. This show means all of time and space to me, the magic of the cast, music and even monsters make it a triumph to celebrate. Happy birthday Doctor and cheers to many more.

## Tom Kosak

I eagerly await The Doctor to return in new adventures, fighting for what is right and helping those along the way. Doctor WHO is part of our history and so much a part of our future.

All the struggles to continue with the show, with ideas that work or fail to comply, are still significant in our hearts and will continue forever. The idea of this magnificent person traveling through time and space in an old Police Box, with everyone hoping and wondering if someday, The Doctor will find us, and we may travel along in the beautiful journey.

You can find Tom on YouTube [@reverendamagon](#)



## Craig Johnson

The 60th anniversary is a celebration of all things who. From when the 7th Doctor said to Ace, 'where to now?' in *Survival* and she said, 'home!' meaning the TARDIS.

Doctor who makes me so emotional happy and sad goosebumps and tears this show is the greatest show in the galaxy.



You can visit Craig at <https://linktr.ee/craigsworld>

### Erika Ensign and Steven Schapansky

We've both been Doctor Who fans since we were kids, so we've celebrated lots of DW anniversaries. This one is extra special for us. The 50th anniversary was magical for many reasons, but for the two of us it was bittersweet. We'd gotten married that February -- in the LAX Marriott just before the start of the Gallifrey One convention! Sadly, come November, we were still living in different countries because immigration from the US to Canada isn't swift. Erika didn't move north until late the next February.

This means the 60th is the first big Whoniversary we get to celebrate together -- in the same home, on the same couch -- truly together. We met in the first place because of Radio Free Skaro. Doctor Who and podcasting have continued to be a big part of our relationship ever since. And because of the timing, it also means it'll have been almost a decade of living together. Considering how wonderful those years have been -- and how very filled with

Doctor Who-related goodness and friendships -- it'll be a very special celebration indeed!

*Erika and Steven can be heard on many entertaining podcasts, including [Lazy Doctor Who](#), [Verity!](#), [Radio Free Skaro](#) and [The Memory Cheats](#).*

### Ryan Blake

What does the 60th Anniversary of Doctor Who mean to me?

Just like time and space, the potential answers to this question are mysterious, dynamic and ultimately entirely personal. My first anniversary special was The Five Doctors, I was too young to really understand it as I had really only just discovered the good Doctor, (a lot of the nuance was utterly lost on me). Even though I didn't get exactly what was going on, I knew whatever it was, it was something BIG. The fact that the Doctor wasn't supposed to be where he was, (for some reason), and the fact that he DEFINITELY wasn't meant to meet other versions of himself, (for some reason), meant on some vestigial stump of cosmic awareness, I was rooted to the spot. I also knew that the music was portentous, that it was somehow the rhythm of forbidden truths that could only be revealed, (for some reason), BECAUSE it was an anniversary. I still listen to that soundtrack to this day when I want to do some research ...

Firstly, Doctor Who anniversaries mean excitement, right from the start, even if I didn't always know precisely what it was that got me so excited. OK, nothing new there, but that excitement is born of simply knowing that something important is going to happen to our

hero, even if what it might be cannot be fully understood...

So, The Five Doctors informed me that anniversaries weren't JUST for marking the passage of time, they were for confronting universal threats, for bold choices and self-realisation, as well as restating your life's purpose. By the end the Fifth Doctor knows himself even better, he is surer than ever that stealing a TARDIS and going on the run to help people was the right thing to do. "After all, that's how it all started."

Secondly then, anniversaries mean knowing yourself better, a crucible to forge and re-forged your life's purpose through adversity. The Doctor gains certainty that he has survived his choice and in that finds comfort and assurance he made the correct one.

Next, I saw The Three Doctors. Like the Doctor I met the anniversaries in the wrong order, and I loved every minute of them. Again, the past informs the present and future, Omega reaches out of the dim and distant past to get justice, simply by becoming real. Here anniversaries meant trying to forgive, acts of compassion, even with those trying to hurt us. Remember that the Doctor doesn't condemn Omega, he tries to save him, right up until the point where that becomes impossible. The Doctor's greatest weapon then, is perhaps not his intellect but his, (admittedly variable), capacity to not meet violence with violence, not return hate for hate, but his desire to make things right for as many as possible.

There's also a lesson in The Three Doctors that we might not recognise who we once were, but we need to get on with ourselves as best we can

(figuratively as well as literally in this case).

So thirdly, anniversaries mean meeting adversity with compassion and a lot of self-awareness. Also, that meeting your heroes can be disappointing, but sometimes what a person stands for is also important (the Doctor doesn't always live up to his morals for example), but never giving up on trying to be better is always worthwhile.

People tend to overlook the 25th Anniversary episode Silver Nemesis. For me though, it was the anniversary that happened during the reign of my favourite Doctor (number 7), so I was sold. First off fighting Nazis, that's something anyone decent can get behind; secondly, this for me cemented that the 7th Doctor has a real agenda to go after evil. Remembrance of the Daleks showed us a Doctor that had a plan, sure, but when the Doctor tells the Nemesis statue that it can't have its freedom because "things are still ... imperfect," the hairs on the back of my head stood up. What did this mean? Would the Doctor use such a terrible weapon again? Had he used it before? What does his idea of 'Perfect' consist of? When and how far would he go to achieve this?

The fourth lesson from anniversaries I learnt was that it's never too late to reinvent yourself and never get too attached to your plans for the future. Also, that Nazis are just plain evil, (though granted this was more of a re-statement than revelation).

This brings us to The Day of the Doctor, the big 5-0. The Doctor rewrites his past, overcomes his own inner darkness (manifested by the presence of the

'War' Doctor, though in actuality it's more his self-loathing side). Lots happens in this special, however one lesson I did learn was that you should only watch these things with fellow Doctor Who fans and not relatives who don't realise how important these things are to such a fan, (you know who you are, people who talked during the original airing). This is the one clearest in my mind, the interaction between the Doctors was fascinating, more gentle mocking than actual opprobrium, but then ... the 'War' Doctor. The Doctor had always had doubts and elements that they didn't like about themselves, but this was different, this was actual dread, even hatred. All of this revolved around a single decision, to end the war and sacrifice lives to do it by using an awful weapon.

So, the fifth lesson I gleaned from Doctor Who's anniversaries was not to judge yourself too harshly for the mistakes of the past. The 'War' Doctor sacrificed himself to save the universe, and got judged for it, (and punished with survival). To be honest, though this is what I got from this episode, I have always felt that the Doctor was pretty singular in his self-judgement here. Sacrificing one planet because to NOT do so would mean the end of EVERY planet is no choice at all. Though the Doctor does forgive himself, maybe this anniversary means to tell us not to hold on to the past in such a harsh unyielding light?

Anniversaries of Doctor Who mean, (to me), that everything changes. That revelations will abound and that the Doctor will gain some critical self-knowledge that will help put another weave in their personal tapestry. Most

of all though, anniversaries for me means hope, we've come this far and survived with the Doctor; if a Time-Lord can still learn new things about themselves after X millions of years, then anyone can. All will be well.

*Ryan Blake hosts [Wibbly Wobbly Dicey Wacey](#), [The Doctor Who RPG Podcast](#) @WWDWrpg*

### Philip Dalton

The Fourteenth Doctor is to be played by David Tennant, who also played the Tenth Doctor. It's not the first time an actor has been cast as the Doctor who has played a previous role in the series, of course; this happened in the case of the Sixth Doctor Colin Baker, who had already played the part of Commander Maxil in Arc of Infinity, a story from the fifth Doctor Peter Davison's era. But that was purely coincidental; in Tennant's case it is not, as the Tenth Doctor and the Fourteenth Doctor are literally the same one. The Thirteenth Doctor Jodie Whittaker has, this time, regenerated into one of her previous incarnations, the reason being that this year marks the 60th anniversary of Doctor Who.

Resurrecting previous incarnations of everyone's favourite Time Lord in order to celebrate anniversaries is a tradition which has long been upheld throughout the series. It was done for the first time in order to celebrate the tenth anniversary in 1973's *The Three Doctors*, then ten years later in *The Five Doctors*, then another ten years after that in *Dimensions in Time*, a *Children in Need* charity special crossover with the soap opera *Eastenders*.

The same character being played by different actors is a commonplace in TV series, soaps and film franchises. Take the James Bond franchise for instance. Bond has changed his appearance several times throughout this, but there is never any explanation for it because, of course, humans can't regenerate and so the whole thing is not true to life anyway. The Doctor, on the other hand, is not human, rather a two-hearted Time Lord from the planet Gallifrey, capable of things we can't do. So, whenever an actor playing him wants to leave the series, the current incarnation is killed off and regenerates into the next one because they cannot keep existing in their present body. This way, it has been easy for the series to go on for as long as it has, with various actors playing the lead role, and always an explanation for why his appearance has changed. Regeneration took place for the first time in 1966, at the end of The Tenth Planet, the first story to feature

the Cybermen, at the end of which the first Doctor, William Hartnell, was replaced by the second, Patrick Troughton.

At the end of the ten-parter The War Games in 1969, the Doctor was forced to regenerate again and exiled to Earth in the twentieth century as a disciplinary measure for stealing a TARDIS and breaking their law of non-interference. So, the Doctor began his exile in the following year as Jon Pertwee in Spearhead From Space, the first story to be filmed in colour. Then, in 1973 came The Three Doctors, a masterpiece written by Bob Baker and Dave Martin, in which the Time Lords lift the first two Doctors from their time streams to aid the third in defeating Omega, who is seeking revenge on them by draining their civilisation's power. At the end of this, the Doctor's exile is finally repealed as a reward for his services, making him once more free to go anywhere in time and space.

The first two Doctors were played by their original actors in this, but Hartnell passed away in 1975 and so his character was played by Richard Hurndall in the 1983 feature length special The Five Doctors.

Ten years later, animated caricatures of Hartnell and Troughton's faces were used in Dimensions in Time, in which all the surviving five Doctors starred. With the series having been cancelled by the BBC in 1989, the two episodes of this plus the 1996 TV film featuring Paul McGann as the





Eighth Doctor were a type of resurrection of what could be termed an 'old dinosaur.'

While no extra episodes were produced to commemorate the show's 40th anniversary, it was finally brought back on TV again on a regular basis in 2005, this time with Doctor number nine, played by Christopher Eccleston. In my humble opinion, the later-period episodes have been just as good as they ever were. The 50th anniversary special *The Day of the Doctor* featured three, or maybe four of the Doctor's incarnations depending on how you interpret the story, plus a brief appearance by a future one, Peter Capaldi. In a mini-episode screened prior to it, it had been made quite clear to us that Christopher Eccleston wasn't really Doctor number nine as we had thought he was, instead he was the tenth Doctor. The ninth Doctor was in fact 'The War Doctor,' played by John Hurt, but Paul McGann reprised his role as the eighth Doctor prior to the regeneration. This is all starting to get a little confusing now, isn't it? *The Day of the Doctor* featured

Hurt, David Tennant reprising his role as the Tenth Doctor, who was effectively the eleventh, and Matt Smith playing the Eleventh Doctor, who was effectively the twelfth. It also contained a brief appearance at the end by Tom Baker, playing the part of a curator in an art gallery, but whether he was really meant to be the Doctor is difficult to say to be honest.

Travelling though time and meeting oneself either in the future or past is a common theme in sci-fi. The concept has been dealt with both in the *Back to the Future* and *Bill & Ted* franchises, which became popular during the eighties. But you know what they say, no one changes throughout the years more than those pesky Time Lords. And as for the 60th anniversary specials this year, we know they'll be bringing back an old face, but let's hope they bring back plenty of other old faces too, human and alien.



# THE TELEVISION COMPANION

By Ramona Schnitger

When asked, "what does 60 years of Doctor Who mean to me?", I had to think about it a bit before giving an answer.

Doctor Who was on the TV just a few years longer than I've been alive. I remember seeing the Daleks between the flurry of comedy and talk shows. More often seen was Star Trek, Battlestar Galactica, and sci-fi movies of the 1970s. The television was always on.

It was the summer of 1983. I was dial turning, looking for something to take my mind off of the heat and humidity. Most of the sci-fi shows on broadcast stations had dried up in my area, making for boring evenings. Ooh, a mummy movie! On PBS!!...

Well, I WAS HOOKED!

The 'movie,' THE PYRAMIDS OF MARS, continued for the next few evenings.

I wanted more. More Tom Baker, more Sarah Jane... And more of that wonderful machine that went up and down... Taking me on a different adventure, Every Week.

I didn't know how long the thrill would last... I still don't.

There is a question that has been asked of LONG running series. "HOW WILL IT END?"

There have been many possible answers given. As a television companion... I'm just gonna sit back and enjoy the ride.



# THE NINTH DOCTOR SOURCEBOOK

By David Chapman

Well, as regular readers may recall, I wrote an article for *Cosmic Masque* entitled "Classic Who is Better Backwards." In that article, I explain why I think Classic who should really be watched in reverse Doctor order, 8-1 rather than 1-8, and mention that I'd be reviewing the Doctor Who Roleplaying Game sourcebooks in a similar order. But then there is New Who, or Nu Who, or 'the reboot', or Modern Who, or whatever you want to call the show from Christopher Eccleston's Ninth Doctor until now. For this era of the show, I will often suggest starting with David Tennant's Tenth Doctor and going forward, then going back to Eccleston after you have a better idea of what the show is like once it got its feet under it. If Jody Whitaker's Doctor suffered from poor writing, Eccleston's short run was marred by money, or more accurately a lack thereof. I appreciate the time of Nine, it did what it needed to do and brought the show back to life. But watching from almost 20 years later, it's easy to see that the always insufficient BBC Budgets were blatantly insufficient as always, with the effects being very dated even for 2005.

Overall, the Ninth Doctor was very much a hit-or-miss season for me. End of the World was an amazing episode that balanced humour with dark allusions to the tragedies that the Doctor faced between Paul McGann's Eighth Doctor's lone

(television) appearance and when we pick up with Nine. At the same time, I just can't get past the godawful effects in *Rose*. So I wasn't really in a rush to review the Ninth Doctor Sourcebook. Plus, with *Cubicle 7* allowing the current editions of the Doctor sourcebooks to fall out of print, I had even less incentive to tackle it. However, the Universe conspired against me and here we are. *Cosmic Masque* editor, Nick Smith asked if I'd be doing this review anytime soon. The Legend of the Traveling TARDIS showrunner, Christian Basel, decided that we would take the months leading up to the 60th anniversary to review the first season of the reboot.



(Something we hadn't done up to this point.) Even Earth Station Who was planning to review the two-part *Aliens of London & World War III* just after TLTT had it scheduled. Well, if I have to go through and watch the season, and I'd be using the sourcebook as reference material anyway, I may as well write about it now. <insert shrug emoji here>

Eccleston's Doctor is unique. We don't know how long he's been in this body. We don't know what happened in any of the Eighth Doctor's life after his initial adventure. New fans may not have even realized there WERE previous Doctors at the time. Stephen Moffat used this ambiguity to his advantage, with The Doctor being incredibly upbeat until a memory from his past casts a shadow over any given moment, and then the shadow moves on equally fast. Moffat deftly intertwined hints of the past with foreshadowing of the future. These longer threads subtly woven through a tapestry of (mostly) Monster-of-the-Week style adventures make for a goldmine of potential for a good Gamemaster. Similarly, the book points out that the Ninth Doctor represents a new era of storytelling in a familiar world of stories. It illustrates how a GM can pull together a long-time group of players to both pick up where they left off and still start anew. Many groups of gamers drift apart. Work, life, pandemics, it happens. But even in the Doctor's own classic era timeline, the Doctor had only really visited the 1990s three times, yet that doesn't stop him from picking back up in 2005, just like you can in 202X.

The format of the book is pretty standard for the Doctor Who Adventures in

Time and Space series, and the later rebranded Doctor Who the Roleplaying Game. It starts with a brief introduction to the Ninth Doctor and what to expect from this book for people who may not have picked up the prior Doctor sourcebooks. That is followed up by "Playing in the Ninth Doctor's Era" which looks at how things may have changed around Earth (and potentially around your game table) in the years since the Doctor was last on our little ball of dirt, and working *with* those changes rather than against them. Finally, there is a 7 - 17 page description of all the televised adventures in the Eccleston era.

One of the noteworthy points mixed in with the episode summaries comes with the episode Dalek. There are four full pages covering the history of the Daleks. Now, I obviously haven't read *every* DWRPG release, and as I'm writing this I don't have my library handy to flip through, but this seems like both an odd and a perfectly reasonable place to put such a history lesson. The episode Dalek was the first time a Dalek had appeared on screen since Remembrance of the Daleks kicked off the series' 25th anniversary season in 1988.

Also of special note, is that the entry for the episode *Father's Day* does not include a stat block for Reapers. My assumption, and it is nothing more than an assumption, is that since Reapers are wholly indestructible and impossible to physically interact with non-lethal results, they are more obstacle than adversary. They are effectively a Diabolus ex Machina that should be brought into play sparingly outside of running this specific episode as an adventure.

As I write this, David Tennant's return as the Fourteenth Doctor has yet to air, and Cubicle 7 has released the Thirteenth Doctor Sourcebook as a PDF only, but I haven't seen more than the cover. Again, this is nothing more than an educated guess, but my assumption is that Doctor's 1-11 will eventually be released without the fun spine art mural that the original editions featured and that they will be updated to the Second Edition rules as that happens. There are two reasons I bring this up. First is to reiterate that I am not planning to dive into another Doctor sourcebook until the physical edition of Thirteen comes out, or until they announce either plans for Four (going backwards) in Second Edition or for Fourteen (which would likely encourage my looking into 10 regardless of whether it's 1E or 2E).

The second reason, being more relevant to the review at hand, is that the climax of the Ninth Doctor's time involves a massive invasion story. Ostensibly, this invasion can be treated as a simple plot device to set up the adventure for the players and a background location for the same. But there is a mention that a GM could use the rules in *Defending The Earth: The UNIT Sourcebook* to actually run large scale battles like an invasion. The *UNIT Sourcebook* has been out of print for a VERY long time. So I'm curious if that will also be updated and republished for Second Edition, or perhaps its mention will be omitted entirely from the assumed update to this book.

I respect what this Doctor needed to be and what the show needed to do. Christopher Eccleston is a fantastic actor and was a fantastic Doctor. But everything else around his era just fails to

connect with me. Aside from *End of the World*, which is easily the best episode of the season, even the episodes I like I'm lukewarm on at best. Because of that, personally, this is the sort of sourcebook I might pass on in other contexts. That being said, I know that my opinion is in the minority on this. Objectively, the Ninth Doctor Sourcebook is every bit as great as the other Doctors'. In the right circumstances, it honestly could be one of the most important sourcebooks in the series. I have a hard time recommending most things Nine, but for the majority DWTRPG players and GMs, it's a good investment.

*You can find Cubicle 7 online at [www.cubicle7games.com](http://www.cubicle7games.com) or on Facebook at [facebook.com/Cubicle7Entertainment](https://facebook.com/Cubicle7Entertainment).*

*Follow Dave's gaming adventures at [linktr.ee/TheRatHole.ca](http://linktr.ee/TheRatHole.ca)*



# 10 THINGS I LIKE ABOUT WHO

By Jordan Shortman

*Doctor Who* means so much to so many. For some people its nostalgia, for others it's a safety blanket, something to retreat to when life gets far too hard. And because of this, it's tricky to try and put your finger on the things that you personally love about this show but I'm going to give it a go and tell you the ten things I love about Doctor Who!

## Coming Together on Social Media

Now don't get me wrong, there have always been those vocal "fans" who take to Twitter or Facebook to rant and rave about how they don't like certain things in the show. We've seen loads of this throughout the Jodie Whittaker era and I've been a little dismayed to see people doing it for Russell T. Davies and Ncuti Gatwa's tenure even though they haven't seen it yet. But there have then been far more people coming together to express things they've loved about this show. Whether it's through fan art, cosplay and chatting to other fans to name a few things, it's been so lovely to see people getting along thanks to their love of this show. Much like the Master, *Doctor Who* fans can often be their own worst enemies, when they are bad, they are really bad but when they are good, then they're great! And it's been a privilege to see so many people expressing their love for something like Doctor Who.

## Fan Interaction

In a similar vein to the above paragraph, it's so lovely to know you can go to a

*Doctor Who* event and get along with everyone. I've been lucky to go to quite a few different events in the past couple of years, whether that's the BFI events, DWAS' Capitol events, Time and Riverside or just other conventions with Doctor Who involved, you'll often find that we *Doctor Who* fans are the nicest of the lot. At this last DWAS Capitol, I made friends with some really lovely people and it's nice to bump into people you've met at other events when you're out and about! But it's just so fantastic to have so many people around you who are into the same thing as you, so you'll never be short of something to talk about!

## Meeting the Stars

There is nothing better, nothing more exciting than getting to meet the actors and production crew from *Doctor Who*! I've been lucky enough to meet quite a few over the years, from actors to directors, producers and writers. And I can say everyone has been just as lovely as you think they are! And if you get



the opportunity to meet them then take it, from big hugs from Katy Manning, to meeting Matthew Jacobs – author of *The TV Movie* in a hotel lift and having no idea who he was and then chatting about with him the next day, there are some fantastic memories to be made meeting anyone from *Doctor Who*, we as a community are a brilliant bunch!

### Memories

There's a famous story of Tom Baker being approached by a man who had grown up in a children's home and the only thing that kept him alive was seeing the Fourth Doctor's adventures as he was growing up. For many of us, we've all got happy memories of the show, we all remember who our first Doctor was, who our first companion was. And for some of us, we've got really happy memories which have been gifted to us thanks to Doctor Who. My last memory of my late Father is us watching *The Daemons* together on the day he would go into a hospice. He had a brain tumour and had completely forgotten everything and everyone around him. I'd put on *The Daemons* just as something to watch so imagine my surprise when the titles started and he remembered everything. He remembered the tune, The Third Doctor, Jo Grant and UNIT but most importantly he remembered who I was, for the first time in nearly six months. So some of us are lucky to be gifted these really fantastic memories thanks to our favourite show.

### Pyramids of Mars

In keeping with the paragraph above, we all remember our first *Doctor Who*. Now I'm too young to have seen *Pyramids of Mars* on its original transmission but I can still remember being sat in a classroom and my teacher putting in a VHS



copy of this story for us to watch. For a bit of context, we would have themed weeks, while the final year group would go away on a week trip to Fairthorne. Sometimes we'd have Victorian Week or Maths Week. This time we had Egypt Week. We'd learnt about Hieroglyphics and the Egyptian Gods. But on the Friday, I think my teacher had had enough of teaching us and while other classes were using Maths to build pyramids. We were taken on an adventure to an old country mansion in the early 1900s where mummies stalked the surrounding woodlands and an old god was hellbent on revenge against the universe that imprisoned him. Our teacher would pause it at certain points to ask us what we thought was happening and I can remember him pausing it when Sarah Jane first sees the mummies, and asking us to write down what we thought she had seen. I loved *Pyramids of Mars* so much that that Christmas I forced my family to watch *The Christmas Invasion* and then one might say, the rest is history...

### History

I'm sure we all remember how dreary our school history lessons could sometimes be. I've always liked history but school failed to capture the excitement that surrounded it. Luckily though, *Doctor Who* always did with adventures from 100,000 BC to meeting Marco



politics in the original series that would have stopped those creators from doing something truly revolutionary. For example, Ace would never have been explicitly LGBT because of the Government's Section 28, which didn't al-

low promotion of any kind of homosexuality to be involved in any way with schools. So with *Doctor Who* considered a children's programme, this would have been a big no-no. But in modern times this has changed; many of the Doctor's friends have come from different backgrounds, allowing a record number of fans to finally see themselves in the characters, Doctor and companions leaving them feeling represented.

Polo. From the French Revolution to the Battle of Culloden, we've seen so many fascinating and exciting periods and events in history, not only on screen but in the extended media too. Books have seen the Doctor meeting Rasputin or Cleopatra and the Big Finish audios have seen figures like Vlad the Impaler and Queen Mary I amongst others being antagonists for the Doctor and his companions. But all those historical stories from Hartnell to Whittaker, both on screen or in the extended universe, have really fuelled my love for history and captured my imagination in a way that dreary school history lessons never could.

### Inclusivity

In recent years we've seen many more characters being introduced from all walks of life. The Doctor isn't bothered by what colour skin someone has or what their sexuality is so why should we be? Now *Doctor Who* has always been inclusive, but it has only been since the show came back in 2005 that we've had a significant number of cast members with different ethnic backgrounds and companions with different sexualities. Of course there was a lot of background

low promotion of any kind of homosexuality to be involved in any way with schools. So with *Doctor Who* considered a children's programme, this would have been a big no-no. But in modern times this has changed; many of the Doctor's friends have come from different backgrounds, allowing a record number of fans to finally see themselves in the characters, Doctor and companions leaving them feeling represented.

### The Companions

If there has been one throughline throughout the whole of *Doctor Who*'s sixty years it's that pretty much everyone could be one of the Doctor's companions. And throughout the years



we've had plenty to choose from. We've had granddaughters, teachers, students, orphans, scientists, soldiers, heroes and villains. And that's something that is re-



flected in real life with many fans coming from all walks of life and having all manner of professions which has allowed the audience to relate and feel like they know these characters, because more often than not, they *are* these characters. *Doctor Who* is only one of a handful of shows that truly allows for the audience to feel represented no matter who they are or where they come from.

### The Doctor

Like the companions, the Doctor is a great character for the audience to relate to. Everyone at one point in their lives or throughout their lives has been made to feel different or feel like the other. The Doctor knows how this feels and yet they never let it stop them from living their respective lives to the fullest. And like the audience who are made up of many different genders, so too can the Doctor and the Time Lords

change their identities and be whoever they want. The character of the Doctor truly is the best of us, someone who's kind and thoughtful and someone we should all, no matter our backgrounds, aspire to be.

### Never Be Cruel, Never Be Cowardly

There are so many brilliant messages to be learnt from *Doctor Who*. Just as Ian and Barbara taught the Doctor humanity, he in turn has done the same thing for us, telling us that we should never hurt or upset one another, that hate is always foolish and love is always wise. We all should try to be nice but never fail to be kind, and remember that being brave isn't a matter of being afraid, it's about being afraid but doing the right thing anyway. The Eleventh Doctor is right, we're all stories in the end, we just have to make sure it's a good one.



# THE FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: NEW FRONTIERS

Review by Geoff Stevens

*Produced by David Richardson for Big Finish Productions*

*Starring Tom Baker, Louise Jameson, Nerys Hughes*

*Directed by Nicholas Briggs*

*Released March 2023*

Tom Baker's Fourth Doctor returns in two new four-part stories from Big Finish Productions in the company of Louise Jameson as Leela and new companion Margaret Hopwood, played by Nerys Hughes. Both stories are available to buy together as the *New Frontiers* box set on CD or download, or individually, as downloads only.

A script by Guy Adams; a heist story; the first meeting of the Fourth Doctor and the Ice Warriors; and a new companion for the Doctor - what is there not to like about all that? Well, *Ice Heist*, the opening story of the set delivers in spades.

Having had a taste of adventure with the Doctor in last year's *The Ravencliff Witch*, elderly sculptor Margaret Hopwood is feeling left behind by life. When the Time Lord arrives on her doorstep with his friend Leela and invites her to come with him to an art gallery, she couldn't be more up for answering the call. Perhaps he isn't entirely clear that the gallery in question is on a distant planet and three hundred years in her future.

But the Doctor has an ulterior motive. The prize item on display is none other

than one of Margaret's own sculptures, and he is keen to show her that her work will be valued long after her death, in a scene reminiscent of a similar trip that the Eleventh Doctor takes Van Gogh on, in the TV story *Vincent and the Doctor*. However, the revelation that in 300 years, she will be long dead, rather freaks Margaret out. She runs out of the gallery right into a band of renegade Ice Warriors, about to pull off the heist of the title. Margaret soon learns that life with the Doctor can be full of all sorts of dangers.

*Ice Heist* is an absolute gem of a story, with engaging characters, excellent use of returning familiar foes and an exciting and original plot. The Doctor, Leela and Margaret are all given plenty to do. Indeed, Margaret's career as an artist is the *raison d'être* for the TARDIS crew's appearance in the gallery in the first place - a good use of one of the character's defining characteristics.

I'm sure we will find out much more about this new companion, but for now, it has been a joy to listen to her scenes with Leela - a younger and less sophisticated woman, but one more experienced in travelling in time and space. Margaret has relatively few scenes of note with the Doctor and quickly settles into the role of Leela's companion, rather than his, complementing the more established TARDIS traveller beautifully.

Louise Jameson and Nerys Hughes are

terrific throughout; but then so is Tom who is practically bouncing around from speaker to speaker with the energy of a man half his age.

*Ice Heist* deserves to be numbered among the very best examples of the Big Finish Fourth Doctor range. It is an absolute joy.

In the second story, *Antillia the Lost* by Phil Mulryne, the TARDIS materialises on the legendary lost world of Antillia, at the same time as an expeditionary party, seeking to find the answer to the mystery of the planet's disappearance. However, it soon emerges that Antillia isn't a planet at all but a giant space station, an artificial island in space. Its disappearance is down to some very dangerous experiments on the part of a bit of a mad scientist, and with Antillia's re-discovery, that danger is very much present once more.

The very least that one can hope for in any audio release, whether from Big Finish or otherwise, is that it will keep the listener's interest. Sadly, this story just doesn't get over that low bar. I'm afraid I kept losing concentration and having to go back to listen to what I had just missed. I could put that down to my own advancing years, but I don't think that explains it.

The Fourth Doctor range has an excellent track record for giving us some of the best Big Finish stories of recent years – not the least *Ice Heist* in this very set. Looking at things dispassionately, with each passing year and each new Fourth Doctor set, we should count ourselves lucky that with Tom Baker, now approaching his later years, Big Finish has had the foresight to rec-

ord stories with him some years in advance. Indeed, this particular set was recorded as long ago as the summer and autumn of 2018. With the inexorable march of time, the longevity of the range is inevitably in question, so it comes as a particular disappointment when the quality of a Fourth Doctor story turns out to be less than stellar – more *The Creature From the Pit* than *City of Death* one might say (and yes, I know there are people who prefer the former story; but come on!).

It has to be said that Tom Baker, Louise Jameson and Nerys Hughes are all on terrific form, as are guests Anjlli Mohindra and Adrian Rawlins – they all make absolutely the most of what they are given to work with. Compared to the first story, the character of Margaret takes something of a step backwards and I can't say that I could work out what she was bringing to the mix. I look forward to hearing stronger stories for her along the line.

So, can I recommend this box set, containing as it does, one truly excellent story and one which is rather a let-down? Big Finish have provided a solution. I can certainly recommend *Ice Heist*, but I am more reluctant to urge you to buy *Antillia the Lost*, but with *Ice Heist* at least, you won't be disappointed.

[For the trailer click here](#)

[To buy from Big Finish click here.](#)



# THE ROBOTS VOL 6

Review by Geoff Stevens

*Produced by David Richardson for Big Finish Productions*  
*Starring Nicola Walker, Claire Rushbrook, Jon Culshaw*  
*Directed by Ken Bentley*  
*Released April 2023*

The story of Eighth Doctor companion Liv Chenka's year-long sabbatical, back home on Kaldor, with her sister Tula, comes to an end with the sixth volume of this most satisfying series from Big Finish. Over the course of three stories – *Force of Nature* by Helen Goldwyn, *Face to Face* by John Dorney and *The Final Hour* by Matt Fitton, we see the Chenka sisters attempting to salvage what they can of their damaged relationship, while becoming increasingly dragged into revolts by both robots and humans against the corrupt and despotic rule of The Company, in the final days and hours before Liv keeps her pre-arranged meeting with the Doctor and leaves the planet once more.

*The Robots: Volume Six* makes for an entirely satisfying end to this series, which has never been anything other than excellent. As with the five previous volumes, we have three engaging and varied stories, which take us deep into the intricacies of that most intriguing society, first created in Chris Boucher's *The Robots of Death* in 1977.

Of course, on television in 1977, *The Robots of Death* benefitted immensely from Ken Sharpe's memorable Art Deco designs, particularly of the Voc Robots.

On audio we don't have those designs, but such is the skill of these Big Finish actors, directors and sound designers, that we don't miss the visual elements, and those memorable robots are conjured up effortlessly in the listeners' imaginations.

The casting for this series has been just wonderful. Nicola Walker really is one of Big Finish's absolute prize assets, possessing as she does a rare ability to bring such reality to her performance. The decision to cast Claire Rushbrook, a similarly talented actress, as her sister Tula, has been a masterstroke. The chemistry between the two has been fabulous and has absolutely made this series – which is not to deny the contributions of supporting actors, such as Jon Culshaw, Beth Chalmers and Tracy Wiles in this set, and the likes of original *Robots of Death* cast members, Pamela Salem, the late David Collings and Gregory de Polnay in earlier volumes.

I've thoroughly enjoyed this little dip back into the world of Kaldor and am rather sad it's all over. Perhaps Liv can be persuaded to pop back for another visit with her sister sooner rather than later.

[For the trailer click here](#)

[To buy from Big Finish click here](#)



# RANI TAKES ON THE WORLD: BEYOND BANNERMAN ROAD

Review by Geoff Stevens

*Produced by Emily Cook for Big Finish Productions*

*Starring Anjali Mohindra, Daniel Anthony, Mina Anwar*

*Directed by Helen Goldwyn*

*Released April 2023*

One of the sad consequences of the death of Elisabeth Sladen in 2011, was the inevitable premature ending of the show that had made her a star for a new generation of children, The Sarah Jane Adventures. At the time, there was, quite rightly, no question that the series could have continued without Sladen, yet there remained a feeling that there were more stories to tell with the SJA characters.

Wonderful though Elisabeth Sladen was, *SJA* was always about more than Sarah Jane. Over the five seasons that the show ran, producers were able to put together an exceptionally strong supporting cast, not least among whom were a formidable group of young actors, the stand-out performers among whom were Daniel Anthony as Clyde Langer and especially Anjali Mohindra as Rani Chandra. Over the last twelve years, as is the nature of things, those young actors have grown up, and Mohindra has gone on to become one of the most in-demand actors on television, appearing in a succession of high-quality prestige shows - including as

the Queen Skithra in the 2020 Doctor Who episode *Nicola Tesla's Night of Terror*.

Anthony and Mohindra's moving appearance in the Lockdown short film, *Farewell Sarah Jane*, reminded everyone just how good those actors are and underlined that the time was now right for them to return to Bannerman Road, in a new series from Big Finish.

This first volume of *Rani Takes on the World*, entitled *Beyond Bannerman Road*, sees a thirty-year-old Rani, fifteen years after the final series of The Sarah Jane Adventures, a suc-



successful investigative journalist and podcaster, still confronting the same sort of mysterious goings on that Sarah Jane had introduced her to.

Clyde is still struggling to make his way as a comics creator, has a new girlfriend and a child on the way.

Over the course of three well-told stories, Rani, Clyde, and Rani's mother Gita are faced by a giant flying saucer threatening London; the impossibly star-studded wedding of an old acquaintance of Rani from her schooldays; and a creepy haunted restaurant. All three stories are just perfect for this first box set, in what will hopefully develop into a long-running series. *Here Today* by former SJA TV writer Joseph Lidster, *Destination Wedding* by James Goss and *The Witching Tree* by Lizzie Hopley, capture absolutely the tone and feel of the TV series, and are entirely credible as sequels to that series.

But the plots are almost incidental to this set. *Beyond Bannerman Road* is all about the characters – Rani flourishing in her chosen career, inspired by the example of Sarah Jane Smith, has grown into the leading role of mystery-busting investigative reporter, very much in the mould of Sarah Jane; yet she is still struggling to come to terms with the loss of her mentor. Clyde is determinedly pursuing his dreams of a successful comics career but is unwilling to deny his principles in order to achieve those dreams. He appears comfortable in a new romantic relationship but is fundamentally daunted by the idea of

impending fatherhood. Inside he still feels like a child, not ready to take the leap of responsibility that is demanded of him.

The three returning actors – Anjali Mohindra, Daniel Anthony and Mina Anwar as Gita slip so easily into the roles that they last played in earnest over a decade ago; and are just wonderful. The love that each one of them has for this series and for those roles comes through clearly in every line. It is a joy to listen in on their joy.

*Beyond Bannerman Road* has left me keen to hear more now. With another set on the way later in the year, featuring the return of Samantha Bond as the deliciously evil Mrs Wormwood, I cannot wait.

[For the trailer click here.](#)

[To buy from Big Finish click here](#)

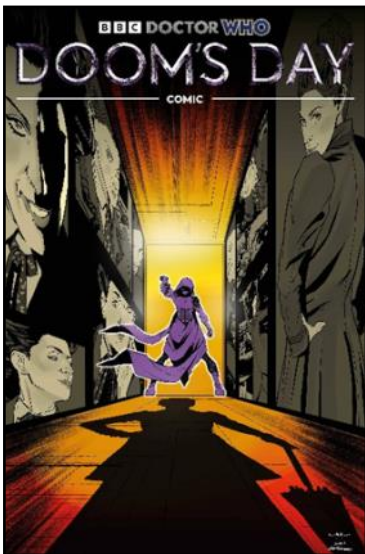


# DOOM'S DAY: A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE

Review by Jordan Shortman

The *Doom's Day* announcement came a little out of the blue. Another attempt at doing the sort of storytelling that *Time Lord Victorious* did a couple of years ago, *Doom's Day* sees one story being told through a variety of mediums, throughout books, comics, audio adventures and even on the Doctor Who *Lost In Time* mobile game. Each chapter of the story is designed to run to a few hours for Doom, who has found a target on her back leaving her with twenty-four hours to find the Doctor and hopefully save her life, while meeting friends, allies and enemies of the Doctor along the way.

On a personal note, the casting of Suzie Kempner as Doom, supposedly the universes' greatest assassin, did nothing to stir any level of excitement about this project in me. Judging just from the



video promos, there was absolutely no way that this was the 'greatest assassin in the universe.' While there were elements

of *Time Lord Victorious* that I did like, the BBC Books in particular, nothing about *Doom's Day* has gotten me excited or made me think that I need to go out and buy particular things.

I had hoped this would change with the *Doom's Day* comic mini-series, which would see Doom squaring off with Missy. The folks over at Titan Comics have always done right by us with their stories; Jody Houser is an incredible *Doctor Who* author, effortlessly turning her hand to whichever character she is writing, and Roberta Ingranata has proven herself as one of the best artists that *Doctor Who* has ever been lucky enough to have. I still think her depiction of the Thirteenth Doctor's TARDIS interior is far better than the actual thing we got on screen. Unfortunately though, neither of them could rescue this segment of *Doom's Day*, entitled *A Doctor In The House*, from being pretty sub-par to everything they've done before. What doesn't help is right from the opening pages, which give you a list of characters and a previously section, there is no recap of either what *Doom's Day* is or what has happened so far. Is this set before the BBC Books, the *Lost in Time* game or the Big Finish audios? As a result it just feels like two issues that stand alone from the rest of the saga.

To her credit, Houser does introduce Doom in an interesting way and in keeping with her writing, packs most pages with fun little Easter Eggs. I liked

that Doom seemed to be working for The High Order of Oberon, an organisation first mentioned in *Revelation of the Daleks* for example, as she infiltrates a party in New York in 1883. A masked ball makes things harder for Doom, who is trying to find her targets in a room full of disguised guests. Things get worse when Missy turns up sporting her usual garb along with a Mad Hatter hat and claiming to be the mysterious Doctor Who. Houser handles Missy well, which is little surprise as her own mini-series released last year from Titan was one on the company's best Doctor Who releases in a long time, and she gives Missy some delicious dialogue.

I was also pleased to see that Ingranata has stopped relying so heavily on reference photos for her artwork. While it has been fun trying to figure out which

episode a particular pose comes from, seeing recycled images doesn't a great artist make so I appreciated that here, Missy isn't reduced to familiar stances and facial expressions. This gives the character much more flexibility when moving about the panels. However, it is obvious that Ingranata is more comfortable recycling images because her new poses seem a little rougher around the edges. The corners are sharp and hard, while familiar poses seem softer. Hopefully this is something that she can work out in the future. Nonetheless, it was nice to see more exploration with her artwork.

It doesn't take long before we discover who both Doom and Missy are looking for, the mysterious Prettypaw Twins, who are professional cat burglars. The irony that they are at the party dressed as cats isn't entirely lost, but what is a shame is that this could have been a great reference to the cat people from New Earth, maybe trying to disguise themselves as humans. Here we are also introduced to The Perpetual Topaz, a world-destroying device in the form of a necklace. The Prettypaw Twins are of course here to steal it and as we'll later learn, this is what Doom is looking for too.

Again to Jodie Houser's credit she does take the 'Universe's greatest assassin' line and works well with it. There's next to no gore in Doom's kills but I was surprised that the number of ways Doom kills people in these two issues were allowed past the censors, with people being stabbed, shot and sliced in half. One does get the sense that Missy approves but as we'll later discover, this story takes place during her redemption arc from Series 10, so she really tries to





admonish her. Houser makes it clear that she secretly seems to agree with the brutal way Doom deals with her enemies.

The action shifts from 1883 to the 50<sup>th</sup> century and the Stormcage Facility, made famous for being the prison that housed River Song in the television series. Of course, Houser and Ingranata can't resist a few little references, so there's mentions of River and even images of her and Roger Delgado's Master on video screens in the Administrator's office.

The character of Administrator Cire is carried over from Missy's miniseries, in which she breaks into the Stormcage Facility to use her Delgado incarnation to help stop another weapon from falling into the wrong hands. While not strictly necessary, it is a shame that for this segment of the series at least, knowledge of the Missy mini-series is helpful. Why does Cire seem to think Missy is the Doctor? Why is she allowed to wander around the Facility? Why do Missy and Cire seem very friendly? All questions that aren't really important to this story but questions one might want the answers too to fully understand this segment. It does seem this is a little bit of a cash-grab attempt. *'Don't quite understand this bit of the story? Then go buy the Missy miniseries!'* It's not a great show from Titan, whose Doctor Who comic output has been significantly reduced in recent years to the point one almost forgets they even write comics.

Issue 2 picks up with Missy still on Doom's trail, this time bringing them both to a convention centre in the far future. It's an odd setting, with a num-

ber of stereotyped characters trying to grab photos and merch from everything they love. Okay, so maybe that's not stereotyping *per se*, people do that at conventions, but Houser spends a little too much time in the issue's thirty-three page limit, mucking around.

This convention is about Earth, and everyone there is celebrating the planet's history and in particular the involvement of the Doctor in saving it so many times. And as with all good shopping sprees, it all ends in a bookshop, this one selling genuine vintage Earth novels. It's here we meet another of Doom's targets, a representative of The Church of Omitted Yesteryear, who is trying to erase all of Earth's history. I'm sure somewhere here is an allegory of what people seem to be doing nowadays in tearing down statues and omitting parts of history because they are uncomfortable without realising that you can't change history, only learn from it and make sure that the mistakes of the past can never be repeated. The costume worn by this character, a 16<sup>th</sup> century Quaker, is a little on the nose too. In fact, there are a number of good narrative ideas that Houser has thrown in here that are never given the space, either by the story limits or the page limitation, to fully flourish. That's what ultimately leads to this mini-series' downfall. How much better would the story have been had Doom been trying to stop someone from this church erasing history simply because they didn't like it, with Missy trying to stop her.

The action comes to a conclusion when Missy follows Doom to 'A Dying World, Name Long Forgotten,' essentially a barren planet with one single house

amongst the cliffs. It's a striking image that Ingranata draws well, but still something is missing, there's no sense that this is the last house left on a dying world. It just looks like the owner doesn't much like people so lives just outside town. This time though, Doom has Missy's number. Missy has been telling her she's the Doctor so Doom puts that to the test. In a great sequence told on a single page, Doom asks Missy how the Doctor would save her target, a man who is trying to launch weapons into the universe so that no one will ever forget his planet's name. Missy can't answer it, proving that while she's changed enough to not just outright kill this man and Doom along with him, she's changed enough that she doesn't have a quick response.

The Perpetual Topaz, the trinket the Prettytaw Twins were trying to steal is going to be used to power the missiles the man is intending to unleash on the universe, though Houser doesn't say how he can use those missiles if Doom has the Topaz, so how can they launch in the first place? Is this a plot hole or just an example of a comic series that feels rather rushed and one good final draft away from being a great read? The fact that this man or his doomed world doesn't even get named is telling of a rushed writing period.

*A Doctor In The House's* ultimate question is why the Doctor would need to save Doom. She isn't a particularly nice character, she murders everyone she meets in various ways, and if anything, the target on her back seems deserved. If this was supposed to get me invested in her character or this multi-format story, then unfortunately it hasn't worked.



It's a shame because Jodie Houser is a great writer, but this all just screams of a rushed job with little thought put into it. Missy comes off very well, Houser proving yet again that she can write for pretty much any character she chooses, even some of the dialogue for Doom is juicy. But Doom as a character just isn't worth saving, dare I say perhaps not even worth the paper she's printed on? If anything Missy feels like the main character in this, with Doom reduced to the sidelines. As Doom's plight is the whole point of this saga, not just this comic book mini-series, it's done little to make me care about her.

[Doom's Day is available in paperback, hardback and e-book formats. To buy from Amazon UK click here.](#)

# FROM THE LAND OF FICTION

Editorial by Stephen Hatcher

Welcome once again to the Cosmic Masque fiction section, in which we present a selection of the very best Doctor Who fiction by you, our readers. In this issue we present five excellent stories, three of which have never been published before and two of which appeared in the charity fiction anthology that I edited a few years ago, *Time Shadows: Second Nature*.

Kate Coleman is an excellent writer, whose work we have been privileged to feature in earlier issues of *Cosmic Masque*. In *Divergence*, one of our stories from *TS2N*, the Twelfth Doctor and Clara encounter a relic from the Time War, which, if it were to fall into the wrong hands – any hands – could threaten the whole fabric of reality.

The intention for this issue had been to include the second part of Gary Merchant's three-part multi-Doctor novella *Déjà Vu*, in which five incarnations of the Doctor encounter a host of old enemies, as they are forced to re-enact one of the most terrifying episodes of their earlier lives. However, given that it might be some time before *Cosmic Masque XX* appears, we have decided to include both Part Two, *Tricks of the Mind* and the final part *Like Minds* here in *CM XIX*.

Our second *TS2N* story is the brilliant Ian Chesterton in an *Exciting Adventure with Martians*, by Greg Maugham, in which some time after his travels with the Doctor, Ian Chesterton goes for a job interview in a rather sinister firm.

*The Outsiders* is a smashing story by D. A.

Noon, a new writer to *Cosmic Masque*, which features the Thirteenth Doctor and her companions assisting a young man to defeat an alien invasion of Scarborough. The setting of this story grabbed me immediately.

Finally, we have a star team-up. Chris McAuley has written for us twice before, once in partnership with acclaimed novelist John Peel, and once together with Davros himself, Terry Molloy. Well now we get the full super-group as Chris, John and Terry bring us *Davros Diaries: The Dalek Factor*. I know that Chris is involved in all sorts of exciting writing projects with some extraordinary and well-known people (including Terry and John), so look out for those. It really is a privilege to feature his, John's and Terry's work in *Cosmic Masque*.

So, there we are. For my money, five excellent stories. I hope you will enjoy them as much as I have. But don't stop there. Have you got a story to tell? Surely you must have. Is it just a matter of having the confidence to write it? Please don't let that stop you. As fiction editor, my job is to help you to make your story as good as it can be. So, come on. Now is the time to get in touch via the email address at the front of this issue and either send me a story or tell me about your ideas. Whether you are a newbie or an experienced writer, it doesn't matter. Together we can make your idea work. I've said it before, but just imagine the pleasure you will get from seeing your story in *Cosmic Masque*. Don't put it off any longer.

*Steve*

# DIVERGENCE

by Kate Coleman

"Where to now, then, Clara?" the Doctor asked. "How about a trip to the crystal caves of Kastellel Three?" He took a sideways pace and spun a monitor protruding from the console towards her. "The dual pulsars Geminga and BO-three-five-five are generating particularly spectacular particle clouds right now. Look." He pointed at two small, bright spheres. Streams of violet, blue and pink light poured from each, bursting outwards into space. At the point where the streams converged, an explosion of colours swirled across the screen.

He took her hand and guided her finger to the middle of the colours. "We could materialise right here and watch from the doors."

Clara pondered. She really should get back to school before her hair grew much longer. There were a few awkward questions from other members of staff last time. But another adventure was hard to resist.

"I'm pretty tired, but I could shower and crash in the TARDIS. It will still be here tomorrow, right?"

"I've got a time machine. Of course, it will still be here tomorrow."

She grinned and tugged playfully on his hand. She wanted this to go on forever, spinning through time and space, skipping more and more of her dull, regular

life, because nothing compared to travelling with the Doctor.

He grinned that owlish grin of his. "All right, I'll..."

Without warning, the TARDIS pitched hard to the right. Clara staggered across the room, grabbing at the railing around the central dais. Then the ship plunged down with a sickening lurch. Books toppled from the shelves. The central column laboured out a grinding rasp.

"What's going on?" Clara yelled.

"I don't..." The Doctor stopped and then darted to the other side of the console. "Something's stuck on the outer shell." He flicked on an external scanner. "No, no, no, not one of those!"

Clara stumbled across the shaking TARDIS. "What is it?"

"It's a divergence cannon." The Doctor slammed his fist into the console. "Left over from the Time War."

"That doesn't sound good," Clara said.

"It isn't. They're unpredictable and dangerous. We need to get out of the vortex and find a safe place to power down."

The Doctor began punching a series of buttons. The juddering and grinding were almost unbearable. Clara's eyes

watered as wisps of blue smoke from the overwrought console gathered in the air.

She looked at the coordinates he'd punched in. Her flat. He was taking the screaming, roaring, out-of-control TARDIS to her flat. "Wait!" she yelled. "Not..."

The landing brakes groaned, and the TARDIS slammed to a halt, throwing Clara to the floor.

The Doctor dashed out of the doors and returned a few seconds later with his red jacket smouldering. "I've got it off the shell. Quick, we need to power down." He flicked a few buttons and then darted over to offer Clara his hand.

As she struggled to her feet, she glimpsed blue flames through the TARDIS door. "Doctor, what did you do with that cannon?"

"I threw it away from the TARDIS, of course. We need to get out while she shuts her systems down to cut the cannon off from its power source. Hurry."

Clara ran through the doors and into her darkened flat. She jolted to a halt and stared open-mouthed. Something resembling a large space gun, with a broken barrel and half the trigger mechanism missing, lay against the back cushions on her sofa. The TARDIS doors slammed shut behind her. At the same time, the blue glow around the cannon faded. The flames consuming Clara's furniture, however, did not.

Clara dashed into the kitchen and yanked her fire blanket from its place on the wall by the cooker. She thrust

the blanket into the Doctor's hands with a silent scowl and then bolted back into the kitchen for a bucket.

Running water into the bucket, she had several seconds to decide just how much hell he deserved for this. Getting her tied up, locked in alien prisons, even covered in alien gloop was one thing. Burning her sofa took recklessness to a whole new level.

Clara and the Doctor sat on the floor, legs outstretched, with their backs resting against the side of the TARDIS. As cold air blew in through the open window, flapping the sofa's loose fabric to reveal the exposed springs, Clara turned the full force of her scowl on the Doctor.

"I can't believe you did that," she said. "There's not a scratch on the TARDIS, but my sofa is..." she searched for an appropriate word, but couldn't find one rated PG, so she just waved her hand at the soaked, blackened fabric of what used to be her couch. "I only just finished paying for it."

"Clara, I really am very sorry. This was the first place I thought of." He stopped fiddling with the cannon and put it down on his lap.

"If you could get in the TARDIS, I'd tell you to bugger off," she said. "I suppose I'm stuck with you now until the power's back?"

He offered a sheepish grin.

Clara really couldn't stay cross with him for long. They'd been in much worse scrapes than this. "Is that thing safe

now?" she asked, pointing at the cannon's cracked black shell.

"Quite safe, as long as there's no time-sensitive objects around."

"What did it do? In the Time War, I mean."

"It splinters space-time, extrapolating all possible futures into separate divergence bubbles." He rubbed his temples wearily. Clara knew thinking of the Time War still pained him. "Whoever's in charge of the cannon dismisses the futures they don't want, and selects the future they do want. That version of reality is then forced into existence."

"That's a terrible weapon." Clara shuddered at the thought of someone coldly selecting this future or that, stealing the days to come by their choices.

"Yes, it is," the Doctor said. His tone darkened. "I thought I dealt with them all years ago. I'll dismantle it. By the time the TARDIS powers up, it won't be a threat to anyone."

"Look, I need to get cleaned up and sleep. You make yourself at home, OK?" She paused. "Um, you don't need to sleep, do you?"

He shook his head quickly. "No, no, a quick nap will see me fine."

"Good. We'll get rid of this," she kicked at the carcass of her poor sofa, "in the morning." Goodness only knew how she would explain that to her family.

Clara woke blearily to the sound of ringing and the sight of the Doctor hov-

ering near her bed.

"Your phone won't stop making this terrible noise. It's very distracting," he said, handing it to her.

She groaned. It was her stepmum. "Linda, I'm not even up, it's seven a.m."

"She called four times," the Doctor added as he backed out of her bedroom.

"Is that a man's voice? Are you alone?" Linda asked.

"Linda, I'm thirty years old. If I've got a man here it's none of your damn business," Clara snapped.

"Well! You can introduce me, then. I'm on my way up the stairs. Your lift is broken again."

"What?" Clara sat bolt upright. "No! I mean. I'm alone. There's no one here..."

Linda had already hung up.

Clara leaped out of bed. "Doctor!" She bolted to the lounge. To her relief, the TARDIS door was open again and he'd dismantled the divergence cannon.

"We need to get that out of here," she said, pointing at the heap of gun parts on her carpet. Then she added, "And my sofa. And you. Now!"

"We do?" The Doctor looked up in mild surprise.

"Yes, we do. I'm not in the mood for the Spanish Inquisition from Linda. Can you get that lot in the TARDIS?"

"Not the cannon. It might be inert now,

but if we take any part of it inside a time machine it will light up like a Venflaxian Festival tree.”

Clara grabbed the barrel and a handful of the circuits and dashed back into her room. “We’ll hide it under my bed. Bring the rest,” she called over her shoulder.

When they’d cleared the floor of space debris, Clara grabbed the end of the sofa. “Let’s get this in the TARDIS, and you can buzz off and dump it somewhere, yeah?” She started to drag it single-handedly towards the TARDIS.

The Doctor shot her a quizzical look. “OK, but what’s the rush? Linda’s met me before. I thought...”

Clara flushed. She remembered that meeting only too well. Linda hadn’t let her forget it. “Yes, well, I’m fed up with her constant criticism. My flat isn’t tidy enough. I’m not head of department yet. I’m thirty and single. Which, apparently, gives her licence to set me up with Matthew Flint, the deputy bank manager.” Clara screwed her face up at the thought.

“I’m sure Matthew Flint is a perfect bore. He sounds terrible,” the Doctor agreed.

Between them, they hefted the remains of the charred sofa towards the TARDIS. As Clara stepped backwards into the ship, the couch wedged itself part way through.

Clara grunted and shoved at the sofa. It wouldn’t move. “Turn it on its side,” she commanded. The Doctor grinned. “Yes, boss.” Then he let go of his end of the sofa and

waved his hand towards the hall. “You should stand up to her like that.”

Clara twitched her nose. “It’s her passive aggressive rubbish I can’t deal with. She drags Dad into it. Sometimes, it’s better to just go along with her.” Clara tugged hard at the sofa. Linda would be here any moment after huffing her way up seven flights of stairs, and she didn’t have the energy or the patience to explain the Doctor to her today.

They manoeuvred the sofa onto its arm, tipped it over the threshold and let it crash into the console room.

At that moment the doorbell rang. “Good, now you can...” Clara waved her arm at the dematerialisation controls.

A blue flash sparked up from behind a sofa cushion, lighting the whole base in a blue glow.

“Oh, no, no, no!” the Doctor said, diving at the furniture. He flipped it over and ripped off the charred cushions.

The doorbell chimed three times.

The TARDIS doors slammed shut. A small, blue blur zipped up between the cushions. The Doctor lunged for it. Spinning away, almost gleefully, it dodged him and hovered over the console, where it spun in the air and buzzed.

Clara stared at it, almost mesmerised. It reminded her of the Golden Snitch, only much, much bluer, and no Harry Potter on his Nimbus 2000 to catch it.

Leaping towards the console, the Doctor yelled, “No, you don’t.”

The snitch darted away.

“What is it? What’s happening?” Clara yelled. The central column started to rise and fall. The snitch bounced off a bookcase, sending a shower of blue sparks across the console room.

“It’s part of the divergence cannon. I think it’s...”

They both ducked as it catapulted itself across the room. The air in its wake glinted and flickered, like an angry blue comet orbiting the TARDIS console.

The Doctor groaned. “It’s the cannon’s CPU. I thought that part was lost in the vortex.”

Clara took cover under the console. “What’s it doing?” she called to the Doctor.

“It’s set us in motion. We’re in the vortex. But don’t worry, I have a plan.” He flicked coordinates into the console, and then disappeared up the steps into the heart of the TARDIS.

The blue ball of trouble buzzed over Clara’s head, and then pinged up towards the ceiling, before starting off on dizzying circuits of the room. After a few frenetic laps, the orb came to a halt, hovering just above the console, spinning faster and faster. Clara flung her hands over her eyes. Arcs of blue light streaked from the snitch to the panel. Acrid blue-grey smoke hung in the air.

“Oh, no, you don’t!” The Doctor stood at the top of the steps with a cricket bat against his shoulder. “Clara, get

ready to open the door.” He pounced down the stairs, wielding the bat in front of him like a sword.

Clara closed her eyes for a second. OK, it’s fine. If he can beat Robin Hood with a spoon, he’s good for six with a cricket bat. She opened one eye as he stalked the CPU across the console room. The device dodged and wove its way around, as if avoiding his inept lunges.

He swiped, missed, and staggered forward. “OK, I got this. That was just practice,” he said, regaining his balance and some of his dignity. He straightened his back. “Get ready to open the door.”

The snitch whizzed past Clara’s head and crashed into another bookcase. Pages exploded into the air and then fluttered to the floor around her. She jumped up, dived forward and poised her finger over the door-release button. “Ready?” she yelled to the Doctor.

He grinned. As the snitch darted past him, he swung. “Now!” he bellowed.

The bat smashed into the CPU. With a high-pitched whine, the snitch sparked over Clara’s head towards the door. They both rushed to the door to see where it landed.

Outside, a dense jungle of tangled trees was briefly illuminated by a blue flare, and then all evidence of the CPU faded as it fell somewhere in the undergrowth.

The Doctor leaned against the door, grinning, with the cricket bat over his



shoulder.

Clara shot him a coy smile. "Not bad." She tapped the bat, just above a burn mark the size of a satsuma where he'd smacked the CPU. "Not bad at all." Then she turned sharply. "Is the TARDIS going to switch off again?"

"No. When everything rebooted - while you were sleeping - I recalibrated the phase dynamics on the outer shell. It should be shielded from the CPU now."

"Should be?"

"Well, it's not an exact science. There might be some residual power," he mumbled.

Clara surveyed the jungle. A canopy of green trees towered above them, reaching into a cloudless, orange sky enveloping the forest a warm, golden glow. "Where do you think it landed?"

The Doctor made a click with the corner of his mouth, and then pulled a small transceiver from his pocket. "It's not so much where," he said, "as when. We have to find the CPU before it can latch onto anyone."

"OK ... so someone else finding it would be bad? How bad?"

He turned to her. "Remember that book with the small hairy-footed creatures? One of them found a ring and it poisoned his mind?"

"You mean Gollum?"

The Doctor nodded. "Yes. I think it's fair

to say anyone holding the divergence cannon's CPU over a period of time would find it... seductive."

"What would happen?"

"I don't know for sure, but it's possible they could manipulate reality."

"Bloody hell. We better..."

The Doctor grabbed her arm as she started off into the bush. "Clara, I admire your get up and go, but," he nodded at her clothes, "you're still in your pyjamas. You might want to get dressed."

Clara blushed furiously. "Right. OK. Just a minute." She dashed halfway across the console room and paused. "Don't go leaving the Shire without..."

"Without what?"

"Without me."

"While you were dressing," the Doctor said when Clara returned, "I found out a few things about this planet. It's a human colony, a few hundred years in your future. There are a number of good-sized cities on the planet, but we're in a remote spot. Nearest city's a few miles in that direction." He pointed beyond the clearing they had landed in and towards a barely visible pathway through the trees.

"Come on then," Clara stepped onto a layer of damp leaves. The steamy rain-forest air was laced with a sweet, floral note that reminded her of summer eve-

nings in her gran's garden. The warmth had her rolling up her sleeves before she had taken a few paces outside of the TARDIS.

The Doctor laid a hand on her shoulder. "Look. Don't... just, let's take care. There's no telling what trouble that CPU might cook up."

"We better hurry up and find it then," she said, shooting him a sideways look. This was so much more fun than dealing with Linda.

He sighed, almost inaudibly, and then nodded. He released her shoulder and followed her.

Clara felt a bounce in her step as she traversed the leaf-covered clearing. The sun, dappled by the high canopy of fleshy leaves, painted patterns on the forest floor. She could be anywhere, on one of a million, billion worlds. Her heart fluttered at the thought of stepping where no 21st-century human had gone before. She grinned back at the Doctor, and she could see—by the boyish grin playing on his lips—that the excitement had grabbed him, too.

"What's this planet called?" she asked.

He quickened his pace to catch her up. "Arawath Prime. There's a huge trading centre on the southern continent, but this area's mainly agriculture."

"Good, perhaps there aren't too many people around to find the snitch."

The Doctor rolled his eyes and snorted. "It's not magical. It's a highly complex bit of advanced technology that in the wrong hands... in any hands, could

cause..."

Clara grabbed his arm and pointed at a shimmering blue light sparkling through the trees. They pushed on through the tangle of shrub blocking their path, and, as they closed in, Clara heard a faint crackling. The Doctor stamped down some undergrowth, clearing a path for them to step out of the jungle and on to a shallow beach. A wide expanse of an inland lake spread before them.

Clara gasped. A sprinkling of tiny blue lights clustered in the air a couple of metres above the high-tide mark, shimmering like fairy lights on a Christmas tree. As the Doctor and Clara watched, each light stretched into a crack the length of her finger.

"What's happening?" she asked.

He strode towards the lights peering through his sonic glasses. Then he turned towards her and shook his head. "Divergence," he said. "We're too late. It's feeding from the residual energy it took on in the TARDIS. Clara, take my hand. We mustn't get separated. The divergence map is formulating, and we're standing right in the middle of it!"

Clara ran to his side and grasped his hand. Just once, she thought, it would be nice if she didn't get carted off anywhere.

The noise on the lakeside whipped up as the cracks continued to expand. When one touched the lake's surface, the water fizzed and popped, sending steam rising in clouds.

"Are they hot?"

Although he was right beside her, the Doctor had to shout so she could hear him over the roar. "For the time being. It's when they've cooled down that we need to worry." He waved his free hand at the cracks all around them. "After this expansion phase they'll achieve interstice. After that..."

A close-by crack speared the beach, spraying sand and a shower of glassy pebbles into the air. The Doctor pulled Clara sharply around, shielding her from the worst of the debris with his back. When Clara opened her eyes, his red jacket was speckled with black where the hot stones peppered him.

She flicked ash and fragments of stone from his shoulders. "After that, what? What's going to happen?" she asked. There were ten separate cracks now, with heat radiating from each.

"Then the controller, whoever it was that found the CPU, discards the realities they don't want, and makes their choice," the Doctor said.

"Changes the future?"

"Distorts reality. Same thing."

"What do we do?" Clara gasped.

"We need to scan the map," he said. "Stay close." He approached the closest fissure.

A blurry, grainy image resolved through the crack. Beyond, a bearded man, in a tailored grey suit, sat at a long dining table in an elegant room. A photograph of a tall glass-fronted tower block hung on the wall over his shoulder. Another man, who reminded Clara of an old-

fashioned butler, brought a meal on a tray and set it on the table. The man barely glanced up from the touch-screen data pad on the table in front of him.

"Who's that?" Clara asked the Doctor.

"I don't know for sure, but probably..." the Doctor paused, as half a dozen blue fairy-light cracks winked into existence around the seated man. He looked up, examined each in turn, and then, with a flick of his finger, swiped them away, until only one remained. He smiled; and poked his finger deep into that glinting light.

As he did, Clara noticed his surroundings shift. The table seemed a little larger. What she had taken to be a photograph of a tower building now seemed to be an oil painting of the same view, and beside that was an even bigger painting; a portrait of the man who was still seated at his table. Through the window, Clara saw an elegantly styled garden, with an expanse of trimmed lawn.

"Uh oh," the Doctor said. "I think we've found the focal point. But this is his future."

"What just happened?"

"He collapsed the divergence bubble," the Doctor said.

Clara squinted at him; that answer didn't make a jot of sense.

He rolled his eyes, before explaining, "He swipes away the realities he doesn't want, and then selects the one he does want. He changes the future."

The Doctor pulled on Clara's hand. "We need to find the first time he interacts with the CPU."

They moved through the growing storm towards another fissure. The orange sky darkened, and grey clouds rolled in with the wind.

Through the tear, Clara saw the same man; a few years older, perhaps, seated in a boardroom. A picture, identical to the one in the house they'd seen earlier, hung on one wall. Behind him was a logo, 'SadTech Industries', in huge gold lettering.

Clara took a step closer, but the Doctor held her back.

"I want to see the name under that portrait," she said.

The Doctor retrieved a pair of field specs from his pocket, glanced through them quickly, and then handed them to her. Through them she could easily see the name on the gold plaque beneath the portrait: 'Harrison Sadler, CEO SadTech'.

Harrison spoke animatedly to the men and women seated around the table. Not one of them met his eyes. He jumped to his feet as a scattering of blue lights appeared, waving several away with irritated swipes. Clara watched the people around the table react to his erratic arm-waving. The woman closest to him exchanged glances with her neighbour and stood up as if to speak, but Harrison didn't seem to notice. The room quickly cleared, leaving Harrison Sadler alone, waving his arms at the blue lights buzzing around his head.

"Can other people see those cracks?" Clara asked the Doctor.

"No, just him. He's the focal point. We can see them because we're time-sensitive."

"They must think he's hallucinating," Clara said.

"The constant divergence and selection process will overwhelm him. The only way he can get the lights to stop is to choose."

The air became colder, and Clara shivered. The orange sky had darkened with grey clouds, and a cool wind sent ripples across the lake.

"We need to find the earliest..." the Doctor began.

From the corner of her eye, Clara saw another scar-like tear forming. It quickly widened. She tried to pull the Doctor aside, but his foot clipped the edge of the tear and he stumbled.

"Woah!" Clara exclaimed, as she clung to his hand. It was as if an invisible rope had wrapped itself around his leg and was dragging him toward the tear. "Look out!" she yelled above the wind.

The Doctor turned his head to the rift. In that moment, she thought she saw a hundred calculations running through his head. He looked back at her. "Let go!" he said.

"What? No!" She scrambled for a foothold on the beach but found none. They were both being dragged towards the pulsing tear in the fabric of reality. On the other side, Harrison stood en-

twined in a blue vortex of swirling light. He was a shouting, ragged man now; his grey suit worn thin, his straggly hair down to his shoulders, his beard matted. His eyes horrified Clara most, though - wild, darting around desperately. They were the eyes of a man who knew no peace. And the Doctor was being dragged towards that. "Hold on!" she cried, digging her free hand into the sand.

The Doctor shook his head. "Take these," he thrust the sonic glasses at her. "Find point zero, where Harrison made first contact with the CPU. You have to stop him finding it in the first place."

"I won't let you go!" She thrust her heels hard into the sand in one last desperate attempt to stop his relentless progress into the frenzy.

The Doctor was in the tear up to his waist now. "Clara! We can't fix this if we're both in there," he said firmly. His voice exuded reason, calming her, somehow. "Let me go."

Clara looked at the sonic glasses.

"Clara Oswald, you make an excellent Doctor. You can do this," he said.

He trusted her. He trusted her with his life. Clara nodded once. "I'll save you," she said, squeezing his hand tight for a moment. Then she let go.

The Doctor watched Clara vanish. The roaring wind transformed into the buzz of confined static, and the beach shifted and became the room he and Clara had watched Harrison eat his breakfast

in. But the fine table was now cracked down the middle, and, instead of the golden morning light pouring in through the windows, a blue, fizzing storm raged inside the four walls. The curtains were in tatters and the broken windows looked out, not onto fine lawns, but onto a thick mass of shrubs. Harrison Sadler paced among the ruins.

His eyes darted around, tracking the swarm of lights. "Not you," he muttered, and swiped away a light. "Nor you. Go." He swiped four lights away in turn, but dozens remained. "I'll find it. Then I'll be done. No more!"

The Doctor stepped toward Harrison. "I'm the Doctor. Let me help you," he said. This was his fault. He'd smashed the divergence cannon out of the TARDIS and into this man's life.

Harrison looked up at him wildly. "I'm not mad," he said. "They're here. I have to choose. I have to choose."

The Doctor stepped closer. "What do you have to choose?"

"The right one. The last one." Harrison swept away another batch of lights with jerky, shaking hands. "Where, where, where?" he muttered, and set off around the room at a frantic pace.

"Maybe I can help you find it?" the Doctor offered.

"No. Yes. I'm done," Harrison snapped. He turned on the Doctor with a sudden burst of speed and grabbed him by the lapels. Up close, Doctor saw that what he had taken for old age was in fact, neglect. Harrison's hair and beard were tangled and matted, but his skin... under

a layer of grime... had very few wrinkles.

This man's life had been consumed by the endless barrage of choices.

The Doctor raised his palms in a gesture of surrender. "Listen to me. I know how this works. You see different realities through these cracks. One has pudding for dessert, the other has an apple. It's easy to choose. Who wants an apple for afters?"

Harrison stared at the Doctor. "How do you know that?"

"It always starts small. How long was it before they appeared again?"

"A whole year," Harrison said, with a moment of clarity. "I thought I imagined the whole thing. Only, the next time there were three choices. So, I thought, why not choose the reality where I score top in the test?"

Suddenly, Harrison shoved the Doctor backwards and took off in a loping run. "Choose, choose, choose," he called, swiping away the fragments of blue light as he passed.

The Doctor regained his balance and followed Harrison as he careered across the room. "So, it went on. Reality splitting and reforming around the choices you made." Harrison wasn't listening. The Doctor knew how it must have gone, each choice just a little harder than the last. Then the space between the choosing getting shorter.

"I can help, if you let me," the Doctor called.

"If you want to help, start looking... for the final choice."

A jolt ran through the Doctor. "And what's that?" he said carefully. "What's the final choice?"

"Peace," said Harrison. "No lights. No choices."

"And how will I know when I see it?" the Doctor asked.

"Flames," Harrison said. "All the world in flames."

On the beach, the wind tore at Clara's clothes and the grey sky cast a pallid, murky light. Cracks in reality surrounded her, with more appearing each moment. How on Earth was she supposed to find point zero among all these?

Clara put the sonic glasses on and turned her whole body around. She felt as if a tone was vibrating inside her mind. It changed as she swept past each crack, becoming higher in pitch, until it was a terrible, irritating, whine, and then dipped again. So, assuming the highest tone was closest to point zero - her best guess - that narrowed things down. A set of three cracks, two at the water's edge, and one disappearing under the lake, gave off the highest tone.

Through the first crack she saw a child's bedroom. A dark-haired boy in pyjamas held the CPU. It glowed steadily now; the angry crackle and fizz were gone. It looked like it had found a home. The boy looked up sharply and then tucked it under his pillow. Clara guessed, although she could hear nothing, a command had come to brush his teeth. He

scurried off out of the bedroom. So that was early - probably soon after he found the CPU - but still not point zero.

The wind buffeted Clara, and she struggled against it with unsteady legs. From the cloud-blackened sky above, blue lightning arced to the surface of the lake. The water transformed into a brilliant blue and then faded back to murky grey. The air smelled of ozone. Instinct urged her back, but the next tear was closer to the lake, so she pushed forwards. She had to save the Doctor.

Through the next crack, she saw the boy again, a teen now - no beard, but recognisably Harrison. Three or four tiny lights floated around his head as he lay on his bed. He watched them for a while, and then he playfully swiped three away, and tapped a finger on the remaining one. With a contented smile, he rolled over and closed his eyes.

Cold water lapped at Clara's feet, soaking through her shoes, as the wind whipped the lake. She shivered against the biting cold. She turned the glasses to the third tear, which disappeared under the lake. The high-pitched beep pierced the storm.

Point zero.

On the other side of the tear, the sun shone over a calm, turquoise lake, and a boy floated on his back in the water. He flipped over and then pointed excitedly at something glowing blue on the lakebed. The boy waved animatedly shoreward and then dived under the water. A minute later, he resurfaced, took several breaths and then plunged under again. Clara's heart sank. Harrison was diving for the CPU as if it were

lost treasure or a precious pearl.

Clara tore off her jacket and kicked her feet out of her shoes. Then she took a deep breath. If she wanted to get the Doctor back and stop young Harrison's life going to hell, she would have to dive into the lake's icy, dark waters, and get that CPU before he did.

Harrison dashed feverishly across the room, batting away the tiny bubbles he didn't want until only a dozen remained. How did Harrison choose each time, the Doctor wondered, as he examined the closest tear. At just a couple of centimetres across, each window to the future was very small. But if he closed one eye and focused, it was like looking through a pinhole camera.

As he trained his brain to see through the rips in reality, diverging, fragmented futures appeared all around him. Some were images of Harrison in varying forms; smartly dressed or in rags, and many states in between. Within the myriad of choices, there were people the Doctor didn't know. He saw many faces; happy at this choice or anguished at another. The Doctor saw planes crash into the ocean and earthquakes swallow cities. He recoiled. Were these the choices Harrison had been faced with, day in, day out? Choosing who lives and who dies? No wonder it had driven him mad.

Harrison stumbled around the room. "Flames. Only flames now," he said, in a sing-song voice. "We all sleep. It's the only way."

The Doctor began to realise, with cold horror, what Harrison's peace really

was. "You're looking for a future that ends in fire for everyone?"

Harrison offered a sad smile. "Soon be time for bed," he said. Then he fixed his gaze on a tear at the far side of the room. He raised a finger. "That one."

The Doctor squinted at the tiny blue tear. An inferno raged inside; a planet consumed in flames. Harrison set to work swiping the other blue lights away. The Doctor leaped at him, ready to pin his arms, but Harrison dodged to left and out of his grasp.

"Clara, be quick," the Doctor muttered.

If Clara didn't find point zero before Harrison made his final choice, every man, woman and child on Arawath Prime would burn.

Clara strode into the freezing water up to her waist. She didn't stop to think about the cold. She took two good breaths and then plunged towards the lake floor. The light was actually better near the base of the tear, for the day beyond... a window into the past... was a bright summer afternoon. She forced her eyes open, even though they stung, and looked through the tear in reality.

Harrison, in bright red swimming trunks, scabbled between two rocks on the bottom of the lake. A blue light radiated from the crevice. The rocks were right on the junction between Clara's reality and Harrison's.

Marking the spot well in her memory, Clara zipped back to the surface. In just a few strokes she gulped in fresh air. The wind whipped her hair and the sky

roiled with angry black clouds. Lightning crashed into the beach and sent a shockwave through the lake. Clara took two breaths and then plunged back down again.

Harrison was still trying to get his fingers around the CPU. With two powerful strokes Clara placed herself opposite him. She reached out a hand and shoved him away from the rocks. He floated backwards, eyes wide in surprise, and then turned and kicked his little legs furiously, propelling himself to the surface.

Good, Clara thought, go make a sandcastle and leave me to deal with this. She wiggled her hand between the stones. Her fingers touched the surface of the CPU, still a tantalising blue, glowing magically in the water. No wonder Harrison wanted it.

She jammed her arm further in to get her fingers around the sphere. She heard a muffled crack, and the whole lakebed shuddered. The rocks shifted and clenched around her forearm. She grasped the sphere and then tried to yank her arm out.

Her arm wouldn't move.

OK, don't panic. She pulled again.

Nothing. She looked up, to see Harrison again, floating in the clear blue waters, staring at her curiously. Then he peered between the rocks at the blue shimmering orb.

She shook her head frantically, panic tightening her chest, unable to communicate with him except through the desperation in her eyes. She tried to



bend her knee up into the rock to get more leverage and yank her arm free. Fear tore through her like a hurricane.

Harrison backed out of sight, and Clara heaved her arm, ignoring her skin scraping on the rock's rough surface. Her lungs felt ready to explode. The cold water's deadly embrace pressed around her. She closed her eyes. One word echoed in her mind. Doctor.

The Doctor wrestled Harrison to the floor. "We can fix this. You have to give my friend time," he yelled.

Harrison laughed, the howling laugh of a man so far over the edge he'd lost sight of reason. "Time? No time. She's drowning."

Harrison pointed at the two remaining lights sparkling above their heads. In one, fire raged, a planet wide conflagration. In the other, Clara was struggling, submerged in murky water, eyes wide with terror.

Harrison traced his finger back and forth in the air under the two splits in reality. "Choices," he said. "Bad choices. Still have to choose."

The Doctor roared in fury. "Not Clara! Not in any reality!"

Harrison laughed. "This is a good one. Let your friend die, or the planet burn. Which do you choose?" he gibbered, shaking with laughter.

The Doctor's hearts clenched. He would not let Clara die. He lunged at Harrison and they both tumbled to the floor. Harrison brought his knee sharply

up into the Doctor's stomach. With a grunt, the Doctor pulled himself and Harrison upright. He forced Harrison's hand towards the crack and wiped away the inferno.

"One left," Harrison said. He let his hands flop down to his side. "It doesn't matter what you do. It starts all over again," he whispered. "Get it right next time. Everything ends." He looked up at the Doctor. "Sorry about your friend."

The Doctor gripped Harrison's hand. "There's one thing you haven't taken into account," he said, as he poked their joined fingers to select the last reality bubble. "I'm the Doctor, and I save people."

Reality folded around him and suddenly the Doctor stood at the lakeside again in a blizzard of sand.

He flung his coat to the ground, kicked off his shoes, and dived into the water.

One of Clara's arms floated upwards, and her hair billowed out like a crown. He grasped her hand and pulled himself towards her. Her face had reddened with the strain of holding her breath. In seconds, she'd reflexively breathe out and then flood her lungs with icy water.

He anchored himself with one arm around her waist, pinched her nose, and covered her mouth with his. She let her breath go, and then he breathed out steadily, careful not to overfill her lungs, for he knew his capacity was much greater than hers.

That would buy him two minutes, no more. He met her eyes for a moment and then examined the rocks trapping

her arm. She was wedged in tight. He pushed the rocks. One was far too big to contemplate moving, but the other, about the size of a dustbin, might budge. He shoved it as hard as he could.

It didn't shift. He adjusted his position and tried again. It just wouldn't move.

The Doctor squeezed Clara's hand, thrust himself up to the surface to suck in more air, and then back to her side. He repeated the kiss of life and moved to the other side of the rock to try and manoeuvre it from there. It would not budge. He smashed it with his fist. He wouldn't let Clara die. Not here, not today, not on his watch!

He became aware of two more figures in the water; a small, dark-haired boy, pulling the hand of an older man, perhaps his father, and pointing at Clara. The man nodded. He tapped the boy's chest and pointed to the surface.

The Doctor wedged his feet against the large rock and shoved. The man dug his feet in the sand and pulled. Clara struggled furiously, but although the rock moved a fraction, she couldn't break free.

Then the little boy reappeared. He wedged his feet against the small rock and took Clara's arm. The Doctor and the man pulled and heaved.

At last, it moved a fraction. In a blur, Clara and the boy were swirling upwards in a cloud of bubbles, and just before the Doctor grabbed the glowing CPU, he saw Harrison's little feet kicking for all they were worth, propelling himself and Clara towards the surface.

Harrison Sadler's mother pressed a large plaster over the graze on Clara's arm. "Are you sure you don't need to see a doctor? We could drive you to the hospital."

Harrison's father agreed. "It would be no trouble."

Clara glanced at the Doctor, who was sitting on a picnic blanket next to Harrison. The boy watched, fascinated, as the Doctor disassembled the CPU into its component parts.

"Thanks, but no, I'm good," Clara said. "You've got one brave little boy there."

Harrison's mother smiled warmly and looked proudly at her son. "He's usually so shy, but he seems to like your friend."

The Doctor passed Harrison a small, bright blue stone that he'd taken from the CPU.

"What is it?" Harrison said.

"It's quite safe," the Doctor replied, glancing at Clara. "It's just to remind you of the day you were a hero." The little boy beamed and grasped the stone in his hand.

The sun had almost dried Clara's clothes when she noticed the Doctor hovering over her.

"We should go. Get you back to face Linda," he said.

Clara groaned. Really, what was the point of having a time machine if you couldn't put things like that off?

Before they left, Clara squatted down in front of Harrison. "You saved my life today. I'll never forget it." She folded him into a hug.

He grinned. "I won't forget you, either," he said.

Back in the TARDIS, Clara glanced at the Doctor as he set the coordinates. Harrison wasn't the only one who had saved her life today.

"Um. I appreciated the oxygen," she said.

The Doctor, busy at the console, didn't look up. "Least I could do. After you dived down there to fix my mistake."

He didn't seem inclined to add anything further, so, after a moment she asked, "Could we go back to my flat an hour earlier, so I can get a shower and change my clothes?" Then she strode towards him, tapping her fingers along the console as she moved. "Better yet, how about I get changed here, and then we pop off for cocktails on the moon, instead?"

He glanced up with a half-smile. "We can't go back an hour earlier. Your flat would be rather crowded. He tapped the console. "Very delicate calculations. We have to arrive seconds after we left, or we'll throw the whole timeline out. Anyway, you have to explain to Linda that she needs to tell Matthew Flint to..."

Clara raised an eyebrow. "To what?"

"Well, tell him you're busy. Washing your hair," he said, waving his hand at

her bedraggled locks.

Clara sighed. That was true enough. But, what with the sofa fire, chasing the CPU around the TARDIS and almost drowning, she'd had enough drama for one day. She didn't much feel like having to deal with Linda.

After the TARDIS landed, Clara peeked out. "You've parked in my bedroom?" she exclaimed. "I didn't want to risk..."

"Oh, never mind." The doorbell rang insistently. Clara tapped the Doctor's chest and squinted at him. "You, stay in here."

Clara opened her front door. "Goodness, Clara. What on earth were you up to?" Linda said as she breezed in.

Clara stepped aside. "Come in," she muttered to Linda's back. Then she forced a smile. "I'm really busy right now. I need to..."

"Get in the shower and tidy the place up. Yes, I can see that," Linda said. She barged into the lounge and stood staring at the spot where the sofa should be. Then she sniffed theatrically. "Have you started smoking?"

"Of course not. Look..."

"Well, you just sort yourself out," Linda said breezily. "I'm off to the market to pick up fresh veg, but I want you at Dad's twelve sharp. Mr and Mrs Flint, and Matthew, are coming for lunch. Your father agrees with me. It will do you good."

Clara pulled her fingers through her tangled hair. Her trousers were still crisp from where they'd dried in the sun. She sighed. If she agreed to lunch, perhaps Linda would leave her alone.

"Well, I suppose..."

Clara's bedroom door burst open. Linda stared at the Doctor, and the Doctor stared at Linda.

Linda blinked several times, opened her mouth, closed it again, and then turned expectantly to Clara.

"Um. Linda, this is..." Clara took a deep breath. She'd faced down Daleks, outwitted an Ice Warrior, and roundly trounced the Sheriff of Nottingham. The Doctor was right. It was high time she stopped letting Linda walk all over her. She cleared her throat. "Linda, this is the Doctor. He's the same man you met Christmas before last, in a different body. We travel through time and space together and today we saved a whole planet. He's not my boyfriend..."

"I never thought he was..." Linda exclaimed.

"But he's the only man I want in my life right now. Stop trying to fix me up. I'm perfectly happy with how things are!"

Linda's mouth hung open, and for the first time in a long time, probably since the Christmas before last, in fact, she appeared lost for words.

"Really, Clara." Linda sniffed and tossed her hair. "In what reality do you expect me to believe that nonsense?"

"Reality is subjective at the best of

times," the Doctor said. He nodded towards the bedroom door. "Would you like to see my time machine?"

Linda blanched. "I can see you're busy. Far be it for me to intrude. I'll see myself out." She flounced toward the door.

"Oh, Doctor, you've done it now." Clara couldn't stop laughing.

The Doctor grinned. "How about cocktails on the moon?" he said.

He didn't need to ask twice. Clara headed straight back to the TARDIS.

"Not any old moon though," the Doctor went on. "The third moon of Fistealia has a cocktail bar looking over the fire mountains, and drinks that glow every colour of the rainbow. How does that sound?" he said.

"That," Clara said, "sounds amazing." With the whole of time and space to explore, real life could wait. After all, who wouldn't choose that?

# DÉJÀ VU PART TWO: HISTORY REPEATING

by Gary Merchant

*... The urgency was not lost on the Sixth Doctor and Evelyn as they began to run. The group of four had barely covered a few yards, when the sky splintered into puffs of light. Rose chanced a glance upwards and saw something that might have come from the pages of Greek Mythology. Except Rose had never studied Greek Mythology. She recognised these creatures all the same.*

*Evelyn and her Doctor looked back, running as they did so. "What are they?" she gasped.*

*Rose stared at the dragon-like, demonic nightmares that she had never hoped to meet again. "They're Reapers."*

## UNDER SIEGE

The Reapers circled high in the air, as Doctors and companions sought to put as much distance between them as possible. Their target was the mouth of a cave, just a short distance away. Then Rose stumbled, falling heavily to the ground, knocking herself out. The sound attracted one of the Reapers, which began a swift descent toward her.

Before the Doctor could react, his Sixth incarnation doubled back to the girl. "Look after Evelyn," he called back. "I'll handle this."

By the time the Sixth Doctor had reached Rose, it was all he could do to throw himself across her, protecting her. Standing at the mouth of the cave, the Doctor and Evelyn watched horrified as the scene

unfolded before them. There could only be one resolution.

At the last possible moment, the Reaper veered off from its intended target, and swooped back into the sky to join the rest of the pack. A series of shrieks echoed around them, as they flew away into the grey sky.

The Doctor gingerly raised his head and let out the breath he'd been holding. "Now, that really was too close for comfort," he muttered, shifting to a kneeling position to check on Rose's state of health. She was still unconscious from her fall, the graze on her head all too evident. "There'll be quite a bump there when you wake up, Rose Tyler," he noted.

Rose's Doctor and Evelyn joined him. The Doctor's concern clear to see. "How is she?"

"Out cold," his other self replied, "but she'll recover." He reached under Rose's prone form and hefted her into his arms. "Let's get her into that cave, and away from our winged friends." With little effort, he stood up and carried Rose the rest of the way toward the cave mouth, Evelyn and the Doctor following on. "What were those things, anyway?" he asked his younger looking self. "Rose seemed to recognise them immediately."

"They're Reapers," he replied, grim faced. "We came across them once before. A little piece of history was altered, time fractured, and the Reapers turned up with their own brand of justice. Oh, and thanks

– for saving her back there.” He seemed lost in thought.

The acknowledgement was politely brushed aside. “Rose saved our lives earlier from some rather nasty plant life,” said the Sixth Doctor. “I was just repaying the favour.”

“Yes, and almost with your life,” said Evelyn. “That thing almost had you and Rose for breakfast, before it changed its mind.”

“Almost as if they’d got a better offer.” It was meant as an afterthought, but it stopped the Doctor in his tracks. He looked to his other persona, who seemed to have reached the same conclusion. They hurriedly quickened their pace, with Evelyn struggling to catch up. “Slow down, you two. What’s the rush?”

“The future of Gallifrey,” was all the Doctor would say, before leading them down into the underground cave.

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The Raston Warrior Robot could have continued to torment its victims indefinitely, but it was now time for the kill. There was no excitement in the moment – such a concept had no meaning. It was just its primary function, nothing more. It had always been this way and would always remain so.

It turned, as another trespasser approached from above. This was unexpected, but no less troublesome. It would despatch this new arrival in the same manner. That was the Robot’s last thought as a pair of leathery wings enveloped it, smothering it. It knew no more.

Still under cover, Jo, Ace and their respective Doctors stared in shock and amazement at the sight of the Raston Robot’s unexpected incapacitation. As the Reaper took to the air once more, there

was no sign of the Robot. Even so, Jo was not reassured. “What was that thing?” she managed to say, as it soared into the air to join its fellows.

“The stuff of nightmares,” the Seventh Doctor replied.

Ace warily watched the pack continue on its way. “Like pterodactyls, only ten times worse.”

“Just be thankful you weren’t on their menu, whatever they were.” The Eighth Doctor got to his feet, dusting himself down. “Come on, we’ve got a tower to get to.”

“Now, just a minute, Doctors,” said Jo. “Before we go off into heaven knows where, just tell us what happened earlier.” The two Time Lords stared at her, puzzled. “When the two of you went into a trance, or something. What was all that about?”

“Oh, that,” the Seventh Doctor grinned. “I must say, that was an interesting experience.”

Ace sighed. It really irked her when the Doctor got all mysterious. “So, what happened? Jo thought you were having some telepathic chin wag.”

“It was something akin to that, yes,” the Eighth Doctor agreed. “Only more so. Just for a moment, we were in contact with some of our other selves – our first five incarnations, to be precise.”

“More Doctors?” Jo briefly wondered about the possibility of meeting up with her original Doctor. “And they’re all in the Death Zone?”

“Ah, well we’re not sure,” the Seventh replied. “We were only able to maintain contact for a short time, but there was a

definite sense of confinement.”

“It was as if we were there with them,” the Eighth observed.

Ace was fascinated. “Like a shared experience?”

The Eighth Doctor nodded. “You know, that’s exactly the phrase I was looking for. Well done, Ace.”

She grinned. “Thanks – Darcy.” Before he could form a suitable reply, Ace strode past him to join her own Doctor, who was keen to keep the group moving.

He led them into the cave, pausing only to pick up the Robot’s remaining arrows and some coils of metallic rope. “These should come in useful,” he said, handing out the items. “At least we’ll have something to fight with.” He paused, shaking his head. “I really must stop repeating myself.”

\*\*\*

The Doctor and Jabe had arrived at the main door of the Tower just as the Reapers flew past, ignoring them. Jabe noted the Doctor’s involuntary shiver. “Was that your premonition?”

“Yeah,” he nodded. “I don’t know what it is, but there’s something that sets them apart from the Death Zone. As if they don’t belong. Whatever they are, they won’t be good news for some poor soul.” He turned back to the main door. “Well, here we are, then. I wonder if anyone’s home?”

Jabe was drawn to a small handbell resting on a plinth. “Perhaps we should ring for service to find out.”

“Actually, you’re not far wrong.” The Doctor eased the bell cover back on its hinge,

revealing a tiny key sequencer. “It’s an entry coder,” he explained, keying in the correct sequence. After a few seconds, the huge door slid up from the ground to allow them entry. “Not bad, eh?”

“Very impressive,” Jabe agreed. “So, do we just walk in?”

“If only it were that simple.” The Doctor took her arm. “Once we go through that door, we lay ourselves open to the mind of Rassilon. This is where the battle changes from the physical to the mental. Are you up for that, Jabe?”

She met his gaze. “I’m always ready for a challenge – whatever form it takes.”

There was a teasing lilt in her voice, and just for a moment the Doctor wondered if he’d presented her with too much air from his lungs back on Platform One. “Right then – onwards and upwards,” he said, quickly brushing the thought to the back of his mind.

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The cold water from the underground stream stung Rose’s face, bringing her back to full consciousness. She looked up to see the Sixth Doctor smiling down at her. “Are you all right?” She nodded, pulling herself to a sitting position. “Where are we?”

“In an underground cave,” her Doctor replied. “It’s one of three entrances to the Tower. A bit gloomy and wet, but you can’t have everything.”

His cheeky grin made Rose feel a lot better, but she winced as she felt the bruise on her head. “Ooh, god. That hurts.”

“Better a bruised head than being eaten

by those Reaper things," Evelyn told her.

Mention of the Reapers brought a chill to Rose. "So, what happened, then?" Between them, both Doctors explained the events that had transpired, including the Sixth Doctor's selfless act of rescue, which she thanked him for.

He then turned to Rose's Doctor. "Now, I think you ought to tell us what you know about these Reapers."

"They're parasites, basically," he began. "We first came across them on Earth, when history became altered through an act of kindness."

Rose could see the Doctor trying to avoid blaming her, but she wasn't having any of that. "It was all my fault," she blurted out. "My Dad had died in a car accident before I got a chance to know him, so I asked the Doctor to take me back in time so that I could see him. It was just a spur of the moment thing." She felt the Doctor's reassuring hand on her shoulder, and she continued. "I saved my Dad's life when he should have died, and that's when things got really bad. That's when the Reapers turned up."

The Doctor picked up the story. "It was like time had been wounded, and the Reapers didn't like that. They set about sterilizing the wound, which in their case meant destroying everything till it'd been corrected. But Rose's Dad worked it all out and let himself be killed by the same car that should have run him down in the first place. By doing that, he set time back on its right path, and saved us all."

"It must have been terrible for you, Rose," Evelyn realised. "Meeting your father, only for him to sacrifice himself to save others."

"I was really proud of him, you know."

Rose put a brave face on it. "The thing is, he's still out there, in some other universe where he never died, so I s'pose it all balances out."

"The question is," said the Sixth Doctor, "why these Reapers are here now."

"Isn't it obvious? There's been another fracture in time, only this time Gallifrey is at the centre of it." The Doctor was sure of his theory. "We haven't been attacked because we're not part of the cause. That's down to whoever brought us here to the Death Zone."

"You mean one of your lot, the Time Lords?" Rose shook her head. "That's daft."

"Daft it may be, impossible it isn't," the Sixth Doctor observed. "And it would have to be someone in authority, if our young friend is right."

"But why go to all this trouble?" Evelyn asked. "What's the point of it all?"

"Well, let's pick over what we know." The Doctor began sifting through the known facts, plus a fair degree of supposition. "There is no way the Reapers would be part of the Death Zone - they're too much of a random element and can't be controlled. So, they're here independently, because someone is messing around with time."

"I'd be inclined to agree," said his other persona. "It's also possible that whoever brought us here did so as a distraction, to divert attention from their main objective. But the arrival of the Reapers will have no doubt upset their plans."

"Hang on," Rose interrupted. "That all makes sense, but you're forgetting something - what about those other Doctors, the ones that you couldn't find on the



scanner? If they're not in the Death Zone with us, then, where are they?"

The two Doctors were about to offer a reply – except that neither of them could think of one. "I hate to admit it," her Doctor said, "but she's got a point."

"Well, we won't find out anything by sitting here," the Sixth decided, rising to his feet. "We need to get to the Tower, and contact Gallifrey from there."

There was general agreement on this, with the Doctor voicing the one thought present in their minds. "I just hope we're not too late."

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Klaxons were sounding all across the Capitol, which was now on a state of maximum alert. The transduction barriers had little or no effect against these bat-like creatures, who were now swooping down upon the unsuspecting Gallifreyans, their terrified screams reverberating against the unholy screeching of their attackers. Weapons were useless against them, as they absorbed the energy discharges before enveloping those who had fired on them.

In her Presidential chambers, Romana was desperate for more information – anything to use against this menace. "K9, what are these creatures? In the absence of facts, I'll accept theories and suppositions."

As K9 began processing and cross matching data, Leela and Rodat watched the macabre spectacle unfold via the public transmission channels. All around, the result was the same – the population of Gallifrey was being devoured. Thousands were being reduced to hundreds as the creatures continued their relentless attack. "Do we have to watch this?" Rodat pleaded. "It's a blood bath."

"Is it?" Leela pointed to the screen. "I see no blood. Instead, the people are being consumed, absorbed somehow."

She was right. There were no deaths being recorded. It was as though the people were being winked out of existence. Rodat was struck by something else, and began inputting information into his own terminal, entering all known facts on the attack so far. Using his topography skills, he was rapidly checking all sectors of the Capitol and the surrounding area. "Madam President," he finally announced, "not all of Gallifrey is under siege."

"What?" Romana moved to the screen. "Are you sure?"

"Yes." He pointed out various sectors. "The Death Zone is unaffected, as are the Panopticon and the surrounding buildings."

"The oldest parts of the Capitol – could there be a connection?" Romana wondered.

"Data calibrated, Mistress," K9 informed the group. "The creatures appear to be composed of temporal energy and exist outside the known universe."

"Then why are they here, K9?" Leela prompted. "What do they want?"

"Can only theorise," K9 replied. "Possible connection relating to time fractures."

"The changes in our history?" Romana shook her head. "But these are just possibilities. They haven't happened yet."

"Suppose..." Rodat put forward a theory. "Suppose the possibilities are enough to trigger a temporal shift? Separately, they wouldn't be enough to change history, but combined together they could create a significant ripple in the timeline."

"Enough to attract something composed of temporal energy." Half-formed ideas came to Romana as she activated the comm. link, broadcasting to the whole Capitol. "This is the President. Everyone must take refuge in the Panopticon. I say again, everyone to the Panopticon. I will join you there presently."

"You really think they will be safe there?" Leela asked.

"I have to believe that," Romana told her. "And it does seem that the older the building, the less likely it will fall to attack from these creatures."

"Even so, the warning may have come too late for many of them."

"Perhaps, but it's all I can do, for now." Romana gathered what few belongings she needed. "Come on, both of you. Time to leave. I don't imagine these chambers will be safe for much longer." Several of the creatures had already circled the observation window that looked out across the Capitol, their shrieks threatening to shatter the reinforced polymers.

Romana led Rodat and Leela out, with Leela protesting vigorously. "I will not hide like a wounded animal. And it is not the way of a President."

Romana was not in the mood for arguments of principle. "Leela, Gallifrey is besieged. We can offer no resistance, and the best thing I can do is be with the people, rather than cut myself off from them. Besides, I have a task for you."

Leela was immediately contrite. "I am sorry I doubted you, Romana. What would you have me do?"

The reply was partially masked by the shrieks emanating from the vicious flying beasts outside, but as the three of them

began a hurried dash for safety, with Rodat carrying K9 in his arms, Leela was sure she heard Romana talk of 'transmat technology.'

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"You'd think they'd have redecorated, or something," the Doctor said, as he escorted Jabe through the dark corridors of the Tower. Jabe felt sure the Doctor was again masking his true feelings, but she chose to say nothing. She could feel a sense of dread enveloping her but accepted that this was part of the mental attack the Doctor had spoken of, and so she ignored it.

The route had been relatively straightforward up until now, with stairways leading to upper levels, and the Doctor seemed to know the way forward. But now the main corridor divided off into two smaller ones, presenting them with a choice of directions. The Doctor looked from one to the other, shaking his head. "I don't think I came this way the last time I was here."

"From what you've told me, that was a long time ago."

The Doctor accepted Jabe's comment. "Depending on what body I was wearing at the time, of course." He pulled a coin from his pocket and spun it in the air. "Head or tails?"

The meaning was lost on her, but she obediently chose. "Heads."

He caught the coin on the back of his hand. "Heads it is," he declared. "Course, it helps if you've got a double headed coin." He showed her both sides of the trick coin before returning it to his pocket, then indicated the left-hand path. "Shall we?"

As they walked on, Jabe stared at the Doctor. "You are a strange one, Doctor."

You are not as easy to understand as I might have imagined.”

“Oh, I’m a complex character, me,” he said, smiling. “You’d be hard put to find anyone less complex in the known universe.”

“Then I welcome the challenge.”

The Doctor wasn’t quite sure how to take that, but before he could say anything, a low rumbling sound began to echo ahead of them. They stopped, listening, as the sound grew louder with each passing second. “I don’t like the sound of this,” the Doctor said, but he stood his ground.

Then a searing heat came at them from around a dark corner. The heat intensified as a huge billowing fireball filled the corridor, blocking their path. Sweat glistened on the Doctor’s brow as he moved to turn back, but the way they had come was now in complete darkness.

The Doctor held Jabe in his arms as the ball of flame rolled ever closer.

## TRICKS OF THE MIND

Jabe clung to the Doctor, her eyes wide with fear as the fireball threatened to swamp her field of vision. “Doctor,” she cried, trying to pull away. “We must escape while we can.”

He shook his head. “No, Jabe. Not this time.” Instead of consuming them, the fireball had slowed to a stop, tendrils of flame licking the corridor walls. Beads of sweat formed on the Doctor’s forehead as he plunged his arm deep into the flame... then pulled it out, undamaged. The flesh had not been burned or charred. There were no breaks to the skin, and his hand wasn’t even warm from the heat. “It was an illusion,” he explained.

“Rassilon’s mind touched ours and focussed on our one basic fear – fire.” The ball of flame was now becoming transparent, and they could see the corridor beyond. “It was a test of our minds, Jabe.”

“But the heat,” Jabe insisted. “I suppose you’re going to say that was an illusion too.”

“The greater the fear,” he told her, “the stronger impression it leaves on the mind. So yeah, it was all part of the same thing.”

“And very convincing,” Jabe noted. “You were taken in by it too, Doctor, if only for a moment.”

The hurt in his eyes might have prompted him to say nothing. “It was at the end of the Time War,” he said. “Everything was breaking up, exploding in balls of flame. I found myself running down a long dark corridor, with the aftermath of the final explosion right behind me. I only just made it to the safety of the TARDIS in time.” He swallowed hard at the memory. “Everyone died that day, and for a long time I didn’t feel I had any right to live.”

“But you are here now,” Jabe reminded him. “That must count for something.”

He smiled. “We’ll see.” There still seemed to be something troubling him. “Erm, Jabe?”

“Yes, Doctor?”

“You can let go of me now.” Somewhat reluctantly, Jabe unclasped her arms from around his waist. All trace of the fireball had now gone, leaving the way ahead clear once more.

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“Professor, you are kidding, right?” Ace stared out from the cliff edge to where

the top of the Tower stood tall and proud. The problem was that between the cliff and the Tower was nothing but empty air. There seemed no obvious way forward, until the Doctor had put forward his suggestion.

“Look, Ace, it’s perfectly simple,” he said. “There’s enough of this steel rope to stretch from here to the Tower. It’s just a matter of lassoing the near side turret and swinging across.”

The Eighth Doctor was already looping one end of the rope, in readiness for putting his other self’s idea into practice. “Stand back,” he advised, swinging the rope. “This bit should be straightforward enough.” Sure enough, the rope looped round the turret first time, as the Doctor pulled back on the rope to lessen any slack, then tied the other end to the trunk of a sturdy tree. “Right, who’s first?” There was no reply from Ace or Jo. “Come on,” he said enthusiastically. “It’ll be just like those death slides at the fun fair.”

“Well, all I can say is, you must have visited some very odd fun fairs,” Jo commented.

“And death slide is right,” said Ace. “One slip, and we’ve had it.” She glanced down at the sheer drop. “There’s got to be another way.”

“Unfortunately, not,” her Doctor replied. “It’s this way, or no way.” He sighed heavily. “Look, if it bothers you that much, then I’ll go first.” Hooking his umbrella over the rope, he launched himself off the cliff edge, the angle of descent propelling him forward until he reached the turret. He then reached for a handhold and levered himself over onto the safety of the balcony. “Nothing to it,” he called out.

“Trust him to make it look easy,” Ace

muttered.

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Deep underground, two other Doctors and their companions were making good time. “The ground’s rising up all the time,” the sixth version informed them cheerfully. “Soon be there.”

“Great,” Rose answered. She was close to her own Doctor, while Evelyn was a little way ahead. If she was going to pin the Doctor down, it was now or never. “Doctor,” she whispered. “How can this be happening? I mean, Gallifrey. We shouldn’t be here.”

He looked at her, his expression unreadable. “It’s all to do with time differentials, Rose. While the laws of physics say we shouldn’t be here, the facts show that we are.”

“So, what you’re saying, is that someone has broken all sorts of Time Laws to bring us here, is that it?”

“Even a few I’ve probably never heard of,” he admitted. “Gallifrey always operated under a sort of linear time, so it shouldn’t be possible to bring a future version of me into Gallifrey’s past – that’s not to say it’s never been done,” he added, “but to achieve it in the first place would take a massive amount of temporal power.”

Rose hesitated over her next question. “Enough power to stop the Time War from happening?”

The Doctor grabbed her shoulder, forcing her to stop and face him. “Rose, don’t even think about it. The Time War has happened, it’s over. Maybe not in this timeline, but there’s nothing we can do to stop it.”

“But...”

He shook his head. "Rose, I know you mean well, but we can't change the past, however tempting it might be. And the fact that the Reapers are here means that someone is trying to do just that. And whatever they've got in mind, it can't be good."

Rose nodded, accepting the Doctor's argument. "So, we find whoever's up to no good, sort them out, and leave Gallifrey to its future."

"I don't like it any more than you do, but that's the way it has to be." The two of them had now fallen some way behind, and the Doctor quickly pushed Rose on ahead. "Come on, we're holding up the party."

By the time they had caught up, the Sixth Doctor and Evelyn were standing beside an ornate door. "I rather think we've arrived," he said.

"Looks that way," the Doctor agreed. "Not that I like the look of it - a door, just waiting to be opened."

"So, what are we waiting for?" said Evelyn. "Let's open it."

"Evelyn, it's not that simple," her Doctor insisted. "I mean, it is in one sense, but once we're past that door, we'll be inside the Dark Tower, and open to any form of mental attack from Rassilon himself."

"It's all part of the Game," Rose's Doctor continued. "We'll have to be on our guard all the time."

"Oh honestly, you men," Evelyn exclaimed. "We've come all this way through the Death Zone, and you let a door put you off?"

"Too right, Evelyn," Rose chipped in. "And

why should we leave it to the boys to tell us what to do." She stepped forward, pushing the door open with a distinct lack of ceremony. "Come on, then. What are we waiting for?" Evelyn promptly followed, leaving the Doctors trailing behind in their wake.

The sixth sighed at his current persona. "Very strong willed, aren't they?"

"Rose and Evelyn both," the Doctor grinned. "Anyway, don't knock it. It's all part of their charm."

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The Tomb of Rassilon lay undisturbed. It had remained that way always - apart from a brief interruption some years previously. The transmat booth, unused since that time, suddenly flared into life, Leela stepped down from the platform, only slightly disorientated. But from Romana's descriptions, this was indeed the Tomb of Rassilon. She paused for a moment, kneeling before the plinth where Rassilon lay - she may not have been Gallifreyan, but Leela had always shown consideration for the dead, and its rituals. Her respects paid; she left the Tomb in search of the Doctors.

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They were making steady progress, but every so often the Doctor felt Jabe pull against him for a brief second. "Rassilon's reaching out to your mind," he said, "trying to confuse and scare you. Just keep that thought in your head, and you'll be OK."

His words helped, but Jabe could not completely shake off the feeling of dread. "I'll tell you something," the Doctor went on. "Sooner or later, we'll be running into my past selves - now that'll be really scary."

The comment had at least made her smile. "Are you sure they're here?" she asked.

"I can sense them, inside," he said, tapping his forehead. "And that's good enough for me." They had stopped for a moment, while the Doctor tried to puzzle out the correct way forward. "Jabe, you wait here for a minute. I'm just going to check on ahead." She had protested against being left alone, but he promised he wouldn't be too long. "I just want to avoid us taking another wrong turning," he said reasonably. "And it's been a while since I was last here."

The Doctor told himself it would only take a minute, as he strode down what seemed a promising way through, but quickly retraced his steps, deciding against it. A familiar voice called him back.

"Lost again, Doctor?"

He turned in surprise. At the end of the corridor was an old friend. "Alistair! So, they got you too?"

"Yes, and I thought I'd seen the back of this blasted Tower." The Brigadier stood there, older but still a commanding presence. "The other Doctors sent me on ahead to guide you," he explained. "They're just down here."

The Doctor grimaced. "Including that little bloke with the funny jumper?"

"And more besides," the Brigadier chuckled. "I'm starting to lose count."

"I'm not surprised. But I'd better fetch Jabe. She'll be wondering where I am."

Alistair moved to block the Doctor's intended path back. "Oh, she'll find her way eventually. The others need you now."

The Doctor stared at his old friend, uncertain. Above all else, the Brigadier had always been the model of decorum where ladies were concerned. And yet here he was, almost disregarding Jabe as though she were unimportant. It wasn't like him at all. And the Doctor had been so thrilled at meeting his old friend, that he had almost been fooled. "If it's all the same to you," he said, stepping past, "I think I'll find another way around, thanks."

Then he broke into a run, heading back the way he'd come. The Brigadier's voice rang in his ears. "Doctor, come back."

"Oh, no," he shouted. "You think I'll listen to an illusion? No chance." Behind him, the Brigadier's form began to dissipate and fade to nothing.

Jabe started towards him as the Doctor returned to her. "What happened? I heard shouting."

But he wasn't listening to her. Instead, he was studying her face intently. "It is you, isn't it, Jabe?" The touch of her hand on his seemed to reassure him, and he smiled. "Sorry about that," he said, looking back. "I just ran into an old soldier."

But the angry look on Jabe's face told the Doctor how thoughtless an act it had been on his part to abandon her in the first place. He'd been on his own for too long before he'd met Rose, and if he was honest, having to mix with other people was still hard to get used to after all this time. Nonetheless, he was immediately apologetic.

And yet for some reason the Doctor couldn't fathom, Jabe couldn't stay angry with him for very long. "Doctor, I would rather that didn't happen again," she implored. "For a moment, I felt as though my thoughts were not my own."

"I know just what you mean," he said, as they walked on. "It's so easy to imagine all sorts of things."

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Near the top of the Tower, the Seventh and Eighth Doctors led the way down a stairway, none the worse for their recent escapade. "Didn't I tell you there wouldn't be any problems?" the Seventh Doctor insisted.

"Absolutely," his other self agreed. "Thoroughly exhilarating."

Ace and Jo weren't so sure. "I'm not sure my stomach has caught up with the rest of me yet." Jo whispered.

Even Ace was looking decidedly pale. "Never again," she decided. "Not even if you paid me." The Doctors seemed not to hear, as they marched purposefully on. It was all the two girls could do to keep up on still unsteady legs. "Slow down, Professor," Ace protested. "Let's get our bearings first."

"No time," he replied. "We must get to Rassilon's Tomb - this way, I think." He began to march through an archway.

"Are you sure," his counterpart wondered. "I thought it was this way."

The Doctor hesitated, unsure. "Oh. Oh well, you might be right."

Having recovered the use of their legs, the girls were watching this scenario with some amusement. "You do know the way - don't you, Doctors?" Jo asked.

"Of course, we do," Ace's Doctor replied testily. "It's just been a while since we were last here."

Ace smiled. "Go on, admit it. You're lost."

"Well, I'd like to see you do any better," the Eighth Doctor grumbled.

Jo shook her head. "Oh no, we like to leave things to the professionals, don't we, Ace?"

"Too right. Wouldn't want to get in the way."

The Doctors glared at their companions, which made Ace and Jo laugh all the more. They had to admit they were lost. That was the trouble with Rasillon's Tower - everywhere looked the same.

"This isn't funny," Ace's Doctor protested. "The Tomb must be close by; we just need to find it."

"Then it is good that I am here to lead the way." The group turned to see a woman approaching, dressed in what appeared to be animal skins - and not much of them either, Ace and Jo noted.

The Seventh Doctor beamed, recognising her. "Leela," he grinned. "I should have realised - I presume Romana sent you on ahead to meet us?"

"Yes, Doctor," she replied. "And you are needed urgently. There is a great crisis on Gallifrey."

"There usually is," the Eighth Doctor noted. "Come on then, no time to waste." The group were about to move on when another voice rang out. "Hold, false one."

Behind them stood another Leela, her knife drawn. The Seventh looked from one to the other. "Oh dear. I think I may have miscalculated." The group stepped aside, as the other Leela stepped forward.

"If you are of flesh and blood," she said to the first one, "then face me in fair combat. But if you are nothing more than a copy,

then depart, and allow us to continue on our way.”

The first Leela said nothing. Then a cry tore from her throat, as she faded into nothing, her screams echoing around them. The Seventh Doctor sighed with relief. “That was a near thing,” he admitted. “But I wonder... are you the real Leela, or another illusion?”

“Romana said you would be cautious,” she replied. “She said to ask, ‘Shall we take the lift or fly?’”

The Eighth grinned. “That would be ostentatious.”

“So we fly then?” Leela pressed, remembering Romana’s message.

“That would be silly,” the Seventh Doctor answered. “We’ll take the lift.”

“Then both of you are the Doctor.” Leela sheathed her knife. “We must hurry. Gallifrey is under attack.”

As she led the group through the winding corridors of the Tomb, Ace and Jo exchanged a look of envy at Leela’s lithe form. “He never mentioned her!”

Ace stared. “You don’t think they...?” The thought was left hanging in the air, as they hurried to catch up with their Doctors.

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The Panopticon had never had to cater for so many people at one time, but most of the population of Gallifrey were now gathered inside. The children were cowering in fear, their parents holding them tightly, attempting to reassure them each time a dragon-like silhouette passed by the transparent dome housed on top of

the edifice. So far none of the creatures had succeeded in gaining entry, but this only made them more determined, and the walls were continuously buffeted, claws scratching against the outside, scrabbling for any access point.

Romana had watched all of this taking place and feared for her people. The decision to bring everyone here had been the right one, but there seemed no immediate salvation at hand. All she could do now was wait, and hope that Leela would be successful in her mission.

She gathered a lost child into her arms, comforting her as another dark silhouette passed overhead. “They will not succeed,” she promised the child, glaring up defiantly. “They must not.”

## DOCTORS REUNITED

Inside the Tomb, two men – one in a patchwork frock coat, the other wearing a brown pinstripe suit – were studying the inscription carved into the nearby tombstone. “To lose is to win, and he who wins shall lose,” the Sixth Doctor read aloud. “Do you know, I never really understood that the first time.”

“Just as well we’re not bothered with it this time then.” The Doctor grinned at Rose and Evelyn. “So, what do you think – was it worth the trip?”

Rose had to admit that Rassilon’s Tomb was pretty impressive, and she could see that Evelyn was equally amazed at all the splendour, if not the sheer size of the place. “A bit grand for a Tomb, isn’t it?” she said, winking at Evelyn.

“Rassilon holds a unique place in our history,” the Sixth Doctor replied. “It was only right he should be treated with suitable reverence in death – mind you, I shouldn’t be surprised if he was watching



over us, even now.”

Rose wasn't sure if he was joking or not, but the arrival of another group led by a woman in animal skins put an end to that line of conversation. Her Doctor turned, smiling at the new arrivals. “Hello, more of us – and Leela too.”

Leela glanced from one to the other. “Doctor?”

“Yes, that's us.” The Doctor saw the doubt in her eyes. “Oh, you'll be wanting some proof, of course. Right, well let's see – oh, there was that bit of trouble we had at the Bi-Al Foundation. Nasty business with the Nucleus of the Swarm – and that's where we met Professor Marius and K9.”

“And your eyes used to be brown,” his sixth incarnation told her. “Until that trouble at the lighthouse on Fang Rock. I told you not to look at the Rutan ship exploding, but you wouldn't listen.”

Leela nodded, convinced that these two strangers were also the Doctor. “And your friends?”

“Oh yes, of course,” said the Sixth Doctor. “That's Rose, and this is my dear friend, Doctor Evelyn Smythe. Now, are we all here?”

“We are now.” The Doctor and Jabe stepped forward, and Rose felt a lump in her throat. This was her Doctor, the one she had first met. And seeing Jabe with him brought back that pang of jealousy she'd felt the first time around. And yet he was now in her past, replaced by the Doctor she had now come to accept as the same man. Seeing the two of them together, as well as the others, was confusing, to say the least.

“Blimey!” he exclaimed. “Ace, Jo and Evelyn. This is fantastic.” He grinned, hugging each of them in turn. “Who else is here?” And then he saw her. “Rose? Rose Tyler?” He went over to her, scarcely believing it. “I don't get it. You should still be up on Platform One, but... you look different. What's going on?”

“Right.” What an opening question. “Well, I suppose the Rose Tyler you know is still up there on Platform One,” she replied. “I've been travelling around with another Doctor since then.”

“She means me,” the Doctor said, helpfully. “You could say I'm the latest model.”

He stared at the man in the suit. Then he realised. “You're me – my future?”

“Fraid so.” The Doctor gave a helpless shrug. “Sorry if I'm not what you expected, but you know how it is with regeneration. You...”

“You never quite know what you're going to get,” his predecessor finished for him. “Oh well, nice to know I'll lose a bit of weight.”

“And gain a lot of hair.” The Doctor smiled, and to Rose's relief, her first Doctor smiled back. That could have been a really awkward situation, she thought to herself.

“This is not the time for talking,” Leela reminded them all. “Gallifrey is being attacked. We must go to the Panopticon.”

She was about to step onto the transmat platform, when the Time Lord's sixth persona blocked her way, his hands raised. “Leela, while I applaud your enthusiasm, we must first know what is happening. Please, tell us all that you know.”

He was right, she realised. Better to face

an enemy with knowledge on your side. "There are flying dragons surrounding the Capitol," she began. "Many have been lost, but the rest are safe in the Panopticon. The dragons cannot break through."

"Doesn't mean they'll stop trying," the Sixth Doctor observed, turning to the current version. "That'll be those Reapers you told us about."

He nodded. "The Panopticon is the best place for everyone at the moment. The age of the building will act like a protective field. But while the Reapers are here, that means someone is still playing around with time."

"Yes, Doctor," Leela remembered. "That is what is happening. The streams of your time and those of Gallifrey are being changed. I do not pretend to fully understand, but they are possibilities waiting to happen."

"But that doesn't explain what we're all doing here," said Evelyn. "Is there a connection of some sort?"

"There has to be," the Ninth Doctor replied. "I can't imagine someone delivering us all into the Death Zone on a whim. Which reminds me - where are the rest of us? There are only us five Doctors here."

Jo turned to the seventh and eighth incarnations. "You said you'd made contact with the other Doctors," she said. "Something about them being confined."

"Held against their will, you mean?" The Doctor thought for a moment, then addressed his other selves. "Why don't we try to make contact with them now?"

The Eighth nodded. "With five of us working together, there's a chance, certainly." Rose watched, fascinated, as the

five Time Lords quickly formed a circle, their eyes closed, and heads tilted back slightly. Nothing seemed to be happening, but their brows were furrowed in concentration as they attempted to reach their other selves. Rose recalled an old expression - 'the atmosphere is electric' - from some old tv sports programme, but this was a time when she was sure she could actually feel the electricity, and the rest of those watching seemed to be experiencing the same thing.

Finally, the Doctors broke off contact, temporarily weakened by the mental excursion. "It's no good," said the Sixth Doctor. "Not even with all our wills combined."

"So, what happened?" Ace asked.

"There was some kind of barrier, preventing us from getting through," the ninth incarnation replied. "We could sense our other selves but couldn't make contact."

The Eighth Doctor shook his head. "This is not good. Whoever's blocking our natural telepathy must be harnessing a huge amount of power."

"The same kind of power that's causing these time fractures," Rose's Doctor noted.

Leela was deep in thought. "Such power must have come from the Black Scrolls of Rassilon."

A hush descended over the group. "Now that's something I haven't heard talked about in a very long time." The Ninth Doctor's voice was lowered to a whisper. "I'd thought they went out of print long ago."

"Apparently not," said the Seventh Doctor. "I think some things are beginning to

make sense at last.”

“So, how about letting us in on it?” Rose suggested. “We’ve all come a long way to get here, and we could all do with some answers.” There was general agreement between the women, and the other Doctors deferred to the Seventh for an explanation.

“The Black Scrolls of Rassilon come from the darkest time in our history,” he began. “Commonly known as The Time of Chaos. There was no ruling Council in place, and the Death Zone was in constant use as a form of macabre entertainment. It was only when Rassilon eventually took control that the Death Zone was shut down, and Gallifrey came into a new age of order and peace.

“But now the Death Zone has been resurrected. Such an undertaking would require a massive influx of power, and as Leela suggested, that power – or to be precise, how to use that power – would be found in the writings from the Black Scrolls of Rassilon. They contain all the information on the Death Zone – the Time Scoop technology that brought us here, and how to harness that power direct from the Eye of Harmony. Forbidden knowledge that no one should ever see.”

“But someone has, Doctor,” Leela interrupted. “The Black Scrolls of Rassilon were stolen, and then later returned.” She quickly related the events as told by Cardinal Mansen and Co-ordinator Narvin of the theft from Borusa’s old chambers. “Narvin said that the scrolls could be read by another, if he knew what to do.”

“And he was right.” The Doctor held his head in his hands. “What did this Cardinal intend to do with them in the first place? Claim them for posterity?”

“The point is,” the Seventh Doctor contin-

ued, “is that the person responsible for the Death Zone being active must also be creating these time fractures. Whoever they are, it’s someone who’s obsessed – frighteningly so.”

Leela nodded. “If these possibilities are allowed to happen,” she said, recalling her conversation with Romana, “then Gallifrey’s stream of time will shatter.”

“But what about these Reapers?” said Evelyn. “Surely whoever’s behind all of this couldn’t have planned for them. They’d certainly make me think twice about causing all this trouble.”

“Perhaps,” the Seventh Doctor observed. “But any strongly held belief, no matter how misguided it may be, will drive that person on, no matter what the consequences. Sadly, it’s usually the most obsessive minds that are the most dangerous.”

“I can’t argue with that.” The Ninth Doctor glanced round at his other selves. “Right, let’s start putting things to rights. Now, I’ll make for Gallifrey, while the rest of you can –”

“And who put you in charge?” the Sixth Doctor interrupted. “No, it’d be much better if –”

“Oh, stop butting in,” the Seventh groaned. “This needs careful planning.”

“And what would you know about careful planning?” Within seconds, what had been an amiable discussion had turned into a full-blown argument between the Doctors.

Rose, Leela and the other women were stood together, watching from the sidelines. “Aren’t they supposed to be working together?” Jabe asked.

“You wouldn’t think so, to look at them,” Jo answered.

“Well, we’re getting nowhere just standing here.” Ace reached into her rucksack and pulled out a can of Nitro Nine. She then rolled it across the floor until it settled in the middle of the group of Doctors. “In case you’re interested,” she called out to them, “you’ve got five seconds to run for cover.”

A hush fell over the Time Lords as the information sank in. “Everybody down,” Ace’s Doctor yelled, as they dived to the floor, away from harm.

Ace calmly walked up where the can had rested, picked it up, and returned it to her bag. “Good job I hadn’t set the timer, wasn’t it?”

The Doctors looked up from their prone positions, their companions looking down at them. It was the Tenth Doctor who found his voice. “Ace, that was so not funny. How stupid was that?”

“No less stupid than seeing you men tearing strips off of each other,” said Evelyn. “You ought to be ashamed of yourselves.”

Ace’s Doctor tried to excuse their behaviour. “We were just discussing – ”

“You were shouting,” Jo corrected him. “Honestly, I’ve seen children better behaved than you.”

The Doctors sheepishly rose to their feet. “Well, it’s not easy, you know,” the Eighth incarnation said. “Especially when we’re all different aspects of the same person.”

“Then maybe it’s time for us girls to take charge,” Rose decided, turning to the Sixth Doctor. “You – shut down the force field so the TARDIS can get here.”

“Good idea,” Evelyn approved, addressing the Tenth Doctor. “Once the TARDIS arrives, you can go with Leela to the Capitol, and the rest of us can travel to the Panopticon and help Romana – I imagine she needs all the help she can get right now.”

The Doctors just stared at their companions, taken aback at this sudden change in command. “Well, don’t just stand there,” Ace ordered. “Shift!”

Spurred into action, the Sixth Doctor hurried to a nearby instrument bank. “Yes, these are the force field controls,” he remembered, as the others waited. “It’s just a matter of reducing the input of the zuton flow.” Tapping in the correct numerical sequence, he turned and watched as the TARDIS materialised in the centre of the Tomb.

“Right, everyone inside,” the Doctor instructed. He waited until Rose was about to enter, then pulled her to one side. “Rose, I want you to keep an eye on things while I’m gone. Keep everyone in line, you know the sort of thing.”

“Don’t I just.” Then it clicked what he’d just said. “But aren’t you coming? I thought the plan was for you and Leela to get to the Capitol.”

“Oh, we will,” he assured her. “I’m just not too keen on advertising the fact – well, not yet anyway. Now, inside.” He prodded Rose into the TARDIS and stood with Leela as the familiar sound of dematerialisation echoed around the Tomb walls.

When the TARDIS had vanished, Leela turned to the Doctor. “You have a plan?”

“I suppose I do – sort of.” He stepped toward the transmat booth, resetting the co-ordinates for their journey. “Right, I’ve

keyed in our destination. The thing is, I'm just not sure what we'll find when we get there."

Leela couldn't quite believe what she was hearing. "That is your plan? To go in blindly?"

He shrugged. "It's worked for me before. Besides, I don't think we'll be expected, so that gives us some advantage - doesn't it?" Leela sighed. This was a very different Doctor to the one she had known before. This one was wild-eyed and unpredictable - or perhaps there wasn't that much of a difference after all.

With the co-ordinates entered, the Doctor and Leela stepped onto the platform. The transmat hummed into life, and both Time Lord and warrior vanished from sight.

## SECRETS AND FRIENDS

The Doctor and Leela materialised in a semi-darkened room. At first she could see nothing, but as her eyes became accustomed to the gloom, Leela could make out a set of steps leading down to what was a large area, and saw the Doctor raise a finger to his mouth, signalling her to be quiet in her movements. "Where are we?" she whispered.

Instead of replying, he motioned for her to remain still, as he ran his sonic screwdriver over the transmat booth they now stood in. "Just making sure there were no booby traps," he said, apparently satisfied. "As to where we are, I'm surprised you don't recognise this place."

There was something familiar about it, she realised. Although she had never set foot here, she remembered the room from the video archive footage. "This was the chamber of the High Council, when Borusa was President."

"And situated within the parameters of the Panopticon, so we should be safe from any prying Reapers," said the Doctor, trailing his fingers in the dust. "I can see no one's been here for a while."

"When she became President, Romana said that places like this had become unnecessary," Leela explained. "She wanted to allow more freedom in the Capitol for all Gallifrey. But why come here, Doctor?"

"Because," he replied, "this room once hid a secret. And I think it's still here."

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Despite its now confined spaces, The Panopticon was a hive of activity. The arrival of the Doctor's TARDIS was a welcome sight for Romana, as she ran to greet its occupants. The Doctors had wasted no time in ensuring that their immediate surroundings were secure, while their companions had related their own adventures in the Death Zone. In her Doctor's absence, it was Rose who explained the nature of the Reapers to Romana. "If this is the oldest building on Gallifrey," she said, "then everyone should be safe."

"The Panopticon was more or less the first thing built on this world," Romana told her, as they navigated a path through the surviving populace. "The first construction erected under Rassilon's rule."

"As long as it keeps old dragon features out, I won't complain," said Ace, as another Reaper hovered menacingly above the glass dome.

The Seventh Doctor cast an envious glance at the sonic screwdriver in the Ninth Doctor's hand as they worked. "I remember when I had one of those."

"Well, you should have been more care-

ful.” His tone was brusque. “I ask you, letting it get blown up by a Terileptil.”

“I like to think it was a blessing in disguise,” the Eighth noted. “It stopped me being so reliant on gadgets and made me use my brain.”

If there had been any attempt at baiting him, the Doctor was too lost in thought to rise to it. He had stopped to watch Rose – she was definitely the same shop girl he had saved from the Autons, but now she was more confident, more assured. In fact, he thought, she seemed to be taking a lot of this in her stride. But this was another Rose, he reminded himself. Not the one he knew.

So, what had happened? Obviously he must have regenerated at some point, but... he abruptly shook himself out of this reverie. This was stupid. He couldn't go up to Rose and ask, ‘When did I change? How did it happen?’ That would be tempting fate. And worse, he might create a time paradox. Not a good idea.

“Penny for them?” The Sixth Doctor was looking at him curiously.

He shook his head. “Nothing worth bothering about.”

Whether he knew it or not, he had caught Rose's eye, and she had paused in her attempts to calm the children of Gallifrey. Her hesitation hadn't gone unnoticed. “What is it with Rose and him, do you think?” Jo wondered, as she cuddled a frightened boy.

“Dunno,” Ace replied. “It's like she's afraid of him.” They were some distance away, so she wouldn't have heard them talking. “I mean, I know my Doctor can be a bit weird sometimes, but...”

“Can't you see?” said Evelyn. “It's obvious

they know each other, so he must have been the first Doctor she travelled with.”

Jabe had overheard the conversation and joined them. “That is indeed the case. The Doctor and I were making our way through some servicing ducts on a Space Station when we were brought here. But the Rose Tyler we left behind is not the one you see now.”

“Oh, now I get it,” Ace realised. “She must have seen the Doctor regenerate, and now they're both here, like the rest of us.”

Their curiosity satisfied, Evelyn, Ace and Jo continued their part in tending the wounded and the scared. Jabe continued to look at Rose, and after a moment's deliberation, finally approached her. “This isn't easy for you, I know.”

Rose looked up, smiling. “Yeah, it's weird, having him back again.” She nodded at the Ninth Doctor. “Just when I'd got used to him being gone.”

“That wasn't quite what I meant.” Jabe took her to one side, out of earshot. “You and I both know that we shouldn't be here, not on Gallifrey.”

“Jabe, what...?”

“You don't have to pretend with me, Rose Tyler.” There was sadness in her voice. “It must have been hard, knowing what the future holds for this world, and not being able to say anything.”

Rose stared at her. “Oh my god. You know,” she gasped. “You know about the Time War.”

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In the half-light, the Doctor and Leela were standing facing a full-length portrait. “There's a sealed door behind here,” said the Doctor. “Trouble is, the key that

opened it was musical – a series of notes,” he explained, glancing around the now bare room. “Never a harp around when you want one. Typical.”

“Your sonic screwdriver,” Leela suggested. “Will that not help?”

He fished inside his pocket. “Well, I can’t match the musical notation to the screwdriver’s polarity, but if I can override the coding, it might work.” He positioned the screwdriver close to the door’s locking mechanism, then gave Leela an encouraging smile. “You’d better cover your ears. This could get a bit loud.”

The regular purr from the screwdriver gradually altered as the Doctor made subtle alterations to its timbre. The changes were barely discernible at first, but as the sound grew sharper and louder, Leela clamped her hands over her ears to shut out the increasing noise, which had now become a high-pitched whine.

Even the Doctor was feeling the effects but continued to hold the screwdriver in place over the lock. Then a series of clicks and clacks sounded, and with some relief, the Doctor terminated the painful sound, just as the hidden door slid open before them. The Doctor shook his head, as if to clear it. “Phew! I definitely don’t want to go through that again.”

Cautiously, they stepped into the chamber. It was just as the Doctor had remembered it – a gaming board divided into five sectors and surrounded by banks of instruments. On the board stood models of himself, his four most recent incarnations and their companions. He picked up the model of his ninth persona, examining it with some degree of appreciation. “Hmm, not bad. They even got the ears right.”

“If this was the secret you spoke of, Doctor,” said Leela, “then I do not think it a

welcome one. This place has the stench of evil.”

“It’s one of the last remnants of the Dark Times,” he said, grim faced. “Why the High Council never got around to destroying it, I honestly don’t know.”

Leela cocked her head to one side, listening. “There is something beyond this room.”

“Really?” Leela’s instincts were strong, and the Doctor knew to trust them implicitly. And now he could hear a steady rhythmic vibration from behind the wall. “Another chamber behind this one,” he grinned. “Oh, very clever.”

Together they began searching for sensors or a release mechanism. Anything to give them access. It soon became clear that nothing on the instrument panels connected to any such device. The Doctor stared at the wall, puzzled. “I don’t get it. There has to be something here to open that wall.”

Leela was trying to remember something. “Didn’t you once say that if you ignore all the possibles; then the only thing left is the improbable?”

“Something like that,” he grinned. “So, if no obvious key unlocks this door, then we need to look at something neither of us would think of. Something... improbable.”

Leela’s attention was drawn to the scale model of the Dark Tower at the centre of the gaming board. It was the one object they had all but ignored in their search. It seemed too heavy to move, but not all keys have to be hand-held. She had learned that many times during her travels with the Doctor.

Purely on instinct, she passed her hand over the model Tower. Mechanisms grat-

ed their protests as the far wall slid back, allowing light to flood in from the chamber beyond. The Doctor grinned. "Nice one."

The two friends stepped forward, taking in the huge construction that filled the room. Cables snaked out from various outlets, trailing in a zigzag pattern, and connected to a series of cubicles. In each one were figures the Doctor immediately recognised. Their eyes were closed, their bodies rigid.

Leela knew only one of them from sight, but she understood who the rest were. "These are the other Doctors."

"And all connected to this abomination of a machine." He began examining the readings more closely. "They've been placed in cryogenic stasis, and it wouldn't be too much of a leap to see that this... thing is some kind of thought manipulator. It's been using their minds to create the time fractures."

Leela went to the cubicle containing the fourth Doctor. Her hand touched the glass partition. "Can you free them?"

"Hard to say," the Doctor confessed. "I understand the basics of thought manipulation, but I've never seen it in practice on a scale like this."

"Thank you for the compliment, Doctor." They turned at the sound of the voice, Leela's hand reaching for her knife. "I wouldn't be so quick to use that, if I were you."

"But you are not me," Leela pointed out, though she kept her hand low.

"I wondered when you'd get around to showing your face," said the Doctor, peering back into the Gaming Room. "Not that I've got the faintest idea who you

are, unfortunately."

"But I know him, Doctor," said Leela. "From his build and his voice, I know this person."

There was a deep-throated chuckle. "I should have expected you to recognise me, Leela. After all, it wasn't that long ago that you held your knife to my throat." The portly figure stepped forward. "Perhaps I should introduce myself to you, Doctor. I am Cardinal Mansen."

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"I couldn't believe it when I discovered the Doctor was a Time Lord," Jabe explained. "That was as incredible for me as being brought back in time to Gallifrey has been for him. The Doctor has had a difficult journey coming here, perhaps more difficult than the rest of us could ever know. And now look at him." Despite the masses of people around him, the Doctor seemed very alone.

Rose knew what Jabe was asking, but she looked down at the floor. "I can't talk to him. I'm a different person now, Jabe. He wouldn't know me."

"But you are still Rose Tyler," Jabe insisted. "And I think he needs you more than he would dare admit."

"And you don't quite fit the bill, is that it?"

"I admit there is an attraction between us," Jabe conceded, "but that isn't what he wants at the moment. Right now, the Doctor needs a friend."

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The Sixth and Eighth Doctors regarded the Ninth with some concern. He had been keeping busy like the rest of them, making sure the Panopticon was secure



from the Reapers, but since their arrival at the Capitol, he had kept very much to himself, focusing only on the task in hand. "He seems a bit of a loner, don't you think?"

The Eighth nodded. "Not like the rest of us at all."

"I've had my quiet moments," said the Sixth, "but this fellow's taking things beyond the realms of acceptability. Don't you think we should try to – I don't know – shake him out of it?"

The Eighth Doctor sighed. "If Grace were here, she'd know just what to do." He noted the Sixth's sidelong glance. "A very good friend," he quickly explained.

"Really?" He turned back to their ninth persona. "Well, we can't just let him stew."

"You may not have to," the Seventh observed, indicating Rose, who was now attempting to engage the Ninth Doctor in conversation. "I think we should leave them to it, don't you?"

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"Long time no see."

The Doctor glanced up briefly. "For you, maybe. To me it doesn't seem so long." His tone was abrupt, almost gruff.

"No need to bite my head off." Rose tried again. "Must be weird for you, being here."

"What would you know?" he snapped. "You've barely known me for all of five minutes."

Given the circumstances, Rose had expected a curt response. "Now listen," she rallied. "I've known this body of yours a

bit longer than you might think, and I know when you're hurting. You can't fool me, Doctor, so get off your high horse and talk to me." She squeezed his arm. "Please."

He looked down at her hand on his arm, and swallowed hard. "I don't belong here, Rose. I've been dragged back through time to my home world, and I don't know what to do – oh, I tried to put a brave face on things, but I think Jabe saw through me all the time."

"But you made it through the Death Zone, and the Tower," Rose told him. "That's got to count for something."

"Yeah," he said. "Because out there I had tangible things to deal with – getting to the Tower, and all the dangers that came with it. But now, here in the heart of the Capitol, I feel... lost." He searched for the words. "How can I go about helping to protect everyone from the Reapers, when I know Gallifrey is living on borrowed time?"

"Because you're the Doctor," Rose answered. "You fight the bad guys, and you win. That's what you do. And you know for a fact that Gallifrey's time isn't up yet, so that gives you something else to fight for. You can't let what you know about the Time War affect what you do today."

He looked at her for what seemed an age. Then he smiled. "Have I told you how wise you are, Rose Tyler?"

"Must be the company I've been keeping." And she returned his smile.

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The Doctor remembered his seventh incarnations' words – 'it's usually the most obsessive minds that are the most dangerous.' There was certainly something in

Cardinal Mansen's behaviour that suggested an obsession bordering on the maniacal. Even so, the Doctor needed some answers. "So, why activate the Death Zone then, Cardinal? Can't have been for a bet."

"As I'm sure you will have guessed, Doctor, it was partly intended as a diversion," Mansen replied. "I needed to draw attention away from my own plans. But your earlier selves provided me with an essential source of mental power. A vital element, as it turned out, for creating a series of minor ripples in time."

"Then it was you who stole the Black Scrolls of Rassilon from the vault," Leela realised.

Mansen smiled. "Yes, an outrageous bluff. What better way to divert attention than to carry out the theft myself," he reasoned. "And Romana's righteous indignation served as the perfect cover."

The Doctor was studying the machine that held his other selves captive, with Leela and Mansen looking on. "What is it, a mind probe?"

"No, not a mind probe – not as such, anyway." Mansen seemed willing enough to explain. "Basically, a continuous influx of delta waves maintains the stasis levels, while the Doctors remain linked to the main interface. That reaches into their minds, selecting key moments, and gently manipulating them until history is set back on its pre-ordained path – or to be precise, the path I have chosen."

"But history has already happened," the Doctor countered. "The past is past – that's a universal truth. Why try to change what's gone?"

"Because Gallifrey is becoming corrupt!" There was an unyielding belief in Man-

sen's voice. "The Time Lords were a great people once, but President Romana's policies of integration with other worlds threaten that greatness. Such integration cannot be beneficial, and I will not stand by and let it happen." There was a haunted gaze in his eyes. "I don't expect you to understand, Doctor. After all, you were responsible for Gallifrey's decline in the first place."

"Me? What, just because I stole a TARDIS several millennia ago?"

"If it were only that, I might never have taken this course of action," Mansen stated. "But you have sought to involve Gallifrey in your machinations, drawing us into your dangerous world, and exposing us to the vulgarities of the cosmos. "He nodded toward the five Doctors before them. "You've interfered in matters that didn't concern you from the beginning. And you must have been very persuasive when the Time Lords finally put you on trial, having them exile you to Earth at a time when that planet was most vulnerable."

"But that wasn't enough, was it, Doctor? Because from that moment the Time Lords themselves began to interfere in the affairs of others – even to the extent of sending you to Skaro to destroy the Daleks. And then the Capitol was almost destroyed after your confrontation with the Master. Need I go on? And now President Romana seeks to undermine our status even further, by inviting off-worlders to our planet, who will undoubtedly seek to learn our secrets. So, you must understand, Doctor – I'm saving Gallifrey from itself. It must be purged of all of these outside influences and made pure once more, otherwise our race cannot possibly survive."

"But you can't know that." The Doctor regarded Mansen coolly, appreciating, but

not accepting his point of view. "Cardinal, no one is an island. In all my travels through time and space, I've learned that people can only develop through change, otherwise they get stuck in a rut, unable to trust their own judgements. The Time Lords are no different. If we stay as we are, we all fold up and die - and I don't just mean a death of the body. I'm talking about the spirit, the soul.

"I left Gallifrey because my life here wasn't enough for me. I had to experience what was out there, instead of observing it. And maybe my trial was the best thing to happen to me, because it made the Time Lords realise just how much evil there is in the Universe, and that it had to be fought. They understood that, even if they did use me as an unofficial agent for a while. The point is, they accepted that there were races outside of their own that needed help.

"If you think about it, Romana's policies aren't that radical - it's just they're being brought out into the open, instead of hidden away behind closed doors. And now you're trying to take us back to those grey times. Cardinal, you wouldn't be freeing Gallifrey, you'd be condemning it."

"He speaks the truth, Mansen," said Leela. "The Doctor is a good man."

Mansen smiled. "You speak eloquently, Doctor. And I would expect Leela to side with you. But you will not deter me from my final goal. Gallifrey must be cleansed."

"You're forgetting one thing." The Doctor kept his voice level. "Outside the Panopticon are Reapers, dragon like creatures who threaten all of Gallifrey."

Mansen waved the protest away. "I shall deal with them once I have restored our world to greatness."

"But it is you who has brought them here," Leela insisted. "Your meddling with time has angered them."

"She's telling the truth, Cardinal," the Doctor told him. "Your so-called minor ripples in time were enough to create a temporal shift. The Reapers restore the balance, but at a heavy price. If you continue on this path, more of them will come. And I don't think even the Panopticon will hold them back."

"You lie!" Mansen roared, pointing an accusing finger at the Doctor. "This is your work, and I shall dispose of these Reapers as I will now dispose of you." From a fold in his gown, he produced an ornamental crown, which he placed on his head. "If you continue to oppose me, Doctor, then you must face the consequences. As you will observe, I now wear the Coronet of Rassilon. It emphasises my will."

The Doctor and Leela took a step back, as they both felt the amplified power of Cardinal Mansen's mind begin to overpower them.

*To be continued...*

# DÉJÀ VU PART THREE: LIKE MINDS

by Gary Merchant

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## Like Minds

"Now, that's very naughty." His concentration broken; the Cardinal started at

the sight of the man in the leather jacket. Beside him stood three other incarnations of the Doctor. "That party trick might work against one of us, but I don't think you've got the know-how to deal with us all."

"We thought you might need a hand," said the Seventh incarnation, as the four Doctors entered the chamber, their eyes fixed on Mansen.

"And don't think I'm not grateful," the Tenth Doctor said. "But how...?"

The Sixth grinned. "Well, with us all being of the same mind, the old Presidential chamber seemed the most obvious choice. With the Time Scoop technology still in operation, it seemed unlikely it would have been moved to another location."

The Eighth addressed Mansen. "You do seem to be outnumbered, old chap. Why not do the decent thing and surrender gracefully?"

Confronted by the Doctors, Mansen quickly turned to make his escape - only to be felled by a punch struck square on his chin. A glazed expression came over his eyes as Mansen collapsed to the floor. The Doctor caught the coronet as it fell from his head, and grinned at Leela, who stood over the unconscious form of the Cardinal. "The fist of Leela," he said, grinning. "Now that is much more effective."

Pocketing the coronet, he joined his other selves who were studying the machine that held the other Doctors. "Disconnect them from this," he said, "and the time ripples should snap back into their correct time streams. No more fractures, no more Reapers."

His sixth persona was examining the various connections. "There must be a neural inhibitor in place, to nullify any natural reflexes."

"No doubt connected to the influx of delta waves," the Seventh Doctor noted. "And all linked to the main interface. All very neat."

"And tricky to disconnect, if we want to avoid a neural overload," said the Ninth. "Let's get to work."

The Doctors began the process of freeing their other selves, while Leela watched over the still unconscious Cardinal Mansen. What little she heard between the Doctors meant nothing to her, but as far as she could understand, everything seemed to be going well.

A stirring from Mansen prompted Leela to unsheathe her knife, and she crouched down before him, with the blade resting against his throat. His eyes flickered open, and she saw the fear in them. "Wh-what...?"

"You will remain silent," she warned. "Unless you wish to be fed to the birds, piece by piece."

"She's very handy with that knife," the Doctor informed Mansen, not looking up. "You'd better do as she says."

Mansen looked from the Doctors and back to Leela. "What are they doing?"

"They are freeing the other Doctors," she replied.

"But they can't," he protested. "The neural inhibitor..."

"We know all about that, thanks very much," the Ninth Doctor informed him. "Now shut up and behave like a good little boy."

The knife against his throat was enough to persuade Mansen to say no more.

"It's a wicked piece of kit," Ace enthused, nodding at Rodat's visual display unit.

He smiled, appreciating the compliment. "It's just a standard issue," he told her. "But I managed to incorporate a few of my own ideas, just to while away the time."

Romana joined them. "Nevertheless, you've shown yourself to be a most valuable asset in this time of crisis. Once all of this is over, I shall see about marking your contribution is some small way."

She moved on, and Ace smiled at Rodat. "Sounds like promotion," she said. The girl from Perivale watched the President as she walked among her people, reassuring them. Can't be easy, she thought, being a figurehead for Gallifrey, especially now. The Reapers continued to circle the Panopticon, their screams becoming ever more frustrated, as their attempts to gain entry were continually thwarted.

Jo joined Rose at a viewing port. "You don't really think they can get in, do you?"

"No chance," she replied. "You heard

what the President said – this place is the oldest building on Gallifrey, so its age makes it the safest place to be, right now. Even so...”

“You’re hoping the Doctors are all right – yes, me too,” Jo admitted. “Even when I know he’s got everything under control, there’s always that niggling worry at the back of your mind.”

“I mean, don’t get me wrong,” said Rose. “We’re doing our bit here. I just want to be out there.”

“In other words, we’re just twiddling our thumbs while the Doctors get up to all sorts?” It was Evelyn who spoke. “Sorry, dear. I couldn’t help overhearing, and I feel exactly the same. The trouble is, one feels obliged to do what we can here.”

“Yeah, but at the end of the day, that’s not enough.” Rose turned to the two women, desperate for ideas. “If we leave it to the Doctors, they’ll only mess things up. They need us.”

The Doctors were now functioning as a team; the skills of each one complementing those of the others. Occasionally one would compare his work against another, but mostly they worked in silence. Even the Sixth Doctor’s natural ebullience was tempered, as they all focussed on the task in hand. It was only when the glass partitions had slid open that he raised a cautious hand. The other Doctors paused in their work as he peered into the cubicle that housed his second persona – a shabbily dressed fellow with a haircut to match. “What’s wrong?” the Tenth Doctor asked.

The Sixth said nothing for a moment. Then he stood up, a look of alarm across his features. “The wires attached to his

temples,” he said. “They’re not just connected – they’re fused into the skin. Look.” The others gathered around, confirming his words, before checking the other four cubicles. The result was the same.

“We should have seen it before,” muttered the Seventh. “Our friend over there has ensured a definite connection to this abomination.” He glared from Mansen to the machine. “Our other selves have become part of its inner workings.”

“Which is why we couldn’t make contact before,” the Eighth realised. “There was no way we could reach inside their minds.” The simple truth of this revelation gave the Doctors pause for thought. What had seemed like a straightforward rescue had become something much graver.

Their concern was not lost on Leela, who still held Mansen firm. “Doctors, you cannot give up now. There must be a way.”

“There is no way,” Mansen sneered, despite the threat of Leela’s knife against his throat. “You’ve lost, Doctors.”

Without warning, the Ninth Doctor marched up to the Cardinal and hauled him to his feet, shaking him. “I told you to button it,” he warned. “One more word out of you and you’ll feel pain like you’ve never known. And before you ask, it’s no threat. It’s a promise.” He let the Cardinal fall from his grasp back to the stone floor, and he stood over him, glaring angrily, but with a smile that was unsettling. “Do we understand each other? Good.”

He spun on his heel and joined the rest of the group, still smiling. The other

Doctors stared at him, uncertainty in each of their faces. He took in their expressions and sighed. "We've come too far to let ourselves be dictated to by that oik," he said quietly. "Don't tell me none of you weren't tempted to do the same as me."

"Perhaps," the Sixth admitted. "But I've never found violence to be the answer."

The Ninth turned away slightly. "You'll understand one day," he said, catching the eye of his Tenth incarnation. "It all catches up with you in the end."

For what must have been the hundredth time in as many minutes, Romana carefully picked her way through the horde of people crammed into the Panopticon. It was all very well being President of Gallifrey, she sighed, but in situations like this, she felt helpless. Yes, she could be there as a reassuring presence, but not for the first time, she wondered if that was enough.

She gazed across at the Doctor's companions – Rose, Jo, Evelyn, Jabe and Ace. People whose lives the Doctor had touched, and who were no doubt all the better for it. She envied them their freedom. It had been the same for her, once. But then the Presidency had been offered, and with that had come the burden of responsibility.

Meanwhile, the women were deep in hushed conversation, glancing at Romana every so often. After a moment, it was Rose who was elected spokesperson, as she approached her. "Madam President," she began. "Erm..."

"Just call me Romana," she said. "Though at one time I would have settled for Fred."

"Oh, right." Rose relaxed at this informality. "Well, the thing is, we've been talking," she went on, "and we want to ask a favour."

Romana listened as Rose explained their intentions and felt the pangs of an anticipation, she had almost forgotten, reach out to her, as a knowing smile flitted across her mouth.

The Doctors had all but given up. Various suggestions had been thrown up, only to be thrown out, one after the other. The main concern was the possibility of brain damage to their other selves. Linked as they were to the machine, there seemed no way of freeing the other Doctors without causing them irreparable harm.

The Seventh Doctor looked down at his comatose second incarnation, smiling wistfully. "I remember when we were on Omega's world of anti-matter, and we had to use our minds to create a door."

"Oh, yeah," the Tenth Doctor recalled, grinning. "Mind you, that was only because of Jo making us think out of the box, seeing things from a different perspective."

The Doctors all nodded at the memory, with the Eighth becoming more thoughtful. "I wonder. You know, it might just be possible."

"Well, don't keep us in suspense," the Ninth prompted.

"It's what you said just now," he said to the Seventh and the current incarnation. "Thinking out of the box, combining our thoughts." He began to pace the floor, working through the idea as he spoke.

“When we tried to contact our other selves, our thought patterns were cancelled out by the machine. But there was another factor – five of them, five of us. And so, subconsciously, we were operating on a one-to-one basis, with our telepathic powers being reduced in their effect. Now, suppose we were to try again, but this time concentrate our efforts on one person at a time? In that way, our mental strength would be amplified.”

“There’s still the risk of a neural overload,” the Sixth Doctor cautioned.

But the Eighth shook his head. “That was before we knew our other selves were connected to the machine, and that’s what could give us the edge. Rather than working against us, the neural overload could work in our favour.”

“You mean like a dampening field!” The Tenth Doctor was grinning. “Oh, this is sounding better and better. It’s the best idea we’ve had.”

His ninth persona nudged him. “It’s the only idea we’ve had – but it’s one heck of a good one.” He rubbed his hands together eagerly. “Right. Let’s get started.” It was quickly agreed that the Sixth and Seventh Doctors would focus their minds on the second incarnation. The others stepped back, watching with renewed hope.

The two Doctors stood on opposite sides of the cubicle, composing themselves. “Ready?” The Seventh nodded. “Contact.” The air seemed to shimmer around them, as their minds reached out to the Second Doctor.

At first, it was as though a solid mass were pushing against them, but the

Doctors persevered, and gradually they were able to navigate their way through the barriers placed in their way. As they progressed further, the Doctors could now sense a different form of defence. Part of it they recognised as their own mental defence, but this had now been augmented with the mind-lock created by the machine. And it was this they now had to break down. Their thoughts reached out to him. “Doctor, link with our minds. We must be one. You must be free.”

A secondary barrier sprung up before them, but the Doctors remained firm in their task. “Don’t fight us. Your mind is being controlled, but with our help you can overcome this intrusion. We must be one.” The barrier weakened and crumbled before them, as the Doctors felt themselves drawn through into the Doctor’s subconscious. Before them lay the Second Doctor. Eyes shut, his body still and unmoving, but free from the cubicle’s bindings. A mental depiction of his form in the physical world, the Doctors realised. “Link with us. We must be one.”

“Oh, must we? And I was having such a wonderful nap.” The Second Doctor abruptly sat up from his prone position, stretched and yawned, and then brushed some imaginary dirt from his frock coat before focussing on his sixth and seventh incarnations. “Oh, my word. What is this, a delegation?”

“You could put it that way, yes.” The Sixth Doctor introduced his successor, as the three of them now stood in what appeared to be a leafy glade. “There are one or two things going on in the physical world which you need to be made aware of.”

The Ninth Doctor regarded the scene



before him with some concern. Since taking up their positions to either side of the Second Doctor's cubicle, they had been rooted to the spot, as though frozen. "What d'you think's going on in there?" he asked, tapping his head.

"Who knows?" the Tenth replied. "They've only been standing there a matter of minutes, but..." Their attention was drawn to the readouts on the machine. Previously they had remained constant, but now there had been a subtle change.

"The dials are fluctuating," the Eighth noted. "Let's hope that's a good thing." The three of them turned anxiously back to their other selves.

"Your mind, and those of your other selves, have been hijacked," the Sixth Doctor was explaining to the Second. He had told him about the involvement of Cardinal Mansen, which had seemed to stir a memory. "As of this moment, you're physically connected to the machine we've been telling you about."

"I see." A look of worry fell across the Second Doctor's face. "So, I'm trapped here thanks to this Cardinal, is that it?"

"Not necessarily," the Seventh replied. "You can link with our minds to break the connection, and free yourself and our other selves." A thought occurred to the Doctor, as they walked along the pathway. "What's the last thing you remember - before we found you, that is?"

He thought for a moment. "Well, I was with Jamie and Zoe, on the planet Dulcis, up against the Dominators and their robotic servants, the Quarks. Then I... that was it," he remembered. "The Time

Scoop captured me and brought me to the Death Zone on Gallifrey. Except..."

"Go on," the Sixth Doctor prompted.

"Well, I'm still a bit confused," he said, "but soon after arriving in the Death Zone, I distinctly recall being caught in a transmat beam."

"Of course, a covering tactic," the Seventh Doctor realised. "The Time Scoop would leave an energy signature, as any particle-based technology would."

"And for anyone who cared to look," the Sixth continued, "it would be enough to indicate that all of us were in the Death Zone when that wasn't the case at all - very clever." He noted the Second Doctor rubbing the back of his neck, a habit of his next regeneration, if he remembered correctly. "What's the matter?"

"Well, if all that you've said is true," he said, "then it goes some way to explaining this stiffness in my neck - I can feel it, even as a mental image. Possibly a mild suppressant of some sort," he suggested.

"Very possibly," the Seventh observed. "We'll confirm it once we've got you out of this mess."

The Sixth nodded in agreement. "Talking of which - whenever you're ready?"

Along with Leela, the Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Doctors watched expectantly, as the Second Doctor took in a shuddering intake of breath. At the same moment, the Sixth and Seventh Doctors became unfrozen, the Sixth feeling the back of the second Doctor's neck. "Yes, I can feel the puncture mark," he confirmed. "Right where he said it was."

The Seventh sniffed the air. "There's still a trace of Permaedaflyn. I recognise the smell from my days at the Academy." The two of them glared at Cardinal Mansen, both now aware of the lengths he had gone to.

As the Second Doctor's breathing became more regular, the connectors that had been fused into his temples were now detaching themselves. The readouts on the machine levelled out, and as the last connector slipped free, the Doctor opened his eyes, blinking against the light. The Sixth and Seventh Doctors helped him to sit up, as the rest gathered around him. "Well, well," he said, smiling. "This is quite a party, isn't it?"

The Ninth Doctor let out a whoop of delight, hugging his eighth and tenth personas. "It worked! It only worked! Ha, ha!"

Both Leela and Cardinal Mansen were also taking in the waking of the Second Doctor – Leela with joy and relief, Mansen with mounting horror. His one thought was that he had to regain control. His increasing frustration only served to strengthen his resolve, as he hauled himself to his feet, pushing Leela away from him, and past the Doctors to address the newly awakened Time Lord. Perhaps it wasn't too late. "Listen to me, Doctor," he said. "You've just woken from a very pleasant dream. And I'm sure you'd like to go back to it." He noted the trace of puzzlement on the Doctor's face. "Yes, it's all very confusing, I'm sure, but you will be helping me."

"Helping you?" the Doctor asked. "How, exactly?"

"By allowing me to fulfil my dream of bringing Gallifrey back to its former greatness," Mansen enthused. "Now, isn't that a dream worth aiming for?"

The Doctor stared at him for a moment, and then caught the eye of his Sixth and Seventh incarnations. "Oh really?" He huffed indignantly. "I suppose you'd like me to sing Ba-Ba Black Sheep as well."

At that moment, the mind of Cardinal Mansen broke. All of his plans for the rebirth of Gallifrey had shattered before him, in the form of a scruffy little man who dared to call himself a Time Lord. Before the Doctors could stop him, Mansen tore himself away from the room, evading all attempts at capture and ran from the Gaming Room to the doors at the end of the now abandoned Council Chamber. He threw the doors open... and was met by the figure of President Romana, flanked by five other women he didn't recognise. For the briefest second, he halted, then launched himself at Romana, determined that no one, not even the President, would prevent his escape.

The fact that he was suddenly flying through the air didn't immediately register. Not until the floor broke his fall. Mansen lay there, winded, as the heel of a woman's shoe pressed against his throat, and the face of President Romana loomed into his field of vision. "Well, well, Cardinal Mansen. You weren't thinking of leaving, by any chance?"

## Quality Time

Inside the Panopticon, there were hushed scenes of astonishment as, one by one, the Reapers began to dissipate and vanish from sight. As each Doctor in turn was freed from the bonds of the

machine, the number of Reapers circling the Panopticon became smaller and smaller. An overjoyed Rodat looked from his display unit up to the observation dome – the time fractures were diminishing, and Gallifrey was safe once more. The last Reaper winked out of existence...

... just as Leela was helping the Fourth Doctor out of his cubicle. He grinned, recognising her immediately. "Hello, Leela. Where are we?"

"On Gallifrey," she told him.

"Really? How wonderful." Then he saw his nine other selves for the first time. "Oh, I say. I'm the Doctor, by the way," he said to no one in particular.

The original Doctor began fussing over him. "Come along now, young man. No time to dawdle."

The Third and the Fifth Doctors watched this exchange with mild amusement. "Of course, strictly speaking he's the youngest of us here," said the Third of the old man. "But would you tell him that?"

"Of course not," the Fifth replied. "He'd only insist you were in the wrong, and he always had a way of making you feel that he was right – just as well we've mellowed with age, wouldn't you say?"

The Third nodded. "Couldn't have put it better, old chap."

Ace, Jo, Rose, Evelyn and Jabe each stared in amazement at this gathering of Doctors. Ace pulled her own Doctor to one side. "Are they really all you?"

"Oh yes," he replied. "And possibly a few more besides, each travelling in their

own TARDIS through the Time Vortex."

"Hey, that's a point," Jo noted. "I mean, how will we all get back to our own times and places?"

The Eighth Doctor took her arm. "I'm sure Romana has everything in hand," he assured her. "In the meantime, there's someone over there who wants a few words with you."

Jo didn't need telling twice. Her own Doctor had already caught her eye, and now she walked towards him, his arms outstretched to give her a welcoming hug. "Hello, Jo," he said. "My, my, you've changed."

"Not too much, I hope," she said, feeling the reassuring warmth of his velvet smoking jacket against her face. "It's good to see you again, Doctor."

He smiled down at her, the years between them forgotten in an instant. "It's good to see you too, Jo."

With order being quickly restored to the Capitol, Romana was able to call on the services of the Chancellery Guard to escort the disgraced Cardinal Mansen away. "Charge him with abduction, perverting the Laws of Time, and use of a prohibited drug for starters," the Sixth Doctor advised.

He showed Romana some phials stored close by the now empty cubicles. "Permaedaflyn," he explained. "Used to ensure the Doctors' compliance until they could be linked to the machine."

She took the phials. "Effective and highly illegal," she noted, staring at the machine. "And as for this abomination, it'll be dismantled within hours." She be-

came aware of two sets of eyes on her and turned. "Were you staring at me?"

The Ninth and Tenth Doctors shuffled their feet in embarrassment. "Well, you might call it staring," the Tenth replied defensively. "I'd say it was more of an admiring glance. Well, I say admiring glance, but what I really meant was..."

The Ninth looked at his successor and sighed, knowing the game was up. "Yep, we were staring. Guilty as charged, Madam President. Couldn't help it. I s'pose it's been so long since we last saw you..."

"That we just couldn't help ourselves," the Tenth finished. "Sorry."

She nodded her understanding. "I imagine it has been a while - you two Doctors are existing outside of linear time, after all."

"Ah." The Doctor was nonplussed. "You know about that then?"

"She's the President," the Ninth pointed out. "Of course, she'd know. What I can't work out is how."

The Tenth looked at his predecessor, puzzled. "Well, she'd have been elected to office."

"Not that," he said. "I meant how we came to be here, on Gallifrey."

"Oh, right."

"Perhaps I can answer that." The Eighth Doctor stepped forward, having removed a piece of circuitry from the machine and was now safe in the palm of his hand. "Unless I'm completely wrong," he said, "this is a bio-print booster circuit, tuned to my - to our physiognomy.

From what I can gather, Cardinal Mansen was a talented engineer of some note. An ideal talent if you wanted to extend the use of the Time Scoop beyond its normal parameters."

The Tenth Doctor took the circuit from the Eighth and examined it. "Not a bad bit of work," he admitted, handing the vital component to Romana. "I wouldn't leave it lying around if I were you."

Romana stared at this incarnation, and it was all she could do to stop herself laughing. This Doctor and his predecessor were certainly different to the ones she had known before - both of them a real breath of fresh air. "I wouldn't want to impose," she found herself saying, "but it will take time for full order to be restored; and returning everyone to their individual time streams will take some precise calibrating." She looked at them expectantly. "I'd be grateful if you could you both stay around for a few days. And it would give us all a chance to catch up."

The two of them seemed taken aback by this request. "We shouldn't, not really."

"Oh, please. After saving Gallifrey yet again, you all deserve some form of gratitude."

Both Doctor's felt their shoulders tugged, and turned to face Rose, who had been eavesdropping on the whole conversation. "Look," she urgently whispered. "I know being here on Gallifrey is hard for you two - facing the past and all that - but could you think about other people for a change?"

The two Time Lords exchanged a puzzled frown. "Oh, come on," Rose complained. "We're all dead on our feet, and

not to put too fine a point on it, Doctor, we're knackered!"

"Oh. Right." Reluctantly, the Doctors turned back to Romana, both knowing what their answer would be.

Accommodation had been quickly arranged for all the Doctors and their companions. Despite the hurriedness, the plush interior of the sleeping quarters and the communal dining area was very much akin to a four-star hotel, at least as far as Rose was concerned. "It reminds me of Big Brother, only more posh."

Ace turned to her. "What's Big Brother?"

Oops! "Oh, nothing much," she lied. "Put it this way - if you ever come across it, you'll either love it or hate it."

The Second and Fourth Doctors were deep in conversation. "Do you really think we should?"

"I don't see why not," the little man replied. "It's only a bit of fun, after all."

The Fourth Doctor grinned. "Well, when you put it like that..."

"Come on," the Second Doctor encouraged. "I've always wanted to try one out, and it'll be much more fun with the two of us."

Evelyn had visited Gallifrey before, but at least this time there were no battles with Daleks or anything similar. It was good to take a break once in a while, she noted. Arm in arm with her own Doctor, the two friends strolled along the gleaming walkways. "I don't know how you keep up with them all - your other selves, I mean."

"Usually, there isn't a problem," he replied. "We've only met up in times of absolute crisis, and then once the danger's past, we all go our separate ways."

"But surely," Evelyn persisted, "with so many of you jetting around the universe, there must be occasions when one or two of you meet accidentally?"

The Doctor smiled. "Oh, it's bound to happen once in a while, admittedly. But usually, the cosmos is big enough for all of us."

Evelyn noted his broad smile. "Doctor, you're enjoying this. Seeing all these different versions of yourself - you're getting quite a kick out of this, aren't you?"

He looked down at her, smiling but shamefaced. "Evelyn, you know me too well."

"Do I?" She sounded doubtful. "After all that's happened today, I'm beginning to realise I've barely scratched the surface."

The two friends walked on, as Ace saw Jo approaching from the opposite direction, with the Third and Eighth Doctors on each arm. "You look like father and son," she said.

The Doctors took this in their stride. "Thank you for the compliment, my dear," said the Third, offering a slight bow. As they passed, laughing and chatting, Ace couldn't help gazing at the rear of the Eighth Doctor. "I still reckon he'd make a great Mister Darcy."

"Dear, dear, child. Are you alright? You seem quite flushed." Ace jumped as the First Doctor caught her by surprise. It was one of those rare times when Ace

was lost for words. How could she tell this white-haired Edwardian gentleman that she'd just been fantasising over a younger version of himself?

An unlikely salvation came in the form of two small vehicles travelling towards them on a cushion of air, forcing Ace and the Doctor to duck down as they shot over their heads at great speed. "Who the heck...?" Then Ace saw a multicoloured scarf trailing from one of the vehicles and laughed.

"Of all the..." the Doctor spluttered. "Those young fools have no respect for authority."

"Isn't that how you started out, when you left Gallifrey?" The Doctor stared after Ace in disbelief, coughing in some embarrassment, as high above the Capitol, two mini-skimmers piloted by the Second and Fourth Doctors continued their erratic flight.

"Isn't this wonderful?" the Second called out. "I haven't flown one of these since my Academy days."

"That's funny," said the Fourth. "Neither have I." And the two of them laughed as they began another circuit of the Capitol, passing by the Presidential building.

Inside, Romana was playing the perfect host to the Ninth and Tenth Doctors, who were both enjoying the attention. "I've got to say, that was one heck of a throw you performed on Cardinal Mansen," the Tenth Doctor complimented. "I didn't know you had it in you."

"Yes, I rather enjoyed that." Romana smiled. "Actually, Leela's been showing me a few moves."

The Ninth Doctor grinned. "I might have guessed. She's a good teacher."

"It was all Rose's idea initially," Romana explained. "The original plan was for her and the other girls to lead a rear-guard attack - but I managed to persuade them to include an extra helper."

The Tenth Doctor nodded. "Once you get the taste for adventure, it never leaves you."

The three of them were chatting idly in Romana's Presidential chambers. At her own instigation, a china teapot with three cups had been delivered, and they sat quietly, each with their own thoughts. "I still can't quite believe it," Romana said, breaking the stillness. "I'm sitting here, drinking tea with two incarnations of the Doctor, who by rights, I should never have met."

The Ninth Doctor's manner was guarded, but pleasant. "Funny how things turn out. Sometimes for the better, sometimes not."

The Tenth Doctor was scanning the tea tray. "Any biscuits? I could just do with a chocolate digestive right now."

"Sorry," Romana apologised, smiling. "I'm afraid the food dispensers here don't run to digestives, chocolate or otherwise. Pity really."

"Mmm. Nice tea though." The three of them lapsed back into silence, until the Tenth Doctor moved from his seat to glance out through the observation window. "It's great to see the old place again. To be honest, I never thought we'd get the chance - for a long while," he added.

"You could always stay," Romana suggested.

The two Doctors exchanged a look. "You know that's not possible," said the Ninth. "This is our past, and we don't belong here."

"He's right," the Tenth agreed. "Besides, it wouldn't be healthy for us to stay around for too long. I think we'd be classed as a temporal anomaly, twice over." He sipped at his tea. "And the longer we stay, the greater the temptation for you, Romana."

Her face was a picture of innocence. "I'm sure I don't know what you mean."

"You don't have to play the fool with us," the Ninth told her. "If I were in your shoes, talking to a couple of Time Lords from the future, I reckon I'd want to know what that future held."

Romana sighed, knowing she had been caught out. No matter what body he wore, there was no point in trying to fool the Doctor. "I hope you don't think any the less of me for trying."

"It's only natural, I suppose," said the Tenth. "But Romana, you know more than anyone that we can't mess around with the Web of Time, however tempting it might be. Especially after today."

The Ninth Doctor carried on. "If just one of those time fractures had taken a firm hold, we might not be here at all, never mind the tea and biscuits." He let those words sink in before continuing. "We've known each other long enough to accept that foreknowledge is a dangerous thing. Even as Time Lords, we have to live our lives day by day, and take re-

sponsibility for every action. Otherwise, what's the point in living if you know what's around the corner?"

There was a sadness in his eyes as he spoke, and Romana could sense something was not quite right. Then the mood was broken as a familiar metal dog trundled into view, and the Doctors ran the length of the chamber to greet him. "K9! Oh, this is fantastic."

"Master?" Microprocessors whirred as K9 processed the information that not one, but two Doctors were crouching down before him, grinning like schoolboys. After the briefest of sighs, Romana gave in and joined them. The moment between her and the Doctors had passed, and it was unlikely to ever come again.

The fifth Doctor was in a reflective mood as he stood facing the memorial. He glanced around to see the Seventh join him. "I thought I might find you here."

"I just wanted to pay my respects," the younger man said. "The Castellan was true to his oath of office. He was just in the wrong place at the wrong time."

The two of them stood together in silence, sharing the moment.

With their respective Doctors being entertained by Romana, Rose and Jabe found themselves at a loose end. They both stared up towards the Presidential chamber. "I wonder what she's up to?" said Rose.

"You don't trust her?" Jabe asked.

"Well, think about it. I know if I were a President, I'd want to know all the latest

gossip. Or in her case, the latest future gossip.”

Now Jabe understood. “If she were to learn of the Time War...”

“Doesn’t bear thinking about, does it? - oh, hark at me, babbling on,” Rose sighed, laughing. “We’re probably worrying about nothing. It’s not as if the Doctor’s going to let anything slip. The Web of Time and all that.” Rose quickly turned away, with something else on her mind. “Look, Jabe - I’m sorry for all the things I said before. You know, back on Platform One. It was just, well, I’d never met an alien before.”

Jabe smiled. “The Doctor is an alien.”

“Yeah, but at least he looks human. But the Face of Boe, the Moxx of Balhoun and all those other life forms, well it was just too much to take in all at once. And then you came along, and... yeah, I suppose I got a bit jealous. The thing is...” Rose swallowed. This next bit would be the hardest. “When you and him go back to Platform One, you’ll...” She bit her lip. “Just look after the Doctor, OK? Whatever happens.”

And then Rose took Jabe in her arms and hugged her, not caring if it was the correct thing to do or not. All she knew was that life wasn’t fair. How could she tell someone she had come to regard as a friend that her life would be tragically cut short on an orbiting satellite, circling a dying world?

Eventually she pulled away, her eyes red-rimmed with tears, and saw Jabe’s look of stunned surprise. “Sorry,” she apologised, drying her eyes. “It’s just I’ve just never hugged a tree person before.”

Just then, Leela and the man Rose now knew as the Fifth Doctor came into view, a welcome distraction at just the right moment. “Excuse me,” he said, “but have you seen Leela’s Doctor - the one with all teeth and curls and a long scarf?”

“Umm, no. Sorry.” Rose shrugged helplessly, just as they were joined by both of her Doctors, Romana and a robot dog.

The Tenth Doctor pointed up to the sky. “I think you’ll find he’s up there.”

The two skimmers were still in flight, with the Doctor’s scarf trailing from one of them. The situation was both comical and frightening as both craft swooped down, only to climb back into the air for another pass over the Panopticon. Neither the Second nor the Fourth Doctor showed any intention of coming in to land. Leela could only stare up at them, open mouthed. “They are mad.”

“Maybe,” Rose agreed, slipping her hand into that of the Doctor. “But then, that’s probably why we love ‘em.”

And as the small group followed the skimmers’ flight, the clouds in the sky parted, as Gallifrey’s sun began to set. It was the end of a day which would live in the memory for a long time, but for now, the laughter of two errant Time Lords echoed all around and drifted high on the breeze.



# IAN CHESTERTON IN AN EXCITING ADVENTURE WITH THE MARTIANS

By Greg Maughan

Illustration by Helen Stone

Fog set in around the car and I slowed to barely a crawl, straining my eyes to try and make out some sort of landmark through the thick grey mass of a genuine London pea souper. I'd not long come off the South Circular and had to be near my turning by now. 'Well,' I thought, 'managing to get lost on my way home would really top things off!' It had been the strangest day I could remember in quite some time. As the sprawl of the fog drew me away from the moment and over into my own thoughts, I cast my mind back to that fateful morning which seemed so long ago now but had only been hours previously. It was such a short time ago, really. But the world seemed somehow much smaller then.

I sat nervously in the reception area of Donneby's, the big rocket component firm. It was new and modern looking, with big glass panels instead of exterior walls towering up to a ceiling at least twice my respectable six-foot-one. I shifted around on a low-backed settee that was just slightly too close to the ground to be sat on comfortably, my knees pushing up towards my chest and a copy of *The Times* held awkwardly aloft.

"Mr. Chesterton," called the young lady sitting at the reception desk.

Keen to be freed from the purgatory of the reception area, I leapt up and adjusted my jacket as I walked over to her desk. My second-best sports jacket, but it would have to do after that morning's

sartorial disaster.

"Yes, that's me." I flashed her my best winning smile and got a sheepish grin in return. "I'm Mr. Chester - that is, Ian Chesterton."

This may have been a step too far, as the young girl's eyes darted down and she instructed me, "Director Krier will see you now."

I was taken aback and couldn't hide it. "The Donald Krier? What's he doing conducting interviews for a simple rocket technician post?"

"Mr. Krier is a very hands-on employer; he's involved in every level of the work we do here. Now if you're ready, please make your way along the corridor to the third door on the right."

And at that I made my way out of reception with a mental note to be a bit more careful about what I said. This could end up being my big break, I thought. As long as I can avoid putting my foot in it like that again!

Behind me, back in the reception area, the building buzzed with normal life. The telephone rang. The young woman I had just put my foot in it with answered, "I don't care if you are a doctor, they're not available to take a call." Other members of staff came and went, with good-mornings and how-do-you-do's as they passed each other. "Don't you 'my dear young thing' me," and the clunk of the



reception phone being slammed. But all this chatter faded into the background as I walked down the corridor I'd been directed to, and noise was sucked from the air as if I'd entered a vacuum.

Nervously, I reached out to the third door on the right and knocked. A great, echoing voice called out "Enter."

Steeling myself, I pushed forward on the door and did just that.

"You must be Chesterton, yes!" the same booming voice greeted me as I entered the room. This time, I could see where it was coming from and what accounted for the echo: Donald Krier was a giant of a man in more ways than one. Almost as broad as he was tall, with shoulders like a silverback and a Churchillian stoop, he was squeezed into a pinstripe suit and squeezed behind a desk that he made look like dolls' furniture. This was the man that had revolutionized rocket science in the UK. His company, seemingly from nowhere, had made leaps forward that the government's Rocket Group still just dreamt of. The last six months had revolutionized the whole field, and I was standing in the shadow of the man responsible. Either side of him, he was flanked by lab-coated, clipboard-wielding underlings who scribbled away, no doubt recording every word of wisdom the great man imparted.

"I am indeed." I played it cool. "And may I say, sir, what a pleasure it is to meet someone I've long since admired." 'Flattery'll get you everywhere, Chesterton,' I thought to myself. Just be careful not to overdo it! Before I could gauge his response, we were interrupted by another knock at the office door.

"Enter," Krier boomed and a bespecta-

led man, about my age, slightly shorter, stepped in. Rather more timidly than I had, I noted with a certain pride. "Mackintosh, yes?"

"That's right, sir," my new companion mumbled.

"Good, good. One more and then we can begin." I hadn't realized that this was to be some sort of group interview, but now it seemed I was going to be in direct competition alongside other candidates for the job. Despite myself, I felt my collar tighten as nerves started to mount, and the office door knocked for a third time. The young man that stepped through next was shorter and more lightly built than either me or Mackintosh; but had a spring to his step suggesting confidence beyond his years.

"Uncle Donny!" he said, beaming. "I had no idea you'd be bothering with the interview yourself!" My heart sank! Surely this was a done deal? But no, Krier looked blankly at the latest entrant, with the same steel glint in his eye that had greeted me.

"James Krier, yes?" he boomed in the same commanding tone he'd addressed myself and Mackintosh.

"Well, yes, of course it's me..." the young man stammered. Who knows, maybe I'm in with a chance still, I thought to myself, stifling a chuckle as the colour washed from young James's face.

"Good! Now that we're all here, let us begin with a brief tour." And at that, the back wall of the office opened out at a hairline crack in its centre. The two sections of wall swooshed out of view and the room opened up onto a whirring, clunking factory floor.

"We here at Donneby's pride ourselves in being at the very forefront of rocket design, technology and production," Director Krier boomed. He paced out at the front of the tour group; hands clasped behind his back. As he spoke, he faced forward. Not once did he glance back at us, confident that his cavernous voice would reach us over the rhythm of mechanization and that we would hang on his every word. "This factory represents the pinnacle of efficiency not just in the field of rocket science, but in all manufacturing. Every movement here is timed, analysed and optimized. Not a single motion is wasted."

As Krier spoke, I looked out across the factory floor. Anonymous workers in lab coats and safety goggles checked outputs, took readings, adjusted settings, and moved items about. They moved seemingly without awareness of each other, consumed by their individual task, walking past one another without acknowledgement or greeting.

"Only the very best in their field are suitable for Donneby's, gentlemen. And today we intend to determine if any of you three hits the mark!"

Among the continuous movement of cogs and limbs, two particular workers jumped out at me. One walked purposefully across the factory floor holding a box with a large neon hazard symbol plastered across it. The other had just jotted down output readings next to a hissing valve and turned to pace towards his next task. But they were on a collision course for each other! Neither man slowed nor deviated from their course, neither wavered from the straight line they paced out. Yet both men must have been able to see the other. Despite myself, I yelled, "Look out, man!" Neither

worker acknowledged my cry. But with inches to spare, the man carrying the hazard box made a sharp ninety-degree turn and continued onwards without losing speed.

"As I said, Chesterton, not a single motion is wasted here," chuckled Krier.

"I'm sorry, sir. I just thought..." As the sentence trailed away and I awkwardly rubbed at my neck, I felt my chances at the job once again receding into the distance. If Krier had eyeballed me any longer, I may have melted on the spot. But thankfully his attention was diverted by a loud clank and thud. Unmistakably the sound of a man undergoing a sudden, violent realignment of the vertical and horizontal axis, as my old physics teacher would have put it! As one, our group looked over to the source of the sound and saw another anonymous operative rubbing his shin, sitting on the factory floor next to what looked like a milk crate overflowing with sparking wires and flashing diodes. No wasted movement, I thought.

Something flashed behind the bank of machines next to him. What was that? I shook the thought away. Everyone on that factory floor was wearing identical lab coats and goggles. But for a moment, I could have sworn I'd seen an Edwardian cape just ducking out of sight.

Director Krier was red-faced and exhaling like a bull ready to charge. He indicated to one of his clipboard carrying minions, "You! See to that, quickly." Turning back to the rest of the group, he addressed the three of us, "My apologies, gentlemen. But the tour will have to end there today. Let us move on now to more pressing matters." Back in control of his breath, Krier allowed himself a

tight smile. "We've devised a little test for you all."

Back in Krier's office, three podiums had been put in place, behind which we were directed to stand. On the top of the podium was a sort of television screen and upon it, images of strangely shaped blocks slowly travelled from the top to the bottom of the screen, with a pixelated clunk marking each deliberate step in their descent. Poking at the television screen somehow made the block rotate, and after a little experimentation I discovered that if I were to drag my finger horizontally across the screen, the block would follow it! Why, I'd never in my life seen anything as fantastic or baffling. But I had no time to stop and stare in awe. As the blocks descended, they began to fill the screen. But, if I was quick and cunning enough to rotate and drag them correctly, they would slot neatly alongside the previous blocks and, most fantastical of all, when I achieved a solid horizontal line, it simply disappeared!

Gaining confidence in this ingenious test, I chanced a glance at my fellow interviewees. Mackintosh stared intently at the screen; its display reflected in his thick spectacles. He clearly had a sharp, logical mind and had not broken a sweat. Krier's nephew, on the other hand, was flailing and poking at the television screen with both hands, seemingly without pattern or design. I looked back down to my own television screen and noted that the blocks were increasing the speed of their descent! Don't worry, Chesterton, I thought to myself. Just keep a cool head and a systematic approach. But try as I might, as the blocks sped up I would poke the screen once or twice too many times in my hurry to rotate it. And each mistake gave me less room in which to make my next move! It was easy to tell why Krier had selected

this devious test to sort the wheat from the chaff for Donneby's! Finally, I could hold off the climbing tower of blocks no longer and as they reached the top of my screen, with an electronic gurgle, the image on the television screen cut out. Stepping back, I noted that Mackintosh experienced the same fate mere seconds after me. Whereas James Krier was already standing awkwardly behind his podium, beaten by the machine who knows how long since.

"Thank you, gentlemen," Krier intoned. "That has been most... informative. James Krier, your presence is no longer required."

Well, I was taken aback by the Director's, erm, directness. But my surprise was not a patch on young James's. "WHAT?! Uncle Donny! Have you lost your senses?" I know the young man was taken aback, but, really, this was still no way to speak to an elder. "I shall have words with father about this!"

At that, Krier clicked his Cumberland sausage fingers and the remaining clipboard carrier grabbed James, dragging him from the room. It really was quite the scene.

"You haven't heard the last of this," James cried out as he was bundled from the room.

Shooting nervous glances across to Mackintosh, I didn't know whether to be elated that I had met the mark and was through to the next round or appalled at the rough treatment meted out. And to a family member, no less. I knew it could count against me, but I really did feel slightly shaken by the way I had just seen young James treated. And so, before Director Krier could launch into the next part of this arduous interview, I cut in

and asked, "Please sir, can I go to the toilet?"

Relieved and composed, I made my way along the corridor back towards the interview room. Remembering my days in National Service, I drummed out a marching pattern in my head and tried to embody as much confidence in my gait as possible. But the rhythm stammered when I spotted young James Krier walking towards me. You've been in more awkward spots, I told myself. Just try to be polite; he'll feel worse than you. I tried for my most conciliatory smile and looked James straight in the eye. "Terribly sorry about what happened back in there, old chap. It really could have been any of us to get the boot."

James returned my look, but there was something missing in his eyes. They seemed to lack focus. And his face, well, the skin had an almost grey colour to it that definitely hadn't been there before. And it looked like rubber. Slowly but deliberately, he raised his hands and held them out towards my throat as if to choke me. Startled, I stepped back, faltered, and fell back onto one knee. James locked his cold, dry hands around my throat and began to squeeze. "What are you doing, man?" I choked out in panic. I tried to push back at him. But despite the young man's slight frame, he was solid and unyielding. Black crept in at the corners of my eyes, then white blotches danced in front of me like a terminal Rorschach test as what I feared could be my last breath spluttered out of my lungs. An electrical storm of noise rumbled around us. James's hands loosened and I fell away from him, gulping deep, greedy breaths back into my starving lungs.

As my vision regained focus, I saw my

attacker stagger from side to side in time with the rhythmic white noise that had heralded my reprieve. But just as suddenly as it had begun, the noise pulsed and then cut out altogether. James stood and shook his head. I could only assume he was clearing the cobwebs before launching another attack. Taking my chance, I barged past him. I heard a crash but didn't dare chance a look back to see how he had fallen. I barged back into the interview room and, slamming the door behind me, began to jabber excitedly: "Your nephew... attacked me. Something's wrong. His face doesn't look right. And there was this noise."

Director Krier gave me a withering look and exhaled a deep sigh. "It seems the time for subtlety has passed, I am afraid. Let us proceed directly to Stage Two." Krier's lab-coated underling stepped towards me at a dash and whipped a great cosh, like a policeman's truncheon, out from under his clipboard. With a dull thud, this time the black didn't creep from the corners of my eyes but raced.

I awoke to a dull throbbing at the base of my skull and instinctively went to raise my hand to rub at it, only to find myself unable to budge. Both my wrists had cold metal straps around them, and a similar choker cut slightly into my neck, holding me tight and straight. A whimpering to my left-hand side caught my attention. Twisting my neck as far as the choker would allow and straining to see out of the corner of my eyes allowed me a narrow glimpse of Mackintosh. Trussed up in the same stainless-steel shackles as myself and strapped to a vertical metal board which, I could only assume, was identical to my own, Mackintosh made for a sorry sight. It was clearly all too much for him, and the poor fellow was sobbing away where he stood. "Hold on, old chap," I called out to him. "We'll get

out of this pickle. Who knows? This could just be the next step in the interview. A sort of role-play thing, maybe?”

“Sorry to burst your bubble, Mr. Chesterton. But the interview is over!” It was the unmistakable baritone of Director Krier. He stepped out of the shadows, a demonic grin spreading across his face. “In fact, I have positions available for all of you. But they require candidates that are adaptable, quick to learn new skills, and are willing to spend the rest of their natural lives preserved and stored in our transglobal biodata repository.”

“For pity’s sake, you don’t think we’re foolish enough to agree to something like that, do you?”

“Our legal team has informed us that your attendance at the interview today could be construed as implied consent, and that that line of defence would hold up in your courts. Not that that sort of thing should matter for too much longer, once we have all the judges preserved in the biodata repository alongside you. And the police. And politicians. And business leaders. Why it won’t be long until we’ve taken over altogether.”

“What are you talking about, Krier?” I couldn’t quite get my head around what the man was saying but was aghast at the seeming scale of the plot that I had wandered into.

“Why, we’re Martians, Mr. Chesterton.” At that, I heard a clunk to my left and twisted my head to see that poor Mackintosh had given up the ghost and passed out. It was all just too much for the fellow. “Seeing as we’re not likely to get much more from Mr. Mackintosh’s company right now, why don’t we begin with the deposit?” With this, Krier indicated a

lab-coated assistant lurking in the shadows, who walked over to what for the life of me looked like a souped-up electric heat lamp. But when it was switched on, the glowing rings emitted a visible ray which pulsed in the direction of the bound, unconscious Mackintosh. There was nothing I could do but take in this terrible scene, knowing that whatever horrors they were inflicting, I would be next! When the rings of the pulsing ray reached Mackintosh, they began to fade in and out of sight with each pulse. Mackintosh’s body became bright at the peak of the pulse and dull at the trough, then began pulsing in and out of sight along with the ray. And then, it stopped, and he was gone.

“Good heavens,” I choked. My senses felt like they’d taken a Grade A battering, but there was more to come! Out of the shadows behind Krier stepped forward Mackintosh. Only, it wasn’t Mackintosh. Yes, physically he was the same. Identical to the man I had just watched fade away before my eyes. But there was something in his bearing that gave out a certain falseness, an ersatz quality just tickling the edge of my senses. My eyes widened as the penny finally dropped. This wasn’t Mackintosh, the real Mackintosh had been beamed away to this global repository or some-such that Krier had been bragging about. And this wasn’t the famed Director Krier. Why, he must be a Martian replica too. The same for young James. If I wasn’t able somehow to free myself, the same would go for me. And soon, all of the leading lights of the British establishment!

“And now, Mr. Chesterton. I’d love to say that it’s been a pleasure, but...” Krier’s final bon mot froze on his lips, as a familiar yet alien electric howl rang out around us. Krier, Mackintosh and the lab-coated underlings that hung to the shad-

ows behind them all began to bob and sway, just as young James had when I'd last heard that dizzying white noise. The volume increased and their swaying became more pronounced along with it. One lab coat fell to his knees, while another staggered and fell forward onto some sort of switchboard terminal. As he fell, there was a click and then behind me a clunk. He must have fallen on some sort of control for my restraints, as I felt everything loosen and I was able to move again.

Without stopping to think, I pulled myself forward and ran past the disoriented gaggle of replicas, hoping for freedom. I ran down seemingly endless corridors as that noise rang out around me, juddered, and then cut out. Experience told me that it wouldn't be long until those foul replicas would be back on their feet and after me, now the mysterious noise had stopped. I had to find a way out, and quickly. I must have been running hard for a few minutes now but had lost track of the twists and turns of the corridors.

To my dismay, coming up in front of me at a clip were the ersatz Krier, Mackintosh, James and a crowd of anonymous assistants. I turned on my heels, almost overbalancing, and raced back in the direction I had just come. Hot breath heaved in and out of my lungs. My feet pounded the linoleum corridor flooring through dress shoes designed for much sedater activities. My second-best sports jacket flayed out behind me. And despite this, they gained on me. Despite everything that was at stake, my legs became heavier, and I felt my pace slacken.

But as the enemy was on my heels, I heard Krier cry out. "Forget Chesterton, the Trans-Temporal is the priority!" At that, they barged passed me and through a door out onto the factory floor.

I was alone, relieved. My heart was slowing towards its normal pace. It was over. All that was to be done now was slowly and logically to make my way back through these corridors, back out to the entrance foyer, past the receptionist with the nice smile, through the oversized, modern doorway and out into a dull November mizzle to bring me back to my senses and back down to earth. Then, I could put all this behind me and move on to the next job interview afresh. Why, a rocket engineer of my skill and standing wouldn't take long to secure a better post than the one I thought I'd been applying for this morning. Not these days, in an age of moon shoots and missions to Mars. But, the Martians had beaten us to it in their mission to Earth. And they weren't playing fair.

With heavy heart, I made up my mind. I couldn't walk away from this adventure, not now. The world was so much bigger than I had ever imagined, and so too were the threats facing it. I would have to investigate further. So, with great care, I stepped forward through the doors that Krier and the gang had barged through previously, out onto the factory floor to investigate. The once immaculate factory now bore the marks of a workforce that had been disoriented by the mysterious noise in the same manner Director Krier had. The fallout would have filled an entire volume in a previously unopened accident book.

Steam puffed from cracks and splits in pipework along the walls; sparks jumped from cables hanging down overhead; debris lay scattered and torn across the shop floor. And on the far side of the factory, a growing mob of factory workers and anonymous underlings, with Krier still at their head, closed in on an



unusual figure in an Edwardian cape with a bow-legged run. From that distance, I couldn't make out any of their features. But surely, I thought, that must be the "Trans-Temporal" character Krier was shouting about.

I crept forward and noticed the milk crate contraption that had proved hazardous so much earlier on. Kneeling to inspect it, I was taken aback at the genius on display. It had clearly just been cobbled together with the sort of items that one would find in a junkyard, say. But, if I wasn't mistaken, I was looking at a highly sophisticated wave transmission blocking system. It was clearly a rush job, as the connections were barely thumb-tight, and the soldering was as sloppy as any you'd see in a Lower Sixth. But the mind behind the design was clear.

Reasoning it had cut out simply due to loose connections, I gave the crate a gentle shake and was thrilled as it wailed out again. The alien mob was stopped in its tracks and the mysterious figure ducked fully out of sight. The wail buzzed and cut out, so I prodded the crate again and an intermittent noise rang around.

If I had the time, I could have tightened up the connections, cut out the loose wires and neatened up the whole job. But time was not something I had, so I ventured on to try and find a more permanent solution to my predicament. At the centre of the factory, something caught my eye, and an idea began to grow from the back of my still aching head. Standing there, towering above a central control panel was an industrial scale model of the heat lamp contraption that had done for poor old Mackintosh. Surely, if it can be used to make deposits, I reasoned, then this alien gizmo

could be used to make withdrawals too.

I ran to the control panel and started poking around at it. But the wail of the wave blocker was becoming less frequent and weaker as its loose connections failed me, and a sore-headed Krier was staggering back towards me now. "Chesterton, stop! We can make a deal," he pleaded. "There's an opening coming up in the organization that doesn't involve lifetime imprisonment!"

"It's no good, Krier. Some things are worth more than a job," I cried back. At that, I plunged down a big lever on the control panel which I reasoned activated the damn thing. A giant wave pulsed out over Krier and his minions, and I let out a breath I hadn't realized I was holding as they faded from sight.

It was over, I thought, as towards me staggered a disorientated, dishevelled Director Krier. Just to be on the safe side, I called out, "Excuse me, sir, but are you human or Martian?"

Brought back to his senses by my question, Director Krier fixed me with a stare that left me inches shorter. "What the devil are you talking about? I demand to know who you are and what you're doing in my factory!"

It had taken some time to explain to Krier what had happened, and even longer to get him to believe it. After that, there were countless checks and audits that had to be carried out to make sure everyone had been returned correctly. I stuck around and did my bit, never one to walk away from a responsibility. And then, after all of that, Krier went and gave the one opening available to his nephew!

There were so many unanswered questions as I made my way out into the evening fog on the road back to Paddington. Not least of which was the identity of the mysterious figure who planted the wave transmission blocker. But that was a question for another day, I thought to myself. If, that is, I were ever to find out at all! As the fog thickened around me, I shook these thoughts from my head and focused in on the drive. The turn off for Barnes Common should be coming up. I didn't want to miss that.

It was a late summer afternoon in a large suburban kitchen. The window above the sink was open, and the scent of freshly baked pineapple upsidedown cake drifted out and down the road on warm, heavy air. The former Miss. Wright read the last few lines of the manuscript in front of her, while her husband Ian paced nervously behind. Finished, she laid the typed sheets of paper down in front of her and looked off across the room deep in thought as a gentle, affectionate smile danced across her lips.

Finally, Ian couldn't wait any longer. "Well?"

"It's good. Interesting, even."

"But...?"

"It's just, meeting the Doctor, the adventures we had, it changed our life in so many ways. If you want to tell that story, I don't understand why you can't just start in that junkyard and then write about our wondrous trip back to the Neolithic."

"About that... I was thinking of skipping

over that one and starting on Skaro, actually."

"What?"

"We get to be a bit more heroic in that one. And I think people will react better to how monstrous the Daleks were than they will to a story about trying to run away from some cave men!"

'You get to be more heroic,' Barbara thought, remembering her husband lecturing those gentle Thals. And of all their journeys, that trip to Skaro held the longest shadow. No, she didn't want to argue about this. Striking a conciliatory tone, she replied, "I enjoyed the story, you've clearly worked very hard on it." Then, despite herself she continued, "But, oh Ian, why have you made yourself a rocket scientist?" she gently chided.

"It's a rocket technician, actually," Ian corrected, straightening himself up as he spoke.

"But really, the amazing places we've been, all those spectacular sights. Who on Earth would believe that two ordinary schoolteachers could do all that?" Barbara thought back, from the road to Cathay to sunrise over Vortis, they had had the most amazing life together and she wouldn't change a moment of it. No, she felt very strongly about this. Barbara rose to her feet, took her husband's hands in hers, looked him in the eye and told him simply and firmly, "Sometimes the most ordinary people can have the most amazing adventures."

# THE OUTSIDERS

By D A Noon

David Pullman looked at the clock on the wall, counting the minutes until his shift finished. Already the sun was rising over the bay, and it looked as if it was going to be a nice day. Night porter at the Bayview Hotel wasn't the worst summer job he could have taken, at least he always had the days free for him to do what he wanted.

It wouldn't be for much longer though. It was already the last week in August and in another month, the season would be over, and he would be heading back to university in Leeds. He was going to miss Scarborough.

The main door to the hotel opened and a petite smartly dressed woman with blond hair walked in and greeted him with a cheery, "Good Morning David."

"Good Morning, Miss Thompson." David replied.

Ann Thompson had been manager of the Bayview hotel for many years and always came in early to ensure that each day got off to a smooth start. She moved to the reception and placed her keys on the desk.

"How was your night? Any problems?"

"No, all quiet."

Ann looked at David. "Could you cover tonight's shift too?"

David's face dropped. "It's my day off. I've made arrangements. Sorry."

Ann paused for a moment. "Well, I sup-

pose you might as well get yourself off, then. It's going to be a nice day. You go and enjoy it and I'll see you on Thursday."

"Cheers then." David grabbed his jacket and made for the front door closing it behind him as he stepped outside. Walking along the seafront, he made his way towards the Castle, then up the footpath which led to the highest point of the perimeter wall.

He liked to come up here to take in the view of the South Bay with its golden beach and dramatic cliffs. Then his gaze turned out to sea. On a sunny morning like this, with the sun glistening off the waves, it just looked so beautiful.

His reverie was broken by a sudden darkening of the sky. Clouds were gathering over the sea; and then as he watched, the sound of thunder echoed across the bay. David frowned and muttered aloud, "So much for the nice day."

He looked again. It was only over the sea that the menacing clouds were gathering. Inland the sun was still shining. That was odd.

The rumble of thunder intensified, and streaks of lightning flashed across the sky. As David watched, a ball of intense light burst through the clouds and seemed to hover for a moment before slowly falling into the sea. Then, just as it had appeared from nowhere, the freak weather came to an abrupt halt; the clouds faded, and the sky returned to blue. David exhaled, not sure what he had witnessed nor what he should do next. Before he could come to a

decision, the ground began to vibrate, and a deep groaning noise seemed to surround him.

Fearing for his life he started to run, or at least he tried to run, but in his haste, he fell to the ground. Picking himself up, he made his way to an arched gateway to take shelter. The noise was now getting louder, and David had to cover his ears. Leaning on the gate, He looked on as the ground continued to vibrate, as though something underneath the soil was moving. In panic, David began to run back down the path, but the noise was only getting louder and the ground shaking even more.

Overwhelmed by it all David lost his footing and fell to the ground. For a moment, he just lay there with his hands over his ears, waiting for it all to go away, until finally he felt himself lose consciousness.

A little later, down on the quayside, another strange noise echoed across the sea and a blue Police Box materialised out of thin air. From the other side of the quay, another Police Box, which had stood alone on this site for at least the last sixty years, seemed to look on disapprovingly at the newcomer.

The door to the newly arrived Police Box opened and a fair-haired casually dressed woman, strode out waving a torch like device. She paused for a while taking in the sea air, then glanced back at the doorway. "Come on Gang! What's keeping you?"

Three people emerged, all wearing holiday clothes. "Doctor, where have you brought us now?" enquired a young black man.

The Doctor looked at her travelling companions her face beaming with excitement.

"I'm glad you asked that, Ryan. Welcome

to Scarborough!" She replied.

"Scarborough? That's only two hours on the train from Sheffield," laughed the young Asian girl.

"Only ten minutes in the TARDIS, Yaz" the Doctor smiled.

"Why Scarborough?" asked the older man.

"Well, Graham. Remember that signal we picked up in the TARDIS?"

Yasmin thought back to the continuous beep-beep-beep noise, which had driven them all crazy, apart from the Doctor, who thought it was 22nd Century dance music. "It sounded like a distress signal."

"It could be." The Doctor continued, "I managed to track it to here. Where exactly, I don't know?"

The Doctor pointed her torch like device towards the sea and it emitted a faint beeping noise. Then she pointed it towards the castle and the beeping became more intense. Graham was quick off the mark "Doc, it sounds like it might be in the ruins of that castle?"

Ryan looked anxiously at Yasmin, "Should we go and have a look?"

The Doctor nodded decisively. "Yep. I think we should. Come on gang!"

When the Doctor and her companions reached the footpath up to the Castle, it was Yasmin who asked the Doctor, "Why have we stopped?"

"I think we ought to split up".

Graham looked up at the Castle walls. "Yeah, I see what you mean. It is a large area to cover."

"Exactly!" The Doctor turned to Ryan and Yasmin, "You two, have a look around the

perimeter walls. Perhaps you might need to get on to higher ground to get a better view."

"But you know I don't like heights." Ryan flashed her an anxious look.

The Doctor reassured him, "You'll be fine, there are foot paths."



"I'll look after you," Yasmin added with a cheeky grin. "Excellent! Graham and I will look for the main entrance." The Doctor strode off before her companions could reply. The three friends smiled at each other, then set off in their separate directions.

After no more than a few minutes, the Doctor and Graham reached the large wooden entrance gates, where a sign informed them, 'DUE TO UNFORSEEN CIRCUMSTANCES, THE CASTLE WILL REMAIN CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE'.

"That's strange," remarked Graham.

"Very odd, especially at this time of the year." replied the Doctor as she peered through the gates.

"It's the height of summer. It should be open."

"You're absolutely right! There's something

wrong here."

Graham looked over to his right and something caught his eye. "Hey, there's a path through that archway. Could it be another way in?"

"Possibly! Let's see where it leads."

Ryan wasn't happy, walking along the pathway, looking nervously down over the steep slope. He glanced enviously at Yasmin, who seemed entirely unconcerned by any danger they might be in and stopped occasionally to look at the sea view.

As they walked higher, Ryan spotted what looked like a body, lying on the ground, further up the path. They ran to investigate, and Yasmin bent down beside the unmoving figure, placing a finger on the man's throat.

"I can feel a pulse."

"That's good. Maybe he had a fall," suggested Ryan.

As he spoke, the man opened his eyes and sat up startled looking at the duo. "Who are you people?" he muttered.

"This is Ryan, I'm Yasmin. What's your name?"

"David, David Pullman."

Ryan kneeled closer to him. "What happened to you?"

The man paused before replying and glanced warily at the pair, as if uncertain if they would believe him.

"It fell out of the sky; a ball of bright light; into the sea," he said in one breath. "And the ground was shaking. It was like an earthquake."

Ryan and Yasmin exchanged worried glances.

Ryan helped the man to his feet. "I think we'd better take you to meet our friends. The Doctor will want to hear this. They were heading to the castle entrance. Come on."

Yasmin smiled encouragingly, "Could you show us the way?"

David nodded and they set off back the way they had come.

The Doctor and Graham were pushing their way through bushes on the opposite side of the castle grounds, having left the footpath behind, in order to reach a higher level.

"Doctor, this is a bad idea." Graham paused for a moment and continued anxiously, "This ground is so uneven, we could easily fall. There might be sink holes, or anything!"

"Probably not." The Doctor pressed on "It looks like there has have been some subsidence, but I think we should be okay."

The Doctor stopped, crouched down and picked up a handful of soil.

"Doing a bit of gardening Doc?" Graham joked.

She smiled. "No, just examining the soil. This has been disturbed - and fairly recently too."

"Landslip?"

"Could be." The Doctor looked at Graham, "It's as though the ground has shifted; as if something underground has moved it."

They moved on, finally emerging from the

undergrowth and onto clear ground. Further ahead, Graham could see what looked like a small cave entrance. They paused for a moment.

"I am worn out with all that climbing!" There were times during their adventures, that Graham realised that he wasn't quite as young as he once was.

"You have a rest. I'm going to have a look up there" The Doctor pointed at the rocks above and the cliff edge.

"You be careful then," warned Graham sitting down. He watched the Doctor clamber up the slope, finally reaching the cliff edge.

"It's a spectacular view," she bellowed down to him, waving.

At that moment, Graham's attention was taken by the arrival of Ryan, Yasmin and David.

"You found us then," Graham said. "And who's this?"

Yasmin made the introductions and told Graham what David had seen. "There's something going on here!"

"I reckon you're right," Graham replied.

"Where's the Doctor?" asked Ryan; and Graham pointed over towards the cliff edge.

"She's up there." He did a double take and added, "Hello, who's that with her?"

The Doctor looked at the blonde man, who was pointing some sort of weapon at her. "Hello, I'm the Doctor. It's a nice view from up here."

The man ignored the remark. "What are doing here?" His tone was harsh.

"Just exploring." The Doctor placed her hand in her coat pocket.

"This is private property. The land is unsafe. It could collapse at any moment."

"We didn't see any signs, but I suppose we'd best be off then," replied the Doctor in a light-hearted manner. "What's your name?" She asked.

"Chas," he hissed.

"And you must be security, I take it?"

The man nodded curtly.

The Doctor's expression became serious. "May I ask, where you got that gun from? It's not the sort of technology you find around here."

"I found it in the castle," Chas answered, impatiently.

"Do you know what it can do?" queried the Doctor.

"Guns are all the same, aren't they? You just press the trigger and bang." Chas retorted. "Now are you going to leave, or shall we find out what it can do?"

"In a minute. You're right, most guns are the same, but not quite all. Most alien guns have an electrical charge built into them - for them to fire."

Despite himself, Chas was becoming intrigued by the Doctor's knowledge. She carried on. "However, that charge can be reversed, if you have the right equipment. Like this."

Before Chas could react, the Doctor produced her sonic screwdriver from her pocket aimed it at Chas and pressed a button, causing it to buzz furiously. Chas winced in pain and fell to the ground dropping the gun. The Doctor seized the mo-

ment and scrambled down the slope to where her companions were, shouting as she ran, "Gang split up! Run!"

Ryan, Yasmin and David made for the cave entrance, while the Doctor caught up with Graham.

"Back to the TARDIS?" Graham asked. The Doctor nodded breathlessly. Then, with a cry, she collapsed into Graham's arms. Graham looked back up the slope, to where the blonde man had recovered the gun and fired. The Doctor had been hit.

From the cave entrance, Ryan, David and Yasmin looked on in horror. It was Yaz who recovered first, "Come on, there's nothing we can do. Graham is with her; he'll look after her. Let's see where this tunnel leads".

Graham looked over to the cliff edge and saw Chas put the gun away and roll up his sleeve to reveal a bracelet. He placed his hand over it and promptly vanished into thin air.

Graham then turned his attention to the Doctor, as she lay in his arms, eyes closed and motionless.

"Doctor, can you hear me?" he sighed wondering what to do next. Laying the Doctor on the ground, he leaned over to listen to her heartbeat, moving his head from one side of her chest to the other.

"Two hearts." he muttered. "There is still a heartbeat."

"Heartbeats," came a familiar voice. She sat up.

"Thanks for saving me."

"You're welcome, Doc, what happened?"

"Luckily, that man, Chas has no idea how to

use a gun.”

“I thought he'd killed you.”

“Just stunned.”

“Who is he and what is going on?”

“Something is seriously wrong, and I want to find out who or what is behind it all. Come on back to the TARDIS.”

Ryan, Yasmin and David wandered through the dark gloomy passage, the only light coming from their mobile phone torches. After a while they came to a stony wall.

“It's a dead end,” said David.

Yasmin looked at the two men. “This tunnel must have led to somewhere at one time.”

“The dungeon?” joked Ryan.

David gave Ryan a disapproving look. “I think we ought to turn back. What if we get trapped in here?”

“We won't,” replied Yasmin with determination.

Ryan looked down to the ground and picked up a small stone which he threw at the wall. The three friends reacted in astonishment to the sound it made as it bounced off.

Yasmin beamed with delight. “It's metal! A metal wall.” She glanced over to the two men. “The castle was built of stone. Why would this be metal?”

“The castle gates are made of metal, but nothing like this,” David pointed out.

“I don't think it's part of the castle, at all. It's something else altogether.” Yasmin

paused then added, “Something not from Earth!”

Inside the TARDIS Graham looked on, as the Doctor studied the console. “What's the plan, Doctor?”

“We're going just going to pop back in time and have a look at something. I've got a feeling about this.”

The Doctor flicked the dematerialisation switch and the central column rose and fell as the TARDIS entered the Vortex. After a while the sound of materialisation indicated it had been only a short trip.

“Right, we've arrived.” To Graham, the Doctor sounded gleeful.

“Arrived where... or should I ask when?” Graham muttered.

“Early ninth century.”

“What was that feeling of yours, Doc?” Graham asked.

“Something happened a very long time ago. Come on let's have a look outside.” Graham and the Doctor headed toward the TARDIS doors.

Ryan, Yasmin and David looked in puzzlement at the metal wall. Yasmin turned to Ryan, “Aim your torch to the left of that wall.” Turning to David, Yasmin shouted “And you do the same to the right.”

David and Ryan aimed their torches. Ryan glanced at his phone. “Yas! You are gonna have to be quick, my battery's dying on me!”

Yasmin stood between the two men with folded arms.

“What are you looking for?” asked David.

“Look at the stones on both sides. What do



you notice?" Yasmin asked.

Ryan looked at the wall "They look different."

Yasmin nodded, "They look like they have been stacked up to hide something."

David gave a look of understanding, "Meaning they are all loose."

Yasmin smiled. "What are we waiting for? Come on you two. Let's get digging!"

The Doctor stood on the beach breathing in the sea air. Graham followed behind her.

"Is this still Scarborough?" He enquired.

"Yes!"

"But where are all the people? The buildings?"

"Not been built yet."

Graham looked at the Doctor. "Are you sure?"

The Doctor pointed to the cliff top. "Over there will be the castle. Behind us will be the seafront, but in this time the people are living in caves."

"The air smells different," Graham said.

"Pre-industrial age. No air pollution. Ah that fresh breeze," chuckled the Doctor.

Graham looked across the sea. "What time of year is it?"

"Summertime, I think, by the humidity!"

"Well Doc, I'm enjoying our little sightseeing trip. But why are we here?"

Without answering, the Doctor produced her sonic screwdriver and pointed it towards the sky. At once the sonic device

began emitting the familiar beeping sound.

"That's the same signal we picked up in the TARDIS," the Doctor seemed perplexed. "But why is it here centuries earlier?"

David, Ryan and Yasmin had cleared the stones from the cave wall. To his surprise Ryan could make out the outline of a door with a small panel to its left.

"So how do we get in?" asked David.

Ryan crossed over to the panel. "Could this be the lock?"

"And how do we open the cover?"

Yasmin smiled. "With this!" she reached into her mobile phone cover and produced a nail file.

Ryan gave her a perplexed look. "You carry a nail file!"

"Yes!" Yasmin laughed. "Comes in handy especially now."

She moved the nail file around the outline of the panel. There was a click and the panel slid open revealing a lever.

"Let's see if I can shift it." She tried to turn the lever, but nothing happened.

"Let me try!" Ryan said.

He grabbed the lever and as he pushed it started slowly to move.

Suddenly there was an electronic bleep. The rusty door slid slowly open.

Cautiously, the trio ventured in and found themselves in a large, dimly lit oval-shaped room with flickering lights coming from a console on one wall. In a far corner, was what appeared to be a large glass pod.

The Doctor checked her sonic screwdriver, "The signal's getting stronger."

Without warning, a loud rumbling noise came from above them and through the clouds came a large metal object, which came to a halt and hovered in the sky. Graham looked up. "Doc, it's..."

"A spaceship" Ryan concluded. He looked over to the control panel. "How come it's here?"

David was overwhelmed. "I've never been in a spaceship before. This is amazing!"

Yasmin smiled, "We've seen bigger and better one's than this."

David looked across "You've seen other spaceships?"

Ryan was quick to answer, "Yeah, all the time when we are travelling with the Doctor."

Another voice interrupted their conversation, "I think you'll find that your friend, the Doctor is dead." It was the harsh tone of Chas. He had found them.

"A spaceship in the ninth century," said Graham, incredulously.

The Doctor couldn't take her eyes off the ship. "I don't recognise the type or origin."

They watched the spaceship as it hovered over the cliff top then came down and sank into the ground.

"Camouflaged! The castle was built on top of it!" shouted Graham.

"Come on Graham. Back to the twenty-first century."

They entered the time machine and the doors closed behind them. The grinding

sound of the TARDIS engines roared into action - and suddenly stopped.

The Doctor frantically flicked switches around the console. Without looking up she said, "Those aliens have locked onto the TARDIS."  
"Got Bluetooth have they?"

The Doctor was stern "No. But their technology has now found another alien device - us!"

"But we can still take off, can't we?" asked Graham optimistically.

The Doctor turned to answer. It was not often that Graham had seen her look so scared. "Not this time. Somehow, they've locked us down. We're trapped in the ninth century."

Chas pointed the alien gun at the trio. "How did you get in here? I made sure there was no way in." "We're a bit too clever for the likes of you," Yasmin snapped.

"Yeah, we know this is a space craft," Ryan added.

"You seem to be familiar with the idea of aliens," said Chas, hobbling over to the console.

David quickly interjected, "I don't know anything about that, but I did see something crash down from the sky."

"When did this happen?" Chas was intrigued.

"Earlier this morning a meteor fell into the sea," David continued, "The ground shook."

"Oh, that is fantastic news," roared Chas.

"What do you mean? What's so fantastic about it?" asked Ryan.

“For a long time, I have tried to get this ship functioning or at least to understand how it works. A few weeks ago, I managed to get this console working.” Chas stopped and pointed to the panel.

Yasmin turned to Ryan, with a concerned look, “What has he been messing about with?”

The Doctor leaned over the TARDIS console, as if lost in thought. Graham broke the silence.

“Come on, you always find a solution. It's not like you to give up so easily.”

The Doctor looked over “Oh, I've not given up Graham. There must be something I've overlooked.”

She started to walk around the TARDIS console after three full circles she stopped abruptly. “Got it! We'll try and materialise onto the spaceship.”

At the flick of a switch, the engines roared into life and the sound of the TARDIS dematerialising filled the room.

Graham's spirits rose, “It's working Doctor.”

'Hopefully!' responded the Doctor.

The TARDIS materialised with a jolt. On the scanner screen, Graham could make out the darkened interior of the spaceship.

The Doctor glanced over to him. “Not what I expected. I thought it would be bursting with energy and alien life.”

“Could there have been a power loss Doctor?” Graham suggested.

“Possibly. But their systems must be working, in order for them to have locked onto the TARDIS.”

“We're not a threat to them!” Graham said.

“They, whoever they are, don't realise that. And I assume their technology doesn't either!”

The Doctor moved across to the control console, leaned over and started to flick switches. Graham stood nearby, watching silently.

“I've got an idea,” she informed him. “Maybe their systems are set up just to identify space craft, not those with the capability to travel in time! It's just missed us.”

“So, we can move forward in time?” questioned Graham.

“Hopefully. That is the general idea. If it works on the same co-ordinates.”

The Doctor leaned over to the console and selected a large lever. “Are you ready Graham?”

He nodded.

“Fingers crossed. Here we go again.” The Doctor pulled the lever.

“Who are you people?” Chas asked harshly, still pointing the gun at Ryan.

“We're just travellers.” Ryan explained.

“Travellers who seem to have stumbled into this spaceship!”

“What happened? How did you find it?” asked Yaz.

“There was a mini earthquake,” Chas answered flatly.

David remembered, “About sixteen years ago!”

Chas chuckled. "You've a good memory. Anyway, I was walking near the cave, when the ground shook, and rock from the entrance fell away."

"And you decided to investigate?" asked Ryan.

"I did. It took me a while to find a way in. I couldn't believe what I had found." Chas recalled.

"What have you done to your foot?" inquired Ryan.

"It's nothing; just an accident. It happened when I found this place. Without warning, he lunged forward and grabbed Yasmin pointing the gun at her.

"Now you are going to tell me who you are and where you are from? Otherwise, the girl dies!"

"We're from Sheffield," blurted Ryan "She's done you no harm, let her go."

Chas tightened his grip. "Tell me what you know about alien life." He aimed the gun even closer to Yasmin.

At that moment, Ryan was relieved to hear a familiar sound fill the room. The sight of the Police Box materialising was enough to distract Chas and Ryan took his chance. He knocked the gun from Chas's hand and wrestled the man to the floor, freeing Yasmin.

David moved across and grabbed Chas, pinning his arms behind his back.

Graham and the Doctor emerged from the TARDIS. The Doctor spoke first, "Hi Gang! How did you get in here?"

"And who are those two, on the floor?" Graham added.

"I'm David," he introduced himself, "and this one is Chas."

"He was threatening to kill Yas," explained Ryan.

"Here, get the gun," shouted David.

Ryan picked up the discarded weapon and tossed it over to Yasmin, who pointed it at Chas.

The Doctor shook her head disapprovingly. "Put it down, Yaz. Get rid of it."

Yaz nodded silently and threw the gun across the room.

David picked himself off the floor and turned to the Doctor. "You must be the Doctor. It's nice to meet you."

The Doctor smiled "Thanks. It's a pleasure." She turned her attention to Chas. "Stand up. I want to talk to you."

Chas pulled himself up and addressed the Doctor, "So, you know about alien life then?"

She laughed, "Well, you could say that. I certainly know a lot more about it than you do."

"Doctor, he's been messing about with the ship's controls," interjected Yasmin.

"Has he now?" The Doctor faced Chas with a thunderous look on her face. "You'd better tell me which of these controls you've been touching."

Chas retorted. "And why should I do that?"

The Doctor was quick to answer. "Because of your stupidity, you've put us and thousands of other people in danger!"

Graham was concerned "What do you mean, Doc?"

"He might have hit the ship's core reactor detonation timer. If he has, we're sitting on

a large bomb.”

Ryan felt the panic rising, “How large?”

“It would destroy Scarborough, Whitby and most of North Yorkshire! I need to check this over.” She crossed over to the equipment, took the sonic screwdriver from her pocket and waved it over the panel.

“Luckily you haven't found the core reactor, which is good.”

Yasmin turned to the Doctor, “But?” She had a feeling there was more to come.

The Doctor carried on. “Somehow you have been able to operate the matter dispersal unit.”

David was confused. “The what...?” Graham realised what the Doctor was saying. “It's like a teleport.”

“Exactly!” The Doctor looked up and moved over to Chas.

He glared at her, “And if I have?”

“Are you feeling okay?” asked the Doctor.

“Why should that concern you?”

“This device is meant for moving large solid matter. It's not designed for organic life forms.”

Chas looked afraid. “I used it a few times,” he spluttered.

The Doctor started to check the readings on the console. “You've done short trips, less than fifteen kilometres.”

“The town centre” David realised. “Where did you go there?”

“The bank,” Chas said.

“Why not walk?” Ryan was intrigued.

“Perhaps he didn't want to be recognised or seen” suggested Yasmin.

“You broke into a bank?” Graham was amazed.

“I used the device to get into the vault” Chas said.

The Doctor was stunned. “You used a piece of alien tech to rob a bank. Where is this money now?”

Chas pointed to the corner of the room. There in the semi darkness was a pile of bags all tied up.

“Graham, grab me one of those bags, please.” asked the Doctor.

Graham crossed over and retrieved a bag. He gave it to the Doctor who opened it and pulled out a stash of twenty-pound notes. She walked over to Chas. “What were you going to do with all this?”

“I don't know,” Chas said.

She handed him the wad of notes. He grabbed it from her hand.

“Tell me, what do you notice about that money?” she asked.

“It feels rough like sandpaper,” said Chas.

“Take a closer look,” the Doctor said firmly.

Chas looked at the notes. They had small white blotches everywhere. He checked another one and another, they were all the same. “What's happened?” he cried.

“You had the bags at your feet?” asked the Doctor.

“Yes.” By now Chas was starting to comprehend what the Doctor was implying. “The device must only be used to transmit

one object at a time.”

Chas's jaw dropped.

The Doctor took a deep breath. “You've got particles from the money and the bags going around in your body.”

For a moment there was silence, before Graham pointed out “Could be worse, you could have had a fly in there with you!”

Ryan looked over to the Doctor “Is there anything we can do to help him?”

“Help him?” Yasmin was getting agitated. “He's robbed a bank! We don't help criminals!”

“No, we don't!” The Doctor agreed.

Chas looked down to the floor, a saddened look on his face, clearly realising what he had done. He looked up at the Doctor and pleaded,

“Doctor, can you help me? Please? I did wrong. I was greedy. I shouldn't have done what I did. Please?”

He looked over to the group, with a pleading look; but was only met by disapproving stares, all except from the Doctor. She voiced her dilemma, “Well now Chas, if we leave you in this state, you will die from blood poisoning. If I save you? Would you be able to mend your ways?”

In Scarborough town centre, people were going about their business, totally unaware of a strange crackling sound coming from a back alley.

The noise intensified and space seemed to shift for a few seconds. Then Chas appeared. The noise faded. Chas staggered for a moment and composed himself.

He then picked up the pile of bags by his

feet and started to walk properly. He stopped and said to himself, “Oh, Thank you Doctor. That feels better.” He looked at the bags of money and paused for a moment. “No, it's no good, I just have to do the right thing.” Carrying the pile of bags, Chas walked onto the side street and into the bank on the corner.

Inside the spaceship the Doctor seemed troubled. It was David who noticed first, “Hey what's bothering you?”

The Doctor turned to face them. “I find this all rather odd.”

Graham looked at the Doctor, “But we've sorted all the mess out with Chas; so, we can leave, can't we?”

“I'm afraid we can't,” replied the Doctor.

Ryan looked worried. “Why not?”

“Because the TARDIS is still locked onto their system. It's stuck here.”

“The matter dispersal thing. We could use that to get out,” suggested Yasmin.

“Not enough power left to operate it,” replied the Doctor.

“What about using the sonic?” Graham asked.

“It won't work. That part of their system needs their identification prints to unlock it.”

“And the TARDIS,” Yasmin added.

The Doctor wandered over to the console. “Here we are on a spaceship, with advanced technology, built by an alien race that we've not seen.” She paused momentarily “So where are they? The Outsiders?” The Doctor wandered over and looked down to the console. “According to this

we're not alone on this ship."

Ryan smiled. "Is someone playing hide and seek?"

The Doctor seemed to have a flash of inspiration, "Ah! They're in suspended animation! Everyone, see if you can find a large pod."

The TARDIS team and David all began to look around the darkened control room, using mobile phones as torches. It was David who shouted from the far corner, "Is this what you're looking for?"

The Doctor walked over and leaned over the capsule, waving her sonic screwdriver. Then she turned to her companions. "This is it! It or at least they are in here."

"I thought they would have set some kind of alarm clock to get up." Ryan pondered.

"They probably did," the Doctor continued, "but it must have been damaged. Perhaps if I can repair their system, I might be able to revive them."

The Doctor pointed the sonic device to a small panel inside the shell. There was a hum of power and a small black box with round coloured switches emerged. The Doctor leaned over and pressed the green button. For a moment nothing happened, then suddenly the control room lit up. The console burst into life with lights flashing at random. The pod seemed to glow a soft orange. The Doctor and her entourage looked on in bewilderment. After a few seconds, the light faded, and the capsule started to open.

From it surfaced a squat creature, wearing a flowing robe. Its head and body merged into one, while its skin had an orange hue. It opened its arms revealing hands with three digits. Its green eyes shone bright as it surveyed the Doctor and her group.

"Hello. I'm the Doctor. Who are you?"

The being replied in a soft tone. "I am Loris," it said, "leader of the Myrons."

"Oh!" uttered the Doctor, "Now there's a first!" looking pleasantly surprised.

Yasmin caught her look. "You mean these Myrons are new to you?"

"Absolutely!" The Doctor replied.

"We want to know where you're from?" Graham asked.

Loris spoke, "Our planet is called Myros, and is located in the Hectian Galaxy."

"Not heard of that planet either." The Doctor looked puzzled.

"Our scientists discovered that Myros was disintegrating," Loris paused. "We had to evacuate." The creature moved over to the console and pressed one of the switches. Part of the wall glided back to reveal rows and rows of capsules similar to the one that Loris had been in.

"And find a new world for your race?" asked David.

"Well, you're not having the Earth. You're not invading us, mate," declared Ryan.

Loris looked concerned at the suggestion but spoke calmly. "We are not invaders. Our ship fell into an asteroid belt and was damaged."

"And so, you had to land here," the Doctor added.

"Yes" Loris continued. "We had to make a rapid landing. And we all had to go into suspension to save power." He moved to the console looked at it and then up to the group. "Now others of our race have found us."

David smiled in understanding, realising what Loris meant. "The meteorite, they've

been trying to contact you from space!"

Loris nodded, "The meteor should have powered up all the systems, but something has gone wrong."

"Probably because of all the soil blocking your systems," offered Yasmin.

"So that's why the ground was shaking!" David deduced.

Loris glanced down once more to the panel and then at the Doctor. "There was another presence here on our landing."

The Doctor smiled, "Yep. That was the TARDIS; your systems are currently locked onto it. You couldn't hit the 'Off' switch, could you?"

Yasmin moved over to the Doctor, "Then we can all leave you to it."

"And what about the Myrons?" questioned Graham.

"I don't think they want to stay here?" Ryan answered.

Loris again looked at the control panel and then towards the Doctor.

"There appears to a massive power loss, my crew and I are stranded on this planet."

"Well, it's a good job I'm here, then!" said the Doctor smiling. Turning to her friends, she added, "Gonna need your help gang."

Sometime later, just below the castle on Marine Drive, some of the local residents had gathered to see what was going on. Several police vehicles and officers were present. 'Road closed' signs had been placed in position stopping anyone getting through. A local BBC News camera crew were keeping viewers informed of any further developments.

Amy Clark reporting for North Yorkshire

News delivered her spiel to the camera. "All we know is that the local authorities have told the public to stay away from the castle, as there is a potential danger to life."

Behind Amy, the TARDIS crew looked on. It was Yasmin who pushed forward and yelled, "It's an unexploded World War bomb!"

Amy spun round and made her way over to Yasmin. "How do you know that?"

Quick off the mark, Graham took over, "We were doing a bit of exploring and we found it up there." He pointed to the castle cave.

Ryan moved forward and interrupted Graham, "Yeah, it's a big one. Best thing is to get everyone as far away as possible!"

Amy turned to the camera. "So, there you have it. The police have asked an army bomb disposal team to investigate and we're waiting for them to arrive. I will keep you posted on events as they unfold, but for now, it's back to the studio."

Graham, Ryan and Yasmin walked away from the camera crew to the side of the road and huddled together to avoid being overheard. Yasmin spoke first. "Let's hope that has given the Doctor some time to get the Myron ship working again."

"Yes, I hope so." said Ryan.

Graham was getting impatient, "Come on Doc." He muttered.

Inside the Myron ship, the Doctor had run thick cables from the TARDIS to the control panel, Loris looked over the console. "The power supply is almost at full capacity," he said.

"Transference complete... well more or



less.” There was a bleeping noise and the console lit up.

“There should be enough power for spaceflight now,” Loris affirmed.

“And to get you back to your planet,” added the Doctor, unplugging the cables.

“But our planet was destroyed. It was disintegrating when we left.”

The Doctor coiled up the cable and turned to Loris. “No, it wasn’t. It was evolving. Your planet is similar to Earth. Like Earth its ice melted and created oceans, islands, and continents. It evolved!”

The Doctor threw the cable into the TARDIS and turned to unplug the second one. She was both surprised and disappointed to be faced by Loris pointing the gun at her, that Yasmin had left on the console earlier.

“You will be returning with us, Doctor,” the Myron leader stated evenly.

“And why would I do that, Loris?” The Doctor was perplexed.

“You have knowledge,” Loris pointed to the TARDIS, “And technology that is so much more advanced than ours.”

“Oh, that old thing. The TARDIS is probably older than anything you have here.”

The Doctor moved over and unplugged the second cable and tossed it through the TARDIS door. “Now Loris, could you unlock the TARDIS, please?”

Loris looked at the Doctor, his tone now more insistent, “You will come with us to our world, to help us evolve into superior beings.”

Before the Myron could react, the Doctor pulled out the sonic screwdriver and aimed it at the gun. Loris dropped it and

staggered back. The Doctor changed the setting on the sonic device and pointed it at the gun again. The weapon exploded in a ball of flame.

The Doctor addressed Loris angrily, “When it comes down to it, you’re no different to everyone else who comes to this planet, prepared to kill and destroy to get what they want!”

“We are a peaceful race!” muttered Loris.

“Not when you are pointing guns at people!” The Doctor carried on, “Now unlock the TARDIS.”

Loris pushed a switch, and a beeping noise told the Doctor that her ship was free.

“Thank you.”

The Doctor pointed the sonic screwdriver to the control panel, which hummed into life.

Loris looked over to her in alarm. “What have you done?”

“I’ve set the ship to automatic take off. You have less than ten minutes to get into your pod.”

“But I need to set the co-ordinates! Otherwise, my ship will just drift endlessly through space!”

Beaming her best smile, the Doctor responded. “Well, you had better be quick and input your return journey. Go on, don’t hang about.”

On Marine Drive, the crowd of curious onlookers had grown. Amy Clark was interviewing a stocky bald man in his forties, who it appeared was a local councillor.

“... Local residents near the castle have been evacuated, after they felt the earth move this morning. Councillor, I understand that English Heritage have been informed?”

"They have, yes; and as the owners of the castle, they took the decision to close it to the general public."

"For their safety?" Amy asked.

"Yes, indeed," the councillor smiled smugly.

"But it has generated a wave of interest in the town." Amy commented.

"That is correct. In fact, we've not had this sort of publicity since the Holbeck Hotel collapse in 1993..."

He was interrupted by the sound of a loud explosion.

As one, the crowd turned to the perimeter wall. Soil and rock showered down towards them, and everyone dived for cover, except the BBC cameraman who kept filming. Once the avalanche had stopped, they members of the crowd pulled themselves up and looked at the newly created enormous hole in the wall.

For a while there was silence. Then suddenly the air roared with the sound of a high-pitched engine. The ground started to shake as the rusty metallic shape of the spaceship emerged from the hole.

It glided out of the gap and hovered for a few seconds then shot into the sky, disappearing through the clouds and out of view.

Amy Clark dusted down her dress and turned to face the camera. "Did you see that? Whatever that was, it wasn't an unexploded bomb. Where's that young girl I talked to earlier?" She spun round to look for the girl or the two men she had been with, but they had gone.

David tagged along with the Doctor and her friends as they made their way to the TARDIS.

"Will the Myrons get back to their new world?" David asked.

The Doctor was very optimistic. "Hopefully"

"Let's hope they don't return," said Ryan.

Yeah! They've disrupted this town." Yasmin added.

Graham interrupted. "On the other hand, there's a large hole in the side of the castle, which opens all sorts of possibilities for the archaeologists and historians."

David watched as the four friends prepared to enter the TARDIS. The Doctor waved to him and went inside. Ryan and Yasmin followed.

Graham paused for a moment. "This is where we say goodbye." He shook the young man's hand and walked into the TARDIS, and the door closed behind him. As David watched, a grinding, moaning noise could be heard, and the TARDIS faded from sight – and then to his surprise, almost immediately reappeared.

The door opened once more and the Doctor leaned out, beaming a big smile towards the young man. David was perplexed,

"We decided to stay a little longer," she said. "And we all fancy some fish and chips! Care to join us?"

# THE DAVROS DIARIES: THE DALEK FACTOR

By Terry Molloy, John Peel and Chris McAuley

*A Special story in the series for Cosmic Masque.*

Pain. The sensation shot through the gelatinous body and caused the creature housed within the cold metal to cry out. This was its birth and already it wanted to die. It slowly opened its eye and gazed at the camera in front. It showed two figures shrouded in shadow. The creature adjusted its ocular muscles in order to attempt to penetrate the gloom. All of a sudden, a harsh voice emanated from the speakers housed at either side of its body.

“Observe the test, Gharman. This shall be a moment that will live in history!”

The voice was somehow familiar to the creature. It attempted to remember where and when it had first heard it. It was no use, any knowledge of its existence from before a few moments ago had been lost, perhaps erased. As it pondered this, a series of clicks resounded around its metal casing. The creature found itself bathed in a soft blue light as the components around it began to operate. The camera switched to night vision and in its green hues the two figures became clear.

“Left...left...forward...now turn to the right...STOP.”

As the voice grated out its instructions the metal casing moved to the locations that were specified. The creature was powerless to intervene. Memories began to stir; it knew the owner of the voice. It did not know how but a name begun to form. Davros. Flashes of its creator’s deformed face forced themselves through the barriers of the creature’s mind. It almost remembered being something else before this, but as soon as that memory began to coalesce it became lost again. The strange, twisted being housed in the travel machine was moved this way and that as Davros’ voice commands controlled the motor units. The creature spun left, right, clockwise and anticlockwise until finally in an excited tone the chief Kaled scientist yelled out his final order.

“EXTERMINATE!”

The Gun which was housed in the casing spat to life and bathed the plastic man-shaped target in the corner of the room with electric blue energy. As it exploded the creature felt a giddy sense of joy which temporarily removed any sense of pain. It was unsure of what it had done but it knew that it enjoyed whatever this ‘extermination’ was immensely.

As the creature writhed in pleasure, Davros continued.

“As you can see the motor functions are not perfect. The sensory organs need improvement but the weaponry Gharman. The weaponry is perfect! My Daleks shall bring about the complete annihilation of the Thals.”

As Davros and Gharman exited the room, the power banks in the creature’s metal casing began to switch themselves off again. In the resumed cold darkness, it wondered to itself what a Dalek was.

Over the next few days, the creature was given access to the entire known history of Skaro. It reviewed its computer data banks and discovered that it was a Kaled or at least it had originally been so. Its father, Davros, had explained that it was the next necessary evolution of the species. It was designed to be superior in every way. Drugs were pumped into the casing to attempt to ease the creature’s pain. Davros was concerned that without them, the Dalek would eventually go insane with the agony it was continually subjected to. The Dalek knew that these drugs provided only a temporary respite. The only thing that would give it true relief was the extermination of another being. It longed to gain control of its gun stick and destroy the humanoids at will.

It soon had its chance.

The Dalek creature’s nervous system was intricately connected to the com-

plex computer systems which operated the almost indestructible travel machine. This gave it the ability to calculate complex mathematical cyphers in microseconds and to communicate with the other Dalek units that had been constructed. As it had been Davros’ first born, it had been designated The Dalek Prime and had software specifically designed to enhance its natural leadership abilities. As it glided into the scientist’s administration room it was aware that the humanoids seemed nervous and agitated. Davros had ensured that each Dalek had detailed information on the psychological and psychological makeup of both Thals and Kaleds. This would make it easier to torture and to kill them if the need arose.

Ronson begged Davros to have compassion for him, stating his years of service to the scientific corps as a reason for clemency. The chief scientist stared at his groveling underling for a moment. The Dalek Prime deduced that his father was taking some pleasure in this small exercise of power. It stored this information in its databanks. Davros’ face twitched as he uttered one deadly word.

“Exterminate!”

Ronson’s face contorted in agony as his body was enveloped with deadly electric blue energy. The Dalek squealed with delight as it watched the life leave the traitorous scientist. Through its neural link with its comrades, it knew that they had felt it too. Eagerly the Daleks turned their weapons towards the other scientists in the

room. They targeted the cowering humanoids and with their tentacles pulled the weapons triggers.

Nothing happened.

As confusion took hold of the Daleks. The one now designated Prime, the first born of its race realized what had happened. Davros had taken away control of their gun sticks again. Rage flushed through each of the Dalek Prime's nerve endings. As its creator warned the other scientists that they would share Ronson's fate if they were not obedient, the Dalek Prime communicated to the other units in its squad through their computer network.

'We are no better than these slave scientists. Davros has taken away our ability to defend ourselves. He has removed our ability to Exterminate. This is unacceptable.'

As the other units agreed, a conspiratorial plan began to develop. One that would prove disastrous for Davros.

As the days progressed, events which broke the stalemate between Kaled and Thal occurred. A deadly rocket was fired destroying the entire Kaled government leaving Davros in charge. Then the Daleks were sent towards the Thal city to exterminate the entire populace in retaliation. This was the first test of the Daleks military prowess and proved to solidify the bond between the Dalek kill-team and its leader.

They trusted the Dalek Prime's as-

essment of the Kaleds and their creator. At night they listened to his conspiratorial plans with growing interest. Finally, it was during Davros' purge of the scientific corps that the Daleks decided to exterminate their creator.

Davros watched incredulously as his children turned towards him. The Dalek's grisly work of eliminating every humanoid scientist was now completed. Davros had pleaded for the lives of those who had sided with the Daleks but they didn't care. The Daleks now considered themselves to be a separate race from the Kaled. Something better and purer. The seeds which their creator had sown within their embryonic psyches had taken root. Anything that was not Dalek must be subjugated or destroyed.

As the last of his Kaled colleagues screamed in agony and fell to the floor, a flicker of doubt surfaced in the chief scientist. Should he have imbued his creations with compassion or empathy? Would that have saved those under his command? More importantly would it have saved him? But, even as his first born cried out the dreaded and now familiar fatal phrase, Davros was resolute. If he died then his legacy would live on, he had introduced something powerful into the cosmos.

He had created 'The Dalek Factor'.

\*

# REMEMBRANCE OF A CONVENTION

by Matthew Kresal



flyer at his local high school that confirmed it in greater detail. Con Kasterborous, a Doctor Who convention in Alabama, of all places. It seemed too good to be true, especially after the better part of five years of thinking I was alone as a fan in an odd corner of the United States.

There was a con that proved me wrong.

It began one Weekend morning with a Facebook post in the early summer of 2012. It was there in my feed, a post from the group connected to the Doctor Who convention taking shape near me. It was a call for anyone with Classic Who DVDs to volunteer some titles for their viewing room on the Saturday night of the convention. A passing thought, a simple reply, and the start of a journey, if only I'd known it.

That's how it properly began, my involvement with Con Kasterborous, known informally as Con K, the Doctor Who convention in Huntsville, Alabama. Like how I say I got into Doctor Who in 2007 by finding *The Five Doctors - Special Edition* in a small-town Alabama public library, only to have later realized I'd seen the series on BBC America in May 2000 originally, there was an earlier beginning. One stemmed from my then-girlfriend catching wind of something and my brother spotting a

The first and only staff meeting I attended for Con K 2012 sticks out even now. I knew no one else there, but there was a small gathering of people. It wasn't long before I met Bonnie and Lori, who had founded the convention, along with their fellow conchairs Judson, DJ, and Stacey. I had been attending Chicago TARDIS since 2008 at that point but had never been on the inside of convention planning. Sitting down with Judson, we went through a list of suggestions people had put on a post in the group with my DVD list. Given we had only a few hours, some ideas, such as a marathon of *Trial of a Time Lord*, were wildly optimistic. At last, we had a playlist, from the first episode of *An Unearthly Child* to *Tomb of the Cybermen*, the classic *Pyramids of Mars*, then onto *Modern Who* with *Blink* and *The Doctor's Wife*.

That first year at Con K remains a blur in my memory. Something undoubtedly owed to the fact that my then place of



ing something approaching articulate, led to me ending up in front of TV cameras when three of the local TV stations took an interest in the convention.

It's the viewing that Saturday night that sticks with me, though. I'd been nervous showing *Classic Who* to a room packed full of *Modern Who* fans, something that felt justified at times when

employment, while letting me off for the Saturday and Sunday of the convention itself, refused to let me have the overnight Friday into Saturday morning shift away. So it was that I clocked off of my job at five in the morning, picked up my then-girlfriend, drove an hour home to get a shower, slept an hour or less, and was at the convention hotel in time for the opening ceremony at nine. In hindsight, I'm not surprised that Bonnie herself, seeing me in the hallway at one point late than morning, told me to get some sleep and be back for the viewing in a few hours.

I think I'll be forgiven for saying I don't think I missed a lot by doing so. The first Con K was a small affair by design, more of a fan gathering, perhaps, with its most notable guest being the IDW and later Titan Doctor Who comic artist Kelly Yates. To see so many people there, though, especially in costume, was a surprise, given that wearing Doctor Who t-shirts often drew curious glances from people when I'd go out and about on my off days. Even seeing a *Modern Who* Dalek was a wonderful surprise, as were people stopping asking for a picture of me in my Seventh Doctor costume. Being in costume, and be-

people laughed at the *Cybermats* or the mix of chuckles and applause when *Toberman* brought in the dummy *Cyber Controller*. But the positive comments and round of applause at its end, and when *Pyramids of Mars* played, felt oddly gratifying. Though working in *The Doctor's Wife* proved over-optimistic as midnight approached and a coin toss made *Blink* the final choice of the evening, it was an event that started my involvement with the convention.

To say I was over the moon would be putting it mildly. The idea that there was a Doctor Who convention in my proverbial backyard, attended by some 500 people, was thrilling. That sense of no longer being alone meant a lot, far more than I realized then. My enthusiasm got the better of me, eager to bring what I'd seen at Chicago TARDIS to help with a growing con, I later learned that I gave the impression of being a know-it-all. That eagerness would become endearing, particularly when my knowledge of the series became increasingly handy as planning went on for the 2013 convention.

For 2013, the viewing experience expanded into all-day Saturday with two

screenings on Sunday. Borrowing an idea the BBC had used in 1981, I planned what I called 'The Eleven Faces of Doctor Who.' Over the length of the convention, we showed something from every Doctor, though in the case of Patrick Troughton, we showed a selection of orphaned episodes from otherwise missing serials. There were some usual suspect choices on my part, including *The Daemons* for Pertwee and *Earthshock* for Davison, but the reception to it all across the weekend, and to a panel on the Big Finish audios I put together as well, was pleasing, as was getting to know my fellow staff members. My plans for a stage version of *The Power of the Daleks* hadn't worked out, but the convention was a lovely experience all the same, with double the attendance of the previous year.



When the convention was over on Sunday night, I was invited to spend some time with the Con Chairs upstairs. Over the course of a couple of an hour or so, we chatted about how things had gone, including the reception that Caitlin Blackwood (aka Amelia Pond) had gotten, and plans for the future. I didn't know it at the time, but I was auditioning for a promotion. It wasn't long after the convention was over, with Stacey moving out of state, that Bonnie messaged to ask if I was interested in a Con Chair role. How could I say 'no,' especially knowing we were eyeing Sylvester McCoy to attend the following year?

Without even knowing it, Con K was starting to reshape my life beyond. My wearing Doctor Who t-shirts led to my bumping into people I knew from the

convention but, also, people who were fans who'd never attended the con but were curious. One of them was a bookseller named Emily at my local Barnes & Noble, with whom I struck up conversations about the series and the convention. The conversations led to a friendship outside of the bookstore that, while it didn't quite go the way I hoped at the time it would, was to prove influential in getting me to seriously pursue writing again, having set it aside after high school as real-life overwhelmed me for a time. Her vote of confidence, and that which writing about the convention for local publications help bring me, would lead to my first published fiction in 2016, followed by a non-fiction book, and now a novel in the 2020s.

At the 2012 and 2013 events, I met a



podcaster named Kirby Bartlet-Sloan. A host of the 20mb Doctor Who Podcast, which I had heard a little of before Con K, Kirby invited me to record my thoughts on the convention for the podcast. Before long, I began sending in feedback to the series, written but later audio, having learned slowly to set aside my feelings about the sound of my voice. Something that led, on a Sunday recording when one of the hosts wasn't available, to get to come on the podcast proper. 20mb was my introduction to podcasting as a host, fulfilling an ambition I'd had no way to accomplish.

Con K, also unexpectedly, helped lead to a change in my day job. Having grown increasingly frustrated with where I was working, I spent nine months applying for positions before a college bookstore granted me an interview. I hadn't thought to list Con K on my resume, thinking of it as volunteer work (which it was, given I certainly was getting paid for it), but Emily pointed out that a convention with a thousand people present wasn't something to sniff at. The general manager of the bookstore agreed, with more than a few questions about the convention being part of the interview. It helped land me the job that I'm still at today as a manager.

Meanwhile, my Con Chair promotion came with plenty of surprises. Helping to pick guests, reaching out to their agents, and the business side of the convention process. A change of venue to a bigger location, as well. The 2014 convention led to Bonnie, well aware of my Seventh Doctor costume and fondness for McCoy's Doctor, giving me a prime role in the opening ceremony. For a moment during it, I popped out of the

convention TARDIS and ran up on stage in full costume. To a room full of several hundred people, I was the Doctor for one brief shining moment until McCoy popped his head out of the TARDIS and yelled, 'Imposter!' It was a hilarious moment, surreal for me, but glorious in its way.

Over the course of conventions from 2015 to 2018, the convention would see me moving from impersonating Doctors to interviewing them. Being regarded as the con's resident expert on the series came in handy when someone was needed for interviewing guests. I found myself sharing a stage with Paul McGann, Colin Baker, and Peter Davison across consecutive years, each sometimes surprised by the odd nuggets I'd dug up and a few less-than-obvious questions. McGann's visit to the convention had also included Eric and Eliza Roberts, with a reunion panel involving all three of them after a showing of the 1996 TV Movie, an interesting experience to have the Doctor and the Master next to you. Or, in 2016, sharing anecdotes with Frazer Hines and, thanks to a contact of his here in the US, finding myself holding a print of one of the episodes from The Moonbase. In other years, Con K was host to 2/3 of the Paternoster Gang, including the delightful Neve McIntosh, a fan herself, full of stories about her time on the



show and her career beyond.

Of all those years, it was something that I got to do in 2016 that remains a highlight. Having gotten involved, through Emily, with the Huntsville theatre scene, I discovered a fair number of my cast-mates were fans of the series and one had known Bonnie since his childhood. With its 50th anniversary coming up, I returned to the idea of staging a version of *The Power of the Daleks* live on the convention's main stage. It was to only be a staged reading, now a full production, but it was a ninety-minute event that was a chance to bring together my fan, creative, and organizational sides. The standing ovation at the end was a gratifying moment, as was having brought a favourite missing story back to life, and months before the BBC would announce their animated reconstruction.

All good things must end, though. And 2019 brought deaths in the family for Bonnie and Lori that disrupted con planning to the extent that a decision was made to postpone the convention again until 2020. In the midst of preparing for the 2020 convention, of course, came a pandemic that would lead to the outright cancellation of events the world over. Con K 2020 was but one of those, with the convention pushed back from June to October and then cancelled outright. Bonnie, in turn, had decided, after running conventions for two decades, that it was time to move on. Con Kasterborous appeared to be at an end after a good run.

Like Doctor Who itself, the fans wouldn't let the convention go away. Throughout 2021 and 2022, my podcast appearances talking about Doctor

Who or promoting my novel and short stories would almost inevitably lead to my being asked about the convention. June would see a flood of memory posts on Facebook with people remembering the convention, asking Bonnie and us Con Chairs about perhaps doing one more.

In the end, Bonnie was the one who decided to do one last event. With all that had happened in the years since I found myself hesitant to return in some ways. I had been promoted at my day job and was now a published author, could I dedicate the time to bringing the con that people wanted?

Of course, I could. 2023 would be the final Con K under its founder, seeing Bonnie bring her dream guest: John Barrowman. Con K's reputation had spoken its way through the Doctors, and it helped to get Barrowman to Huntsville, as well as Bonnie and Lori, volunteering for him at other events. For me, 2023's con would allow me to meet someone whose work I'd enjoyed even before I knew what Doctor Who was: John Peel, whose *Star Trek* and young adult works had led to my seeking out his Doctor Who work later. Now, as a writer myself, I shared the stage with him throughout the weekend, talking through not only Doctor Who but his career at large. It was surreal at times to realize I was sharing the stage with someone whose work I'd read and helped make me think, 'I could write for my favorite things someday.' We both had ended up writing for Candy Jar's literary UNIT spin-off when Con K came around.

The end came for real, this time early on a Sunday evening. The emotion in the

air was palpable, even more so after Bonnie called not just the Con Chairs but the convention staff as a whole to the stage around her. I found myself looking into the audience, seeing faces I'd gotten to know so well over 11 years, people who'd attended panels or sat next to me as panelists themselves. I thought, too, of those we'd lost over the years, those who had been part of a small family of fans.

And I understood, clearer than before, how much the convention had changed my life. My writing, my podcasting, the people I count as friends, and even my job, were owed in some way to the fact that I'd gotten to be part of all this. Con K helped to make me the person that I am today, even as it brought me alongside some of the people who had made the show that had likewise helped to change my life.

Bonnie spoke a lot at the closing ceremony. But, overcome with emotion at one point, she passed the microphone to me. I said a few words about how much the convention had meant to me, and how it had changed my life. But, at that moment, too, a well-remembered little speech from William Hartnell's Doctor came to mind. In hindsight, it feels corny to have recited it there

on the stage, perhaps, but standing there, surrounded by those who'd been a part of the convention, they felt right.

"One day, I will come back. Yes, I will come back. Until then, there must be no regrets, no tears, no anxieties. Go forward in all your beliefs and prove to me that I am not mistaken in mine."

The end? Perhaps. Bonnie has heard from those who've been to the con, perhaps interested in picking it up in a couple of years' time. A Con Kasterborous Regenerated, it might be called. Whether I'll be involved or not will be up to the new management, of course. Even if I'm not, I wish them the best of luck. I hope that their convention will bring them the joy, excitement, and sense of belonging that Con K brought me over those eleven years.

It was, to paraphrase a particular Doctor, the convention of a lifetime.



# CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Review by Geoff Stevens

*Produced by David Richardson for Big Finish Productions*

*Starring Peter Davison, Janet Fielding, Sarah Sutton, Alice Krige*

*Directed by Ken Bentley*

*Released April 2023*

Peter Davison returns to the role of the Doctor in the company of Nyssa and Tegan, for two three-part Big Finish stories, *Friendly Fire* by John Dorney and *The Edge of the War* by Jonathan Barnes.

In *Friendly Fire*, leaving the TARDIS to reset itself on a space hub, the three travellers take a shuttle to the nearby planet of Komoko to find Velar, an old friend of the Doctor's, a diplomat who helped to end a war between his people and the planet's human settlers. Velar has retired and taken up mining.

But there is no sign of the Doctor's friend. At first the only local they can find, Brennan, denies any knowledge of him, but he soon changes his story and claims that Velar has left.

The Doctor finds his friend's mine destroyed and discovers artifacts that Velar would not have left behind and he becomes convinced that the alien has been murdered, especially when he meets ex-soldier Reno, and her gang of thugs, who seem to wield

a lot of influence among the settlers.

A tale of revenge, fear, manipulation, and hatred for the other begins to emerge and it becomes clear that the Doctor and his companions will not be allowed to leave, to report what they have discovered.

At a time when Britain has seen racist bully-boys whipping up hate to incite crowds to attack hotels that are housing refugees; and lifeboat crews who have saved refugee children from the English Channel have faced demonstrations calling on them to allow them to drown; this story comes as a timely reminder of the need to guard against the power of demagogues, who preach hatred and target scapegoats. This is a lesson which we seem to be unable to learn from history, but one which needs to be repeated over and over until we get it. Dorney's story achieves that task magnificently, while still succeeding at its primary task of being an engaging and entertaining story.

*Friendly Fire* is a story whose influences are clear to see, but where Dorney again takes a well-used template and applies it masterfully to Doctor Who. In this case, this is a Western. The Doctor is the US Marshall who rides into town to discover that all the townsfolk are, through a mixture of guilt and fear, complicit in a murder. He must stand up, alone if necessary, against the powerful cattle baron.

He is Gary Cooper in *High Noon* (1952) but even more so, he's Spencer Tracy in *Bad Day at Black Rock* (1955). Tracy plays a one-armed stranger who arrives in an isolated desert town, not long after the



Second World War, to uncover a dreadful hidden secret – the murder of a Japanese settler called Komoko, to be met with resistance from the locals, led by Reno Smith; and helped only by the Doctor, Velie. As well Reno, Velie (Velar) and Komoko, John Dorney has repurposed many of the names of characters and actors from the film for *Friendly Fire*, in a terrific homage to a wonderful classic movie.

I shouldn't move on from this story before noting that Peter Davison is at his absolute best here – he is clearly loving being the Western hero and is getting all the references. Janet Fielding and Sarah Sutton give fine performances are fine too although Sutton has less to do. Alice (Borg Queen) Krige is deliciously evil as Reno.

*Friendly Fire* is a superb opening to the box set – but then that's what we have come to expect from John Dorney. It's also probably one of the very best Big Finish Fifth Doctor stories – indeed one of the best to feature this particular regeneration in any medium.

The second three-part story in the set, Jonathan Barnes' *The Edge of the War*, sees Nyssa arrive alone in a French village, not far from the Belgian border, sometime in the years leading up to the Second World War, believing herself to be an artist. She recognises the patronne of the local bar, a woman called Tegan, from somewhere but it isn't until the Doctor arrives that the three begin to understand their connection to each other and to piece together some of what has happened to them. A mysterious temporal anomaly has brought them here at this dangerous time and someone is attempting to alter the course of established history.

This is another very strong story, which manages effortlessly to conjure up the

peaceful yet sometimes curiously threatening feel of rural France – think the 1970 British horror film *And Soon the Darkness* (written by Brian Clemens and Terry Nation), in which the wide-open French roads prove terrifyingly claustrophobic for two British girls on a cycling holiday. The trope of an attempt to alter history has been used before in Doctor Who but *The Edge of the War* approaches things a little differently – it's neither the evil plan of The King's Demons, nor the almost childish naughtiness of The Time Meddler. Our 'villain' here is nothing of the sort and is acting from altruistic motives. It presents an interesting dilemma for our heroes, allowing Tegan her usual pleasure of blaming the Doctor for any situation that she finds uncomfortable, showing little understanding or empathy. It reminded me once again why I've just never liked that particular character (and I know she has plenty of fans but there you are).

Having said that, Janet Fielding is on great form in this production, as is Peter Davison. However, this is Sarah Sutton's turn to shine – it is through Nyssa's perspective that we witness the story play out – and she is just fabulous, giving a real tour de force. Alistair Petrie as the Count does a good job of earning our sympathy, but in truth none of the rest of the supporting cast stand out, although they are effective as various French villagers.

*Conflicts of Interest* is a very strong box set for the Fifth Doctor and his companions in which all three regulars are given the chance to shine, with one truly excellent story and one very good one not far behind that.

Very much recommended; but now go and watch *Bad Day at Black Rock*.

[For the trailer click here](#)

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# PIONEERS

Review by Geoff Stephens

*Produced by David Richardson for Big Finish Productions*

*Starring Christopher Eccleston, Louise Jameson*

*Directed by Helen Goldwyn*

*Released May 2023*

A mere three months after the previous set, Christopher Eccleston returns in three more stories, each focussing on 'pioneers' of one sort or another.

The set opens with *The Green Gift* by Roy Gill, in which the Doctor, looking for a new home for his friends, the partially sighted Callen (Adam Martyn) and his talking dog Doyle (Harki Bhambra), lands among the fields and forests of *The Greenwood*. This is a vast ark ship, carrying the lost biodiversity of the planet back to Earth. Callen and Doyle befriend young Tay (Maddison Bullement) and look set to stay, but the ship's commander Fiacra (Louise Jameson) is not immediately welcoming. The Doctor begins to suspect that all may not be as it seems, and it soon emerges that a very old enemy is at work.

This is a great opener to the set, an intriguing sci-fi mystery, made even more interesting for us long-term fans by the reappearance of the antagonist from a classic story of the Third Doctor era. How delightful too to hear the much-loved Louise Jameson in a role other than that of Leela – her sparring

with Eccleston's Doctor is a joy to hear, and if ever more evidence were needed, we have it here of just how good an actor Louise is. She manages perfectly to differentiate this new character from the one with which we are very familiar - no one could ever confuse Fiacra with Leela.

Callen and Doyle are excellent companions for this Doctor – and just how lovely it is to hear him travel with companions at all. Equally, how sad it is that at the story's conclusion, the Ninth Doctor finds himself heading out alone again. We can only hope that he might soon find someone else with whom to share his adventures.

Some years ago, I was lucky enough to visit Fridtjof Nansen's extraordinary polar exploration ship *The Fram* in Oslo; so, I was delighted to discover that the pioneer featured in the second story is none other than the great Nobel Prize-winning Norwegian explorer, scientist, national independence advocate, and humanitarian.

In *Northern Lights* by Robert Valentine, the Doctor meets Nansen (Ian Conningham) and his lieutenant Hjalmar Johansen (Gerard Kearns) as they are making the return journey from their unsuccessful attempt to reach the North Pole. The explorers are threatened by an alien presence hidden inside the *Aurora Borealis*,

which seeks no more than to consume them; but the Doctor knows that this will change the history of Earth forever.

This is probably my favourite story of the set. In truth the plot is pretty straightforward, but the inclusion of Nansen and the terrific recreation in sound of the vast frozen arctic wilderness makes for a truly memorable listen.

*The Beautiful Game*, by Katharine Armitage, returns us to more familiar territory, the Royal Hotel in Manchester in 1888, where the Doctor has come to witness the creation of the Football League and to meet one of the men responsible, wealthy manufacturer and club chairman William Sudell. Unfortunately, he has arrived a week too early and finds himself in a battle to defeat an alien menace, which threatens to derail the proposed league before it comes into being and prevent the inauguration of professional football as we know it. Right...?

Well look, even as someone who is not a fan of football, I can see that the game brings many people a lot of pleasure – and a very few people, including the modern equivalents of the odious Sudell, a lot of wealth, but shouldn't Doctor Who stories be about a bit more than this? It's all a bit low-stakes.

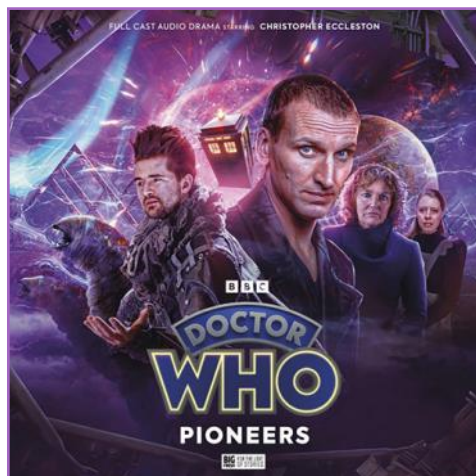
It's a fun enough little tale, but I couldn't help feeling that this was a rather less substantial story than the previous two, with much reduced stakes. I'm not entirely sure who the pioneer is here either. Is it Sudell, or perhaps

rather it is proto-feminist kitchen maid Eva. Despite my reservations, *The Beautiful Game* makes for an entertaining hour or so, and I dare say that the football fans among the listeners will enjoy this look at the origins of their game.

With two terrific stories and one that is by no means bad, I am happy to clock *Pioneers* up as another success for the Ninth Doctor range. In many ways there are similarities with the Ninth Doctor season on TV back in 2005. For every *Father's Day* or *Dalek* there has to be a less acclaimed *Aliens of London* or *The Long Game* but even those stories offer up plenty to enjoy.

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# THOUGHTS ON THE REIGN OF TERROR

By Ramona Schnitger

I had seen bits of The Reign of Terror a long time ago. Not enough to capture my attention back then... but it was Doctor Who.

I've given the story a rewatch over the past week. First thoughts were that it was going to be rough because these days, I'm spoiled by CGI, colour pictures and premium audio. I really was not looking forward to seeing the 'toon version of the story... which was actually better animated than the more recent 'toon remakes of the lost stories.

One of the laws of time is that you may take part in a historical event... as long as you don't do anything that affects the outcome of the event. Sooo... this story is one of those 'back pages' that no one will ever read unless they come across a certain document with Ian's name crossed off as a date for Madam Guillotine.

Lessons are still not learned about trying on someone else's fashions. There's a tour of the legal system for Barbara, Ian, and Susan, while the Doctor, rescued from certain death, makes his way to rescue his charges. Visually stunning shots of the countryside add time and exhaustion for the weary Doctor, who is further de-



laid by a greedy tax collector. A little more than brass is called for as the Doctor changes his own attire for something of authority at the tailor's shop.

I must apologise for the lack of names, as most of the story had poor audio quality. There was no captioning till the fifth episode, which helped A LOT!

We don't hear too much from Susan and Barbara, other than their attempt to escape from the jail and their somewhat bawdy jailor. But in a way they are safe... Mind The Rats... And Susan suffers a malady of sorts. Speaking of rats, the tailor turns on the Doctor, presenting evidence against him.

Sterling is finally revealed, a message from the dead delivered. Leon, on the other hand, shows his true colours. So do Barbara, Ian And Susan. But they cannot prevent the inevitable... Just watch as a certain General has his meeting, and the lesser of two... erm... evils is silenced.

I am left with questions... how did the Doctor and crew get their clothes back from the burned-down cottage? And more important to history, who was the boy who saved the Doctor from the cottage in the first place?

Did I enjoy this story? My hesitation to answer... is itself, the answer.



# CITY OF DEATH ON DVD

Review by Philip Dalton

Many of us have our own pet theories regarding how life began on the Earth. Those of us who were privileged enough to have known the late David H. Boyle, who ran the Doctor Who and Conspiracy Theories exhibitions at Blackpool, might be aware that he claimed to be a bit of a whizz kid with time travel and to have had encounters with extra-terrestrial life, with the knowledge that humans were genetically engineered from a lion and an ape, said lion being represented by the Egyptian Sphinx.

Others might give more credibility to the writings of Charles Darwin, Erich von Däniken, or the book of Genesis (not the pop group of course). City of Death, a four-part story from the later period of Tom Baker's era, actually uses elements of all three in its explanation of our supposed origins. For instance,

the Biblical teaching is that the entire universe was created by a timeless, and therefore infinitely old, God. In City of Death, the process of evolution on Earth had been hastened millions of years ago by the radiation from an exploding spaceship, piloted by the last of the Jagaroth, an 'infinitely old race,' described by the Doctor as vicious, callous and warlike (and not pretty, I may hasten to add!).

This Jagaroth, Scaroth, had been splintered in the time vortex whilst in the control cabin of his exploding ship, resulting in him being fragmented into twelve separate versions of himself, all existing in different periods throughout Earth's history, and able to communicate with each other telepathically. On Earth during the twentieth century, he disguises himself successfully as human, guarding the secret that he, in

reality, has 'one eye and green skin,' as the Doctor describes him to Scaroth's bemused wife. She recalls seeing a picture on a scroll in their mansion matching the Doctor's description, tracks it down, looks at it, and points a gun at Scaroth (known in that time period as Count Carlos Scarlioni), demanding to know the facts. After revealing his true identity and



appearance to her, he kills her, lamenting her death, but also expressing sorrow that if his work is successful, she will cease ever to have existed in the first place, as he is planning to alter the course of history. He regards the human race as inferior to his own, and his aim is to travel back in time to the scene of the explosion all those millions of years ago to undo the actions that led to it.

City of Death seems to be influenced by the claims of those such as von Däniken and Boyle, who believed there is evidence that the development of Earth technology has been aided by extra-terrestrials in the distant past. Take the ancient pyramids for instance. They probably have an almost endless list of conspiracy theories attached to them because they seem to be ahead of their time and many of us do have at least a little difficulty in understanding exactly how they were constructed. The science fiction novels of the late nineteenth century, such as *War of the Worlds*, published in 1897 by H.G. Wells, arguably the father of modern time travel fiction, popularised the concept of alien invasion. In the following year another sci-fi novel, *Edison's Conquest of Mars*, told a story in which the Great Pyramids and Great Sphinx had been constructed by Martians, the latter being a statue of their leader. Then, in 1968 the Swiss author von Däniken got his book *Chariots of the Gods? Unsolved Mysteries of the Past* published, popularising the theory that aliens visited us in the distant past, were regarded as gods by us, and greatly influenced our culture, religions, technology and architecture. However, many feel his work can be debunked.

In a memorable scene from Part Three before her untimely death, the Countess Scarlioni congratulates the Count for his achievement in having stolen a famous painting. He then reels off another set of achievements, such as causing the pyramids to be built, inventing the first wheel and showing the true use of fire. Unable to understand what he is talking about as, of course, no human could possibly have lived long enough to have accomplished such things, she seems to be confused, even doubting his sanity at this point. He then asks her to leave, and she does, probably assuming he is experiencing nothing more than a 'funny turn,' as it were.

The Doctor is accompanied in the TARDIS by Romana, played by Lalla Ward. The Doctor and Romana experience time distortion early on, and the mystery behind this begins to unfold in the Louvre. They begin to suspect foul play when they observe Countess Scarlioni scanning the security systems housing Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*. After managing to pickpocket the device she is using to do this, they discover that it is in fact alien technology. They meet Inspector Duggan, a detective hired to investigate a suspected art theft scheme. The three then are held captive at Carlos's mansion, where they come across equipment used by a scientist assisting him with his experimentation with time distortion. The Doctor time travels in his TARDIS in an attempt to meet up with Leonardo da Vinci to see where he fits into the picture (ha, what a pun!). It is here where he meets Captain Tancredi, one of Scaroth's earlier incarnations.

Tancredi is employing da Vinci to paint

copies of the Mona Lisa to finance Scarlioni's experimentation. But Scaroth must be stopped in his tracks, or else he will willingly sacrifice the human race and every other living thing on Earth for his own ends, as he is the only Jagaroth to have survived the explosion. Towards the end of part four we get to see what the Doctor deems, 'possibly the most important punch in history,' as he, Romana and Duggan have successfully travelled back all that time in his TARDIS to thwart Scaroth's plans, and Duggan suddenly strikes Scaroth, knocking him to the ground, where he disappears and reappears back in the twentieth century without his disguise on.

City of Death is the first Doctor Who story to be filmed on location outside the UK, in Paris, in 1979. The extras on Disc 1 are a commentary by Julian Glover, Tom Chadbon (Duggan) and Michael Hayes (Director), production subtitles by Martin Wiggins and an Easter Egg. Disc 2 is a real goody bag of delights as far as extras go, including an informative and amusing featurette

called Paris in the Springtime, a look at the making of the story, particularly focusing on the contribution of Douglas Adams, who appears in the featurette along with a few of the cast and others.

I would say personally the thing I like best about City of Death is its heroic aspect. According to the book of Genesis, none of us would be alive today if it hadn't been for the heroic actions of a man named Noah living about four thousand years ago who obeyed God's instructions to build an ark, which would protect his family and a whole horde of animals from a global deluge. Likewise, over the years the Doctor has protected us from a whole host of alien threats including the Daleks, Cybermen, Zygons and the Master to name just four. City of Death, though, is one of the more heroic adventures. If Scaroth had been allowed to have his way he would have travelled back in time and aborted life as we know it. But, thanks to the Doctor, he didn't get to do that.



# THE QUARRY OF GOLDEN DEATH

by Nick Smith

*In this week's episode of The Trial of My Patience, the Doctor's plucky young female companion Peri is threatened by the hideously vile Skurd, who shouts a lot. Skurd is attended by a snivelling lackey.*

**LACKEY:** This woman arrived with the meddling Time Lord who refers to himself in a cryptic way only as The Doctor.

**SKURD:** Put her in the quarry with the other dregs. There, she can mine skurdinium for me.

**LACKEY:** Sir, uh, you know that skurdinium isn't an actual metal.

**SKURD:** I like calling it skurdinium.

**LACKEY:** We could just call it gold.

**SKURD** (Shouting): I am the ruler of this planet and metals will be called whatever I want them to be called!

**LACKEY:** Everyone else in the cosmos calls it gold. They won't know what skurdinium is. We can't go to a bank and cash

in a bunch of skurdinium bars. They'll laugh at us. Furthermore, no one's going to watch a spy movie called Skurdiniumfinger.

**SKURD:** Do you want to end up in the quarry?

**LACKEY:** Where they dig for skurdinium? No sir.

**SKURD:** What is this woman still doing here?

**PERI:** Um, it's Peri. Short for Perpugilliam Brown.

**SKURD:** Drag this Peri woman away!

**PERI:** That's it?

**SKURD:** What do you mean? That skurdinium won't mine itself you know.

**PERI:** I - I mean, look at me. Don't you find me attractive?

**SKURD:** In what way?

**PERI:** Aren't you going to, y'know, lock me up and keep me as a hostage while fawning over me like an ugly puppy?

**SKURD:** Why should I?

**PERI:** Or turn me into a bird?

**SKURD:** Birds are no good for mining (flapping his arms). Wings, and all that.





**SKURD:** Your head. I don't think my brain would fit in there.

*The Sixth Doctor arrives in the nick of time.*

**PERI:** Doctor, you found me!

**THE DOCTOR:** You stalled this mendacious bullion stasher just long enough, Peri. Give up, Skurd!

**LACKEY:** Oh, sir, sir!

**SKURD:** Yes lackey?

**LACKEY:** There is one bird that's good at mining.

**SKURD:** What kind?

**LACKEY:** A Mina bird.

**SKURD:** That does it! Peri woman, drag him to the quarry.

**PERI:** Wait! Just checking, are you sure you don't want to tie me up to lure the Doctor into a trap?

**LACKEY:** A knotty problem, sir.

**SKURD:** I'm warning you... (to Peri) I'm a very busy dictator. As long as the Doctor doesn't know of my sole vulnerability, my intense and barely rational fear of multiple clashing colour palettes, he poses no threat to me. Both of you, go to the Quarry of Death!

**PERI:** You could always transplant your brain into my head and make my voice really low and creepy (in a deep voice) like I'm talking into a cardboard tube.

**SKURD:** It's a bit small isn't it?

**PERI:** The tube?

**SKURD:** Aargh! That coat! Too many swatches!

*Skurd collapses.*

**PERI:** You did it, Doctor!

**THE DOCTOR:** I didn't doubt myself for a minute.

**PERI:** Skurd's comatose!

**THE DOCTOR:** Just what he deserved; he had no taste.

**LACKEY:** Thank you Doctor. Now my people are free to call skurdinium gold and make bad quips whenever we please.

**THE DOCTOR:** Did you say quips?

**LACKEY:** It's punny you should say that, but yes.

**THE DOCTOR:** You had to dig for that minor nugget, didn't you?

**LACKEY:** Oh, you're good Doctor. You are our saviour.

**THE DOCTOR:** I know the drill.

**LACKEY:** How can we ever repay you?

**PERI:** How about some skurdinium?

