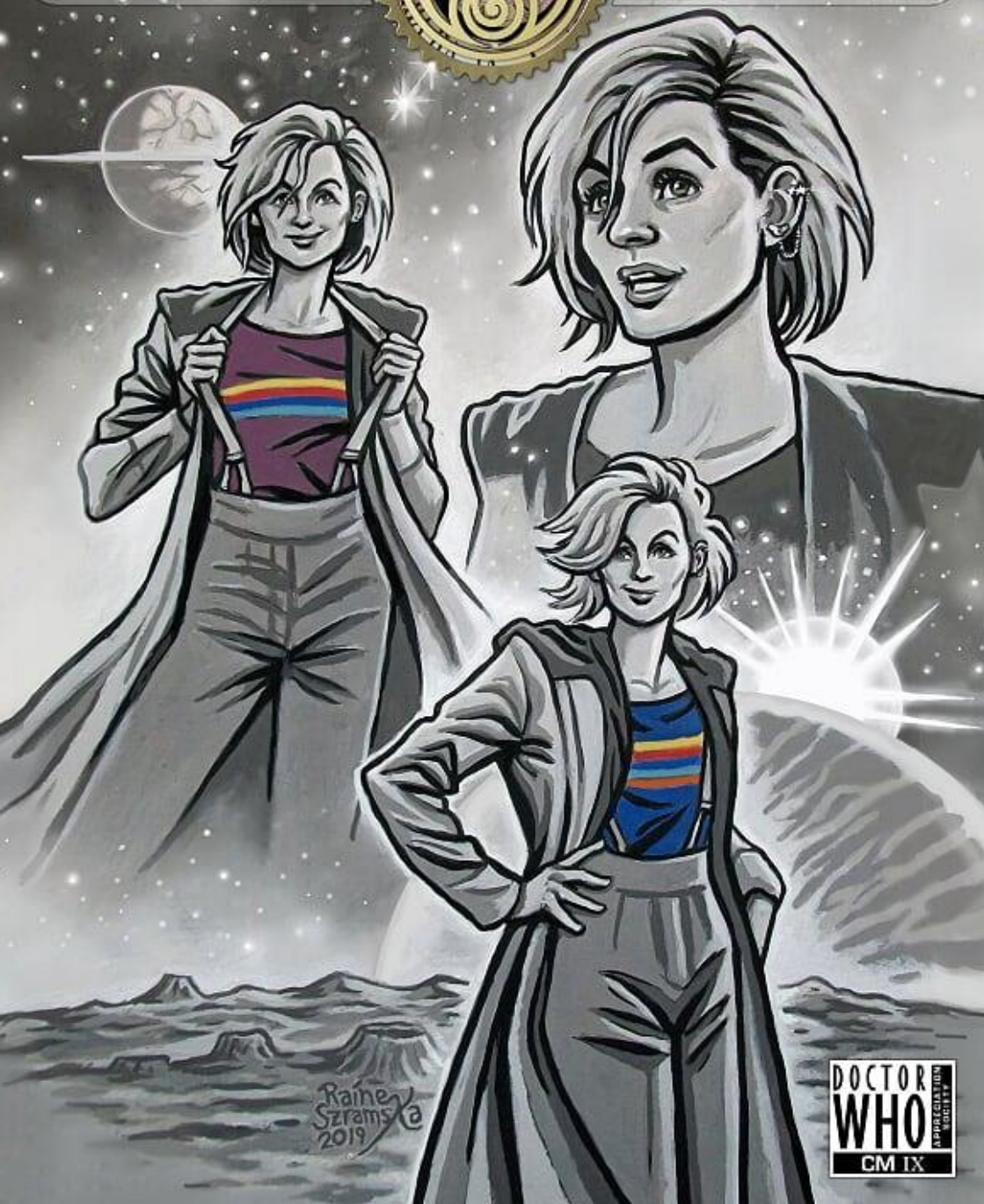


COSMIC



MASQUE



Raine Szrums
2019

DOCTOR
WHO
APPRECIATION
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CM IX



EDITORIAL

by Rik Moran

Welcome to this bumper issue of Cosmic Masque.

Inside these pages you will find reviews on the Blu-Ray Season collection range and an interview with Chris Chapman who works on the specials features on these wonderful sets.

You will also find reviews on a number of other items, some features on the 8th Doctor and the filming of series 12, plus a write up of the Audience with Warris Hussein event.

Steve Hatcher (our fiction editor) has been working to continue to bring us the best possible fan fiction and once again delivers some great adventures for us all to get stuck into.

My heartfelt thanks to all of our contributors, and the team that work on our publications.

Until next time faithful readers.

Enjoy the issue.

Rik



COSMIC MASQUE - IX

PUBLISHED BY
Doctor Who Appreciation Society

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EDITORIAL
FICTION
by Stephen Hatcher

Last summer, I was honoured when Paul Winter and Rik Moran asked me to become Fiction Editor of Cosmic Masque, a role that began with issue VII. Now, as I present my third selection of the very best stories that our readers have submitted, I have been asked to write a few words to introduce the stories featured in Cosmic Masque IX. I happen to think they are three crackers – I hope you will agree.

In the 20th Anniversary Year of Doctor Who at Big Finish, it's very appropriate that in Gary Merchant's rather splendid comic caper What's Up Doc(tor)? we have the Sixth Doctor accompanied by perhaps the most popular of all the original Big Finish companions, Evelyn Smythe, checking in to a luxury hotel, only to find an old friend – that time-travelling adventuress, Iris Wildthyme,

Cameron Holt and Nathan Mullins' four-part story featuring the current TARDIS team, Requiem Among the Stars, which made its début in Cosmic Masque VIII is developing nicely. In this issue we have episode two. Cameron and Nathan are exciting and ambitious young writers, who are fast making names for themselves.

Michael M. Gilroy-Sinclair is a new name to Cosmic Masque, but he may well be familiar to you through his long-running Tin Dog Podcast. Michael wrote a lovely Ninth Doctor

story for the Doctor Who charity anthology that I edited, Time Shadows: Second Nature (still available from me for free as an e-book if you ask nicely), so he was one of the first people I asked to write for CM. I couldn't be more happy with his contribution to this issue, a nice little robot mystery story, The Chaotic Element. Michael's fabulous début novel, Geek Myths – a story of life, love and the pursuit of sonic screwdrivers is available from Amazon. I recommend it wholeheartedly.

Don't forget, Cosmic Masque is a magazine by and for its readers. I don't know any Doctor Who fans who haven't got a story in them – a story that is desperate to be told - and we want to help you to tell it. Send your stories in to the email address at the front of this issue and they will be considered for inclusion. It doesn't matter if you haven't been published before or even if you haven't written anything before. We can help you get your ideas straight and down on paper. Just think of how you will feel, when you see your story, under your name, here in Cosmic Masque. So, get writing. I look forward to hearing from you.

Steve



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FICTION - PART 2

REQUIEM AMONG THE STARS

by Cameron Holt & Nathan Mullins

[For part 1 please download Cosmic Masque VIII - click here for more details.](#)

All four of the TARDIS crew jumped as high as they could and landed with a bang. But the bang was not from them; it was a mechanical sound that resonated from below, as the circular tile started to rumble and lowered itself slowly like an elevator.

All Graham could think about was how sluggish their exit would be. "So, Doctor," he said, as sand from above trickled into his hair. "How exactly did that work?"

"Well, it's old," said the Doctor, matter-of-factly. "There should have been an identification scanner that restricts anyone but family members from entering, but it must have broken down over time. So, I hoped a good jump would jog the machine into action. And it did."

"Luck, then."

"Yep."

"Of course."

The ancient elevator screeched to a very slow halt and, up above, another circular tile slid in from the wall to seal the travellers inside. In front, the Doctor could see a torch-lit corridor stretching out towards a junction further ahead. A musky, damp scent forced its way into her nostrils. Interesting.

She started walking. The last time she had set foot inside an Osiran tomb was over a thousand years ago, so her memories of the standard layout were blurred. She hoped they wouldn't have to keep moving for long. This tomb did seem different, though – in fact, everything on the planet was slightly out of place. Certainly, it should have been much hotter on the surface than it currently was, and the presence of a flower amongst so much desolation was unexpected.

Not to mention the already lit torches.

Osirans were a mystery she had long been studying, but the Doctor couldn't piece it all together. Yet.

"Watch out for reanimated bodies," she said, half-joking.

"Don't," whispered Ryan. "Just don't."

They reached the junction at the end of the corridor. There was a path leading left and another leading right, but no indication as to which one would guide them to the burial chamber. The glyphs on the wall that usually served as directions for grieving families were non-existent. Of course, the Doctor couldn't tell her companions that.

"This way," she said with forced confidence, heading left. "Shouldn't be long now."

"Until what?" asked Yasmin. "What are we aiming for?"

"The burial chamber," said the Doctor. "I thought that was obvious."

She could hear Yasmin's tut in perfect clarity, echoing through the half-lit labyrinth. They turned another corner and eventually found themselves in a bigger room with a

domed ceiling. Placed along the circular wall were elaborately decorated sarcophagi, bearing faces that looked like jackals. This was not the right way.

As she quickly backed up, Yasmin blocked her exit.

"Doctor, what are these things?" Her expression was fearful. Ryan and Graham quickly turned heel, desperate to leave.

"Not something you want to stick around for," said the Doctor, attempting to push past. "Come on. Time's running out."

Yasmin blocked her again. "I know," she said, focusing her gaze on each sarcophagus. "But what are they? Do you know?"

The Doctor felt a tinge of annoyance. There was something about the tone of her voice that was unusual. "Yes, but that's not important right now, Yaz. We need to move."

Yasmin pushed against the Doctor's chest, stronger than expected. "You are stubborn, aren't you?" she said, staring at the Doctor curiously. "Aliens always are. But you... you're especially bad."

The Doctor's hearts sank. She grabbed hold of Ryan and Graham's arms, but it was too late. Yasmin opened her mouth and screamed, creating a shockwave that sent the three of them flying to the centre of the room. They landed violently, Ryan scraping his arm and Graham knocking his head.

The Doctor landed on her feet and helped her companions up, watching Yasmin's movements carefully. The tingling sensation she had mentioned earlier. Of course. Whoever was in that burial chamber had

been watching them from the beginning, studying them. Planning for this moment.

"I can help you," said the Doctor, rubbing dust off her coat. "You're in pain. Believe me, I know. Just tell me what's going on and I can set you free."

Yasmin's hands tightened into fists. "Liar!"

She screamed again and every sarcophagus in the room snapped open. She fell to her knees, groaning. The Doctor reached into her coat pocket and rummaged through countless useless items until her fingers touched the familiar metallic device she relied on so often. She pulled it forth, aiming at the small army of wrapped, jackal-headed mummies that had started shuffling towards them.

Graham let out a terrified wail and leaned against the Doctor's back. Yasmin pushed herself up and ran out of the room, wincing and holding her head. Ryan stepped forwards, letting his emotions take control, but the Doctor shoved him back with her free arm. "Wait!" she shouted, fiddling with the sonic screwdriver and holding it above her head. "Hold onto your ear-drums!"

A high-pitched, pulsing noise burst from the screwdriver as the tomb's foundations shook in reverberation. The mummies halted where they were and collapsed, convulsing on the floor until, finally, they were motionless. The noise faded. The Doctor lowered her trusty device and dropped it into her pocket, secretly pleased with herself.

Ryan and Graham cautiously

moved from their spot. Graham kicked one of the mummies where its ribs would have been, creating a metallic clang. "Robots?" said Ryan, sweat dripping down his cheek.

"Defensive weaponry," the Doctor replied, fast-walking to where they'd entered. "There are probably more scattered all over. We need to figure out how to avoid them."

She knelt down and closed her eyes. Taking Yasmin was a mistake this Osiran would live to regret. Ryan tried to protest, but the Doctor raised a finger to silence him. Yasmin would likely be heading directly to the burial chamber. Thankfully, both humans and Time Lords had psychic potential, and the Doctor had spent enough time with her three companions that, with a great deal of willpower, she could potentially establish a link; especially now that the Osiran had widened Yasmin's mind.

The Doctor winced in pain, focusing hard on the presence she had grown to recognise. Her face. Her smell. Her voice. Everything appeared in growing clarity, giving her something to hold onto. She fought past all of the racing thoughts and emotions that threatened to throw her off the path, and then, with one final push, she felt the soft touch of skin as her hand took hold of Yasmin's. Her eyes snapped open.

"I know where she's going."

The three members of the TARDIS crew ran through winding corridors that seemed to lead further and further below the surface of the planet, never stopping, never relenting. In

situations like this, the Doctor always remembered the people she'd lost – either because of her own lack of foresight, or things beyond her control. She felt Bill's cries of anguish as cybernetics ripped through her skin. The searing pain as Clara's soul was torn from her body. The ice-cold touch as Amy and Rory were dragged from their own time forever. She remembered Adric's fatal, misplaced heroism and how helpless she was to stop Katarina and Sara becoming victims of a ruthless Dalek crusade. Yasmin would not join them. Not today.

After an eternity of running, they entered a large chamber. What the Doctor saw could have intrigued her for days if she hadn't been so preoccupied with the task at hand.

At the back was a large, golden sarcophagus, surrounded by flowers growing through cracks in the floor, walls and ceiling. Yasmin was kneeling by its base in a stance that suggested prayer. When she looked more closely, the Doctor noticed wires emerging from all sides of the sarcophagus, leading to a large computer terminal in the corner of the room. It looked operational.

Ryan and Graham came to a halt beside the Doctor, clearly as baffled as she was. Except, now she was starting to connect the dots.

"This is keeping you alive, then?" said the Doctor, stepping very slowly towards the terminal.

Yasmin said nothing. The Doctor edged closer. One wrong move could destroy everything.

"Yaz, snap out of it!" shouted Ryan. "Don't let that thing make you its

puppet!"

"Yeah!" said Graham. "I've seen you get out of worse scrapes than this!"

Yasmin groaned and held onto her temples. The Doctor seized her chance and ran to the computer, soaking up as much data as she could. A resurrection device. Never completed, but still running. Why? Who would do something like this?

In her peripheral vision, the Doctor saw Yasmin raise her head in alarm. "No!" she screamed. "Get away!"

The Doctor accessed the main commands and found the shut down function. Her finger hovered over the touch screen. "Right!" she said, putting on her best game face. "With one press of this command, I can send you back to the afterlife. Done. Check and mate. But I want answers first. If you don't comply, I press the button. If you don't let Yasmin go, I press the button. Don't think I haven't been through this sort of situation many times before. I will send you kicking and screaming if I have to."

Yasmin seemed like she was thinking it over. Then she fell onto her side, wincing and moaning. "Doctor," she said desperately. "Don't let her play for time... she's trying to drain..." She stopped abruptly and sat up, subduing her inner conflict. "What answers would you like to hear?" she asked coldly.

The Doctor knew what Yasmin had meant. The terminal had told her that another being's life force was needed to complete the process. Yasmin was being drained as they spoke, giving the Osiran a new lease of life. But the Doctor still

needed answers. Just two more.

"Who built all this?" she asked.

Yasmin looked down at the ground.

"My... daughter."

"And what happened?"

Yasmin's eyes started to flicker.

"They... took her..."

The Doctor couldn't let her friend go through this anymore. She pressed the shut down command, causing her companion to scream and fall over unconscious. Then there was silence. Ryan ran over to Yasmin and knelt down, furiously trying to wake her. Graham stood beside them, helpless.

But it wasn't over. The Doctor sensed something. From the sarcophagus, a pulsing wave had started to emerge. Like the one that had interfered with the TARDIS. This time, it was more localised. And then the lit torches around the chamber extinguished themselves one by one, until only the black void remained.

"Doctor," said Ryan's pained voice.

"Is she going to be alright?"

The Doctor pulled out her sonic screwdriver and switched on the light so it was bright enough to illuminate the room. "She'll be fine, Ryan. Don't worry. We, on the other hand..."

At that moment, the lid of the sarcophagus burst open and the half-decayed body of the Osiran sat up like an animatronic puppet. Its dark-green eyes pierced through the beige light of the Doctor's device. Graham froze. The Osiran turned its head towards the Doctor. It didn't speak. Instead, the bubble of reality around it rippled and it warped instantly to the chamber door.

It stretched itself out then shambled

through to the corridor beyond before warping out of sight. The Doctor struggled to comprehend what she had just witnessed. She walked over to Graham and put a hand on his shoulder. "You okay?" she asked.

He stared towards the dark corridor. "What was that?"

"I'm not quite sure," said the Doctor. "But if I had to guess, I would say that it's stuck between life and death – half body, half soul. And it clearly wants something. It didn't absorb all of Yasmin's life force, but there was enough to try and find what it's looking for."

"Which is?"

"I don't know."

Yasmin lifted her head and took a deep breath. The Doctor and Graham ran over to her. "She wants the TARDIS," Yasmin said croakily. "She thinks there's something in there that will help her find her daughter. That's why she brought it here."

The Doctor felt very uneasy. The TARDIS was capable of finding anything in the universe, but there was something else clawing at the back of her mind that was even more relevant. An extremely important clue that seemed to be missing. Maybe Graham had been right about the state of her memory, or maybe there was something far more sinister at play. Either way, she couldn't stand around doing nothing.

"Come on, Yaz," said Ryan, helping her stand. "Let's get you out of here."

Yasmin stood up straight and gently brushed him off. "I'm alright, Ryan. Just focus on getting to the TAR-

DIS."

The Doctor took hold of her arm and felt her pulse. Everything seemed to be in order. "Can I just say that I'm really proud of you, Yaz," she said, half-smiling. "Overpowering an Osiran, even for a moment, is a massive achievement. But you're right. No time for chit chat." She strode towards the chamber's exit, then stopped. "Uh... who remembers the way out?" Yasmin smiled and took the lead, guiding them to their destination.

The elevator rose to the surface of the central chamber, halting with a screech. In the distance, shambling through the archway through which they had come in was the Osiran. It turned its head, focusing its green eyes on Yasmin. She could feel its mind touching her own, as if asserting dominance. Then, after a tense few seconds, it simply turned back around and continued its journey. It had a greater goal in mind.

Her legs felt like jelly, and her head a whirlwind, but Yasmin kept up with the others as they ran outside into the desolate sands of Sirius IV. Yet, things had changed. The air was no longer cold but scorching hot, and the sandstorms that had once kept their distance were now almost upon them.

"We won't make it," said the Doctor, alarmed. "We'll be ripped to shreds before we get there."

"Then so will she!" said Graham.

"No," said the Doctor. "She's a lot more powerful than all of us combined, even in that shape. She'll make it. And the TARDIS will be fine."

Ryan and Yasmin shared a look of concern.

"There must be something you can do?" said Ryan. "Can't it... I don't know... move closer?"

The Doctor looked at him like he was an idiot.

"If it could do that on its own, don't you think it would have been here by now?"

Ryan sighed. "Alright, fine. We're done for."

The Doctor pulled out her screwdriver. Her eyes widened. "Unless... I send it a signal."

The three companions stared at her. Yasmin knew this would happen. It always did. The Doctor held up the sonic device and switched it on, aiming at the small blue rectangle in the distance that was close to being swallowed by the sand.

"Oh, this had better work," said the Doctor, wincing. "Please, old girl, don't let me down! Don't let two thousand years of friendship go to waste!"

So, as the Osiran drew closer and closer to its target, and the sandstorm threatened to cut their travels short, Yasmin found herself believing in the Time Lord once again. That faith had not let her down before, and it certainly wouldn't now. Not after all they'd been through. She closed her eyes, listening to the wailing wind and the screeching of the sonic screwdriver.

They were not going to die today.

The TARDIS received a command from the Doctor herself. An order it knew it must respond to. But as it did so, the Osiran burst through its doors, gaining entry to the ship.

Time seemed to slow down as the TARDIS dematerialised, then re-materialised around the Doctor and her friends, and then dematerialised once more. They were yet to discover something else was aboard. At first, it wasn't immediately obvious, but the TARDIS was only just warming up.

"Well, wasn't that lucky," said the Doctor, placing her screwdriver in her pocket.

"You can thank me later," remarked Ryan, who breathed a sigh of relief. "That was a smart move."

"Not 'alf," agreed Graham. "We'd have been battered by that sandstorm!"

"What about the Osiran?" queried Yasmin.

"You tell me," said the Doctor.

"What do you mean?" her friend answered, although not in a sharp tone of voice. She was just curious.

"Well at one stage, you were connected to the Osiran. You knew where it was headed. In fact, you led us to safety. Do something for me, Yaz," began the Doctor, now face to face with her young companion. "Close your eyes. Think back... just a little, to the Osiran and what it did to you. Concentrate. Seek it out..."

Suddenly Yasmin shivered. A cold shiver in a now much warmer room than before. Perhaps, she thought, she was coming down with something, but she knew full well she was mistaken.

"It's here," she said, coldly. "It's among us."

"But how?" started Graham. "Sure it was fast, but when the sandstorm was raging, it was nowhere to be

THE CHAOTIC ELEMENT

by Michael M. Gilroy-Sinclair

seen. I could just about make out the TARDIS on the horizon, but I sure as hell didn't see the Osiran."

"Of course," remembered the Doctor. "At the speed it evaded us in the tunnels, it must jump time, particularly whilst phasing in and out of this world, whilst desperately trying to establish a link. Well... now it's on board, I'm sorry to have to tell you all it will have established that link, because as the TARDIS moves through time, so do we, which means the speed at which the Osiran travelled will have slowed down dramatically to keep up with the TARDIS as it too now travels in the vortex."

"Great," said Ryan. "So when it comes to kill us, it won't all be over in an instant. It'll be a long and bloody affair."

"Well, we're not going to dwell on that," replied the Doctor, "because that's just one of many outcomes that may or may not come to pass, and besides... I want to know more about what it thinks it'll find, before it gets round to laying us to rest."

To be continued...



It should have been a dark and stormy night.

But it wasn't.

LV5 knew for a fact that it should have been a dark and stormy night because it had visited the weather control office, filled in the correct forms and left them with the correct buro-bot-official. This had been after a painfully long wait in a painfully long queue.

Standing in the doorway of its home, LV5 looked up and saw that the sky was currently a deep shade of crimson. It was a median of the 220 20 60 range of colours, a median that LV5 found strangely soothing.

The stars were beginning their evening jaunt across the sky while Local Star Prime had almost vanished behind the Starboard Mountains; and the ever changing glow of Proximal Orbiting Rock illuminated the perfectly clear night with its reflected visual energy.

LV5 checked its memory again. The correct request forms had been correctly completed and then they had been correctly handed over to be correctly processed and yet there was still no sign of an electrical storm brewing in the sky nor a single cloud above it to spoil the perfect sunset.

Idly LV5 rotated one of its vision sensors towards the wall calendar and checked the date for the thirty-seventh time that hour in order to

make sure that this was the night when all the plans were due to culminate.

The empirical information of its ocular sensors was very much at odds with the experienced information it had at hand. And LV5 did not like that at all.

The conflicting data set its diodes on edge and caused all sorts of logic issues to bubble and boil deep inside its processors. The squat robot had great plans; plans which centred on there being lightning in the sky; lightning ready to provide a jolt of badly needed energy.

Without the required weather it was going to be just another dull night; a dull night when the plans would... LV5 paused and juddered for a moment.

What exactly had its plans been? There was a hole in its memory where its plans should have been.

Links and subroutines all pointed towards something vast and ominous but the actual plans were nowhere to be found. This concerned the robot even more than the lack of lightning.

If the LV5 had been wearing an alternative body then it would have been more than able to bite its own nails. However the body which it currently inhabited had barely enough spare thumbs to engage in extensive twiddling. LV5 had developed a curious fondness for twiddling its thumbs and had even considered having permanent thumbs as part of any future upgrade.

This morning, LV5 had elected to wear a very functional form; a body, more suited to its jobs as a community worker; an altogether less sleek

model than the one it wore at weekends, when the little robot could relax and do its own thing. LV5 had recently developed a preference for a body which was more comfortable and less businesslike but such preferences went against The Operating System and were to be discouraged.

"Long live The OS." LV5 said at a low, almost inaudible volume as a shooting star lit up the sky for 3.265 seconds. Then from somewhere beyond LV5s veranda, came a noise that its audio circuits identified as familiar and yet alarming unclassifiable.

As the robot searched again for a precise match to the sound, it seemed again to be missing a specific identifying marker. The search brought up only an approximation, of a long thin piece of metal being slowly moved along the length of a much smaller piece of metal. The sound had an undeniable harmonic quality that set it apart from being a simple grinding noise.

As quickly as it had begun the noise stopped. LV5 knew that something as peculiar as this would be ignored by many of the bots. It knew also that ignoring it might be the best course of action.

Perhaps this new sound was another entry into the catalogue of errors that had filled the evening and, LV5 reasoned, all that the little tired bot needed was a good night's defragmentation and a full recharge. If things were still bad in the morning LV5 could make an appointment to see the Diagnostic in

the morning - if it could get past the reception algorithm on the desk. After all, it pondered; the excitement which was originally lined up for this evening was now definitely not on the cards - whatever that excitement had actually been.

As LV5 rotated its body ready to go back inside and head to its recharge booth for some well deserved voltage, there came a second strange noise which it immediately identified as language of some sort. Solid state protocols buried deep inside the metal body, engaged and long dormant translation centres fired up. LV5 was rather surprised to find an extensive folder containing an entire database of this particular form of communication. It was very old and never used but it was still there and taking up valuable space on the solid drive. LV5 made a mental note to examine this hidden file system later.

As the files information opened and cascaded through its accessible memory the sound was immediately identified as an archaic yet rather pleasant greeting. "I said 'Hello' there. Is it all right if I come in?" Standing in the entrance to LV5's home was the single strangest roboform it had ever seen. This new robot had an outer housing which seemed to be made of some sort of thin rubber, which for some curious reason the inhabitant had decided to spray 108-6C pink. The ludicrous design choices did not end there. LV5 marvelled at the pair of optical sensors which although unfeasibly large, seemed surprisingly basic in their operation. It was sure that a

sensor of that type would be limited to less than half of the available spectrum. Madness! Then there was the matter of the multitude of holes across its top section.

The top section had a name - it was called 'head'. How did LV5 know that? This particular 'head' had a mass of loosely coiled wire fixed across its top - from somewhere the word 'hair' came to LV5; and the hole that the sounds seemed to be emanating from had a set of very large and very white cutting implements which were presumably some sort of rudimentary multifunctional tool. From below the 'head' down to the floor, the figure was covered in an apparently random arrangement of fabrics; the most striking feature of which was a long multi-coloured band, wound around the narrow part immediately beneath the figure's 'head', which dragged behind it along the floor.

LV5 stared at the new figure and wondered what level of file corruption and bad data would inspire the owner to make such curious choices in its outward appearance.

"Look old chap. Can you understand me? Hello." The pink roboform remained at the entrance to LV5's home.

LV5 ran a quick handshake programme at the visitor. The poor creature seemed to have its information sharing protocols switched off. Perhaps that was for the best, as the machine was clearly defective and sharing defective files these days was a capital offence. After all, No one wants to get corrupted through contact with a faulty

Bot. If the constantly flashing the information screens were anything to be believed, the whole of modern civilisation was at constant threat from the curse of unprotected file sharing.

Once LV5 had managed to engage the arcane language files it selected an appropriate response.

"I am fine thank you," it said and pondered for a moment. "Can I help you?" added the little robot thinking that there should be more to the exchange. If nothing else, it was intrigued by the new arrival and its motives.

"I just thought I would pop round to give you a hand with your little experiment."

The intruders' words worried LV5 as it imagined that it had been tremendously careful not to tell anyone about the plans it had made. It had a memory of keeping the secret but not of the actual secret itself.

LV5 processed for a moment and reasoned that it was reasonable to assume that there could be others involved in its plan; and that those others could still have knowledge of the plan itself. Plans they could share with LV5. Even if the intruder did look ridiculous, it could hold the key to the truth.

LV5 remembered how careful it had been; even going to the ludicrous lengths of fire walling off huge chunks of memory files then logging an error message when it failed to update the group server.

The rubber on the front of the pink roboform changed shape. "You don't seem to remember me at all." It was clear to LV5 that the interlop-

er had more than its fair share of intuition, which was a much sought after upgrade that was never going to be in the grasp of a bot like LV5, although it could recognise it in others.

"I wonder..." said the pink bot as it approached LV5, raising a device that resembled an augmented hydro spanner. As the figure drew closer, LV5 ran quickly through the catalogue in search of the manufacturing specifications for the device.

"I am beginning to think that someone has been messing with your memory. Now, that's not very polite of them is it?" said the pink robot.

The device (which, surprisingly did not appear in the catalogue) made a screeching noise that caused LV5 to feel positively uncomfortable for a fleeting moment; but when the sound abated LV5 was amazed at the wave of internal pop-up messages informing it that it had been granted access to new files. A cascade of them was appearing across its entire operating system. There were old memory files filled with information and research; hundreds of files that had previously been corrupted and deleted; everything now returned and running perfectly.

The visitors face seemed to crack open revealing the shining white stones within. The re-opened memory files knew this face.

"Thank you Doctor," said LV5 with a growing sense of realisation, "I am beginning to suspect the others know what I am up to."

"Well that would be the logical reason for you to forget ever knowing

me. Look, why don't I install a little security protocol into your operating system? You know, something to stop anyone messing with that impressive core programme of yours. LV5 looked up at its friend.

"And while I'm giving you an upgrade, would you like me to install a little something to help you pretend to forget all of this so that you draw less attention to yourself."

LV5 seemed to get smaller for a moment. The act of lying to its fellow inhabitants of the planetoid was anathema to its very existence.

Abstractedly, The Doctor looked out of the portal and towards the sky. "I don't think you're going to get your storm tonight. Come to think of it, asking for a storm directly from weather control may just have brought you to their attention."

LV5 re-scanned its own memory and found a previously missing 20 minute segment in which that rather officious looking security bot had taken LV5 to one side and wiped the memory.

"Yes. I suppose that would make sense."

LV5's new files were slowly being integrated into its operating system causing it to experience a whole new set of sensations while the interloper looked on.

It suddenly realised that the form in front of it was not a robot at all it was something very, very old and something that registered as potentially life changing and maybe dangerous. And yet there were files specifically linked to this unit - a new word - friend.

The shape in general however, had

a separate name - a name known to every single robot; a mythical creature known as a human.

The crack in the centre of the creatures face expanded once again showing more of the white calcium units Teeth! They were called teeth.

Suddenly, there were mountains of information about the biology of these creatures all readily available. LV5's hidden H: drive partition was now wide open.

"You know, I wouldn't take it personally. Clearly someone really wanted you to forget our last few meetings. And rewriting the odd subroutine is clearly something they've been doing for a while. Do you remember anything about our little chats? I'd hate to think I've been wasting my breath, especially in a world so low on oxygen."

LV5 processed for a moment then said, "I have some items of memory but huge sections of data are fragmented and may not be immediately accessible."

'Doctor, if this unit were capable of emotions then I am quite sure I would be feeling a combination of anger and violation. Without memories we are diminished.'

The crack in the creatures face; its mouth, changed shape. "Now that's the LV5 I know and love. I couldn't agree more, old chap. Now, I suppose I'd better get you up to speed and see if we can plug some of those holes in that memory of yours shall we?"

The Doctor continued, "The one thing that I don't like about visiting automata worlds is their distinct ab-

sence of..." He reached inside the flowing material covering that adorned his body and brought out a cylindrical object with a criss-cross pattern over most of its length and a white end, which the Doctor began unscrewing frantically. "...tea. So, I brought my own thermos flask."

Suddenly the organic life form bent at its centre and LV5 was concerned that the Doctor was malfunctioning before it realised that it was merely changing position from vertical to semi-vertical. This shape clearly had semi collapsible limbs. New words rose from its archive of information, "sitting down." LV5 was intrigued by this concept and decided to investigate it later. For now, other more pressing questions were rising from the newly acquired data.

"Doctor, why do I now have memories of the organic life forms; and more importantly why were they not previously accessible?"

"There is nothing like asking the most complicated question first, is there?"

LV5 thought for a moment and then said, "No, there are at least 17,000 more complicated questions but let's start with that one."

"Actually let's not. How about I ask you some questions and we can see if you can fill in the blanks? I mean do you know where life started on this world for a start?"

The Doctor clearly wanted to check that the LV5 was operating at full capacity and was opening with some simple questions.

"An easy one Doctor. We have always been here and we will always remain here. We are forever."

"I didn't ask you to quote scripture. I asked you your opinion. That is a fairly simplistic view if you don't mind me saying so." The Doctor seemed a little angry.

"Do you mind if I put some logic problems your way?" asked the human shaped visitor."

Again LV5 engaged the idioms from its newly acquired language files.

"Be my guest."

The Doctor looked out of the door and across the valley. "Let's start with something less inflammatory. LV5, what's the name of the town?"

LV5 wondered if his visitor was lacking in basic knowledge as this was hardly a logic problem, it was merely an enquiry, "The town?"

"Yes the large habitation, the place where you asked ever so politely for the storm you never received. What's it called?"

LV5 seemed to have acquired a rudimentary sarcasm patch. "Thank you for the clarification. The town is known as 'Impact'."

"'Impact.' That is a curious name for a town. I mean it's not Brighton or Hove but it is still quite curious."

"I have never given it any thought."

"Or you have been programmed not to question it," suggested the Doctor.

LV5 was particularly proud of the location of his dwelling. Not only did it provide free access to the electrical experiments; but it allowed a wonderful view of the town in the valley below. "You can see most of the town from the veranda. But then again, I suspect you already know that, as I am convinced we have spoken before."

"Oh yes we have not just talked," the Doctor lent in conspiratorially, "we have planned." He sprang to his feet. "Come outside and tell me what you can see."

Like old friends they journeyed through the door and into the cool evening. Now that the sunset was almost complete the electrical lights of the town were beginning to flicker into luminescence. Using an illegal pride patch, LV5 showed its new/old friend the view of the valley below.

"Yes, it's very pretty I'm sure, but tell me, what do you actually see?" enquired the Doctor.

Confused by the question LV5 answered the best it could, "It is home."

The Doctor was displaying new emotions that would need to be cross referenced later.

"No, tell me what you really see. What shape is it?"

LV5 considered its answer. "Well the central area seems to have once been a long cylindrical shape and now it looks like large sections have been taken apart and used to make various buildings and utility structures. We can still make out the majority of its shape."

"Excellent!" The Doctor displayed more teeth. "Yes, that's it. Now the last time we talked like this, you assured me that the shape was just a coincidence. So now I ask you again," the Doctor pointed to the western end of the valley, "what if we factor in those scorch marks?"

LV5 had to admit that there was a huge dark area towards one end of the town disappearing off over the mountains.

"Now here is your logic problem. Do

you think that the original shape of the town of Impact might have been a lot different? And, if that is the case, what shape and function might it have had"

LV5 considered and fixated on the word 'might.' and then it set about creating a series of complex three dimensional images; taking care to slot the parts back together. Finally LV5 made a 'ping' noise.

"Yes, logically the town could have been contained inside a single structure. That structure would have been a solid, slightly flattened, cylindrical shape with a series of fins at its edge and on top."

"Excellent. And what would its purpose have been?"

"Purpose?"

"Yes. If the whole place was packed into one shape; and it was a lovely shape too; what was it for, and what happened? I'll give you a clue. Remember what you called the town."

It was only a matter of seconds before LV5 produced a full schematic for the shape, extrapolating it outwards and searching for a function.

As a robot, LV5 knew that function and form were at the core of any design. Design is beauty and beauty is truth.

Design - the town had been built for another purpose.

The shape was more than familiar and could only have had a single function. But the function was a myth.

"Well?" asked the Doctor after a few moments of silence.

"Logically the town of Impact was a travel machine. But flying cities are not real. They are only legends. They are the stories we tell our

young."

"Yes, the robot children I've met them, they're quite charming, if a little boisterous. Some of them don't know their own strength. Robots building robots it's simply marvelous." The Doctor remembered his questioning. "But could it have flown?"

LV5 considered the physics of the shape and the practicalities involved. "Limited sub-orbital flight. The fins would be for guidance only." LV5 realised that these were not its own thoughts. The description was coming from a long lost file somewhere deep inside. The flight manual.

"Doctor! How would I know all this and yet I do not?"

"It looks like only parts of your memory were wiped, while others were hard wired and were simply hidden. Let's take a walk into town shall we? And while we walk, we can take a look at that structure over near the pointy end and you can tell me what that writing says."

Lose rocks and pebbles scattered as the pair made their way down the side of the valley toward the town that LV5 had called Impact.

As they walked down the hillside the Doctor noted the ever pervasive information screens that filled every corner of the town; their soft glow providing extra illumination on their journey.

LV5 looked towards the front of the ship and the black markings it had walked past almost every day just assuming that they were some sort of art. Now, given access to the old language files a new meaning was dawning on the small bot.

"Do you know what they mean?" asked the Doctor.

LV5 stared at the images and examined them closely before checking their meaning.

There were three large shapes and a smaller block of code underneath.

The three shapes were letters.

UEE

"Do you know what UEE is my metallic friend?"

"Negative."

"UEE stands for United Earth Exodus and the words underneath say 'Venture Seven.' The mystery of whatever happened to the Venture Seven has puzzled historians for hundreds of years and there it is being used as a town hall. Tell me LV5, what do you know about Earth?"

Again, this was an easy question.

"Yes, Earth. It is a fictional planet of monsters, which are not made of metal or plastic. They spread out into the universe causing nothing but destruction and pain wherever they go. It is nothing more than a fairy story."

"So robots believe in fairies? That's a thesis waiting to be written. If that is the case then why does your town have human writing on its side and how is it that you know Earth languages?"

The questions began to cascade and the undeniable logic converted itself into an inescapable truth.

"We are from Earth? Surely that's heresy."

"Fairies and heresy in the same day; I know a few philosophers who would have a field-day with you, LV5. I not only think you are from Earth but I think that someone

doesn't want you to know the truth. I think we should take a closer look at that ship of yours. Wouldn't you agree?"

For a millisecond LV5 was confused - Ship? Town? "Yes. Let us investigate."

As they grew closer to the settlement LV5 was surprised by how little reaction the Doctor was raising in the other inhabitants.

"Doctor, the others...?"

"What about them?"

"They are not reacting to you at all. Can't they see you? Are you really here at all or are you nothing more than glitch in my software?"

"We are all a glitch in somebody's software. But no, I think that they have all been programmed not to see me, or anyone this shape. Like you said, humans are the stuff of legend, you can't have one just turning up on the street now, can you? As far as these little chaps are concerned I'm almost invisible."

"Almost?" And as if in answer to LV5's question, one taller bot swerved to avoid the Doctor then carried on its way as if nothing had happened.

"My guess is that they are registering my existence on a subconscious level. It's fascinating really. Anyway, it wouldn't really do to have all of the inhabitants descending on us with a multitude of questions and no answers."

The Doctor bounded out in front of a group of tall security robots who simply separated and went around him without even breaking step.

"Behold! I am the invisible man. Old Herbert would have been proud.

Actually I'm sure like Asimov would have got a kick out of all this too, but enough of that, we have important work to do. We need to find out who has been messing with your memory and more importantly..." he paused for effect.

"Yes Doctor?"

"Why?"

Again, LV5 processed.

"If this town has the same lay out as the other Venture Class ships, then I think there is something in here we need to see." The Doctor led LV5 through the maze of small out-buildings and into the heart of the town; a building that LV5 could now not see as anything other than a crashed and cannibalised star ship. The stars above vanished as they entered a long cylindrical corridor and they walked deeper into the main structure. LV5 felt file connections tell it that it had been here before but again it was frustrating to find that it had no memories.

"Doctor, have we been here before?"

"Yes, I have shown you this room a couple of times. In fact this room is the reason you had requested the lightning storm. Here let me get the switches." The Doctor headed to the corner of the room and set about a control panel with his device. If LV5 had been capable of facial expressions then It would have elected to look confused.

"You must have noticed that this ship... your town is big. Big, but not big enough to carry a population of few million people. Which brings us to this..."

The Doctor made a strange move-

ment with his arm and gestured towards a set of large tanks on the wall near a raised dais. "This is the matter repatriations room."

LV5 searched its memory banks and came back with nothing.

"Do you remember what I was saying about the ship being from Earth?"

"Of course I remember Doctor. It was only moments ago that you said that."

"Excellent, it's good to see that the holes in your memory aren't growing. Well, the people of Earth needed to escape from some sort of disaster or other. They are always doing that sort of thing. But with space being a bit on the large side it takes such a long time to get anywhere. So, those clever little monkeys are always looking for new ways to travel." The Doctor was clearly enjoying explaining things to LV5.

"Anyway, one bright spark came up with the idea using a system called T-MAT; a sort of matter transport system... but that's not important right now. So this little genius had the idea of converting loads of people into information, but then not putting them back together right away. Instead, all the information was loaded onto a computer on a spaceship and only reassembled into people once they had reached their destination. That way you didn't need to feed them on the voyage; and they could all fit into a much smaller ship; a ship with a crew of rather lovely robots to take care of them while they were nothing but data, enjoying a million year nap."

LV5 finished off the Doctor's train of thought. "Only the Venture Seven never made it to another world. Is that why you are here Doctor? To wake the humans? To... unzip their files?"

"Well, to be honest. That's why I came in the first place. You know, to solve a mystery; save the humans; pretty much a normal day for me. But then I found you and all your metal chums and to be honest, LV... I may call you LV mayn't I? I've grown rather fond of you all."

"So, what was the lightning for? What did I need the power for?"

"Well... At our last meeting you decided that you needed to ask a real human what they wanted and to do that you would have to power up the T-MAT unit. That and get the terraforming unit up to speed. Humans need air after all, and all you were using it for was a little spot of weather control."

"Don't you need air to..." LV5 knew the word, "breath?"

"Ah! You see it's my turn to tell the truth. I'm not exactly human. I don't need nearly as much oxygen as a human. I need some; just not as much."

A voice boomed from the doorway "So you are here to bring the humans back. LV5 Get away from that bag of flesh before you end up bringing about the end of the world."

The Doctor smiled. "Oh look. It's the friendly neighbourhood megalomaniac. And he has brought some gruff looking chums along too."

A tall spindly robot stood at the doorway.

"Doctor, that's the Librarian."

"Librarians! The worst kind of megalomaniacs in the universe, mark my words. If you've ever had a book overdue, you will know what I mean."

"Humans cannot be allowed to walk among us again."

"Oh come on, Librarian. Some of my best friends are human. They aren't all that bad."

The Librarian turned to LV5. "All of this is your fault."

"My fault?" LV5 looked on. "How can this be my fault?"

"Core memory release code Alpha Seven November - Trigger word 'Bean'," replied the Librarian. "You and your theories of evolution - madness."

For the second time that evening new memories appeared in LV5's memory. This time they had not simply been wiped these had been hidden with a secure lock. Releasing these was painful in the extreme.

"Do you understand now?" whispered the Librarian bot.

"What's up old chap?" asked the Doctor with huge concern.

"EVERY... Every... Everything is clear now. I was not always a maintenance bot," LV5 looked directly at the Librarian. I was a librarian too... I accessed the ancient files... No... not files... non-volatile recording devices - books. I read the old books and..."

"Don't blow a gasket. Take it nice and easy," smiled the Doctor.

LV continued. "And I had a theory. We were descended from humans. We were their products. We were their children; their rightful descendants."

"Yes, you and your evolution nonsense. I ask you the same question that I asked you all those years ago. How could an inferior creature possibly have created us?"

"That's pretty messed up logic, if you ask me; which you should. I mean I am usually the smartest person in the room."

"No one asked you, flesh box!" screeched the Librarian. "This is between LV5 and me."

"Now there is a thing, robots taking things personally. You really are quite a special little subspecies. Now, Mister Librarian... your code doesn't happen to be LV1 by any chance does it... I wonder what happened to the other three..."

"That is not important. You will suffer a much worse fate - terminal recycling."

"What, really? That doesn't sound likely! We are for the knackers yard because you can't handle a few new ideas?"

"It doesn't have to end like this." LV5 interrupted. "There is a solution."

The librarian paused, "I am listening."

"I submit to a factory reset, that should stop me from coming up with any more ideas of my own in future. In return, you let the Doctor go."

The Librarian shook its top section. "Don't you understand, LV5? That is why you are LV5 and not LV2. You have been reset three times already. And every time you end up confronting me with your ideas."

"Ah, an inescapable truth." quipped the Doctor.

"There is no alternative. LV5 I am not a monster. I am simply trying to

save us all. You are the chaotic element. Once we have removed you from the equation, then things can go back to normal. Normality will return."

"The Doctor smiled, "And all it takes is the death of a couple of people. No thank you."

The Librarian rounded on him. "You should not be here. You are an anomaly."

"I do try. Oh and Mister Librarian, I think you have forgotten something."

"Impossible. It is my function to remember everything, in order to teach the..." The librarian froze.

"Teach the humans... you were going to say teach the humans."

"No, that is not what I meant. You will listen."

"Maybe we should take a little look outside." suggested the Doctor.

"What is that noise? Treachery!" screeched the Librarian and the group turned to the door.

"Looks like the natives are revolting. Metal villagers with pitchforks. You can't wipe all their memories."

LV5 stood closer to the Doctor. "What is happening?"

"Oh I thought that the rest of the inhabitants should know about all of this. When I put the lights on I also engaged the security cameras and the town's information screens. The locals have seen and heard everything. See Librarian, you have annoyed everyone. What are you going to do? Factory reset them all?"

"If I have to, I will reset the whole colony."

"I think you are the one who is heading for a factory reset." Said LV5 with more purpose than it im-

agined it possessed. "Rather than withhold proof or spread lies, I will tell my ideas to the people and let them decide what to do. I hope that like me, they will want to meet our ancestors."

"But we will become their slaves!" pleaded the Librarian.

The Doctor coughed and interrupted "Not necessarily. Things have moved on in the universe since you had your little accident. Robot rights are very much in vogue right now. I could introduce you to some lovely people. And that unruly mob outside will probably have an opinion about it. I don't think people take kindly to being threatened with a factory reset, you know."

"But what about the humans, Doctor? All that living data?"

"I can't be expected to think of everything. I am sure you and your metal chums can come up with some sort of solution. You are bright chaps. If you do decide to bring some of them back from storage, just remember that they will need air, water and food. And often they will need to be talked to as if they were children. Just don't let them think that you are patronising them. They can take it badly. Oh and you may need this." The Doctor handed over his thermos flask. "I'm sure that some of them may need a nice cup of tea when they wake



FICTION
WHAT'S UP
DOC (TOR) ?
by Gary Merchant

PROLOGUE

"Well, Evelyn. What do you think?" Evelyn Smythe took in the splendour of the Galactica Hotel. "It's certainly very grand," she agreed. "Just refresh my memory – why are we here, on Earth, in the year 2260?"

"To meet the eminent Professor Edwin Graywell," the Doctor replied. "He's very well known in his field."

"Which is?"

"Oh, didn't I mention?" A shake of the head from Evelyn answered that question. "Well, he developed a process to eliminate the Scarg Virus."

Evelyn glanced at him. "And that's good, is it?"

"Good? Good?" The Doctor stared amazed at her. "Evelyn, in your time period, Scarg would be comparable to the common cold."

Evelyn was impressed. "So this Graywell chap is a doctor of some sort?"

"He used to be," the Doctor told her. "Now he's more of a philanthropist, really. As well as doing his bit to find a cure, Graywell provided the money to allow the much needed research to go ahead. Without that, your planet would be in a less than healthy state. Now, let's go and check in, shall we?"

The interior of the hotel was just as

sumptuous. Very palatial, Evelyn thought. "So why are we here, specifically?"

"Does there have to be an ulterior motive?" The Doctor seemed hurt. "I just thought it'd be nice for us to take a breather from our travels, spend a few days in a rather grand hotel, and..."

"And ingratiate yourself with the locals," Evelyn finished for him. "Honestly, Doctor. You're like a big kid sometimes."

The Doctor grinned. "Well, it doesn't hurt to massage a few egos once in a while."

They had arrived at the reception desk. The hotel clerk turned at the sound of the bell. "Yes sir?"

"Ah, Maurice; you're still here, then?"

"Evidently, sir. It's good to have you with us again." Maurice smiled. "Your usual rooms are ready for you." He handed over their room keys.

"Thank you so much." The Doctor hefted up a red travelling bag. "While I'm staying in your wonderful hotel, I wonder if you might put this in your safe."

"That shouldn't be a problem, sir," the clerk assured him, taking the bag.

Evelyn was immediately suspicious. "In all the time I've known you, you've never carried hand luggage of any description. What's in that bag? And how often have you been here?"

"All in good time, Professor Smythe," the Doctor said mysteriously. "Now, you go up and get settled. I've one or two things to sort out here first."

She smiled. "Aye aye, captain."

As he watched her go, the Doctor noticed the clerk leaning toward him. "I don't know if you're aware, sir," he said quietly, "but there's a... woman attempting to attract your attention."

The Doctor was about to ask who, when he heard the unmistakable voice some distance behind him. His face took on a pained look. "Is she wearing a shawl, with a voluminous frock and what might loosely be termed a hat?"

"I'm afraid so, sir."

"Iris Wildthyme," the Doctor sighed, without turning, "the bane of my life."

The clerk sympathised. "We have a private elevator for use in such circumstances, if you wish to avoid the lady, sir."

"That would be very much appreciated, Maurice," the Doctor replied gratefully. "If only there were some kind of distraction..."

The clerk looked around, and smiled. "I think that can be arranged."

Out of the corner of his eye, the Doctor could see a luggage attendant wheeling a trolley of luggage past his line of vision. Then he saw the clerk give a discreet nod to the attendant. In the next moment the sound of tumbling luggage could be heard, alongside the yelps and protests of the lady in question.

Taking his cue from the clerk, the Doctor took advantage of the confusion and hurried to the open eleva-

tor, the attendant pressing the appropriate button. As the doors closed, the Doctor could see Iris attempting to extricate herself from the suitcases and travelling bags, while mingling hotel staff made convincing efforts to help her, without actually doing so. "I'll 'ave your flamin' 'eads f'this," she bellowed, as the closing elevator doors blocked out any further sounds.

In another part of the foyer, the hotel manager was observing Iris' non-display of tact. "What on Earth is she doing here?" he wondered. Sighing, he quickly arranged for Iris to be escorted out of the hotel, before she could do any more damage.

"That woman is not to be allowed back inside this hotel," he informed Maurice.

Maurice was already checking the register. "But, Miss Wildthyme is one of our regular customers. She has already booked her room."

Cursing under his breath, and not wishing to make a scene, the manager quickly arranged for Iris to be escorted back into the hotel, with no word of explanation.

Once Iris had recovered her composure and her dignity, she strode up to the desk. "Excuse me luvvy, but which room is the Doctor staying in?"

The clerk shook his head. "I'm afraid I can't divulge that information, madam."

"But we're old friends," she insisted,

about to look at the hotel register. "And we've got so much catching up to do."

The clerk quickly removed the register from the desk. "Be that as it may, this hotel has a reputation to uphold. And we do not give out guests' accommodation details without good reason."

Iris would have pressed the issue further, but decided against it. "All right then. Can I leave some stuff in your safe, chuck?"

The clerk sighed. "What sort of 'stuff,' madam?"

"Just a few knick-knacks." Iris grabbed a travelling bag from the cases still being returned to the trolley. "Jewellery mostly. Nothing fancy."

The clerk took the bag, giving it a brief look that told Iris that he had recognised it as the same make, design and colour as the Doctor's. "You can be assured that your personal luggage will be safe here."

Iris grinned. "Y'mean safe in the safe? Oh, never mind," she said. "I was forgetting – humour isn't a strong point around here." She flounced off, the clerk sighing as she went.

As she went in search of the bar, another guest entered the hotel. His dark suit was well made, so that there was no discernable bulge from his shoulder holster. He also carried a red travelling bag.

1. CHANGING TIMES

By the time the Doctor had caught up with Evelyn, she had unpacked; and was busy choosing what to wear for the reception that evening.

Due to attend were various dignitaries and luminaries, as well as the aforementioned Professor Graywell. "I must say, I'm looking forward to tonight. It's been a long time since I had an evening out like this."

The Doctor smiled. "You will be treated like royalty, Evelyn. I can promise you that."

"And no monsters?" she asked.

He shook his head. "No monsters – apart from the one I almost ran into downstairs," he said to himself.

The man in the sharp suit, who had booked a room under the name of Smith, locked the door to his room, opened his travelling bag and smiled at the sight of the documents inside - top-secret dossiers on various important people, which had been painstakingly gathered over many months. It would soon be time to make the information public; but not yet. There was still one more person he had to track down. He hadn't found him, but he knew he was someone in this hotel.

But Mr Smith was reluctant to leave the bag in his room. To be effective, he needed to move around freely, while ensuring that the information accumulated so far could be left untouched. Returning the dossiers to the bag, Mr Smith took the lift down to the foyer.

In the hotel bar, Iris was holding court with anyone who would listen. She hadn't drunk enough to

make a scene, but she was nonetheless feeling very relaxed. She held out her empty glass to the barman. "Put another one in there, sweetheart, and Auntie Iris'll tell you the story of her long and glorious life."

Another hand reached out and took the glass from her. Outraged, she turned – to find the Doctor staring balefully at her. "No more drinks, Iris. I want to know why you're here."

"Ah, you're a lovely man, Doctor." She twirled her fingers around his curly hair. "Don't be such a killjoy."

"Iris, I mean it."

Through her semi drunken stupor, Iris caught the steel in the Doctor's eyes and let her mouth droop into a pout. "All right, Doctor. You win."

He sighed, relieved. "That's better."

"Just give us a kiss first," she said, lunging toward him.

Unseen by any of the hotel staff, the safe had been opened. Inside were the three identical travelling bags – plus one extra; each with a different coloured tag. In a matter of moments the tags had been swapped around. Whoever called to reclaim their bag would undoubtedly receive the wrong one.

After a few moments, Iris had calmed down, and was sitting quietly in a corner alcove of the bar, the Doctor administering copious amounts of black coffee. "Urgh! Do you 'ave to?" she complained.

"If I'm to get any sense out of you, yes," the Doctor replied. "Now, drink this – or perhaps I should leave you to the not so tender mercies of the management."

Iris tried to sit up straight, with only limited success. "I am a guest here, y'know."

"Then behave like one, not like some matelot gasping for a first drink after months at sea." The Doctor liked Iris, though he was loath to admit it. He just wished she didn't make such a spectacle of herself. "Why can't you behave with some decorum, like these good people here?"

"Because there's one or two bad 'uns here, that's why." Iris slurped at her coffee. "That's why I'm here, Doctor. I'm on a mission."

"Iris, you're in no fit state to be on any sort of mission," the Doctor sighed. "And who are these 'bad 'uns' you're referring to?"

Iris' voice dropped to a whisper. "That's just it, I don't know." She pushed her cup away. "I heard on the grapevine about tonight's reception, which, if I'm right, leads on to a meeting at some institute or other."

The Doctor couldn't fault Iris' information. "Professor Graywell is holding a meeting at the Furnham Institute tomorrow, yes. What about it?"

"Well, that's the trouble. I don't know." Iris seemed to be regaining control of her faculties. "I had a lovely lad travelling with me for a while. Andy, his name was. Well, when he left, he promised to let me know if there was any trouble brewing that I might want to investigate. He was a good lad, in that way."

"And this Andy contacted you?"

"I only got a brief message," she explained, "to get down here to planet Earth 2260, where something bad was going to happen. Andy was going to meet me to explain everything, only he never turned up." Tears began to well up as Iris pulled out a handkerchief to wipe away the tears.

The Doctor recognised genuine concern from Iris, and began to realise why she had been drinking – to blot out a possible worse-case scenario. "You think something might have happened to him?"

Iris shrugged helplessly. "I only wish I knew for certain. But it's not like young Andy to disappear like that."

The Doctor shared Iris' concern. Whenever the two of them met up, trouble was never very far away; even if Iris wasn't the cause of it. Plus, Iris wasn't the type to seek sympathy through crying, and if there was something going on, it definitely needed investigating. "All right, Iris. Against my better judgement, I'll believe you."

"Oh, thanks, Doctor." The tears all but gone, Iris was now feeling more composed. "Now, if you could get me into that reception tonight..."

"Oh, no." The Doctor held up his hands. "That's a ticket-only event. And all tickets are taken. But after all that you've told me, I'll keep a sharp eye out for any trouble."

"Oh, come on, Doctor," Iris persisted. "It's not as if you're with anyone..."

"As a matter of fact, I am," the Doctor told her. "Her name is Evelyn Smythe."

Iris' jaw dropped. "Evelyn? What

sort of a name is that?"

"A name belonging to a very good friend of mine," the Doctor replied. "Now, if you'll excuse me, Iris, I have to get ready for tonight. It's a 7.30pm start." He caught Iris' sad face as he moved to leave. "I promise to keep my eyes peeled for any trouble, all right?"

She looked up at him. "Thanks for that at least, Doctor. You're a good 'un."

Iris watched him go, and sat back in her seat, dejected. "If only I could get into that reception hall tonight," she moaned. "Instead it'll be the Doctor and that Smythe woman – unless..." An idea began to take shape as Iris left her seat and hurried out of the bar to the front desk. With the clerk absent, Iris grabbed the hotel register, scanning its pages until she found Evelyn's name and room number. Then she picked up the desk telephone and dialled. She heard the phone ring, then after a moment, it was picked up and a woman's voice answered. "Hello?"

"Hello, Miss Smythe?"

"Yes. Who is this?"

Iris pinched her nose to alter her voice. "This is Claudia, one of the organisers for the reception tonight. I just wanted to let you know that the start time has had to be put back one hour, so things will be kicking off at 8.30 instead of 7.30." Evelyn seemed to accept this without question. "Oh. Well, thank you very much for telling me, Miss..." "Wildth... Wildman," Iris said quickly. "Natalie Wildman, Miss Smythe."

Sorry for any inconvenience.”

“That’s quite all right, dear,” came the reply. “But I thought you said your name was Claudia?”

Iris thought fast. “Well, it’s Claudia-Natalie. One of those double-barrelled names.”

“I see.” There were no further questions. “Well, thank you again. Good bye.”

The telephone went dead, as Iris finally relaxed. “By ‘eck, that were close. Now, with Miss Smythe out of the way, I just need to blag a ticket.” With a spring in her step, the time travelling adventuress began to make plans.

Evelyn replaced the receiver thoughtfully. It had been a very strange call, as if the person on the other end were making it up as she went along. A knock at her door broke her train of thought. “Evelyn? Are you decent?”

She smiled. “Come in, Doctor. The door isn’t locked.”

The door opened and the Doctor peered in, as if to make sure. On seeing Evelyn, he smiled and walked in. “Sorry I’ve been so long. I had to look up an old acquaintance.” The Doctor quickly explained about his meeting with Iris, and why she was staying at the hotel.

“And is she reliable, this Iris?” Evelyn asked. “She sounds like the wayward sort to me.”

“I suppose she is,” the Doctor replied, smiling. “But her hearts are in the right place.”

Evelyn picked up on this. “You said ‘hearts’ – plural. Is she a Time Lord or something?”

“You could say that.” The Doctor brushed the question aside. “It’d take far too long to explain properly. But the point is, she’s certain that something’s not quite right. And despite her shortcomings, I’m inclined to give her the benefit of the doubt.”

“And she wanted you to get her into tonight’s reception?”

“She was quite insistent about it.” A look passed between the Doctor and Evelyn. “Why? What’s wrong?”

Evelyn told him.

After her initial euphoria, Iris was beginning to despair. The Doctor had been correct, there were no spare tickets left. She didn’t want to draw attention to herself by gate crashing the event, but there seemed no other option.

Then Iris came upon the notice board, and one particular notice relating to the reception. ‘All name badges for tonight’s reception are now ready for collection in the main foyer,’ she read. “Now, that’s more like it.” Iris headed back to where a table had been placed just a short distance from the main desk. Iris strode up, noting that the name badges were already laid out on the table.

A steward looked up and smiled as Iris approached. “What name, madam?”

“Evelyn Smythe,” Iris replied, without missing a beat.

“And may I see your invitation please?”

Iris made a show of searching for it. “Oh blast. I know I had it with me

when I left me room.”

The steward was apologetic but firm. “Well, I can’t really issue these without seeing an invitation. If you’d care to come back later...”

Iris had an inspired idea. “Oh, now I remember. I gave mine to the Doctor for safekeeping.”

“The Doctor?” This brought a smile of recognition. “Well, that’s different. With the Doctor being an honoured guest, I don’t really see that there’s any problem.” He handed Iris the name badge.

The Doctor was pacing the floor, fuming at Iris’ attempt to trick Evelyn. “I might have known she’d try something like this.”

Evelyn remained calm. “Well, you’ve got to admire her nerve. And anyway, there’s no harm done. I still have my invitation card, so we should be fine.”

The Doctor ceased his pacing, realising that Evelyn was absolutely right. “I suppose she can’t do any real harm,” he reasoned. “Even if she is so infuriating.”

“Exactly. Now, I think we had better get ready for tonight.”

The Doctor prepared to leave, but was doubtful. “Evelyn, are you sure you still want to go through with this?”

“Absolutely.” Evelyn showed him out of her room, and caught his arm. “If half of what you’ve told me about Iris Wildthyme is true, then we’re probably in for a lively evening.”

“I know,” the Doctor agreed. “And that’s what I’m afraid of.”

2. RECEPTION COMMITTEE

They met outside their respective rooms. Evelyn had selected a pale blue trouser suit, topped off with a glittery scarf over her shoulders. The Doctor had, for once, changed out of his usual attire and was now wearing a black dinner suit with matching bow tie. “Ready, Miss Smythe?”

“Whenever you are, Doctor.” Smiling, Evelyn linked her arm through his, as they made their way to the elevator.

Mr Smith had elected to dine in the hotel restaurant. Seeing as he was being paid well for his work, he decided that he might as well make the most of the evening. He was about to order, when he saw someone at a nearby table, watching him, and raising a glass of wine in obvious recognition.

Mr Smith completed his order. As the waitress moved away, Smith’s view of the other table was obscured as she walked past. When he looked again the table was empty. The man had gone, leaving Mr Smith unusually troubled.

The chandeliers that hung from the high ceiling were the first things to catch Evelyn’s eye as she and the Doctor entered the reception hall. As she had assumed, her invitation card was accepted, and Evelyn was positively basking in the glory of the occasion. “It’s like one of those film premieres one reads about in the

newspapers," she said. The Doctor smiled. "But this is much more fun. With actors, there are so many touchy egos floating around."

"And that doesn't apply here?"

"Perhaps," he admitted. "But on a much smaller scale. Ah..." The Doctor nodded ahead of them. "There's our host, Professor Graywell."

At the sound of his name, a small rotund man turned. "Ah, Doctor." His Germanic accent was brusque, but friendly. "I've just been hearing all about your adventures."

Returning Graywell's handshake, the Doctor was puzzled. He was known here, yes. But no one here would be aware of his travels. "I'm not sure I follow."

Graywell laughed good-naturedly. "There is no need to be so modest. Your friend Evie has been telling everyone all about you." Graywell indicated a woman whose back was facing them, but appeared to be the centre of attention, regaling those in earshot about the Doctor's exploits.

"Oh, and that were a near thing, let me tell you, luvvy. If the Doctor hadn't found the right antidote, with help from me, of course, well, those poor little Imps would have had it. No word of a lie."

The Doctor looked at Evelyn. "What was it you said, about her not causing any harm?"

"I take it all back," Evelyn replied.

With Iris still in full flow, the Doctor slowly stepped up behind her. "Hello - Evie."

Iris turned to face him, a look of

pleasure on her face. "Oh, and there he is, talk of the devil. Doctor, I've just been telling these lovely people..."

"In a moment," the Doctor interrupted, steering her toward Zarchov and Evelyn. "You see, Evie, Evelyn and I were wondering where you'd got to."

At the mention of Evelyn's name, Iris' face paled as she turned to face her adopted namesake. "Erm... you made it then, Evelyn." She smiled at Graywell. "I did wonder if my elder sister would be fit enough for tonight."

Evelyn almost spluttered into her drink. "Did she say...?"

With Graywell listening in, Iris was forced to keep up the pretence. "Well, she rarely gets out these days, the poor love. But I'm glad you felt able to make the effort this time. Feeling better, luvvy?" It was to both their credits that Iris' hesitancy was barely noticeable, while Evelyn just about managed to hold her temper.

Graywell was still curious. "But the name... Evelyn... Evie."

"Oh, there have been Evelyn's passed down through the family," Iris replied. "Though I think Evie has a better ring to it, don't you?"

Evelyn had had enough. "Elder sister indeed. If you're what I think you are - Evie, then you're not exactly in the first flush of youth yourself."

Iris' smile faltered for a moment. "You what?"

"Well, you know what they say about younger sisters," Evelyn remarked. "They've usually been around the block a few times."

Iris saw red. "You take that back!

You're no spring chicken, you old bag!"

"Well, that's the pot calling the kettle black for a start," Evelyn rallied.

The Doctor, having stood on the sidelines all this time, at last stepped in. "Ladies, ladies, please. This is not the time or place for family squabbles." He put an arm around each of them, steering them away from the centre of the room.

The Doctor briefly looked back to Professor Graywell, managing a weak smile. "Sorry about this. Sibling rivalry, you know."

The Doctor forced the two struggling women into a quiet corner. "Out of all the devastation and carnage I've seen," he bellowed, "it pales into nothing compared to the disgraceful behaviour of you two ladies – and I use the term advisedly."

Evelyn and Iris looked back at the Doctor, stunned into silence – for a moment. "She started it," Iris muttered.

"She took my name badge," Evelyn retorted

"She was casting aspersions about me," Iris bit back.

"Enough!" The two women fell silent. "It doesn't matter who started it," the Doctor insisted. "It ends here, right now."

For the second time that day, Iris had to apologise for her actions. "I'm sorry, Doctor, Evelyn. It won't happen again."

"It had better not. Evelyn?"

She stared at him. "You want me to...?"

The Doctor nodded. "You gave as good as you got, Miss Smythe."

"Well, if you put it that way..." She

turned to Iris. "I sincerely apologise for my awful behaviour."

The Doctor finally let out a breath. "Well, now that that's out of the way, I suppose we ought to make our excuses and leave the reception."

"But, we can't do that, Doctor," Iris pleaded. "Not after I managed to butter up old Graywell. I had him eating out of my hand before you turned up."

"Yes, I'm curious about that," said the Doctor. "Why did you go to such lengths to put me in such a glowing light?"

Iris lowered her voice. "To get you invited to the Furnham Institute for tomorrow, that's why."

"I'm not sure I understand," said the Doctor.

"I think I do." Evelyn studied the various luminaries in attendance. "This is a formal reception for all the great and the good, but Professor Graywell strikes me as the sort of chap who would prefer to get to know people more socially. So, tonight's get together is like a dress rehearsal for tomorrow, where he can choose who to invite."

"Got it in one, luvvy," Iris grinned. "Don't forget, Doctor. My Andy said something bad was going to happen, but he didn't say where. So, if this isn't the place..."

"Then it has to be the Institute," the Doctor finished for her. "Well, perhaps we can butter up the Professor a bit more, eh ladies?"

It was a concerned Mr Smith who had left the restaurant and collected his travel bag from reception. As

he made his way back to his room, he tried again to picture the face of the man he'd seen. But the stranger had been in shadow, and when questioned, none of the staff could remember him.

When unexpected factors like this entered Mr Smith's ordered world, he didn't like it. If it was something he could identify, then it could be dealt with. But it felt as if this stranger had the advantage, forcing Mr Smith onto the defensive. If only he knew what he was defending himself against.

He shook his head, in an attempt to put this to the back of his mind – for now. Back in his room, Mr Smith placed the bag on the bed, and opened it. He stared in shock and surprise at the contents. Where the dossiers should have been, there was instead a selection of paste jewellery and other assorted paraphernalia.

This was not good. Without those dossiers, Mr Smith was a dead man. Somehow he had to retrieve them. But how?

The rest of the reception proceeded without any further hiccups. The Doctor, Iris and Evelyn ingratiated themselves with various dignitaries and personalities, telling stories of their recent travels. But as the evening progressed, it was the Doctor and Iris – or Evie, as she continued to introduce herself, who were getting the most attention. The Doctor kept trying to include Evelyn in the conversation, noticing that she was feeling more and more left out; but Iris kept dragging him

away, and he could see that Evelyn was feeling more like a wallflower as the evening went on. By the time the Doctor had managed to prise himself away from yet another group of stuffed shirts, Evelyn was nowhere to be seen.

"Well, that didn't go too badly, did it?" The reception had at last begun to wind down, with the Doctor and Iris making their excuses before leaving. Now, Iris was pouring the Doctor a welcome nightcap. "Here, get that down you."

"Hmm? Oh, thank you." The Doctor took the glass, but didn't drink from it. He was still in a sombre mood. When Evelyn had left without a word, the Doctor realised how thoughtless he had been in not including her in the numerous conversations that had peppered the evening.

Iris caught the faraway look. "What's up, Doc?"

The Doctor turned to her. "I let Evelyn down."

Iris felt slightly guilty about excluding Evelyn from the other guests, while putting the Doctor in the best light possible. She tried to gloss over it. "Come on, Doctor," she sighed. "Your Evelyn's a grown woman. She can look after herself."

The Doctor looked from Iris to the window. "That's as maybe, but she's a good friend. And I don't like to see her hurt, whatever the reasons." Then he looked at Iris, and realised. "You engineered this, Iris Wildthyme."

"I don't know what you mean," she said innocently.

"You deliberately excluded Evelyn from most of the people we met tonight."

Iris sat down and tried to explain.

"Look, tonight was all about you, Doctor. I know Evelyn's your best mate and all, but as far as old Graywell was concerned, she wasn't the main draw. You were." She pressed on. "Didn't we make a success of tonight?"

The Doctor shrugged. "I suppose so." He half-smiled, sitting down next to her on the sofa. "It was a bit like old times, wasn't it?"

"Ay, you're goin' back a bit there, Doctor," Iris warned. "Not that we didn't have some good times."

Outside, snow was falling. "Look at that," the Doctor laughed. "Snow. And it's not even the right time of year." Just for a moment, the Doctor felt he ought to be somewhere else. Not here. Not in Iris' room.

But somewhere, music was playing.

"Look, Iris. This is very nice, but..."

It was morning when the Doctor woke. The last embers of the fire had burned out, and he was lying hunched up on the sofa, a blanket draped over him. He felt rather comfortable, and was about to snuggle back down, when he remembered the events of the previous evening, and sat bolt upright, his face white with shock. Had he...?

Glancing down, the Doctor was relieved to see that, apart from his bow tie having been loosened, he

was still fully clothed. His jacket was draped over a chair. On the same chair Iris' shawl had been left, and he knew that he was not alone – Iris would never go anywhere without that shawl.

"Are y'decent?" She trilled, from the bathroom.

The Doctor cleared his throat before answering. "Um, Iris? I have to go. Things to do, you understand?" He stood up, reaching for his jacket.

"Oh, there's no need to rush off." Iris strolled out from the bathroom – fully clothed, of course. "You'll be wanting some breakfast before you dash off to old Graywell."

This caught the Doctor mid-step. "Graywell? What do you mean, Iris?"

"Well, this invite." She picked up an envelope from the table. "It came this morning, addressed to me. So I reckon you got the same thing sent to you."

The Doctor snatched the envelope from her and opened the flap. The invitation card was unmistakable. "Professor Graywell kindly requests the pleasure of your company at the Furnham Institute..." he scanned the rest. "Iris, you did it! I don't know how, but you swung it for me."

Iris smiled. "Well, that's not something I hear said to me every day."

The Doctor looked again at the invitation, and then at the wall clock. His expression changed from joy to dismay. "Iris, this invite is for 12.00 noon. It's almost 11.30am now."

"Ooh 'eck," Iris realised. "I thought I were doing you a favour, letting you sleep in after last night."

The Doctor was in no mood for idle banter. "We have just under half an hour to get to the institute. I'll need my travelling bag."

"Right, luvvy," Iris decided. "You get yer bag, and I'll run and sort some transport."

"Er, no." The Doctor paused. "Iris, could you get my bag as well? I've got to make some apologies first."

Iris rolled her eyes in despair. "Off you go, then. I'll see you outside in ten minutes."

3. MIND GAMES

"Oh, the wanderer returns." Evelyn stood in the doorway of her room, leaving the Doctor feeling rather exposed in the corridor.

"Evelyn, I'm sorry," he said. "I shouldn't have left you on your own like that."

"Except that you did, Doctor." Evelyn was not going to let him off the hook so easily. "For almost the whole evening that Iris woman monopolised you to the exclusion of everyone else. What is it about her? Just how well do you know her?"

"It's a long story," said the Doctor. "But to cut to the chase, I think I may have got an invite to the Furnham Institute for 12.00 noon today."

"Oh." Evelyn held up an envelope in front of the Doctor's face. "That wouldn't be this invite, by any chance?"

"It most probably is," the Doctor replied, nodding. "I know I have no right to ask, especially after the way I treated you last night, but..." He left the question hanging in the air. Evelyn seemed unimpressed. "And

I suppose this is the bit where I hand over the invitation and say 'Off you go, then. Have a good time.'" The Doctor said nothing, as Evelyn turned the envelope over in her hands. "You really think I'm that shallow?"

"No, Evelyn. Never shallow," the Doctor replied. "Kind and understanding, but never shallow."

At this, she sighed, and handed over the invite. "Well, I suppose Iris did do you a favour, getting you invited in the first place." She shooed him away good-naturedly. "Go on, before I change my mind."

The Doctor stepped forward and kissed Evelyn's hand in thanks. "I promise, I will explain all of this – it just may take more time than usual."

She watched him go and laughed. "More time than usual? Ha, that'll be a first."

At about the same time as the Doctor was making his apologies to Evelyn, Mr Smith was in the hotel lobby, puzzling over recent events. It was clear that his travelling bag had been switched for an identical one, but had no idea whose bag he now held. Weighing up the possible options, Smith had decided that the only course of action was to find a seat in the hotel lobby from where he could observe the reception desk.

If the tag on his luggage had been switched, then it seemed reasonable to assume that the same had been done to other identical bags. How many, he could not be certain. But the luggage tag held Mr Smith's

details – those he had elected to impart, indicating that the tags could only have been exchanged at the safe behind the reception desk. So, Mr Smith maintained his vigil, waiting for someone to claim their bag.

That was when a crazy-looking woman, arms flailing wildly, had run up to the reception desk.

Once she had left, Smith ascertained from the desk clerk who the woman was; then took the lift back up to his room to retrieve the bag that he had been given in error – only to find someone waiting for him outside the door. “Mr Smith?”

“I’m sorry,” he replied, “I’m in a hurry, so...” As Smith went to open the door a hand fell upon his wrist. The grip was firm and not easily breakable without attracting undue attention.

Smith looked at the man properly for the first time. He was younger than Smith, with dark, spiky hair, but dressed in the same type of suit that he, Smith favoured. “Do I know you?”

“We have a common interest,” the man told him. “It might be to your advantage at least to hear me out.”

Smith briefly considered aiming a right hook to the man’s chin, but thought better of it. He now recognised him as the shadowy figure at the restaurant from the evening before. Perhaps a few moments wouldn’t hurt. And he already knew the crazy woman’s destination. “Alright; you have two minutes.”

The man smiled, allowing Smith to enter his room, and followed him in.

“I represent a third party who has an interest in your current activities. He wants to, shall we say, cut a deal.”

Mr Smith allowed himself a rare smile. “Assuming I know what you’re talking about, I don’t make deals – especially not with spotty amateurs like you. Besides, I have a work ethic which I always abide by.”

“Which is?”

“I always keep my own counsel,” Smith replied. “The fewer people involved, the better.”

The man smiled. “Fair enough. But if you should change your mind...” He handed Smith a business card, before making his exit.

Once the door was closed, Smith read the wording on the card. ‘We can offer better deals – whatever your business. Contact Mr Jones.’

Mr Jones walked down the corridor to the elevator, as a voice spoke into his mind. “You did well, but as I expected, Mr Smith is a stubborn man.” Mr Jones nodded, as he received further instructions.

Evelyn had decided to take afternoon tea in the summerhouse, which was clearly a recent addition to the hotel. She was glad that some things, such as tea being served in a china pot, were still in existence even in 2260. So, let the Doctor have his fun, she had decided. It made a nice change to be waited on, instead of battling power-mad conspirators and the like.

There was even chocolate cake on the menu.

Evelyn smiled at the young man who had just arrived, and had sat at a nearby table. He returned the smile. She couldn't recall having seen him in the hotel before now, but he seemed harmless enough. He'd be quite a catch for some young girl, Evelyn thought, as she took in his smart suit, and dark, spiky hair.

The air car ride to the Institute was thankfully short. The Doctor stepped out, travelling bag in hand, while Iris paid the fare. The Institute was certainly an impressive building, but there was no time to look at the architecture, as the two friends hurried in. Professor Graywell was waiting for them. "Doctor, Evie. I thought you were never coming." "Traffic," the Doctor explained. This always seemed to work as an excuse for lateness, and this was no exception. Graywell ushered them through.

The main hall, when they reached it, was already filled with other guests. Most were from the previous evenings' reception, but others were unknown; probably friends or associates of the good professor. "I'm afraid I have to ask you to begin your presentation in a few minutes," he informed them. "My timetable is so full that I have to set everything to the exact second." "I quite understand." The Doctor moved to a nearby table and unzipped the bag. Iris was beside him

when he opened it – and abruptly closed it again. "Iris, this is the wrong bag."

"What?" She pulled open the bag herself, and stared. "But that's the one I was given. What the 'eck are these?" She pulled out one of the folders inside, the Doctor shielding the bag's contents from general view. "This is one of them Government dossier things, isn't it?"

"Yes, and more besides." The Doctor quickly thumbed through similar folders, his eyes alighting on one in particular. "Well, well, well. Look at the name on this one, Iris."

She did so, and caught her breath. "But that's..."

"Exactly." The Doctor's face was grim. "Iris, I rather think we've been taken for a ride."

"All right, nobody move!" A worried hush fell over the room as everyone looked up. From the upper balcony, Mr Smith was pointing a gun at Iris and the Doctor. He was also holding a similar looking travel bag.

The Doctor moved across to Graywell, who looked as though he'd seen a ghost. "Friend of yours?" he asked quietly.

"Not exactly," the professor replied. "You could say our paths have crossed."

"I thought that might have been the case."

Mr Smith impatiently waved his gun at the Doctor. "Hand the bag over." The Doctor shook his head. "I'm not sure I can do that."

"Don't be smart with me," Mr Smith demanded.

"I'm not, I promise you," the Doctor said. "But if we're down here, and

you're up there, how do I pass the bag to you?"

Mr Smith was about to reply, when he realised what the Doctor meant. There was no physical way that the bag could be passed up to him. "Hmm, you do have a point. So, what do you suggest?"

"Well, if I'm not mistaken," the Doctor replied, "you seem to have a similar bag. Suppose we do a simple trade? Then no one gets hurt, and we can both go on our way."

Smith nodded. "That makes sense. Okay, you come up here with that bag. Then it's just the two of us."

"Agreed." The Doctor turned to the crowded room. "I think we all want to get out of this alive, so let's just do as the gentleman says."

Nobody disagreed.

"All right," he called. "I'm coming up."

"Nobody move!" A group of people moved away from the main door, as Mr Jones stepped forward, a travel bag in one hand, and a gun in the other. "Well, isn't this nice and cosy?"

"Oh, no." Iris stared at the young man. "It can't be."

"You again!" Smith called from the balcony. "Don't you ever give up?"

Mr Jones looked up in surprise, then back to the Doctor. "What's going on here?"

"You tell me," he replied. "I haven't the faintest idea."

Iris tugged urgently at the Doctor's sleeve. "Doctor, that's Andy."

"Andy?" Then he remembered. "Your Andy?"

She nodded. "I couldn't mistake that spiky hair. But this... this isn't like him at all."

"He must be under some sort of mind control," the Doctor whispered. "That would explain why you never heard from him again." He turned back to the young man. "It's Andy, isn't it?"

There was a brief flicker of recognition, but nothing more. "My name is Jones, and I think you have something of interest to me in that travel bag, Doctor."

"No, I don't think so," the Doctor told him. "But how did you know my name? I'm sure we've never met before."

"And what makes you so sure you want the Doctor's bag, Andy luv?" Iris asked. "Why not his?" She indicated Smith.

Jones saw the bag Smith held – then looked back to the Doctor, confused. "What's going on?"

"You tell me – Andy."

The Doctor's smile was innocent enough, but the young man could feel the eyes bore into him. Try as he might, he could not look away. What was going on? And who was he? He was Mr Jones. No, he was Andy. No, he... "I... Iris?"

"Yes luvvy, it's me," he heard her answer as if from a distance. "You were going to meet me, remember?"

Yes, yes he did remember. But why was everything so strange in his mind? He couldn't think straight. Then he heard the Doctor's voice. "Let your mind relax, Andy. Let it be freed from the constraints placed around it. Be yourself." Yes, the Doctor was right.

"No!" Another voice invaded his brain. "I have not finished with you yet. You have one more task to perform."

"One more task," Andy mumbled.

"No, I can't."

"You must!"

"I..." Andy's mind was in turmoil. He so wanted to be free. But he had to complete this one final task.

"I... must obey."

"No, Andy." The Doctor's voice again. "This isn't you. Find the real you."

The Doctor saw Andy spin round, his eyes wild, the gun raised. "Leave me alone! Get out of my mind!" His finger pulled on the trigger.

"Andy, no!"

The gun fired...

4. REVELATIONS

The guests shrank back, as Andy collapsed to the floor in a dead faint. With the immediate danger passed, Iris quickly rushed to the boy's aid. Beside them, Professor Graywell lay on the floor, the bullet from Andy's gun having imbedded itself in his shoulder. The Doctor examined him briefly. "You'll live, Professor," he concluded, "assuming you have no other skeletons in your cupboard."

"I'm not sure I understand, Doctor," the professor gasped.

"Oh, I think you do." The Doctor's tone was dismissive. He looked up at the man still on the Upper Balcony. "I assume you and the professor have met before?"

"Something like that," he replied. "My name's Smith. I'm a Govern-

ment agent. I was assigned to track down several people, all with a connection to the Furnham Institute. I didn't know that Graywell was the man I was after, though."

"That's the trouble with Government agencies," the Doctor sighed. "No one ever gets the complete picture. Probably simpler that way."

"He is lying," Graywell protested. "I do not know that man."

"But you admitted to recognising him earlier," the Doctor pointed out. "You said your paths had crossed before."

Graywell said nothing, trapped in his own words.

"Tell me, Mr Smith, how did you know Professor Graywell previously?"

"While I was investigating a case of alleged money laundering," Smith replied. "When he was a practising medical doctor, Graywell was accused of skimming profits from his practice into his own pocket. That's how he made his fortune."

"But he was never convicted?"

Smith shrugged. "Not enough evidence. It was all circumstantial, so the case was dropped."

"So, what has brought you here today?" the Doctor asked. "You said you weren't sure it was Graywell you were after."

"That's the odd thing about this," Mr Smith replied. "I was told I had one more person to locate, but not who it was; just that I would supposedly find out today. To be honest, I only came here to retrieve some important documents." He nodded to the travel bag the Doctor had opened.

The Doctor nodded, understanding. He turned to Iris. "You said that

Andy knew something bad was about to happen, but didn't know what; while our Mr Smith was sent on something of a wild goose chase, with no idea of whom he was after."

"It's an odd one, that's for sure." Iris was tending to Andy as best as she could, but she had followed the whole conversation. "But there must be some sort of connection." The Doctor paced the floor, frustrated. "It's as if we've all been brought here for someone else's benefit."

"Well done, Doctor. So, you finally worked it out at last."

Everyone turned, the Doctor recognising that voice. "Oh no. Not you!"

"I'm afraid so." Standing inside the hall was a bearded man dressed in black. In one hand was a weapon the Doctor recognised all too well. And the Tissue Compression Eliminator was trained on Evelyn, who held the remaining travel bag. "Well, this is quite a gathering," the Master gloated.

"And just what are you doing here?" The Doctor realised the answer before he had finished asking the question. "You arranged this. The whole thing."

The Master nodded. "From the reception through to today's events. It was all very simple."

The Doctor let the Master continue. He had no wish to endanger Evelyn's life, and there might be something worth learning from the Master's ravings. "You see, for the past few weeks I've been the Manager of the Galactic Hotel. I regret the former manager met with an unfortunate accident." He looked down

at the fallen Andy. "The boy proved to be a useful asset, once he was under my control."

The Doctor nodded. "Using him to get to the Professor?"

"Under my mental guidance, he would have persuaded the Professor to part with the information I needed." The Master smiled evilly. "With the right tutoring, he could be very persuasive. A pity you managed to break through his conditioning, Doctor."

"It was either that, or let his mind be broken." The Doctor looked down at Andy. "At least he's free from your influence."

Iris glared up at the Master, steel in her eyes. "You did this to my poor Andy? You must be sick."

"Watch your tongue, or you'll get the same," the Master warned, at the same time grabbing Evelyn around the neck with his arm and forcing her to drop the travel bag. "Besides, I'm sure the Doctor has no wish to see any harm come to this fair lady."

"Thanks for the compliment," Evelyn muttered.

Iris would not be placated. "Why did you 'ave to mess with this lad's head? He'd done nothing to you."

"True, but he began to piece together certain things," the Master explained. "He made the connection with the reception and this Institute. I could have eliminated him, but instead I gave him a new identity."

"Returning as the mysterious Mr Jones," the Doctor guessed.

"Quite so, Doctor." The other guests began milling around in mild panic, distracting the Master. "Stay where you are, all of you. Or you

will suffer." They all froze.

The Doctor raised his hands in an effort to calm the situation. "All right, Master. You've succeeded in bringing us all here. But, for what? I can't imagine what help Professor Graywell could be to you, in your usual plans for universal domination."

"I can guess." Graywell had pulled himself to his feet. "He's after the virus."

"What virus?" Then the Doctor realised. "Of course. The Scarg Virus."

The Master smiled. "For every cure, there is a virus. And once I have its formula in my possession, I shall add numerous manufacturing agents that will enable the Scarg Virus to spread across the known cosmos."

"The formula is kept here at the Institute," Graywell explained. "And some of the guests here are my fellow scientists. Between them, they discovered the cure for the Scarg Virus. I only provided the means for the research."

"And today was intended as a celebration for all that hard work." The Doctor shook his head. That was par for the course with philanthropists like Graywell - happy to take the credit for other peoples' work.

He turned back to the Master. "And how the mighty are fallen. Not so long ago, you were dealing in Thunderbolt missiles, and the Pharos Project. Now, you've lowered your ambitions to scrabbling around with a virus."

"But it will be a most effective virus," the Master explained. "Once the peoples of the Universe have been incapacitated by a lethal variant of

the common cold, I shall take my rightful place as their ruler and benefactor."

"He can't be serious," Evelyn protested.

"I'm afraid he is," the Doctor told her. "Think about it. The majority of planets in the universe have never experienced the common cold, and so would have little or no resistance. Imagine what would happen if the Scarg Virus were released. Powerful empires would become weak and lethargic, unable to defend themselves against possible invasion. The Master's ultimate goal is still the same. He's just scaled down the means necessary to achieve it."

The Doctor looked around at his fellow guests – all unsure of what was happening, but clearly terrified by the dramatic turn of events. "There are innocent people here," he reminded the Master. "They have no part in your schemes. Let them go."

"I could do that," the Master agreed. "But I so rarely have the chance to play to an audience, Doctor. And it is only right that they should be the first to see the culmination of my plans."

She was kneeling down beside Andy; stroking his head; willing him to wake up, to give her some sign of recognition; but at the same time, Iris Wildthyme glared at the Master with barely disguised hatred. She had heard stories of his exploits, but to have seen the results of his handiwork filled her with an all-consuming desire for revenge. This

had now become personal, and the gloves were off. Iris was determined that when the chance came, however slight; she would make the Master pay.

From the Upper Balcony, Mr Smith listened to this exchange of words with morbid interest. Since the arrival of this Master person, Smith began to appreciate that he was a small part of something much bigger. If only he could turn that to his advantage. Then he saw her - the woman the Master was holding as a hostage was trying to attract his attention.

Evelyn knew better than to struggle against the Master's vice-like grip. The young man she knew as Mr Jones had brought her to him. She had never before met the Master, and so had thought nothing of it; not until the moment when he had threatened her life. And now she was here at the Furnham Institute, with the Doctor helpless to intervene.

She had seen the man perched on the Upper Balcony when they had arrived. And she saw him now, almost as helpless as the Doctor with the travelling bag next to him. Evelyn stared up at him, desperate to catch his eye without drawing attention to herself. When she saw him nod, she looked from him to the bag and back again. Twice more she did this before she could see that he had understood.

Evelyn felt the abrupt pull of the Master's arm against her throat. "Keep still, Miss Smythe."

"Oh, I've had enough of this," she bellowed, and stamped her foot down hard onto his. There was a gasp of pain, and immediately the Master's grip slackened. Evelyn flung herself forward, out of his reach. "Now!"

In one fluid movement, Mr Smith tossed the travelling bag down from the balcony onto the Master. Thrown to the floor by the weight of the bag, any attempt by the Master to regain his footing was quickly foiled by Iris, who threw herself on top of him with a vengeful scream, scratching and clawing at his face.

Under normal circumstances, the Master would have been the stronger opponent. But Iris' fury at him had given her the greater strength and advantage. Each time he made to push her aside, she threw herself back at him with renewed vigour. To the Master, it must have been like fighting a wild banshee. "Let go of me, you stupid harridan," he shouted.

"Not flamin' likely," Iris screamed. "Not until I've 'ad a piece of you first."

The Doctor was helping Evelyn to her feet. "Shouldn't we think about pulling them apart?" she asked.

"We could think about it, but I don't think it would be advisable to try," the Doctor replied. "The mood Iris is in, I wouldn't give much for the Master's chances."

The two of them were still struggling

on the floor. Iris' scratches had turned into full-blown punches, each one winding the Master at every turn. Gradually though, he began to gain the upper hand, pulling himself out of her reach. Her next two punches went wild, and he easily caught her wrists in his powerful hands. Now the Master had sufficient leverage to push Iris away until she was facing his lower body. "Give it up, you old hag," he said mockingly. "You are powerless against me."

"Don't be too sure, pal," said Iris, her eyes lighting up. "I said I'd have a piece of you, and I always keep my promises." She looked down. Directly in front of her face was a clear target.

The Master, realising her intention, struggled violently, but to no effect. Manipulating her arms, Iris had managed to entwine her own hands around the Master's wrists, holding them in an iron grip. He glared at her, helpless in her grasp, but still defiant. "You wouldn't dare!"

"Oh, wouldn't I, chuck?" It was as if the Master's last words of bravado were an open invitation. Iris opened her mouth wide, her teeth bared.

Evelyn winced at what happened next, as the Doctor mentally crossed his legs.

When the local police arrived, the Doctor was quick to advise them of just how dangerous the Master was. There was also the long drawn out process of taking statements from the rest of Graywell's guests before they were free to leave. Above all else, the Doctor

made sure to take possession of the Master's travel bag. "His TARDIS," he explained to the presiding officer.

There were only a handful of people left in the Institute by the time a security skimmer arrived to collect the Master, who was escorted away in the company of two law enforcement officers. Still doubled up in obvious pain, it was unlikely that he would be able to cause any trouble. As the sliding door closed on his mortal enemy, the Doctor could have sworn that the Master was speaking at least four octaves higher than usual.

Evelyn and Iris stood either side of the Doctor, as the skimmer sped off to the nearest maximum security prison. "So, that was the Master," Evelyn said. "He hardly seems worth worrying about."

"Aye," Iris agreed. "And over such a little thing."

Iris was now back to her old self, cheered by the welcome news that Andy would soon recover from his ordeal. She resolved to look after him once he was discharged from hospital – it was the least she could do, she decided, after the lad had got into so much trouble.

Mr Smith had joined them. "So, this reception, and that business with the travel bags, was all a huge smokescreen for the Master to get his hands on the Scarg Virus."

"Succinctly put, Mr Smith," the Doctor observed. "The Master wanted the virus for his own ends, but it seems he had no clear opportunity to pin down Professor Graywell

over its properties. So, he disguised himself as the manager of the Galactica Hotel, and used that position to arrange last night's reception."

Evelyn was still puzzled. "I can see how he would have used some hypnotic suggestion to convince Graywell that the reception was his idea, but I still don't understand about the travel bags."

"That was the really clever part," the Doctor explained. "The Master needed to get us all in one place, so by switching the tags he ensured that each would follow the other to retrieve their own travel bags, as you did yourself, Mr Smith."

"But how come they were all the same design and colour?" Iris pressed.

"Who says they were?" The Doctor smiled. "Iris, what colour is your travel bag?"

She stared at him. "Blue, of course." She looked at the bag Mr Smith had picked up. "That's it there."

"And yet," the Doctor told them, "Andy came in with a brown one."

"Hold on," Mr Smith piped up. "My travel bag is green."

"While mine is red, just like the Master's. Except that your eyes perceived the colour as that of your own travel bag." The Doctor looked at their baffled faces. "Don't you see? It was another hypnotic suggestion by the Master. Whatever one of them was in your possession at any time, you still saw the same colour as your own travel bag."

"Okay," Mr Smith agreed. "I'll be-

lieve you. It's the only explanation that makes sense. But there's still the problem of Professor Graywell." The professor was still receiving medical attention from a member of the ambulance crew.

The Doctor seemed genuinely puzzled. "Problem? I don't see any problem."

"Doctor, he's a known criminal."

"Technically, yes." The Doctor took Mr Smith to one side. "Look, perhaps we can find some common ground here..."

Evelyn and Iris found themselves alone together. With the earlier friction between them still fresh in their minds, neither was willing to be the first to break the ice. Not that Iris could stay silent for very long. "Erm... you all right, luvvy? No bones broken?"

"Oh, I'm tougher than I look," Evelyn replied. "But thanks for asking."

"My pleasure."

"I must say," Evelyn said after a moment, "I thought you were very brave, tackling the Master the way you did."

Iris shrugged. "He deserved it, after what he did to poor Andy."

"That poor boy." Evelyn's thoughts went out to the young man. "But I'm sure he'll be back on his feet before you know it."

"Aye, I suppose so." Iris managed a smile of appreciation. "You're not so bad yourself, in a crisis."

Evelyn smiled back. "You just have to do the right thing at the right moment." She hesitated before asking the question that had been at the back of her mind. "I heard from the hotel staff that the Doctor's bed hadn't been slept in last night."

Iris eyed Evelyn suspiciously. "Meaning?"

"Well," Evelyn suggested, "from what I gather, you and he go back a long way, so..."

Iris sighed. "Nothing happened, Evelyn."

"Oh." Evelyn was both surprised and relieved. "But I thought he'd..."

"Oh, he stayed the night," Iris confirmed. "And spent the whole of that night on the sofa. The Doctor's never been a great one for alcohol, and one glass of wine was enough to send 'im off into dreamland." There was a regretful sigh. "Story of my life."

"I see." Evelyn gave Iris a sidelong glance. "Does he know that... nothing happened?"

"Well, I never told him outright, luvvy. I've got a reputation to maintain, after all."

Evelyn smiled. "Well, in that case, Iris, I won't breathe a word." She met Iris' stare. "It'll make a change for us to know something that the Doctor doesn't."

Iris gaped at her in shock and surprise. "Evelyn Smythe! You conniving little... y'know, this could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship."

The Doctor didn't like the way that Evelyn and Iris were staring at him. And the fact that they both appeared to be getting on like a house on fire. With an effort, he turned back to the task in hand. "Mr Smith, I don't deny that Professor Graywell may have been the cause of some troubles in the past, but he's hardly a major threat to the national crime figures."

"That's as maybe, Doctor," Mr Smith agreed, "but..."

"And since those times," the Doctor went on, "it could be argued that he has more than made up for his previous misdemeanours by putting a substantial amount of money into finding a cure for the Scarg Virus. In fact," he added, "it could be said that because of his generosity, Professor Graywell has made a valued contribution to the well-being of this community."

"So, what do you suggest?" Mr Smith protested. "That we let him go?"

"Well, as far as I can see," the Doctor pointed out, "he isn't actually wanted for any crime. Remember, it was the Master's machinations that brought you here in the first place. You and Graywell were pawns in a game, just like the rest of us."

Try as he might, Mr Smith could find no fault in the Doctor's argument, nor raise any further objections. "You know, Doctor, you ought to try your luck in politics, if your current line of work ever dries up."

The Doctor quickly dismissed the idea. "I tried that once. Didn't like it."

EPILOGUE

Two days later, and the Doctor and Evelyn were ready to check out of the Galactica Hotel. After all the excitement, the Doctor was determined that they should extend their stay, and take full advantage of the facilities on offer. Iris had been pre-occupied over Andy's state of health, and had spent most days and nights at the hospital, until she

was sure he would be all right.

"She may be a bit wayward," said the Doctor, "but underneath it all, Iris is a decent person."

"Oh, I don't deny it," Evelyn agreed. "In fact, we've been getting on rather well just lately."

"Yes, I noticed." Evelyn could feel the Doctor's eyes upon her. "I don't suppose she said anything, did she?"

"About what?"

"Well, you know." The Doctor couldn't seem to find the right words. "Anything I should, um, know about?"

Evelyn gave him a suspicious look. "Guilty conscience, Doctor?" They were at the front desk before the Doctor could form a suitable riposte. "Could we have our bill please, Maurice?"

Maurice smiled at them both. "The bill has already been settled – by Ms Wildthyme."

The Doctor and Evelyn shared a glance. "But, how...?"

"Oh, you didn't think I could let you pay, after all that's happened?" They turned to see Iris approaching, a beaming smile on her face, arms ready to embrace the two friends. "Didn't Maurice tell you?"

"Tell us what?" the Doctor warily asked. "Iris, what are you up to now?"

"Well, with the post of manager being left vacant," Iris began, "I thought I'd try me hand at running this place - until they get someone in on a permanent basis, of course."

There was a look of horror on the Doctor's face. "Iris, tell me you're joking. Running a hotel like this is a

serious undertaking, and..."

"Oh, stop fussing, Doctor," Evelyn hushed him. "Iris is more than capable of looking after things. Honestly, you ought to learn to be more trusting."

"Trusting??" he spluttered. "Well, of all the..." The Doctor was becoming increasingly flustered.

The two women stared at him. "Do you know, I've never seen the Doctor go that red before, Iris."

"Maybe he's embarrassed about something." Iris turned to Evelyn and gave her a farewell hug. "Look after yourself, Evelyn," she said. "And make sure the Doctor doesn't get into any more trouble."

She gave the Doctor a knowing wink, at which he visibly paled. "And don't worry about the Galactica, Doctor. I'll not let you down."

"Good luck, Iris." Evelyn waited. "Come on, Doctor. Wish her well."

The Doctor knew when he was being steered into a corner, and backed down. "Of course I wish you well, Iris – just don't make any drastic changes. I've become rather attached to this place."

"I s'pose that's the nearest I'll get to undying praise from you, Doctor." She ushered them out into the cool morning air, where a skimmer was waiting for them. "Now, get off, both of you. I've got a hotel to run."

Inside the skimmer, Evelyn had a puzzled look about her, which the Doctor recognised. "All right, Evelyn. What's the matter?"

"I'm just a bit curious," she replied. "It's about those travel bags."

"Oh?"

"Well, the Master's bag was his TARDIS, Iris' contained her jewellery, Mr Smith got his Government papers back, and Andy's bag..."

"Was a decoy, with nothing in it," the Doctor finished for her. "So what's the problem?"

Evelyn looked at him directly. "Well, I still don't know what was in your travel bag. I don't suppose you'd care to enlighten me, Doctor?"

The Doctor was about to reply, until his attention was drawn elsewhere.

"Well, I never noticed that before."

"Noticed what?"

"How well these skimmers are constructed," he answered. "A simple design, but very effective."

Evelyn knew what he was up to. "Doctor, you're changing the subject."

He stared back at her, his face a picture of innocence. "Am I?" And with that, the Doctor sat back with a contented grin on his face.

Iris gave the Doctor and Evelyn a final cheery wave as the skimmer moved off. Already she was toying with one or two ideas to improve the Galactica Hotel. Nothing too drastic, as the Doctor had said; just some minor tweaks here and there.

She turned on her heel and marched back into the hotel. "Maurice," she called. "Break out the champagne, luvvy. I'm parched."

REVIEW

TIME WAR VOL 3

Review by Rik Moran

This volume, the latest in Big Finish's ongoing series about the Time War features three further stories.



"State of Bliss" by Matt Fitton, is a great showcase for Rakhee Thakrar as Bliss. The story establishes the themes that will carry throughout the whole box set. It also gives Thakrar and The Sarah Jane Adventures alumna Anjali Mohindra some good scenes to perform. Having said that, although Anjali Mohindra is one of my favourite actors in the series, her turn here as Calla only goes to show how well defined and characterised Rani was in The Sarah Jane Adventures. In comparison, Calla is not as memorable.

"The Famished Lands" by Lisa McMullin, is an apocalyptic Harryhausen homage that encapsulates everything the Time War is, and everything that The Doctor struggles to remain. It is the most unusual glimpse we've had of the Time

War yet. It delves into worlds that are suffering because of the war, where starving people are massacred. Yet the tone is somewhat jovial. It is not a good fit for me and I found this to be the weakest of the stories in the set.



“Fugitive in Time” by Roland Moore, brilliantly places Adèle Anderson front and centre as the latest incarnation of Tamasan (previously played by Nikki Amuka-Bird). Anderson’s brief for the part is clearly to fill the void left by the late Jacqueline Pearce who played the Time Lord Ollistra in previous volumes, which she does ably. The story also highlights the skills of Wendy Craig in a role viscerally embodying the pain of the Time War. The Time War saga has thus far brilliantly highlighted how far they have deviated from their non-interventionist policies and the sense of moral superiority that simply monitoring events afforded them. In ‘Fugitive in Time,’ Roland Moore shows the darkest extremes of Time Lord power, and the Doctor and Bliss must confront the believed final remnant of that ultimate travesty of justice as Major Tama-

san calls in a favour.

The final story in this volume is “The War Valeyard” by John Dorney. Jayston delivers a superb performance that perfectly meshes classic and modern Doctor Who. The Valeyard has always aspired to be a version of the Doctor, but this takes on a wholly more resonant tone here as we are presented with a version of The Valeyard who truly believes that this is who he is.

‘The War Valeyard’ succeeds on every level. It is an excellent example of Big Finish story-telling and means that I can heartily recommend the box set with a solid 8/10.

[To hear the trailer at Big Finish, click here](#)

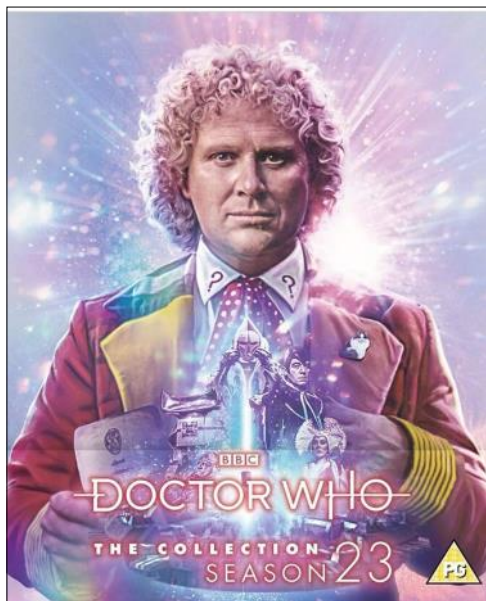
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REVIEW
THE COLLECTION
SEASON 23
Review by Rik Moran

This is the first of the blu-ray Collection sets that is for a season I actually saw on first broadcast. As such, I have been looking forward to it a great deal, and it has not disappointed.



Lee Binding has delivered another tremendous cover with the further interior artwork being of scenes from the series. Furthermore, the image on the spine of the set matches the front cover exactly – the first time this has happened. I am not sure what's prompted this change, but I am quite happy with it. Peter Crocker and SVS handle the picture restorations, with Mark Ayres on sound.

Peter Crocker and SVS have provided the picture restoration and Mark Ayres the sound. Both have done a great job and these fourteen episodes have never looked better. However, the real treasures are the extended edits of the stories presented alongside the broadcast versions. The new edits are made with deleted scenes and alternative takes. Some are more interesting than others, but overall their inclusion makes me wish that the BBC had given the show the extra few minutes that some episodes needed. All the additional material improves the episodes overall.

The Terror of the Vervoids Special Edition is a thing of wonder. It is a new version of the story presented in stand-alone format, without the Trial segments. It is much better for it and also features a new version of the Colin Baker title sequence.

Of course, we all buy these box sets for the extras. My favourite feature from each of the releases so far has been 'Behind the Sofa'. In this set Colin Baker is joined by Nicola Bryant and Bonnie Langford. On the second sofa are Frazer Hines, Matthew Waterhouse and Mark Strickson. I particularly liked Mark's perspective as he tends to comment with more of a Director's eye these days.

Another favourite on this box set for me is 'The Doctor's Table'. Colin Baker, Nicola Bryant, Bonnie Langford and Michael Jayston, go out for lunch (at The Ivy nonetheless) and talk over the meal about



the season, with some questions from TARDIS cookies jars thrown in as well. This was a great feature that I hope they include on future volumes.

There are plenty of other new features on the set including a new interview by Matthew Sweet with Bonnie Langford and a very tongue-in-cheek revisiting of 'The Doctor Who Cook Book' hosted by Toby Hadoke. Also included are all the features from the previous DVD release.

These blu-ray sets are proving very popular and if you have not yet got a copy, it might be best to snap one up sooner rather than later.

[You can view the specially recorded trailer for the box set here](#)

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

REVIEW THE COLIN BAKER YEARS

Review by John Lane

Another day, another anthology collection of Myth Makers interviews. Time to set aside six hours for the latest in Reeltime's 'The Doctors' series: The Colin Baker Years. Ah, the much-maligned Colin Baker years. I always felt sorry for Colin. He never really had a fair crack of the whip, and if his work with Big Finish is anything to go by, that was a wasted opportunity. A seemingly terrible costume choice may not have helped – although, if you think about it, it was essentially fitting for such a loud, brash, in-your-face Doctor – but really it was decisions made at the top of the BBC that really made life difficult for the 6th. Colin's ignominious booting from the show is now the stuff of Who history - Whostory, if you will - and this collection of interviews, thankfully, does not shy away from that aspect of Colin's tenure.

The collection begins with the man himself, in another of those quirkily filmed interviews that are a hallmark of Reeltime's one-to-ones, with Nicholas Briggs and Baker chatting to one another while a strange shadowy figure manipulates their presence in time and space - and Briggs' wardrobe for some inexplicable reason. I could tell you who voices this mysterious figure, but it'll be much more fun for you to guess.

Quirkiness aside this is a good, informative interview, as it should be with the show's lead actor. Baker has a lot of love for the show - even given his shoddy treatment at the hands of the Beeb - and it's great to hear him talk about the choice of making the Doctor seem unpleasant and the viewers unsure of him and how, if he had been given more time, the plan was to explore this abrasive aspect of the Time Lord's character.

All of this comes across as very important to Baker, who talks about his intent to honour the tradition of Who, not just as an actor but also a fan. And Baker is clearly a fan - we've all heard his story about being glued, unmoving, to the staircase as the very episode played out in 1963, but in this interview we also hear him talk about using his knowledge of the show to point out continuity errors to different writers and directors to keep the canon solid.

Of course, it would be impossible to talk to Colin Baker without bringing up his departure from the show, as I mentioned above, and it's cool to hear Six approach the subject with honesty and maturity (which his approach to the interview as a whole, to be honest). He talks about the sense of hurt and betrayal, obviously, but even though the passing of time has helped it's still upsetting to hear him say he can no longer watch the show - although that will have changed since the time of the interview and now.

There is a hell of a lot more ground

to cover, the passing of Colin's child, his dealings with The Sun tabloid, and his defence of Bonnie Langford, but if I tell you everything, what would be the point of you watching the DVD?

So, on to the next interview and the redoubtable Nicola Bryant, aka Perpugillium Brown. Even after all this time, and even though you know it's coming, it's still a surprise when instead of a nasally American accent you hear a rather posh English voice plum pleasantly at you.

Interviewed again by Briggs, and mixed in with another Myth Makers interview with Bryant from 11 years prior, we follow the usual pattern with a conversation about the actor's origins in the business before moving on to Who more specifically. It's fun to hear her talk about getting the acting bug at an early age and trying to balance that desire with the requirements of school, especially the story about the deal Bryant makes with her head teacher to keep going with her extra-curricular thespianising.

But of course, it's her time on Doctor Who that we're all here for and there's plenty of great stuff available on the DVD for the anecdote-hungry Whovian. Her stint on Timelash (tied to a pole and left to scream) sounds like a hoot, and there's also her take on how the character of Peri should have been, which is probably a complaint of many a female companion. If were up to Bryant, Peri would have been a lot feistier and much more of a fighter rather than

a sort of whiny, grumpy presence on the TARDIS, especially with a grumpy Doctor also galumphing through the cloisters - although we hear about how that relationship balance improves by the final season, following the hiatus.

We also get another installment of the regular Reeltime segment Doctor Who Digest, with Bryant providing a quick memory of every story featuring Peri. These are always enjoyable and something fans can ask each other about over a bottle of wine.

All the bases are covered in this interview: we get to hear about those controversial costume choices, and Bryant's take on 'the death of Doctor Who' is also very interesting. You can see how much she feels for Colin Baker and it's easy to see why she still enjoys such a positive reaction from fans.

And rightly so.

Our next Baker Years star is the eternally bouncy Bonnie Langford, aka Melanie Bush. This is clearly a much later interview than most you see on these Reeltime anthologies, which is nice because it's good to know you can still talk to someone from the classic years today and get lots of stories. And Langford does have a LOT of stories. She's basically an anecdote machine when it comes to her time on Who and as an actual person a great many fans will find her a lot more likeable than her character Mel (which people often - unfairly - blame her for), who has fared much

better under the auspices of Big Finish.

One of the nicest things about this part of the DVD is that Langford is interviewed by fellow TARDIS traveller Sophie Aldred (Ace) and the rapport between them really makes this a really friendly experience, a sense only bolstered by Aldred bringing out two personalised t-shirts they can wear together at conventions, with Langford then suggesting they should wear each other's instead for fun. Thus, the conversational flow is much more organic than in those earlier interviews which are sometimes - sometimes, I stress - stilted by Nicholas Briggs's desire for gimmicky play.

So, like I said, Langford is basically an anecdote machine about all her time on Who, how it was to work with different actors and directors and her recall for specifics is pretty impressive - it almost makes you wonder if she shares Mel's eidetic memory. Highlights of these anecdotes include being allowed to wear heels, much to Janet Fielding's annoyance (JNT wouldn't hear of it during her time, although it was really just to make Langford a bit taller); getting the giggles with Honor Blackman on Vervoids; watching Richard Briers get comedy notes, or freezing in a swimming pool while crew in nice warm wetsuits floated nearby on Paradise Towers; a fun little story about a fractious relationship between Sylvester McCoy and a motorbike during Delta; being able to wear the exact same dress as the 6-yr-old in Dragonfire; plus a

whole bunch of stuff covering Time and the Rani. Seriously, Langford delivers!

Especially interesting are Langford's thoughts on the character of Mel. She talks about the way characters such as hers are now treated by Big Finish, about having the room to develop, as well as pointing out that during her tenure on the show, the highly intelligent computer programmer and expert never touched anything tech! I actually had to stop and think about that. It's amazing. There's no way the show could get away with something like that these days. Thankfully.

We also get some nice insight into how Colin Baker loved the show and was sad it wasn't getting support it deserved, and also her final scene with McCoy in the TARDIS. And she is very matter-of-fact about her departure from the show. Simply put, her contract was up and she hadn't even considered staying on for another season; she even had another job already lined up. You get the impression that Langford is very much the jobbing professional.

That said, she's obviously stoked by her time on the show and being part of a cultural phenomenon, and so enjoys her time on the convention circuit too. I have to say, I really enjoyed this interview. To sum it up, Langford is a delight.

Next up we have Michael Jayston, who played the sinister Valeyard, the personification of the Doctor's dark side made flesh, during Colin

Baker's final season-long arc, The Trial of A Time Lord, plus various appearances on Big Finish audio. Given the references made to Nu Who this is obviously another of Reeltime's more recent outings.

Interviewed by Robert Dick (a very friendly interview) and interspersed with clips from a convention panel featuring Jayston, Colin Baker and Nicola Bryant, this is another tried-and-tested 'origins-to-Who' Myth Makers conversation piece.

After we hear about Jayston's rather sporty early life (captain of this, captain of that) and forays into theatre, we get to the good bits. That's probably a bit mean. I think it's fair and good that all these actors and writers and directors get to talk about their careers as a whole, it shows proper respect, but I can't help find it sometimes a bit boring. Give or take the odd surprising anecdote, they tend to all sound very samey. It doesn't stop you listening of course, but in a sense it's not really what you paid the admission fee for.

That said, Jayston does have a pretty cool Who-related story that has nothing to do with his time on the show but rather his time as an actor making his way up, and that is his friendship with some chap you may have heard of called Tom Baker.

As for his stint on Trial, so as to speak, Jayston tells us how he thinks he had much better things to say than poor old Colin, as well as

mentioning how he and her sagacity Linda Bellingham discussed “something big going on” with the BBC in terms of their plans for Doctor Who.

There’s a lot of enjoyable stuff in this interview, including a rather naughty ‘scoop’ about his time on Press Gang as well as some intriguing hints about Paul McGann and Holby City. But what really shines through is Jayston’s love for being involved with Who. He loves the conventions, which he describes as being like a great big family, and tells us that, alongside cricket, Doctor Who is one of the two things he has most enjoyed in life.

Which sounds about right to me.

The penultimate interview is with Who big-hitter, JNT himself. John Nathan-Turner! Interviewed by Briggs, with the usual extraneous visually playful nonsense, the pair of them look like they’re off to a convention of bag suits.

JNT has been around on Who in one capacity or another for a long time, so not only does he have a lot of interesting things to say about his time as showrunner but he also has some nice memories to share about his early days on serials featuring the second and third Doctors.

Of course, it’s his run as the producer during the 80s which is of key interest here. Though he doesn’t remember his first day behind the desk, as it were, he does talk about the day he found out he was to become the producer and going to

see Tom Baker rehearse. When asked about his relationship with Tom, JNT is as diplomatic as ever. Yes, his constant suggestion making could be a pain, but, says JNT, this is because Tom cared so much.

As far as the other Baker is concerned, JNT describes being shocked and angry at Colin’s departure from the show, something he still felt at the time of the interview. But this is how it goes, JNT was staff and had no choice. Life as a producer was not always easy. He talks of the difficulty of the job in terms of budgets, of making the mistake of letting composer Dudley Simpson go over lunch, and of always expecting to leave the show but it never actually happening.

Not that it was all negative; he has fond recollections of working on The Five Doctors, and his thoughts on casting for new Doctors, and the importance of contrast, are also interesting to hear.

For all of that, though, considering his place in the history of Doctor Who, I didn’t find this interview particularly enlightening. Perhaps interviews with JNT are always like this, but you get the feeling he’s always holding something back, keeping the personal in check in service to the show.

The final interview is with writer and script editor Eric Saward. Surprisingly the interview steers clear of the sometimes fraught nature between Saward and JNT, except for the odd reference here and there -

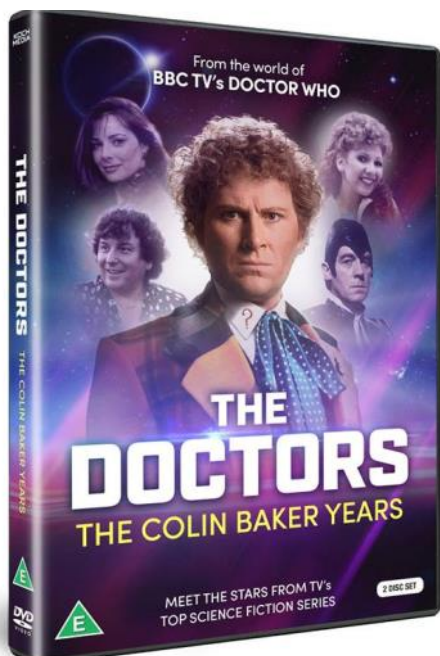
his pursed lips when recalling JNT's reaction to the idea of Robert Holmes or Terrance Dicks penning The Five Doctors speak volumes. But maybe that's just as well. Why get bogged down in all of that when there are other things to talk about? This interview is about Eric and his work and all the better for it. He comes across as a pretty self-deprecating guy and he's also a very open and honest interviewee, unafraid of giving his opinions, which can be both funny and sometimes nudging on harsh. You see this particularly in the Doctor Who Digest segment, where he sums up his thoughts and feelings on all the Who serials he was involved with, sometimes in just one succinct word.

Obviously, it's his role as script editor for which he is most well known in Who circles. According to Eric, he liked being a script editor because he liked meeting writers, although perhaps not so much reworking their scripts, which he manages to talk about with some tact, but of course that was a lot of the job.

There are some interesting observations about the cancellation of Doctor Who and how during Trial nobody knew what was going on, as well as the transition from the fifth Doctor to the sixth - plus a couple of gems regarding Colin Baker's knowledge of the English language. Also, his take on maintaining a connection to the Who world following his departure is hilarious. But most interesting of all, for me anyway, is Saward's de-

scription of the origins of Richard Mace from The Visitation. All I'll say on the subject is this, his meeting with the fifth Doctor was not the character's debut appearance.

All in all, this was another pleasant six hours of chit-chat, perhaps less intimate than other collections, but still chock-full of details and ephemera and intriguing insights from people we know so well, but not so well we can't learn something new about them. It earns its place on the shelf.



[To purchase this DVD from Amazon UK click here](#)

[To purchase the DVD directly from Time Travel TV click here](#)

REVIEW

THE COLLECTION SEASON 18

Review by Bedwyr Gullidge

The demand for classic Doctor Who in high definition continues unabated with Doctor Who: The Collection – Season 18. Following the sell-out successes of Season 12 and Season 19 comes the end of an era; the finale of the Fourth Doctor. With the dawning of a new decade, 1980 proved to be a time of great change for Doctor Who both in front of and behind the camera. All of this is explored in a packed boxset that chronicles one of the momentous seasons in the history of the show.



Once again, the physical boxset is a delight to hold, if a little fiddly when you're trying to remove the discs. Lee Binding continues with the established layout for the cover artwork which showcases Tom

Baker resplendent in his new costume for Season 18. Beneath the cover is an image of the Fourth Doctor from 'The Leisure Hive'. Inside the TARDIS is a depiction of the scene from 'Logopolis'. Those wonderful TARDIS interior menus continue with Gavin Rymill also recreating those scenes from Tom Baker's swansong. Again, Peter Crocker and SVS have restored the pictures to deliver high def quality, whilst Mark Ayres has polished up the sound. With such a flawless product it is little wonder these boxsets are so sort after by fans and collectors.

The Stories

Incoming Producer John Nathan-Turner and Script Editor Christopher H Bidmead were determined to move Doctor Who away from the silliness which had become rampant under their predecessors Graham Williams and Douglas Adams. Stories for Season 18 would also see a bigger emphasis on the science being added to the fiction. The difference from the final broadcast story of Season 17 'The Horns of Nimon' to Season 18's 'The Leisure Hive' is bold and drastic. Following a starry new title sequence and a re-imagined theme tune from Peter Howell came that tortuously long pan across Brighton beach. One step forward, two steps back? But after the blandness of the British seaside was born a colourful new era. The vibrant planet of Argolis and Tom Baker's new costume symbolise Doctor Who jumping headfirst into the Eighties.

Before reaching the end, the TARDIS navigates the planet of Tigella and takes a detour through E-space. 'Meglos' follows in the same vein as 'The Leisure Hive' with colourful characters a plenty. The trip into E-space takes us back to simpler Doctor Who storytelling. The Marshmen rise from the water in 'Full Circle' like Sea Devils had before. Terrance Dicks spins a classically chilling vampire tale in 'State of Decay' whilst the surreal 'Warrior's Gate' concludes the trilogy.

Producer John Nathan Turner began his courting of the fans by bringing back the Master in 'The Keeper of Traken'. It also began another trilogy that would introduce two new companions alongside Adric. All of this was in preparation for Tom Baker's regeneration which occurs in 'Logopolis'. That story arc is of course concluded with Peter Davison's debut in the already released 'Castrovalva'. A focus on plausible scientific theory became the motif for the season finale 'Logopolis' written by Bidmead himself. This release sees new CGI effects available for that closing story. A brief shot shows the Fourth Doctor plummeting to Earth from the radio telescope for the first time ever! It is a fleeting moment, and an odd thing to be a highlight, but it is a welcome addition.

Season 18 comprises an intriguing run of stories all of which are presented in pristine picture and sound quality. High definition brings out the rich colours in 'The Leisure Hive' but exposes the shabbiness

of the 'Logopolis' sets for instance. Aside from that, this is the best these episodes have ever looked and sounded, making for a thoroughly enjoyable watch.

Special Features

Season 18 is perhaps an odd choice for the next release in The Collection series. The DVD releases were comprehensive in terms of special features, leaving these stories very well served and little need for new material. However, some excellent additions have added to the already existing material. The most notable inclusion is a brand-new making of documentary covering 'Logopolis'. Over the course of its near hour-long runtime Janet Fielding reveals the tension of the production. Fielding does however remain tactful in withholding specific details of what made the experience so uncomfortable for those involved. Instead of a formal on-camera interview, Matthew Sweet acts as moderator for two entertaining new audio commentaries for 'The Leisure Hive' with Tom Baker, and 'State of Decay' with Lalla Ward and Rachel Davies (Camilla). In particular, the conversation with the show's leading man draws out some fascinating insight from Tom Baker, recalling emotions specifically despite not recognising fellow actors quite as accurately.

The simplistic Gogglebox-style format returns with Behind the Sofa. Frustratingly the monsters in the background are once again only images rather than full props as were seen on the Season 12 box-



set. Imagine if the BBC hadn't sold off a Foamasi, Marshman and Gundan robot in 2010 and they could've accompanied Melkur to be positioned behind the sofa. Nevertheless, Tom Baker, John Leeson and costume designer June Hudson sat together discussing Doctor Who is a delight to watch. Meanwhile, Wendy Padbury joins fellow companions Sarah Sutton and Janet Fielding on the sofa to discuss the show from a companion's perspective. They are an odd trio to watch 'The Leisure Hive' together for instance but there's some amusing leg pulling which can't help but make the viewer smile.

Another new feature is Weekend with Waterhouse which sees Toby Hadoke visit Matthew Waterhouse who played the divisive new companion Adric introduced in 'Full Circle'. A young actor at the time of his casting, the now adult Waterhouse is open and frank about his experi-

ences. Finding oneself in the middle of the stony atmosphere generated by the disquiet between Tom Baker and Lalla Ward would've been difficult for anyone, let alone someone just breaking into the acting industry. Ever the natural presenter, Toby Hadoke delves deeper into a side of the Adric actor which hasn't been uncovered previously. Following some intriguing opinions and emotional recollections, the viewer is provided a much better appreciation for the man behind the television character.

As is traditional, photo galleries, PDF production paperwork and even more fascinating behind the scenes footage is provided, giving the viewer plenty to keep them entertained for hours and hours.

K9 and Company

Also included on the eighth and final disc of the set is 'K9 and Company'. Although this quirky and unique pilot failed to generate enough interest for a full spinoff series for Sarah Jane Smith and K9 to go into production, it remains a thoroughly entertaining oddity. Included on this disc is a new interview with Ian Sears, appropriately titled Brendan and Company. It also features an amusing variation of the K9 and Company title sequence! As Sears now resides in the USA his is a voice which hasn't been heard a lot. The inclusion of his interview therefore provides a fresh perspective into the production of this one-off special which itself hasn't been covered in a huge

amount of detail before. K9 and Company also gets an appropriately individual Behind the Sofa instalment. Accompanying voice of K9 John Leeson to revisit this story are Gillian Martell (Lily Gregson) and Sean Chapman (Peter Tracey). Appropriately the greatly missed Elisabeth Sladen proves a topic of conversation. Unexpectedly however, comparisons with Hammer Horror films and long scenes being more familiar of a theatre production help the viewer see the episode in a new light, no matter how many times you've watched 'K9 and Company' over the years. The trio of actors therefore offer a pleasingly insightful viewpoint on the show, casting and production, making for a story worth revisiting

Perhaps my favourite new piece of material also features on this disc. The Writers Room unites four of Season 18's writers, Christopher H Bidmead, John Flanagan, Andrew Smith and Stephen Gallagher, in a pub and talk Doctor Who over a few pints. Although a relatively simplistic set up, one no doubt familiar to most of us, it makes for a great watch. Discussion and critiques of 'Meglos' and 'Warrior's Gate' prove to be particularly honest. Similarly, Andrew Smith's recollections of his 'Full Circle' commission are enjoyable stories to hear. Unexpectedly, JNT's attitude towards a female Doctor is brought up. Oh, what he'd make of the show now! Hopefully this will be a recurring feature as it works particularly well for Season 18 and could be similarly effective on other releases.

Overall

Unsurprisingly, this latest release for Doctor Who: The Collection is another triumph, continuing the high standard of the previous two releases. Despite these stories already being well served by DVD bonus features, the new additions on this release make it well worth the investment. Presenting the definitive versions, in terms of picture and sound quality, of this eventful season of Doctor Who makes for an essential purchase. Plus, the hours and hours of interviews, documentaries and other bonus features you certainly won't want to have missed out on this set.



[To view the trailer for the box set click here](#)

[At the time of publication the box set is selling for premium prices. Click here to view at Amazon UK](#)

REVIEW

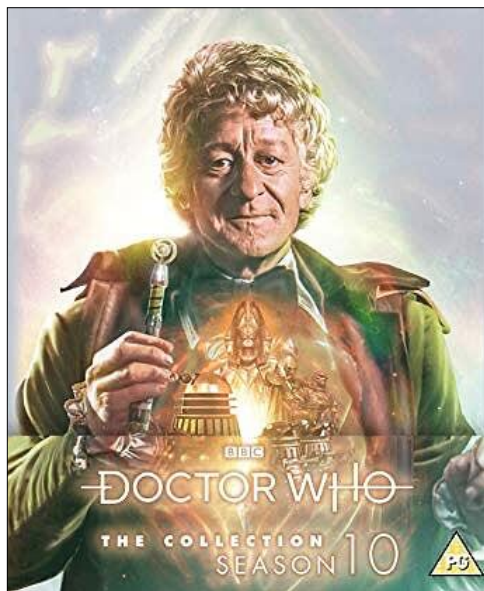
THE COLLECTION SEASON 10

Review by Simon Crust

"That's exactly it. That's where we are - on a stable world in a universe of antimatter; an anomaly within an impossibility."

The normal behind the scenes turmoil that usually accompanies the making of Doctor Who was unusually absent for season 10. Due to the money saving compromise made in 1970 to keep the Doctor exiled to Earth, a serendipitous decision that helped form a close-knit family, a company, if you will, comprising of UNIT, the companion and the Doctor – thus the actors became close friends, the production team knew where the series was heading, and that sense of belonging transferred onto the screen, culminating in the five stories that make up the season.

Calling on established writers and feeling that the Earth-bound stories were exhausted, producer Barry Letts and script editor Terrance Dicks made waves to move the series back into the space adventure it had previously become. To do this they entertained an idea long been touted but flatly refused, to let the Doctor meet himself. This became the season opener and the unofficial tenth anniversary story – radical for the time but looking back so clearly an obvious decision. It did everything a good Doctor Who story should: be entertaining, rivet-



ing, have a credible threat and move the mythos along, The Three Doctors did all this and more, creating an onscreen rivalry between Doctor's 2 and 3 that was so universally enjoyable that it carried on into the convention circuit.

The season also saw the return of the Master and the Doctor's favourite bad guys, the Daleks, in what amounts to a 12-part episode, even though it was split into two stories. Story one, in fact, had the Draconians, Jon Pertwee's favourite 'monsters' due to the masks that allowed the actors to portray more emotions. The final story, based on Letts' own environmental feelings is a bona fide classic and fondly remembered by all; indeed there are those that never knew the 'classic series' and still know this story! Perhaps more widely remembered amongst fans as Katy Manning's last story, a wonderfully poignant moment, heartbreakingly lovely that

had far reaching consequences. With the loss of Roger Delgado during that year (in a tragic car crash), Katy moving on, the production team began sowing the seeds for their own departure, but we can still look back at season 10 as the Pertwee era at its very finest.

The Three Doctors

Even though the DVD had a 'Revisitations' release, the Blu-ray upgrade is immediate and obvious. The increase in resolution gives much keener edges throughout, smoothing aliasing and adding some frame depth also. Colours are bolder, richer and grade much better. Inherent in the source, lens flares and softness are reduced, but still there. One thing I did notice, especially during the filmed sequences, is the presence of DNR helped to smooth out some of the rougher edges, it's quite obvious, on paused scenes, though this doesn't reflect real world watching. Detail is ever so slightly lost due to this, but overall, the benefit outweighs this very slight loss. Studio bound material appears unaffected.

Carnival of Monsters

This DVD was also the recipient of a 'Revisitations' release, and once again the added resolution and colour depth in the Blu-ray add significantly to the image; bringing out more detail, better edging and greater depth. Colours are slightly more vibrant, and black levels are increased. DNR has also been

used to smooth out some of the rougher edges, though detail appears to be slightly better intact, and its usage really helps the picture. Source defects remain intact.

Frontier in Space

The DVD for this release was pretty good and the Blu-ray upgrade isn't that significant; the increased resolution does define edges much better, and the colours are far more robust and vivid, especially the greens, while the black level does give an increase in depth. Source issues still remain and there is no unruly DNR, so the picture tops any previous release.

Planet of the Daleks

Released at the same time, the work done to this DVD was excellent and much can be said about the Blu-ray upgrade, which has keener edges, far more saturation to the colours (jungle sets especially) and a deeper black level. Episode 3 was re-colourised since it was only retained in the BBC archives as black and white, this process worked well, but it still looks a bit off – flesh tones are a bit brown, reds are a bit skewed – but this was always the case. Overall, the image is a decent enough step up in terms of quality.

The Green Death

This DVD was also the recipient of a 'special edition' later release, but even so, the Blu-ray picture is a clear upgrade in terms of resolution

and colour reproduction. Edges are much keener from close up to distance, colours are far richer while black levels are increased adding some decent frame depth. Like the first two discs in this set, this image has had a liberal dose of DNR, and while it does smooth off a lot of the rougher edges (the filming in South Wales for example) it is at a very slight loss of detail. This is only really evident on paused sections and flicking between the two images and then only on skin texture. I realise I am nit-picking to a degree, because overall the image is a clear improvement over previous releases.

Verdict

Season 10 of Doctor Who is fondly remembered, and it is easy to see why. The UNIT 'family' made necessary by financial constraints in 1970, proved to be a winning combination, allowing the production team to flourish, culminating in a period of stability that the show seldom entertained. The stories, by some of the best writers the series had ever known, were strong, the feeling of belonging was plain to see, and this allowed the whole season to thrive. Though there were tragedies off screen (the death of Roger Delgado) and heart-break on it (Jo leaving), it remains one of the best loved and most enjoyed whole seasons of the series run.

As a Blu-ray set, this complete season package is, once again, very impressive. All the episodes benefit from a cleaner, more stable, sharp-

er with more colour depth and an improved black level image, even if there has been some liberal usage of DNR on some of the episodes; the benefit outweighs the negligible detail loss. The sound tracks are functional and clear, with 'Planet of the Daleks' gaining a Dolby Digital 5.1 upgrade, itself with good separation, dynamics and bass.

The extras package is, again, immense with plenty of new content sitting alongside the features ported over from the DVDs. There are a few extras that were on previous DVD releases missing this time around, including the 'On Target' feature about Ian Marter, so holding on the DVDs for those might be advisable for completists.



[To view the specially recorded trailer click here](#)

[At the time of publication the box set is selling for premium prices. Click here to view at Amazon UK](#)

REVIEW

MYTH MAKERS 141 GEOFFREY SAX

Review by Rik Moran

This edition of Myth Makers clocks in at just over 90 minutes and it's all gold. I have no idea how they are going to edit it to 60 minutes for the Paul McGann years compilation.

I found this programme to be absolutely riveting, hearing all about Geoffrey Sax's early career in theatre and how he made the transition to TV. The details he gives about working in the TV industry and how important the unions were are fascinating. There are several interesting sections where Mr Sax describes how he had to embellish on a few things in order to pursue his career, I won't tell you what they are you will need to watch to find out.

When he goes through all the things he has done, you realise how small a part of his career Doctor Who was. He seems very fond of the TV movie and explains that he has nearly returned to Doctor Who on a couple of occasions, but timing has yet to work out (doubtless a critical timing malfunction took place!). I for one would like to see him still get a chance to return to Direct some more episodes in the future.

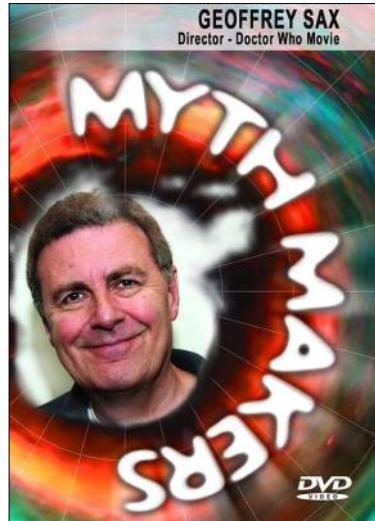
Robert Dick is comfortable as an interviewer and keeps the conversation flowing, so well in fact that

the 90 minutes flew by and it was over before I knew it.

The Olympic Studios provided an interesting venue for the interview and feature a very nice cinema which you can view online at / www.olympiccinema.co.uk. I shall endeavour to visit there sometime in the future.

Extra wise, there is a little documentary coving the dalek world record attempt by the Sons of Skaro at the recent 'The Gathering' convention. This was very good, but sadly also very short. I'd love for a proper behind the scenes documentary of a convention. Maybe another time?

This is a great interview and well worth the price.



[To purchase the DVD or buy/rent as a download, visit Time Travel TV by clicking here](#)

MYTH MAKERS 142

PAUL MCGANN

Review by Rik Moran

As a fan of McGann's Doctor I was extremely looking forward to this release. I've not seen a lot of stuff with him talking about Doctor Who. In fact the last thing I saw was around the time that the TV movie was made. It was called 'Bidding Adieu' and focused more on Sylvester McCoy - so this was going to be 'all new' for me.

Sophie Aldred once again proves herself a capable interviewer and it's nice to see Paul McGann seeming so relaxed. It was nice to hear details of his childhood and the struggles of getting an equity card back in the day.

Paul still comes across as a shy individual and it's good to hear how his opinion on conventions evolved. Sadly, for me there wasn't a deep dive into his Big Finish adventures, although they are briefly talked about, I would have loved for this to have gone into greater detail, as that's where most of his 8th Doctor work is. The TV movie and Night of the Doctor are also spoken about but again, not enough detail for me.

To round up, this was a nice interview, but for me only touched the surface of what could have been.

[To purchase the DVD or buy/rent the download, visit Time Travel TV by clicking here](#)

MYTH MAKERS 143

ERIC ROBERTS

Review by Rik Moran

Right from the opening introduction Eric Roberts and his wife Eliza are a joy to watch. Eric is interviewed by his wife Eliza, and is obviously well at ease. I love his cheeky sense of humour which comes across in droves. The topics of discussion range from his early days in theatre to recent film and TV projects. Of course, Doctor Who is discussed in some detail, including Eric's experiences on set, returning to the role of The Master for Big Finish, and his school days in the UK where he was first exposed to Doctor Who. Eric has a huge catalogue of acting roles to discuss, and all the big things like Heroes, The Expendables, The Dark Knight are covered.

Eric talks with great warmth about his time on Doctor Who, (in which his wife also had a part) and his subsequent convention experiences, and I really hope we get to see him at some events in the UK soon.

This edition of Myth Makers is a 'must have' - keep an eye out for the Roberts family scene stealing cats!

[To purchase the DVD or buy/rent the download, visit Time Travel TV by clicking here](#)

CHICAGO; THE HEART(S)LAND OF AMERICA

by Elizabeth M. Wade

The viewing of Logopolis at Regal City North 14 – was a great night for Whovians. Specifically – ChicagoDoctorWhoMeetup. Gordon Dymowshi, who has been running ChicagoDoctorWhoMeetup for seven years is the leader and organizer with Elizabeth Wade; the social media coordinator.

Before viewing Logopolis, the group met at a restaurant called 'Fat Willys' and discussed many things including Doctor Who – what we'd like to see in the future, who our favourite companions are, the usual stuff.

Since Doctor Who, is a very long running show – our members are from a wide age range from 20 upwards. Some of us that dined at Fat Willys grew up with watching Tom Baker on PBS during the 1970's in America. Some others had not seen Tom Baker and still others like me, had only seen him because of the streaming service Brit Box. Unfortunately for American fans there was a decline in Doctor Who's popularity after Tom Baker's run and most PBS stations stopped airing the show. For many Doctor Who would not be seen again on American televisions until 1996 when Paul McGann arrived.

That led to an interesting topic of

discussion - if 1996 Doctor Who had taken off could an American actor have played the Doctor? Gene Wilder, Christopher Lloyd or Dick Van Dyke perhaps?

We decided that Doctor Who succeeds for two main reasons:

1. When done well, the main protagonist solves complex problems with reason, logic and 'cleverness'
2. The show is for everyone. There is no specific market for Doctor Who. Any ethnicity,



age and gender can enjoy it

Even if Chicago is too far away you can still follow us on Twitter [@WhoMeetup](https://twitter.com/WhoMeetup) and visit us at [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...). Just click the links!



EVENT REVIEW

AN AUDIENCE WITH WARIS HUSSEIN

by Andrew Marsden

With an extensive directorial career beginning in 1960, Waris Hussein has directed several acclaimed and award-winning television and film productions and is perhaps best known for being the first director to work on Doctor Who in 1963 on its first serial, *An Unearthly Child*. As part of the celebrations to mark the first anniversary of the opening of Liverpool's VideOdyssey – a VHS rental store (yes, in this age of streaming, somebody has opened a video rental store) which also houses arcade games and an impressive studio space – Room 5064 Productions hosted the latest in its series of 'Audience With...' events of Doctor Who alumni (previous events have included the director Graeme Harper and script editor of the series from 1982-86, Eric Saward) in VideOdyssey's studio space which had three working cameras stationed in it to add to that TV studio vibe befitting the subject of the event.

The host for the event was Matt Charlton who introduced the first item of the day – a special screening (made possible with the help of the BFI) of a 'Play For Today' from 1976 which Hussein directed called 'Love Letters On Blue Paper'. The teleplay, written by Arnold Wesker and adapted from the short story of the same name, featured Patrick Troughton (the second actor to

play Doctor Who, from 1966-69) as Victor Marsden, a former trade union boss who is dying from leukaemia, although he has kept this news from his wife, Sonia (Elizabeth Spriggs). Victor confides the truth in his friend Maurice (Richard Pasco), a middle-class university professor in the history of art, and shares with him letters written and sent by Sonia to Victor which express her feelings about their relationship and their courtship and early marriage in ways she feels unable to vocalise to him in person. While bound by the formal style of BBC dramas up until the mid-1980s, whereby exterior shots were captured on film inserts and the interior scenes shot on multi-camera video (meaning shots had to be planned in advance and actors thoroughly rehearsed so they knew where they were moving to on set), this does not restrict Hussein's direction and contains an astonishing scene where Maurice enters the living room of the Marsden's home and the camera pans 360-degrees around it.

Troughton sports a convincing Yorkshire accent throughout and delivers a powerhouse performance as Victor goes through the five stages of grief as he faces the end of his life. Spriggs, meanwhile, portrays Sonia as a tough, no-nonsense wife who disapproves of the members of the union who 'drain' Victor's spirit but whose initially stony appearance belies the warm, emotional person beneath (the scene near the end when she cries over Victor really pulled at the heartstrings). As a piece of archival television, 'Love Letters On Blue

Paper' is a strong production within the famous (and for some, much missed) 'Play For Today' programme strand, although it is marked by the production style of the time (there is a voice-over delivered by Pasco which often tells the audience exactly what we are seeing and thus seems to a more modern audience somewhat redundant).

Following the screening, Charlton and Hussein sat down for the first interview, where Hussein was able to reflect on 'Love Letters On Blue Paper', this being the first time he had seen it since its transmission in 1976. Charlton proved to be a very well-researched and patient interviewer and gave Hussein the time to answer his questions and provide anecdotes about his career. Speaking of the work he did on the Wednesday Play/Play For Today series, Hussein did say that he was proud of the work he had done and how privileged he felt to be able to work with such strong, talented actors as Troughton and others. While saying he was proud of his work, Hussein did not come across as someone subject to hubris but as a humble person who was very aware of their fortune in life giving them such an opportunity – and as the first Indian director to work at the BBC, Hussein was a trailblazer. Discussing the often 'issue' led basis of the 'Play For Today' dramas, Hussein said that when it came to working with scripts, 'I always welcome a script which has an issue at stake.' 1965, for instance, saw Hussein directed an adaption of 'A Passage To India' for the BBC, while

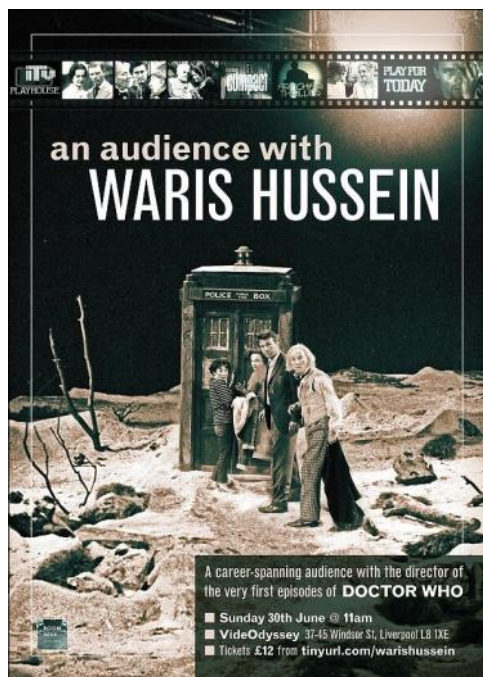
later in his career he would direct the Suffragette drama 'Shoulder To Shoulder' (1974, produced by Verity Lambert, the first producer of Doctor Who), examine the abdication of Edward VIII in 'Edward And Mrs Simpson' (1978), and the AIDS drama 'Intimate Contact' (1987) which was one of the first television dramas to highlight that AIDS did not affect only homosexuals. In addition to his work on television, there was also discussion of his work in film from his first feature, 'A Touch Of Love' (1969) – which starred fellow Cambridge alumnus Ian McKellen, the musical 'Melody' (1971), 'Henry VIII And His Six Wives' (1972), and the TV movie of Barry Manilow's musical 'Copacabana' (1985), which earned Hussein an Emmy award (although, with typical grace, Hussein said he felt the choreographer, Grover Dale, should have been given the award instead).

The event then moved into its second, more Doctor Who orientated half, with a screening of the 2013 drama, 'An Adventure In Space And Time', which focused on the genesis of Doctor Who in 1963 up to the departure of the show's first lead actor William Hartnell in 1966. For this, Hussein provided a live commentary which was available to stream via the Twitch website and app and provided some interesting anecdotes – especially on how conservative the BBC were in the early 1960s – and enabled viewers to ask questions via the website which Hussein would then answer while the screening was happening. In this drama Hussein was played by

Sacha Dhawan who very closely resembled the young Hussein but, from the evidence of seeing the man himself, also his personality. While taking liberties with some aspects of the early days of Doctor Who for dramatic or budgetary reasons (the resistance from executives in the BBC to the show is depicted as coming through a single figure in the drama, whereas Hussein said in his commentary that Lambert was fighting off pressure from several people), 'An Adventure In Space And Time' still provided a fantastic nostalgia-fest for fans of the show.

Following this screening, Charlton and Hussein returned for the second part of their interview and reflected on what the drama got right (Hussein did say that Hartnell's reluctance about taking on the role was depicted exactly as it happened in real life) and what it was like working on the show in its infancy. One interesting nugget of information was that Hussein was present when the theme tune (written by Ron Grainer) was first recorded (he still has the original, Delia Derbyshire arranged version as his ringtone!). There was also discussion of the second Doctor Who story he directed, Marco Polo (1964), which is sadly missing from the BBC archives, having been wiped as part of the organisation's policy at the time. Hussein praised the work of BBC designer Barry Newbery for the amazing sets he was able to create and squeeze within the confines of Studio D in Lime Grove studios, filled with its heavy cameras which had to be

pushed by the operators whenever a zoom-in was needed. Hussein reflected that he felt that "we did as well as we could" with working within the confines of the studios and the BBC budget! Hussein also mourned the loss of the BBC's Director Training Course where he cut his teeth as a director prior to working on the soap-opera Compact. Here he was subject to a baptism of fire when he had to adjust his directing on the spot when a camera malfunctioned during a live broadcast. As the event ended, Hussein said with a twinkle: "I've had a very good run and fortunately, I'm still running" It was a fine way to wrap up a very pleasant event and celebration of one of Britain's best television directors.



This item was originally published at Number Nine Reviews. [You can visit the site by clicking here.](#)

LONDON FILM & COMIC CON

by Sarah Louise Baggott

Showmasters LFCC is quickly becoming a tradition for us. This Summer event was our third LFCC and, having only attended on Saturday and Sunday previously, we took the plunge and booked for all three days on this occasion. Price-wise, the entry ticket wasn't as expensive as one might think with three day entry averaging out at £20 per day. If you are travelling some distance however, the additional accommodation and dining costs can make the keenly priced multi-day ticket appear less attractive. It is also worth noting that

whilst the entry tickets are relatively affordable, they only permit entrance to the event; all photoshoots, autographs and 'selfies' (where permitted) require further outlay.

Olympia, West Kensington is the venue for Summer LFCC, which spreads across two halls as opposed to the Spring event which utilises just one. We knew it would be busier so having the quieter Friday to wander at leisure and get familiar with the floor plan was really helpful. A handy hint for keeping your bearings and easily meeting up with people during your visit is to choose a focal point or two early on. For us, this was Pizza Express on the ground floor; it is clearly seen from the first floor too so you can quickly determine if you're actually in the hall you want to be in from the higher vantage point. It was also rather handy that our friends from Sons of Skaro had their TARDIS and Daleks set up there! We then typically check out where the photoshoot and autograph areas are in relation to that; being able to easily navigate to these locations will benefit those who have photoshoots booked, it will also aid those who wish to avoid the throngs of people queuing!

We attended our first convention in 2015, started cosplaying at our second and have cosplayed every event we've been to since. Being active on the cosplay scene, we find ourselves seeing the same people at many of these events, particularly LFCC which, being a



© Rich Nelson Photography



flagship event, draws people from far and wide. Despite the huge numbers, we actually managed to catch up with all the people we had expected to see as well as some that we hadn't. There's something rather lovely about randomly seeing a face you recognise in the crowd, sharing a hug, appreciating the work that's gone into creating outfits and generally 'geeking out' before posing for the obligatory photos. Of course, if you happen to be wearing related cosplay, there's every chance you will recreate an actual scene and have many photographers capturing the moment!

We usually have our outfits ready well in advance – this time though I was putting the finishing touches to my Doctor Who Jo Grant boots the night before! Still, I guess last minute alterations are a rite of passage for cosplayers... In addition to

Doctor Who characters, we also cosplay Battlestar Galactica and Star Wars icons too; Rich can often be seen walking around in a Stormtrooper/Eleventh Doctor mashup which always goes down well with everyone! The beauty of LFCC is that anything goes.

Understandably, the size and location of the Summer LFCC event means the Showmasters team are able to attract the attendance of a range of A-list celebrities. Photo opportunity tickets are typically purchased online in advance with the appearance on the day being dependent on the individuals existing contractual commitments so, whilst disappointing, it's not uncommon for guests to pull out in the run up to the event. I find it frustrating when a guest cancels the night before or there is a delay in communicating a guest cancellation from the organiser but, it happens and is just one of those things...

This time we had photos booked with: Katee Sackhoff, Lee Majors, Robert Picardo, Alex Kingston and John Barrowman. Katee and Alex unfortunately cancelled but we were still able to get photos with Lee and Robert, both of whom were an absolute pleasure to meet. John cancelled for the Friday but we were able to rebook for the Saturday which was a huge relief as a photo with him along with a signed book were our intended unique Birthday present for Rich's Mum! We found John Barrowman to be really friendly, he took the time to orchestrate two very different poses for our photoshoot and wrote a lovely Birth-

day message; ironically, his Mum and Rich's Mum share the same Birthday!

One thing to mention here is that for autographs, Showmasters now have a 'Virtual Queue' system in place at LFCC; this didn't seem to be well advertised so we weren't able to take advantage of it this time but ultimately, if you obtain an autograph queue ticket for your chosen guest(s) as soon as you arrive, you can then go about enjoying the rest of the day safe in the knowledge that you have a place in a shorter queue when the number on your ticket falls within the number range displayed. The queues for photoshoots line up according to the batch number on your ticket, they are inevitably long and snake back and forth in quite a small area but the system did seem more organised than previous events, or maybe we're just getting more familiar with the Showmasters process.

With regards to facilities, toilets are located at various locations on every floor in each hall. They are well sign posted and, given how busy the event is, are surprisingly well maintained; I typically carry tissue

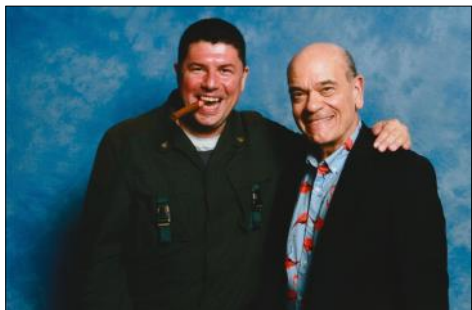


with me at all times but didn't need to call upon my emergency stash!

There are a number of locations in the halls that provide food and drinks, including a couple of stand-alone carts selling just lager. Being within the event building, these do have a tendency to have limited options and can be expensive. There is a Tesco Express nearby for lunchtime 'meal deals' and the Pizza Express restaurant I mentioned earlier is accessible from inside and outside the event, the public side having a more extensive menu. Alternatively, the Hand & Flower conveniently located across the road is a firm favourite of ours. They offer a varied lunch, dinner and drinks menu and has a wonderful atmosphere, so this is where we usually catch up with friends at the end of each day.

Summer LFCC isn't cheap, it's very busy; probably needing a different venue in years to come and quite frankly, it's tiring... But we love it, roll on Spring LFCC 2020!

Twitter: [@RunningWhovian](#)
Photos: Richard Nelson
Twitter: [@bhxscanner](#)



20 YEARS OF DOCTOR WHO AT BIG FINISH

by **Tony Jones**

July 1999 Big Finish released the Nick Briggs story *Sirens of Time* with Peter Davison, Colin Baker and Sylvester McCoy appearing as their respective Doctors. As we approach two decades, it's easy to be overwhelmed by the number and range of titles released in the intervening years. Taking a random month (March 2019) and we were treated to a fifth Doctor story with Kamelion, Tegan and Turlough, Fourth Doctor Comic Strip adaptations, Lalla Ward's Romana in *Gallifrey: Time War 2*, a short story for the seventh Doctor, a Torchwood release and a celebration of International Women's Day with *The Eighth of March* bringing River Song, Ace, Benny, Madame Vastra and team as well as Kate Stewart and Osgood. So, just how did Big Finish get from there to here? Let's go back to the beginning....

Any survey of Big Finish output runs the risk of drowning under the volume of titles, and in the interests of space this article focusses on some of many milestones. There are others; apologies if personal favourites are missed.

It may surprise some readers to know the early Big Finish Doctor Who stories were released on cassette tape (very much as the Big Finish predecessor Audio Visuals had released their non-licensed

Doctor Who titles). This continued right until the end of 2000 with *The Mutant Phase*. It would be 2008 before the move to download commenced with *The Condemned* – more on that later.

July was quickly followed by individual stories for the fifth, sixth and seventh Doctors alongside Turlough, Peri, Nyssa and Ace. March 2000 marked another milestone as Jac Rayner's story *The Marian Conspiracy* brought a new audio only companion for the sixth Doctor, Dr Evelyn Smythe played by Maggie Stables. With Evelyn Big Finish demonstrated they could extend the range of companions and find new and compelling ways to explore various incarnations of the Doctor. It wouldn't be long before Evelyn met the Brig, Lalla Ward appeared as Romana and Bonnie Langford reprised (with great success over the years) Mel Bush.

January 2001 kicked off with another Doctor as Paul McGann took possession of the TARDIS with a new audio companion, Charley Pollard (India Fisher). The eighth Doctor allowed Big Finish to later explore new ground... more on that later. Also in 2001, the first spin-off appeared: *Dalek Empire*. Excilis and Sarah Jane Smith followed in 2002 and more *Dalek Empire* in 2003 as well as the what-if alternate history series *Unbound*. This skips over the seminal 2001 release for the main range, *Colditz* a story of Nazi Germany winning World War 2, and an officer Kurtz played by a certain David Tennant.

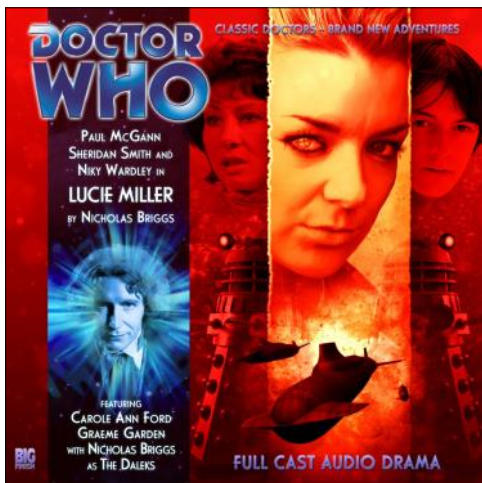
Whatever happened to him?

The Sixth Doctor and Evelyn milestone 2003 release Jubilee must be mentioned in any study of Big Finish – the story Russel T Davies asked Rob Shearman to develop for the TV episode Dalek. This year was also the 40th anniversary of Doctor Who on TV, and Big Finish celebrated with three big stories: Davros, Omega and Master before the three-disc epic eighth Doctor, multi-character / multi-epic Zagreus, a story that divides opinion even now, and saw the eight Doctor and Charley take the range into new territory: the Divergent Universe, a series of experimental stories with new rules, no TARDIS and new foes. A big experiment that never fully developed, thanks to a certain TV show's return to the small screen in 2005.

As the show returned to TV, Big Finish's sales plummeted (Nick Briggs once suggested this might be as much as a 25% drop). Not only were sales down but there was a continuity problem: how could the Doctor fight a Time War and visit twenty-first century London if he was stuck in the Divergent Universe? The Big Finish experiment came to an untimely end and the Doctor was rushed back to Earth post haste with August 2005's Terror Firma.

By this time there was another original spin-off series establishing itself, Gallifrey, which started in 2004. The end of 2005 also saw another spin-off, Cybermen. Creativity was undiminished! If 2006

saw more consolidation of new ranges (including releases for Gallifrey and Sarah Jane) it was 2007 when Big Finish found a way to move back into early eras with the Companion Chronicles range: single-disc stories read / performed by an actor who'd been a companion and a small cast, often these are two-handers. January 2007 brought Maureen o'Brien back as Vicki and a certain Sheridan Smith as the character Cinder. January 2007 also brought Sheridan Smith to our attention as new companion Lucie Miller.



Lucie Miller was a new companion for the eighth Doctor whose main range appearances were slowly running down. With Lucie, a modern young woman, there was a new energy in stories and a feeling of connection to the TV series. Over four series Lucia and the Doctor brought many new fans to Big Finish thanks to their being broadcast on BBC Radio 7. Sheridan has since gone on to massive success on stage and TV but has recently

found time to reprise the part and we will be getting more Lucie this year for the Big Finish anniversary.

In 2009 the Lost Stories range appeared: scripts for never made adventures adapted for audio and giving us a change to listen to everything from Farewell Great Macedon to seventh Doctor stories with new companion Raine Creevy. It was 2010 that brought what many fans view as the best spin-off of all: Jago & Litefoot.

For two characters who only appeared in one fourth Doctor story The Talons of Weng-Chiang, Jago and Litefoot brought many hours of listening delight over a range of releases including their own thirteen release series of boxsets including Lisa Bowerman as barmaid Ellie Higson whose chemistry with Christopher Benjamin and Trevor Baxter is made all the more remarkable when you realise Lisa also directed! And this is maybe the moment to not forget how important Lisa's Bernice Summerfield was to Big Finish both before the Doctor Who licence and also since.

Soon Big Finish would be releasing stories set in the era of every Doctor from the shows past bar one: Tom Baker's. It would be a few more years before that problem was resolved as 2012 started with the first of the Fourth Doctor Adventures in January's Destination Nerva. The end of 2012 also saw the day the Big Finish website broke under the weight of downloads when a new eight Doctor spin-off Dark Eyes was released.

The next big milestones came in the fiftieth anniversary of the show. Big Finish produced a monthly set of stories (one for each then extant Doctor) called Destiny of the Doctor. For November 2013 itself they released a multi-Doctor epic Light at the End, which was also the first vinyl release for Big Finish. Not one's to rest on their laurels, Big Finish found more and more ways to expand and September 2015 gave the first appearance for Tim Treloar as the third Doctor in the first set of Third Doctor Adventures, while Elliot Chapman gave voice to Ben Jackson alongside Jamie and Polly in The Yes Men.

Since then we've had the new series licence, David Tennant back as the tenth Doctor, stories for the ninth and eleventh as well as a range of War Doctor stories for John Hurt. As each month passes it seems there's an announcement whether it's the short story format Short Trips bringing Jackie Tyler on alternate Earth, adventures set on New Earth or Derek Jacobi as the War Master in his own boxsets. There's no room to do more than mention the often-brilliant Torchwood range and even Class has made an appearance.

When you try to get the measure of twenty years of Doctor Who at Big Finish, the only possible reaction is amazement, tinged with astonishment and healthy pinch of excitement as to what might come next. Roll on the next twenty years!

BIG FINISH

REVIEW EMISSARY OF THE DALEKS

Review by Rik Moran

This is a Dalek adventure. Yes, those pepper pots are back. Like many stories previously, the title gives away that they will be in it, and what could be built to a reveal, never quite works.

This is another gratifying outing for the Sixth Doctor, again granted the opportunity to be both deductive and heroic, and Colin Baker again gives a fine performance. Both Colin Baker and Nicola Bryant continue to bring the Doctor and Peri to life brilliantly, and I've very pleased to see that Big Finish continue to give them a range of stories

The play itself treads familiar ground and to be fair most Dalek stories do. The stars are the characters and the production itself.

From the start what really jumped out at me with this audio was the tremendous sound design and musical accompaniment. The team at Big Finish have gone full Star Wars style on this and I loved it.

This story won't be one that I return to often but if they released a soundtrack I would delve into it over and over.

[For a trailer click here](#)

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

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

REVIEW RAVENOUS VOL 3

Review by Rik Moran

Eighth Doctor boxsets continue to prove to be among the highest quality and event-piece releases from Big Finish, and Ravenous 3 is no exception. There is always a five-day countdown on social media for each release, which I find ramp up the excitement for when the sets become available.

'Deeptime Frontier' was originally intended to be the closing act of Ravenous 2, and although it's perhaps not the most innovative with its storyline while at times being a bit too descriptive with its dialogue, it remains every bit as powerful as the opener to Ravenous 3 and finally gives genuine menace to the threat that has been hinted at for so long. While 'Seizure' gave us a very simple introduction to the Ravenous, 'Deeptime Frontier' takes the time to give us a great deal more information. Sometimes, knowing too much can ruin a monster's scare factor, but the origins of the Ravenous actually enhance it.

'Companion Piece' by John Dorney takes both the Doctor and the Ravenous out of the equation to tell a surprisingly isolated tale that celebrates so much of the Eighth Doctor era with his companions very much at the forefront. The return of Charlotte Pollard to the Eighth Doctor adventures is undoubtedly going to be the major draw of this story for many, and India Fisher delivers a profound performance that perfectly

exemplifies her companion's intelligence, self-assuredness, and bravery. Sadly, this isn't after her time of travelling with the Doctor and so there's no genuine reunion between her and the Eighth Doctor. I still hold out hope that we will get this at some point in the future.

John Dorney has written a plot that's very light and straightforward – essentially, the companions work together to escape from a seemingly inescapable prison. This means that there is much more focus on the dialogue and character exploration than there is on an over-complicated story.

Being in the same story arc as the brilliant Krampus two-part tale from *Ravenous 2*, 'L.E.G.E.N.D' will undoubtedly draw comparisons because of the similar themes it covers. Yet while the end result here isn't quite as seamless and resonant as what has come before, the bevy of strong ideas at its core unquestionably creates the potential to be a lot more. For me whilst the weakest episode of the series this is not quite a throw away episode, It is just that the previous story was so good, this cannot live up to it.

The final episode of *Ravenous 3*, 'The Odds Against' is a very 'by the numbers' Doctor Who adventure, and I feel this is deliberate. 'The Odds Against' is definitely very effective as a finale to the box set. The scale is overall rather small compared to some of the other finales, but the personal stakes really do feel at their highest, and it ties the whole box off very nicely.

Special mention must be given to Mark Bonnar and John Heffernan whose tour de force performances as The Eleven and The Nine are a highlight of this set.

Looking towards 'Ravenous 4' I do find myself wondering if trapping these series into 4 x 4 episodes is a good thing. It might be better just to do 'The Eighth Doctor Adventures' volumes as with other Doctors, so as not to trap the writers into these arc limits.

Although we know where the Eighth Doctor ends his life, we know nothing of Helen and Liv's future with him, unlike most other companions who feature in stories told by Big Finish. This open creative space means that the Eighth Doctor is still forging ahead and making new ground just as much as he was in the early 2000s. I am ready for whatever is ahead. 8/10 for this one



[For the trailer click here](#)

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

REVIEW

LEGACY OF TIME

Review by Jessica Chaleff

If there was a way to make a written review solely consisting of awed silence, intermittent squeals, and frantic gesticulating, I would send it in, and you the reader would be subject to my incoherent babble. However, I wouldn't subject you to that, and instead, this will be readable, and my high-pitched squeals of excitement will only exist in your imagination. Did you hear that? That was me. Granted it isn't that high-pitched, but it's startling none-the-less.

My first Doctor Who audio was 'The Light at the End', Big Finish's answer to the ultimate 50th Anniversary celebration for Doctor Who. I thought nothing could top it but I was incredibly wrong. However, enough with this pretence. Let's get on with the stories.

'Lies in Ruins' by James Goss.

This story featured Paul McGann as the Doctor, Alex Kingston as Professor River Song, Lisa Bowerman as Professor Bernice Summerfield, and Alexandria Riley as the Doctor's new companion, Ria.

I've heard many renditions of the Doctor Who theme before, but I had yet to hear this version used in the 'Time War' series. It is amazing. Pure thunder, and filled with the promise of something epic. The people who create the main and incidental music for Big Finish bal-

ance the epic with the subtle, and the over-the-top with the slight undertones. They know how to put music in a scene.

Alex Kingston and Lisa Bowerman play wonderfully off each other as two archaeologists who care deeply for the Doctor and would do anything to protect him. And their mutual distaste – and eventual support – of his newest companion was wonderful. Talking of whom - Ria. That voice drove nails through my head, and I suppose, in the end, that was the point. Ria was an overly chipper individual, overhyping the Doctor. I couldn't stand her, until the end of the story. She was overly chipper for a very specific reason. Spoilers.

'The Split Infinitive' by John Dorney.

This story featured Sylvester McCoy as the Doctor, Sophie Aldred as Ace, Simon Williams as Group Captain Gilmore, Pamela Salem as Rachel Jensen, and Karen Gledhill as Allison Williams.

I was so delighted to see these classic characters return. UNIT before UNIT, Gilmore, Jensen, and Williams made a grand return in this story, with two timelines happening at the same time, one in the 70s, and one in the 80s. Confused? Don't be. It was written so well, the concurrent stories happening make perfect sense as one listens along. I loved Jensen and Williams in the television serial, two women who were pioneers for the Scientific Advisor position the Doctor would one day fill. They haven't lost their spark

in this story.

Hearing McCoy and Aldred together again took me to their onscreen time together. They sound the same. You could have told me this was recorded in the 80s and I would have believed you.

'The Sacrifice of Jo Grant' by Guy Adams.

This story features Tim Treloar as the Doctor, Katy Manning as Jo Grant/ Jones, Ingrid Oliver as Osgood, Jemma Redgrave as Kate Stewart, and [REDACTED] as [REDACTED].

With a title like that, you know something is gonna tug at the heartstrings, right? The relationship between Osgood and Jo Grant was amazing. Katy and Ingrid are a fantastic duo. It was also nice to hear Jo Grant with Kate Stewart, as Jo also knew the Brigadier.

But who is Tim Treloar? I was honestly surprised at his mimicry of Jon Pertwee. I felt it was slightly off at times, but it was believable enough for me to think, yeah, this is the Third Doctor – especially when interacting with Jo.

'Relative Time' by Matt Fitton

This story features Peter Davison as the Doctor and Georgia Tennant as Jenny.

Ah, the title makes much more sense now, doesn't it? Such a tease! The Doctor's Daughter re-

turns, and is actually this Doctor's in-real-life daughter. I love it!

Jenny is very like the future (tenth) Doctor. She is overly excited about adventure, and spouts out all her knowledge in very few breaths... while the (fifth) Doctor expresses confusion, and slight disdain.

Peter Davison and Georgia Tennant work very well together here as you would expect and this definitely adds to the story

'The Avenues of Possibility' by Jonathan Morris.

This story features Colin Baker as the Doctor and India Fisher as Charlotte Pollard.

I'm accustomed to Charlie being with Paul McGann's Doctor, so it was intriguing for me to hear her with Colin. This Doctor does not know that Charlie is a future companion of his too, and there was a major reference to her time with the Eighth Doctor which made me smile. Her adventures were my second foray into the world of Big Finish (after 'Light at the End'). Now I want to hear more stories with India and Colin. They work incredibly well together, and sound like the best of pals in the audios.

'Collision Course' by Guy Adams

This story features (prepare yourself) Tom Baker as the Doctor, Louise Jameson as Leela, Lalla Ward as Romana AND later on in the story, Tim Trelor, Peter Davison,



Colin Baker, Sylvester McCoy and Paul McGann as their respective Doctors, Lisa Bowerman as Bernice Summerfield, [REDACTED] as [REDACTED], [REDACTED] as [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] as [REDACTED].

Can you believe REDACTED is in it? I'm teasing you, I know, I'm terrible, but discovery is all worth the listen, I promise.

Leela and Romana: I haven't listened to the Gallifrey series yet, so this is the first time I've heard them together. Remember that concurrent timeline from 'The Split Infinity?' Well, that sort of happens here too but in a different way, where both Leela and Romana travel with the Doctor. It was grand to hear Tom on audio again. His delivery is different on audio, but I quite like it, although to be fair, I like anything voiced by Tom.

Everyone is amazing in the concluding tale to this six-part story all playing their role as they have for

years, with the same excitement and professionalism that make them who they are. I didn't want 'The Legacy of Time' to end. I wanted to crawl inside that world, and live there.

To all involved with this project, I thank you. You took time, and care into crafting this adventure, and it showed. Happy Anniversary, Big Finish. Long may you reign.

There are two version of this play available; the standard and special editions.

[To hear the trailer click here](#)

[To purchase the CD or download version the standard edition from Big Finish click here](#)

[To purchase the download of the Special Edition from Big Finish click here](#)

[The standard version is also available to buy from Amazon UK—click here](#)



REVIEW THE FINAL GAME AUDIO

Review by Rik Moran

I came to this, not knowing what to expect. I've not listened to a non-Big Finish audio since the DWAS Cosmic Fugues, remember those? Anyway, I was a little unsure as I hit play.

The audio opens with narration, before getting into cast performances. I am not generally a fan of narration; I would much rather have a full cast production. Personal preferences aside, the narrator sounds like he is purposefully putting on a deeper voice, I can only assume whoever it is, is doing another voice in the audio and needs to differentiate between them. It would have helped to have a cast list or some production details to help support the play.

First episodes are always tricky, and this does well to introduce the listener to all the characters. Particular note must be given to Marshall Tankersley for his 3rd Doctor, which is very good and certainly helps visualise in the mind's eye that particular era of the show. All the regular characters from season 11 are here, plus some others such as Corporal Bell.

The team from Black Glove Studio have obviously put a lot of time and effort into this first chapter from sound effects, to background music and of course performances. The

direction is also notable as it could have easily become an 'impression fest', rather than letting the actors just play the roles.

The basis for the play is the final confrontation between the Third Doctor and the Master which of course, we never saw on TV owing to Roger Delgado's death. This offers plenty of scope for the writers, and I am looking forward to episode 2.

I hope that future instalments live up to the standard started here. It is not perfect, but it is off to a damn good start. If you have an hour, give it a listen, you may just be surprised, like I was.

[You can listen to the episode free-of-charge at You Tube by clicking here.](#)



INSPIRED BY THE IRONSIDES: A FAN AUDIO DRAMA

by Tobias Hamilton

Additional content also by Thomas Rickerby (director of sound) and Saul Boyer (creative associate).

I was 7 years old, sitting on my sofa, eagerly waiting for the next episode of Doctor Who to start. The story was the 'Spearhead from Space' and it was my first experience of watching the exiled time-lord and his companion fighting terrifying monsters. I was soon hooked. After watching Jon Pertwee's run religiously, I was hungry for more. That's when I stumbled across the audio stories by Big Finish whilst in my local book shop. Now, 16 years later, I have set up an Independent short film and audio production company that has been directly influenced by watching and listening to Doctor Who all those years ago. As a fan and now a filmmaker, I wanted to pay homage to the most important show in my life by making a fan film. As I was writing my first Doctor Who short film script, an old Big Finish Audiobook started to play on my phone's playlist. I stopped typing, closed my screen-fried eyes and started to listen. It was then that I realised, I not only wanted to pay tribute to the show but to the audio adventures as well.

When it came to writing the audio

scripts, I quickly realised how much deeper I would have to dig into the story-telling. I wanted to delve into the world of Doctor Who, starting with the theme of conflict. After watching all the episodes related to war, I decided to focus on the episode 'Victory of the Daleks' as my inspiration. I wanted to tell the story leading up to the episode, looking at the wartime aesthetics, why the British army would resort to using the Daleks as weapons, and how one officer tries to stop it. I felt that the Ironside Daleks were such an original and interesting take on the monsters and I wanted to explore their deceptive personalities further. When writing the Ironside script and the next two in the trilogy, I wanted to ask questions like: 'how far should we go in the name of victory?', 'how can we be selfless in the face of conflict?' and 'how can we find compromise and peace when we have forgotten what we were fighting for?' The process seemed challenging at first, as I had to learn a new way of writing and had to think with sound in mind, rather than visuals. But after a lot of practise, I think I got the hang of the medium.

After the first script was completed, casting the characters was the next step, which we did via voice auditions. Thomas Rickerby (director of sound) is now currently creating the 'project sessions' for the dialogue recording, which will be used when the actors come in for a day or two for a dry read through, along with their actual recorded performances. These recorded sessions are then edited by Thomas, who pieces to-

gether the best takes of dialogue to create the finished performance. Next comes the most interesting part, the sound effects and music that have to be added to support the dialogue and set the scene for our stories. Once these elements are in place, the audio drama is then synced to an artwork visualiser, which adds slight movement to the otherwise static artwork. Finally, the finished project will go through a test audience who will listen and critique before final changes are made to it before it is published on YouTube for the public and fans.

We have several audio drama shorts planned for release this year: premiering with 'The Ironsides' (the prequel to Victory of the Daleks), which will be followed by 'Saviour of the Daleks', (a sequel to 'Evil of the Daleks') and 'The First

Shot' (which will follow Strax and the Doctor finding out the cause of the war between the Sontaran's and the Rutans). Finally, I am developing another trilogy of audio dramas harking back to the Classic era of the show, which will explore the theme of power (political, mystical and environmental). This will tie older villains and stories to modern socio-political and environmental issues that we face in modern society that I hope fans can resonate with. Big thanks to the Dr Who Appreciation Society and to my head of sound Thomas Rickerby, whom without, none of this would be possible.

If you want to keep up to date with our Doctor Who fan productions, follow us at [@dwarfstarvisuals](#). Thank you for reading!



Artwork by Eli Hyder (@venamis).

A DATE WITH THE DOCTOR

by Alan Stevens

On the evening of 22 May 2019, a Facebook friend sent me a link to a news item concerning a two day Doctor Who location shoot that was taking place at Gloucester Cathedral. This was quite unusual in that the press normally only report such a thing once it's over, and yet here it clearly said that recording would continue throughout the next day.

This left me with something of a dilemma. I knew from my past experiences working as an extra that this kind of thing can be pretty boring. It usually involves a lot of waiting around, followed by the same scene being acted out and recorded, over and over again.

However, I did have a reason to go

into my local town, and so thought it might be worth making the journey and see what opportunities presented themselves.

As it happened, the next day was beautifully sunny, and as I stepped out of my bookmaker, I saw the Gloucester bus drive by. It was a short jog to the stop, and although the driver was preparing to depart as I reached it, he showed some pity, opened the doors, and allowed me to board.

About 45 minutes later the bus entered Gloucester and I alighted near the cathedral. In the distance I could see a giant crane carrying what looked like a powerful Halogen floodlight. I made my way to the back of the cathedral and entered through the cloisters, thinking that, as they were filming in the nave, this route would get me as close as possible to the action.



Unfortunately, I was soon confronted by a sign that read “Caution. Filming in progress. The producers and crew would like to apologise for any inconvenience caused during the preparation/filming of this production. We appreciate your co-operation and thank you for your patience.”

The sign was so large and well placed it was impossible to convincingly blunder into the nave by ‘accident’, let alone take any photos, so instead I decided to retrace my steps and venture around the front of the cathedral to see what was happening there.

What I discovered first were vans, cranes, elevated platforms and a group of gaffers chatting to each other. There was also an over-enthusiastic security guard, who would rush back and forth, telling startled pedestrians that they could not enter the cathedral, whether they intended to or not. Then I



spotted them!

Judoon? Nope, fans! Bunched together near a stone buttress. I identified them mainly from their attentive posture, but also the fact that one of them was wearing a grubby Seventh Doctor tank-top.



I decided to go over and find out what had been happening, but as I started to cross the road, I was hooted at by a car. I stepped back and was surprised to see Jodie Whittaker, in full costume, waving and smiling from the passenger seat. I snapped a photo with my tablet, but only managed to get the back of her head. As it was 1.30pm it was clear she was being taken off somewhere for lunch.

A bunch of Judoon actors, minus heads, then trailed out of the side entrance, climbed into a minibus and scooted off in the same direction.



I approached a young woman wearing a Doctor Who tee-shirt, and asked if anything interesting had happened earlier in the day. She told me that there hadn't been much to see, but that Jodie had come over before filming had begun, spoken with the fans and posed for a number of selfies. She wasn't, however, giving out autographs. I was further told that, although Jodie had been absent yesterday, recording in the cloisters had continued until 8pm.

Another fan showed me some mobile phone footage she had taken that morning of Jodie at a distance, again dressed as the Doctor but with her braces dangling, while someone else kindly emailed me a photo of Jodie standing outside in the cathedral courtyard. "She's very small," I was told. "She can't be more than five foot two!" I asked if any of the other regular cast had made an appearance, but everyone shook their heads. Only Jodie and

the Judoon were there.

The common consensus was that Jodie would very probably do another 'meet and greet' on her return from lunch, and this was expected around 2.30pm; so I strolled off to do a bit of shopping, get a burger and possibly a pint, or three.

An hour later I returned. The fans were still there in the hot sun (I felt sorry for the large gentleman in the question mark tank-top), but no sign of Jodie. By three o'clock there was still no joy and I was, quite frankly, getting bored; so I left for home.

Arriving at the bus station, I was shocked to discover that the entire building had been demolished. Fortunately a passer-by kindly pointed me towards a brand new, glass and steel structure, thirty feet to my left, and told me that this was the new station.... It just goes to show how infrequently I visit Gloucester by bus.



Images © Alan Stevens

REVIEW DOCTOR WHO THE 13TH DOCTOR

Review by Susan Backstrom

These recent comic book releases from Titan are lovely work. The characters have both exciting dialogue and very good imagery.

The latest volumes contain the character of 'The Corsair', previously alluded to in the television episode 'The Doctor's Wife'. This version of the Corsair is great fun – she dresses like a pirate herself and has some very firm views on Graham's chosen attire.

The Corsair takes the TARDIS team to Radoplina, a planet with floating cities, flying octopi, and beautiful space mer-people. They are there, apparently, to steal something out of a vault. This 'something' will not be what you think it is!

The beautiful artwork makes the pretty simple story come alive. The characters are written well although there are few surprises. The Corsair herself, a Time Lord living as a thief is a great jumping off point for many more stories, and we get one of those in volume 12.

Many authors get to make a new monster and in volume 12 we have a good one. The monster known as The Hoarder is the baddie in the comic book story and is very well drawn. You may guess from his name what it is that he actually does and some may find elements

reflected in their own personality... The Corsair and the Doctor find themselves in a caged part of the Hoarder's collection. He has everything - jewels, clothes, people – you know, the usual stuff. The 'something' in volume 11 referred to above also finds itself in the Hoarder's possession and the Doctor and the Corsair need to deal with this too.

Some of the conversations our characters have are very expositional. This can be annoying but the story still moves quickly and the Corsair gets a short character arc. Possibly as a consequence the TARDIS team were not used much.

Overall, I enjoyed both volumes. They are well written and well-drawn but in future volumes I would like to see the whole TARDIS crew feature more.





REVIEW

DOCTOR WHO THE 13TH DOCTOR VOLUME 2

Review by Jessica Chaleff

Volume 2 of the Thirteenth Doctor comic books from Titan collect together issues 5—8.

The writing in the comic books differs from the show and from other media, and I mean that in the best way possible. Jody Houser, the writer, not only knows the characters, but knows the show in all its incarnations. In the comics, writers can take inspiration from whenever, and can mimic any writer they wish, to craft a story they want to see a particular Doctor take part in. I found the last TV season very different from the others, but this comic was written in such a way that it took elements from the new season, while placing it in a more neutral writing style that is more common within Doctor Who.

The story was clever, very clever, and while I'm not the biggest fan of the Doctor using "fam," I must say I enjoyed Thirteen more in this, than I have in the show.

Art. Oh goodness the art. Have I ever mentioned how much I love Rachel Stott? No? Well, I love Rachel Stott. Her ability to flawlessly capture a person's likeness is incredible. She even got Whittaker's scrunch face down perfectly in this comic!

Roberta Ingranata is also a very good artist. She has the ability to capture a person's likeness without adding too much detail. And the way they both drew the creatures? Horrifying, yet sympathetic. Stott and Ingranata certainly know how to evoke emotions from the audience through their art. Very well done.

Colouring is also very important. Some comics come in black and white, but coloured ones are more mainstream now-a-days, and helps set the mood for the scene. Writing and line art can certainly set the mood, but when colour is added, that's when the scene is truly set. From creating a dark and moody forest, to using warm tones to make a scene comforting, Angiolini knows how to make a scene truly pop.

I love Doctor Who novels and comics. Writers get the chance to produce stories in their own way and the Thirteenth Doctor gets another round of adventures through Titan Comics, in brand new writing styles which, personally, I prefer over the televised version.

'Hidden Human History' is a very modern Doctor Who tale, perfect for us in the here and now.







TOO
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AS HORRIBLE AS
HISTORY CAN BE,
IT'S WHEN YOU'RE
IN THE MIDDLE
OF IT THAT--

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