

COSMIC



MASQUE

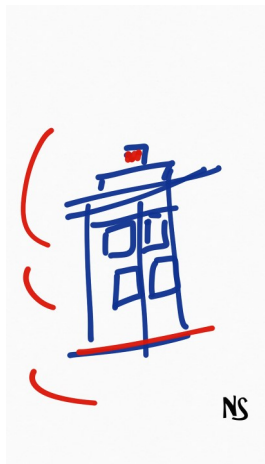


**WHILE
THERE'S
LIFE
THERE'S...**

DOCTOR
WHO
APPRECIATION
SOCIETY
CM XII

FANS VICTORIOUS

Editorial by Nick Smith



I'm currently working as a Production Manager on a movie in East Texas. I say this, not to brag – I'm a glorified office boy with a walkie talkie – but because Doctor Who helped bring me here, instilling a passion in me for visual storytelling, film and telly-making.

After a long day of filming, I'm eating pizza in Napoli's, a downtown joint with a bar next door that's also called Napoli's. I'm with the Wardrobe Supervisor, Assistant Camerawoman and a couple more crew. The locals give us a glance or two but leave us be. I've got a TARDIS T-shirt on and the Associate Producer Cydney says to her boyfriend Brandon, 'look what he's wearing.' Her man Brandon, the movie's Special Effects guy, holds up his keychain for me and the metal fob says he's a Time Lord.

'You should see Brandon's scarf,' says

Cydney, her eyes wide. She doesn't need to tell me what it looks like.

'She made me a great one,' says Brandon cheerfully. 'If it was colder, I'd be wearing it.' Since we've been working in 40-degree heat, he's smart to leave it at home. We smile and move on to another subject.

So, I'm thousands of miles from my birth town of Bristol with people I've only known for a few weeks and yet we have this connection, a TV show that seems as well-travelled as the TARDIS. From South Croydon, England to Corsicana, Texas, Doctor Who is in the zeitgeist, with fans everywhere

When DWAS Publications Officer Rik Moran graciously asked me to become the new editor of Cosmic Masque, I looked forward to connecting with some fellow Whovians and sharing my passion for the show. I did not know that everyone I talked to for Cosmic Masque would all have a deep connection to the show, whether it was exceptional cover creator Grahame Robertson, writer Jody Houser and artist Roberta Ingranata of Titan comics, or Courtney Jarrett, the Birmingham Game Master of 'A Dalek Awakens'.

Rik describes Cosmic Masque as 'about being a fan.' To me, that means a magazine that feels communal. Nerdy. Generous. Gushing. Inclusive and goosebumpy. All those feels crop up in this issue, which has an eclectic mix of memoirs, reviews, interviews and fic-

tion. It has a transatlantic flavour, since I've reached out to British and American writers for their views on Who.

Although the Doctor's new televised adventures are in a holding pattern right now, the contributors have plenty to write about. As fans, we can immerse ourselves in the multiplatform marvel that is Time Lord Victorious; read comics, revisit classic novelizations and get stuck in escape rooms.

Time Lord Victorious is the culmination of an incredible amount of work and creativity. While it remains to be seen whether all its threads will tie together successfully, Who-lovers everywhere will have fun finding out. I hope you have fun reading this issue too, with or without a multicolour winter-warming scarf spooled around your neck.

Nick

COSMIC MASQUE XII

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Time Lord Victorious 1 Comic

Review by Jordan Shortman

With Time Lord Victorious now finally kicking off, despite a rocky start to the year and creator, James Goss' fear that it would be cancelled altogether thanks to COVID-19, Titan Comics have kicked off the Tenth Doctor's role in the multi-media story with its first issue of Time Lord Victorious with a story called Defender of the Daleks.

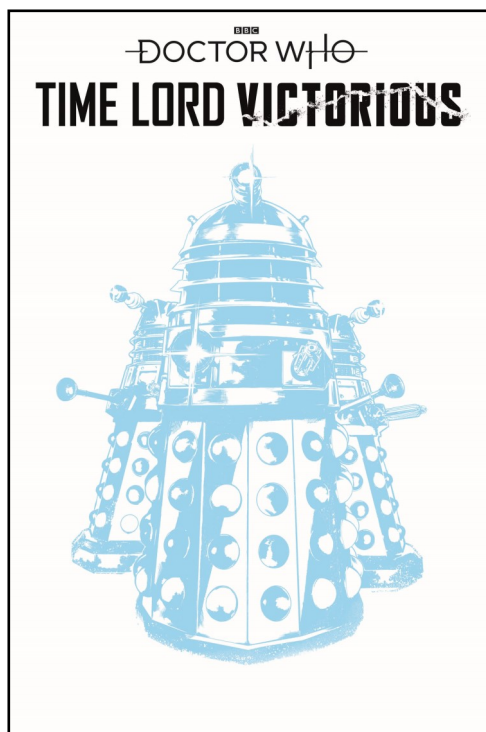
I'll admit, when I first saw the many releases for this new story, I was a little credulous. Did it mean I would have to buy everything to understand what was going on or could I dip in and out at my leisure? The good news is

that I could do the latter, and while the diagram of all the releases to come in the front of the comic still confuses me slightly, I'm happy in the knowledge, that the books, comics and audios will do for me.

Author Jodie Houser doesn't keep us guessing what's going to happen here for very long, and although some knowledge of the previous Tenth Doctor comic adventures will please long-term readers of Titan Comics, it doesn't mean that new readers will be confused. Rightly so, Houser keeps the focus on events here, not what came before, making the book instantly readable to newcomers.

The Tenth Doctor wakes in the TARDIS to find that he is alone and only he remembers the Time War. He quickly finds himself surrounded by Daleks everywhere he goes including planets we've seen before in the comics as well as what looks like Elizabethan England. When he finally stops running, he poses the question, why hasn't he been exterminated. The following exchange leads to the Daleks saying they'll destroy the TARDIS leads to one of my favourite lines from the book where the Doctor warns them, if they do that, he'll make the Time-War look like a tea party. Houser's characterisation is so perfect that you don't doubt he couldn't do it for a moment. It's the first of many brilliant moments for the Tenth Doctor here.

No time is wasted in going to Skaro, and artist Roberta Ingranata gives us an impressive visual of the Dalek city, clearly based on the view Missy and Clara had in The Magician's Apprentice, but it's a fantastic visual on its





own and makes for a great double page image. Also excellent is Ingranata's design of the Tenth Doctor's TARDIS, complimented perfectly by the colouring from Enrica Eren Angiolini, and one wonders if they took stills from the television series, the visuals are so good.

Also brilliantly realised are the new design for the Daleks who look like a perfect cross between the classic and new era designs. And the Dalek Emperor is a nice nostalgic look at Remembrance of the Daleks while giving it a nice modern touch with the gold paintwork. For metal pepper-pots, Houser gives them some excellent characterisation too and Goss' creation of The Prime Strategist, who fills in the Doctor an interesting companion for this miniseries. It's an interesting thing to do, making the Daleks,

not good exactly, but taking away their motivation to kill everything because they realise all of creation have a common enemy. The Prime Strategist is urprisingly sassy for a Dalek too, adding to the great dynamic it has with the Doctor. And Houser puts in a nice tribute, intentionally or not, to the famous cliff-hanger from Episode 3 of Death to the Daleks, with something once again on the floor.

Like Houser's excellent characterisation, Ingranata draws a perfect Tenth Doctor, effortlessly capturing his iconic look and putting him in a number of recognisable Tenth Doctor poses, which not only are fun to look at but also make you think about which episode some of the poses come from.

For me, the weakest part of this comic came from the realisation of the Hond. Which is a shame as Houser makes it feel like some massive threat, giving the Doctor a line about how it was a myth to make children go to sleep. The final page sees the Hond finally realised and it looks like a cross between Batman's Clay-Face and Scooby Doo's Tar Monster. I wasn't too impressed but this is its first appearance and I'll reserve much judgement until I can see what it does in the second issue. But even so, it's a minor quibble for what is otherwise a great first issue.

If you've never read any of Titan Comics output, first of all, I'd say give them a try, there are some great stories there, especially those with the Classic Doctors, and Time Lord Victorious would be a brilliant place to start. It doesn't require any knowledge of what came before and can be enjoyed as a brief interlude in the Tenth Doctor's

Discussing Who Podcast

by **Kyle Jones**



life or as part of the Victorious event as a whole.

Once again, Houser and her creative team have excelled themselves, the art and colouring never fails to leave me stunned, with the panel of Skaro looking particularly beautiful. If you're looking for a way to get into the Victorious event or the Titan Comics in general, then Time Lord Victorious #1 is a must!

Images © Titan

[To visit Time Lord Victorious at Titan and to order a print or digital copy click here](#)

[To view and to buy from Amazon UK, click here](#)

My name is Kyle Jones. I consider myself a lifelong fan of Doctor Who having been introduced to the Doctor in the mid-1970s. As with most in the US during that time, my introduction came in the form of the Fourth Doctor and Sarah Jane Smith on the local PBS station. Now, after all these years, Doctor Who is still an important part of my life with every Tuesday night devoted to discussing Who! This is our story. Welcome to Discussing Who: A Doctor Who podcast.

While they call me the showrunner, our virtual console would not be complete without both Clarence Brown and Lee Shackleford, both of whom have been there since the first episode. I met Clarence Brown in the mid-2000s while working for the same company while Lee Shackleford and I connected in late 2014 when we became co-hosts of Doctor Who: Podshock.

Lee's works include writing for stage, screen, and radio. He wrote and starred in an off-Broadway play, Holmes & Watson, and wrote for Star Trek: The Next Generation. Lee teaches theatre at the University of Alabama Birmingham. His enjoyment of sci-fi extends to comic books, general science fiction, classic radio serials, and is the creator/writer/producer/co-star of the Relativity sci-fi podcast.

Clarence began podcasting in 2008 as a

host of a technology and fandom podcast, Techpedition. He works as a programmer and has, quite honestly, been our saving grace for technical aid on several occasions. He plays the role of Marcus DuPree, one of the central characters of Relativity. His enjoyment of sci-fi also extends to comic books, general science fiction, Star Wars, and he is the creator/showrunner of Discussing Trek: A Star Trek Podcast and co-creator of Discussing Comics: A Comic Book, TV, and Movie Podcast. Clarence continues to co-host Techpedition.

Our story would be incomplete were I not to mention our frequent guest host, Nicole Mazza, from Terminus: A Doctor Who Podcast.

Naming a podcast often serves as one of – if not the – most difficult parts of starting a new show. The phrase “Who or what will we be discussing next?” became the original tagline with early episodes featuring comic books, science fiction, and, of course, Doctor Who. The first episode of Discussing Who dropped on 07 March 2016. By 2017, the concept morphed into the

Discussing Network with the creation of Discussing Trek and then Discussing Comics while devoting Discussing Who completely to Doctor Who.

We are not experts. We get things wrong. We do not always agree, but we always respect the other opinion. We bring different opinions, experiences, and points of view to our reviews and share a love for the character of the Doctor. We are fans just like you. And, most importantly, we enjoy our weekly discussions.

According to Lee:

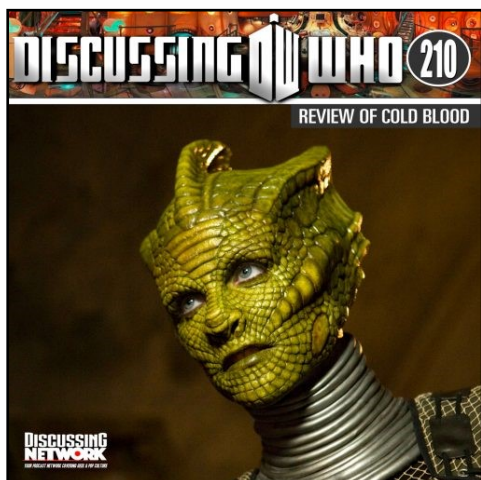
I look forward to every recording session with Kyle and Clarence because I love those guys and enjoy all the time we spend together, especially talking about something we are all emotionally invested in, one way or another. And I think that's what makes our show unique: I hear other shows where the hosts seem to sort of ignore one another (or worse, compete for microphone time), but I think the strength of our show is in our deep interest in one another's opinions and experiences, and the fun that can come from comparing our different perspectives.

According to Clarence:

What I enjoy most about Discussing Who is the distinguished hosts I get to do it with each week. As the new Whovian of the group, in both time-watched and the incarnation of the show I most connect with, I always learn things both fascinating and insightful from our resident Whostorians, Kyle and Lee. Kyle supplies the ultimate research angle, bringing his profound love and joyous enthusiasm of the Doctor into the mix. Lee manages to bring that same love, but from a



writer and production point of view. His career teaching and writing drama provide insight into the inner working of how the show is created and produced. Being more of a newcomer to Doctor Who, I am willing to question things that other Whovians may take for granted, while also giving an unsullied view on things both new and old. It is this variation of viewpoints that I feel makes our show unique. All said, it just feels like I am sitting around a virtual table each week with very close friends, talking about a show that traverses both space and time, along with our hearts!



As of this writing, I am putting the final changes on Episode 210, with Episode 211 waiting in the wings. So, after over 200 episodes, what keeps us going? Future seasons not yet aired, past seasons and stories not yet reviewed, and topics not yet discovered. The easy answer would be to say the same reason we recorded our first episode: I enjoy talking about Doctor Who. I enjoy talking with Lee and Clarence and I enjoy the special occasions when Nicole joins our discussion.

Our journey has introduced us to former Doctors, companions, and fellow Whovians who have become our friends. We have grown individually and as a team, and our audience has been there with us along the way.

Our goal has always been to produce quality content that would be of value to anyone listening. It makes it worthwhile to see reviews that say we are, 'kind, funny guys and an utter joy to listen to' or that, 'each brings something to the table and it's easy to hear they enjoy making the show as much as we enjoy listening.' A listener sent an email this week ended with the following: 'I will continue listening to you guys and now you have an added listener...my 1-month old daughter.' These are the reasons we continue discussing who.

What is next for Discussing Who? As I say on the podcast: go out, watch the episode, because from this point forward...spoilers!

[To learn more about Discussing Who visit www.discussingwho.com](http://www.discussingwho.com)



The Black Archive: Robots of Death

Review by Alice Dryden

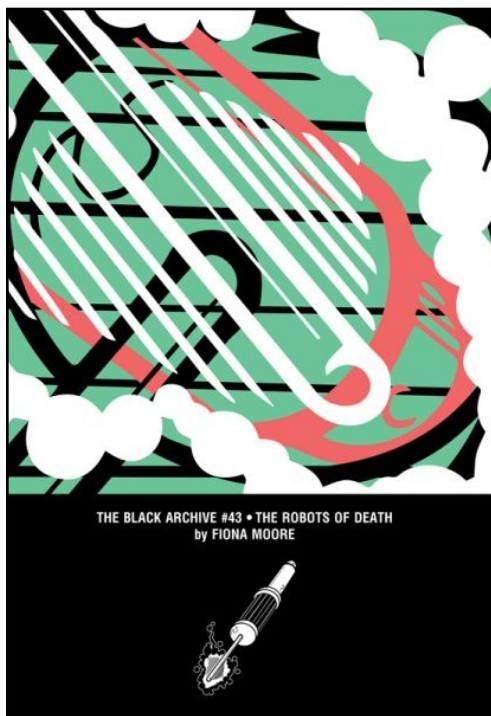
It was only after I'd agreed to review Fiona Moore's *Black Archive: The Robots of Death* that I realised I hadn't actually seen *The Robots of Death*. Very bad fanning, there. Luckily my flatmate had a copy, and we enjoyed it over a Friday night pizza.

I love a good robot story, and I was instantly captivated by the Art Deco setting and the costumes bizarrely ornate for the crew of a mining vessel, as well as the nods to Asimov. The story has plenty of elements that stand out as unusual for *Doctor Who*, and all these are covered in the accompanying *Black Archive*.

Moore first places the story in the wider context of late-1970s television (including *Royal Flying Corps* saga *Wings*, which I'm also enjoying at the moment) and the careers of the personnel involved. Producer Philip Hinchcliffe was approaching the end of his tenure, while writer Chris Boucher was young and hungry. Tom Baker is a Doctor thoroughly settled in the *TARDIS*, but this is only the second outing for Louise Jameson as Leela.

However, that's just one set of factors to shape *The Robots of Death*, and much of the book is taken up with examining the rest. Changes took place from rehearsal script to final version as circumstances offered challenges and the cast brought ideas and opinions of their own to the table.

No story is created in a vacuum, and *Doctor Who* has always drawn inspiration from screen, literature, mythology, politics, history and art. Robots have been a fascinating and fruitful source of ethical conundrums since the concept was invented, and this was far from their first appearance in *Doctor Who*, but the Dums, Vocs and Super-Vocs are among the most striking and memorable examples in the series, thanks to their design and the way in which they're used. The most obvious influence here is Asimov, with his Three Laws and his positronic brains, but a whole army of fictional artificial intelligence, from the 1920s' *Metropolis* and *RUR* onwards, have left their mark on the story too. Meanwhile, the Art Deco styling of robots and mining craft, plus the mix of races and classes aboard, aren't just window dressing, but statements in their own right.



Time Lord Victorious Panel at the SDCC

Review by Nick Smith

Finally, there's a look at the influence this story had on future Doctor Who adventures and beyond. Chris Boucher would explore the characters and concepts from The Robots of Death in his later writing for Blake's 7 and Star Cops, his sequel novel Doctor Who: Corpse Marker, and the audio CD Kaldor City: Death's Head. Meanwhile other writers sojourned on Kaldor for comic strips and audio adventures.

I'm not especially dedicated to Doctor Who output beyond the small screen, but I was impressed by the story's far-reaching legacy, the questions it keeps on inspiring and the affection in which it's held by creators as well as fans. Given how many writers of post-2005 Doctor Who are also fans, it's not surprising that the themes explored in The Robots of Death have also re-occurred in adventures from the last fifteen years.

This was also my first time reading a Black Archive, and before I embarked on it I wondered how so much could be found to say about a single four-part Doctor Who adventure that first aired six months before I was born. I soon found that a deep dive into the background of the story, and the future works it would inspire, made me appreciate The Robots of Death that much more.

[Visit 'The Black Archive' here](#)

[Buy 'The Robots of Death' from Obverse Books by clicking here.](#)

[Buy 'The Robots of Death' from Amazon UK here](#)

In 'The Waters Of Mars', The Doctor breaks the laws of time with tragic results. 'Time Lord Victorious' takes Ten's hubris and runs with it, making a long intuitive leap over the course of 12 weeks, building into an epic event. Comics. Novels. Figurines. Audios. An immersive experience. 'Time Lord Victorious' is a five-headed (at least) monster that is hard to track. To help, an introductory panel was held at this year's San Diego Comic-Con, describing 'Time Lord Victorious' as 'the BBC's brand-new, multi-platform Doctor Who story told across comics, novels, audio, vinyl and digital!' Despite the hyperbole, the panel was positive and was not presented as a money-making scheme. The participants, mostly from Titan Entertainment, really seemed to care about Doctor Who.

TLV focuses on the Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Doctors. There's a danger of getting stuck in the past when the current show is trying so hard to be fresh and new, but with the Thirteenth Doctor in Space Prison right now, this placeholder story doesn't contradict anything going on in the 'present.' (She is acknowledged in the Titan comics, thanks to a time paradox). Much as we enjoy previous Doctor stories with this many manufacturers involved, it would be great to see what they could do to move Who forward, instead of looking backward.

“It’s a new way to enjoy Doctor Who” said Andrew Sumner, the extremely enthusiastic Executive Vice President of Titan Entertainment, whose favourite word is “fantastic!”. The BBC created the project and had a title, but not much more. All the enthusiastic licensees (there are at least 10 different publishers/platforms) ran with this nebulous concept, thinking outside the box about how the saga could be told. For example, could a yarn be spun on a T-shirt?



“This is such a huge story,” said Titan comic book writer Jody Houser. “We get to tell the story that works best in comics... a piece of a bigger story.” She’s done a good job of appealing to a wide audience with writing that is accessible and not too complex.

During lockdown, BBC producer James

Goss thought TLV would be cancelled, a shame since he hinted that it had been gestating for years. But the licensees found a way to stay connected and carry on. “The project has been good during lockdown,” Goss said. “It was a way to stay creative until regular ventures were up and running again.” Finding a way to keep the story flowing, especially with virus-related delays, has been a challenge especially for ‘Time Fracture,’ the immersive theater portion of TLV. But the creators have been determined to make it work, incorporating a new alien race along with the Doctor’s old moral dilemma – should he be a watcher, or a time meddler?

For all the hoop-la, expect traditional storytelling albeit on a grand scale. As Titan editor Jake Devine summarized, “Time Lord Victorious boils down to a Doctor versus the Daleks story.”

[You can watch the Time Lord Victorious panel by clicking here.](#)

[The official trailer for Time Lord Victorious can be viewed here.](#)



Titan Comics Interview

Writer—Jody Houser

Cosmic Masque: I can't keep track of all the comics you've written for! How do you juggle all the different properties and keep track of all the characters and situations?

Jody Houser: I had to get good at multitasking when I was getting my MFA in creative writing--I was generally taking a 150% class load. When jumping from project to project, having good notes and outlines helps a lot. And if you're ever unsure of voice, watching or reading a bit to refamiliarize yourself with how the characters talk is key.

CM: You've written various tie-ins and superhero comics with characters that are already established. How much to do you focus on what has gone before, and how much do you just go with wherever the characters take you? Does the 'backstory' make it easier or harder for you to write?

JH: One of the main goals when working with a property owned by someone else is to make sure that the work you're doing fits into the bigger picture of the plans for the character/characters. So I do concern myself with the backstory, as well as where the characters are headed next, as far as I may know.

CM: How did you break into the comics 'big league'?

JH: I got my start in professional com-

ics with the Kickstarter anthology 'Womanthology'. It was my first published work, over eight years ago now.

CM: What's one thing you've learned from working with Roberta and Enrica?

JH: Roberta and Enrica are an amazing team. I love that I can throw out weird sci-fi planets and creatures in the script and they always make it work. And all of the different worlds we've seen have their own flavour thanks to them.

CM: When you 'see' the story in your head, do you see Roberta's style?

JH: I tend to visualize comics pages more as roughs or layouts in my head when writing, than seeing the final art. Every artist will do something different than what you're imagining (generally far better), so I try not to become too wedded to some sort of final idea of the art in my own head. That's not my job as the writer.

CM: Time Lord Victorious has been hyped up since February. Feeling any pressure?

JH: One of the nice things about big multi-platform stories like this is there are so many creative minds working on the different pieces. I think that helps keep it from feeling like the pressure is all on you.

CM: What do you hope to achieve with the Time Lord Victorious comic?

JH: I hope that it will work equally well as a stand-alone story and part of the larger event.

CM: Time Lord Victorious is only 2 is-

sues long. Who decided this? Do you wish it could be longer so you could develop the characters and situation? Is it weird leaving that to other creators (in other media)?

JH: Each of the issues is super-sized, so overall it's really the same page count to a four-issue story. That makes it the same length as the other Doctor Who stories I've done.

CM: You've described yourself as a RPG addict. Have you tried the Doctor Who RPG?

JH: I have! I was actually on a livestream Doctor Who RPG show called Eric's TBD RPG on Geek & Sundry before I ever worked on the Doctor Who comics. It's a really fun system, and I love how the combat very much mirrors the feel of the show.

CM: What next for you?

JH: Coming out this fall are Doctor Who Comic, Stranger Things: Summer Camp, and Stranger Things and Dungeons & Dragons.



[View more about Titan's Doctor Who range by clicking here.](#)

Titan Comics Interview

Artist—Robert Ingranata

Cosmic Masque: The theme of Cosmic Masque is 'about being a fan.' Why do you like Doctor Who? What attracts you?

Roberta Ingranata: The unpredictability of the series! And the fact that it fits into so many genres. It can be science-fiction, a thriller, a detective story, horror, historical, emotional, romantic. Doctor Who manages to be all in one series, and I love that!

CM: Are there particular Doctor Who TV episodes that have inspired you visually?

RI: Many, especially when there are similarities with the comics. For example, for the story with the "Weeping Angels" I looked at the episode (Blink) over and over again (it's always a pleasure) to grasp the atmosphere, the shots, the details.

CM: With only two seasons of the Thirteenth Doctor, the reference material is limited for you - how do you get around that?

RI: I'm not sure it's limited, I find a lot of references, especially watching the episodes. It is thanks to the episodes (and therefore to the screenshots) that I manage to have a very large archive, especially of expressions. I have jig and jig of RAM occupied by many folders!

CM: Time Lord Victorious is epic,

lasting for months and crossing different media. Being aware of this epic quality, did you approach it differently from other comics?

RI: I knew the project was very important, but I tried to do my best as in all other projects. It was very satisfying for me, especially with the presence of The Tenth Doctor and the Daleks!

CM: What was it like drawing all those Daleks? So many bumps ...

RI: I have my secrets!

CM: You've collaborated a lot with Jody Houser. What is your working relationship like?

RI: Great! I love Jody as a person and as a professional, working with her is always wonderful. I feel great affinity with her stories, I think it is for this reason that I have no difficulty in drawing them.

CM: Creating a visual world must be challenging. Do you prefer real-life settings, such as present-day New York and historical backdrops, or more fantastical ones?

RI: They are two very different things, a realistic environment gives you many references, while an imaginative one ... you can invent more! I like them both, but on Doctor Who I have both options. Draw today's London on page one and maybe on page 20 you draw a world made only of candy!

CM: Speaking about Witchblade you said, "as a woman and artist, I think that we can do something new in Witchblade's perspective. Not better,

just different." How does that point of view affect your Doctor Who comics?

RI: Each person's point of view is different, sometimes the point of view between a man and a woman is different too. As I said, this does not mean that the female point of view is better, but it is different. To draw a woman, sometimes you need a woman's sensitivity. Although I know many male artists with enormous sensitivity and ability to draw women.

CM: Being a comic book artist is hard work! How do you stay motivated?

RI: With a great pre-established routine! And a lot, a lot, of professionalism. I have very strict work schedules every day, and I am committed to respecting them. Then in life I am a disaster (LOL), late and messy, but at work I am very methodical. I believe that a good organization helps the work, combined with a lot of passion.

CM: What are your favourite techniques? Your favourite tool (such as pencil or brush)?

RI: I prefer digital to work, but when I dedicate myself to traditional drawing I certainly prefer the pencil.

CM: Any favourite artists at the moment?

RI: Lots! Difficult to make a list. It's like music, it depends on the period, lately I've been watching Rafael Albuquerque a lot, I love his work.

CM: Comic book art and fine art are seen as very different. Why do you think the 'gap' isn't as big in Italy?

Roberta Ingranata



RI: Because in Italy, unfortunately, the idea that comics are dedicated to "kids" still wins, that it is a childish thing. It is not regarded as in England, America or France. I hope that time will close this gap.

CM: *What's next for you?*

RI: We will see you again on Doctor Who in 2021!



[Click here to review Roberta's work at Titan](#)

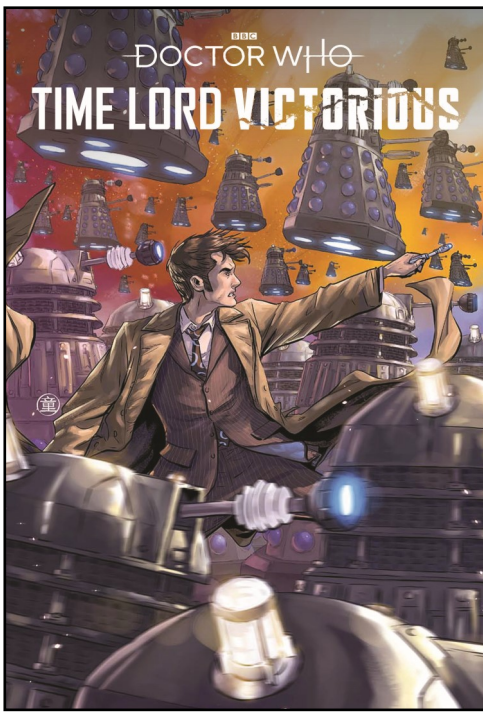
Time Lord Victorious 2 Comic

Review by Nick Smith

Titan's Doctor Who comics are consistent. Crack open the cover and you'll get sturdy writing, elegant art, references to previous adventures and a double shot of humour. That goes for the Time Lord Victorious (very) mini-series, which runs for two bumper issues.

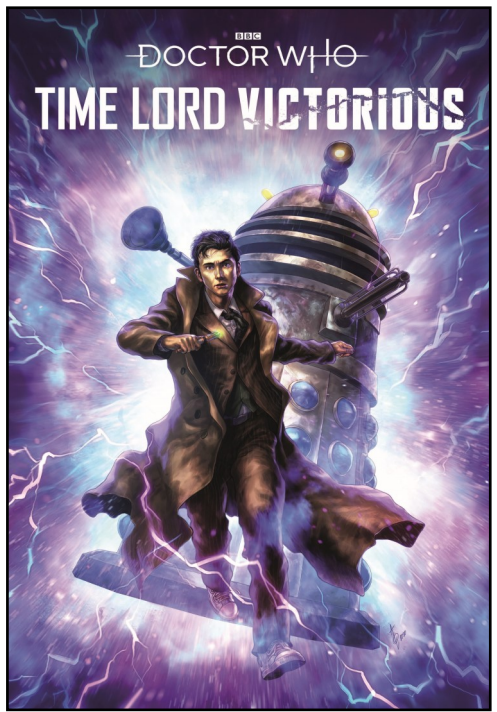


1 is a slow burn set-up, mostly a conversation between the Tenth Doctor and the Dalek Emperor, followed by a conversation between the Tenth Doctor and the Dalek Strategist. So, issue 2 has to do the heavy lifting of providing us with thrills, threats and the Doctor being clever.



The story's goopy alien enemy, the Hond, want to destroy all life – including Dalek life – because 'life hurts. When all life dies, all pain dies.' Since the Hond seem to be made of primordial yuck, the Daleks can't just exterminate them. They ask for the Doctor's help and he rarely lets them forget it.

Roberta Ingranata draws innumerable Daleks, depicts a withered Skaro and keeps the comic visually interesting with multiple angles of the Doctor, who has a smooth, recognizable face with a smattering of manga to it. Ingranata captures David Tennant's expressions while giving the look her own modern edge. The most striking image is that of the Strategist, its casing torn open with one ugly eye looking out. Writer Jody Houser imbues the Strategist with character but doesn't make it too likeable – it's still a Dalek, after all.



This is a simple story that definitely feels like an episode of Doctor Who, although it does rely on Tenth-isms a little too often (at one point he's so sorry; at another, he really is good!). Nevertheless, catchphrases like 'alonsy!' help the Tenth Doctor's voice to resound through the pages.

2 pulls its weight tremendously, focusing on a battle of wits between two strange bedfellows, the Doctor and the Daleks. It gets a rock solid 8/10.

[To view and buy Time Lord Victorious from Titan please click here](#)

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

The comic comes with three different cover illustrations. Two are shown here and all can be viewed at the Titan website.



From the Land of Fiction

Editorial by Stephen Hatcher

Welcome once more to the fiction section of Cosmic Masque. It's been a great pleasure over recent months to receive story submissions from a number of new writers (at least to us). Whether that is a result of our regular appeals for contributions; or because the varying degrees of lockdown have given potential writers the time to put their ideas into story form; I am not sure - perhaps it is a combination of factors. In any case, the result is a number of interesting stories in this and subsequent issues.

So, to those stories. I am delighted to be able to present new contributions from two of the strongest of our regular writers, Trinah Eke, whose previous contributions were in CM VIII and CM X; and Gary Merchant whose most recent story was in CM IX.

In *Evolved*, Trinah takes us to a planet, where the Fourth Doctor and Leela meet human colonists who are faced with the consequences of meddling in the development of an indigenous species.

Gary's story *Communication Breakdown* introduces us to a marriage guidance counsellor, who is trying to help a most unconventional couple.

The *Peril of the Picture House* is Thomas Beech's first story for Cosmic Masque and features the Third Doctor and Jo Grant. When they investigate strange goings-on in an abandoned

cinema, they find themselves faced with an old enemy.

Simon Horton is someone else who hasn't written for us before. His *Past Imperfect* is a Fourth Doctor story with Leela and K9, in which our heroes become embroiled in a time paradox, with potentially deadly consequences. Finally, I am delighted to introduce the first published work by Katherine Ioffe. Katherine is a young Doctor Who fan from the USA, who wrote to the Society asking advice about how to set up a local fan group. In her story *Dalek Who*, one of the most evil creatures in the Universe becomes confused as to who and what it is and sets out to do good in its own special way. It's a smashing story which shows that Katherine has lots of talent. We wish her luck with both her Doctor Who group and her writing.

As always, I'll end by reminding you that we want your stories. Send us your ideas or completed tales, to the email address at the front of this issue and your work will be considered for inclusion. Send us previously unpublished stories, featuring the Doctor, his/her friends and enemies or generally set in the Doctor Who Universe. It doesn't matter how much writing experience you have; I will work with you to tell your story. Cosmic Masque is your magazine and this is your chance to see your story in print

I do hope you will enjoy this issue's stories. We'll be back with more before too long – perhaps with your story included.

Steve

Fiction: Communication Breakdown

By Gary Merchant

Extract from the diary of Mr A. E. Howard, a noted counsellor on Marriage Guidance.

I hadn't been sure what to make of them at first. It had been two weeks since they had first made the initial appointment, and in that time, we didn't seem to have made much progress. The couple were talkative enough – at times it was hard to get a word in. There was certainly no lack of communication on their part. It was just that they couldn't seem to agree. And this day was no different.

I tried again. For the umpteenth time. "Is there any way for us to reach some kind of compromise?"

She glared at me, as if amazed that I'd dared make such a suggestion. "Hah! You might be able to, but we sure as hell can't."

The man sitting next to her tried to ease the situation. "The poor man is only trying to help."

She rounded on her partner. "Oh, that's right. Take his side."

"I'm not taking anyone's side."

"Well, you sure aren't helping."

This was how things had been since their first visit to my offices. Barely a sentence passed between them without some barbed comment being uttered. And while I've been, in the main, relatively successful on being a

good Marriage Guidance Counsellor, having steered many couples through some hard times, this was proving to be somewhat of an uphill struggle.

In an effort to move things on, I turned to the man. "I understand your line of work results in a lot of travelling for you."

"Doesn't it just," the woman muttered. I chose not to comment.

"I do travel quite a bit," he admitted.

"My work takes me to quite a few out-of-the-way places."

"And you're a Doctor, is that right?"

"Not in the medical sense," came the reply, "but I like to think I make things better than they were."

"Oh, play the sympathy card, why don't you," the woman sighed. "I let him out of my sight for one minute, and he went off in that... contraption of his, without even a forwarding address."

He turned to his partner. "That was hardly possible. And if you remember, I did offer to take you with me."

"Ah, yes." I was referring back to notes from a previous session. "Now, I believe that relates to your first meeting. Why don't you tell me about that?"

He looked down at his shoes. "I don't really remember anything about that."

"Well, you were on an operating table at the time," she reminded him. "He'd been shot," she explained. "I was on call at the hospital, so it was down to me to get the bullets out."

"After which, you nearly ended up killing me all by yourself."

She shot him a look of contempt. "That wasn't my fault. I hardly knew you at the time."

"That's true," he noted.

"Anyway." She paused, before continuing, as if daring him to interrupt her.

"Anyway, the next time I saw him was in the car park. He said he needed my help, but I didn't recognise him at all." Her partner chipped in. "It's amazing what a night's rest can do for you. I felt invigorated, but with no real memory of who I was or what had happened to me."

I was curious. This had been glossed over before and seemed to be a real stumbling block for them both. "Do you mean to say you had blanked out the memory of what had happened to you in the operating theatre?"

They seemed uncomfortable talking about this. "We can explain that later," the man eventually replied. "Anyway, after a few misunderstandings, we properly got together the next evening. And after an eventful night..."

"He left," she finished for him. "I ask him to stay with me, and he turns me down, the nerve of him! He just turned around and walked out of my life for the next few years."

"But I came back," he insisted. "I'm here now, aren't I?"

"Only because it suits you," she snapped, turning back to me. "He went away for God knows how long, and then he turns up outside my house, as if nothing had happened."

The man protested. "Nothing did happen – not the way you mean, anyway."

I picked up on this. "You believed he had been unfaithful?"

She let out a short laugh. "He sure had the opportunity."

"And I swear to you," he told her. "Nothing happened."

"And how do I know you won't disappear the minute my back's turned? This isn't the first time, you know," she said to me. "He came back a few

months after he left, with some kid in tow. And before I knew it, he left again. With her."

I'm supposed to be a neutral party in these situations, yet I couldn't help but take a dim view of this. "You do seem to be away for extremely long periods," I said to the man. "I can understand why your wife..."

"We're not married," they said in unison.

This was, to say the least, a surprise. Certainly, there had been no indication of this in their previous sessions. I looked from one to the other, stunned. "I beg your pardon; I had assumed you were husband and wife."

The man spoke. "We, ah... have an understanding. That's the phrase, isn't it, Grace?"

"Something like that," she agreed quickly.

Recovering from my momentary confusion, I addressed the couple. "Well, from whatever basis this understanding operates, it doesn't seem to be working, does it?" The two of them were taken aback by my outburst – and I must confess the words were out of my mouth before I could stop myself. After all, one must have a sense of detachment in these matters, but as the session had gone on this had become more difficult to maintain. I found myself breathing rather heavily as I tried to remain objective. "Have either of you ever considered marriage?"

"You mean, to each other?"

"That was the general idea," I suggested.

They both stared at me in shock, looked at each other, and then back again. This was clearly something that

had not been on the agenda. The man shook his head. "It wouldn't work." She seemed to hastily agree on this point. "He's a doctor – well, you knew that. I mean, we're both doctors. And marriage... well, it just wouldn't be practical."

"For either of us," the man added.

This was becoming impossible. I could see no further way forward, despite my best efforts. "Then why are you both here?" I exclaimed.

"Well..." the

man hesitated. "That's a good question. Why are we here, Grace?"

"Well, it was your idea," she replied.

"Was it?" he asked, uncertain.

"Sure. Don't you remember?" She said.

"We'd been at the movies for the evening, and when we got back we had this argument, and you said..."

He snapped his fingers, remembering. "That's right. I said that if we'd behaved like that other couple, we'd soon be in need of help ourselves."

The situation was spiralling out of my control. "Excuse me," I persevered.

"What other couple?"

"The couple in the film," the man said, as if it was the obvious answer. "What was the name of it, Grace?"

"When Harry Met Sally," she reminded him. "Jeez, your memory..."

"Let me see if I have this correct." I stammered. "For the past two weeks I have been attempting to counsel you both in an effort to get to the root of your problems, only to learn today that they were centred around a film?"

"Problems?" Realisation dawned as the man's face broke into a smile. "Oh, that. No, that was just an experiment." I was now beside myself. "An experiment?"

"We just wanted to see how it would be if we didn't get along for once." The woman smiled at her partner. "We've never had a cross word, not really."

"Then why...?"

"Well, we felt we couldn't rationalise anything sensibly unless we had a referee of sorts. Like yourself," the man offered a winning smile. "And you've been a great help to us both. It's been a fascinating piece of research."

"Research? Really?" I felt my voice crack. "In other words, you've been wasting my time for the past two weeks - playacting just for the sake of a foolish test?!"

"Oh, don't worry," the man reassured him. "We'll be sure to give you an honourable mention in the next issue of The Lancet."

"I, um... I don't think that's what he means, Doctor." The woman must have seen the look of distress on my face. "We might just have overstayed our welcome."

"You think so?" He looked from the woman and then to me. "Ah. I think you may be right, Grace. Perhaps we should make our excuses and leave."

"Forget the excuses," she said, pushing him toward the door. "Let's just leave."

I watched them, stony-faced, as the door closed behind the couple. Only then did I fall back in my chair, passing a shaking hand across my brow. A stupid test, that was all it had been about. And I felt humiliated, made to look a fool. I would probably be the butt of their jokes for some time. Oh, I like a joke as much as the next man, but this had been too much. To have my place of work invaded by two people who were probably laughing at me even

now.

With everything else that had happened recently, this was the last straw. I looked to the drinks cabinet. I'm not normally one to indulge during the day, but at that moment I didn't really care. Right at that moment I needed a drink. A scotch would do. Neat.

As I raised the glass to my lips, the door to my office opened unexpectedly, and the head of the man popped through the gap. "Sorry about earlier," he said. "I think we might have overstepped the mark."

Something snapped inside me. The man ducked as a full glass of scotch slammed against the door, the glass shattering under the impact. I barely took all of this in as I stared numbly at what I had just done. After a moment I was vaguely aware of the man leading me to the nearest chair, talking in hushed tones as he sat me down. "Grace," he called out. "I think you'd better come in."

I looked up as the woman entered. The look of concern that they both shared did little to raise my spirits as she loosened my tie and undid my shirt collar. Why should they care about someone like me?

"Did we do this to him?" she asked as she took my pulse.

"We might have acted as the trigger, certainly," the man replied. "Perhaps there's some underlying cause." He addressed me directly. "How long have you been like this?"

My head was still spinning. "I've tried, I really have. But it just doesn't seem to be enough. I just can't hold it together anymore."

"He's rambling," I heard the man say. "Grace, you try. You understand humans better than I do." I think I must have misheard that last sentence. Not that it mattered.

The woman sat opposite me so that we faced each other. She studied my face for a moment before speaking. "Why don't you start at the beginning?" she suggested.

I let the words tumble out. The problems I'd had trying to juggle work and home life, and the resulting troubles in my personal life. I had tried to make things work and had kept things bottled up inside. I had reasoned that, if I could help other couples, then it should follow that my own should be just as straightforward. Except it hadn't worked out that way.

I'm not sure if I explained all this as clearly then as I've written it now, but some of it must have made a sort of sense to the couple. "When was the last time you did something unexpected?" the woman asked.

"You mean, apart from throwing that glass?" I found a grim humour there. "Not for a long time. My wife and I have a good relationship. She has her interests, and I have my work."

"But isn't that a contradiction?" the man wondered. "It sounds as though your work has become your whole life, when it should only be a part of it."

The woman seemed to agree with this. "Aren't there any interests that you and your wife could do together?" I had to confess that I had no answer to this. I simply didn't know.

"This isn't really my field," the man stressed, "but I assume you still love each other?"

"Well, yes," I said. "That goes without saying."

"Ah, but does it? When was the last time you told your wife that you loved her?"

I looked at them both. "Does that matter?"

The woman took my hands in hers. "I think you have some way to go if you have to ask. As the Doctor says, romance isn't really his thing – well, not usually. But he is right. You need to stop letting your work take over your life, and maybe focus on what's really important."

The three of us talked until late into the evening, having cancelled all other appointments for that day. I have to admit that it was the first time I had ever been so open with anyone. Usually it was I who would be addressing other people's relationships. This time I had to look at my own situation, and whether it was worth saving.

During our long conversation, there were issues raised that I hadn't even mentioned to my wife. My dear Eleanor, who must have wondered where I was. Normally I would have been home by this time, but I had much to ponder over. I had allowed myself to become so wrapped up in other people's problems, to the point where they overtook my own. I had let my own life take second place.

By the time the Doctor – he never told me his name – and Grace bade their farewells, I felt a sense of release, as though a heavy burden had been lifted from my shoulders. Through their words of encouragement, they had given me a fresh outlook on life, and

the knowledge that it wasn't too late to try again and learn from the mistakes I had made.

And since that day, more than a year ago, my life has indeed changed for the better. Eleanor and I spend more time together, and we found we did have mutual interests in history and nature. It took some time for me to get the balance between work and home exactly right, but it has been well worth the effort.

I often wonder about the Doctor and Grace, and how their lives may have changed. Thinking back, I can see that while they were close, they were not a couple – at least, not in the traditional sense of the word. But their bond of friendship was clear, and whatever life has in store for them, I am certain that bond will never be broken.

Extract ends.



Fiction: **Dalek Who?**

by Katherine Ioffe

The Doctor was regenerating.

The silly old man in the bowtie was surrounded by Dalek ships, in a town called Christmas on the planet Trenzalore. He stretched his arms out and let the regeneration energy blaze.

"I'm from Gallifrey, boys!" he shouted triumphantly at his Dalek attackers, each Dalek ship exploding in the sky, one by one.

But there was one Dalek, one Dalek who was not completely destroyed. This Dalek was hit by regeneration energy, and absorbed it. But the Dalek absorbed more than regeneration energy; it absorbed the Doctor's personality. "I am a Dalek!" said the Dalek with reasonable certainty, as it began to feel the onset of change. It felt a terrible, horrible sensation within itself. "I am a Dalek!" the Dalek repeated, as if to reassure itself. But it knew it wasn't true. It continued with increasing uncertainty, "I am a Dalek! I am a Dalek! I am..." Now the regeneration had taken full effect, bursting into a beautiful orange fire, "I am... the Doc-tor!"

The Dalek wandered across the burning, rubble filled battlefield, looking for the wounded; looking for a way to be good. He was the Doctor, and the Doctor was good. The Doctor should go across the battlefield, and find the wounded. The Doctor would help the

Universe by caring for the wounded, and that was good.

And lying there on its side in the wreckage of a fallen building was a bruised and battered Dalek. The Doctor-Dalek found himself filled with intense hatred of the thing. The Doctor should help to protect the universe from these evil creatures.

The wounded Dalek said, "You are a Dalek. You will assist me".

"No," the Doctor-Dalek replied curtly.

"You are a Dalek. We are the same. You will assist me." the wounded Dalek replied.

"No," the Doctor-Dalek spat with seething contempt, "I will assist go-od! You my en-emy!"

"No," the wounded Dalek said, "I am like you. We are the superior life-form. We will exterminate all non-Daleks!"

"No!" the Doctor-Dalek replied, "You are my en-emy! You are evil! I am not a Dalek! I am not a Dalek!"

"Then what are you?" asked the wounded Dalek. "I am your en-emy!" said the Doctor-Dalek. "You will be exterminated!"

"What are you?" repeated the wounded Dalek, a trace of confusion, fear even, seeping into its modulated voice.

"I am..." the Doctor-Dalek said, becoming hysterical with hatred, "I am the Doc-tor! You will be exterminated!" And with that, the Doctor-Dalek shot the wounded Dalek, turning it into ash. The Doctor-Dalek continued to glide across the battlefield.

There was a wounded woman, a civilian, trapped beneath rubble and broken stones. She was crying, and horribly wounded, but she was trying to pull herself out of the wreckage. If it had been a Dalek, the Doctor-Dalek would have exterminated the inferior life form on sight. But he was the Doctor now. He was good. For the first time, the Doctor-Dalek felt something other than hate. He felt, he felt...what did he feel? The Doctor-Dalek did not know this feeling, but it compelled him to approach.

"No!" the woman screamed in terror, "No!"

The Doctor-Dalek felt pain at this reaction. "I will assist you. You are a friend."

"Stay away, Dalek!" screamed the woman, desperately throwing bits of stone and rubble at him.

"I will assist you. I am the Doc-tor." said the Doctor-Dalek.

"No! You're not!" shouted the wounded woman. "You're a Dalek! All you do is kill and hate! The Doctor, he's kind and merciful. You, you are not! You are a Dalek!"

"I am not a Dalek." said the Doctor-Dalek, feeling a new sensation. Sadness... it was sadness. "I am the Doctor. I will assist you."

The wounded woman was still suspicious, "Will you call for help then?"

"No," replied the Doctor-Dalek.

"Will you find a hospital, then?" asked the woman, still fearful and suspicious.

"No," the Doctor-Dalek said.

"What will you do, then?" asked the wounded woman, becoming increasingly confused and frustrated.

"I will assist you." the Doctor-Dalek said.

"How?" asked the wounded woman, still trying to pull herself out of the wreckage.

"You are in pain. You are suffering. You cannot be repaired." said the Doctor-Dalek.

"If you're not going to do anything," pleaded the wounded woman, "Then at least call someone! Please!"

"I will assist you," the Doctor-Dalek said. The Doctor-Dalek aimed its weapon at the wounded woman.

"No!" she begged in terror. "No please! I have a family! I have children!"

"I show kindness." the Doctor-Dalek said, "I show mercy. Exterminate!" he fired his weapon. "I am the Doc-tor!"

The Doctor-Dalek continued to traverse the battlefield, looking for more wounded to help or enemies to exterminate.

With a whooshing sound and a thud, a large blue box appeared out of thin air on the battlefield before the Doctor-Dalek. The doors to the police box creaked open, and out stepped the Doctor, no longer young and no longer wearing a bow tie. He was now grey-haired and dressed in black.

The Doctor stepped out of the TARDIS, his eyebrows knitted in an expression of outrage and fury. "Rusty!" the Doctor said. "May I call you Rusty? I met a Dalek once like you, and I called him Rusty."

"I am the Doc-tor!" said the Doctor-Dalek.

"No, Rusty! You really are not!" the Doctor said sternly. "and you never will be. You never, ever, ever will be."

"I am the Doc-tor! I have done good!" the Doctor-Dalek replied.

"Is that really so?" said the Doctor quietly, the rage and fury bubbling quietly beneath the surface. "Because, I heard what you've been doing here, this little charade. And I have arrived too late it seems." he gestured to the ashes on the battlefield. "And you did it in my name! My name Rusty, not yours! Because, last time I checked, enemy or friend, KILLING IS NOT GOOD!"

The Doctor-Dalek lowered its eye-stalk as it experienced sadness for a second time, "Why?"

"You can drop the charade, Rusty." the Doctor said with complete and utter contempt. "You are not the Doctor. You are not ever good. And you can never ever be good."

"I am," the Doctor-Dalek said mournfully, "the Doc-tor."

"No you're not, Rusty," the Doctor said. "You think you are, but you're really not. Because even if you have some of my personality, even if you have morals, you are still what you are. Your nature, your programming, your

design, none of it will ever let you do anything other than kill. If you continue, you'll cause destruction and death wherever you go. You won't see the evil or pain that you inflict. Because you'll never believe that you're anything but right and good."

"Why?" asked the Doctor-Dalek once more, but this time it had ceased to be a question and had become desperate denial. "You are good. Why... can't... I... be... good?"

The Doctor's expression softened. He knelt down and drew himself closer to the Dalek, "If you really are me...If you are me then you know that there is one thing you can do. There is one good thing you can do. What is the one thing that you hate most? Who is the most dangerous being in the universe? Harness that hate without hope; without witness; without reward." The Doctor stood up, and looked down at the Dalek, "What can you sacrifice, Doctor?"

The Dalek's weapon hummed and whirred, "I have reversed the polarity of my weapon. I will be exterminated!"

With a scream, and a flash of blue light, the Dalek who believed itself to be the Doctor, was now no more than ashes.



Fiction: Evolved

by Trinh Eke

"Do you know where we going this time?" asked Leela.

"Why do we want to know where we are going?" replied the Doctor indignantly, "I like surprises. Don't you like surprises?" he asked.

Leela thought for a moment, "Sometimes," she replied. The Doctor smiled. "I hope it is somewhere warm this time," she said rubbing her arms.

"You're about to find out; we're landing," replied the Doctor. He flicked a switch on the console, activating the viewscreen.

"It is a city!" exclaimed Leela.

"Shall we take a look around?" asked the Doctor, pulling the lever to open the door. Leela smiled. The Doctor strolled out and she followed.

The TARDIS had materialised on the outskirts of a city. The city was gleaming white, stretching out for miles in front of them. Leela turned to see what lay beyond and could see fields dotted with farm buildings and animal enclosures. She smiled at the sight of a forest in the distance. "Can we go exploring?" she asked, gazing longingly at the forest.

"Of course; let's go," replied the Doctor, striding off into the city.

Leela turned to speak and saw the Doctor moving away, she had to run to catch up. "Are we not going to explore the forest?" she asked.

"Don't you want to see the city?" asked the Doctor.

"Well, yes...of course..." Leela trailed off giving the forest a lingering look.

"Which way?"

The Doctor smiled, moving toward a wide street. "This way, come on."

"Are you sure you do not know where we are?" asked Leela.

"One city looks much like another after a while," replied the Doctor. "All roads lead to the centre." They headed along the street, which was lined with uniform rows of buildings on each side, intersected every two hundred feet with side streets. "It's a grid layout, all the streets are intersected with other streets," observed the Doctor.

"Is that bad?" asked Leela.

"No it's not bad! It's interesting," replied the Doctor haughtily.

"And that is good?"

"Sometimes," replied the Doctor.

They walked in silence until they reached the centre of the city.

"It is deserted," said Leela.

The Doctor looked into the sky, "No, I don't think so. It's early; the day hasn't started yet,"

"How can you tell?" asked Leela looking into the sky. "The sun is high; hunting parties should have gone out long ago."

"The solar collectors on the buildings aren't very efficient, they'll need another hour or so before they generate enough energy to maintain a city this size."

"Solar collectors?" said Leela puzzled.

"They collect the energy from sunlight and turn it into power," explained the Doctor. "Let's find ourselves somewhere comfortable to wait shall we?" said the Doctor with a smile.

As the Doctor had predicted the city came to life a couple of hours later. A few minutes later the Doctor and

Leela were greeted by someone whom Leela decided must be some sort of official. "Greetings travellers," he said, subtly trying to tuck his shirt in behind his back. "What brings you to the city of New Babylon?"

"New Babylon," repeated the Doctor smiling. "Just passing. Thought we would stop for a visit, didn't we Leela?" Leela nodded in agreement before adding, "Yes,"

"Good, good. We are very proud of our city, there is plenty to see," the official said enthusiastically. "Where are my manners? I'm Erich Salanger, Mayor of New Babylon," he said holding out his hand to shake.

"I'm the Doctor, and this is Leela," the Doctor replied, shaking Erich's hand.

"A Doctor, marvellous! What are you a Doctor of?" replied Erich excitedly.

"Oh many things," replied the Doctor with a smile.

Erich pondered for a moment. "Many disciplines, excellent! Here in New Babylon, we encourage learning... and research naturally."

"Naturally," repeated the Doctor smiling.

Erich continued. "We are engaged in many fields of research, I am sure we can find something to interest you. The labs aren't in operation at the moment, but I could give you a tour later. In the meantime would you like a tour of the city?"

A short time later the Doctor and Leela were standing beside a stepped wall, adorned with varieties of flowering plants. "It's our version of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon... on a much smaller scale obviously. One day we hope to surpass the original," Erich explained.

"It's very pretty," remarked Leela

sniffing a nearby plant. Erich smiled with pride. "Can you eat them?" she asked.

Erich looked horrified.

"Leela is from a colony where survival was tough, no frivolities like decorative gardens," explained the Doctor.

Erich nodded in understanding. "It was tough here in the beginning, too," he said. "The labs should be up and running by now. Ready for the tour?"

The labs were situated in a large building on the eastern edge of the city, close to the animal enclosures. "What are those creatures?" asked Leela after seeing the animals in the enclosures up close for the first time. They were the size and shape of a cow with multi-coloured feathers, long necks and a single horn in the middle of their heads.

"We call them eekers, because of the sound they make. They are an indigenous species," Erich explained.

Leela was confused. "In-did-jen-us?"

"It means they were already on this planet when the colonists arrived," explained the Doctor.

"They are magnificent creatures," said Leela.

Erich smiled, "If you would rather tour the animal enclosures..."

"Yes," interrupted Leela with a smile.

"Ronan!" shouted Erich to a man working beside a nearby enclosure, who walked over to join the group. "This is Leela, could you show her the eekers?" "Of course," replied Ronan smiling at Leela. She returned the smile. Ronan gestured for Leela to accompany him and they headed to the animal enclosures.

Erich punched a code into a keypad beside the lab door. There was an audible clunk as the door unlocked. Erich pulled open the door and ushered the Doctor inside. The labs lined either side of a long corridor. Each lab had a keypad entry system. The Doctor peered into the nearest lab window, "paleobotany," he moved to another window. "geology... ah, zoology. You are studying the eekers! I can see why, they are fascinating creatures."

"We believe they are at a crucial point of their evolutionary history. We are trying to accelerate it to see what they become," explained Erich.

"Do you think that's wise?" asked the Doctor.

"We take all due precautions, I assure you, Doctor... I don't remember you giving me your name," replied Erich.

"Doctor, just Doctor," replied the Doctor with a smile. "You know, you could improve the efficiency of your solar collectors by 50% if you..."

"50%?" Erich asked in astonishment.

"Oh at least, maybe even 75%..."

Leela sat with Ronan as he told the story of how the original colonists had encountered the eekers. "So the colonists, low on food went into the forest hoping for fruit or berries or fungi, something, anything they could eat. They got just inside the forest and they heard a noise. 'Eek, eek'."

The sound of Ronan doing a creditable impersonation of the eekers' odd calls made Leela laugh.

"They had been here three weeks and this was the first indication of any form of life on the planet. Curious, they went searching for the source of the sound. They found a group of eekers in a clearing, apparently fighting, charging at

each other. Well, they watched for a while, but the eekers noticed them and started to charge the colonists, at full speed, 'Eek, eek'. The colonists scattered and ran in all directions. One, Keegan, ran further into the forest, the eekers followed him. He was so busy looking behind him he didn't notice a huge tree and ran straight into it."

Leela laughed again.

Ronan was becoming more and more animated as he told the story. "Keegan was smart, slumped next to a tree with a herd of eekers charging towards him, he thought fast. He knew the only way to stop the charging eekers was to show dominance, so he got to his feet and roared, 'RAWR'." Ronan laughed.

"What happened next?" asked Leela struggling to speak through laughter.

"The eekers stopped, lowered their heads and squeaked."

"Squeaked?" asked Leela.

"Squeaked. It's their way of showing submission," explained Ronan. "The eekers saved the colony. They provide us with milk, meat, manure and some parts of them have medicinal properties, nothing goes to waste, we even make use of their feathers."

"They are magnificent," said Leela.

"They are," agreed Ronan. "We have a cull scheduled today, if their numbers get too great they overrun the city, do you want to join?"

"A cull?" asked Leela.

"It's kind of a hunt," explained Ronan.

"A hunt? Then I will be honoured to join," replied Leela smiling. "I will need to return to the TARDIS and prepare."

"TARDIS?" asked Ronan.

"It is our... ship," replied Leela.

"Where is it?" asked Ronan.

Leela looked around. "That way," she replied getting to her feet setting off

for the TARDIS. Ronan watched her for a second and then joined her.

As they walked Ronan continued to regale Leela with stories. They reached the TARDIS. Ronan stared at it for a moment, "This is a ship?"

"Yes," replied Leela, retrieving a key from her pouch. She unlocked the door and stepped inside, motioning to Ronan to wait. A minute or so later she returned having collected her bow, a quiver of arrows and her hunting knife.

"Er," said Ronan.

"Yes?" replied Leela.

Ronan smiled, "Shall we go?"

Leela nodded.

Erich watched as the Doctor and Tomas worked on plans for the solar collectors' upgrade. Finally the Doctor spoke, "That should do it."

Erich caught Tomas' eye, Tomas smiled. "By my calculations, this will increase efficiency by 80%. It's really rather simple, we should have thought of it," said Tomas.

"Oh, don't be too hard on yourself, Tomas. We can't all be geniuses," the Doctor said with a wide grin. Erich looked uneasy but Tomas smiled.

"So how long will this upgrade take?" Erich asked.

"With the Doctor's help..." Tomas glanced at the Doctor trying to gauge whether he would be willing to help. The Doctor smiled. "A few hours,"

"Then please, start as soon as possible," replied Erich. "Anything you need will be at your disposal,"

Leela had initially kept her disappointment to herself, when they had used technology to locate the eekers, it wasn't the way she would have liked to

hunt, but this wasn't her world. Traveling with the Doctor had taught her that different was not necessarily wrong; but this... this was wrong. Finally she could contain herself no longer. Stepping out in front of the hunting party, she spoke up. "This is not hunting, this is slaughter. These creatures deserve better."

"This is a cull," replied the leader, a man named Seth.

"A cull, a hunt, whatever words you want to use, this is without honour. If you are going to kill these creatures, it should be done with respect; they should have a chance to escape to live another day. "This..." Leela grabbed a stun gun from one the group, "...is not a fair hunt,"

"Leela!" implored Ronan.

"We aren't here to hunt, we are here to cull their numbers," replied Seth.

"Can you not do both?" asked Leela.

"This is the most humane way we could think of. Torturing these animals in a hunt..."

Leela fired the stun gun at Seth, he dropped to the floor.

The Doctor and Tomas were working on the upgrade watched by Erich, when a man rushed into the room, "There has been an incident on the cull," he said breathlessly.

"What kind of incident?" asked Erich concern on his face.

The man looked at the Doctor, "His companion, she... stunned Seth." The Doctor didn't appear to have heard. The man continued, "She threatened the rest of the party with the stun gun so they...stunned her. They are on their way back now."

"How long does the stun effect last?" asked the Doctor without looking up

from his work.

"A couple of hours," replied Erich.

"No immediate rush then, I will continue working until she wakes up. We can sort out this mess then."

Erich nodded at the man, who departed. "Doctor... we have laws..."

"Shush... Later," replied the Doctor.

Erich opened his mouth to speak but closed it again and sighed. He left the room.

Less than two hours later the Doctor, accompanied by Erich, headed to the cell where Leela was being held. He heard her before he saw her; she was yelling threats at her captors. When Leela saw the Doctor she stopped yelling. "Are you here to free me?" she asked hopefully.

"In time. You need to be patient... and stop threatening people," the Doctor replied.

Leela nodded and sat down on the bed.

"Now..." said the Doctor turning to Erich, "what happens next, an inquiry?"

"Yes, of sorts. We gather witnesses together in the meeting room and listen to accounts of events," replied Erich.

"Will Leela be given the opportunity to give her account?" asked the Doctor.

"Of course," replied Erich. "Everyone involved is required to give their account,"

"There we are, you see Leela. Everything is going to be fine."

Leela smiled.

"I will convene the meeting. Unlock the cell," Erich instructed a guard.

"Come on then," said the Doctor to Leela, who had remained seated on the bed. She rose and slowly walked to

the open door.

The Doctor and Leela followed Erich as he led the way to the meeting room. "Please sit down, I will be back in a few minutes and then we shall begin." Erich indicated the long oval table surrounded by a dozen chairs, in the middle of the large room; then left the Doctor and Leela alone. The Doctor pulled out a chair and sat down, putting his feet up onto the table, Leela stared at him for a moment and sat in a chair beside him. They waited in silence. After a few minutes members of the cull party began streaming in taking seats around the table; among them Ronan, who sat beside Leela. Finally, Erich and Seth entered the room and sat down. "Good, we are all here; let's begin. Seth?" said Erich.

Seth glared at Leela and began speaking, "We were out culling, we had just stunned two eekers and Jakob had finished them off..."

"Hit them over the head with a lump of wood like a..." sputtered Leela in disgust.

"Leela!" interrupted the Doctor. "Shush, you will have your say later."

Leela crossed her arms and harrumphed but remained quiet.

"Please continue," said the Doctor.

Seth resumed speaking, "...and then she grabbed a stun gun and shot me."

Leela glared at him but didn't speak.

Erich nodded and turned to Jakob. "Jakob, will you tell us what happened?"

One after another each of the group gave their accounts, repeating Seth's story almost exactly; all except Ronan who added what Leela had said; until finally it was Leela's turn to speak herself.

"Ronan invited me to a cull, he said it was like a hunt. Hunting is noble and

with purpose. What you do is not hunting. You do not track, you do not study your prey. You stun and bludgeon, like cowards in the night." Leela's disgust was clear.

Erich paused, then after a moment he turned back to Ronan. "Is this true? Did you say a cull was like a hunt?"

"I did. I didn't realise she would misunderstand..." Ronan trailed off. "I'm sorry. This is my fault."

Leela looked at Ronan confused.

"I'm sorry Leela, you were misled about the purpose of the cull. This is an unfortunate misunderstanding," said Erich.

"I do not understand," said Leela.

"The purpose of a cull is to reduce the numbers of eekers as quickly and painlessly as possible," explained Erich.

"Those stun guns are not painless," interrupted Leela.

"Maybe not, but they are the best we can do," said Erich solemnly.

Leela thought for a moment and nodded resignedly.

"This matter is settled," declared Erich rising to his feet. "Now, please return to your duties."

The members filed out of the meeting room. Seth gave Leela another glare before leaving. Ronan remained seated beside Leela.

"I'm sorry Leela," he said quietly when everyone else had left.

"Erich said it was a misunderstanding," replied Leela.

Ronan nodded, "Will you be attending the feast later?"

"Will you be eating the eekers you killed today?" asked Leela, an edge to her voice. Ronan nodded.

"I will not eat animals killed in such a way, it dishonours them," she replied.

Ronan got to his feet and left the meeting room in silence.

"That went well I thought, didn't you

think that went well?" asked the Doctor.

"You were no help," replied Leela.

"You didn't need help," said the Doctor. Leela smiled. "I think it would be best if you went back to the TARDIS, I have a few more things to do here, but I will join you later," Leela nodded.

Tomas was still working when the Doctor re-joined him a few minutes later.

"How did it go?" he asked.

"Oh, as expected, all a big misunderstanding," the Doctor replied.

"Good." The Doctor resumed work.

A few hours later they were finished.

"Test run?" asked the Doctor. Tomas nodded. They attached a converter to a multimeter and switched it on.

Tomas watched the readings excitedly. "These readings... this will transform the colony, no more power rationing."

Half an hour later the upgraded system was online. The Doctor had bid Tomas farewell and was on his way to the TARDIS. In the distance he could see the glow of multiple fires and could make out the shadows of colonists around them. "That must be their feast," he said to himself. He reached the TARDIS and stepped inside. Leela was sitting on the floor beside K9. She scrambled to her feet.

"Are we leaving now?" she asked.

"Not yet. I want to make sure the upgrade is a success. Tomorrow," replied the Doctor.

"And then we will leave?" Leela asked hopefully. The Doctor smiled, Leela responded with an uneasy smile.

A few hours later Leela was sleeping. The Doctor was tinkering in the console room. There was a loud banging on the door. "Doctor! Doctor!" the voice was familiar. The Doctor pulled the lever on the console and walked briskly to the door.

"Hello Erich... and Seth, isn't it?" he greeted his visitors.

"Doctor. There's been an incident..." began Erich.

"That woman Leela has poisoned us!" yelled Seth.

"K9!" commanded the Doctor.

"Master?" responded K9, moving to the door.

"How long has Leela been in the TARDIS?"

"The Mistress has been in the TARDIS for 9.4 hours, Master."

"There you are you see. Leela couldn't have poisoned anyone; she has been right here since the inquiry," stated the Doctor.

"You think we will accept the word of a robot?" Seth hissed.

"K9 wouldn't lie, would you K9?" replied the Doctor.

"Negative, Master,"

"You see. How many people are sick?" asked the Doctor.

"Hundreds," replied Erich solemnly.

"Eight have died."

"Hundreds? Since yesterday?" asked the Doctor.

"Most of the people who attended the feast..." Erich said.

"They were poisoned!" interrupted Seth.

"Didn't you two attend the feast?" asked the Doctor.

"I did," replied Erich.

"But you're not sick? What about you, Seth? Did you attend the feast?"

"No," snapped Seth.

"Erich, this is very important. Did you

eat eeker meat?" asked the Doctor.

"I don't eat meat," Erich replied. "You think the meat was tainted?"

"It seems the most probable explanation," said the Doctor.

"How is that possible?" asked Erich.

"Every precaution is taken in food preparation."

"I have a theory. I will need to speak to some of your scientists."

Erich thought for a moment, "Yes, yes of course."

The Doctor stooped down to K9, he whispered, "Make sure Leela stays in the TARDIS."

"Affirmative, Master," responded K9.

The Doctor walked out of the door and closed it behind him.

Seth had left reluctantly to track down the scientists. "Tell me about the containment procedures for the labs?" asked the Doctor as he and Erich walked to the meeting room.

"You think this has something to do with an experiment? I can't think of anything our scientists are working with that could have caused this," replied Erich.

"The procedures?" the Doctor prodded.

"Having limited power, containment on the labs can only be maintained until 6pm. All research materials must be locked in the containment vault by 5.00pm. There is a one-hour clean-up window for disposal of anything that could be a hazard. We take great care with our research."

"I assume the containment vault has its own power supply?"

"Yes, it's a separate system."

"And there have been no power fluctuations?" asked the Doctor.

"None. I would have been informed."

"With such a small window each day for research, some of your scientists must get frustrated. Hmm?" said the Doctor.

"Well...yes, but they know how important containment is," replied Erich. "You think one of them breached procedures, don't you?"

"I am certain of it," replied the Doctor. "The experiment on the eekers, accelerating their evolution; have you considered that carefully? Eekers were the dominant life form on this planet, now they have one natural predator. Evolution in time would have given them a defence against that predator, you accelerated the process,"

Erich's face went pale, "You think we did this to ourselves?" They walked in silence the rest of the way to the meeting room. Some of the scientists were already there. Erich scanned the faces, Henrik, the evolutionary biologist was missing. Erich ushered the Doctor to sit and took a seat beside him.

A short time later, Seth arrived with more scientists shaking his head at Erich, "The rest are sick."

Erich glanced around the arriving scientists, he spotted Henrik. "Doctor, this is Henrik, evolutionary biologist."

The Doctor leapt to his feet, smiling. "Henrik!" he boomed. "Tell me about the eekers. Fascinating creatures," he said putting a hand behind his back and leading him to a seat.

Henrik looked puzzled for a moment, "Er, well, yes; the eekers. You've seen them I assume. They evolved from birds... well I am sure you guessed... the feathers. They are midway through the transformation from bird to mammal. I'd seen fossils of evolving species, but to see it up so close... well..."

"It's the opportunity of a lifetime," said

the Doctor.

"It is, it is," enthused Henrik.

"And you have been able to accelerate the process," added the Doctor.

"Yes, to be able to witness the evolutionary process on this scale, it's never been done before."

"But the time constraints, with the power rationing, that must be frustrating," said the Doctor.

"Yes it is," replied Henrik.

"Is that why you broke procedure and kept working without containment?" asked the Doctor.

"I... I..." Henrik panicked. He looked around the room.

It was Erich who broke the silence, "Henrik you have doomed this colony. The eekers' meat is tainted... poisonous."

"No, I didn't do that," retorted Henrik. "Evolution; it's an unpredictable business," said the Doctor.

At that moment, a man ran into the room out of breath. "Erich, the eekers... the enclosures."

Erich and the Doctor rushed out of the meeting room.

As he reached the enclosures, the Doctor could make out what was clearly a body, lying on the ground. Inspection revealed it to be Ronan. He had been badly gouged, and blood was soaking his clothes. A small team of doctors was tending to him. The Doctor left them to it and walked slowly towards the nearest enclosure. The eekers were loud, "Eek, eek" their call more shrill than before. As he drew closer he could see that they had changed from the last time he had seen them. Their legs had lost the hooves that they had had before; and in their place were vicious looking claws. Beneath their

shoulders were the first sign of developing wings, he could see the skin rippling around them. Slowly he backed away to the group surrounding Ronan. "Everyone, inside quickly!" he hissed. "We can't move him yet," said one of the doctors.

"You have to, they will be flying within minutes," replied the Doctor.

The doctor's eyes widened. They took hold of Ronan and moving as quickly as they could, took him inside. As they reached the building the Doctor turned to Erich, "Wait for me in the meeting room."

"Aren't you coming in?" asked Erich.

"I have to go to back the TARDIS," replied the Doctor.

"Oh, your shuttle," said Erich.

The Doctor smiled, turned and hurried away.

A few minutes later he was inside the TARDIS. "K9, I need to land inside the meeting room in the city," he said punching co-ordinates into the console.

"Affirmative, Master. Calculating," said K9 as he plugged into the console. The central column began to rise and fall as the TARDIS dematerialised.

"Are we leaving?" asked Leela as she walked into the console room.

"No. We need to evacuate the colony before the eekers learn to fly..." said the Doctor.

"Fly?" Leela interrupted. "The eekers cannot fly."

"There isn't time to explain now. We need to evacuate the colony before more die."

"Die? Who has died?" The TARDIS landed before the Doctor had chance to answer.

The Doctor pulled the lever for the

door and strode out. Leela followed.

Leela stepped out of the TARDIS into the meeting room where she had been earlier. There were a group of bewildered looking men and women staring at the TARDIS.

"You need to gather all essential equipment. Do not go outside. Anything you can't get without going outside, leave it. The eekers can fly and are deadly. We are evacuating the colony," the Doctor instructed.

The scientists looked at each other puzzled.

"No time to waste, chop, chop," he added. The scientists hurried from the room, passing Erich as he came in. He looked surprised to see the Doctor.

"Doctor? I just left you..." he began.

"No time to explain. We have to evacuate the colony, gather essential equipment only, don't go outside. Bring everyone here." The Doctor ordered.

"How are we going to evacuate from here?" Erich spotted the TARDIS. "How did you get that in here?"

"Complicated. Evacuate now, explanations later," said the Doctor.

"It's impossible." Erich replied, anguish in his voice. "There is no way to get all the colonists here without going outside... if they go outside..." his voice trailed off.

"They must fight their way here." Leela said.

Erich looked at Leela as though he was seeing her for the first time. "There are children," he said quietly.

"Then I will bring them," she replied defiantly. "I will need a stun gun."

The Doctor smiled. "Erich, you need to send out escorts with stun guns to bring the colonists here. We will also need a distraction to get the eekers

attention.” he turned at looked at Leela.

She smiled.

Leela along with Seth and 18 volunteers were armed with stun guns and two-way radios. She had devised the plan, distract the eekers by running around outside as far away from the evacuating colonists as possible, without cutting themselves off from the buildings. If necessary, they would split into groups of four to keep the eekers attention away from the colonists.

They waited at the door for word from Erich to begin. As her radio crackled Leela took a deep breath, it was time. Seth grasped the door handle, “Ready?” he asked. Leela nodded, he threw the door open, they all ran outside.

The eekers spotted them immediately. There were a few eekers walking around who hadn't fully transformed, Leela gave them a wide berth as she ran. She heard the sound of flapping overhead, the eeker screeched as it dived. Screeching was replaced by screams. Seth shouted, Leela turned to see one of the volunteers on the ground being mauled by an eeker.

“The stun guns aren't working!” yelled Seth.

“Run!” yelled Leela.

One by one the eekers reduced their number until there were a handful left. Leela ran to a nearby doorway, the remaining volunteers followed. She could see eekers grouped around the fallen, they were feeding. There were a few eekers still circling overhead.

“We haven't had the all-clear yet.” Seth whispered while trying to catch his breath.

“We need a new plan.” stated Leela.

“Most of the eekers are distracted, we need to distract the rest.”

One of the men stared at Leela in disbelief.

“Do you have any ideas?” asked Seth.

“We make them fight each other.” Leela replied.

“How?” Seth hissed.

“Look.” she said pointing at the feeding eekers who were jostling each other for prime position. It was clear Seth didn't understand. “Ronan told me about the eekers, they charge each other, they have the instinct to fight, we make them fight.”

Seth nodded, “What is your plan?”

“We run there.” she said pointing at the mid-transformation eekers.

Seth smiled, “I get it.”

“I don't!” said one of the other volunteers.

“We are the cheese in the mousetrap.” replied Seth. “The mice fight each other to get the cheese. That's the plan, right?”

“Mice?” she asked.

“It doesn't matter. We are the bait, right?”

Leela nodded. “Ready?” she asked.

Seth took a deep breath and nodded. They ran. The flying eekers quickly spotted their prey diving to pick them off. The walking eekers charged at them, Leela dodged out of the way. Seth was too slow and was gouged by the horn of a charging eeker, Leela pulled him out of way as a second charged. There was a earpiercing screech as the second charging eeker collided with first. Behind her Leela heard screams, she turned to see the remaining volunteers being simultaneously impaled and mauled by both flying and charging eekers. She knew it was too late to help them, she grabbed Seth's arm and led him from the fray.

Fiction: Past Imperfect

by Simon Horton

An hour later all the colonists were inside the TARDIS. Leela helped Seth through the TARDIS door. Erich watched the door behind them, when there were no new arrivals the anguish was visible on his face.

"They were brave," said Leela.

Erich nodded sadly.

"We can't thank you enough Doctor," said Erich, as the last of the supplies were carried back out of the TARDIS and onto the planet, which after an extensive search of the TARDIS databank, the Doctor and Erich had determined would be the colonists' new home.

"Oh, it was nothing," said the Doctor disarmingly. "Just one thing though Erich; you may very well find the odd local species on this planet too. If you do, please leave them alone to get on with their evolution in their own way. Do resist the temptation to interfere."

"We'll just leave them to it, Doctor. You can absolutely count on that."

"I hope you do; I really hope you do. Goodbye Erich. Come on Leela."

The Doctor and Leela closed the TARDIS door behind them and Erich watched in astonishment as the strange blue box faded from view.



Leela was dead.

It had all started so promisingly. "A little education," the Doctor had promised Leela. "A trip to see one of the most successful Earth colonies this side of Qadaniqa."

K9 had helpfully advised against visiting the colony on SD15 without inoculations for the strain of blue influenza virus that ran rife there. The Doctor had thanked K9 for the information and ignored it.

Leela looked decidedly non-plussed as the three of them emerged from the TARDIS into the deserted town square. Night had fallen and the sky was painted a vivid crimson. The dark square was outlined by squat, pre-fabricated buildings constructed from vac-formed plastic panels and alloy sheeting; there were very few lights on, and the entire area was still and silent.

Silent, except for the rapidly approaching footsteps.

"Life forms approaching, Master," K9 informed redundantly.

Leela instinctively reached for her knife. The Doctor rounded on her. "People aren't *always* hostile, you know."

Leela didn't look convinced. "Are they not?"

"No!" The Doctor beamed. "Sometimes they can be positively charming!"

The sound of running feet was much closer and had been joined by the sound of several more in the distance. Suddenly a grubby young man burst from a litter-strewn alleyway, scattering detritus in all directions. He almost ran full tilt into the Doctor and stopped short, his eyes wide in disbelief.

"Doctor!" His voice was shaky and breathless. "Twice in one day! You must be my guardian angel or something!"

The Doctor's eyes boggled. "Well, it's always terribly nice to be recognised... but do I know you?"

The man looked disappointed. "It's me, Jed!"

The next few seconds were a riot of confusion. Jed's explanation was lost in an explosion of energy bolts that fizzed around them. In the same instant, K9's own defence capabilities went to work on the as-yet unseen enemy, firing randomly at the surrounding buildings.

"Get down!" the Doctor yelled to anyone who would listen. He saw Leela shoving Jed to safety behind the TAR-DIS, then a stray energy bolt singed his hair, before blasting a sizeable chunk of metal plating from a building on the far side of the square. It was only when he saw Leela's lifeless body hitting the ground several metres away that he realised that the same energy bolt must be responsible for blowing a smoking hole the size of a football right through her abdomen.

Time seemed to slow for the Doctor. He was dimly aware that the shooting had stopped, that the footsteps were running away amidst confused shouts, and that the faint whiff of what smelt like burnt sugar now hung in the air...

There was a noise irritating the Doctor, but he couldn't tell where it was coming from. An incessant buzzing like an angry wasp caught in a jar. He sat on a hard plastic bench in the colony medical centre, trying desperately to locate the noise. As his eyes darted along the corridor he noticed the grubby man from the square approaching, two plastic cups in his hands. He placed one on the bench next to the Doctor and began to speak.

The Doctor flapped his hands in irritation at the unseen flying insect before finally identifying the buzzing sound as a faulty light fitting in the greasy ceiling. Apparently satisfied, the Doctor absent-mindedly gathered up the trailing ends of his scarf and began picking dirt and biscuit crumbs from the tassels.

Jed sat down and stared into his drink. "They need her i.d. for the death certificate."

The Doctor nodded gravely. "Yes."

Several seconds of silence. The occasional nurse hurried past, almost unseen.

The Doctor suddenly sat bolt upright and stared at the opposite wall. "What did you mean?"

Jed looked apologetic. "You know, her identification..."

"Not Leela!" hissed the Doctor venomously through clenched teeth. "Earlier. You said: 'Twice in one day'..."

Jed looked a little confused. "Well, y'know, I thought you were gonna help me again."

The Doctor fixed Jed with an intense stare. "Again...?"

"Yeah, well, you'd already saved my life once today, hadn't you..."

"Had I...?"

"Don't tell me you've forgotten!"

The Doctor gripped Jed's arm and glared at him. "Let's pretend I have," he whispered fiercely. "Tell me about it."

Jed looked blank. "About what?"

The Doctor struggled to keep calm. "About me saving your life."

Jed grinned cheekily. "Having problems with your memory?"

"Only when it comes to the future."

Jed's face blanked.

The Doctor leaned in so close that his nose was almost touching Jed's. "Tell me."

"You really can't remember?"

The Doctor's glare intensified.

"Alright, alright." Jed backed away.

"Well, it's the Chief, innit? I owe him big time, don't I? See, I sold him a dodgy aircar. Well, I *say* dodgy... I didn't know it was dodgy at the time, did I...?"

"How did I save your life?" the Doctor interrupted.

"Well, I was cornered, weren't I? By the Chief's Berserkers. They were goin' to do me in, then you come along, and distracted 'em while your metal mate zapped 'em!"

Realisation drifted across the Doctor's troubled mind - Jed's past was the Doctor's future. For Jed, this must be the Doctor's *second* visit, just a few hours after an earlier visit when he'd apparently saved Jed's life; for the Doctor, this hadn't happened yet, so the TARDIS must have landed on SD15 a few hours *after* it had already visited. But why? The Doctor struggled to get to grips with the implications of a time paradox that made even *his* head spin. "So these... Berserkers... they were chasing you again tonight when you ran into us in the square."

"Yeah! And you saved me *again*!"

The Doctor looked grave as he corrected him, "Leela saved you."

Jed's face fell. "Yeah, well... that wasn't quite what I intended."

"No."

An awkward silence again.

Jed stood up. "Well, I oughta be goin'. The Chief's still after me, and... Well, y'know..."

The Doctor nodded absently. Jed stood up and started to move away, but the Doctor suddenly leapt to his feet and grabbed Jed by his scrawny shoulder. "Was Leela with us?" he asked intensely.

Jed looked confused.

"Leela. Was she there the first time I saved your life?"

"Er... I dunno... It all happened so fast..."

"Think!" The Doctor spat the word out through gritted teeth.

Jed was shocked at the Doctor's sudden ferocity. He stopped and thought back. "No... Just you, and... and the robot thing... I think you said you'd left someone in the soup bar round the corner..."

"Thank you." The Doctor's voice was barely audible.

Jed nodded, unsure of what else to say, then turned and headed out. The Doctor picked up his drink from the bench and stared into it. There was a thin film of scum floating on the surface.

The mood in the TARDIS had never been more morose. The Doctor was lying flat on his back, hands clasped behind his head, haunted eyes staring at the softly glowing ceiling.

"There's a problem here, K9."

"Master."

"Leela's dead."

K9's head drooped. "Master."

"And that's a big problem." There were several seconds of heavy silence. "But the biggest problem is that she's dead because I apparently saved that young man's life. If I hadn't saved his life he wouldn't have been there to be shot at when we arrived for the second time..." He paused, then corrected himself: "Or the *first* time from *our* point of view..." Another pause, then he suddenly brightened. "Except I *haven't* saved his life. Not yet, anyway. His past is our future, if you see what I mean."

"Master," K9 chirped warily.

"So, we're left with something of a dilemma." The Doctor sat upright, exciting himself with his own fractured logic. "What would happen if we *didn't* save his life...?"

"The First Law of Time..." K9 began primly.

"Ah, yes!" The Doctor leapt to his feet and began pacing animatedly around the central console. "But maybe we're not changing history, because it hasn't happened yet – not for us, anyway..." The Doctor knew his argument sounded thin, but pushed on regardless. "So maybe *not* saving his life is also part of history – *our* history."

K9 backed discreetly into a corner. "Likelihood of such action causing a significant disturbance to the temporal flux field is 1,346,892 to 1."

"Spoil sport!" the Doctor snapped tetchily. "Besides, in the scheme of things that's not too bad, is it...?"

"Define 'not too bad,' Master."

"Aha!" the Doctor suddenly exclaimed. "There is another alternative, of course..."

As the TARDIS materialised for the second time that day on the planet SD15

(some seven hours prior to its first visit), the Doctor had to admit that it hadn't been the best day of his lives, even by his own reckless standards.

He emerged cautiously, finding himself in a filthy alleyway between two rows of decrepit pre-fabricated buildings. He looked around with disdain. "And I thought this was a model colony," he muttered. "Remind me to update the TARDIS data banks, K9."

"Affirmative, Master."

"Now all we've got to do is hope that my theory's correct, and that we don't bump into ourselves..."

The Doctor and K9 set off down the alley, looking for any sign of a disturbance that might lead them to Jed's fracas with the Chief's heavies. They wound their way down squalid streets lit by flickering neon lights and populated by an assortment of lowlifes. Several people stopped to stare at the Doctor's flamboyant figure; one vagrant offered to swap K9 for a plastic bowl containing some unidentifiable food substance, whilst an extravagantly garbed woman with neon implants offered to show the Doctor a new use for his scarf...

It was as they were narrowly avoiding an old man coughing and spluttering blue phlegm into the gutter that their quarry unexpectedly appeared at their feet. Jed had been launched from the doorway of a particularly seedy-looking bar and landed heavily in front of them, knocking an overflowing dustbin flying. He was closely followed by a handful of young punks sporting holographic haircuts, luminous tattoos and a variety of mechanically augmented limbs. The Berserkers, the Doctor assumed.

The first Berserker leapt forward with a vicious snarl, his robotic drill-hand buzzing at Jed who rolled aside just in time. In a flash Jed was on his feet and bolting out of sight down a gloomy alley. The Berserkers were hot on his heels.

The Doctor cast a wary glance along the street as the motley bunch disappeared noisily into the distance.

"Come on K9; we've got work to do."

The Berserkers had Jed cornered in a grimy doorway as the Doctor sauntered casually towards them. "Good morning, gentlemen!" His cheery voice boomed along the narrow alley. "Or is it good afternoon? I wonder if you can help me – I'm looking for the tourist information office!"

The rioters turned to look at the charming toothy grin beaming at them, and their initial incredulity quickly became whooping amusement as they swung their assorted mechanical appendages in his direction.

"Well now, boys," snarled Drill-Hand delightedly, "looks like we found ourselves a new toy!"

Another punk with surgically implanted steel talons circled the Doctor, fingering his scarf. "Smart, ain't he?"

The Doctor ran his fingers through his mop of hair and smiled modestly. "Aah, well... I like to make an effort. First impressions are so important, don't you think?"

A third Berserker with a single glowing artificial eye leaned into the Doctor's face. "That right, mister?" His left hand had been replaced by a rusty buzz-saw, which he brandished recklessly under the Doctor's nose.

There was a tense pause. The Doctor eventually broke the expectant si-

lence; he half turned his head and muttered out of the side of his mouth, "Anytime now would be good, K9."

"That was fantastic!" Jed enthused as he looked back down the alleyway at the untidy heap of punk haircuts, ragged clothes and tangled mechanical limbs. He stooped down to K9's level and shouted enthusiastically into his eye panel, "That was fantastic!"

"Congratulations are unnecessary," K9 chirped brightly.

Jed stood up and turned to the Doctor. "That was bloody fantastic!"

The Doctor glowered down at the robot dog. "Yes, well, it nearly wasn't. K9 occasionally likes to leave these things a little too close for comfort."

"Incorrect, Master. I had calculated the timing of the attack to 98.9% certainty."

"It's the 1.1% *uncertainty* that worries me..."

Jed was far too excitable to notice the squabbling. "How can I thank you guys?!" he babbled as he pumped the Doctor's hand vigorously.

The Doctor thought for a second, then grinned mischievously. "You know what you need? A holiday!"

Jed looked baffled.

"Yes!" declared the Doctor persuasively. "Yes, I think you need a new start in a new town, away from those thugs."

"Oh yeah, great idea!" Jed indicated the unconscious Berserkers. "I already owe that lot more money than my life's worth! How am I supposed to afford to get away?!"

The Doctor put a reassuring arm around Jed's scrawny shoulders. "When does the next inter-planetary transporter leave?"

Jed shrugged. "There's a shuttle to Al-Taraq any time now..."

"Excellent." The Doctor's voice had taken on a chilling edge of steely certainty. "Make sure you're on that transport." Jed began to protest but the Doctor shushed him, then pressed something cold into his hand. "That should be enough to get you a first class seat."

Jed glanced down at the enormous golden crystal glinting in his hand and gasped. "What the...?"

"It's a vaxxal jewel from the crown of the last Queen of Hunderfak. Poor dear passed away while I was making her a cup of tea. Charming lady. She had three eyes, five legs, and no children. She won't be needing the jewel anymore."

Jed was speechless.

"Good man," enthused the Doctor. "Now, if you'll excuse us, we have to collect our friend. I have a feeling I left her eating breakfast. Tell me," he said, careful to ensure that the timelines were maintained, "is there a soup bar near here?" Jed pointed back to the main street. "Thank you," the Doctor beamed, "then that's precisely where I must have left her..."

Leela was slumped disconsolately in a corner when the Doctor entered the soup bar. An empty bowl sat congealing in front of her.

"Did you enjoy your breakfast?"

Leela looked up grumpily at the Doctor. "I do not like this place. It smells of rotten fish."

The Doctor beamed. "I'll take that as a 'no'."

Leela rose to her feet. "I have been here too long. 'Once round the block' is what you told me, Doctor. I do not

know what that means, but I am sure that once round the block does not take all morning!"

"Ah..." The Doctor looked shamefaced. "You left me in here and you did not tell me where you were going."

"Didn't I...?"

Leela glared, then her face softened. "But I am very pleased to see you again, Doctor."

"Well," the Doctor beamed, "I'm very pleased to see you, too."

The three travellers headed back down the bustling street towards the TARDIS as the shuttle to Al-Taraq roared overhead. The Doctor waved at it affably with his hat.

"You know," he announced proudly, "I'm a clever old Doctor!"

Leela looked confused. "Sometimes I do not understand you, Doctor," she declared flatly.

The Doctor looked disappointed. "Only sometimes?"

Suddenly Leela let out an enormous sneeze, spraying bright blue phlegm in all directions. The Doctor grinned with malicious delight. "Looks like you've caught the 'flu, Savage!"



Fiction: **The Perils of the** **Picture House**

by Thomas Beech

Beams of flashlights scanned the cracked, painted walls. Trailing behind were two pairs of trainers that treaded lightly on the moss ridden floor of the derelict cinema. Lilly held a creased blueprint in thick-gloved hands. She wanted to know where she was and more importantly, how to get out. David was more hands-on, breaking through debris, irking Lilly. Right now, the pair were in the lobby of the building and David was struggling with a set of wooden doors.

"Stop looking at that map an' help me!" David had jammed a crowbar in the seam of the doors.

Preoccupied, Lilly wandered behind the confectionary stand. "If you did your research David, you'd know that when this building was closed so suddenly, some things were left behind." Lowering the blueprints, Lilly smiled at the group of keys hanging next to an employee timetable. The marker had smudged and rubbed away over the years yet one name above it was printed proudly in gold: Dominic Dominar. "Must have been the new owner," Lilly muttered as she gripped the keys and gnashed her teeth at their abominable scraping. Stepping out, she proudly lifted the keys. "Shift out of the way then." Lilly stepped up to the doors and stabbed a key into the lock; pieces snapped into brittle pieces. Finally, a key slotted in and clunked heavily as Lilly turned it. The doors shunted open,

kicking up decades of dust and rubble. The pair strode in and gasped at the wide-open space of the theatre. The seats were desecrated, the stands and rows devastated by the collapsed ceiling. Spots of sunlight bathed the destruction, casting a path down to the stage area. As they walked, the explorers found belongings, left under seats: handbags; coats; even children's toys. "What happened here?" David asked, lifting a scorched teddy bear with his gloved hands.

"Years ago," Lilly began, shining her flashlight above them. "They put a film on that was so terrifying, disgusting, traumatising, et cetera; that it caused them to close the entire cinema." Lilly held the flashlight under her chin for dramatic effect. "Another theory is that after being completely bought out in the fifties by some rich bloke, they just kicked everyone out and just left it to rot."

"They were forced to leave everything behind?" David dropped the bear to the floor; it erupted with dust on impact.

"Looks like it." Lilly nodded in response. Reaching the stage, Lilly climbed up first, just barely scratching her outfit on mouldy splinters. David jumped up and finished climbing with an assist from Lilly. Ahead of them stood a large, faded, velvet curtain, sagging to envelop the stage in ripples of moth-chewed fabric. "We can get to the projection room from behind the stage." Lilly stated, tapping the blueprints.

"What d'ya wanna go there for?" David asked as he tugged at the stage curtain, finally making an opening for Lilly to pass.

"There will be film canisters up there. I need material for my project. That's

why I'm here." Lilly's reply was muffled within the curtain.

"Oh," David said out loud. "I just wanted to explore and be with you," David finished glumly, burrowing under the curtain to the other side. David eyed Lilly already leaving through a side-door.

"Just stay down here, I'll look in the projector booth. I won't be long." Lilly echoed as she bounced up a flight of rusted metal stairs.

Using her keys, Lilly unlocked the door to the astonishingly pristine projection room. Positioned in the far corner was the projector, standing halfway along a wide view window that overlooked the seating complex. She gave David a wave, but he was too engrossed in the complex machinery to notice. Turning back, Lilly found a rack of film canisters, layered in rust. Her eyes lit up as she cradled them carefully, inspecting the taped labels along the sides. They were a mixture of cheesy B-movie sci-fi, dumb action flicks, and the usual Hollywood suspects. Lilly gripped one curiously titled 'Mentis Imperium'. "Must be a foreign import," she muttered, while opening the canister carefully, to uncover an oddly shaped film reel within. It was hexagonal. Lilly felt compelled to place it in the projector. Her heartbeat was the rhythm of a raging stampede as she locked the reel in place and flicked the switch.

David's investigations on the stage were interrupted by a harrowing scream from above. David instinctively looked towards the projection room. The wall behind him lit up brilliantly with a blurred image, it was Lilly. She was on the floor, flailing, covering her eyes and screaming, "Don't watch the

film!" Her pained voice echoed out... David felt compelled to look behind him and he saw the horror unfold before his eyes...

The dilapidated cinema was swamped with UNIT troops. Amongst a group of shaking heads, one voice stood out. "Where's the Doctor? This is right up his alley," the Brigadier barked.

A roar announced the arrival of a yellow roadster, which parked beside the depressing set of dirty green four by fours. Hopping out of the vehicle was a tall figure clad in green velvet and a white frilled shirt. Beside him was a young woman, with blonde hair, wearing a patterned jumper and boot-cut trousers. "Brigadier!" The Doctor raised his hand as he and Jo Grant approached.

"About time, Doctor. We have a situation here," the Brigadier said, turning to reveal Lilly and David, seated, with their eyes and mouths gaping open.

"Good grief," the Doctor said, placing his fingers on their necks.

Jo kept back, looking on nervously. "Are they dead Doctor?" she asked timidly.

"There's a pulse. They're just catatonic, Jo," responded the Doctor, removing his fingers. His eyes scanned their moss ridden clothing. "What were they doing here? Construction? Surveying?" He looked towards the Brigadier.

"Urban explorers, Doctor. Folks who rummage around abandoned buildings for fun. I suppose they're a bit after your own heart," smiled the Brigadier. The Doctor looked back at the catatonic explorers, "Were they like this when they were found? Have they said anything at all?" he asked.

"They were in hysterics, flailing wildly.

The police were on the scene but soon called us down. and From what little they were able to say, they had found some kind of film and it appears that it was that, which had this effect on them. They passed out before they could give any more details. It would be wise if you and Miss Grant were to retrieve it before it can cause any more damage."

"We're up for it!" Jo bounced ahead, standing by the Doctor's side. "I've always wanted time from work for a trip to the pictures." The Doctor and Jo looked at each other warmly, as they turned to go towards the cinema.

"Before you go, there's a gentleman who wants to talk to you, a Mister-Dominic Dominar. He wants to communicate over the radio," said the Brigadier.

"Why didn't he want to be here in person? It's a bit odd," replied Jo.

"Nothing odd, Jo, I expect he doesn't want to become too involved. Perhaps he's worried about being held accountable," stated The Doctor coldly.

The lobby was surrounded by floodlights and guarded by a group of soldiers. One gripped a handheld radio and passed it to the Doctor. He pressed the trigger down and spoke. "Good day. This is the Doctor. Mr. Dominar?"

The radio crackled and fizzed as a voice responded incoherently. "Yes, you're investigating my property, aren't you? Terrible business, I hoped to be there myself, but I have other appointments, I'm a busy man."

"Yes, I'm sure you are," the Doctor said sarcastically and clicked the radio off. He looked towards the soldier, "What was the point in that?"

"I'm sorry Doctor, he insisted on having a direct line to you," the soldier replied, straightening his back for a sa-

lute.

The Doctor turned away to spot Jo investigating a harsh, leaking crack in the wall nearby, "Come along Jo." The Doctor gestured to the open double doors and politely guided the girl in first.

Jo gasped at the theatre, taking a moment to admire its gothic architecture. The Doctor brushed past, strolling down the walkway. Feeling left out, Jo sprinted to catch up. "What's the plan Doctor?" she asked, nearly tripping on the rubble.

"Simple," said the Doctor, "I want to investigate the control room and the projection booth. Maybe get some information about the projectionist who used to work there; if it truly was a film that caused this." He inspected a shard of wood in his hands. It was covered in a moss-like substance.

"What about me?" Jo enquired.

"You can explore the dressing rooms and..."

The Doctor was cut off by a displeased cough from Jo, "...The uninteresting, least important areas?" She placed her hands on her hips.

"No, not exactly, we need information on what led to the collapse of this establishment. The business office is accessed through the dressing room, I trust you with the paperwork." The Doctor looked more deeply at the moss.

"Very well Doctor," Jo huffed, reaching to climb onto the stage. Suddenly she found herself being grabbed by the Doctor.

"Jo! Careful, this moss isn't natural." The Doctor demonstrated by prodding the wood with a finger.

Jo's eyes widened as she watched the moss move away from the invading finger... "Oh, my word, is it alien?"

"Yes, it's highly infectious too and causes delirium. I spotted small quantities on the explorers' clothes." The Doctor threw the wooden shard away. "Not to worry Jo, it can't survive well in oxygenated environments; but be sure not to let it any of it onto your skin."

Jo climbed up carefully, assisted by the Doctor, who then followed. Standing on the stage, the pair parted, with the Doctor heading to the right and Jo to the left.

The dressing room was astonishingly compact, despite the lavish building in which it was contained. Jo scanned the dust-ridden make-up desks with a torch. Items were preserved, frozen in time. The mirrors were oddly pristine with not a shade of dust or decay on them. As Jo looked at her reflection, something shifted behind her. She turned, spotting an open door to the offices. Jo cautiously wandered in, finding the office in pristine condition. "What's going on here?" she muttered to herself; then jumped as the door slammed behind her... A voice echoed out from the darkest corner of the room. "All will be explained Miss Grant. If you would be so good as to come with me..."

The Doctor was investigating the complicated machinery at the heart of the control room. Gears and levers were corroded with rust. "If the building has no power, how did those explorers watch a film?" he tutted to himself. He was still stroking his chin in puzzlement when the dials and levers began to shift and grind to life on their own. "Good grief... It's being remotely controlled! But by whom?" The radio buzzed violently in the Doctor's jacket, forcing him to answer it. "Mr Dominar, now is cer-

tainly not the time!" The Doctor barked fiercely.

From the intense static a sly voice responded, "I think the time is now Doctor. I implore you, head to the stage for your friend's curtain call."

The Doctor set off in a sprint, rushing down to the stage, where he was met by the overbearing sounds of an orchestra! The cinema had come to life with laughter, cheering and jeers, all aimed at him. A sudden barrage of stage lights blinded him.

In the projection room, Jo had been tied to a stiff chair, which leant against a tall, metallic cupboard. Ahead of her was a figure cast in shadow, watching the Doctor's distress, its hands, clasped together proudly. "Well Miss Grant, this could be the Doctor's finest performance!" Finally, the figure turned towards the light... It was the Master!

"Whatever you've planned, the Doctor and I will stop you!" exclaimed Jo, struggling with her binds.

The Master just turned away, looking back down at the Doctor. "I fear not Miss Grant. The moss is distorting the Doctor's perception. He is incapable of discerning fact from fiction!" The Master chuckled.

"So, you were behind those young people losing their minds?" asked Jo, feeling the constraints loosen a little.

"They did that all of their own accord. It was most helpful of them to discovering the reel's effects for me," the Master responded, turning away to pick up a hexagonal film reel.

Jo gasped, "So, it's not yours?"

"Precisely, I needed subjects to test it - hence the usefulness of those young explorers; and now the Doctor will

gladly view this 'feature presentation'. The Master laughed mightily, while locking the reel into place.

Below, Jo could see the Doctor continuing to falter; his mind clearly swamped with whatever it was he believed he could see and hear. Then he stood still, closed his eyes, breathed deeply and spoke in a loud, clear voice. "This is an illusion, I deny it..." The Doctor exhaled. Jo could see that he had cleared his mind of the fog, revealing the decrepit cinema once more.

"Come out from the shadows, face me now!" the Doctor's voice boomed.

A sly voice echoed back, "I think not Doctor; for I am the 'Master' of ceremonies!"

The Doctor clenched his fist. "Of course, it's you..." He muttered under his breath.

"Indeed Doctor! This cinema has been most suitable for my purposes."

"Which are?" cut in the Doctor, kneeling to lift a piece of moss-ridden wood.

"This 'reel', although primitive, will assist me in my conquest of this planet! I can bring forth creatures unimaginable to the primitives of this world. Those young people caught a glimpse of a truth too unbearable for them to comprehend!"

The Doctor retorted with a sly smirk, "Enough of this showboating. Where's Jo?" The theatre suddenly went cold; the Doctor's breath became a thick mist. The abandoned surroundings of the cinema became a frozen wasteland. Ahead of him was a ghastly creature with matted white fur. Its yellowed claws swiped at the Doctor, forcing him to dive away. The Doctor

was cast in a white light. To the sound of the flicker of the projector the nefarious film reel played again.

Jo had loosened her binds enough to wriggle a hand free. As she untied the other, Jo spotted a mound of living moss.

"The power of the silver screen... Imagine it, an entire universe at my disposal." As the Master monologued, Jo edged towards the pulsing mound. Grabbing a rusted film can lid, she scooped up some of the moss and moved surreptitiously towards the Master.

"I'm not a fan of action movies," she called to him.

The Master chuckled, without turning around, "Is that so? I suppose you couldn't understand them..."

"No, nothing like that..." Jo readied the film can, "I prefer a good comedy... one with lots of slapstick. My favourite gag involves a pie to the face!" she yelled, startling the Master and causing him to turn around suddenly. With all the force she could muster, Jo whacked him in the face with the can! The Master yelped in pain, clutching his face as he stumbled around. Jo got to work, dismantling the projector. It stuttered and finally broke into pieces, stopping the film as the images ripped and split apart, shattering the Doctor's illusion! Jo yelled down to her friend, "Doctor! I've stopped him! I've destroyed the projector!"

The Doctor broke from his trance, rising suddenly to his feet, "I'm coming Jo!" he yelled, breaking into a sprint. Jo turned, proud of herself; but was met with a horrifying sight. Even with the moss crawling on his face the Master had the composure to aim a concealed

gun at her.

"You have interfered with my plans for the last time!" he said through gritted teeth, as his finger tightened on the trigger. At that moment, a spinning film canister crashed into his hand. The Master recoiled in pain, his eyes staring daggers at the proud silhouette of the Doctor in the doorway.

"It's over Master, take a bow and give yourself up." The Doctor stepped in and stood next to Jo, who smiled warmly up at him.

"I will not!" bellowed the Master, blasting the floor to mask his escape and retreating into the metallic cupboard. Through the smoke and crackles of fire, a familiar wheezing and groaning echoed out. The Master and his cupboard had disappeared.

"There's no time to waste Jo, head downstairs! Tell the Brigadier to fall back. I need to make sure that film reel is destroyed!" called the Doctor over the roaring flames. Jo nodded, sprinting out of the projection room, hurrying to escape the collapsing structure. She turned back to see the Doctor rummaging through the rubble and retrieving the hexagonal film reel. As she watched, he shook his head and tutted, tossing the reel into the raging flames.

Jo and the Brigadier stood helpless as the cinema burst into a hellish inferno. They waited nervously for any signs of the Doctor but as the building collapsed there seemed to be little hope. "I've seen this film before," came a familiar voice from behind them, as the Doctor placed his hands on their shoulders.

Jo spun around and hugged her friend with relief. "I thought you had snuffed it back there!"

"Well Jo, I would have, if it hadn't had

been for the leading lady!" The pair laughed as they headed towards Bessie.

The voice of the Brigadier caused them to pause and turn, "Doctor! The film reel... Is it...?"

"Yes Brigadier, destroyed in the flames, and good riddance too! As for those young explorers, keep them isolated; they'll recover. It wasn't the film after all. The Master had unwittingly brought with him a psychoactive alien substance!"

"My word, is it contained?" asked the Brigadier, baffled.

"Oh yes, the oxygen in your atmosphere was suffocating it. The fire has destroyed it now. The residue on the explorers will soon die off too. Keep this site condemned and contained. We can't be having anymore spelunkers chancing their lives!"

Jo waved goodbye as they hopped into Bessie.

"You know Jo, it's rather a pity that you don't have drive-in cinemas here. I would have enjoyed that today," smiled the Doctor, putting the roadster into gear.





A Wonderful Time

by West Hubbard

When I was about ten or eleven, I was flipping through the channels one Saturday night and I came across a show that would change my life. I could stay up later on the weekends. Our local PBS station was having one of their pledge breaks, and they had people in crazy costumes, so I stopped on the channel and watched for a few minutes. The announcer was talking about an exciting new show that was about to come on. It was called Doctor Who and it was about time travel. They then showed 'The Five Doctors' and that was it. I did not understand what was happening on the screen for most of the episode, but I was hooked!

Over the next few years, I was introduced to most of the classic doctors every Saturday night at ten. I started attending local conventions and met a few of the actors, bought as many target books as I could, and when the VHS copies of episodes started showing up, I bought those as well. I learned as many facts about the show as I could. I knew directors' names. I had favourite writers like Robert Holmes and got excited when one of their episodes was on the screen. I got to meet some of the actors who played the Doctor. I met many companions!

As I got into my college years, and Doctor Who had gone off the air my interest started to wane. When I hit my thirties, I had almost forgotten how much Doctor Who had meant to me. I was at a mall bookstore and in the DVD section they had Doctor who epi-

sodes. I bought 'The Five Doctors' and was transported back to my ten-year-old self. So now, twentyish years later my love for the show is bigger than it ever was as a child. It makes me feel better whenever I watch it. The science in the episodes makes me smarter, the Doctor's attitude towards everyone makes me a more tolerant, kind person. I feel like I would not be who I am today without Doctor Who.

Watching classic Who as an adult has changed how I look at character and story. Before, I just saw the monsters and the heroes battle it out every week. As an adult, a lot of the storylines resonated with me in a way that it never could when I was a child.

When the Blu-ray collections were announced, I was excited. Here was my chance to own as many of these episodes as I can. The price is reasonable, and they look stunning. I fell in love with Big Finish's audio dramas, and there are proper action figures! It is a wonderful time to be a Doctor Who Fan.

When the new series was announced, I was sceptical. I was blown away. The writing, the effects and acting were amazing. It was sleek and exciting, and added to the overall world of the show without forgetting the past.

Each actor that has portrayed The Doctor continues to add to the success of the character. I don't know what my life would be like without Doctor Who, but I can say that it is a lot better with it.

Time War 4

Review by Rik Moran

The Eighth Doctor Time War series has, like most Eighth Doctor audios, been of a very high standard. Even volume 3, which I thought was one of the weaker parts, was much better than many other audios in the genre. Listening to volume 4 now, I realise that maybe Volume 3 needed that dip for volume 4 to rise and soar.

This set begins with the two-part story 'Palindrome.' The writer John Dorney crafts a very Moffat-esque story, with alternate dimensions, time going backwards and forwards and Terry Molloy acting his socks off. It is very good but complicated and not everything will be explained at the end.

'Dreadshade' has the hard task of following 'Palindrome', but is far from a weak episode. Its exploration of a universe after the Time War is rather intriguing and we find out that even in victory, the Time Lords are far from benevolent. Julia Mackenzie returns as the Twelve in this story having escaped



from her stasis chamber to cause havoc on Gallifrey. Paul McGann's Doctor is paired together with Ken Bones' General in a tense siege situation against an old foe, while companion Bliss' full humanity is put on display. This episode gives us the greatest insight into the character of Bliss that we've had since her introduction

Moving on to the finale 'Restoration of the Daleks,' and there is a lot of stuff crammed in here. Despite this every element is as strong as it needs to be, especially with the cast, who really do



shine. It's another outstanding story for Paul McGann's Doctor, who continues to skirt the edges of what he can and should do while saving the day for those caught in the middle. Rakhee Thakrar's Bliss again gets to take a central role. Davros even comments on her pragmatism, which could be a great road of character development for Bliss in future audios. Terry Malloy's Davros continues to be exceptional, especially in how he manipulates every piece still standing on the board, and his final moments are frankly chilling, as he finds a new role to play in the War regardless of whether he has a choice or not. Terry has been given so much freedom across this volume to delve deeply into the character of Davros and has brought that exploration wonderfully to life for us to listen to.

Finally, a special mention for Nicholas Briggs who once again supplies the menace as the Daleks and especially as the Dalek Time Strategist. The Strategist even mentions the Cult of Skaro and those awful Tele-Tubby style, (sorry I should use their proper name -



paradigm Daleks?) for a bit of continuity or fan service. Take your pick.

The Eighth Doctor Time War volumes have all been good, but this volume is tremendous. It is by far the best so far and from the way it ends, I'm guessing it won't be the last one.

[To listen to the trailer for 'Time War Volume 4' at Big Finish click here](#)

[You can buy the download or CD from Big Finish here](#)

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



VORTEX

[The regular Big Finish magazine available for free download at the website—click here](#)

Interview: A Dalek Awakens

**Nick Smith talks to
Courtney Jarrett**

A windowless room is darkened by the echo of a sinister voice. It's not quite human, syphoned through a thousand years of rust and hate. You are trapped with a rogue Dalek, slowly coming to life.

Rather than a TV episode, this is an escape room. If you find watching a Dalek story creepy or disconcerting, then getting up close and inhuman with one is sure to get your blood rushing (don't worry, it's got a PG rating of 8 and up).

In Escape Hunt's 'A Dalek Awakens', 2-6 players spend an hour as the Doctor's friends on a dying spacecraft, with a Dalek that is draining the ship's power. Cut the Daleks's power source, and you also cut life support to thousands of passengers. You can stop the Dalek – but do you have the right?

Cosmic Masque bumped into Games Master Courtney Jarrett at Birmingham Resorts World and interrogated him... that is, we asked him some questions about the new attraction, and what it's like to run a Who-themed room.

Cosmic Masque: What is the Dalek Awakens game? How does it work and what is it like to experience the room?

Courtney Jarrett: A Dalek Awakens is our newest live escape game, it truly feels like stepping into an hour episode

of Doctor Who. For fans it is absolutely the ultimate experience.

CM: Does it tie in with Timelord Victorious, and if so how?

CJ: Although it doesn't tie in, A Dalek Awakens relies heavily on the presence of Doctor 13.

CM: What is your involvement as the Games Master? How much creative control do you have?

CJ: As a GM I have a little bit of an omnipotent presence in order to be able to guide people around that room. But I put myself as almost a co-pilot. The person with the most control and the most decision-making ability is always the player in that room, it's down to them to guide their own experience a bit and the way they figure things out, the way they approach it and what they do when they approach something.

CM: What is your personal interest in this room? Are you familiar with Doctor Who or is this simply a job for you (it's OK, we won't judge).

CJ: I grew up watching Doctor Who and did for years and years until 10 or 11. At that point I stopped watching it, got into other things. I grew up. But as we started opening A Dalek Awakens here and I saw little bits of the props being put in, as it was built it really tugged on that nostalgia string and I have since gone back, watched through all of them and still watch them weekly now.

CM: What is special about the Birmingham location? Is it different from other

locations?

CJ: We're the most exciting venue there is! Currently Birmingham is one of our newest locations, with 110 now across the country. Rooms do vary a bit location to location; we have our virtual reality here that only features in a couple of other locations.

CM: *How do the at-home 'remote' rooms work? What has the response to them been like?*

CJ: I was lucky enough to be involved in the testing phase of the remote games and I got to experience them as a player. It was a lovely, pleasant surprise. It really felt like the closest thing you can get to just being in the room. Obviously, nothing can quite match the experience of stepping in a physical room. However, in the kind of times we're going through, it really is the next best thing and has been really helpful and great fun for a lot of people.

CM: *What kind of reactions have you seen to 'A Dalek Awakens' or other rooms with a similar theme?*

CJ: It isn't our first Doctor Who game, we have another one called 'Worlds Collide' in Birmingham, which centres around a different Doctor Who villain. The response to that was fantastic when it opened a couple of years ago, and we've seen some of the same people who went to play that game come to play 'A Dalek Awakens' as well and we've seen them just as impressed if not more after already playing a Doctor Who game. So, the response seems to be improving.

CM: *How do you feel now it's all put together?*

CJ: We opened 'A Dalek Awakens' a couple of weeks before lockdown, when everyone wasn't allowed to go out. So in the months leading up to our opening it was really a stressful time, we were in all the time making everything perfect and ready for opening.



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When everything happened, we weren't able to see all our hard work pay off for a long time, although now we're back at Escape Hunt and of course things have changed a little bit. We've made it as safe as we possibly can during these times. It's great seeing people enjoying the game and all the hard work we've put into it so yeah, it felt good seeing it all come together.

CM: What are you going to do next?

CJ: I guess what's next is, we've opened another Escape Hunt venue in Norwich. The plan is once everything is getting settled there, we are going to take 'A Dalek Awakens' to it so we've spent our time honing how to run these games in a COVID-safe environment so we can take that to Norwich.

Courtney seems to be having a blast mastering 'A Dalek Awakens', honing it as more visitors flock to the room. He's had the added challenge of ensuring a number of COVID measures are in

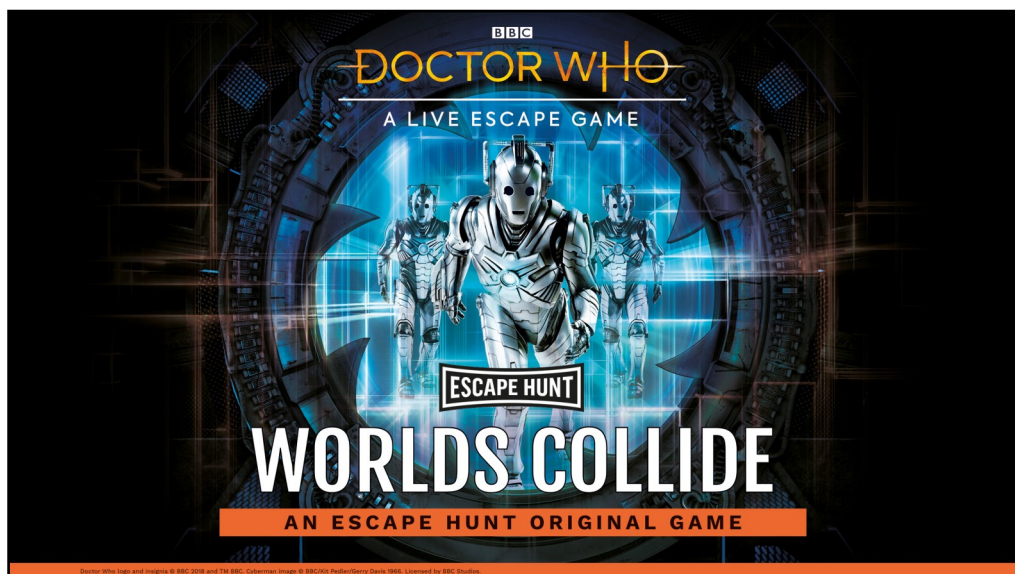
place so guests can 'play safe,' including social distancing, PPE and deep cleaning. Escape Hunt has received accreditation from hospitality bodies like Visit England and the AA. For those not quite ready or able to venture out and try the room, there's the play-at-home Dalek game 'The Hollow Planet'.

In this original adventure, you investigate a mysterious signal from planet-oid TG-88.3Ω. Will the Daleks ever learn not to carve out the hearts of planets and take them for joyrides? You can print out the game and find out. Courtney won't be there to guide you but the Doctor's presence will always be felt.

[For more information on 'A Dalek Awakens' and to see how you can take part visit Escape Room here](#)

[For 'Worlds Collide' click here](#)

[The play-at-home game, 'The Hollow Planet' can be found here](#)



Lytton issue 1

Review by Rik Moran

Cutaway Comics' debut issue of Lytton focuses unsurprisingly, on the character of Lytton, created by Eric Saward for his Resurrection of the Daleks story, and then featured again in Attack of the Cybermen.

Lytton is interesting. It was noticeable from his Doctor Who appearances that there was more to him, and that he was a deeper character, than what we actually got to see. Eric Saward did get to him further in his novelisations of the two television stories and now with this comic book, it's another opportunity to continue with that development.

In this first issue we are introduced to some supporting characters, Wilson, Miss L and Mr Shend. We're also given our first questions to ask: Who are they? What relationship do they have to Lytton? Why is Mr Shend willing to pay Lytton so much for Wilson?

We get just enough information in this first issue to lay the groundwork for the story, and I can't help but wonder that with noises in the sewer, we may have been given a clue that the conclusion of the story could be linked to 'Attack of the Cybermen' in some way. I guess I will have to read future issues to find out. And that's the thing; I shall, because this story from Eric Saward has left me wanting more.

An important part of any comic book is the artwork. I wasn't personally aware of Barry Renshaw as an artist

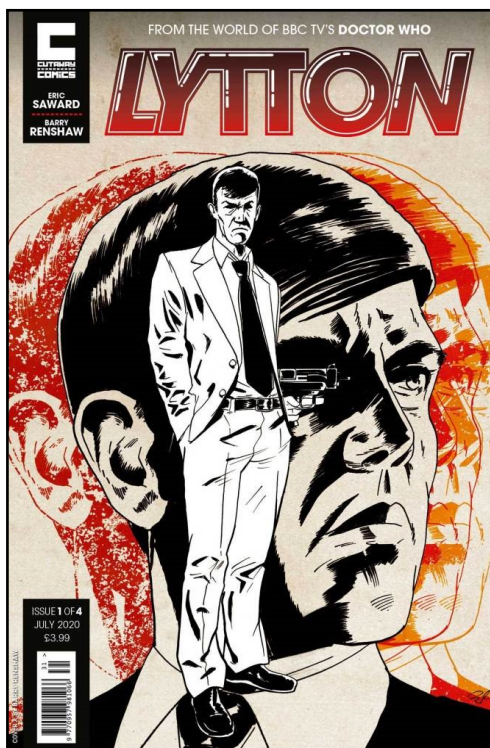
before, but I'm loving what he is doing here. Renshaw's paintwork is vivid and brings the comic to life and is essential to setting the tone.

This is a great solid start to the Lytton range, and I will certainly be checking out future issues.

I give this volume 7/10

The Comic Book is available with a choice of covers that you can view at the Cutaway Comics website. Copies bought directly from the publisher also include a free DVD about the range.

[For more information and to buy you can visit Cutaway Comics here. 'Lytton' is available as a print magazine and a download](#)



For the Love of Target

Review by Nick Smith

It took me about an hour to walk three miles home from school, from Bristol's historic Park Street to my home in Knowle. It was cold and I was exhausted. There was a hole in my shoe and it was letting in water.

I could have bought a bus ticket – the route stopped right near my house. But I was saving the money for something else. A new Target book was due out mid-month.

Doctor Who novelizations had been a part of my childhood since I could remember. I'd been hooked by David Whitaker's imaginative descriptions in books like *The Crusaders* and the quaint illustrations that went along with them. I was also intrigued by the differences between the books and the synopses in DWM. 'Doctor Who in an Exciting Adventure with the Daleks', starting with a car crash rather than a junkyard police beat, was one of my first hints of how adaptable and all-encompassing the show could be. Yes, the Doctor can travel and exist in parallel dimensions but I like Timothy Zahn's theory, which he applies to the non-canon Star Wars books: they're like an oral history, legends told and retold with variations as they're passed through generations.

I read 'The Sea Devils' at the local swimming pool while my favoured little sister Becky butterflied around in the water. Disappointingly for me at

the time, no reptiles emerged to drag her away. I read 'Marco Polo' on a long car journey to Cornwall and 'Time-Flight' on a plane to the primordial beaches of Denmark. At school, we were asked to list our summer reads; I wrote down the story titles sans Doctor Who to make myself look well-read; Terrance Dicks cropped up a lot on my list.

There was a cakemaker in my neighborhood who custom-baked confectionary for kids, a Willy Wonka with a whisk. My mum asked her to make a TARDIS birthday cake for me with room for sixteen candles. That is how I ended up with a sticky coating on my copy of 'An Unearthly Child', which the great British baker borrowed as a visual reference. Although I never got the icing off that prized paperback, the cake was delicious.

The Fifth Doctor's books were glossy and newfangled with their neon-style logos and photographic covers. By the Sixth Doctor's era, the much-anticipated 100th book ('The Two Doctors') had a silver cover and tight Robert Holmes prose. Like his coat, a couple of the Sixth Doctor's covers were garish. A Gastropod graced 'The Twin Dilemma', after Colin Baker's face was removed for fear of having to pay him royalties. If you could judge a book by its cover, then 'Slipback' was a freakish and pestilent read; Captain Slarn sneered out of space, his head as big as the TARDIS.

It was great to see so many lost or hard-to-find stories get novelized by such writers as Nigel Robinson (whose adaptations included 'The Sensorites') and John Peel, who specialized in Da-

lek stories. This was my first in-depth experience of many lost First and Second Doctor stories. Others seemed destined never to be adapted, such as scripts by Douglas Adams and Eric Saward along with a few Skaro sagas. The publication of 'Power of the Daleks' and 'Evil of the Daleks' in 1993 indicated that anything was possible in the world of WH Allen and Co.

As the '90s beckoned, the kids who'd grown up with Target were becoming more sophisticated. The books followed suit thanks in particular to Marc Platt and Ben Aaronovitch, who added extra depth to televised adventures and paved the way for Virgin's New and Missing Adventures.

After I left school, I got a plum job as a clerk in a small trademark and patent office. I was more interested in rereading my First Doctor books than dusty law tomes. A big salary and legalese weren't for me. I was sent packing and became an author instead, inspired in part by amazing writers like Dicks, Whittaker, Malcolm Hulke and Brian Hayles.

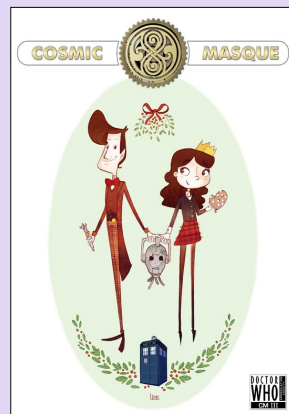
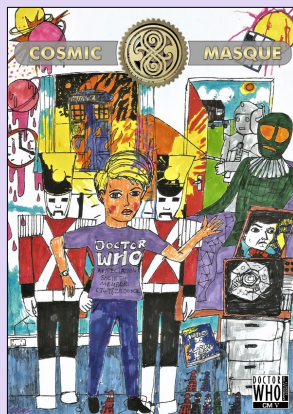
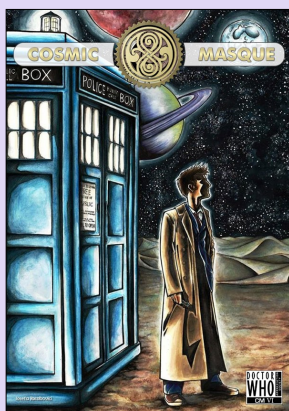
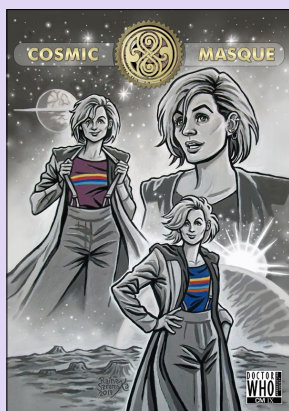
Terrance Dicks' work remains familiar and reassuring, from his descriptions of the TARDIS and companions to the warm regard for the show that's obvious from his storytelling. Through the books, I felt like I got to know Dicks and other authors like Ian Marter and John Lucarotti. I heard their earnest voices and experienced the Doctor's adventures along with them.

Not all the books were a success. Somehow, I got through Tony Attwood's spinoff book 'Turlough and the Earthlink Dilemma' twice, despite it

being a super dry read. While the Fourth Doctor's slimmer books, like 'Image of the Fandahl', are fun to whip through, one wonders what might have been if they'd been written with the depth and detail of the '60s books. Barbara Clegg, Jane Baker, Alison Bingham and Rona Munro are the only female authors in the original Target run, indicating how male-dominated the series was.

I should have spent my youth reading Proust, Plato or Carl Barks' Scrooge McDuck. But for a lonely wordaholic who suffered from depression, the Target novelizations gave me something to save up for, invest in and look forward to. With their higgledy-piggledy numbering and trying-to-be-uniform spines, they were worth all the time, money and shoe leather spent on them.

I sold most of my Target books to help fund my emigration to America. I couldn't bear to part with some, though; Donald Cotton's quippily written 'Gunfighters', for example. His clever and amusing writing is refreshing after the solid adaptations from his peers. 'Mission to the Unknown' and 'The Mutation of Time', two books that span 'The Daleks' Masterplan'; 'Inferno' and 'The Cybermen'. Those books sit on my 20-year-old son's bookshelf now. When I visit him, sometimes when he's not looking, I read a few pages and I'm transported back to simpler days of a man with a young-old face, a wheezing, groaning ship and an affordable paperback way to escape into danger.



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