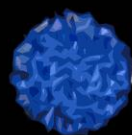
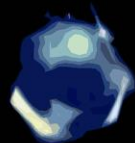


THE WIFE HAS
BEEN ASSIGNED
SAPPHIRE
&
STEEL



NEIL AND SUE
PERRYMAN

THE WIFE HAS BEEN ASSIGNED SAPPHIRE AND STEEL

by Neil and Sue Perryman

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*This ebook is dedicated to everyone who backed a Wife in Space
Kickstarter campaign where this assignment was a stretch goal, and to
Graham Kibble-White for handling its irregularities.*

INTRODUCTION

Hartlepool, November 2015

Me: Okay, Sue, what can you tell me about *Sapphire and Steel*?

Sue: Not a lot. You made me watch it once, years ago. It was set in a railway station.

Me: That wasn't me. We watched a completely different story together. Bravo repeated the series in the mid-'90s, and we watched an episode that was set in a high-rise flat. You didn't make it as far as the second episode, for reasons that will become apparent later.

Sue: Well, I definitely remember a train station...

Me: You probably remember it from your childhood. Well, I say childhood; you were 17 when *Sapphire and Steel* was broadcast in 1979. I was only nine.

Sue: Rub it in, why don't you? I was probably out getting drunk when it was on. Or playing badminton. Or both.

I transport my wife back to 1979 with a song. Sapphire and Steel would probably frown at that, but what the hell.

Me: Gary Numan was Number One with 'Are "Friends" Electric?' when *Sapphire and Steel* started.

Sue: I saw him that year at Newcastle City Hall. Best concert I've ever been to. He arrived on stage on this huge platform...

Me: It was on twice a week. Like *EastEnders*. And it was supposed to be ITV's answer to *Doctor Who*. Sort of.

Sue: Was it on ITV? Oh, in that case, I probably saw it when I was getting ready to go out.

Me: So what else do you remember about *Sapphire and Steel*? Apart from the railway station.

Sue: Well, it's got Patsy from *Ab Fab* in it, and one of the men from U.N.C.L.E was in it, too; don't ask me what his name is, though. Mac-something, I think.

Me: Anything else?

Sue: They are basically superheroes with silly codenames, like in a Marvel comic. It's something like that. I don't really know. There's definitely a railway station in it, though.

Me: Is there anything about *Sapphire and Steel* that you'd like to know before we begin?

Sue: Yeah. How long is it? And will it be over by Christmas?

ADVENTURE ONE

EPISODE ONE

Sue: Could these titles be any cheaper? They aren't even straight. *(Shaking her head)* Seriously, is this really the best they could do?

Sapphire and Steel's first episode begins in a farmhouse kitchen.

Sue: Ooh, I like that table. Yeah, that table is absolutely gorgeous.

As Sue admires the woodwork, a young boy concentrates on his homework. Or he would if his house wasn't so bloody loud.

Sue: What's with all the clocks? They'd drive me crazy if I had to listen to them all day.

Me: I bet that poor kid can't wait for digital watches to be invented, so he can enjoy some peace and quiet for a change.

The boy's parents are upstairs in his sister's bedroom.

Sue: How is that supposed to send her to sleep, exactly? They're encouraging her to jump up and down on her bed. Are they mad?

Me: Says the woman who let her five-year-old daughter stay up all night watching *The Breakfast Club*.

And then the clocks stop. All of them. At the same time.

Sue: Finally! Peace, perfect peace!

The boy examines one of the timepieces, which has suddenly fallen silent.

Sue: Don't wind them up again, son! Actually, this is a bit scary. I mean, one or two clocks stopping at the same time is bad enough, but all of them? What are the chances? Is this why the house is full of clocks? Is it to ram that effect home? It's a bit over-the-top. They could have done the same thing with just a couple of clocks. Unless the clock fetish becomes important later on.

The boy is distracted by a strange noise emanating from his sister's bedroom.

Sue: Wasn't he in Flintlock?

Me: Wrong show, love.

And then the real title sequence kicks in...

Me: So what did you think of that?

Sue: It was pretty good. It was a bit cheesy, but it explains what's going on.

Me: (*Amazed*) It does?

Sue: Yeah, they're superheroes named after elements.

Me: Sapphire and Steel aren't elements, though.

Sue: But Silver is.

Me: Yeah, I know. It's fucking complicated.

Sue: The music's good, though.

The boy, whose name is Rob, realises that his parents are missing.

Sue: Have they been abducted by aliens? Are Sapphire and Steel like Mulder and Scully? Is that it? Are they Space Cops? Do they work for the government? Are they like Torchwood? And does Joanna Lumley always wear blue?

Sapphire and Steel have arrived.

Me: Yes, Sapphire always wears blue. The clue's in her name, Sue.

Sue: I was only asking. Don't be so tetchy.

Steel urges the boy to tell him everything that's happened so far. And he isn't very nice about it.

Sue: He's a bit rough with these kids. He's definitely the bad Space Cop, and she's definitely the good Space Cop.

Rob is aggrieved to put it mildly.

Sue: He's a good little actor. Why didn't they cast him as Adric? This is the same time as Adric, isn't it? He would have been a million times better than what they ended up with.

Me: And he isn't even that good.

Sue: I think he's doing a great job considering how weird this is.

Sapphire and Steel tell Rob and Helen that their parents have been abducted by, well, time monsters, basically.

Sue: That's going to make them feel better. Is this Sapphire and Steel's first assignment? Because they aren't very good at this.

Steel asks Helen to re-enact the exact moment her parents vanished.

Sue: He's bloody horrible to her. She's only a kid. Are you sure Sapphire and Steel didn't abduct their parents? I wouldn't put it past them. Especially him.

Steel doesn't have time for any pleasantries as he methodically pieces together what happened.

Sue: I could imagine Paul Darrow playing this part. Do you know what I mean? He's dishy and heartless at the same time. He's like Sherlock. He doesn't have any empathy.

Steel commands Sapphire to recite the nursery rhyme that Helen's parents were reading to her when they disappeared.

Sue: He's a right old bossy boots, isn't he?

Sapphire recites the rhyme, and just as the tension becomes unbearable, there's a sudden knock at the door.

Sue: Fuck me! I got the fright of my life!

Visions from the past suddenly invade the present, altering the dimensions of the bedroom itself.

Sue: What the hell is going on, Neil?

Steel tells Sapphire to tear the rhyme out of the book and burn it.

Sue: But give us a kiss first. I tell you what, Neil, there's quite a bit of sexual tension in this scene.

Rob finds Sapphire in the kitchen.

Sue: And now it's turned into *Bewitched*. Hang on a minute. I thought you said she always wore blue, Neil? Her dress is yellow... And now it's red!

Sapphire can change her appearance at will.

Sue: She's showing off, now. And she's fucking with this poor kid's head at the same time. *Who are these people?*

Steel tells Rob that the corridor of time is infested with beings who are desperately trying to break into our reality, and they used an old nursery rhyme as a key.

Sue: If only they'd explained this to the little girl. Oh dear...

Helen recites the nursery rhyme to herself in her bedroom. Sapphire and Steel race upstairs to stop her, but the door slams shut in their faces. Cue credits.

Sue: That was ridiculously scary! What time did this go out?

Me: 7pm.

Sue: Don't be stupid!

Me: I'm serious!

Sue: That's insane. This is too scary for me, let alone any kids watching.

Me: It's been 35 years, and I'm still getting over it.

Sue: I hate ghosts and supernatural things like this. If all the episodes are like this, I'm going to be in trouble.

EPISODE TWO

Sue: How many episodes are set in this house?

Me: I'm not telling you.

Sue: In that case, there must be loads. I can read you like a book.

After the recap, the title sequence rolls again.

Me: They didn't have computer graphics back then. This is all animated by hand, Sue.

Sue: You could probably knock something like this up at home in a few hours today. I like it, though. It's got a certain charm to it, and I love the music. It really gets you in the mood... No, not that kind of mood, Neil.

Sapphire opens the bedroom door with her 'superpower', and Steel keeps the malevolent force at bay by sacrificing Helen's teddy to it.

Sue: What a heartless git. I bet she loved that bear.

The room's dimensions begin to distort as voices from the past echo through the house.

Sue: The LSD you put in my tea is definitely kicking in, Neil.

Me: It's very atmospheric, don't you think?

Sue: It's as atmospheric as fuck! It's scaring the shit out of me! The direction is really bizarre and unsettling. It's even more scary because it doesn't look like normal telly. Everything is slightly off.

Steel barricades the bedroom door with several planks of wood.

Sue: Is he preparing for some kind of zombie attack?

It then becomes apparent Rob and Helen are cut off from the outside world because they live on an island.

Sue: As if this wasn't scary enough, now they tell us that they can't even leave! Bloody hell. How many episodes is this, Neil? I don't think my heart can take it.

Rob tries to make a run for it.

Sue: He's very smart for a boy so young.

Me: I bet he's got a badge for mathematical excellence and everything.

Rob's pathetic bid for freedom amuses Steel.

Sue: I can't believe he actually smiled. Well, almost.

Me: He's great, though, isn't he? David McCallum, I mean.

Sue: Oh, definitely. You can't take your eyes off him. He oozes charisma. He would have been a good Doctor Who.

Me: He's blonde, so he could have replaced Peter Davison.

Sue: Actually, forget I said anything.

Sapphire and Steel tell Rob he'll have to put up with them if he wants to see his parents again.

Sue: I don't care what this show is called, I'm on Rob's side.

Sapphire and Steel are as scary as fuck! I don't trust them at all.

Sapphire persuades Helen to take her side.

Sue: And she's supposed to be the nice one!

A policeman arrives to investigate Rob's 999 call, but he vanishes as soon as the boy opens the door.

Sue: Are you sure Sapphire and Steel aren't the bad guys, Neil? I mean, are you *absolutely* sure?

And then the policeman arrives again. And again. And again.

Sue: Has Sapphire put him in a time loop? You know, I'm certain that's the sort of thing the bad guys do. Okay, she's doing it with a smile, but I'm not sure if that makes it worse or not.

Sapphire's powers allow her to extend moments in time.

Sue: That must come in handy when she's having an orgasm. Don't write that down, Neil.

The policeman is released from the time loop and Steel persuades him to leave.

Sue: So, every time you experience *deja vu*, it's because some fucker has stuck you in a time loop? It's clever, this. But why don't they just wind back time to a point *before* Rob's parents were taken?

Rob asks exactly the same question.

Sue: They should have called this show *Rob*. He's great.

Me: If only he'd slept with John Nathan-Turner...

Steel asks Rob to show him his father's office.

Sue: His interpersonal skills definitely need work. Fish fingers and custard – that's how you get small children to trust you. Everybody knows that.

A sense of pervading dread percolates through the house.

Sue: This is a show that isn't afraid to linger on some stairs. That takes guts. Even back then, it must have taken guts. I love it, even though it's terrifying.

Sapphire can identify the age of any given object.

Sue: Now that's a superpower I'd like to have. She'd make an absolute fortune on *Bargain Hunt*.

Steels wants the office stripped bare.

Sue: I love the flagstones on the kitchen floor. This looks incredible considering it's a studio set. I'm really impressed.

Rob's mother calls to her son through the barricaded door.

Sue: That isn't your mam! Don't be daft, lad. And you were doing so well.

But Rob can't resist his mother's voice, and he places his head next to the door.

Sue: No, Rob! Run!

And then a couple of roundheads from the English Civil barge their way into the bedroom. Cue credits.

Sue: What the fuck?

EPISODE THREE

Sue: These recaps go on for ever. The episodes themselves must only be 15 minutes long.

The entity from the corridor of time (I think that's right) is represented by a white light on the floor.

Sue: It's the Mysterons!

Amazingly, Sue doesn't have a problem with this 'special' effect.

Sue: It's as low budget as it's possible to get, but it still works. Leaving it to your imagination makes it scarier, somehow.

Me: Good.

Sue: And I've seen every episode of *Doctor Who*, so my standards are pretty low. And you can't go wrong with clocks. The sound of ticking clocks is always scary. It isn't rocket science, you know.

This particular entity uses nursery rhymes to break into our reality.

Sue: Programme makers didn't give a shit about the effect this would have on kids in the 1970s, did they? I mean, making nursery rhymes scary before the watershed is just asking for trouble, isn't it? I bet there were a few wet beds that night.

Me: Don't look at me.

Sapphire believes that history has gone wrong.

Sue: I'm confused.

Whereas Steel thinks the entity is confusing them on purpose.

Sue: That doesn't help.

And then Sapphire finds herself trapped in a painting. As you do.

Sue: What a nice room. I love the wooden beams. I wouldn't mind being trapped in a room like that.

But the room is the scene of a terrible crime. A crime Sapphire will become part of if she doesn't escape.

Sue: I have absolutely no idea what's going on.

Sapphire tries to return time to a moment before she ended up in the painting. And fails miserably. "It's no good," she cries. "It's in here with me!"

Me: At 7pm, Sue. Can you believe it? 7pm!

Sue: I'm speechless. Fucking hell. I'm exhausted after watching that, and nothing actually happened!

Steel heads to the fridge freezer.

Sue: It's too late for fish fingers and custard now, mate. Actually, the girl who plays Helen reminds me of Amy Pond, and her parents were missing as a weird alien stole things from her kitchen. Do you think Steven Moffat has ever seen *Sapphire and Steel*?

Me: I think he's probably aware of it, yes.

There are now two entities loose in the house.

Sue: Ooh, two lights on the floor. They're really pushing the boat out.

Steel takes the fridge freezer apart.

Sue: He's just like the Doctor. A mardy Doctor. I bet he reverses the polarity or something like that.

Steel freezes the painting and Sapphire is saved in the nick of time.

Sue: This is too scary for me.

She reaches for my hand, instead of the usual cushion, as the roundheads break into our reality, determined to complete their grisly task.

Sue: What the fuck?

Cue credits.

EPISODE FOUR

Sue: I can't believe they threatened Sapphire with hanging *and* decapitation. This programme isn't pulling its punches. And if these recaps were any longer, I'd begin to suspect that I'd been trapped in a time loop, as well.

After the title sequence, which Sue attempts to sing along to (with limited success), Steel freezes the attacking soldiers and they vanish into thin air, screaming.

Sue: Has he broken time by doing this? If that murder never happened, doesn't that mess things up? Who does he think he is? Doctor bloody Who?

Sapphire tells Rob that Steel reduced his temperature to minus-273.1 degrees, which Rob immediately knows is as near to absolute zero as makes no odds.

Me: He's definitely got a badge for mathematical excellence.

Sue: What a waste.

Steel, who is now freezing to death, needs some time to recover.

Sue: Make him a Cup-a-Soup. Or some hoops. That's what you did in the 1970s, especially when the boiler stopped working.

Sapphire asks Helen to lead Steel to the kitchen, although she mustn't touch him under any circumstances.

Sue: Er, I think he knows the way, so why put her in unnecessary danger like that? That's just crazy.

Helen leads Steel to the kitchen.

Sue: If she's really lucky, he'll make her some ice cream. You know, to make up for being a grumpy git earlier.

Sapphire tells Rob that there are 127 different elements like them.

Sue: I thought you said they weren't elements, Neil?

Me: They aren't. Steel is an alloy. I only know this shit because I looked it up before we started.

Sue: They obviously didn't have access to Wikipedia when they wrote this. Bless them.

Steel corrects Sapphire, stating that there are actually only 115 elements like them because all the transuranic elements are unstable.

Sue: Racist.

Me: There are actually 118 elements, but who's counting? And transuranic elements include Uranium and Californium.

Sue: Whatever you say, love.

And then Sapphire and Steel receive some unexpected back-up.

Sue: It's Shaft!

It's Lead, actually.

Sue: Of course it is. I should have guessed. Lead is definitely an element.

Me: Atomic number 82.

Sue: Oh do shut up, Neil.

Lead offers to help Steel.

Sue: It's basically like Marvel's *Avengers*, this. You could imagine Lead and, I don't know... Radium having their own show and crossing over into this one. Did that ever happen?

Me: No, but if their show existed, I bet the soundtrack would have included wah-wah guitars.

Lead is famished, so he tucks into a hearty meal before he takes on the forces of evil.

Sue: That's a Vista curry. They were state of the art back then. I can still remember the smell.

Lead tells Steel that Jet sends her love.

Sue: What? Her off *Gladiators*?

Sapphire serves up dessert.

Sue: A nice Sara Lee cake. This is so Seventies, it hurts.

With dinner out of the way, Lead is finally ready to help Steel.

Sue: I suppose having a black guy as a good guy with actual words to say was quite progressive back then. It undermines Sapphire and Steel if they have to call for help this quickly, though.

Lead removes a painting from the wall and places it back against the wall.

Sue: How is that going to help, exactly? It's still a painting and you can still see it. It's just lower down the wall. I don't get it.

Lead tells Rob that he once helped Sapphire and Steel deal with another assignment on a ship. A ship called the Mary Celeste.

Sue: I thought it was going to be the *Titanic*. But it's the same thing.

Me: It can't be the *Mary Celeste*. The Daleks were responsible for that.

Sue: Maybe Sapphire, Lead and Steel cleared up after the Daleks. Maybe the Daleks made a hole in time and they had to fix it.

Me: Have you heard yourself, Sue?

Sue: You made me this way, Neil.

Meanwhile Sapphire and Helen are burning books in the kitchen when one of the tomes comes to life.

Sue: Just when you thought they couldn't make this any scarier, they decide to make children's books evil as well. Yeah, nice one, ITV.

Helen recites the rhyme, seemingly against her will.

Sue: Just slap her!

And then all hell breaks loose. Quite literally.

Sue: Is this before or after *Poltergeist*?

Me: Before.

Sue: It's definitely tapping into something popular back then. There was a little girl in that film, too. And is she supposed to be laughing in this scene, or is that an outtake?

This episode concludes like all the rest – with people screaming at something incomprehensible.

Sue: What the fuck?

EPISODE FIVE

Sue is convinced that the malignant entity is the least of our heroes' problems.

Sue: That stair carpet hasn't been tacked down properly. It's an accident waiting to happen. Just imagine if they defeat this evil spirit, but then they break their necks traipsing down the stairs. That would be embarrassing.

But by far the most dangerous element in this story is Steel. And he isn't even an element.

Sue: He's pure evil. That little girl has just lost her parents and he's having a go at her for clinging to Sapphire. What a git. That's even worse than Jon Pertwee's sandwich! He's only happy when he's bossing people around. I don't like him *at all*.

As the story begins to tread water, Sue's mind wanders.

Sue: I'd love a kitchen like this.

Me: A haunted one?

Sue: If it meant I'd get flagstones like that, yeah, sure, why not?

Helen is beginning to do Sue's head in.

Sue: I can't understand a word she says. I can't tell if it's because she's supposed to be traumatised, or if it's because she can't act. Maybe it's a bit of both.

When a door mysteriously opens by itself, Rob decides to investigate, broomstick in hand.

Sue: Who does he think he is? Harry Potter?

Rob finds his father waiting for him.

Sue: And if he believes that, he'll believe anything.

Rob's father tells him that he's been hiding with his mother all this time.

Sue: Is this some kind of weird insurance job? Is that it?

Meanwhile Steel and Lead are hunting for sentient spots of light in a pile of dusty books.

Sue: If I was a circle of light trying to keep a low profile, I think I'd hide in a lampshade. It's the last place anyone would think of looking for me.

And then, as Lead puts his friendly giant shtick on hold for a few seconds so he can discuss the plot with Steel, Sue gives up.

Sue: How are children supposed to follow this? Are you following this, Neil?

Me: Erm...

Sue: I thought not.

Rob's 'father' leads him into the cellar.

Sue: This POV shot is amazing. I can't fault this programme's atmosphere and style; if only I knew what the fuck was going on. Even just a little bit.

When Sapphire and Steel follow Rob, they discover the door to the cellar has been locked. So Lead opens it with a hearty laugh. Cue credits.

Sue: Eh? That wasn't a cliffhanger. What the fuck was that?

EPISODE SIX

Me: Don't worry, love. This is the last episode, I promise.

Sue: I hope they spend it explaining what the hell is going on. Because I haven't got a clue.

Steel enters the cellar, but not before he tells Helen to sit the fuck down.

Sue: Bossy arse.

Meanwhile Rob's 'father' is still trying to convince his son to join him.

Sue: How come Sapphire and Steel can't hear them arguing? They can't be more than a few yards away from them at this point.

Me: I think they might be in another time zone. Or something.

Sue: *Eh?* Since when?

Rob's 'mother' appears in the cellar, with her back to Rob, facing the corner of the room.

Sue: It's turned into *Blair Witch*, now. I suppose that director saw this as well.

Me: Possibly. *Sapphire and Steel* is a very influential programme.

Sue: Well, *Blair Witch* didn't make any sense either, so yes, I can believe that.

Lead decides to check on Helen.

Sue: He's off to cop another feel.

Me: Sue!

Sue: He's far too touchy-feely for my liking. He can't stop kissing her. It's a bit odd if you ask me. Bloody Seventies. You look at everything differently now, and always assume the worst. They'd never do anything like that in a script today, that's for sure.

Rob is trapped in the past, so Lead sings a sea shanty to him. Because, you know... reasons.

Sue: Stop pissing about, Lead, you're supposed to be working.

Sapphire forces the lights to manifest themselves in Rob's time zone.

Sue: How the hell is she doing that, exactly? And why didn't she do that before, when they were searching for the lights in the books? They're just making this up as they go along.

And then, just as Sue thinks about throwing in the towel, Steel begins to question Rob (or at least the voice that's pretending to be Rob).

Sue: Okay, this scene is excellent. Mainly because I can actually follow it. Well, the basic gist of it, anyway.

Written on the house's foundation stone are the words: Jed Mace, 2 February 1736.

Sue: There's a typo on that stone. It says Febrvary instead of February.

Me: Really, Sue? *Really?*

History has never been Sue's strong suit.

Sue: Be honest with me, Neil – are you actually following this?

Me: Nope. Not even a bit. Sorry.

Steel wants to use Helen as bait.

Sue: I'm not surprised. I bet he'll sacrifice her if he has to. You can tell he doesn't really care about her.

Helen recites a nursery rhyme as she walks through the house.

Sue: It should be *The House That Jed Built*, not Jack, but never mind. And this poor kid is going to be messed up for the rest of her life.

Me: The actress?

Sue: No, the character. Even if she survives this, she'll be in therapy for years.

Helen's 'mother' begs her to stop. Thankfully, Sapphire is on hand to keep the girl on track.

Sue: I don't buy this at all. She trusts the weird woman with the glowing eyes who she's only just met, but she won't trust her own mother. Yeah, right. Bullshit.

The episode concludes when... Well... Let's see... Okay, right... So the spots of light end up trapped in the foundation stone, which Steel freezes with his powers before Lead stops giggling long enough to destroy it with his bare hands.

Me: Don't look at me!

Sue: Fuck's sake...

Rob wakes up at the kitchen table with his homework sprawled in front of him.

Sue: Don't tell me it was all a dream!

Me: Rob's been at the Dairy Lea Triangles again.

Rob finds his mother and father reading to Helen in her room as if nothing has happened. But we know better because Sapphire, Steel and Lead have all congregated on the landing so they can hand the girl's teddy bear back to her.

Sue: So Sapphire and Steel are basically the Ghostbusters, but without any of the jokes. Right, okay...

THE SCORE

Sue: What do you want me to compare it to?

Me: I don't know. *Doctor Who*?

Sue: Which one? You can't compare that to a William Hartnell story, even though it did go on and on and on and on and...

Me: Compare it to one of the scary Tom Baker ones, then.

Sue: Well, in that case, I'll give it:

4/10

Me: Really? Is that all?

Sue: Look, I enjoyed some of it. Joanna Lumley was brilliant, and so was David McCallum, even if his character was an evil bastard. But it didn't work as a television programme. It made no sense whatsoever. As a viewer, I feel cheated by it. I sat through three hours of that and I'm still none the wiser. And kids were supposed to follow it? Don't make me laugh! Yes, it was atmospheric, and some of was pretty scary, but as a piece of television, it was a complete failure.

Me: There isn't an official title for this story because the writer couldn't be bothered to write anything down. So what do you think we should call it?

Sue: Oh, that's easy: *Nursery Crime*.

ASSIGNMENT TWO

EPISODE ONE

Sue: Is this a train station? It is! It's a train station! I've seen this before.

Me: I know. So what do you remember about it?

Sue: Erm... I think it's about a haunted train.

Me: A ghost train?

Sue: Yeah. And there's something to do with a clock, as well, I think. Or maybe it's a scary waiting room. I can't remember. It's definitely scary, though.

A man named Tully is setting up some equipment in an abandoned railway station.

Sue: This place would be a great doer-upper.

Me: Apart from the fact that it's haunted, you mean.

Sue: I wouldn't worry too much about that; you'd get it dirt cheap.

Tully places candles at strategic points around the station.

Sue: (*Laughing*) Oh dear, they faded the lights up before he managed to light that candle, bless them.

Tully takes his time.

Sue: You'd never see anything like this on a television show nowadays, a man wandering around an abandoned train station for five minutes with no dialogue whatsoever. It was a different time back then, wasn't it? No one is in any rush to get this party started.

Sue finally realises what Tully is up to.

Sue: So he's a Ghostbuster? Is that it?

Me: Who you gonna call?

Sue: Er... this guy? He reminds me of the Crazy Russian Life Hacker.

Me: The what?

Sue: The Crazy Russian Life Hacker. Don't tell me you've never heard of the Crazy Russian Life Hacker, Neil! He's on *YouTube* and he shows you how to survive a zombie apocalypse with coat hangers and stuff like that. He's brilliant.

Tully uses a coat hanger to set-up a reel-to-reel tape recorder.

Sue: We used to have one of those. Me and my brother Gary used to record stuff on it, and then we'd play it backwards to see if we

could hear any spirits.

Me: And did you?

Sue: Yeah. All the time. Or at least we convinced ourselves that we did.

A mysterious figure walks towards Tully as the theme music kicks in...

Sue: Do you know what this episode needs?

Me: What?

Sue: Ray Parker Jr.

Sue decides that the iconic title sequence needs improvement.

Sue: Who the fuck is Silver? And what are they doing in the middle like that?

Me: Eh?

Sue: The mysterious voice says, "Sapphire, Silver and Steel". Silver ruins it. The voice should say, "Sapphire and Steel!" instead. It isn't rocket science, you know.

The mysterious figure approaching Tully is, of course, Steel. He tells the amateur ghost hunter that he's from the Other Side.

Sue: What? The BBC?

Sapphire, meanwhile, approaches the station via its platform.

Sue: The set is amazing. They've done a brilliant job. I'm almost convinced that this is a real train station. And there's something else I've noticed as well.

Me: Oh yeah? What's that?

Sue: Steel is tiny! Sapphire towers over him! I bet he's got short man syndrome.

Meanwhile, on the platform outside, a darkness descends.

Sue: It reminds me of the black fog from *Lost*.

Me: It'll probably make as much sense as the fog from *Lost*, too.

Sue: The only thing about this station that isn't very realistic is there should be a giant cock and balls on the wall.

Me: I beg your pardon?

Sue: You know, graffiti. An abandoned train station in the 1970s and there's no graffiti anywhere. The place should be full of it.

Me: Maybe the ghosts scared Banksy away.

Sue: The direction is excellent, though. It's quite tense, this.

Sapphire and Steel have been assigned to track down a malevolent force.

Sue: Who sends them on these missions, exactly? Do we ever find out? I need to know.

Steel asks Sapphire to ascertain whether Tully is human or not. He'd do it himself but he's not equipped for the task.

Sue: Sapphire does everything! Steel just wanders around the place, scowling at people. I hope the people who send them on these missions pay her more than him.

Tully settles down to a heavy night of ghost hunting.

Sue: Why was everything tartan back in the 1970s? Tartan flasks, tartan shawls, tartan slippers... What the hell was that all about, eh?

Sapphire confirms Tully is indeed human. She also claims that his life expectancy is 57.03 years.

Sue: And he doesn't look a day over 57 years and two months. Oh dear.

Tully is quite taken with Sapphire.

Sue: Jesus! Why is it that men – no matter how old they are – always fancy their bloody chances? Unbelievable!

Me: Give the guy a break. I bet he only spends the night in abandoned railway stations so he can escape from his loveless marriage.

Sue: Really? I usually play tennis.

Steel removes his coat to reveal he's dressed in a tuxedo.

Sue: Either he's planning on going out to dinner after solving this – whatever this is – or he thinks he's James Bond. A really tiny James Bond.

Sapphire continues to perform all the heavy lifting. Not only can she detect the sounds and smells of summer on the platform, even though it's the middle of October, she can hear a military band in the distance, too. Steel, on the other hand, can't detect shit.

Sue: Even Tully can hear that band, and he's 57.02 years old.

The episode concludes with Sapphire trapped on the platform, dressed in Edwardian clothing.

Sue: That was really good. It was a bit slow, but everything was slow back then.

Me: Does it live up to your memory of it?

Sue: I remember it being a lot scarier than that, but give it a chance.

EPISODE TWO

Steel telepathically urges Sapphire to leave the platform before it's too late.

Sue: Just walk outside and grab her, you lazy git.

Me: I don't think it's as easy as that. I think she's trapped in time.

Sue: What? Again? You'd think she'd be used to this by now.

Tully tugs on the handle to the station door, which is now mysteriously locked.

Sue: (*Laughing*) Don't pull it too hard! The set almost came down.

A soldier appears on the station platform – and he very isn't very happy about it. Probably because he's dead. We know he's dead because we're subjected to a flashback, which suggests that his passing was both bloody and painful.

Sue: Not for kids! Bloody hell, that was horrific!

Sapphire refers to the soldier as an after-image.

Sue: For some reason, *After-Image Busters* never really caught on. I don't know why they don't call it a ghost and be done with it.

This minor quibble notwithstanding, Sue is completely gripped by this story. Rather worryingly, she's bitten her nails down to the bone and there's still another three hours left to go.

Sue: It's really well done, this. The direction is very simple, but it's extremely effective. Most of the effects are done in-camera, too, with simple lighting techniques. It just goes to show that you don't need fancy computer graphics to scare the shit out of people. No wonder I can still remember this after all these years. It still holds up today. This is much better than the first story, too.

Sue feels sorry for the ghost. Sorry: after-image.

Sue: It isn't his fault he was killed. I'd be resentful too if it happened to me. I don't see why Sapphire and Steel think he's evil. The worst thing he's done so far is to plant some nice flowers.

Tully feels much the same way as Sue.

Sue: I love this guy.

She's still conflicted when it comes to Steel, though.

Sue: He's definitely a lot like Avon. Paul Darrow could have played this part, and vice versa. This was around the same time as *Blake's 7*, wasn't it? There must have been something in the air to come up with so many charming anti-heroes. There's a smug, dangerous vibe to both of them.

Me: So does this mean you're going to start fancying David McCallum as well?

Sue: Don't worry, Neil. He's a bit too short for me.

Steel listens to a tape-recording that Tully made just before they arrived. After some preamble where Tully tries to communicate with a ghost, it suddenly switches to the sound of someone breathing very heavily indeed.

Sue: I bet he wishes he'd turned his recorder off when he went to the toilet, now.

What Tully captured was the after-image (after-sound?) of a conversation between two sailors slowly suffocating to death in a submarine.

Sue: Try getting your head around that while you're having your tea, kids.

Steel sends Sapphire upstairs to see if she can detect anything malevolent.

Sue: There she goes again, doing all the hard work while Steel just bosses everyone around. Typical.

When Sapphire reaches the top of the stairs she feels like she's floating high above the clouds.

Sue: That was brilliantly done. This is a masterclass in how to create atmosphere and tension in a TV studio with just a couple of simple lighting changes. I can't get over how good this looks.

Steel realises the force they're up against has turned the railway station into a recruiting station for the dead.

Sue: I don't know what that means but it sounds great.

Me: An army of ghosts sounds impressive. I just hope it doesn't turn out to be a pile of shit.

Steel retires to another room to listen to another batch of Tully's tapes.

Sue: Do you think they'll explain why somebody has drawn four number 11s in the dust on that window? I can't work out what it means and it's starting to piss me off.

The episode concludes when Steel is suddenly transported into the cockpit of a military plane that's about to crash. The programme-makers achieved this feat with nothing more than a Dutch-titled camera, a dazzling light and some rather unsettling sound effects.

Sue: That was brilliant. Come on, Neil, let's watch the rest of them tonight. I want to know what happens next.

Me: We can't. We have to be up early tomorrow.

Sue: It's only 10.30am.

Me: Like I said, we've got an early start.

And that's when Sue had the biggest scare of the night.

Sue: Eight episodes? EIGHT?! But that's longer than a bloody Quentin Tarantino film! Fuck!

EPIISODE THREE

The next day, during the title sequence...

Sue: So is this the voice of God?

Me: Erm... possibly.

Sue: Is he supposed to be like Charlie from *Charlie's Angels*? Is that it? An omnipotent Charlie?

Me: Yeah, that's exactly it, Sue.

Meanwhile, back in the haunted railway station...

Sue: Tully's a bit of a stalker, isn't he? He can't take his bloody eyes off Sapphire, the poor woman.

At one point, Tully offers to protect Sapphire from imminent danger as they prepare to open a door.

Sue: That's hilarious. I love the way she sends him away to perform a stupid errand, just so she can have five minutes to herself without him leering at her.

Sapphire finds Steel slumped over a desk. But is it really Steel?

Sue: He's regenerated. Either that or David McCallum was ill and they had to replace him.

Steel has been replaced by another actor (David Cann to be precise).

Me: It's the doctor from *Jam*!

Sue: I hated that programme.

Me: You didn't understand it.

Sue: I don't understand this but I'm still enjoying it.

Sapphire takes back time – which results in her falling through the clouds with a clearly terrified David Cann.

Sue: I haven't got a clue what just happened, but it looked amazing.

When Steel returns from a fate worse than death, he kisses Sapphire's hand.

Sue: Oooh... Some sexual tension at last. Tully will be well jealous.

Steel asks Tully to light the lamps in the train station, even though they haven't worked in years. Tully fails to light the first lamp and gives up. And then, a few seconds later, all the lamps are mysteriously lit.

Sue: How did he do that, exactly?

Me: I have absolutely no idea.

Sue: But aren't we supposed to know? Don't you care, Neil?

Me: It's... enigmatic.

Sue: It's bloody irritating.

At least they attempt to explain the four 11s written on the station's window. Sapphire points out that Great War ended on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month. But that still leaves another 11 unaccounted for.

Sue: Maybe the fourth 11 refers to the fact there are 11 ghosts? Or maybe it was the 11th second of the 11th hour? Maybe these ghosts have digital watches.

Steel wants Tully to sing for him, mainly because he believes it will annoy the ghost in the process. Tully refuses.

Sue: I bet he wouldn't refuse if Sapphire asked him to sing. Just saying.

Steel eventually cajoles Tully into a joyless rendition of Pack Up Your Troubles In Your Old Kit-Bag.

Sue: That's a very Doctor-ish thing to do, isn't it? Steel's acting very like a mardy Peter Davison in this one.

And then, just as Sue settles back in her chair, the soldier suddenly – and completely unexpectedly – appears a few inches from Sapphire's face.

Sue: SHIT! I got the fright of my life then! Fuck!

Not only does the song cause the resentful soldier to reappear on the platform, he brings a submachine gun with him and the station is peppered with a hail of bullets. When it's all over, Steel is left staring into space, clenching his fists.

Sue: Oh dear. He's bloody furious now.

Steel realises that Tully and Sapphire have taken the place of two submariners who are slowly suffocating to death. Look, it's complicated.

Sue: I'm sorry, Neil, but am I actually supposed to understand this? How did kids manage to follow this?

Me: I think *Look-In* magazine used to produce free flow-charts that explained the plot. You could hang them on your bedroom wall.

Sue: Really?

Me: No.

The episode concludes with Steel holding a 1940s tank-top out in front of him.

Sue: Right. Okay. So that's the cliffhanger, is it? It isn't exactly a Dalek, but okay.

EPISODE FOUR

While Sapphire and Tully slowly suffocate to death, Steel decides to annoy the ghost who's causing it.

Sue: What the hell is he doing? Get a bloody move on! They're dying!

Sue begins to worry that Steel is enjoying his job far too much.

Sue: I'm sure pissing off this ghost isn't the best way to go about things. Not when your partner is being tortured to death. What's he playing at?

Steel enters the part of the station that is now a submarine. Like I said, it's complicated...

Sue: He should have brought a garden hose with him.

Me: What?

Sue: You know, a hosepipe. He could have left one end in the railway station, and then they could have sucked in the fresh air from the other time zone.

Me: Right. That almost makes sense, I suppose. Almost.

Sapphire and Tully are slowly becoming the victims of a terrible naval disaster.

Sue: It's very clever, this. And very disturbing, too. It's giving me the creeps.

Steel saves Tully and Sapphire, but he has to leave the original victims to their grisly fate.

Sue: Bloody hell, it's a bit grim, this.

Steel is triumphant.

Sue: What's he so pleased about? He hasn't solved a damn thing. All he's done is piss off the fucking ghost. We're four episodes into this and we're still no further forward.

Steel decides to give Tully a bollocking for mucking about with things he doesn't understand.

Sue: Steel is a massive arsehole.

So our intrepid heroes decide to mount a séance.

Sue: Did they ever release a *Sapphire and Steel* Ouija board? They missed a trick if they didn't.

Me: Did you ever use a Ouija board when you were young?

Sue: Yeah, all the time. My mam used to tell me off because it wasn't a very Catholic thing to do. She said it was dangerous, too, although nothing like this ever happened when I tried it.

Our heroes retire to the buffet to summon the dead.

Sue: The actor who plays Tully is brilliant. What's he been in before?

Luckily for me, I'd already done some research on this.

Me: Well Gerald James was in *Yus, My Dear*.

Sue: Oh...

Me: But don't hold that against him. He was in *All Creatures Great*

and Small as well. And loads of other things.

Sue: He's wonderful.

Sapphire is possessed by a dead submariner.

Sue: I don't mean to be funny, Neil, but there are times when Joanna Lumley looks like a man.

Me: (*Spitting out my tea*) WHAT?

Sue: She looks like a man in drag. It's her build, I expect. Do you know what I mean? Can you see what I'm saying?

Unfortunately for me, now that she mentions it, I can see what she's saying.

Sue: I bet she's got big hands, too.

It doesn't help that Joanna Lumley is currently impersonating an angry, young man who resents being killed on a submarine, especially as was killed as a result of negligence rather than warfare.

Sue: Oh, I see. Somebody fucked up. That's why these people are so angry – it's as if the ghosts have joined a union or something.

And then, as Sapphire possesses the spirit of the soldier's girlfriend, the episode just... stops.

Sue: Do you think the production team had the faintest idea what was going on? And if they didn't, did they care?

EPISODE FIVE

Sapphire channels a dead schoolteacher.

Sue: What's wrong with her voice?

Me: Nothing. She's doing a Cornish accent.

Sue: Is she? Well, in that case, let's just say that her Cornish accent is almost as good as Nicola Bryant's American accent, and let's leave it at that.

Tully goes ballistic when the séance's circle is broken. When it comes to séances, this is the golden rule, apparently.

Sue: How does he know all this stuff, exactly? Did he go on a course or something? What a load of bollocks.

After a great deal of coercion, we discover that the dead soldier's name was Sam Pearce.

Sue: Hallelujah! It's only taken them two hours, but we finally have a name. Okay, so now what? *Wikipedia* doesn't exist yet so I don't know how this will help them.

Sam remembers the marshes of his childhood...

Sue: And now it's turned into fucking *Springwatch*.

And as he reminisces about his sweetheart, he begins to reel off the names of birds: warblers, wee buntings, yellow wagtails....

Sue: But he was mainly interested in tits, if you know what I mean.

It turns out that Sam was killed 11 minutes after the Armistice came into effect.

Sue: Fair enough – I'd be pissed off too – but, you know, shit happens.

We are told that the Darkness has struck a deal with the ghosts.

Sue: They sound like the Shadows from *Babylon 5*. Maybe they're cousins or something. When do we learn more about them, and what they're actually trying to do?

Me: Er... Wait and see.

I'm sure the mooted remake will explain everything.

Sue: It's a tense episode, this. I can't get over how something so cheap can be so effective. It must have cost about 12p.

Steel spends the next five minutes antagonising Sam Pearce.

Sue: Steel is horrible. And what makes it even worse is that he enjoys being horrible. You can understand why the ghosts would make a deal with the so-called Darkness if Steel was the alternative. If he just *pretended* to care, he'd get a lot further with them, you know.

As Steel tries to reason with the ghost, three dead submariners make a grab for his legs.

Sue: FUCKING HELL! We should have given this to Gary!

Sue's brother came over earlier that evening to borrow a DVD. He wanted the scariest thing I had in my collection so I gave him The Thing, The Exorcist and The Texas Chainsaw Massacre on Blu-Ray.

Sue: This makes *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* look like a comedy.

Me: *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* is a comedy, Sue.

Sue: EH?

The episodes concludes with more enigmatic whistling.

Sue: They aren't even trying to come up with a decent cliffhanger any more. Oh well. Never mind.

EPISODE SIX

While it's fair to say that Sue is enjoying this story, she can't understand why it has to be four hours long.

Sue: They're definitely dragging this out.

Me: You should count yourself lucky. If you watched this in 1979, it would have taken you four months to get through it. Your first marriage didn't last that long.

I tell Sue there was a significant gap after the first couple of episodes aired, thanks to an ITV strike.

Me: When they resumed transmissions again they opted to repeat the first couple of episodes because they were worried the audience wouldn't be able to follow the plot otherwise.

Sue: What? Are they taking the piss? I've been watching this over the course of a week and it still makes no sense whatsoever.

Me: This explains why I don't remember seeing this story when I was growing up – I was living in New Zealand at the time. I probably didn't see this until my late-20s, and even then I don't think I made it to the end.

Sue: Lightweight.

And then Sue has a confession to make.

Sue: I don't have anything else to say about this. Apart from the fact that ITV had much better technicians than the BBC. You never saw lighting as good as this in *Doctor Who*. They over-lit everything.

Steel wants to know how many ghosts are expected to arrive at the station. Is it a handful? Dozens? Thousands?

Sue: If we have to go through a thousand ghosts' back-stories, we'll be here for ever.

There are now two Sapphires in the station. One is comatose, the other is acting very suspiciously indeed.

Sue: If Steel can't tell that she's an imposter, then he's an even bigger dickhead than I thought.

Steel admits that he loves Sapphire.

Sue: Ooh... So now we know for sure: they've definitely done it.

Me: I'm not convinced that medium atomic weights can actually *do it* – I failed chemistry at school – but yeah, if you like.

The entity pretending to be Sapphire tries to convince Steel the ghosts are perfectly harmless.

Sue: She's got a point, I suppose. I mean, all they've really done is make the station look nice and pretty by bringing all the flowers back. They should just let them get on with it.

Steel is trapped by the Darkness.

Sue: What the hell is going on now?

Steel has been transported back to the Great War and left to hang on some barbed wire.

Sue: These sound effects are setting me on edge. Please make it stop.

Tully is allowed to leave the station, and the poor man runs away, leaving Sapphire to her fate.

Sue: Don't worry, he'll come back and save the day in the last episode. He's the only sane person in this. Steel will have to swallow his pride and thank him in the end, just you wait and see.

The episode concludes with Steel still hanging on the wire.

Sue: I'm sorry, Neil, but I don't understand this at all. The atmosphere is amazing, and it's definitely as scary as fuck, but what the hell is going on?

EPISODE SEVEN

This episode begins with Sam Pearce's ghost momentarily caught in a time-loop.

Sue: That's right – make it even more complicated. As if this wasn't confusing enough already.

Steel's barbed wire prison has been replaced by a spider's web.

Sue: The music sounds like something you'd hear on *Play School*.
"And today we're going through the cobwebbed window..."

Steel finds Sapphire in the station's waiting room. She tells him they still have work to do.

Sue: Yeah, but there's no rush. Take your time.

Steel is worried about the Darkness.

Sue: (*Singing, very badly I might add*) "I believe in a thing called love!" Sorry, Neil. I just can't help it. Every time they mention the Darkness I have visions of longhaired men in tight spandex. It's off-putting.

When Sapphire analyses the dust in the station she concludes that they've been shifted 12 days forward in time.

Sue: You know, I'm sure I'd enjoy this a lot more if I knew what the fuck was going on.

And then, completely out of the blue, Steel goes from berating Sapphire to planting a kiss on her cheek.

Sue: Their relationship worries me. It's abusive.

Me: Really?

Sue: Just watch them: Sapphire has all the best powers, and Steel bosses her around and gets her to do all the hard work. One minute he's shouting at her, the next he's kissing her. Have medium atomic weights never heard of sexual harassment in the workplace?

Tully, who has been transported forward in time too, is scared to death.

Sue: You have to feel sorry for him, especially when he has to deal with Steel being a complete and utter bastard.

Me: The clue's in his name, Sue. He isn't Mercury, you know. That guy's really wet.

Steel commands Sapphire to contact the Darkness so he can strike a deal with it.

Sue: Yeah, offer a three-album deal and a European tour.

Steel suggests that Tully has a nice lie-down (mainly to get him out of his hair).

Sue: He's been asleep for 12 days! The last thing he needs right is a bloody catnap!

Speaking of which, when Steel asks Tully about his family, he tells him that he lives alone with his cat, Nelson. Which makes a lot of sense.

Sue: Shit! That cat's been left alone for 12 days!

Luckily, Tully's neighbour feeds Nelson when he's out.

Sue: Thank God for that. That was the scariest thing in the episode so far.

Sapphire contacts the Darkness.

Sue: (As Steel) I'll just hide over here in the corner while you do the dangerous stuff. Good luck!

The episode concludes with the station platform heaving with passengers.

Sue: Typical. You wait ages for a ghost and then 30 turn up at once.

EPISODE EIGHT

Me: It's the season finale!

Sue: This had better explain everything. And I do mean everything. They've had more than enough time to explain what's going on. I bet the transuranium heavy elements (sic) would have sorted this out in half the time.

Me: Sadly, they can't be used where there is life.

Sue: So what? They've got a problem with ghosts, who are already *dead*. There is no fucking life, Neil.

Me: What about Tully?

Sue: Just send him home to his cat. What's the big deal?

The ghosts turn to face the wall as the Darkness passes between them.

Sue: The fact you can't see it, but you know it's there, is really, really scary.

The Darkness pushes past Tully, who screams his head off.

Sue: Is he okay? He had better be okay, Neil.

When the Darkness invades Sapphire's mind, her eyes turn black.

Sue: Fucking hell! This is fucking terrifying!

Steel offers the Darkness a deal. A deal he won't adequately explain.

Sue: Ha! Like that's going to work. Steel is even worse than the writer when it comes to holding things back!

Steel promises to explain his offer in more detail if the Darkness agrees to send them back in time.

Sue: Right... So Sapphire has stopped time so they can jump off 11 days ago instead of 12...

Me: Yes, that's right.

Sue: *Why?*

Me: Erm... Keep watching.

Steel tells the ghost of Sam Pearce that the deal he made with the Darkness – to live again – is a sham and he'll actually spend eternity haunting an abandoned station.

Sue: Oh, I see. Steel's going to make these ghosts even more resentful, so the Darkness can feed on that and fuck off. That's clever.

Sue doesn't suspect a bloody thing.

Sue: Okay, so Steel is going to send all these ghosts back. Back where, exactly?

Me: That's a bit philosophical, Sue.

Sue: Yeah, but if they – FUCK!

Sapphire's face has been replaced by a lumpy, waxen mush.

Sue: What the fuck?

But that's nothing compared to the shock that's coming.

Sue: YOU MUST BE FUCKING JOKING! NO!

Steel's deal involves sacrificing Tully to the Darkness.

Sue: Sapphire – stop him! He's gone completely mad!

Steel urges Tully to his death as Sapphire slinks away in shame.

Sue: But... But... This will damage time! What the fuck is he playing at? It must be a trap. He can't actually...

Tully screams his head off as the Darkness consumes him.

Sue: Fuck me.

Sapphire and Steel walk off into the sunset. Cue credits.

Sue: I definitely hadn't seen that episode before. I wouldn't have forgotten something as cruel as that.

THE SCORE

Me: So what are you going to give that?

Sue: God knows. I'm still in shock. I can't believe they actually did that. And what was the point? Sapphire and Steel didn't solve anything! In fact, they probably made it even worse because time is all messed up now and the Darkness is still wandering around. Doctor Who would punch Steel in the face if he ever found out.

Me: But they saved at least 20 ghosts from an eternity of resentful haunting. There's always that.

Sue: I would have left them to it. They were already dead. They even brightened up the station with all the flowers and everything. I just don't think killing Tully was worth it. And does that mean Tully will spend eternity haunting the station? And what happens in five years time when he's supposed to die? Will they have to go through this all over again?

6/10

Sue: I've already told you that I loved the lighting, and the sets and the direction, but it was too long and it barely made any sense. They could have cut at least two episodes out of that, maybe more.

Me: But then you wouldn't have grown to love Tully quite so much.

Sue: Yeah, and it wouldn't have traumatised me quite so much, either.

Me: So what should we call this story, given that we don't have an official title for it?

Sue: I don't know... How about *The Waiting Room*? Because most of the time you're sitting around waiting for something to fucking happen.

ESCAPADE THREE

EPISODE ONE

Sue is singing. No, not the Sapphire and Steel theme; she's belting out the old ATV ident music. What's even worse is that as soon as she's finished, she launches straight into the theme to Crossroads.

Sue: I forget, was this before or after *Star Wars*?

Me: After.

Sue: Thought so. What a rip-off.

As if you couldn't guess, she's referring to the mini-title sequence that begins every episode.

Sue: At least this story is set outside for a change... Oh... We're back in a TV studio again. Shit.

The studio has been transformed into tower block apartment. As a woman gets out of bed to tend to a crying baby, she stops and reports her activity to an unseen entity.

Sue: Nothing's ever simple in this programme, is it?

Me: Don't you remember this?

Sue: Definitely not.

Me: Well I can remember you watching it, even if you can't. Having said that, you didn't make it to the end.

I remind her that the cable TV channel Bravo repeated episodes of Sapphire and Steel more than 20 years ago ("What? Between all the soft-core pornography?"), and this episode was my first – and last – attempt to persuade her to watch the programme with me. I always took "No" for an answer back then.

Sue: Did I walk out in disgust because it didn't make any sense?

Me: Keep watching and see if you can guess the moment you finally gave up.

Sue: (*Two seconds later*) Was it now?

Me: No. Keep watching.

The baby's mother tries to work out why her baby is still crying.

Sue: It's 8am. It wants feeding, you silly cow!

At least Sue believes she has a handle on the plot.

Sue: Okay, so these are aliens slumming it on Earth. Fair enough. I think I actually understand this one. Amazing, eh?

Sapphire and Steel arrive at the tower block, only to find the apartment they've been sent to investigate is completely empty.

Sue: I love Sapphire's hair. She looks like Lady Gaga.

Me: Any minute now she'll start singing *Japanese Boy* by Aneka.

Meanwhile, the baby's mother, whose name is Rothwyn, and who reminds Sue of a British Bjork, is still reporting to a glowing symbol.

Sue: That's a gobo projected on the wall. It's as cheap as chips, this, but somehow it works.

Sapphire and Steel don't understand why the flat they've been sent to is empty. Steel thinks they've arrived too late. Sapphire says if that were true they would have been told.

Sue: Told? Told by whom? Are they ever going to explain who they work for? They could be the bad guys for all we know, especially after what happened last time.

Sapphire is adamant the subjects they've been sent to investigate are definitely in the room with them.

Sue: Maybe they are really, really tiny, like in *The Borrowers*.

Me: Don't be fucking stupid, Sue.

Steel suggests that the subjects could be microscopic.

Sue: See! Now who's fucking stupid, Neil?

Sapphire and Steel search the abandoned flat.

Sue: (As Steel) No, they definitely aren't in this chest of drawers. Let's check the fridge.

Sapphire finally works it out – the subjects are on the floor above them.

Sue: Right, so they got off the lift on the wrong floor. It happens to the best of us. Mystery solved. Nothing to see here. The end.

Meanwhile, on the floor above them (which doesn't technically exist), Rothwyn is attempting to live a normal life in 1980, and that involves preparing the evening meal. However, when she removes a frozen leg of lamb from the freezer, she's inexplicably attacked by disturbing – and extremely loud – visions from a slaughterhouse.

Sue: This is when I walked out, isn't it?

Me: Yeah.

Sue: Can I walk out now?

Me: No.

Sue isn't a vegetarian (despite our daughter's best efforts) despite the fact that she can't abide the thought of animals suffering. Yes, she knows it's hypocritical, and she hates being confronted about it, so the next five episodes could be interesting.

Sue: I can't believe this is supposed to be for kids. Bloody hell, Neil, make it stop!

Rothwyn picks up the leg of lamb she dropped on the floor and returns it to the freezer.

Sue: You should probably wash that first, love.

And that's End of Part One!

Sue: Ooh, this is new. Do I get to see the adverts as well?

She doesn't. So I sing the Shake n' Vac song to make up for it.

Sue: WHAT THE FUCK?

Part Two begins with Rothwyn trying to smother her husband to death with a pillow that's squawking at her.

Sue: I can't believe what I'm seeing. This is insane.

Having said that, at least she's got a handle on the story's premise.

Sue: Okay, so when she touches something organic, she can feel the pain it had to go through to make life easier for us. That would be a pain in the arse every time you fancied a bacon sandwich.

We learn that Rothwyn isn't an alien – she's a time traveller.

Sue: So her and her husband are sociologists from the future? That sort of makes sense.

What doesn't make sense is the cushion on Rothwyn's sofa that's moving by itself.

Sue: Definitely not for kids. The kids use cushions to hide behind when things get too scary for them, and now they can't even do that. Even *Doctor Who* would have thought twice about making cushions scary. Idiots.

Me: I've grown to be frightened of cushions, living with you.

Sue: Don't tempt me, Neil.

Up on the roof, Sapphire and Steel stumble across an invisible apartment.

Sue: At least they got to go outside for a bit. Even if it is only on the roof of the TV studio.

Inside the flat, Rothwyn places a dressing gown back on its hanger.

Sue: Don't tell me it's possessed by the ghost of an angry sheep.

Rothwyn's husband, Eldred, joins his wife in the lounge.

Sue: Do you think they try to blend in by swinging? I bet they do. Just look at them.

Steel is adamant that nobody should interfere with time. "Except us," says Sapphire.

Sue: And the Doctor. Actually, they do act like Time Lords, don't they?

Me: They're basically ITV's version of the Time Lords.

Sue: Cheeky bastards...

The time travellers can't communicate with their own era thanks to what looks like a technical fault, and Rothwyn is worried they are trapped in the 1980s, which she describes as a horrible and cruel time to be alive.

Sue: Yeah, Thatcher's just come to power and she's obviously read her history books. No wonder she's shitting herself.

And then, just in case this episode wasn't disturbing enough, a sentient pillow attacks the baby in its crib.

Sue: I've seen it all now.

Me: Funnily enough, there wasn't a pull-out poster of the infanticide scene in that week's *Look-in* magazine.

The baby has disappeared, but the pillow is still restless.

Me: Oh dear. It's all gone a bit *Rentaghost*.

I expect Sue to agree with me, but her mouth is too agape to form anything coherent. And then the pillow – which has now taken the form of a giant bird – attacks Steel, almost pushing him off the edge of roof in the process.

Sue: It's an angry goose!

Cue credits.

Me: So what on earth did you make of that?

Sue: It's definitely better than the bloody train station.

Me: Really?

Sue: Yeah, I can actually follow it. It's completely insane, but at least I know what's going on. A bit.

EPISODE TWO

There's a difference of opinion regarding the identity of the homicidal pillow.

Me: You know, I'm sure that's a swan...

Sue: Don't be stupid. You can't stuff a pillow with swan feathers. The Queen would have your head cut off.

Me: It looks like a swan to me.

Sue: Maybe it's a duck?

Me: Well, whatever it is, it's definitely fowl play.

And that's when Sue threw a non-sentient cushion at me.

Sue: Why is Sapphire caressing Steel's arm like that while he's being attacked by a pigeon?

Me: It definitely isn't a pigeon.

Sue: We're only a minute into this episode and I'm lost already.

Not only does Steel survive the pillow fight, the baby seems to be okay too.

Sue: What a bonny baby. Thank God for that.

Steel identifies his attacker as... a swan.

Me: Ha! See!

Sue: Neil, you've had this DVD for years.

Me: Yes, I know, but I haven't seen this since you walked out on it 20 years ago.

Sue: Don't tell me – you gave it another five minutes and then you turned over to something a bit saucier on *Granada Men and Motors*? That's why you didn't remember for sure.

Me: Erm...

Sapphire wants to know why a swan would attack Steel.

Sue: Good fucking question. It makes no sense whatsoever. A goose I could just about understand, but a fucking swan?

Steel sets some charges that will blow the apartment block to smithereens if anything goes wrong.

Sue: Like last week.

Me: I've got to admit that is a bit extreme.

Sue: *Extreme?* He's a fucking terrorist!

Steel reckons the collateral damage would be worth it.

Me: Our hero, ladies and gentlemen.

And if that wasn't disturbing enough, how does a lava lamp with a foetus inside it grab you?

Sue: What the fuck?

Sapphire doesn't understand why they've been sent to this place. Two adults and a baby don't exactly amount to an invasion force.

Sue: My thoughts exactly. They aren't doing any harm. Just leave them to it. These two always seem to make things worse.

Steel disables the lift by tying a knot in its cable.

Sue: Is that Steel's superpower, then? He can bend steel? Is that it?

Rothwyn tells her husband that a pillow wanted her to kill him.

Me: Luckily she didn't go through with it because Eldred must live.

Sue: Eh?

Me: Never mind.

Sue: I want to know what he does for a living. What does he do all day if he isn't allowed to leave his time capsule? I bet they've gone stir crazy.

Rothwyn is left feeling distraught while her husband busies himself checking on "the others".

Sue: You know, I'm sure this is a metaphor for post-natal depression. Or a loveless marriage. One or the other.

And then a booming voice starts talking about time.

Sue: Is this Sapphire and Steel's boss talking?

Me: I don't think so, no.

Sue: He sounds like a fucking Mysteron to me.

And then, just before the commercial break, we're left with the unnerving image of adult hands emerging from a baby's crib.

Sue: Fucking hell, Neil! This is bloody terrifying!

Part Two kicks off with the mysterious voice somehow aging the baby into a small boy in a matter of seconds.

Sue: Oh no. He's turning into Adric.

Meanwhile Eldred can't contact any of the time-travellers who are scattered around the planet. Their webcams show empty houses.

Sue: Any minute now he'll switch to a video feed that shows a wild party in Provincial Unit Six. A party he hasn't been invited to. Again.

If that wasn't worrying enough, his baby is now a fully-grown adult male.

Sue: Bloody hell, I'm actually scared, Neil.

And then the most horrific moment in Sapphire and Steel so far comes at us out of nowhere.

Sue: You can see his arse crack!

She's exaggerating, but only slightly. If his shawl had risen by another nanometre...

Me: I wouldn't have bothered with *Granada Men and Motors* if I'd known this was going to happen...

Sue: My eyes! My eyes!

Steel finally finishes fucking up the lift.

Sue: Typical man, leaving all his tools in the corridor like that. Put them back in the storeroom, you twat!

Sapphire believes the mysterious presence in the invisible time capsule is Time itself. She's clearly terrified of it, and contacting it – albeit briefly – reduces her to tears. So what does Steel do? He cajoles her into contacting it again.

Sue: Here we go again. I really don't like him very much, Neil. He's a bully and a coward.

Sapphire does as she's told, even though she's obviously unhappy about it.

Sue: Look at Steel running off and hiding again as she puts herself in danger again. What a cunt.

Sapphire suddenly fades from view. She calls out to Steel, trapped in a dimension of never-ending pain.

Sue: (To Steel) That was your fault!

Cue credits.

Sue: I don't know what's more disturbing – the adult baby or Sapphire and Steel's relationship.

EPISODE THREE

Steel nips downstairs to see if Sapphire is hiding in the abandoned flat.

Sue: Why is he looking for her there? Does he think she's gone to the loo for a poo?

Steel walks straight into a cardboard box as he investigates the kitchen.

Sue: Steel's peripheral vision is shocking. *Who are these people?*

And then the lift starts to make a horrible, droning sound.

Sue: This is what it must be like to suffer from tinnitus.

The noise gets steadily louder.

Sue: You wouldn't be able to broadcast this on television nowadays. That noise would break too many Ofcom rules.

And then the lift starts moving again.

Sue: He had one job!

Steel enters the lift and smashes its controls.

Sue: You should have done that in the first place, you numpty.

Steel returns to the roof where he finds man in a grey suit perched between the chimneys.

Sue: Blimey, that baby grew up quickly. And how did he learn how to speak English?

But it isn't the baby. It's...

Sue: Silver! Finally, the words "Sapphire, Silver and Steel" actually make sense! Hooray! So what's his special power?

Silver has been sent to help out.

Sue: It sounds like it's blowing a force-10 gale up on that roof, but their hair is barely moving.

Me: 1980s hairspray.

Sue: Oh yeah. Probably.

Silver is concerned about Sapphire's welfare.

Sue: Here we go... Love triangle time.

Steel and Silver rub each other up the wrong way in a cupboard. Literally! There's comedy music and everything!

Sue: When I say love triangle, I mean Sapphire and Silver be fighting over Steel.

Silver immediately gets to work.

Sue: He reminds me of the Doctor. You know, the way he's completely mad but still charming with it.

I remind her that David Collings has appeared in Doctor Who, but she can't place him, which means I have to re-enact the scene where Pool seeks refuge under a table.

Me: I'm scared of robots! I'm scared of robots!

Sue: That almost rings a bell.

Silver places a screw on the floor.

Sue: Is that code? Is he saying, "Fancy a screw?" to Steel?

Me: There's fan-fiction for people like you, Sue.

Silver's special power is the ability to transform metal objects into liquid. Or something.

Sue: Shouldn't that be Mercury's job?

And then Silver makes it blatantly obvious that he fancies Sapphire like mad.

Sue: Has Silver killed all the people who are missing from the other time capsules? Is he a hit-man? Is that it? Has he been sent to clear up?

Meanwhile Eldred is worried the other time-travellers have left this time zone without him.

Sue: Yeah, like that time they all went out for a Wimpy and didn't invite you. That still hurts, I bet.

Sapphire materialises in one of the empty time capsules.

Sue: Ooh, I like Rural Unit 2. It's got a lovely kitchen. It's like that episode of *Big Brother* where there was a second house and it all kicked off. Look, that chair over there is their version of the Diary Room.

Back in the empty apartment, Silver gives Steel something to hold.

Sue: His knob!

It's a doorknob, actually, but yeah.

Sue: He's the world's weirdest estate agent.

She's pointing at Silver who's examining the apartment walls for what could be damp but probably isn't.

Sue: Silver and Steel look like insurance salesmen to me. The Doctor wouldn't be seen dead in a suit like theirs.

Back in the capsule, the man-child reaches for a glass. However, as soon as he touches it, it turns to sand.

Sue: He's like that Skittles guy, only worse. At least you could eat the Skittles afterwards.

Rothwyn and Eldred are finally reunited with their offspring, who stumbles towards them from the shadows.

Sue: He looks like a zombie Marc Bolan. Good God, this is horrifying, Neil... Hang on... His mother just screamed without opening her mouth.

Me: That was a clarinet.

Sue: Oh. Okay.

Meanwhile, in the apartment below, Silver transforms Steel's doorknob into a fully-functioning light bulb.

Sue: He's made his knob all shiny.

Me: Stop it, Sue!

Sapphire and Steel re-establish telepathic contact, and when she learns that Silver has been sent to lend a hand, she barely contains her excitement.

Sue: Hello. Here we go.

Which means the episode ends with Steel feeling sorry for himself.

Sue: Well, I know who I'd choose.

EPISODE FOUR

Sue: They should let Silver's ball pop up at the end of the title sequence since he's in this one. Wouldn't that be nice?

Sapphire finds tiny puddles of sand dotted around the time capsule.

Sue: So did all the babies rise up and turn their parents into sand? That's a bit full-on, isn't it?

But that wouldn't be nearly disturbing enough for an episode of Sapphire and Steel, so after the compulsory 'let's walk around a house saying nothing for a couple of minutes' scene, Sapphire learns the family killed themselves in a suicide pact.

Sue: Dead kids! You know, I don't think I want to watch this any more, Neil. It's starting to upset me.

Meanwhile, the man-child gains access to the time capsule's diary room after disintegrating the lock with his hand.

Sue: What happens if he touches himself with his own hand? I need to know!

Sapphire and Steel strategise telepathically.

Sue: I wonder if they bothered learning their lines for these bits. I bet this was one of the easiest acting gigs they ever had.

Silver creates a portal that allows all three of them to enter the invisible capsule on the roof. But when Steel crosses the dimensions, he's assaulted with images and sounds from a slaughterhouse. Sue buries her head in a cushion and asks me when it's over.

Sue: Sapphire and Silver definitely have the hots for each other. She's all over him!

At one point, Silver teleports from one room to another.

Sue: Why walk anywhere at all if you can just do that instead? It doesn't make any sense.

Sapphire and Steel explore the capsule in semi-darkness, and when they enter the baby's room, Silver decides to help out by turning on the lights.

Sue: He's very funny. I love him. He stops this becoming too depressing. We could have done with him in the last story.

Silver believes the capsule is constructed from some kind of impenetrable metal.

Sue: Can't he just melt it with his superpower? And if not, why not?

Sapphire explores the kitchen area, but as soon as she opens the fridge, she's confronted with the sound of animals screaming.

Sue: The meat's definitely gone off.

And then – finally! – Sapphire, Silver and Steel come face-to-face with the man-child.

Sue: It's good casting, actually. He doesn't half look like his mum.

Sapphire realises that the male who's standing before them is actually a baby.

Sue: He's basically your average teenager: he's moody, doesn't say very much and is always causing trouble...

Silver believes the man-child is a machine, although why he jumps to that insane conclusion isn't entirely clear.

Sue: Is his superpower being thick?

Sapphire begs him not to touch the child, but Silver doesn't listen and the episode concludes with him vanishing in a puff of light.

Sue: Is Silver dead, then? Does that mean they'll have to remove him from the title sequence?

EPISODE FIVE

Sue: Nope. He's still there. Maybe that means Silver isn't dead after all?

The man-child (who is later referred to as a Changeling for some inexplicable reason) reminds Sue of somebody else.

Sue: He's a scary Marcel Marceau.

Me: Is there any other kind of Marcel Marceau?

Marcel uses his magic hand to transform the apartment's furniture back to its original organic state, which means a leather sofa suddenly becomes...

Sue: A huge pile of cow shit!

It's really difficult to argue against Sue's reading of this scene, so I don't bother.

Sue: Does that mean Silver is a tiny blob of silver, somewhere?

And then Sue finally loses her patience.

Sue: It's all gone a bit timey-wimey, now. It's making my head hurt. Don't any of these stories make any fucking sense?

Steel orders Sapphire to turn back time and bring Silver back.

Sue: He forgot the magic word again. What a git.

Sapphire does as she's told and we are treated to several flashbacks from earlier episodes.

Sue: I'm totally lost. What the hell is going on, Neil?

Me: Don't look at me! I haven't got a clue.

Sue: How were kids supposed to follow this if a semi-educated person like you can't manage it? It's ridiculous!

The lead-up to the ad-break features our heroes reminiscing about poor old Silver.

Sue: He's only been gone 10 minutes!

Part Two begins with Sapphire and Steel visiting scenes from previous episodes as Rothwyn and Eldred repeat their movements.

Sue: It's like a really boring version of *Back to the Future*, this. But with McCallum instead of McFly.

When Steel starts peeling wallpaper off the wall, Sapphire begins to moan and groan.

Sue: I'll have what she's having!

*Behind the woodchip is machinery that's covered in animal blood.
Yes! Really!*

Sue: Is it a dragon, do you think?

Me: No, Sue, this isn't *Game of Thrones*.

Sue: More's the fucking pity.

Steel questions the Changeling, who's sulking in the nursery.

Sue: He's obsessed with knowing people's names. It's as if he can't do his job properly if he doesn't fill out all the forms first.

Is suddenly becomes clear that Steel is trying to trick the Changeling into touching himself.

Sue: WHAT THE FUCK?

Me: I know. It is a bit confusing.

Sue: No, I'm talking about those door handles over there. They aren't flush! Who put this set together?

Steel ends up in the baby's crib.

Sue: Best place for him, the big baby.

But at least the Changeling is a bouncing baby boy again.

Sue: Okay... Right... So... Oh fuck it. I have no fucking idea!

When Rothwyn and Eldred barge into the nursery, Steel demands to know their names.

Sue: There he goes again!

And then the episode concludes with Sapphire and Steel staring intently at a wall.

Sue: What kind of cliffhanger was THAT?

EPISODE SIX

Silver is alive!

Sue: Good. He's making this stupid nonsense almost bearable.

Steel ramps up the casual misogyny to 11 as he directs his ire towards Rothwyn.

Sue: Her husband is just standing there while Steel manhandles and shouts at her. What a dick! Wait! Now Steel is pushing her around as well. I can't believe we're supposed to root for this prick.

Sapphire says their job is to safeguard the fabric of time.

Sue: So they are definitely Time Lords, then.

Me: You can believe that if you like, Sue.

Sue: Time Lords with silly code names.

Me: Like the Doctor, you mean?

Sue: Yes. Why not?

Me: BBC lawyers, probably.

Rothwyn and Eldred are told their colleagues decided to kill themselves in order to stop a malevolent force from wrecking havoc on time itself. Then Steel casually suggests that Rothwyn and Eldred do the same.

Sue: But they've got a baby! You can't be serious. Please tell me he's joking, Neil.

Steel takes Eldred to the Diary Room so he can see for himself. But when he's asked to look at the video feed from the bedroom where the suicide took place, Eldred refuses.

Sue: I think he protests a bit too much. He's obviously down here watching his neighbours at it all the time, but he's too embarrassed to admit it.

Eldred is forced to look at the corpses of his colleagues' children. And so are we.

Sue: Fuck's sake, Neil.

Meanwhile Silver is fiddling with the circuits embedded in the time capsule's walls.

Sue: He's even got his own sonic screwdriver.

Silver believes the machine has turned against them.

Sue: Like HAL? Is that what's happened?

Do you honestly think Sapphire and Steel would be that simple? Think again...

Sue: Oh, I see. It's a living ship. It's organic. Okay, I think I understand this.

In short, people in the future torture animals so they can travel in time. Well, of course they do.

Sue: Actually, on second thought, I don't understand a fucking word of this.

Eldred listens to the final diary logs from the other time capsule and he learns that the children had a say in the suicide pact, which is a lovely thought. Steel, on the other, is more concerned about the name of the animal causing all this trouble.

Sue: There he goes again. Who cares what they bloody call it! Worry about that later!

As Eldred and Rothwyn explain what the hell is going on (sort of), I wonder if this story will have any sort of meaningful impact on Sue.

Me: Will this put you off eating meat in the future?

Sue: No, but it will stop me torturing animals so I can travel in time. You have my word on that.

The creature that has been powering the time capsule suddenly breaks free from its moorings.

Sue: What the fuck is *that*?

Me: It looks like a mutated dolphin to me.

Sue: It's fucking horrible!

Steel stalks the apartment, a carving knife gripped in his hand.

Sue: Oh no! It's eaten the baby!

But this is just an illusion, which Steel realises as he's about to skewer an infant to death.

Sue: Unbelievable...

Steel is then confronted by a giant doll's head, which scares the living shit out of both of us.

Me and Sue: FUCKING HELL!

Steel almost strangles Sapphire to death as a result of this illusion.

Sue: Actually, it's difficult to tell if that's out of the ordinary for him or not.

Our heroes decide to send the creature back to the future with Rothwyn and Eldred so they can sort out this mess themselves.

Sue: Charming! Imagine the Doctor doing something like that! I give up on these two. They're a couple of lunatics.

Our heroes entice the creature back into the wall with a nice leg of lamb and then, thanks to something or other (answers on a postcard, please), the apartment is returned to its own time zone (which we aren't even allowed to see).

Sue: So, a couple of minutes after returning home, they're all eaten by a rampaging mutated dolphin.

Me: Yeah, and the baby was probably murdered first.

Sue: Neil! Stop it!

The episode concludes with the revelation that the time capsule was riddled with mice.

Sue: But that doesn't make any sense... Oh fuck it, I don't care.

THE SCORE

Me: I'm almost afraid to ask...

Sue: Don't worry, Neil, I'm lost for words.

3/10

Sue: I liked Silver a lot, and some of it was proper scary, but I barely understood a word of it. I think they're taking the piss. It's as if they're daring us to take this nonsense seriously. No, I didn't like that one at all.

Me: So what do you think we should call that story?

Sue: A load of bollocks.

Me: Apart from that.

Sue: I don't know and I don't care.

Me: What about *Terror in the Timeshare*, or something like that?

Sue: Whatever. Call it what you like. I don't care.

Me: Cheer up, Sue. We're over halfway there.

Sue: I'm not enjoying *Sapphire and Steel* very much, Neil. But I still want to know what happens next.

Me: You make it sound like you have a choice.

SHENANIGANS IV

EPISODE ONE

Sue: Here we go again with the scary nursery rhymes. Oh joy.

I think it's fair to say Sue is expecting the worst.

Sue: I'm confused already and we're two minutes in.

Me: Give it a chance!

Sue: Yeah, right. Because anything I don't understand right now will be explained eventually, won't it? Of course it fucking won't, Neil. Give your head a shake, lad.

Children are disappearing from old black and white photographs only to reappear in an old tenement building.

Sue: Okay, I admit this is a pretty good start. It feels like the sort of thing *Doctor Who* would do. But at least *Doctor Who* would attempt to explain what the fuck was going on, even if it couldn't.

Cue titles.

Sue: So who do we get to meet this week? Is it Copper? Does Copper have red hair? I bet they do.

Sapphire and Steel arrive.

Sue: I like her new hairstyle.

Me: Talking as a reputable hairdresser in the 1980s, was that a fashionable style?

Sue: Not really. Joanna Lumley was probably trying to set a trend. I like it, though. It really suits her.

One thing hasn't changed though:

Sue: Steel is still a cunt.

Our heroes explore an abandoned store, which Sapphire describes as a cross between a second-hand bargain shop and a pawnbrokers.

Sue: *Cash Converters*, in other words.

Sapphire and Steel are worried they may have arrived here too late.

Sue: Well, it wouldn't be the first time, would it? It makes you wonder what these two get up to on their days off.

There's some talk about the difference between operators and specialists (whom Steel clearly doesn't like very much).

Sue: Bloody specialists, eh, Neil?

Me: Don't even go there, Sue.

Sapphire and Steel agree the shop is a very depressing place.

Sue: Yeah it's definitely a branch of *Cash Converters*.

Sapphire can detect a young girl hiding somewhere in the shop.

Sue: Do all the kids hide in the old photographs. Is that it? And did Dudley do the music for this?

Me: No.

Sue: Then he should sue the person who did.

Part One of the episode concludes with Sapphire being attacked by a phalanx of squawking umbrellas.

Sue: I've got to say, I didn't see that coming.

Part Two kicks off with more violent umbrella-shaking.

Sue: This is the sort of thing Alfred Hitchcock would do if he didn't have any money.

We are told that Sapphire and Steel are investigating a "time break".

Sue: I still think they might be Time Lords.

Me: Well they aren't.

Sue: And you know this for a fact, do you? Does that mean we meet their boss later, and it's all explained to us? Is that what you're saying?

Me: Well...

Sue: Because if that doesn't happen, they're Time Lords.

It doesn't take Sapphire and Steel very long to deduce that people are vanishing from old photographs and reappearing in our reality.

Sue: It's a wonderful concept, I'll give them that. And the sepia lighting on these children is quite brilliant, actually. Very clever.

Sapphire and Steel explore the rest of the building, and when they come across a locked door, Sapphire tells Steel where the locking mechanism is situated so he can use his powers to break in.

Sue: He still needs Sapphire to point at the bloody door for him. How many times has he done this, and yet he still can't work it out himself? He's useless.

They find a darkroom full of old photographs.

Sue: I miss our darkroom. If I could cause a time break, I'd bring our old dog back to life again. What a lovely idea that would be. To have Buffy around again.

Me: But you'd have to break the laws of time, or something.

Sue: So what? Do I look like I care?

Meanwhile sepia-toned children play in the yard downstairs.

Sue: Once again, I don't see the harm they're causing. Why can't they just let them get on with it?

Turning their attention to another flat in the building, our heroes burst in on a young woman who's half-dressed.

Me: Bloody hell!

Sue: I know. It's turned into an episode of *Rock Follies*. And put your tongue back in, Neil.

Me: Have you seen what's she wearing?!

Sue: I'm warning you, Neil.

The young woman tells Sapphire and Steel everything they need to know, even though they barged in on her in her underwear.

Sue: I can't tell if they're hypnotising her or she's easily led.

The young woman admits the building is haunted by the ghosts of children.

Sue: Even she isn't bothered by them and she has to live there. Just leave them alone!

But when the landlord returns, the children reveal another side to their playful personalities.

Sue: Did she just say, "Can we hurt them?"

Me: Yes!

Sue: Fucking hell.

And if that wasn't disturbing enough, there's the revelation the new landlord doesn't have a face.

Sue: Wow.

Me: I know!

Sue: That's very *Doctor Who*. I bet the *Doctor Who* writers wish they'd thought of that. Okay, I'm intrigued. Stick the next one on.

EPISODE TWO

Sue: This monster reminds me of something else.

Me: Does it? I can't place his face.

Sue: I know what it is, it's Pink Floyd. He's on the *Wish You Were Here* album.

Me: Oh yeah... I can't believe I'd never noticed that before.

Sue: He reminds me of an Auton, too.

The young woman (who's name is Liz) tells Steel that she works in a nightclub.

Sue: She's a stripper? Right, okay...

She describes the building's new landlord as a "clean man", unlike Steel.

Sue: I can't believe this went out at 7pm, Neil. It's bloody ridiculous.

Liz puts a record on, and the music is so dreadful, even the Rock Follies would have baulked at it.

Sue: Stick some Floyd on – at least it'd be appropriate.

However, just when it looks as if Steel will succumb to a quick lap dance, we cut to Sapphire in the landlord's darkroom.

Sue: Not. For. Kids.

A little later, Liz bumps into the landlord on the stairs, only this time, he has a face.

Sue: Is that Tony Hadley from Spandau Ballet?

But it isn't long before the landlord's visage becomes a shapeless blob again, heralding the End of Part One.

Sue: Okay, I admit it. That was pretty good. I'm actually enjoying this.

Part Two begins with Sapphire and Steel realising the previous landlord has been trapped in an old photograph, along with the young woman's friend who has also gone missing under mysterious circumstances.

Sue: Show us the bloody photo, then! Oh, that's frustrating. It's because they didn't have *Photoshop* back then and it would have taken them ages to do it. And it would have looked like shit.

Sapphire can detect the smell of copper.

Sue: I knew it! I bet you anything they've got red hair.

The stench of copper means the new landlord is actually a living photograph.

Sue: So the bad guys have invented 3D printers. Fair enough.

Steel is determined to uncover the force responsible for this break in time.

Sue: Yeah, good luck with that. I bet we're none the wiser when this is over.

Sapphire describes the evil entity as a genie trapped in a bottle, which was released into our universe when the world's first photograph was taken. It's a bit of a leap, but...

Sue: That actually makes sense. As far as this programme ever makes sense, I mean. Okay, I can go along with this. Fine.

Steel orders Sapphire to take back time so they can meet the landlord face-to-face.

Sue: Here he goes again. What does he actually do apart from shout at Sapphire? What is his job, exactly?

Me: He opens all the doors.

Sue: Big deal! Just give Sapphire a sonic screwdriver and let her open her own doors. Or team her up with Silver; anything's better than this abusive relationship.

There then follows an exceptionally weird scene as Sapphire takes back time and the faceless man keeps drifting in-and-out of reality, accompanied by what can only be described as agonised screams. Seriously, it's fucking weird, even for Sapphire and Steel.

Sue: But if he comes from a black and white photograph, how come he looks like a colour negative, eh? Tell me that.

Sapphire can't bring the shape into focus and Steel loses his temper.

Sue: Leave her alone, you big bully!

Our heroes come to the conclusion the faceless man appears in every photograph ever taken.

Sue: I bet that would look really good if they did that again today. It's the sort of thing the Moff would do. I bet he liked *Sapphire and Steel*. You can just tell.

The episode concludes with Steel trapped in a photograph and Sapphire about to be blinded by a little girl wielding a parasol.

Sue: Careful. You'll have someone's eye out with that.

Cue credits.

Sue: This is definitely the best *Sapphire and Steel* so far. And I'm not just saying that because there are only two episodes left.

EPISODE THREE

The opening recap is so long, Sue threatens to get up and make a cup of tea. However, at least it gives her the opportunity to make something official:

Sue: Steel is even worse than Jon Pertwee's Doctor when it comes to being a total cunt. Sapphire puts up with far worse than Jo Grant ever did. If Steel stole a sandwich from her, he'd force her to make it first, and he'd stand over her shouting as she sliced the tomatoes. You can just tell.

Luckily, the parasol threatening Sapphire's vision is made out of paper and easily dispensed with.

Sue: Ooh, that was clever. I really liked that.

It then turns out the man without a face actually has two faces, whereas Sapphire and Steel are at a disadvantage because they only have one face each.

Me: That settles it. They can't be Time Lords.

Sue: Unless they've run out of regenerations.

Me: Oh, for fuck's sake!

This man has many faces.

Sue: It's very *Game of Thrones*, isn't it?

Me: Well, we almost saw some tits in the last episode, so yes, I guess so.

Sue: No, the whole stealing-faces thing. It's a bit like that. I love the way Sapphire and Steel are talking to two different people, but

they're actually the same person.

Me: Yeah, I don't understand how anyone could be confused by this when you put it like that.

Steel realises the shape is using photography to travel between dimensions.

Sue: If they made this show today, the villain would have to be digital. That could still work, actually... You could have him jumping out of *Facebook* and *Instagram*. That would be scary.

Liz – who is still getting ready for work – is drawn towards a photograph of a Mediterranean villa.

Sue: I wouldn't mind being stuck in that photo. At least you'd get a tan.

The faceless man appears outside the villa. Cue ad-break.

Sue: I don't have a lot to say about this one, Neil. I'm enjoying it far too much.

Part Two begins with Steel hard at work in the darkroom.

Sue: He'll probably reverse the polarity of the sodium nitrate or something like that. And then he'll steal someone's sandwich.

Liz is heading to work when she finally notices the children she's been hearing for the last seven months.

Sue: I'll tell you what, though, the lighting in *Sapphire and Steel* is always amazing. Look at that. It's brilliant, that.

Liz hugs one of the children, but he turns to cardboard and crumbles under her embrace.

Sue: Well that didn't really work, did it? It's a brilliant idea but they were never going to pull that off in a million years.

Meanwhile Steel develops a photograph of a photograph.

Sue: He should be using tongs. He'll get fix on his trousers, if he's not careful.

Steel tells Liz to shut the fuck up and sit down. Or words to that effect.

Sue: He's a terrible role model, Neil. Did you actually like him when you were growing up?

Me: He scared the shit out of me. I definitely didn't want to be him.

Sue: Right answer.

Steel tells Liz that her missing friend – Ruth – is trapped in a photograph. Liz is naturally sceptical about this until he unveils a small detail from the photograph that he's blown-up for her.

Sue: That's really grim. I'm actually freaked out by that.

Ruth doesn't know where she is; it's as if she's trapped between a memory and a dream. And as we attempt to navigate our way through this existential minefield, the faceless man strikes and sets fire to the original photograph. Ruth screams in agony as the image shrivels away to nothing in the flames.

Sue: Oh. My. God. That's horrible! I can't believe he actually did that!

Cue credits.

Sue: That was fucking mental. But in a good way. I'm really enjoying this one.

EPISODE FOUR

Sue isn't that worried about Ruth's fate.

Sue: Just take back time. Easy.

However, when Sapphire tries to do this her talent is blocked and she's transformed into a two-dimensional standee. Oh, and Ruth is still dead.

Sue: This is all Steel's fault. If he hadn't taken his eyes off the original photograph, none of this would have happened.

Steel decides to blame Sapphire instead.

Sue: Unbelievable. The arrogance of the man. Even Marty McFly kept the fucking photograph on him at all times.

Sapphire tells Liz to pack her bags and leave.

Sue: I wouldn't go back to my flat and put my lippy on. I'd be well gone by now.

Steel surmises the original landlord combined images from two different time zones, which unleashed something terrifying.

Sue: He would have loved *Photoshop*. But he's dead now. The idiot.

The landlord tried to impress Ruth with an image formed by a kaleidoscope.

Sue: Ruth was very easily pleased, that's all I'm saying.

Steel is about to demonstrate how the kaleidoscope dragged the evil entity into our reality when Sapphire stops him in his tracks.

Sue: He's such a cocky bastard. He'd be totally fucked without her. I don't know how she puts up with him.

Part One ends with the faceless man trapping Sapphire and Steel in a photograph.

Sue: How does he do that?

Me: Fuck knows.

Sue: Why are you even here, Neil?

Part Two begins with the parasol girl eager to torture our helpless heroes.

Sue: Hang on a minute... Why has this guy surrounded himself with kids? What the fuck is that all about?

Trapped inside a photograph, Steel blames Sapphire for sending Liz away.

Sue: The fucking nerve of this guy!

The next five minutes are spent with a rostrum camera, as Sapphire and Steel slowly realise they've been completely fucked.

Sue: This is really disturbing.

Me: Disturbing? It's one of the creepiest things I've ever seen!

Sue: I don't really care about Steel – he deserves it – but she shouldn't have to suffer as well.

Thank God Liz took her sweet time leaving the building.

Sue: What was she doing all this time? Packing away her sex toys?

Luckily, Steel has a plan.

Sue: Didn't David Tennant's Doctor trap someone in a mirror, once? When he got married?

Me: He didn't trap his wife in a mirror, no. But yes, he did trap someone in a mirror. Out of spite.

Sue: Bloody Time Lords.

Me: They aren't Time Lords!

With Liz's help, they trap the entity in a prism.

Sue: Somebody just coughed off-camera. And all the characters are on-screen.

Me: Don't worry, they'll probably investigate that next week.

Steel transfers the entity to a kaleidoscope, which should hold it for 75 years. And just to be sure, they'll stick it on a ship that's due to sink in the Arctic Ocean. And then, just before they leave, Steel has a warning for Liz: "Find every photograph of you that there is. Burn them. Never have another taken."

Sue: She's definitely isn't on *Facebook*, then.

Cue credits.

THE SCORE

Sue: I really enjoyed that.

8/10

Sue: It didn't go on for absolutely ages, and I sort of followed the plot. A bit. And the idea of a monster hiding in old photos is brilliant. Why can't they all be like that?

Me: So what should we call this story?

Sue: *Man in the Mirror*.

Me: That only works for the last episode.

Sue: Oh, I don't know.

Two hours later...

Sue: *Little Photo Shop of Horrors!*

Me: That'll do.

INVESTIGATION 5

EPISODE ONE

Me: I have a confession to make: I don't think I've seen this story before. And if I have, I can't remember a thing about it.

Sue: So it's crap, then?

Me: I didn't say that. I don't know.

Sue: Of course you don't, Neil. I can read you like a book. This is going to be crap.

Lord Mullrine is preparing to host an extravagant dinner party in 1930 with his sister Emma. There's only one problem: they come from 1980.

Sue: Right. So they're time-travellers, then. This is going to be another one of those jobs the Doctor turned down.

Mullrine tells his secretary that he isn't to be disturbed during the revelries.

Sue: These two are definitely shagging. He'd probably snog her face off right now if he had a box to stand on. He's tiny!

Mullrine is throwing a party to celebrate the formation of his company fifty years ago.

Sue: Oh, I see. It's a fancy dress thing.

But when Mullrine returns to the party, he leaves something important behind.

Sue: Oh no. He hasn't got his Dictaphone.

Me: Then he'll have to use his finger like everybody else.

Sue: Really, Neil? That joke is so old, Sapphire and Steel should investigate it.

Me: It's a classic! Besides, do you know how hard it is to actually use that joke nowadays? Anyway, it isn't a Dictaphone, it's an ultrasonic door key.

Sue: Of course it fucking is.

Cue titles.

Sue: The floating hat in the title sequence... Is it meant to be Viking?

Me: It's taken you 25 episodes to notice the hat?

Sue: No, I've always known it was there. But it's only just started to annoy me. Actually, didn't the Time Lords wear helmets like that?

I think she's talking about Omega in The Three Doctors.

Me: For the last time, Sue. They aren't...

Sue: (*Laughing*) You are far too easy, Neil!

Mullrine wants to transport his guests back to 1930.

Sue: This is what Nigel Farage is trying to do our country right now.

(Note: we watched this story in the lead-up to Brexageddon).

Sue: In fact, this party looks like it's packed with rich Tories. Do they all die, Neil? Please tell me they die.

Mullrine talks shop with his guests, Felix Harborough and Howard McDee, son of ex-business partner and dead scientist, George McDee.

Sue: Framing a decent three-shot with this guy in it is an absolute nightmare. He's tiny!

Mullrine's attention to historical accuracy includes a radio that broadcasts "live" cricket commentary from June 1930.

Sue: The commentator has a lovely voice. You don't get voices like that on the radio any more.

Me: It's Valentine Dyall.

Sue: Is that supposed to mean something?

Me: (*In my best Valentine Dyall voice*) FORTY-TWO!

Sue: Nope.

Me: (*In my even better Valentine Dyall voice*) TURLOUGH!

Sue: Erm...

Me: The Black Guardian! He wore a dead bird on his head!

Sue: Oh yes! Him!

The radio actually conceals a tiny tape recorder.

Sue: This Lord has far too much time on his hands. He should open an interactive 1930s theme park or something.

However, when Felix, who memorises Test cricket results for a hobby, tries to remember the score of the match they are currently listening to, he can't.

Sue: This is a shit party. The atmosphere is dreadful. Cheer up, people! You're filthy rich!

The elderly Felicity McDee notices that the door leading to Mullrine's 1980 office has temporarily disappeared.

Sue: I think they've all been transported back to 1930 by accident. Yeah, that must be it.

The doorbell rings.

Sue: The cast is huge this week. I don't know how I'll keep track of everyone. I wish they wore name badges or something.

And then the penny drops.

Sue: Of course! The new guests are Sapphire and Steel! I'd almost forgotten about them.

She's right, of course, although they are going by the names Miles and Virginia Cavendish.

Sue: They could have made an effort. Didn't the invitation tell them it was fancy dress?

Luckily, they've brought a change of clothes with them, and when they reach the guest bedroom in order to change, Sapphire asks Steel which side of the bed he prefers.

Sue: Bloody hell.

Steel asks if there's any other way.

Sue: There isn't if you want to make baby elements.

The house has indeed been transported back to 1930, as evidenced by the church tower that can be glimpsed through the drawing room window (it was destroyed during the Second World War). But Sue has other things on her mind.

Sue: It's all very Agatha Christie, this. I'm not a big fan of Miss Marple. It usually bores me to tears. I can't be bothered with aristocrats dropping dead. Good riddance to bad rubbish if you ask me.

The guests notice that a painting of the dearly departed George McDee is suddenly missing its mourning crape (whatever the hell that is).

Sue: George is going to come marching through that door any second now, you mark my words.

Sapphire and Steel change into their 1930s gear.

Sue: David McCallum could have been the first blonde James Bond if he hadn't been so small.

Me: What is it with you and size all of a sudden? It's making me feel inadequate.

Steel grows a moustache for the occasion.

Me: Aren't you going to mention that?

Sue: I don't like him enough to care, really. Sorry.

When they are introduced to the other guests, Sapphire provides Steel with a running telepathic commentary that's packed with juicy gossip.

Sue: This is quite funny, actually. I like it when Sapphire is cheeky.

You don't need to be telepathic to know that Howard is shagging Felix's wife, Annabel.

Sue: Did they have swingers' parties in the 1930s?

Sapphire informs us that a time-break has gate-crashed the party.

Sue: Bloody time-breaks, coming over here and fucking things up.

The door which leads to Mullrine's 1980s office begins to glow, so Sapphire astrally projects through it to get a better look.

Sue: Since when could she do that? Is there anything she can't do?

The episode ends with Sapphire's consciousness trapped behind the door while Steel panics.

Sue: That was all right, I suppose. If you like that sort of thing.

EPISODE TWO

When Sapphire returns to her to her own body, she describes a feeling of euphoria emanating from the doorway.

Sue: In other words, there's a better party going on next door.

Meanwhile, two more guests have arrived: Tony Purnell and Veronica Blamey. Tony is a merchant banker.

Sue: There's no need to be rude.

Tony Purnell wants to shave before he joins the party.

Sue: His face is as smooth as a baby's bum, so what's he hoping to shave, exactly? His testicles?

Mullrine's secretary can't reach her boss and she (mistakenly) blames it on the ultrasonic key's batteries.

Sue: Just take them out and give them a quick rub, pet. That always works for me.

And then Sue begins to worry about Sapphire and Steel's presence at this party...

Sue: How can they not know how many guests they've invited? The chef is going to be livid when he finds out he's got two extra gatecrashers to feed.

Just as the guests are admiring a portrait of the late Dr McDee, the door opens and the real Dr McDee walks in. End of Part One.

Sue: Finally. A decent cliffhanger for a change.

Part Two begins with a crane shot, which knocks Sue's socks off.

Sue: I'm really enjoying this one. The direction is brilliant, the plot is easy to follow, and the furniture looks amazing.

As the guests try to come to terms with a dead guy suddenly turning up at the party, some wah-wah guitar can be heard in the background.

Sue: What the hell? Is time breaking through?

Me: Yeah, a 1970s blacksploitation movie is threatening to destroy the fabric of reality. Probably.

Once the confusion begins to settle down (a little bit), the guests agree to play a game of Sardines before dinner.

Sue: What the hell is Sardines when it's at home?

Me: You've never played Sardines before?

Sue: No. Am I missing out?

Me: I'll show you later.

The game begins.

Sue: Oh, I see. It's hide-and-seek for posh people.

The soundtrack replaces the wah-wah guitar with an arpeggiated keyboard solo.

Sue: Did Rick Wakeman have anything to do with this?

As as Steel examines a book on local history ("Nowt must have happened because that book is basically a pamphlet"), Howard's wife, Annabelle, finds Veronica in a cupboard. There's only one problem – Veronica is dead.

Sue: Ouch!

Annabelle slams the cupboard door on Veronica's dead hand, which really upsets Sue for some reason.

Sue: Hey, it's good, this. It's definitely the best *Sapphire and Steel* so far.

EPISODE THREE

When Annabelle slams the cupboard door on Veronica's lifeless arm in the recap, Sue winces and turns away from the screen.

Sue: I can't watch that again. She'll have a terrible bruise in the morning.

Annabelle screams the place down.

Sue: For a moment there, I thought Veronica was screaming because she hurt her arm.

Me: Stop going on about her bloody arm! It's the least of her problems.

Sue: I know. She's fallen to the floor and I think I heard her hip snap.

It's even worse than that: Veronica has been stabbed in the back with a carving knife.

Sue: NOT FOR KIDS!

And then there were nine.

Sue: Oh, this tracking shot is fabulous...

Sapphire conjures up a blue-tinged flashback, which shows Tony Purnell trying to snog Mullrine's secretary.

Sue: I feel like we're watching an episode of *Dallas* that's been filmed underwater.

But at least Sue knows who the murderer is.

Sue: (*Pointing at Emma*) You see her, Neil. She did it. Don't ask me why. I can just tell. You can trust her as far as you can throw her.

The surviving guests are slowly losing their memories, and when Steel invites them to re-examine Veronica's corpse, they're horrified to discover her body has vanished. Cue adverts.

Sue: Oh no. Just when I thought I understood what was going on.

Part Two begins with an extreme close-up of an ashtray.

Sue: You don't see that on telly nowadays. Dirty fag ends.

Me: If Nigel Farage gets his own way, we'll be smoking in pubs again any day now.

Have I mentioned that we're watching this episode on the day of the big EU Referendum vote?

Me: Don't worry, Sue, I'm sure the United Kingdom will stay in Europe. I have a good feeling about it.

Sue: I wouldn't be so sure, Neil.

Me: Trust me.

Sue: Are you kidding? What do you know? You never leave the house. When was the last time you spoke to somebody about the referendum who wasn't on *Twitter* or *Facebook*? Seriously, Neil, you have no idea.

And then we reach the crux of the matter: if Dr McDee isn't killed in 1930, he'll accidentally wipe humanity off the face of the planet with a virus he's created.

Sue: I've gone right off this, now. I could just about follow it before it went all sci-fi on me.

Steel persuades Sapphire to commune with the dead McDee.

Sue: I don't know why she bothers arguing with Steel any more, he just shouts at her until he gets his own way.

Steel interrogates the spirit of McDee.

Sue: What an amazing scene. That was absolutely brilliant. I got goosebumps watching that. I can't fault the direction in this at all. It's remarkable.

A gun is heard. The guests try to work out who's been shot.

Sue: Don't just stand there guessing! Walk down the corridor and find out! For heaven's sake!

Tony's dead.

Sue: So what? Who cares?

EPISODE FOUR

It's the day after the EU Referendum...

Me: TAKE BACK TIME, SAPPHIRE! TAKE IT BACK!

Sue: I did warn you.

Me: TAKE IT BACK! NOW!

Sue: Stop whining and pull yourself together, lad.

We're not really in the mood for another episode of Sapphire and Steel, but since the alternative is throwing cushions at the never-ending parade of resignations on the news, we decide to press on.

Me: I bet Tony Purnell would have voted 'leave' if he hadn't died.

Sue: He's a banker, of course he would have voted to remain, you idiot. You have to let it go, Neil.

Mullrine's butler is told to remove Tony Purnell's corpse from the dining room.

Sue: Greville will never get the bloodstains out of that tablecloth.

Sapphire tells Steel that Tony was having an affair with Mullrine's secretary. He didn't love her, he was just using her, not that Steel can tell the difference.

Sue: That tells you everything you need to know about Steel. What a cunt.

When the guests have left the scene of the crime, Sapphire and Steel are thrown forward 50 years and the dining room is suddenly covered in cobwebs and dust.

Sue: Poor Greville. I hope he's on overtime.

Steel decides to take on the role of Hercule Poirot.

Sue: This reminds me of *Cluedo*. Tony was killed in the dining room with the revolver and an elemental time force.

Me: I keep expecting Jon Pertwee to turn up with a panel of celebrities.

Sue: In your dreams, Neil. In your dreams.

The prime suspect in Tony's murder is Howard, because Tony was embezzling money from his father's bank, and Howard was blackmailing him.

Sue: If that's true, whose bright idea was it to invite the pair of them to the same party? It would be a bit awkward, wouldn't it?

Annabelle complains that things are becoming crazier by the minute.

Sue: Tell me about it, pet.

Sapphire uses her powers to examine the murder weapons. She can tell how old they are, where they were made, and who used them.

Sue: She should ditch Steel and join the police. The hours are probably better and she'd be valued there.

Completely out of the blue, Sapphire grabs the carving knife and stabs herself in the chest. Cue adverts.

Sue: WHAT THE FUCK?

Steel blocks the knife with his hand, so Sapphire picks up the revolver and trains it on him.

Sue: Wouldn't the bullets bounce off him if he's made of Steel? What's he so worried about?

Just before she pulls the trigger, Sapphire tells Steel that she isn't sorry about shooting him.

Sue: Do it! Do it!... I'm not supposed to feel like that, am I, Neil?

Luckily for Steel, he removed the bullets earlier when Sapphire wasn't looking (even though she can apparently detect stuff by just looking at it).

Sue: Why was Steel so scared, then? And why are there six bullets on that table? Shouldn't there be five bullets after the other guy was shot? Or maybe he wasn't really shot. Was he shot, Neil? Oh God, this is so confusing...

Once Sapphire has stopped trying to murder Steel, she decides to seduce him instead.

Sue: Seriously? Have they really got time for this?

However, before they can get down to it, they are interrupted by Emma, who tells them dinner is about to be served.

Sue: Yes, they've removed all the corpses and all these deaths means extra pudding for everyone!

As dinner gets underway (Greville must have replaced the blood-stained table cloth), Emma slips away.

Sue: I knew it! She's definitely up to something.

Emma walks into Mullrine's office in 1980 and finds herself in Dr McDee's laboratory in 1930. Does that make any sense? Does it? No, it makes about as much sense as Great Britain leaving the European Union. Sorry. Where were we? Oh yes, in Europe. Sorry! Sorry! Erm...

Sue: This is making me feel uncomfortable.

Emma is flirting outrageously with Dr McDee, even though she's old enough to be his grandmother.

Sue: Either there's something timey-wimey going on here and he can see her how she looked 50 years ago, or he's got the same taste in women as Wayne Rooney. Either way, this is bloody weird.

Back in 1980, Mullrine's hi-tech computer equipment (think Amstrad meets Commodore 64) starts going crazy.

Sue: Oh no! The photocopier is out of toner! Nooooo!

Text appears on a computer monitor, only the word 'library' keeps being replaced with the word 'laboratory'.

Sue: Somebody wants to change their *Cluedo* answer.

Meanwhile, at the dinner party from hell...

Sue: The old lady is flirting with Steel now.

Me: She's a sugar granny.

Sue: She's a cougar.

Me: She's too old to be a cougar. She's a sabre-toothed tiger.

There's an uncomfortable moment as Steel passes the port in the wrong direction.

Sue: So fucking what?

Me: Don't you know you're supposed to pass the port to the left?

Sue: Do I look like the sort of person who drinks fucking port, Neil? These people make me sick.

Howard proposes a toast to their hosts.

Sue: What about a toast to absent friends, you heartless dick? People have died tonight!... I think...

Howard knocks back a glass of port and drops dead. Cue credits.

Sue: And then there were seven. At this rate, this story will be at least 12 episodes long. Get a bloody move on!

EPISODE FIVE

With Howard dead, thoughts immediately turn to what will happen to his shares.

Sue: What a bunch of cunts. Kill them all!

Greville is instructed to clear up after the third murder of the night.

Sue: He'll never get port stains out of that tablecloth. Poor Greville.

When Howard's body disappears, Sapphire claims the explanation is perfectly obvious.

Sue: Is she taking the piss or what?

I decide to have a go:

Me: I think the guests are travelling back in time to 1930, but the guests who are too young to have been alive in 1930 can't be there, so the... *thing*... whatever it is... killed them. Yeah, I think that's it.

Sue: Sounds like a load of bollocks to me, but nice try.

As if to prove my point, Annabelle is electrocuted to death. Cue adverts.

Sue: That was quick. The first part of this episode, I mean, not her death. I think she suffered quite a lot.

Part Two kicks off with a detailed summary of the plot. And guess what?

Me: I WAS RIGHT!

Felix is the only guest who seems to care that people are dying, so he seeks help from Sapphire and Steel, whom he calls operatives in an intergalactic police force.

Sue: That's probably the best description for them I've heard. It almost makes sense.

Sapphire proves to Felix that the guests aren't really dead by showing him Howard relaxing in limbo land.

Me: Limbo land sounds great; you can go anywhere and see anything you want.

Sue: I bet you'd use it to perv.

Me: So what would you choose to see, if you ended up in limbo?

Sue: I already feel like I'm in fucking limbo watching this story. When does it pull its finger out and get a move on?

Felix wants to join Sapphire and Steel's gang, as long as he gets an elemental codename, of course. Sapphire suggests Brass.

Sue: They should include some brass balls in the title sequence, for a laugh.

Sapphire gives Felix the ability to communicate telepathically.

Sue: If Sapphire can transfer her special powers, why doesn't she give them to Steel when he starts shouting at her? Let him do his dirty work himself.

Our heroes need to know how Dr McDee died, so Sapphire makes Mullrine's office door reappear, meaning Steel can nip next door and check an old newspaper report on the office Amstrad. Why they couldn't have asked someone at the party (or read their mind) is anyone's guess.

Me: You know, that sounds like a Chumbley from *Galaxy 4*...

Sue: Yeah, it does a bit.

Me: Are you seriously telling me that you remember what a Chumbley sounds like?

Sue: Yes, you made me watch *Galaxy 4* twice, you sadist.

Me: I'm impressed.

Sue: Actually, I'm lying. All these computer noises sound the same to me after a while. But that's what I get for living with you.

Steel barges into Mullrine's 1980s office and pushes the secretary away.

Sue: Seriously, Neil, I'm really beginning to lose my patience with this git.

Sapphire is too busy playing bridge with Brass to care about Steel's attempt to reach a 1980s version of Wikipedia. However, she eventually relents and agrees to distract Mullrine's secretary so Steel can sneak a peek at her files. The secretary doesn't take too kindly to this subterfuge and calls Sapphire a bitch.

Sue: Charming!

Sapphire telepathically instructs Felix to take Mullrine to bed.

Sue: (As Felix) I say, steady on, chap!

Mullrine leads Felix to Dr McDee's laboratory instead. Unfortunately, Dr McDee doesn't want to be disturbed and he accidentally throws the contents of a Petri dish in Felix's face.

Sue: Oh no. It's all going to end in tears. And vomit, probably.

Felix staggers back to the library and Sapphire and Steel watch helplessly as he slumps to the floor with half his face missing.

Sue: Greville will never get those pus stains out of that rug.

EPISODE SIX

Me: It's the season finale!

Sue: Another one?

Sapphire and Steel have to keep time on track, or George McDee will destroy the world.

Sue: But I thought the virus had already escaped? Look, it's all over Brass' face.

Me: Yes, but he hasn't really died, remember. Time is getting rid of him so it can take the house back to 1930. It's perfectly simple, really.

Sue: Is it bollocks.

The remaining guests are now oblivious to Sapphire and Steel's presence.

Sue: Why?

Me: Because... erm... they're on a different... erm... a different timeline. Or a different dimensional thingy. Look, just go with it!

Emma tries to seduce Dr McDee.

Me: Thank God lingerie in the 1930s wasn't all that revealing.

Sue: Does she think she's a young woman?

Me: Yes, she's re-enacting the past in her 1980s body. Hence the granny sex.

Sue: They should have recast the parts with younger actors for these bits. It would have made a lot more sense.

Me: And it would have been a lot less disturbing, too. This is inches away from turning into *The Word*.

Everybody hates George McDee. His wife, Felicity, hates him because he's sleeping with Mullrine's sister, Emma hates him because he won't leave Felicity, and Mullrine hates him because he's threatening to pull out of a business deal. Greville is suspiciously quiet on the subject.

Sue: My money's on Emma. I don't trust her one bit.

Me: I think Greville did it.

Sue: Don't be stupid.

Me: It's always the butler, Sue. Don't you know anything?

Felicity confronts her adulterous husband, but she can't bring herself to shoot him. Which is a shame because he's going to destroy the world tomorrow. Cue adverts.

Sue: Sapphire should take back time so she can have another go.

Sapphire takes back time so Felicity can have another go.

Sue: Anybody could write this. How many goes is she allowed until she gets it right? Is there a limit?

Me: Are you asking me whether there should be a second EU Referendum because...

Sue: NO! SHUT UP!

But Felicity isn't the killer; Emma is.

Sue: I knew it. It was obvious from the beginning.

Me: Er... *why?*

Sue: Are you joking? She came to the party dressed as a witch!

Emma changes history by shooting Felicity instead of George.

Sue: Who cares? Just get Sapphire to turn back time and try again. Next!

It turns out that Emma has made a deal with 'Time'. She and George will become young again, as long as she doesn't kill him.

Sue: So who's rattled Time's cage?

Steel explains to George that he'll bring about the end of humanity if he isn't killed.

Sue: He didn't take much persuading.

Me: Do you want another episode where they persuade him to die?

Sue: Fair enough. Good for him.

Sapphire takes back time once again, only on this occasion, when Emma shoots Felicity, Dr McDee steps in front of the bullet.

Sue: Okay, there's still one thing I don't understand.

Me: Only one thing?

Sue: Did that actually happen? For real, I mean?

Me: Yes. That's how events were meant to happen.

Sue: Right. So how come Emma and Felicity were still on speaking terms 50 years later? Emma slept with Felicity's husband and then she killed him. I suppose that explains why they were so frosty with each other in the first episode, but I think I'd be a little more than frosty if someone you were having an affair with killed you because they were trying to kill me. Yeah, I definitely wouldn't have passed her the salt.

With time back on track, Sapphire and Steel depart before the dinner party can begin again.

Sue: Poor Greville. He's got to serve dinner to those rich arseholes all over again. It's a fate worse than death.

THE SCORE

Me: Well, I enjoyed that. How about you?

Sue: It was pretty good, I suppose, but if you hadn't been around to explain what the hell was going on, I wouldn't have had a clue.

7/10

Sue: It would have been even higher if they'd trimmed a couple of episodes. They needn't have spent so much time killing off the guests who were surplus to requirements. And I would have recast the flashbacks. Apart from that, it wasn't too bad for that sort of thing.

Me: So what should we call that particular assignment?

Sue: Fuck knows.

Me: What about *50 Year Party People*?

Sue: That's shit; I don't get it. I know, call it *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Cluedo*.

Me: Okay. Oh, incidentally, that was the only *Sapphire and Steel* story that wasn't written by the series creator, PJ Hammond. Could you tell?

Sue: Not really, no. None of them make much sense.

MISSION SIX

EPISODE ONE

Sue: So this is it, then? This is the last one?

Me: Yes, and it's only four episodes.

Sue: I like it already. So do they explain everything we've seen so far?

Me: What do you think?

Sue: I think I've got more chance of winning the lottery.

The place: an abandoned petrol station. The time: 8.54pm on a summer evening in 1981.

Sue: Castrol GTX! Wow, this takes me back. And signs for Luncheon Vouchers, too! Do you remember Luncheon Vouchers, Neil?

Me: Weren't they a prostitute's currency of choice in the 1980s?

Sue: How the fuck would I know that? And what's more, *how do you know that?*

Sapphire and Steel have been assigned.

Sue: Did Steel have a crafty peek at the dirty calendar on the wall just then? I'm sure he did...

But they are not alone.

Sue: It's Silver! Excellent. I love Silver. He's my second-favourite element after Sapphire.

Our heroes have been sent to investigate a couple who have arrived at the petrol station in a car that was manufactured in 1946, but is less than two years old. Cue titles.

Me: Tell me if you notice anything different about these titles.

Sue: Different to what?

Me: The other 30 times you've watched them.

The title sequence draws to a close.

Sue: Looks the same to me.

Me: Really? I'm appalled. Here, try again.

A few seconds later...

Sue: The whooshing noise is slightly different when it all kicks off.

Me: Apart from that.

Sue: It isn't that? Well, in that case, it looks the same to me. Have the words been changed?

Me: Yes! One of the elements has been replaced!

Sue: Really? Which one?

I play it again.

Sue: Is it Radium? No, Radium's still there. Is it Silver? No, it can't be Silver, because he's in this. Oh, I don't know. Does it matter?

Me: It's Lead! Lead's dead!

Sue: Lead's dead?

Me: Yes! Lead's dead! I don't know why you're laughing, Sue. We met Lead in the first story. Remember?

Sue: Oh yeah. So how do we know Lead's dead? He could be on sabbatical or something.

Me: Either way, he's been replaced by Mercury.

Sue: That means Mercury has to turn up in this story, or they wouldn't have changed it. So that's a spoiler.

Silver welcomes his colleagues with open arms.

Sue: What's his superpower again? I've forgotten.

Me: He can manipulate machines. Look...

Silver rigs a fruit machine so it always pays out.

Sue: If he wants to make some real money, he should stop holding his plums and go for the bells. Yes, that's it! Three bells. He's quids in now.

But enough of all that, our heroes have a time-break to deal with.

Sue: Okay, I know how this works. What usually happens now is Steel shouts at Sapphire until she finally turns back time and tells him everything he needs to know. I'm right, aren't I?

Sapphire doesn't need to be persuaded to access Silver's memories.

Sue: Any opportunity to touch Silver up. There would be a big row, usually, and then she'd agree to touch the car. But she's actually enjoying this.

We learn the petrol station is stuck in a single second of time. Cue adverts.

Sue: It's a good idea. It feels familiar somehow. Like someone ripped this off later. I get the sense this programme has been very influential, if you know what I mean.

Steel interrogates the couple from 1948, but they refuse to cooperate, mainly because the future scares them.

Sue: It's a good job they didn't end up in 2016.

Me: I'm terrified of 2016 and I'm from around here.

When the duo arrived at the diner, it was 1948, but then their surroundings suddenly changed.

Sue: It's like that Stephen King thing where there's a hole in time in a diner (11/22/63 – Ed). You see, I knew this was influential.

The two are married. But not to each other.

Sue: Ah! So that's why they're shitting themselves. It all makes sense now – they're worried about being caught.

Me: Don't you think they're a bit more suspicious than that?

Sue: The fact they're just sitting there doing nothing is a bit annoying, I suppose, but apart from that, no, not really. What else are they going to do? Play pinball?

Silver offers to rustle up some food, but they remain adamant they don't want anything from the future. Except for a glass of water, that is.

Sue: She's not that fussy, then.

Me: She'll be on the coke floats in no time. Just you wait and see.

Silver offers to introduce them to the wonders of the modern electronic calculator.

Sue: They should take that back to 1948 and invent the calculator. They could be millionaires.

Sapphire suggests they take the calculator back to 1948 so they can invent it and become millionaires.

Sue: Hey! That's what I just said!

Steel's intense questioning results in the man losing his temper.

Sue: Look at Steel back away as soon as the other guy put his fists up! What a coward!

However, before the man can punch Steel's lights out, the petrol station jumps forward in time. Cue credits.

Sue: It's really good, this. I've got no problem with it at all.

EPISODE TWO

Me: Cynthia Payne.

Sue: What?

Me: The prostitutes who were paid in Luncheon Vouchers, they worked for Cynthia Payne. I looked it up.

Sue: Oh, thank God. I was losing sleep over that.

Silver investigates the couple's car.

Sue: I bet it's got a megaflux capacitor under the hood.

Me: What?

Sue: You know, *Back to the Future*. This car's got funny doors that open the wrong way, too.

Sapphire drapes herself over the vehicle while Silver soaks up the view.

Sue: Oh for God's sake, you two. Get a room!

Meanwhile, Steel pumps the woman for information.

Sue: He's obsessed with learning people's names. Obsessed, I tell you!

The man wants to leave the petrol station and return to 1948. Silver tells him he'll only end up back at the petrol station again. So the man asks Sapphire to accompany him. "What would happen then?" he asks. "What would you like to happen?" is her reply.

Sue: She's a terrible flirt, don't you think? I'm not sure how I feel about that.

The man is crestfallen when it becomes clear Sapphire is only teasing him.

Sue: He reminds me of a miserable Mr Bean.

Sapphire hears a strange sound which reminds her of a cymbal or a triangle. Somebody wants them to know they're there. Cue adverts.

Sue: I'm sorry I'm not saying very much, Neil. I'm too wrapped up in the story and I don't want to miss anything.

Part Two begins with our heroes searching for the source of this mysterious sound.

Sue: You know, I still don't know what Steel's power is. Unless 'glaring at things' is one.

Sapphire doesn't understand why Silver – a mere specialist – was sent to investigate the time-break before a pair of operatives arrived.

Sue: So what's the difference between a specialist and an operative?

Me: The holiday pay is better.

Sue: Right.

As they continue to search for the sound, they stumble across an old man from 1925 who is convinced he's talking to some ghosts. Sapphire begins to panic.

Sue: Things must be bad if she's confused.

Silver admits that he wasn't briefed the usual way before he came here, only that he knew he had to come.

Sue: I'd love to see one of their briefings, but I bet we never do.

Sapphire is convinced something isn't quite right.

Sue: Maybe their boss is testing them. Maybe this is their annual appraisal.

Time jumps forward 20 minutes and suddenly it's raining.

Sue: It's hard to believe they filmed this in a TV studio, it's amazingly well done. I'd like to show this to my students, but they'd just laugh at me. Look at it! It's marvellous.

Sapphire can hear footsteps coming towards them, out of the rain.

Sue: It's getting scary, now.

Sapphire notices a trail of muddy footprints on the floor.

Sue: Whoever it is, they don't know how to wipe their feet.

A shadow forms on the screen. The shadow of a man.

Sue: "Is that you, Dave? Wanna buy some pegs, Dave?"

Cue credits.

Sue: They've definitely saved the best till last.

EPISODE THREE

The speaking clock is stuck in an endless loop: "It will be 9.24... It will be 9.24... It will be 9.24..." and so on.

Me: That's interesting. This predates *Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark's Dazzle Ships* by at least a year!

Sue: What the fuck are you talking about, Neil?

Me: Nothing. Never mind. Oh, look... I've just noticed that Sapphire is wearing blue stockings this week.

Sue: Yeah, of course you have.

The silhouette of Papa Lazarou manifests into Johnny Jack. Sue is very disappointed when he doesn't start talking like a demented lunatic.

Sue: Oh, he's been in stuff before...

Me: Go on.

Sue: *Doctor Who*. He's been in *Doctor Who*.

Me: No he hasn't.

Of course he bloody has. He was in bloody Flatline. How I'm expected to lecture Sue on Christopher Fairbank's CV when I can't even get that right is beyond me. Anyway...

Sue: I recognise his pockmarks.

Me: Well that should narrow it down a bit.

Sue: He looks like he's been skiing.

Me: *What?*

Sue: He's burned his nose and cheeks. Either that or he's pissed.

Me: Right, well, he was in *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*, pet.

Sue: I knew that, pet.

Johnny Jack claims to be a travelling entertainer. Sapphire and Steel are immediately suspicious.

Sue: That's right, blame the travellers. I don't know why they just don't ask him what year is it.

They ask him what year it is. Johnny says it's 1957.

Sue: There must be a connection. Let's see... 1925, 1957, 1948, 1981...

Sapphire saves Sue the bother – it doesn't make any sense. And then she decides to take another look around, at which point she is confronted by three men from three different time periods, all dressed in identical grey suits. Cue adverts.

Sue: What the fuck was that all about? Is that supposed to mean something? EH?

Johnny Jack claims to be one of the best tambourine players in the country.

Sue: (*Laughing*) Is he taking the piss? How fucking hard is it to play the sodding tambourine?

It later transpires that Johnny is lying through his teeth.

Sue: (*Borderline hysterical*) If you're going to pretend to play a fucking instrument, at least go for one of the cool ones, like a fucking guitar!

Sapphire and Silver head outside to steal the couple's car while Steel keeps watch on the stowaways from the past.

Sue: Don't you think Steel looks tired?

Sapphire projects an image of the car to replace the one Silver drives into the garage.

Sue: Is this really necessary? They've already searched their car twice. And who are the others going to call if they catch them stealing it? The police?

Sapphire returns to Steel and then, after an awkward silence, she gasps in horror.

Me: Fucking hell! That scared the life out of me!

Sue: You can hold my hand if this gets too much for you, Neil.

Sapphire and Steel are in grave danger.

Sue: Oh no. Is Silver a traitor? Has he set them up? He wasn't supposed to arrive before they got there so he must be in on it. Oh no, I liked Silver!

The woman from 1948 offers to help, but Steel rebuffs her. Sapphire is sent to talk to her instead, but she gets more than she bargained for when she discovers that the three men in the petrol station have been sent to kill them.

Sue: They're operatives!

Me: Which elements do you think they are?

Sue: How the fuck should I know?

Whoever they are, Sapphire thinks they answer to a higher authority.

Sue: Who's that, then? God?

EPISODE FOUR

Sapphire and Steel are in deep shit.

Sue: They should have listened to that woman when they had the chance.

It turns out the agency who want to harm Sapphire and Steel actually offered them a job once.

Sue: Maybe it's the difference between MI5 and MI6, but, you know, on a more intergalactic scale.

Me: That makes about as much sense as anything else I've heard to describe what the hell is going on. So yeah, let's go with that.

Steel decides to question the woman from 1948.

Sue: Oh, so *now* he wants to listen to her! Typical!

The woman tells him he should leave while he still can. The only problem is he can't. No one can.

Sue: Why can't they leave the same way they arrived? Can't they just teleport out of there?

Me: No.

Sue: Oh.

Sapphire and Steel have been lured to this place by Transient Beings.

Sue: Who are they when they're at home?

Me: They're the bad guys, Sue. That's all you need to know. Okay?

Sue: But...

Me: Sue, it's not worth it. Just enjoy the last 10 minutes knowing that they're the bad guys. That's all there is to it.

Sue: But...

Me: Please!

The woman from 1948 starts repeating herself, like a stuck record.

Sue: Is she a robot?

She's been fitted with what looks like a couple of transistors, and when they are removed from her body, she slumps, lifeless, into Steel's arms.

Sue: She *is* a robot! Well, I didn't see that coming.

Her partner walks through a glass door without opening it first, like the Terminator in a sports coat.

Sue: Would it have killed him to use the bloody handle?

The man is unstoppable.

Sue: They're playing a James Bond version of the theme tune, now. And this guy is a bit like Jaws, isn't he? But with nicer teeth.

The Transient Beings use a small wooden box to travel through time.

Sue: Is it bigger on the inside?

Silver makes a replica of the box and Sapphire peers inside so she can see her future. Unfortunately, all she sees is empty space.

Sue: Oh look, it's the end credits.

Steel is determined to help the woman from 1948, who isn't a robot after all.

Sue: I'm shocked. Steel actually cares about someone other than himself. What brought that on all of a sudden?

Silver opens the box and the Transient Being from 1925 is sent hurtling back to the Triassic Period.

Sue: I bet the Master wishes he had one of those. It even shrinks people as it sends them back in time. Actually, that looked really good, that. A great special effect for its time.

When Johnny Jack is given the same treatment, it is left to Steel to confront the man from 1948.

Sue: It's the battle of the boxes! Who will open their box first? The tension is unbearable. And why is Jimmy Page playing the incidental music all of a sudden?

Steel comes face to face with the Transient Being. They both reach for their boxes and...

Sue: So who won?

Once the dust has settled, we find ourselves in a cafe in 1948, where the mysterious couple have just met.

Sue: Ah, right! Steel must have sent the bad guy back in time, and now this couple will have to live their lives in an endless loop or something like that. That's clever. Maybe Steel isn't completely useless, after all.

Or is he?

Sue: What? EH? NO! Steel had ONE JOB and he couldn't even do that properly!

When Steel opens the door to the cafe he's confronted by endless space.

Sue: So they're stuck in a TARDIS that doesn't work? Right...

Sapphire and Steel are trapped in a cafe for eternity.

Sue: I hope the larder is well-stocked.

The final shot of Sapphire and Steel framed in a window hanging in space sends a shiver down my spine. Sue, on the other hand, is a little more optimistic.

Sue: I'm not that worried. Silver will sort it out.

Me: Silver isn't there.

Sue: Are you sure about that? He could be on the loo.

THE SCORE

Sue: That was definitely the best one. I really enjoyed that. It was pretty scary, the direction was really good, the sets were amazing, and the ending was really disturbing. Yeah, I liked that a lot.

9/10

Me: So, given a choice, what would you call that story?

Sue: That's easy – *Battle of the Boxes*.

OUTRODUCTION

Hartlepool, July 2016

Sue: The first thing I want to say is this... They can't leave it like that!

Me: They already did, Sue.

Sue: It's not too late. McCallum and Joanna are still alive, aren't they? Just pick it up 30-odd years later in the same cafe. Simple.

Me: It's a very grim ending. Like *Blake's 7*.

Sue: No way. They all died in *Blake's 7*.

Me: Except Avon.

Sue: Yeah, except Avon. Still, *Blake's 7*'s ending was proper sad. Sapphire and Steel could be immortal for all we know. Yes, they'll get bored of that cafe after a while, but I'm sure they'll work something out.

Me: They can't be immortal because Lead's dead.

Sue: (*Laughing*) Lead could have retired for all we know! Look, it's fine. They'll escape eventually.

Me: Well, according to Big Finish...

Sue: (*Sighing*) Here we go...

Me: Never mind. Moving on, I have some questions that have been sent in via *Twitter* and *Facebook*...

Sue: I bet most of them are rude.

Me: Don't worry, I chucked those out. Anyway, lots of people (well, three: Kevin Farrell, CDK and David White, to be precise) want to know which elements we would be if we were operatives.

Sue: Have you got a list of elements I could look at?

After a quick trip to Wikipedia...

Sue: Right. So you'd be Nobelium, Neil.

Me: Thanks. What's my superpower?

Sue: Being able to say, "I'm Nobelium" without laughing.

Me: And what about you?

Sue: I'd be Einsteinium, and I'd be really clever.

Me: But with shit hair.

Sue: *Einsteinium and Nobelium*. I can't see it working. Not even on Sky One.

Me: Dave Sanders wants to know how you'd get Sapphire and Steel out of that cafe trap.

Sue: Silver would get them out.

Me: Has he been on the loo for the last 35 years?

Sue: No, but he'll manage it somehow. They'll say something like, "What took you so long?" and simply pick up where they left off. Haven't we covered this already?

Me: So you wouldn't recast it, then? Because there's a rumour going around that the show is coming back.

Sue: It depends on McCallum and Joanna, I suppose. Maybe they could film a scene at the beginning where Silver rescues them. (Is

the actor who plays Silver still alive? He is? Good.) And then they could change their appearance. Because they can. They can do anything. Because they're Time Lords.

Me: For the last time...

Sue: I'm joking, Neil! They just work for the Time Lords.

Me: So who would you choose to play Sapphire and Steel in a new series?

Sue: Cumberbatch would make a good Steel. He's good at acting aloof. And Emily Blunt could be Sapphire.

Me: Who?

Sue: She's very good, Neil. Trust me.

Me: David Geldard wants to know how Sapphire and Steel would have voted in the EU Referendum.

Sue: Oh for God's sake, stop going on about the bloody Referendum! They wouldn't have cared less. And they wouldn't have been eligible to vote, either. Next!

Me: Daniel Tessier wants to know if you think Sapphire and Steel get annoyed when people point out that they aren't really elements.

Sue: Hmm. Well, it's not as if they walk up to people and say, "Hello, we're two elements called Sapphire and Steel." So I don't understand why people would point that out.

Me: Fair enough. Alistair Cowan wants to know what you would include in a *Sapphire and Steel* cookbook.

Sue: Roast chicken with rosemary and take-back-thyme.

Me: Roast swan, surely?

Sue: I think it's still a hanging offence to eat swan.

Me: Hugo Rune wants to know what the transuranic elements look like.

Sue: Don't we all. Erm... Big blobs of gas, probably. I'm not a chemist.

Me: Kevin Jordan wants to know why Silver was a specialist rather than an operative.

Sue: How the fuck should I know? Ask *Wikipedia*! Isn't anybody going to ask me what my favourite item of furniture was?

Me: Chris Orton asks: if the Doctors had appeared in *Sapphire and Steel*, which elements would they have played?

Sue: (*Sighing*) Pass me that list of elements again... William Hartnell would have played Arsenic, because he could be quite poisonous.

Me: And a bit of an arse.

Sue: Sylvester McCoy would have been Berkelium.

Me: I think that's a transuranic element, so he couldn't be used where there is life.

Sue: That's a shame. And Jon Pertwee would be Boron.

Me: Can I have a go?

Sue: If you insist.

Me: Colin Baker would be Palladium, because he always sounds like he's on stage at the London Palladium.

Sue: Neil!

Me: Tim Drury wants to know: *Sapphire and Steel* – did you understand a bloody word of it?

Sue: Not really, no.

Me: Does that bother you?

Sue: Not really, no.

Me: So, you enjoyed it, then?

Sue: Yes, I did. Mostly.

Me: What did you like the most?

Sue: The lighting and the set design. Actually, the direction was excellent. They did some amazing things with light and sound, which still work today. It just goes to show what you can do with the basics. I also liked some of the ideas they introduced, like people trapped in photos, and taking back time. It was certainly unique.

Me: And what did you like the least?

Sue: Steel. His relationship with Sapphire reminded me of Jon Pertwee and Jo. In other words, it was abusive. That put me right off. And some of the stories were too long.

Me: Anything else?

Sue: The other thing that really irritated me is that we never saw who Sapphire and Steel worked for. They could have been bad guys for all we know.

Me: Finally, can you sum up *Sapphire and Steel* in three words?

Sue: Confusing, intriguing and meandering.

Me: Thanks, Sue.

Sue: My favourite item of furniture was the farmhouse table in the first story. Just in case you were wondering.

SUE'S SCORES

Nursery Crime: *It didn't work as a television programme.* 4/10

The Waiting Room: *I can't believe they actually did that.* 6/10

Terror in the Timeshare: *I think they're taking the piss.* 3/10

Little Photo Shop of Horrors: *I really enjoyed that.* 8/10

I'm Sorry I Haven't A Cluedo: *Recast the flashbacks.* 7/10

Battle of the Boxes: *They saved the best till last.* 9/10

COMING SOON

**THE WIFE VERSUS EVERYTHING ELSE
Volume 2**

The Day of the Triffids
A Very Peculiar Practice
Shortland Street
Mystery Science Theater 3000
Bugs
Crime Traveller
Urban Gothic
Buffy the Vampire Slayer
Firefly
Doctor Who
The Middleman
HEAD

WINTER 2016

SUE
ME

BOOKS