

# **THE WIFE VERSUS EVERYTHING ELSE**

## **VOLUME 2**

by Neil and Sue Perryman

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# AUTHOR'S NOTE

The blogs in this ebook are presented in the order the programmes were originally broadcast (with one exception), and if the episodes aren't familiar to you, they should be fairly easy to track down. The only exception to this rule is the first episode of *Shortland Street*, which is even harder to find than *Churchill's People*.

# THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS

**Requested by:** Derek Handley

*Derek wanted us to watch Part two, but Sue wasn't having that.*

**Sue:** We have to watch the first episode otherwise I won't have a bloody clue what's going on.

## PART ONE

**Me:** Does this ring any bells?

**Sue:** I don't think so.

**Me:** I can't remember whether you've watched this with me before or not.

**Sue:** Well, I definitely know what a Triffid is.

**Me:** So what can you tell me about them?

**Sue:** They're plants that kill people.

**Me:** Anything else?

**Sue:** They come from outer space.

**Me:** No! They don't come from outer space!

**Sue:** Okay, don't get your knickers in a twist.

**Me:** I got into an argument with Brian Pern about this on *Twitter*; his *Day of the Triffids* musical makes the same mistake.

**Sue:** So where do they come from, then?

**Me:** Russia.

**Sue:** But you blame Russia for everything, Neil. Especially Brexit.

*The Day of the Triffids begins with Bill Masen in hospital. His eyes have been bandaged and he only has his Dictaphone for company.*

**Sue:** I think I do remember this. Is everybody dead?

**Me:** You could be confusing this with a different British film.

**Sue:** There was a film version of *The Day of the Triffids*?

**Me:** Well, yes, but that's not what I meant. It will come to you eventually.

*Bill must be bored, because he spends his time reminiscing about the rise of the Triffids.*

**Me:** I told you they came from Russia.

**Sue:** But this guy in the flashback sounds French to me. I can tell it's a flashback because they've smeared Vaseline all over the camera.

**Me:** He is French. The French nicked the seeds from the Russians.

**Sue:** Should I be taking notes?

*A Triffid stung Bill when he was a little boy.*

**Sue:** His dad was Richard Stilgoe?

**Me:** His dad was William Morgan Sheppard, actually.

**Sue:** You say that like it means something.

**Me:** He's been in loads of stuff – *Babylon 5*, *Doctor Who*... Loads of stuff! Even his son has been in *Doctor Who*.

**Sue:** He has a very deep voice. Is he still alive? Because I think he may have throat cancer.

*Bill and his father examine the Triffid that has wandered into their back garden.*

**Sue:** Their balls are very hairy.

*The general public regard the Triffids as a laughable novelty, especially when they start walking around.*

**Me:** Do you think the Triffids look stupid, Sue?

**Sue:** Not really, no.

**Me:** I like the way the programme gives you permission to laugh at them, because they do look a bit ridiculous.

**Sue:** You'd shit yourself if one of them turned up in our garden. We should make a plastic one and put it outside the house. That would scare off the crows.

**Me:** Not to mention the postman.

*Bill realises the nurses who were supposed to remove his bandages are over an hour late.*

**Me:** How long would you wait before you took the bandages off yourself?

**Sue:** I would have ripped them off by now.

*I think Sue has fallen for Bill. The dead giveaway is when she says he reminds her of David Tennant.*

**Me:** I think the scariest thing about the Triffids is that noise they make.

**Sue:** I know what you mean. They sound like Hannibal Lecter.

**Me:** I beg your pardon?

**Sue:** You know when he says he wants some nice Chianti, and he

makes that funny noise with his mouth? Well, that's what the Triffids sound like to me, only worse.

*Bill remembers a conversation he had with a colleague at the Triffid farm where he works, about the plants' ability to communicate.*

**Sue:** Are the Triffids shagging now?

**Me:** No, that's the sound of an electric typewriter in the background.

**Sue:** Oh, for a minute there I thought they were really going for it.

*Back in the present day, Bill prepares to remove his bandages.*

**Sue:** Wait! I think I can hear the tea trolley coming.

**Me:** That's the incidental music.

**Sue:** Oh.

*And then Bill remembers a comet appeared in the sky last night, and everybody watched the free firework display. Everybody except him.*

**Sue:** Don't worry. You can always watch it on TV later.

**Me:** Have you worked out what's happened to everybody yet?

**Sue:** Did the comet kill them?

**Me:** Not quite.

**Sue:** Did it turn people to stone if they looked at it?

**Me:** Not quite.

**Sue:** Has it turned them into Triffids?

**Me:** (*Sighing loudly*) Not quite.

*Bill removes his bandages and searches for help. He eventually finds the doctor who treated him earlier, but there's a problem – the doctor is blind. Cue credits.*

**Me:** What do you think of it so far?

**Sue:** You know I hate being scared, Neil. And this is bloody terrifying.

**Me:** But nothing's happened yet.

**Sue:** I know, but I'm still a bag of nerves.

## **PART TWO**

**Me:** What do you think of the theme music?

**Sue:** You call this music? I bet you couldn't hum it. Whatever it is, it's making me nervous. I won't have any nails left by the end of this.

*Bill's tour of the deserted hospital is bleak to put it mildly.*

**Sue:** I hope he doesn't walk into the maternity ward.

**Me:** Does this remind you of anything else yet?

**Sue:** Yes, it does. Is there a scene where a man is killed by his own lawnmower?

**Me:** No. I think you're confusing this with *The Happening*, one of the worst films ever made.

**Sue:** I'm sure the plants were responsible.

**Me:** No, it was definitely M Night Shyamalan's fault.

*A blonde woman gets into her car and drives away.*

**Sue:** I hope she can see, or this will end in tears.

*When she stops the car next to a group of blind people in the street, one of them begs for help.*

**Sue:** I can't tell if she's deaf or she's just being cruel. Help them, for God's sake!

*However, as soon as she offers her hand, she is attacked, threatened and captured.*

**Sue:** How embarrassing would it be to be captured by someone who can't even see you?

*Meanwhile Bill finds another young girl who can also see.*

**Sue:** The children would have been in bed, so they wouldn't have seen the comet.

**Me:** Nicol would have gone blind, then. She never went to bed when she was supposed to.

*The girl's father and mother, who are both blind, beg Bill to stay.*

**Me:** What would you do, Sue?

**Sue:** I'd run away to the Lake District without a second thought. I'm sorry, but I would.

*Bill explains that he was recently stung by a Triffid and almost blinded. But at least he didn't look at the comet.*

**Sue:** That's right, rub it in.



*The girl's father offers Bill shelter in exchange for his help.*

**Sue:** Why would he need a shelter? He's got a house, hasn't he? That's a terrible deal. He should leave. Now.

*People are already looting the shops for food, even though they don't know what they're eating until it's too late.*

**Sue:** I can't watch this. That woman is going to eat a box of washing powder, for God's sake! I definitely would have remembered this if I'd seen it before. I don't think I'll be able to sleep tonight.

**Me:** It makes *Threads* look like *Doctor Who*.

**Sue:** I don't like it. It makes me feel uncomfortable.

*A man who can still see leads a group of blind drunk football hooligans through the streets, only stopping to grab a young, helpless woman. Bill tries to intervene but he's given a good hiding and the girl is dragged away, screaming.*

**Sue:** So, he's leaving that woman to be raped? I can't believe I'm watching this. What time was this on? Was it midnight?

**Me:** I think it was before the watershed – around 8:30pm, I think.

**Sue:** Fucking hell. That's unbelievable.

*London's famous landmarks are completely deserted.*

**Me:** Does this remind you of anything?

**Sue:** Yes. Fuck knows what it reminds me of, but it definitely reminds me of something. Is it *The Survivors* (sic)? Actually, this reminds me of that *a lot*.

**Me:** It's *28 Days Later*.

**Sue:** Oh yeah... What a rip-off!

*Bill stumbles across the blonde woman who was captured by the perfidious blind man earlier. He is currently beating the life out of her so Bill steps in and twats him.*

**Sue:** Bloody hell, this is grim.

*Bill takes Josella (Jo for short) to the pub.*

**Sue:** Is this the Queen Vic?

*I think Sue's EastEnders detector is on the blink.*

**Sue:** I reckon they must have asked Joanna Lumley to play her part, but she turned them down. She looks and sounds exactly like her. I bet Bill can't believe his luck.

*Jo tells Bill she knew she was in trouble when she couldn't find her housekeeper.*

**Sue:** How posh is she? She won't last five minutes out there. She's already shown that. In fact, I'll be surprised if she survives this episode.

*As Bill and Jo plan their next move, Sue lays out, in laborious detail, how she would deal with this situation:*

**Sue:** I'd find a van and head for a big supermarket, like Aldi.

**Me:** Aldi? It's the end of the world and you're going to an Aldi?!

**Sue:** Okay, I'd find the nearest Waitrose. Whatever. It doesn't matter.

**Me:** So the *Dawn of the Dead* tactic, then?

**Sue:** I'd fill the van with tins of food, bottles of water, medicine, you know, the sort of thing sort of thing you made us stock up in 1999 when you thought the world was going to end.

**Me:** Alcohol.

**Sue:** We'll make our own alcohol from potatoes.

**Me:** I can hardly wait.

**Sue:** And then I'd drive to B&Q for some tools and a generator or two, and then I'd drive to the Lake District and find a nice cottage with its own water supply.

**Me:** What about the Triffids?

**Sue:** I'd dig a ditch – I'd like to see them get over that.

**Me:** You have it all worked out.

**Sue:** Yeah, this post-apocalyptic survival thing is a piece of piss.

*Jo and Bill encounter some Triffids at Jo's family home.*

**Sue:** The only good thing about this situation is blind people and Triffids are pretty easy to dodge. I mean, let's face it, nothing's going to be running after them, is it? It could be worse.

*The Triffids kill their victims with their stingers, and then they stand over them until they decompose, at which point they eat them.*

**Sue:** Fuck's sake, Neil. This is horrible.

*Bill attacks a Triffid with a pitchfork.*

**Sue:** Go inside the house! Run upstairs! I bet the fuckers can't go upstairs.

*Bill stabs the Triffid to death instead.*

**Sue:** Watch out! You'll spray poison all over yourself! Oh, too late.

*Bill and Jo return to their car, but it isn't long before they are confronted by another group of desperate locals.*

**Sue:** It's turned into a zombie film. Just reverse over them!

*Cue credits.*

**Sue:** Bloody hell, Neil, that was tense. I'm exhausted. And look!

*She waves her hand in my face.*

**Sue:** No nails!

*I stop the DVD.*

**Me:** So, what score are you going to give that?

**Sue:** We haven't finished it yet.

**Me:** We're only watching the first two episodes.

**Sue:** Like hell we are. Stick the next one on.

### **PART THREE**

*Bill and Jo's car is attacked by the blind mob.*

**Me:** (*Pointing*) You see that guy over there, Sue. That's Morris Barry, that is. He directed *The Tomb of the Cybermen*.

**Sue:** Shut up, I don't care. I'm watching this. WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?

*Bill is opening the car door.*

**Sue:** RUN THEM OVER! For God's sake, Neil, the direction in this scene is terrible.

**Me:** They should ask Morris Barry to take over.

*Bill wants to get his hands on a Triffid gun.*

**Sue:** A Triffid gun? Why is that a thing?

**Me:** Triffids are dangerous. Haven't you worked that out yet?

**Sue:** I thought they just stuck them in a field and left them to it. Why would you need a special gun? I'm sure a shotgun would do the job just as nicely, and there must be loads of them in London.

*Jo and Bill retire to a flat in a tower block so they can rest a while. Bill uncorks a bottle of red wine.*

**Sue:** Let it breathe first, you savage! She won't like that at all. And why are they drinking wine out of a mug? And why is he eating his dinner with a penknife? Did the comet destroy all the knives and forks in this flat?

*Bill says they will have to leave London before it starts stinking like a sewer.*

**Sue:** It's a bit late for that. This is London we're talking about.

*Bill realises that the country will slowly fall apart.*

**Me:** This is exactly what Brexit will be like.

**Sue:** Apart from the Triffids.

**Me:** Whoopee-fucking-do.

*That night, a blind couple are out harvesting cabbages when a Triffid strikes.*

**Sue:** I bet the cabbages are laughing their arses off.

*Jo is kept awake by the sound of someone crying for help.*

**Sue:** That would get on your tits after a while. The sooner they fuck off to the country the better. I would be halfway there by now.

*Jo climbs into bed with Bill.*

**Sue:** The sounds of people dying in the streets isn't going to get her in mood, so he should probably keep his hands to himself. God, this is so depressing.

*Early the next morning, Bill and Jo head for the city's university because they saw somebody signalling there the night before. When they arrive, they find Maurice Colbourne arguing with what's left of the army, who couldn't give a shit, frankly.*

**Sue:** Oh, it's whatshisface from whatsitcalled.

**Me:** Well spotted.

*Maurice tries – and fails – to help the large group of blind people he's somehow managed to assemble together.*

**Sue:** At least he tried. I'd have my feet up in my new cottage with a nice cup of tea by now.

*Things are so bleak, Bill and Jo have to stop for a cigarette.*

**Sue:** I could do with a tab about now.

**Me:** You've given up.

**Sue:** I know, but this programme makes me want to start again.

*Bill and Jo agree to locate some supplies for the survivors who are currently holed up in the university. As they finish loading a van, they watch as a blind man struggles valiantly down the street to his certain doom. And they don't lift a finger to help him.*

**Me:** Our heroes, ladies and gentlemen.

**Sue:** They can't save everybody, can they? I mean where do you draw the line?

**Me:** It's one person, Sue. They have a van. They are about to drive to a safe place, with food and people who can look after him. Would it have killed them to help one person?

**Sue:** Look, if it was me I'd be in the Lake District on my second cup of tea.

*A meeting is called in the university's lecture hall.*

**Sue:** You'd think they'd find a meeting place that didn't have quite so many steps, what with all the blind people and everything.

*The survivors' de facto leader doesn't think the Triffids pose much of a threat.*

**Sue:** I really hope he gets eaten by one now.

*When the men are told that they will have to take several wives if they want to repopulate the planet, a couple of middle-aged men in the audience can barely contain their joy.*

**Me:** I'm surprised he didn't start pumping his arm up and down.

*Jo tells Bill that men are just a means to an end now.*

**Me:** Well, this is romantic.

**Sue:** It definitely isn't for kids, that's for sure.

*Bill asks Jo to be one of his three wives, and Jo agrees if she can pick the other two.*

**Me:** I bet she picks the ugliest women she can find.

**Sue:** You are so bad-minded, Neil. But yeah, I would.

*Bill is woken in the middle of the night by the smell of burning.*

**Sue:** How did the Triffids set fire to this place? I'm confused.

*Bill decides to investigate but he is overcome by the fumes. When he wakes up later, he's been tied to a bed.*

**Sue:** Okay, now I'm confused. How did the Triffids tie him up?

*Cue titles.*

**Me:** Have you seen enough? We can stop here if you like.

**Sue:** We can't leave it like this. Let's watch one more.

## **PART FOUR**

*Bill has been kidnapped by Jack Coker (Maurice Colbourne). Coker believes that sighted people should help the blind whether they like it or not.*

**Sue:** What a bastard. Did he ever think about asking him nicely first?

**Me:** He's using the old carrot and stick routine, only he's fresh out of carrots.

**Sue:** Everyone's scared of the carrots, Neil.

*There then follows 20 of the bleakest minutes ever broadcast by the BBC, at least until Threads came along and maybe not even then.*

**Sue:** This looks like an average Sunday in Stockton-on-Tees.

*Or maybe not... Anyway, Bill's new job entails him escorting blind people to the shops so they can loot them.*

**Sue:** Surely it would be a lot quicker, not to mention easier, if he stocked up the van himself.

**Me:** But what would stop him pissing off to the Lake District?

**Sue:** His conscience.

**Me:** You said you'd run away the first chance you got!

*One of Bill's party is shot in the head, while another is attacked and killed by Triffids. To be honest, it's not the greatest first day at work.*

**Sue:** I'd almost forgotten about the Triffids. In fact, they don't need the Triffids at all. They could easily make a version of this without them.

**Me:** They already did. It's called *Survivors*.

**Sue:** Oh yeah... Anyway, do you know what these Triffids remind me off?

**Me:** Go on.

**Sue:** Emu.

**Me:** Of course they do.

**Sue:** It's the long necks and threatening gestures that do it. Oh, and bits of them are bright orange.

*Bill steals a car.*

**Sue:** Great. Now run the lanky fucker over.

*A Triffid spits deadly venom at the windscreen.*

**Sue:** So fucking what? Just flick your wipers on, turn around and RUN IT OVER! Why is this so difficult?

*Bill is forced to make a decision – stay and help the blind or run away and search for Jo.*

**Sue:** What would Greg do?

**Me:** Greg from *Survivors*? He'd probably fuck off to Norway in a hot air balloon like he always does.

*A teenage girl is sent to Bill's room in an attempt to persuade him to stay.*

**Sue:** Unbelievable.

**Me:** I know.

**Sue:** Prime time BBC1. Are you absolutely sure about that?

**Me:** Yes, Sue, I know.

*Bill rejects the girl's clumsy advances but decides to stay anyway. However, when he wakes the next morning, everyone has gone. Only the girl is left – and she's dying from an unexplained disease. But don't worry, readers, Bill leaves her with enough drugs to kill herself. Phew, eh?*

**Sue:** Un-fucking-believable.

**Me:** Yeah, I know.

**Sue:** And now he fucks off to the Lake District. The End. Because I don't think I can take much more of this. And why are these people ill all of a sudden? Did a Triffid sting them?

**Me:** I don't think so.

**Sue:** That girl was all over Bill last night, so why hasn't he got the same disease as her? Did looking at the sky make you sick as well as blind? Because that doesn't seem fair.

*Bill scours London for Jo.*

**Sue:** Stop telling everyone you meet that she's blonde. They're blind!

*The episode concludes with Bill returning to the university, where somebody is waiting for him.*

**Sue:** Bloody hell.

**Me:** What's wrong?

**Sue:** I have to watch the next one. I need to know if he finds her or not. I'm a bag of nerves, but I'm well and truly hooked. You bastard.

## **PART FIVE**

*It isn't Jo who's waiting for Bill – it's Coker.*

**Me:** I don't know why Bill doesn't just plant him in the face, no pun intended.

*Bill tells Coker that he simply must find Jo.*

**Sue:** He's on a promise, you know.

*Bill and Coker discover a small community of well-meaning – but totally out of their depth – Christians.*



**Sue:** They look like zombies to me.

**Me:** Plants versus zombies. That has a good ring to it. We should definitely look into that.

*Coker restores electricity to the floundering community.*

**Sue:** He's turned into Greg. He's even wearing the same sort of jumper as Greg.

**Me:** You can stop drooling, love. I am sitting here, you know.

*Coker wants the community to stop letting blind people in.*

**Me:** He's changed his tune!

**Sue:** He's gone from one extreme to the other. He'll be eating them next.

*The Christians won't repopulate the planet without getting married first, so Bill and Coker hit the road again.*

**Sue:** The Lake District is that way.

*Bill is momentarily bewitched by a scarecrow when they stop to refuel.*

**Sue:** Did he really think it was Jo standing in that field? The cheeky sod. Is he going blind as well?

*Coker decides to try talking sense into the Christians while Bill searches for Jo in the Sussex Downs.*

**Sue:** Did I mention he was on a promise?

*As he heads south, Bill ends up adopting a little girl and her dog.*

**Sue:** And they all lived happily ever after. The End.

*Bill miraculously finds Jo a few days later.*

**Sue:** Okay, fine, they can end it here instead. This is nice.

*Jo was living with some blind people until they went out one day to look for help and never returned.*

**Sue:** And you let them go out on their own? Are you mad?

*Bill tries to rendezvous with Coker, but all he finds are lots of dead Christians. Cue credits.*

**Sue:** Okay, I've seen enough. Let's end it here.

**Me:** We can't end it here!

**Sue:** But it's depressing.

**Me:** Maybe there's a happy ending.

**Sue:** Does the little girl's dog survive?

**Me:** I can't remember.

**Sue:** They wouldn't kill a little girl's dog, would they?

**Me:** Her younger brother was lying face down in the mud, so all bets are off when it comes to her dog, Sue. But there's only one way to be sure. I mean, if we stop now, I don't know about you but I'll always believe that her dog was eaten by a Triffid. However...

*Schrödinger's dog swings her decision.*

**Sue:** Okay, I give in. Let's do it.

## **PART SIX**

*The final episode takes place six years later. Eat your heart out Battlestar Galactica!*

**Me:** The dog probably died of old age.

**Sue:** For fuck's sake, Neil!

*You can tell it's six years later because Bill's beard is totally out of control.*

**Sue:** Did the comet destroy all the world's scissors? Look at the state of his hair!

*Bill has carved out a comfortable life for himself with Jo, their adoptive daughter, their son, a blind couple and their child. There's no sign of a dog.*

**Sue:** And they've got a nice Aga stove and a lovely Welsh dresser. What more could they want? The End.

*An electric fence keeps the Triffids at bay, until one day they break through and Bill has to roast them alive with a flamethrower.*

**Sue:** It's a shame you can't eat the Triffids. Just think of the stew you could make with that lot.

**Me:** They're plants, Sue, not vegetables.

**Sue:** A nice salad, then.

*Bill and Jo take walk on a beach, mainly because the Triffids can't walk on shingles.*

**Sue:** Spread shingles around the house, then, you dick!

*Bill believes that the comet may have been a spy satellite that went rogue and blinded everyone by mistake.*

**Sue:** Like they haven't got enough to worry about without his lunatic conspiracy theories.

*Jo wonders if we destroyed the world by accident.*

**Me:** Like Brexit.

**Sue:** Oh, do be quiet, Neil.

*Coker turns up at Bill's house in a helicopter, and even Jo is pleased to see him.*

**Sue:** Yeah, thanks for kidnapping my boyfriend and chaining me to some blind people. Here, give us a big kiss.

*Coker offers Bill a job on the Isle of Wight.*

**Sue:** Of course! The Isle of Wight! Why didn't I think of that? That makes perfect sense. Go there. The End.

*However, before Bill's family can pack up and leave, they are visited by a group of uniformed men who want to create a militarised feudal society.*

**Sue:** I like the way the Triffids aren't the world's biggest problem – it's other people. They haven't learned a bloody thing, have they?

*Bill gets the soldiers drunk so he can sabotage their armoured tank.*

**Me:** I would have put rat poison in their wine.

**Sue:** I must admit, it is a waste of a good tank.

**Me:** If Greg was in this programme, he would have made the wine, cultivated the poison and hot-wired the tank.

**Sue:** (*Sighing*) I know...

*Bill's family escape from the compound, but in doing so they leave the gates open for the Triffids.*

**Sue:** I was going to say that was an awful thing to do, but if these heavily-armed soldiers can't escape from a couple of Triffids, they don't deserve to live. I don't care how hungover they are.

*The story concludes with Bill's family running away to the Isle of Wight.*

**Sue:** Is that it? But they can't leave it there. I want to see them get on a boat.

**Me:** They were probably killed a hundred yards down the road.

*Cue credits.*

## **THE SCORE**

**Sue:** It was very good, and certainly well made, but it was too bleak for me. I know you like being depressed by grim TV, Neil, but where was the light relief? I don't think there was a single joke in the whole programme. It was three hours of unrelenting misery.

**Me:** I'd forgotten how grim it was.

**Sue:** And we never did find out about the dog.

**8/10**

# A VERY PECULIAR PRACTICE

**Requested by:** Jon Cole

*This blog originally appeared in The Fit One: The Wife in Space Volume 6.*

## A VERY LONG WAY FROM ANYWHERE

**Sue:** I don't like the theme music very much. And what's this title sequence meant to be about? I thought this series was set in a university? It looks like a zombie film. Or there's been a nuclear explosion. Anyway, it doesn't tell me what the programme is supposed to be about, and the music is terrible.

**Me:** Don't you remember this? I know we've watched it together before. I think we borrowed some VHS tapes back in the 1990s...

**Sue:** I know it's set in a university, but I couldn't tell you anything specific about it. I definitely remember liking it, though, so I must have blanked-out the theme music. Which episode are we watching?

**Me:** The first one. That way we can watch them in order if we suddenly get into it again.

**Sue:** In public?

**Me:** Absolutely not.

**Sue:** Oh, okay. We'll do it after *All Creatures Great and Small*.

**Me:** Fine.

**Sue:** And *Northern Exposure*. You bought me the box set for Christmas three years ago and we still haven't watched an episode. When will it be my turn to make *you* watch something?

*Moving swiftly on, the episode begins with two nuns rooting through some bins.*

**Sue:** Are they mature students on their way back from a party?

**Me:** No, they're real nuns. You don't remember this series at all, do you?

**Sue:** So why are nuns going through these bins?

**Me:** It's a metaphor for something. Wait and see.

**Sue:** It's a bad habit, that's for sure.

**Me:** I'm going to pretend you didn't say that.

*The first person we meet is Jock McCannon.*

**Sue:** Oh yes, it's all coming back to me now. He's always pissed, isn't he?

*Jock uses an intercom to contact his colleague, Bob Buzzard.*

**Me:** Who's that, Sue?

**Sue:** Bob. He just called him Bob.

**Me:** No, I mean, who's the actor playing him?

**Sue:** I have no idea.

**Me:** He had a famous dad.

**Sue:** Oh yes, of course. It's Patrick Troughton's son. I've met him, haven't I?

**Me:** No, that was his other son, Michael. This is David.

**Sue:** Patrick had so many families, it's difficult to keep up.

*Cue Peter Davison in a car.*

**Me:** Is he still too young to fancy?

**Sue:** A little. Is this before or after *Doctor Who*?

**Me:** After.

**Sue:** Well, in that case, I think I'm allowed to fancy him.

**Me:** If it makes you feel uncomfortable, there's always Jock.

*Peter Davison is playing Dr Stephen Daker.*

**Sue:** So Peter Davison plays a doctor in this?

**Me:** Yes.

**Sue:** Wasn't he worried about being typecast? A vet, a Doctor, and then another doctor... What did he play after this? A dentist?

*Stephen arrives at Lowlands University.*

**Sue:** He should have parked his car closer to the main building. What an idiot!

*She isn't impressed with the university's Brutalist architecture.*

**Sue:** What a dump. Where did they film this?

**Me:** Birmingham, I think.

**Sue:** That explains everything.

*Stephen encounters a sobbing man.*

**Sue:** He must be one of the lecturers. That's how I usually finish my classes.

*And then he accidentally stumbles into a young woman who's out jogging.*

**Sue:** Oh yes, it's all coming back to me now. They end up shagging.

**Me:** Spoilers!

**Sue:** It's obvious! He's drooling all over her!

*Sue can't believe that a university could afford its own medical centre.*

**Sue:** We've got some people who are trained in first aid, if you can find them before you bleed to death, but that's about it.

**Me:** So who do you go to if you catch a sexually transmitted disease?

**Sue:** I have no idea, but I wouldn't go looking for [NAME REDACTED] – they barely know how to apply a plaster.

*When Stephen arrives at the practice, Jock mistakes him for a patient with libido problems. Stephen tries to correct the error (the line "No, I'm a real doctor" gets a belly laugh from Sue), but Jock assumes he must be a stripogram instead. It takes Sue a good five minutes to stop laughing at that.*

**Sue:** If only!

*When Jock realises Stephen has been appointed as the practice's replacement doctor, he tells him everything he needs to know about Lowlands University. Namely that it's being destroyed by swingeing cuts, apathy and neglect.*

**Sue:** Nowt's changed. This could have been written yesterday. For example...

**Me:** Do you really want me to publish this in a book?

**Sue:** Good point. I love my university. It's fabulous.

*As Jock pours himself half a pint of whiskey, I remind her Graham Crowden almost played the Fourth Doctor (see The Horns of Nimon).*

**Sue:** He'd have been good. You can see why they considered him. He's got crazy eyes, like Tom Baker. In fact, it's a miracle anyone ever considered Peter Davison for *Doctor Who*. I mean, just look at him. He doesn't have that... *thing*.

**Me:** Thing?

**Sue:** The thing that makes you say, "They'd be a good Doctor." He hasn't got it. He's very easy on the eye but he doesn't have that *thing*.

**Me:** And yet you liked his Doctor.

**Sue:** Actually, I think I just liked Peter Davison.

*Bob gives Stephen a tour of the practice.*

**Sue:** How many staff does this place have? Our department doesn't have this many full-time staff!

*Stephen meets Rose Marie and immediately puts his foot in it.*

**Me:** I had such a crush on Rose Marie back in 1986.

**Sue:** Is this what first attracted you to radical feminists, Neil?

**Me:** Definitely. In fact, I think *A Very Peculiar Practice* is probably responsible for me wanting to go to university in the first place.

**Sue:** And I bet you only watched this series because an ex-Doctor was in it.

**Me:** Probably.

**Sue:** And if you hadn't gone to university, we wouldn't have met.

**Me:** That's right.

**Sue:** (*Sighing*) *Doctor Who* certainly has a lot to answer for.

*Bob Buzzard oozes cynicism from every pore.*

**Sue:** He's brilliant. Horrible, but brilliant. Because he gets all the best lines.

*Stephen tells Bob he actually likes being a GP.*

**Sue:** If Stephen Daker was my GP, I'd end up like you, Neil.

**Me:** I don't understand.

**Sue:** A hypochondriac. I'd be in and out of his surgery like a yo-yo.

*Meanwhile Jock is busy with a patient – an overseas student with stomach pains. However, instead of examining her, he blames her condition on homesickness and stress.*

**Sue:** I bet she's got appendicitis. I mean, I sort of like Jock, and he probably means well, but he's totally incompetent. He reminds me of [NAME REDACTED].

**Me:** You should probably stop doing that. We can't afford a good lawyer.

*Stephen agrees to Bob's offer of a squash game and Bob gives him a jolly good thrashing.*

**Sue:** Please tell me there's a shower scene... And Peter's wearing black underpants again.

**Me:** They're shorts, Sue.



**Sue:** Whatever. He loves tight pants, doesn't he? That would be a great name for a band, actually: Peter Davison's Tight Pants.

*Sue is treated to the next best thing, Peter Davison's Swimming Trunks.*

**Sue:** Please tell me he's just pretending he doesn't know how to swim, because he looks like a dick. He looks like he's afraid to get his hair wet.

*Bob completes his laps of the pool and leaves a clearly exhausted Stephen to finish.*

**Sue:** Just wait a couple of minutes and then climb out. No one will ever know!

*Stephen almost drowns instead. Thankfully, the pool's life guard – who also happens to be the woman he was drooling over earlier – saves his life.*

**Sue:** For a moment there I thought he was pretending to drown so he could catch her eye, but he really is hopeless, isn't he? I don't remember him being such a wimp. I mean, this is pretty wimpy, even for Peter Davison.

*Stephen is so grateful to be alive, he thinks Lowlands University is a wonderful place to be.*

**Sue:** Really? I'd be halfway back to Walsall by now. I told you he should have parked his car closer to the main building. I mean, this has to be the worst first day ever.

*But it isn't over yet, because later that night Stephen has to attend a party at the Vice Chancellor's house.*

**Sue:** I've never been invited to my VC's house. Or any parties, come to think of it. I expect it's because people are worried I'll bring you with me. Yeah, that's probably it.

*The VC's academic guests are a little eccentric, to put it mildly.*

**Sue:** This reminds me of...

**Me:** Let me stop you right there.

**Sue:** I'm just saying I've worked with some of these people. We both have. You can tell that the person who wrote this must have

worked at a real university. He did, didn't he?

**Me:** Andrew Davies taught English at the University of Warwick.

**Sue:** Thought so. And I know someone who went to work for the University of Warwick. She was...

**Me:** Don't finish that sentence.

*Stephen bumps into Lyn – the woman who saved his life at the pool – but he puts his foot in it again.*

**Sue:** I'm sure they end up sleeping together. Although it's going to be a fucking miracle based on his performance so far.

*Stephen is called away to deal with a medical emergency, the overseas student had acute appendicitis, after all.*

**Sue:** Even I knew that, and I'm not a doctor.

*After saving the student's life, Stephen decides to confront Jock.*

**Sue:** This has gone a bit dark. I mean, Jock should be struck off. She could have died. Yes, he's very funny, but how many people do you think he's killed?

*The episode ends with Stephen finally losing his patience with his colleague.*

**Sue:** Finally, some backbone! Oh no, it's finished. Just as I was getting into it.

## **THE SCORE**

**Sue:** That was great. We should definitely watch them all.

**9/10**

**Sue:** I have to knock a mark off for the awful theme tune. Please, turn it off!

*I pause the DVD.*

**Sue:** I really enjoyed that. And you know what's really weird? I actually look forward to watching TV programmes made in 4:3 now. I blame you for that, Neil.

**Me:** What?

**Sue:** Well, most of the things you make me watch are in 4:3, and it

reminds me of better times. Maybe it's because the world is fucked right now, or I'm just getting old, but I find that watching old TV programmes can be really comforting these days.

# SHORTLAND STREET

**Requested by:** Kirk Moore

**Sue:** So, what are we watching tonight?

**Me:** The first episode of a soap opera from New Zealand.

**Sue:** Yeah, but what are we watching really?

## EPISODE ONE

*An ambulance hurtles towards us, its sirens wailing.*

**Me:** He won't sell many ice-creams going at that speed.

**Sue:** Is this a medical soap-opera, then?

**Me:** Either that or Shortland Street is a notorious black spot for traffic accidents.

**Sue:** Perhaps it's where all the journalists live.

**Me:** Eh?

**Sue:** Shorthand Street.

**Me:** It's Short-*land* Street, Sue.

**Sue:** Oh. So what year is this?

**Me:** It's 1992. This is the first of more than 6,000 episodes. *Shortland Street* is still going strong today.

**Sue:** Shall we watch them all in order? Now *that* would be a challenge.

**Me:** I can't tell whether you're joking or not.

*The soap takes place in Shortland Street Hospital.*

**Sue:** Just think, most of these people will be dead now.

**Me:** It was only 25 years ago.

**Sue:** I suppose their version of Kylie is still knocking around.

*She's referring to the Kylie-lite receptionist.*

**Sue:** And I thought my hair was bad in the nineties.

*A car accident involving a pregnant woman throws the hospital into chaos.*

**Sue:** I really like the hand-held camera work. The direction is very ambitious. Oh wait – they've just crossed the line. That's a bit crap.

*And then something remarkable happens.*

**Me:** Oh my God! It's Jango Fett!

**Sue:** Who?

**Me:** Jango Fett! You know, Boba Fett's dad!

*It really is Temuera Morrison playing an angry doctor from Guatemala.*

**Me:** You do know who Boba Fett is, don't you?

**Sue:** Of course I do, I'm married to you.

**Me:** He's the voice of all the Stormtroopers in *Star Wars*; even the ones that were made before *Shortland Street* existed. How crazy is that?

**Sue:** Are you saying George Lucas was a big *Shortland Street* fan?

**Me:** He never missed an episode.

*Nobody can find Dr Warner, probably because he's drooling over the women who are working out in the hospital's aerobic fitness department, which is a definitely a thing, believe it or not.*

**Sue:** Pervert.

**Me:** Our hero, ladies and gentlemen.

*Dr Warner makes a move on the department's fitness instructor, but she's too tired after all that cardio-funk.*

**Sue:** Did she just say cardio-funk?

**Me:** (*Laughing*) I hope so!

*Elsewhere in the hospital, a young nurse tends to a teenage patient with a grazed hand and a serious attitude problem.*

**Sue:** I hope she dies of tetanus.

*And then it gets very complicated indeed. You see, the pregnant woman in the car accident is the girlfriend of the son of the hospital receptionist (not Kylie – there's another one, who's probably dead now), and she's married to the ambulance driver who responded to the emergency call in the first place. Confused? You will be.*

**Sue:** I don't see what they did that was so wrong when they brought her to this particular hospital.

**Me:** It's because New Zealand doesn't have a national health service, which means there's probably going to be a problem with the bill.

*The pregnant woman is looking at a breeched birth, but Dr Warner is still nowhere to be found.*

**Sue:** He's too busy enjoying a quick cardio-funk with that married fitness instructor. What a twat.

*This means Jango Fett will have to step in.*

**Me:** I don't think I can take much more of this. When is she going to stop screaming?

**Sue:** If you think this is bad, Neil, you want to try living through it.

*It turns out that Dr Warner's pager was turned off by the woman he was cardio-funking.*

**Sue:** It's absolutely fine. There was a road traffic accident, and several people died, but at least you got your end away. Don't worry about it.

*The woman has to give birth on her hands and knees.*

**Me:** I didn't even know you could give birth like that.

**Sue:** (*Sighing*) You really don't have a clue, do you, Neil?

*Thank God she ended up in a high-tech medical room.*

**Sue:** It looks like somebody's office! I thought they were using an office because this was an emergency and they didn't have a choice. I didn't know this was supposed to be a state-of-the-art maternity ward! It's the same size as a stationery cupboard.

*The irritable patient with the injured hand convinces a nurse to give her 50 dollars so she can buy a bus ticket home. On her way out, the patient is presented with a bill for her treatment.*

**Sue:** That'll be 50 dollars, please.

*It turns out that the patient was a common thief and she's robbed the nurse blind.*

**Sue:** Some of these actors are pretty bad, I must say.

**Me:** Yeah, it isn't exactly *Doctors*, is it?

**Sue:** It feels like a community theatre company got some arts funding to make a TV programme. You want them to do well, though.

**Me:** There are more sheep than actors in New Zealand, so what can you do?

*The episode concludes with Dr Warner on the cusp of a bollocking from the hospital's management. Cue extreme close-up and credits.*

**Sue:** Is it over already? I was just getting into it.

*Before we can take the piss out of the dreadful theme song, which is probably sung by Kylie Minogue's second-cousin twice removed, a text-based advert for the company that provides Shortland Street with its furniture literally takes our breath away.*

**Sue:** I can't believe the furniture got a bigger credit than the cast and crew.

**Me:** I can. At least the furniture knew how to emote.

## **THE SCORE**

**Sue:** That wasn't that bad considering it was a 25-year-old soap opera from New Zealand and... Why are we doing this again, Neil?

**Me:** I can't remember.

## **6/10**

**Sue:** Can we watch another one?

**Me:** No.

# MYSTERY SCIENCE THEATER 3000

**Requested by:** Scott Fenton

*This is the hardest thing we've ever been asked to blog (and that includes the first episode of Shortland Street). Just thinking about talking over something where the characters are already talking over something else threatens to unravel the very fabric of the universe. Not only that, I've tried to persuade my wife to watch MST3K with me many, many times before, without success.*

**Sue:** I just don't get it. I've tried to like it, I really have, but every time I watch it, I ignore the robots and I end up watching the film. And the films are always bad. Like, *really* bad. And then I end up resenting the robots because I can't follow what's happening in the film because they won't stop yapping all over it, and that just makes it worse, somehow.

*I feel a bit silly admitting this now, but there was a time when I was obsessed with Mystery Science Theatre 3000. I ran a website about it (MST3UK.com). I wrote some bad fan fiction where the characters were forced to watch Return of the Jedi; I went through a period when I couldn't stop shouting "Mitchell!" and "McCloud!" at random people in the street; and I currently own dozens of NTSC video cassettes which I can longer play but can't bear to part with.*

*However, even worse than that (yes, worse than the fan fiction), I planned my honeymoon around it.*

*You see, the very last episode of MST3K was scheduled to go out on the Sci Fi Channel on August 8th 1999, and if I married Sue in late July, we would be in Florida the day it aired, which meant I could watch it live. There was only one problem with my plan: the house we rented that summer didn't have cable television, which meant no Sci Fi Channel and no MST3K.*

*I was devastated.*

*So, do you know what my wife did? She picked up the phone and called several holiday rental firms and asked if she could pick up the keys and look around their properties the night the episode aired.*

*That's how brilliant my wife is.*

**Sue:** None of those houses had cable TV and you never did get to see it.

**Me:** I know, but at least you tried. Although it was a bit weird running into all those homes, checking to see which TV channels



they had, especially when their alarms went off. Besides, I got someone in America to send the episode to me a week later, so this story still has a happy ending.

**Sue:** Is this the same guy you ripped-off with those *Worzel Gummidge* tapes?

**Me:** (*Slapping my arse with my notebook*) I'm a very naughty boy! Naughty! Naughty! Naughty! That's a reference to *MST3K*, by the way. But no, it was someone else.

**Sue:** Marvellous.

**Me:** Graham [Kibble-White, the third person in our marriage] doesn't like *Mystery Science Theatre 3000*, either.

**Sue:** Doesn't he?

**Me:** I bought the Blu Ray of *MST3K: The Movie* for him a couple of Christmases ago. He refused to watch it. I think he's using it as a coaster.

**Sue:** I knew there was a reason I liked Graham.

**Me:** This means he hasn't actually seen it yet. Not really. At least that's what I keep telling myself because I'm suspicious of people who don't like *MST3K*.

**Sue:** Like me?

**Me:** You let me pack an NTSC video player I bought from Walmart in our luggage so I could watch old episodes of *MST3K* when I got home, so you get a pass. I just don't see how you can criticise a show which employs a similar format to the one we use for our blogs. That's what we do – we talk over the episodes.

**Sue:** Yes, but the only people we annoy when we do that is each other. People don't read our blogs while they're watching the episodes.

**Me:** I wouldn't bet on that.

*Another reason why this is the hardest thing we've ever been asked to blog is Scott decided to pick an episode that is notoriously difficult to watch – Manos: The Hands of Fate. The film is so bad, the guy who made it killed himself. What's worse, I've tried to make Sue watch Manos with me twice before, and she walked out on me both times, probably because it's comedy's answer to A Serbian Film.*

**Me:** There's a character in it called the Master. You could ask me if it's the Master. Come on, love, it'll be great.

*The film is so bad, the mad scientists who regularly force Joel and his robots to watch these bad movies apologise for Manos. And they never do that.*

**Sue:** Can't we watch the film without the robots talking all over it?

**Me:** You must be fucking joking. Although it is available on Blu Ray

now, which takes polishing a turd to new extremes.

**Sue:** Let's watch that, then.

**Me:** Fuck, no. There's nothing you could possibly say about *Manos* that the robots haven't already said. Did you know that the film's title is actually *Hands: The Hands of Fate*? No, I didn't think so. They watch the film 17 times in a row before they record their comments. That's what makes them so good.

**Sue:** You couldn't pay me to watch anything 17 times in a row.

**Me:** Somebody has paid you to watch this once, though.

**Sue:** Give them a refund, then.

**Me:** That isn't such a bad idea. Scott – pick something else for Volume 3...

**Sue:** Wait, there's a Volume 3?

**Me:** Or I can give you a refund. Oh, hang on, Scott specifically said that he wants to know what you think of the show's sets.

**Sue:** Show them to me again.

*Cue titles.*

**Sue:** This is probably the best thing about the programme. The home-made quality of the special effects is really cute. I remember the first time I saw you watching this, I thought I'd caught you watching *Sesame Street*.

**Me:** Who's your favourite robot?

**Sue:** Fuck knows.

**Me:** The correct answer is Crow T Robot.

**Sue:** What does the T stand for?

**Me:** Tiberius.

*Sue sighs.*

**Me:** What's wrong?

**Sue:** I don't know. It's just really stupid, isn't it? In some ways I love it because it makes you laugh; I've never heard anybody laugh quite as much as you do when you're watching this... this... whatever it is. And that makes me laugh. But no, it isn't for me.

**Me:** You won't be allowed to give it a score.

**Sue:** I'll survive.

**Me:** Have we actually found a show that's Sue-proof?

**Sue:** I still have no idea why anybody would be interested in anything I say. Anyway, I'll give it:

**3/10**

**Me:** You can't give it a score!

**Sue:** (*Slapping her own arse with my notebook*) I'm a very naughty girl. That's a reference to *MST3K*, love.



# BUGS

**Requested by:** Liam Hutchinson

**Me:** Do you remember anything about *Bugs*?

**Sue:** No.

**Me:** We definitely watched it. It's what BBC1 broadcast on Saturday nights in the mid-1990s instead of *Doctor Who*.

**Sue:** You're still angry about it. I can tell.

**Me:** I should probably let it go. It has been 20 years. To be honest, I don't remember anything about *Bugs*, either, apart from who's in it, but I do remember being terribly angry about it at the time. Sorry, I think I've been triggered.

## EPISODE ONE: OUT OF THE HIVE

*Armed police escort a man carrying a large rectangular case to a waiting helicopter.*

**Sue:** That must be one hell of an expensive snooker cue.

*The helicopter pilot, Ed, is played by...*

**Sue:** Oh, it's whatshisface from *Neighbours*. Craig something... I definitely know this... Hang on... Craig McLachlan.

**Me:** I'm impressed.

**Sue:** I don't know where I pulled that name from.

**Me:** It's because you bought all his records. You had no taste in music when I first met you. I mean, you actually thought Jimmy Nail was a good idea.

**Sue:** (*Wistfully*) I loved *Crocodile Shoes*...

**Me:** I rest my case.

*As soon as Ed's helicopter is airborne, a rival helicopter gives chase.*

**Sue:** They'll crash into Anrika Rice if they're not careful.

*This helicopter chase certainly gets Sue's pulse racing.*

**Sue:** It's pretty good, this. They've paid for a couple of helicopters and they're definitely going to use them. It feels really modern. I like the way they've cut little holes in the windows for their guns. I bet it's draughty, though.

*A woman with a Russian accent, who is observing this high-octane chase from the ground, concludes that Ed's helicopter has been cornered.*

**Sue:** (*Laughing*) How do you corner a helicopter? It can fly straight up, for fuck's sake!

*Ed shoots the enemy helicopter's tail rotor and it plummets to the ground.*

**Sue:** STOP THE CLOCK!

*BOOM!*

**Sue:** Too late.

*Cue titles.*

**Me:** Does this ring any bells?

**Sue:** None at all. Are you sure we watched this on a Saturday night? Weren't we out having a good time?

**Me:** We used to drop an E during the opening titles. Don't you remember?

**Sue:** You'd have to take some Ecstasy to make this theme music bearable.

**Me:** Do you know who Brian Clemens is?

**Sue:** No idea.

**Me:** He created *The Avengers* and *The Professionals*.

**Sue:** Did he? I expect this to be bloody amazing, then.

*After the breathless excitement of the opening sequence, we enter the relative calm of a secret government agency called the Hive. There's no sign of Bodie or Doyle lounging behind a desk, more's the pity.*

**Sue:** Is that David Walliams?

**Me:** No, it's Jesse Birdsall.

**Sue:** Oh yes, he was in *Eldorado*. He's rubbish.

*Jesse, aka Nick Beckett, receives a phone call from the man with the expensive snooker cue (which is actually a device for jamming satellites). He tells Nick there's a traitor in the Hive, but before he can elaborate further, he's shot dead by the woman who believes you can corner helicopters. Beckett thinks he heard gunshots before the call was terminated, but he can't be sure.*

**Sue:** Is he deaf as well as stupid?

*Beckett contacts a woman named Roz. She's something of an expert when it comes to recognising gunshots in the middle of phone calls. Anyway, she's played by Jaye Griffiths.*

**Sue:** She's been in loads of stuff.

**Me:** Name one thing, apart from *Bugs*, that you've seen her in, Sue. I'll wait.

**Sue:** Er... *The Bill*?

**Me:** It would be quicker to name all the actors who *haven't* been in *The Bill*.

**Sue:** Whatever. She's really good.

*Beckett steals the DAT tape that recorded his phone call.*

**Me:** What's with the electro-porn soundtrack all of a sudden?

**Sue:** I thought this was the latest album by Tangerine Dream.

**Me:** Actually, this saxophone solo is very familiar...

*Beckett's attempts at subterfuge are thwarted and the tape is returned to the Hive.*

**Sue:** Worst James Bond ever. Why doesn't he go around to his friend's house? If he isn't there then he's probably been shot. End of.

*Beckett is framed as a double agent, but he manages to escape from the Hive thanks to Roz, who takes Beckett for a very bumpy ride around Canary Wharf in what has to be the worst car chase ever committed to video tape.*

**Sue:** Where is everyone? Where are all the other cars?

**Me:** This series takes place in a depopulated world of the future. Like *Hollyoaks*.

*A pursuing car overturns spectacularly for no discernable reason.*

**Me:** They closed all the roads, and made sure there were no pedestrians around, and that car still managed to crash into something. Fuck's sake...

*Beckett will have to break into the Hive and steal the tape again. Luckily for him, Ed is one of Roz's neighbours.*

**Sue:** That's when neighbours become good friends.

**Me:** I'm gobsmacked. What are the chances of that?

*Ed parachutes into the Hive and retrieves the tape. I must have fallen asleep while he was doing this because I was awoken by the sound of gunfire. At least I think it was gunfire. If only there was a way to be sure...*

**Sue:** Were these soldiers trained by UNIT? Because they couldn't hit a barn door if their lives depended on it. And why can't they run and shoot at the same time? They might actually hit something that way. Bloody hell, they really are fucking useless.

*Roz examines the recording with her specialist equipment and concludes that the bloke who called Beckett was – wait for it – shot.*

**Sue:** I can't believe it's taken them 30 minutes to work that out.

**Me:** This is so exciting, I think Jesse Birdsall is hyperventilating.

*Beckett is determined to find out who framed him.*

**Me:** He delivered that line with the passion of a man who's just realised that his newsagent short-changed him last week.

**Sue:** He's rubbish, but he was flavour of the month back then.

**Me:** Yes, and that flavour was dog shit.

*Meanwhile the woman who likes to corner helicopters meets the person who framed Beckett in a restaurant. She passes him an envelope before heading off to the loo. Seconds later, the restaurant explodes.*

**Sue:** Bloody Russians, assassinating innocent people in restaurants.

**Me:** Yeah, that would never happen today.

**Sue:** It's really dated the programme.

**Me:** I can't take it seriously any more.

*Roz hacks into the Hive's top-secret Computer Recognition Ageing Programme. At least that's what I think it's called.*

**Sue:** That would have been cutting edge back then.

**Me:** Possibly. Still boring, though.

**Sue:** I quite like it. Well, I like her. She's great.

*Beckett realises that his boss is the real traitor. But before he can do anything about it, his boss kidnaps the pair of them and Roz is*

*tied up in the back of her car as it heads for a crusher. Thankfully, Ed rescues her in the nick of time. Oh wait, he doesn't.*

**Sue:** Oh no! She was my favourite character!

*It's fine. Roz rescued herself off-camera ages ago.*

**Me:** So, the last five minutes were spent trying to save her fucking car?

**Sue:** I like it. It means she didn't need his help.

**Me:** How did she escape, then? Did she hack her way out of the car with her digital watch?

**Sue:** Calm down, Neil.

*The next morning, Ed gives Beckett's boss a poppy that contains a hidden camera.*

**Sue:** It's *The Professionals* meets *Watchdog*.

**Me:** Except that sounds like something I'd actually watch.

*Beckett's boss is caught red-handed as he attempts to steal the super-secret satellite jammer, so he shoots his way out of the building. Or maybe he used a knife? Roz will have to analyse the tape to be sure. Anyway, the Russian woman (or maybe she's Spanish) has tied Beckett to some nice wooden beams. At least Sue thinks they're nice. Maybe it's because Jesse Birdsall is tied to them. Anyway, she's just about to shoot him...*

**Me:** I hope she records his death or they'll never know how he died.

*...when Ed comes to the rescue.*

**Sue:** She shot him four times at point blank range. How the fuck did she miss him?

**Me:** Maybe she was firing blanks. Pass me the tape and I'll get it analysed.

**Sue:** Okay, Neil, enough already.

*Our heroes (and I use the term loosely) trick the Russian woman (or maybe she's Italian) into heading for the heliport, even though she doesn't like helicopters very much.*

**Me:** Maybe she was cornered in one, once.

**Sue:** Does this mean there's a helicopter chase every week? That's going to cost them.



**Me:** They should spend the money on acting lessons for Jesse Birdsall.

*You know I said earlier that we witnessed the worst car chase ever committed to videotape? Well I lied. THIS is the worst car chase ever committed to videotape.*

**Sue:** Where the fuck is everybody?

*The Russian decides to drive her car onto a road that hasn't been finished yet.*

**Sue:** At least they won't be able to corner her.

*And then her car explodes in mid-air.*

**Me:** WHAT THE FUCK? Since when did thin-air make cars explode?

**Sue:** (*Laughing*) I think they triggered the explosives too early. I'm sure they were supposed to go off when the car hit the ground. Oh dear, that is hilarious.

**Me:** Imagine if that had happened to Thelma and Louise. The film would have ended with a freeze-frame of them both burning to death.

*The episode concludes with one of those really annoying scenes where the main characters stand around laughing at how funny and clever they are and OH, PLEASE KILL ME NOW!*

## THE SCORE

**Sue:** I enjoyed that.

**Me:** You did?

**Sue:** Yeah, I loved the concept. The acting was a bit dodgy...

**Me:** A BIT?

**Sue:** ...and the script could have been funnier, although the joke at the end about her compact car was brilliant. Why are you crying, Neil? Anyway, I think they should bring it back. All that technology is really dated now – I think you can do everything they did on a mobile phone today – apart from the helicopter bits, which you could always replace with some drones. Anyway, what I'm saying is they could easily update it. *Bugs* is probably more relevant now than it was back then.

**Me:** I thought it was awful. Worse than that, it was boring.

**Sue:** Did it bug you, Neil? Did it? Did it bug you?

**Me:** Stop it, Sue. I will kill again.

# CRIME TRAVELLER

**Requested by:** Antony Lyell

*Another day, another half-arsed replacement for Doctor Who...*

## **EPISODE ONE: JEFF SLADE AND THE LOOP OF INFINITY**

*The title sequence features clocks and guns floating in space. Obviously.*

**Me:** JUST MAKE *DOCTOR WHO*!

**Sue:** Have you been triggered again?

**Me:** YES!

**Sue:** These titles are very...

**Me:** YES! I KNOW!

*Sue's EastEnders detector starts going haywire...*

**Sue:** It's David Wicks!

**Me:** Michael French, actually, but whatever.

*Michael French is Jeff Slade (yes, really), a detective who works with "that woman off Brookside" and his 12-year-old partner, DS Morris.*

**Sue:** Is it bring your son to work day?

*Jeff is part of a delicately poised stake-out until he defies a direct order and allows the suspect to escape in a car. Jeff jumps on a motorbike and a high-octane chase through the streets of Reading ensues. It's marginally better than the one in Bugs.*

**Sue:** It isn't exactly *The French Connection*, is it?

**Me:** The closest this chase gets to *The French Connection* is the branch they just passed on the high street.

**Sue:** No they didn't. Fcuk off.

*Jeff follows the villain to the roof of multi-storey car park. The villain tries to run him over, but this results in him driving his car off the roof and into a canal, killing himself instantly.*

**Sue:** At least the car didn't blow up in mid-air. That was a pretty good stunt, actually. I'm impressed.

*Jeff is a cop on the edge who doesn't play by the rules but always gets results. Only he doesn't actually get any results, so he's fired. Thankfully, Holly Turner – forensic scientist, friend and colleague – decides to help him out.*

**Sue:** She reminds me of Scully.

**Me:** This was made at the peak of *X-Files* mania, so yeah that was probably the general idea. If only the BBC had their own sci-fi show which could have competed with it. But no, they had to rip off American shows and...

**Sue:** Shut up, Neil.

*Holly has a time machine in her flat.*

**Me:** Look at the state of it.

**Sue:** That's what I imagine a real time machine would look like. It looks realistic.

**Me:** It's a mess.

**Sue:** Yeah, but it looks like it might actually work.

*Holly turns on the machine. Lights start flashing and everything.*

**Sue:** She's basically a female Doctor Who. Is this why don't like it very much, Neil?

**Me:** Of course not!

**Sue:** I think you have a problem with strong female time travellers.

**Me:** But.. But I loved Romana! I loved both of them!

**Sue:** I think I've hit a nerve.

*Holly travels a few hours into the past.*

**Sue:** So, her TARDIS doesn't actually move, then?

**Me:** No, and it's a lot smaller on the inside, too. It's shit!

**Sue:** At least she doesn't have to worry about parking.

*Holly has arrived at a point in time before Jeff managed to screw everything up.*

**Sue:** If I were her, I'd put the lottery on first. But that's just me.

*Holly retrieves some crucial evidence that will allow Jeff to solve the case later, and then she rushes back to her flat before a countdown on her digital watch reaches zero.*

**Sue:** What happens if she doesn't make it back in time?

**Me:** She turns into a pumpkin.

*At least Jeff's boss is pleased.*

**Sue:** It's very progressive, this. There's a strong female boss who doesn't take any shit from anyone, a clever female scientist with a time machine...

**Me:** And a plank of wood as the male hero.

**Sue:** I like him. Yes, he's a bad boy, but he can't help it.

**Me:** You do know he isn't playing David Wicks, don't you? I know it's hard to tell given Michael French's acting range, but I thought I'd better check.

*Holly tells Jeff that she has a time machine back at her flat.*

**Sue:** Why would she do that? That's a bit unbelievable.

**Me:** Yes, I know. They are talking about time machines and neither of them have mentioned the word 'TARDIS' yet. It doesn't make any sense. How can you talk about time machines and not mention the TARDIS?

**Sue:** Yeah, but was *Doctor Who* still a thing in 1997? Would the audience remember what a TARDIS was back then?

**Me:** That's right, rub it in.

*Holly tells Jeff she can't travel into the future because it doesn't exist yet, and she can only travel a few days into the past, at most.*

**Me:** How shit is that?

**Sue:** It's realistic. Well, as realistic as time machines go, I suppose. At least there aren't any stupid aliens in this.

*Jeff's next case involves a man named Lombard who has supposedly committed suicide inside a locked room. It should be an open and shut case, but...*

**Sue:** Where's all the blood? He shot himself in the head, so where's the blood gone?

**Me:** That'll be the space vampires; they sucked him dry before they shot him.

**Sue:** Really?

**Me:** No. It's because *Crime Traveller* is fun for the whole family, if you can believe that.

*Jeff investigates the crime scene.*

**Sue:** That's right, make sure you put your fingerprints on everything. Well done.

*Lombard's son mistakes Jeff for the caterer, which means Jeff has been to the house before.*

**Sue:** It's all gone a bit timey-wimey. I like it. It's basically a modern episode of *Doctor Who*, except it makes sense.

*Jeff convinces Holly to let him travel in time with her, because if they go back to a time before Lombard died, they can discover the truth. However, before they can leave, they are distracted by the sound of a car crashing outside her flat.*

**Sue:** That'll be them coming back later. I bet the Moff loved *Crime Traveller*.

*Holly tells Jeff that he can't meet himself because that would break the first law of time.*

**Me:** And still nobody mentions *Doctor Who*...

**Sue:** Give it a rest, Neil.

*Jeff can't contain his excitement when he realises he's travelled a few hours into the past.*

**Me:** This isn't the 18th century, mate. Calm down.

**Sue:** Where's the nearest bookies?

*Jeff and Holly incapacitate the caterers who have been booked to turn up at Lombard's house so they can take their place.*

**Sue:** That was a bit extreme.

**Me:** I'm sure they changed the past by doing that, but the rules she set out don't make a lot of sense.

**Sue:** You're right – this is just like *Doctor Who*.

*Jeff and Holly arrive at Lombard's house.*

**Sue:** This guy is a right pain in the arse. I hope somebody did kill him. I've only just met him and I want to kill him, the pompous twat. And there's something I don't understand – how come they don't find Slade's fingerprints all over the crime scene later?

**Me:** Yeah, but he put his prints all over the house in the future, so it wouldn't matter, would it?

**Sue:** Yeah, but wouldn't it be funny if he framed himself for murder?

*Jeff isn't impressed when Holly admits that she doesn't know how to make a cheese soufflé.*

**Sue:** What a twat.

**Me:** Finally, we're getting somewhere.

**Sue:** Yeah, he's a bad boy, but...

**Me:** Oh, for fuck's sake.

*Jeff throws the gun away so the crime can never be committed.*

**Sue:** If that doesn't work, the police will find a gun with Slade's fingerprints all over it in the bushes. He's definitely framing himself.

*Jeff confronts Lombard, who has another gun.*

**Sue:** Or maybe Slade kills him! Wouldn't that be brilliant?

*Despite Jeff's best efforts, Lombard is shot and killed in the locked room. But instead of kicking the door in, or calling for help, Jeff climbs out the rear window of the adjacent room so he can clamber over the balcony to the other window and peek inside. The berk.*

**Sue:** Meanwhile, as he pisses around on that balcony outside, the murderer quietly leaves the room and locks the door. Considering this is such a clever programme, it can be incredibly stupid at times.

*The murderer pokes a gun out of the window and shoots at Jeff. The bullet grazes his thick forehead and Holly finds him recovering on a sun lounger, dazed and confused, as usual.*

**Me:** I'd ditch him as my assistant if I were her. He's fucking useless.

*Jeff remembers to remove his fingerprints from the scene of the crime.*

**Sue:** It's a bit late for that!

*And then they hurry back to Holly's flat.*

**Sue:** I bet he goes to the bookies first. I know I would.

*Jeff goes to the bookies.*

**Sue:** So, he isn't completely stupid, then.

*There's a mad rush to get back to Holly's flat before they are both trapped in a loop of infinity (which is basically Groundhog Day without the jokes) and in their haste to make the deadline, they cause a car to crash outside Holly's flat.*

**Sue:** I love this. I would happily watch more of these. What's not to like? It's funny, exciting, clever, believable. I mean, what's your problem, Neil?

*When they return to the present, Jeff's gunshot wound disappears.*

**Sue:** That will turn out to be important in a future episode. I bet he nearly dies and she has to drag him back to her flat before it's too late. I can't wait to find out.

**Me:** You'll have a long fucking wait.

*Jeff identifies Lombard's business partner as the murderer because... reasons. The woman from Brookside is pleased and Jeff treats Holly to a slap-up meal.*

**Me:** Why is this restaurant projecting a giant clock on the wall?

**Sue:** Don't worry, I'll knock a mark off the score for that.

**Me:** Thank God for that.

*Holly tells Jeff that the bet he placed in the past never happened, because it couldn't have happened. Could it?*

**Me:** EH? WHAT THE ACTUAL FUCK?

**Sue:** Calm down, Neil.

**Me:** So how did ANYTHING happen in that episode?

*Cue titles.*



**Me:** Jesus, that was painful. Oh, look, Anne Dudley did the music.

**Sue:** See, I told you this was good.

**Me:** You don't even know who Anne Dudley is!

## **THE SCORE**

**9/10**

**Sue:** I loved that.

**Me:** Are you taking the piss?

**Sue:** No. Can we watch another one, please?

**Me:** I tell you what, we'll blog it for our next book, *Adventures with the Ex-Wife in Space*.

**Sue:** Now I want to watch it even more.

# URBAN GOTHIC

**Requested by:** Chris Reynolds

**Sue:** What are we watching tonight?

**Me:** *Urban Gothic*.

**Sue:** Never heard of it.

**Me:** Neither have I.

**Sue:** This should be fun, then.

## NECROMANCE

**Sue:** What's it about?

**Me:** Goths in a tower block.

**Sue:** Really?

**Me:** I have no idea. I didn't even look it up on *Wikipedia*.

**Sue:** Well look it up now!

*I pause the episode.*

**Me:** It says here that *Urban Gothic* was a British horror series that ran on Channel 5 from 2000 to 2001.

**Sue:** Some people couldn't get Channel 5 when it first started. Maybe that's why we don't remember it?

**Me:** No, we weren't one of the lucky ones. It also says it's an anthology series, so we should be able to follow it.

*I restart the episode, which begins in a sixth-form classroom.*

**Sue:** This looks a *Buffy* rip-off to me.

**Me:** No shit, Sherlock.

*In a nutshell: a teenager named Poppy is infatuated with the school's resident beefcake, Corum, who also works part-time at the local morgue.*

**Sue:** I bet you anything you like he's into dead bodies. And I mean *really* into dead bodies, if you know what I mean.

**Me:** Don't be ridiculous, Sue. This is obviously a kid's programme. It'll be about witches or something like that. I bet it's just like *Charmed*.

*I say this is because Poppy's friend has just given her a spell book, and later that evening the angst-ridden teenager dabbles in a little magic while her mother cooks dinner downstairs.*

**Sue:** (As Poppy) I'll be down in a minute, Mum! I'm just conjuring up Satan!

*Poppy returns to school the next day, where she has to deal with her nemesis, Caitlin, who says, and I quote:*

**Caitlin:** I hear your golden boy is fucking some nurse over at the hospital.

*We turn and face each other, totally gobsmacked.*

**Sue:** What did she just say?

**Me:** (Astonished) It's like somebody just swore on *Grange Hill*.

**Sue:** So, this isn't for kids, then?

**Me:** It's Channel 5, Sue. Who knows?

**Sue:** I think I know how this will end: Poppy will finish up on a mortuary slab – maybe she's run over by a lorry while she's mooning after him – and *then* he falls in love with her.

**Me:** I know this is Channel 5, love, but they still had standards back then, and... Holy FUCK...!

*Yep, Corum really is a necrophiliac.*

**Sue:** I was only joking!

*Poppy catches Corum in the act, which isn't tastefully implied off-screen – you see him climb on top of a naked female corpse and... I'm having flashbacks just writing this down. Please make it stop.*

**Sue:** Is this really happening?

*Poppy is so mortified (sorry), she decides to end her own life.*

**Sue:** This is how *13 Reasons Why* ends.

**Me:** I don't know what that is, but I can think of at least 13 reasons why I don't want to watch this.

*Poppy slits her wrists in the bath. If we were watching this in 2001, this would have been followed an advert for shampoo or dog food or something like that. Anyway, it turns out that Poppy can't die thanks to the spell she cast earlier. That's right, she's a zombie.*

**Sue:** At least she can still blend in at school by dressing as goth. That's pretty funny, actually. I've taught a few goths in my time and everything suddenly makes sense now.

*Poppy and Corum can't get enough of each other.*

**Sue:** They're the perfect couple – she's dead and he likes shagging corpses. What could possibly go wrong? The End.

*Poppy doesn't have a problem with Corum's fetish because it's "just a thing".*

**Me and Sue:** JUST A THING??!!!

*However, Poppy will have to take some drastic measures if she wants to stop her rotting flesh from stinking the place out.*

**Sue:** Oh my God. She's actually going to stuff herself.

**Me:** I can't watch this.

*I bury my head in a cushion as Poppy fills a bath with formaldehyde.*

**Me:** What's she doing now, Sue?

**Sue:** I think... I think she's scooping her internal organs into the bath, Neil.

**Me:** I think I'm going to be sick.

**Sue:** Her mum will have a fit when she sees the state she's left the bathroom in.

**Me:** Is it over yet?

**Sue:** You've made me watch some weird shit over the years, Neil, but this is a whole new level.

**Me:** Is it over yet?

**Sue:** Our marriage?

**Me:** Just tell me when it's over.

*Corum and Poppy are all over each other like a rash.*

**Sue:** Surely what he likes about dead women is that they just lie there and don't say anything. But Poppy doesn't stop yapping. This isn't going to work.

**Me:** You don't say!

*Caitlin doesn't like Poppy's new goth look and wouldn't be seen dead in it.*

**Sue:** The script is very funny. It's as if they knew nobody would be watching this so they just went for it. I mean, you'd have to be pretty sick to watch this on purpose.

*Sadly, Corum can't stop seeing other corpses.*

**Me:** Maybe she was alive when he started?

*Poppy is so upset by this she starts leaking formaldehyde.*

**Sue:** Where's her mum while this is going on?

**Me:** Cleaning the bathroom.

*Poppy decides to follow Corum to the morgue and it isn't long before we see his naked buttocks grinding away on top of a corpse.*

**Me:** I can't watch this. I mean, what the fuck is this?

**Sue:** Hey, that's my line!

*So, I watch Sue instead. She has the look on her face that she usually reserves for TV shows about gory medical procedures. She even winced at one point.*

**Sue:** We never saw Buffy in the buff. Just saying.

*To show there are no hard feelings, Poppy asks Corum if he fancies a quick threesome.*

**Sue:** What do we say if Nicol walks in while we're watching this?

**Me:** Don't worry, she's miles away in Norwich.

**Sue:** I'm still worried. Are you sure the front door is locked?

*Poppy documents Corum's perversion in graphic detail with his Polaroid camera.*

**Sue:** He'd be completely fucked now if *Facebook* existed.

**Me:** We're all completely fucked because *Facebook* exists, Sue.

**Sue:** Ooh, topical.

*Poppy locks Corum in the morgue so she can deliver the photographs to the hospital staff, who aren't pleased, to put it mildly. And then Poppy fucks off until the season finale. At least that's what it says here on Wikipedia.*

**Sue:** Poppy must be starving. I haven't seen her eat any brains yet.  
**Me:** She didn't even eat the school bully. What a con.

### **THE SCORE**

**Sue:** Well, I definitely won't forget that in a hurry.  
**Me:** I could barely watch it, and I've seen *A Serbian Film*.  
**Sue:** I can't believe they got away with it. Can you imagine what would happen if that was on television today? *The Daily Mail* would go spare. And for that reason alone I'll give it:

**7/10**

**Sue:** Shall we watch another one?  
**Me:** Over my dead body.

# FIREFLY

**Requested by:** Matthew Kopelke

**Me:** What do you remember about *Firefly*, Sue?

**Sue:** Is that the one with all the cowboys in outer space?

**Me:** That's the one.

**Sue:** I loved it. So which episode are we watching?

## SERENITY

*We are watching the last episode of Firefly, although it should have been its first. Look, it's complicated.*

**Sue:** Whose stupid idea was that?

**Me:** Fox and friends.

**Sue:** But why would they do that? Why wouldn't you start at the beginning? It doesn't make any sense.

**Me:** Fox weren't happy with the episode and didn't want to open the series with it.

**Sue:** Why? What's wrong with it?

**Me:** I don't know. Let's find out.

*Firefly begins with Mal Reynolds and Zoe Washburne losing a decisive battle in a futuristic civil war.*

**Sue:** I don't understand why anyone would want me to watch this. It's too easy. I mean, what do you want me to say?

**Me:** Maybe you could tell us which classic science fiction show *Firefly* pays homage to. It's obvious, really.

**Sue:** Oh that's easy. *Farscape*.

**Me:** Oh for fuck's sake...

**Sue:** What's wrong? They are both about criminals on a spaceship flying around the galaxy committing crimes, aren't they?

**Me:** And which classic TV show did *Farscape* pay homage to?

**Sue:** I don't know... *The Muppet Show*?

**Me:** BLAKE'S 7!

**Sue:** Oh yeah. Now you mention it, it's obvious.

*We catch up with Mal and Zoe six years later, when they have resorted to stealing contraband from derelict wrecks in their spaceship, Serenity. They are helped by Kaylee, the ship's engineer, it's pilot Wash, and Jayne, a dim-witted beefcake who likes to throw his weight around.*

**Sue:** I remember liking him a lot.

**Me:** He's a massive Trump supporter in real life.

**Sue:** Don't tell me that!

**Me:** He plays a deplorable character so it's fine.

*A large spaceship drives by just as Mal's crew begins to transfer the contraband to Serenity's hold.*

**Sue:** Are these the bad guys?

**Me:** What gave it away?

**Sue:** Their big scary spaceship.

**Me:** It's the Alliance – they're basically the Federation from *Blake's 7*, but without a diva in charge. Well, not that we know of, anyway.

**Sue:** They dress like the bad guys.

**Me:** It's like that Mitchell and Webb sketch where the Nazis suddenly realise they look like the villains, and this lot are driving around in a spaceship called *Dortmunder*, so there's no excuse, really.

*Our heroes evade the Alliance thanks to Serenity's firefly-class engine.*

**Sue:** Wow, that was beautiful.

**Me:** You wouldn't think this was made 15 years ago, would you?

**Sue:** It looks like it was made 15 months ago.

**Me:** So, what do you think of the title character?

**Sue:** It's a funny-looking ship, but it's cute. And you have to admit that it does have a very nice arse.

*This impressive pyrotechnic display segues into Firefly's title sequence.*

**Me:** What do you think of the music?

**Sue:** I fucking love it.

**Me:** (*Sighing*) I knew you'd say that.

**Sue:** This is my kind of music. It sounds like Bon Jovi.

**Me:** Yeah, I reckon Jimmy Nail would have done a cracking cover version of this.

*It turns out that Zoe is married to Wash.*

**Sue:** She hasn't aged at all. She's in *Suits*, you know.

**Me:** I know.

**Sue:** I love *Suits*. It's my favourite show at the moment. Meghan Markle is in it.

**Me:** Is she? She kept that quiet.



*Mal arranges to meet Inara, another member of his crew who works as a freelance prostitute from a detachable shuttle, which Sue immediately christens the Love Shack.*

**Sue:** Is he her taxi driver, then? He isn't her pimp, or anything like that, is he? I think I would have remembered that.

*Serenity arrives on a bustling frontier planet named Persephone.*

**Sue:** Are you sure we didn't see this in a cinema?

**Me:** No, this was definitely on TV.

**Sue:** Are you absolutely sure about that? I mean, look at it. There are hundreds of extras on this planet. I'm not surprised they didn't make a second series – this episode must have cost a fortune. And is there something wrong with the sound mix on this Blu Ray? I didn't understand a word they just said.

**Me:** They're speaking Chinese.

**Sue:** Why?

**Me:** Because China is the dominant culture in the future.

**Sue:** That would explain why they're selling cooked dogs in the market.

**Me:** Get used to it, love, because that's what hot dog stands will look like after Brexit.

*Mal navigates his way through a maze of crates in order to meet Badger, the man he hopes to sell his contraband to.*

**Sue:** It's turned into an episode of *Storage Wars*.

*Badger is played by...*

**Me:** Oh my God. It's Mark Sheppard!

**Sue:** Oh yeah... What was he in again?

**Me:** *Battlestar Galactica*. The good *Battlestar Galactica*. He played a drunk lawyer, remember? He was in *Doctor Who*, too, with Matt Smith.

**Sue:** Why is that exciting?

**Me:** Because Mark's dad played Bill's dad in *The Day of the Triffids*! In real life, I mean. What are the chances of that? We were only talking about him the other week.

**Sue:** He definitely has his father's voice. Either that or he's got a 40-a-day habit.

*Badger won't handle the stolen goods because the ingots have been branded with Alliance serial numbers.*

**Sue:** Just melt them down.

**Me:** How are they going to do that, exactly?

**Sue:** Find a furnace.

**Me:** And where are they going to find a furnace?

**Sue:** Their spaceship's backside catches fire – just melt the gold bars in that. Problem solved.

*While Mal was negotiating with Badger, Kaylee managed to sell passage on their ship to three disparate individuals.*

**Sue:** Oh yes, I remember him. He's a doctor, and his sister is in one of those crates over there. She's as mad as a box of frogs. And this guy is a preacher, which is nice.

**Me:** What about the third passenger?

**Sue:** No idea, which means he won't survive this episode.

*Mal lays down some ground rules before they take off.*

**Sue:** I like the way their ship is full of chairs that don't match. It makes the place feel more realistic and lived in. It's as if they're driving around in a camper van that's seen better days. I love it.

*The preacher, Shepherd Book, bribed his way on board with a rare and special gift.*

**Sue:** A strawberry? Kaylee's easily pleased.

**Me:** This is another example of what life will be like after Brexit.

**Sue:** So, was there a nuclear war or something?

**Me:** No, they didn't secure a trade deal in time.

**Sue:** In this programme, stupid. And stop going on about Brexit.

**Me:** Okay, I suppose it's because it's difficult to grow strawberries in the future.

**Sue:** They can fly around the galaxy in spaceships but they can't build a fucking greenhouse?

**Me:** Maybe there's nobody left to pick the strawberries because they all fucked off back to their home planets and...

**Sue:** I mean it, Neil. Give it a rest.

*Jayne embarrasses everyone at dinner when he tells Simon that Kaylee wishes he was a gynaecologist instead of a regular doctor.*

**Sue:** What a horrible thing to say.

**Me:** It's why the actor was driven off *Twitter*. He's partly responsible for Gamergate, you know.

**Sue:** I don't know what that is but it can't be good if there's a gate in the name.

**Me:** Yeah, like Gareth Southgate.

**Sue:** This is nothing like *Blake's 7*, by the way. If this was *Blake's 7*, Jayne would be Avon, and Avon wasn't a clueless idiot.

**Me:** I think Jayne is more like Gan.

**Sue:** Maybe. But where's the sarcastic computer? I'm sorry, Neil, but this is nothing like *Blake's 7*.

**Me:** It's similar because it features a dysfunctional crew living outside the law. In space.

**Sue:** I can see where you're coming from, but the relationships in this programme are a lot more believable. You can actually relate to these people.

**Me:** Especially Kaylee's love of spanners.

**Sue:** Exactly.

*The third passenger is an undercover cop named Dobson. However, he isn't interested in Mal's crimes because he's really after Simon. A fight breaks out and Dobson shoots Kaylee in the stomach.*

**Sue:** It's all coming back to me now. She fancies him, but he fancies her, whereas those two fancy each other but won't admit it, and the other two are a married couple.

**Me:** Like I said, this is exactly like *Blake's 7*.

*Mal opens Simon's luggage and finds the doctor's sister inside. Her name is River.*

**Sue:** She's got super ninja powers. You don't want to get on the wrong side of her.

*Simon explains that the Alliance experimented on his sister's brain.*

**Sue:** Do we ever find out why?

**Me:** Not really, no.

**Sue:** That's annoying. So why was *Firefly* cancelled?

**Me:** Low ratings. It got great reviews but the viewing figures didn't match the hype. Plus, Fox hated the show. They told Joss Whedon to ditch Zoe and Wash's marriage because they said married couples were boring and nobody cared about them.

**Sue:** Did Joss Whedon tell them to go fuck themselves?

**Me:** Something like that.

**Sue:** Good.

*Dobson offers Jayne a great deal of money in exchange for letting him go, even though it will mean betraying his captain.*

**Sue:** If he was Avon, he would have let him go by now.

*And then Serenity strays into the path of another spaceship and everybody starts wetting themselves.*

**Sue:** This sort of thing happens to them a lot. Space must be really crowded.

*The ship belongs to the Reavers, a feral bunch of cannibal rapists who make the Alliance look like a load of boy scouts.*

**Sue:** So who are *Blake's 7's* version of the Reavers, then?

**Me:** Erm... The Mutoids?

*Luckily for them, the Reavers decide to leave Serenity alone.*

**Sue:** Maybe they're having a nap?

*Once the danger passes, Mal tells Simon that Kaylee is dead.*

**Sue:** It's okay, River brings Kaylee back to life with her superpowers. I remember that for a fact.

*She's wrong – Mal was winding Simon up.*

**Sue:** That wasn't very funny. He isn't very nice, is he? He only gets away with it because he can turn on the charm. Actually, maybe Mal is Avon, after all...

*Mal agrees to sell the contraband to a woman named Patience, even though he knows it's almost certainly a trap.*

**Sue:** Oh, it's definitely is a trap all right, but River saves the day with her ninja superpowers. I'm definitely right about that.

*Serenity lands on another backwater planet that looks a lot like Wyoming, and Mal and Zoe rendezvous with Patience's gang while Jayne takes up a sniping position in the hills.*

**Sue:** This is what I enjoy the most about *Firefly*. It's basically the Wild West in space.

**Me:** It's the one thing I don't like about it. It's too on the nose for me. It's as if the whole series takes place in the theme park from *Westworld*.

**Sue:** It's more like a *Mad Max* version of *The Wild Bunch*, but with spaceships and horses instead of trucks.

*It turns out that Mal's contraband wasn't precious metal, after all.*

**Sue:** It's chocolate?

**Me:** Just melt it down, you said.

**Sue:** I didn't know it was fucking chocolate! Why is chocolate so expensive in the future?

**Me:** They're still living through the Brexit transition period. And it isn't chocolate, it's a nutritious energy bar.

**Sue:** So, what have they been paid in? Avocado seeds? Blueberries?

*Patience reneges on the deal and all hell breaks loose.*

**Sue:** I'd rather see a shoot-out like this than lots of laser guns going, "Pew! Pew! Pew!" any day.

*Meanwhile, back on Serenity, Dobson escapes from his bonds (possibly thanks to Jayne, it isn't clear) and takes River hostage.*

**Sue:** Use your superpowers on him!

*A tense stand-off between Dobson and Simon is only broken when Mal boards his ship and shoots the cop in the head without breaking his stride.*

**Sue:** That's just the sort of thing Indiana Jones would do.

**Me:** Or Han Solo.

**Sue:** Yeah, that makes more sense.

**Me:** None of that, "Who shot second?" bollocks here. I think this is why Fox didn't like this episode very much – the heroes aren't heroic enough.

**Sue:** I bet they liked the handguns, though.

*But it isn't over yet – the Reavers have returned in their big rackety spaceship.*

**Sue:** Ooh, nice air-braking!

**Me:** Here come the Indians.

**Sue:** You can't say that, Neil.

**Me:** Okay, here come the Native Americans. Or the Native Humans. Oh, you know what I mean.

**Sue:** Yes, here come the *Mad Max* people.

*They narrowly escape from the Reavers when Wash successfully pulls off a Crazy Ivan manoeuvre (which is even crazier than it sounds).*

**Sue:** (*Half out of her chair*) Yes! That was brilliant!

*When the dust settles, Jayne admits that Dobson tried to make a deal with him, but he turned it down because the money wasn't good enough.*

**Me:** So how did Dobson escape? I think Jayne agreed to the deal and only changed his mind when everything went pear-shaped.

**Sue:** It wouldn't surprise me. That's very *Blake's 7*, I suppose.

*Mal offers Simon a permanent job on the ship and the episode – and the series – concludes with Serenity beginning/ending her small-screen adventures.*

**Sue:** No, I don't want it to end!

*Cue credits.*

## THE SCORE

**Sue:** That was fantastic. It was funny, exciting, a little bit scary, and loads of fun.

## 10/10

**Sue:** It set everything up perfectly. I still don't understand why they didn't show that one first. The person who made that decision is a fucking idiot. Are they still working in TV? I really hope they aren't.

**Me:** Do you think they should bring *Firefly* back?

**Sue:** Of course they should. What a stupid question.

# DOCTOR WHO: SCHOOL REUNION

**Requested by:** our *Kickstarter* backers

**Sue:** What are the tissues for?

**Me:** Never mind.

**Sue:** I didn't know you had a cold. Anyway, what are we watching tonight? And who picked it?

**Me:** We're watching a David Tennant episode of *Doctor Who*...

**Sue:** Ooh...

**Me:** And our *Kickstarter* backers chose it. There was a poll and everything.

**Sue:** Well this is a lovely surprise. Thank you.

*The episode begins with a Deffry Vale High School student feeling unwell.*

**Sue:** I'm not surprised she's got a headache when the walls in that school have been painted a shade of green that's probably illegal under European health and safety regulations.

**Me:** Enjoy them while you still can.

*Anthony Head plays the school's headmaster, Mr Finch.*

**Sue:** Oh, it's whatshisface from *Buffy*. He likes to hang around in schools, doesn't he?

**Me:** Do you remember this episode, Sue?

**Sue:** Yes. Definitely. The headmaster is the bad guy – he's eating all the children – and the Doctor's got a job at the school so he can catch him in the act.

**Me:** You've just described everything you just saw. You don't remember this at all, do you?

**Sue:** No.

*Cue titles.*

**Sue:** I definitely remember this, though. This is the best version of the *Doctor Who* theme music, without a doubt.

**Me:** You know, I often wonder if the last seven years were a complete waste of time...

*The Doctor is teaching physics at the school, but only one of his students displays any aptitude for the subject.*

**Sue:** Is the smart kid with the glasses supposed to be the Doctor as a child or something?

**Me:** Eh?

**Sue:** Is this a timey-wimey one, and the Doctor's gone back in time and...

**Me:** I'll stop you right there. No, this isn't a timey-wimey one. You really don't remember this at all, do you?

**Sue:** When did this air?

**Me:** Twelve years ago.

**Sue:** Well, there you fucking go, then. Of course I don't remember it. What a stupid fucking question. Can you remember an episode of *EastEnders* you saw 12 years ago?

**Me:** Possibly. It depends.

**Sue:** Depends, my arse.

**Me:** Don't you think David Tennant has bad skin?

**Sue:** I beg your pardon?! Where did that come from?

**Me:** David Tennant has very bad skin.

**Sue:** Hark at Robert Redford.

**Me:** Look at his face!

**Sue:** They're freckles, Neil. They're nice.

**Me:** Freckles! It's a good job this isn't in HD.

**Sue:** So, what happened in Albert Square the week this was on TV?

**Me:** Oh look! It's Rose...

*The Doctor and Rose have infiltrated the school so they can investigate some unexplained goings-on which have been detected by Mickey Smith (no thanks to Torchwood, whoever they are). Or to put it even more bluntly:*

**Sue:** There's something fishy going on with the chips.

*The school's curriculum isn't exactly traditional, either.*

**Sue:** Are they playing *War of Worldcraft* (sic)?

**Me:** Not quite.

**Sue:** I don't think much of the graphics.

*A journalist has arrived to write a fluff-piece on the school, and the Doctor can't contain his joy when he's finally introduced to her.*

**Sue:** This is really sweet. Is this the first time Sarah Jane came back?

**Me:** Yes, this is the first time we've seen Sarah Jane Smith since *K9*



*and Company* in 1981.

**Sue:** Aren't we supposed to re-enact the opening to that? You know, for *Kickstarter*.

**Me:** We were going to do it last summer, but you broke your ankle.

**Sue:** The things I have to do to get out of the things you've promised I'll do without asking me first.

*A student, who isn't allowed to eat the school's chips, discovers that one of his teachers is actually a giant bat.*

**Sue:** That looked amazing. Didn't that look amazing, Neil?

**Me:** It was alright for 2006, I suppose.

**Sue:** Are you taking the piss? The stuff you've made me sit through and that was "alright"? You need to give your head a shake.

*Later that night, Sarah breaks into the school.*

**Sue:** This brings back memories.

**Me:** Oh, so you do remember this episode, then.

**Sue:** No, I'm taking about the overhead projector over there. Do you remember them, Neil? They were a right pain in the arse.

*Sarah stumbles across the TARDIS and realises she's in the presence of a very old friend.*

**Sue:** That scene gave me goosebumps. It's so poignant. Especially now.

**Me:** It's heartbreaking.

*The Doctor mentions the Time War, but I think he got away with it.*

**Me:** Except everybody didn't die, did they? Not really. He just doesn't know it yet, the idiot.

**Sue:** Oh yeah... That's right. However, he thinks they did, and that's all that matters, you twat.

**Me:** He isn't even the Tenth Doctor, you know. He's the Eleventh.

**Sue:** Do I look like I'm bothered?

*Rose isn't exactly thrilled to meet the Doctor's ex-assistant, and Sarah isn't exactly thrilled when Rose tells her the Doctor never talks about her.*

**Sue:** (*Laughing*) I don't know why Mickey thinks this is funny; he's supposed to be Rose's boyfriend, isn't he? What a gooseberry.

**Me:** What's even worse is the Doctor never stops talking about Adric.

*Sarah has something she wants to show the Doctor.*

**Sue:** Why is Sarah Jane driving around with a broken K9 in the back of her car? Does she drag him around with her all the time, just in case she bumps into the Doctor? Because that makes no sense at all.

*As the Doctor repairs the mechanical mutt in a local cafe, Sarah wants to know why he never came back for her.*

**Sue:** That's a good question. Why didn't he go back for her?

**Me:** He couldn't steer the TARDIS, remember? That's why she ended up in Aberdeen. He probably wanted to go back for her, but before you know it, he's knocking about with Leela, and it would have been awkward if he'd turned up in Croydon with an attractive woman dressed in a leather bikini.

**Sue:** I don't buy it. He could have come back for her any time. What was stopping Peter Davison popping round, just to make sure she was okay? No wonder she's pissed off. I would be too.

*The Doctor claims to be cursed, because he has to outlive his companions.*

**Me:** Like a friendly vampire.

**Sue:** It sounds alright to me. I don't know what he's moaning about.

**Me:** It's like abandoning an old dog on the side of the road because you can't bear to put it down.

**Sue:** That's horrible, Neil. I worry about you sometimes.

*As the Doctor and Rose discuss his 'curse', they are observed by Finch and a Krillitane, who are currently perched on the ledge of a nearby building. However, when the Doctor mentions he's a Time Lord, the bat-like creature takes off, alerting its presence to everybody concerned.*

**Sue:** Did it leave the gas on or something?

*The next day, Finch and the Doctor face off across the school's swimming pool. The Doctor gives Finch one last chance to stop eating the children and bugger off. We're not sure what this means for the children who have already been eaten, but what the hell.*

**Me:** What do you think of Anthony Head?

**Sue:** He's great.

**Me:** Back in the 1990s, when *Doctor Who* wasn't on television and a

great darkness fell upon the land, he was always mentioned as a possible Doctor if the series came back. It was usually a toss-up between him and Paul Daniels.

**Sue:** Yeah, he would have been good.

**Me:** No, Paul Daniels would have been TRAGIC! Sorry, I couldn't resist.

**Sue:** He would have been a better Master, though.

**Me:** What, Paul Daniels?

**Sue:** Stop it. Look at him. He's practically auditioning for the part. In fact, if he hadn't eaten that child earlier, I'd swear it was the Master. You know what he's like.

**Me:** Maybe the Master eats children now. The last time we saw him he was a snake.

**Sue:** Yeah, he wasn't very nice.

**Me:** No, a real snake.

**Sue:** Yeah, I definitely knew that.

*When Finch and the Doctor have finished posturing, Sue asks an important question:*

**Sue:** Why do Time Lords look human?

**Me:** What?

**Sue:** I can't believe I've never thought about this before. There must be a good reason for it.

**Me:** Well, it's cheap, for a start.

**Sue:** Oh yeah, that makes sense. Forget I asked.

*Rose and Sarah compete to see which one of them had the craziest adventure with the Doctor.*

**Sue:** The script is absolutely brilliant. Everything about this is brilliant. The direction, the acting, the music. Everything.

**Me:** Even Mickey.

**Sue:** Especially Mickey. Poor Mickey.

*A Krillitane teacher subjects his students to yet another lesson in computer hacking.*

**Sue:** Whatever this computer programme is, it can't be that good if he's got it running on an Amstrad.

*The children are being forced to crack the Skasis paradigm, which will give Finch power over, well, practically everything, apparently.*

**Sue:** This is brilliant.

**Me:** Sorry, what did you say? I can't hear you because THE MUSIC IS TOO LOUD!

*The Doctor could be a God if he teamed-up with Finch. Not only that, his companions could remain by his side, forever young.*

**Sue:** That sounds like a pretty good deal to me. Say yes.

*The Doctor could stop the Time War...*

**Me:** You already have!

*But Sarah urges the Doctor to do the right thing and resist.*

**Sue:** It's quite good this, because doesn't he go all God-like later and fuck everything up?

**Me:** So, you do remember these episodes, then?

**Sue:** Bits of them. I remember that David Tennant loses control at some point, and tries to be a God, so this must be setting that up. It's good, isn't it?

*K9 comes to the rescue when the Krillitanes attack.*

**Me:** I love the way he says "Maximum Defence Mode!" It always makes me laugh.

**Sue:** Always? How many times have you seen this, Neil?

**Me:** Shut up.

*The Krillitanes are allergic to the same oil they've been cooking their mind-altering chips in because... reasons.*

**Me:** What a load of bollocks. I'm sorry, Sue, but that's bollocks.

**Sue:** So fucking what? Like that's ever stopped *Doctor Who* before.

*Mickey saves the day when he unplugs a large extension cable.*

**Sue:** *(Laughing)* This reminds me of all the times I've had to stop students checking *Facebook* during their lectures. I wish I had a giant plug like that.

*However, K9 will have to go the extra mile if they want to stop the Krillitanes permanently.*

**Sue:** He'll be fine. He's K9. I refuse to cry.

**Me:** Speak for yourself.

*The students are over the moon when their school explodes.*

**Me:** You can tell this was made 12 years ago. Nobody's filming this on a mobile phone, or taking selfies in front of the flames.

**Sue:** Forget that. Have they really killed K9? Like, really?

*Sarah gets to see inside the new TARDIS, and then, after dispensing some sage advice to Rose, she bids the Doctor farewell.*

**Me:** Here. Take these...

**Sue:** Go away. Don't look at me.

*I pass her the tissues.*

**Sue:** Thanks. I didn't know I had a cold.

*As the TARDIS dematerialises, Sarah looks back and sees a pristine K9 waiting for her.*

**Sue:** K9! I knew he'd be okay. You can't kill K9.

**Me:** He still died. That's his replacement.

**Sue:** But they can't do that...

**Me:** Of course they can. The K9 they blew up earlier wasn't the original, either.

**Sue:** What?

**Me:** The original K9 lives on Gallifrey with Leela, and *his* replacement is knocking around with Romana in another universe. The K9 who sacrificed himself today was the third version of K9. That we know of. They should have called him K11, really.

**Sue:** (*Throwing the box of tissues at me*) If you'd told me that at the beginning, I wouldn't have been so upset.

**Me:** The Doctor has a cupboard full of K9s, like we have a drawer full of old iPods.

**Sue:** Oh, in that case, fuck him.

## **THE SCORE**

**Sue:** Do you really have to ask?

**10/10**

**Sue:** It's a good job we aren't watching all the David Tennant episodes for a blog. It would just be me saying, "This is great, this is wonderful, this is funny" – all the fucking time. People would get bored.

**Me:** And that's why we'll never do it, Sue.

**Sue:** So, what's next?

**Me:** Another episode of *Doctor Who*. With David Tennant.

**Sue:** Oh.

# DOCTOR WHO: LOVE & MONSTERS

**Requested by:** Matt Hills

**Me:** This is the last time I'll ever ask you to watch an episode of *Doctor Who* with me for a blog. I promise.

**Sue:** If I was given a pound every time you promised me that, I'd have six pounds now.

**Me:** This time I actually mean it. Unless Philip Morris isn't full of hot air, which he is, by the way. He voted for Brexit, you know. I saw him on *Facebook* moaning about fishing quotas one day, so I replied, THE EU IS DESTROYED. THE END. He didn't get the joke.

**Sue:** Neither do I.

**Me:** Anyway, it doesn't look like you'll ever have to watch *Marco Polo* again.

**Sue:** So, there is a God, after all?

**Me:** Meaning, this is probably the last one.

**Sue:** Probably?

**Me:** Definitely. Unless the latest *Evil of the Daleks* rumour is true. Which is isn't.

**Sue:** Shall we just skip to the end? I thought it was fabulous, 10 out of 10.

**Me:** The episode we're watching tonight was chosen by Matt Hills. You met him once, when he visited the university.

**Sue:** *The* Matt Hills?

**Me:** Yeah.

**Sue:** Oh no. He'll probably expect me to say something clever. He's a proper academic and everything.

*The episode begins with a young man named Elton encountering the TARDIS on some wasteland.*

**Sue:** So, what's this one called, then?

**Me:** *Love ampersand Monsters*.

**Sue:** Do you have to be a cunt all your life, Neil?

*Elton recounts his story to a webcam.*

**Sue:** He's a blogger, then? This is a bit meta, isn't it? So that's why Matt Hills choose this episode. Come on, Neil, say something intellectual about how meta this episode is.

**Me:** Er...

**Sue:** Come on, you started a PhD in *Doctor Who*. Make something

up!

**Me:** Doesn't this scene remind you of *The Benny Hill Show*?

*The Doctor and Rose are chased by an alien as an astonished Elton watches from the sidelines.*

**Sue:** This reminds me of something else.

**Me:** Yes, I know. I pitched a script to Big Finish once for an audio adventure called *Gareth*. It was basically the same plot as this. They turned me down.

**Sue:** No, I mean I'm sure I've seen this before in *Doctor Who*. I think they go around to his house later.

**Me:** Oh, you're thinking of Clive. This is a completely different super-fan.

**Sue:** They should meet up for a drink and exchange notes.

**Me:** Clive's dead. He was killed by the Autons, remember?

**Sue:** It's what he would have wanted. So, are you still annoyed about the Big Finish thing?

**Me:** Of course not.

**Sue:** Well, it has been 15 years, and you only mention it once a month now, so that's progress, I guess.

*Elton witnessed the same Auton invasion that killed Clive, as well as the Sycorax spaceship which appeared over London on Christmas Day.*

**Sue:** So what? Who didn't see that? Does that mean everyone in London has a Doctor Who blog now? Get over yourself, pet.

*It turns out that quite a few people have been running blogs dedicated to the Doctor's adventures, and before Elton knows it, he's joined a community of like-minded individuals.*

**Me:** Can you see what they are doing here, Sue?

**Sue:** Yes, I'm not completely stupid. This is about *Doctor Who* fans.

**Me:** Yeah, this episode is basically a love letter to fandom.

**Sue:** It looks more like a support group for people suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

**Me:** Same thing.

**Sue:** Is this what it's like when you go to that pub in London without me? You swap recipes?

**Me:** No, but we have been known to dance to ELO.

*And then Victor Kennedy turns up and ruins everything.*



**Sue:** Is it the Master?

**Me:** Really?

**Sue:** I'm joking for old time's sake. But seriously, is it the Master?

*No, it's Peter Kay.*

**Sue:** I don't remember this episode at all. I'm sure I would have remembered this if Peter Kay was in it.

**Me:** Well, I know you didn't watch it when it was first broadcast...

**Sue:** How can you possibly remember that?

**Me:** Because I kicked you out of the caravan when it was on.

**Sue:** Charming.

**Me:** I was recording a live podcast with my friends, remember?

**Sue:** You're as bad as Elton. Did you swap any recipes?

**Me:** Only a couple. John Williams' carrot cake was delicious.

**Sue:** Actually, it all makes sense now, because you used to record songs, too. Do you remember that one time you got Damon to sing a cover version of something or other...

**Me:** *Chasing Pavements* by Adele. Or maybe it was Amy Winehouse...

**Sue:** Whatever it was, Damon can't sing, bless him, and he sounded like a cat being tortured to death. This was back when the house was still being built, and while he was screaming his lungs out, some builders walked in and you had to explain what the fuck it was you were doing. Now *that* was funny.

**Me:** It was so bad, we had to cut it from the podcast. And our standards were pretty low.

*Meanwhile, in Love ampersand Monsters...*

**Me:** This guy, Victor Kennedy, is supposedly based on somebody famous in *Doctor Who* fandom. Who do you think it is?

**Sue:** I have no idea. The only people I know in *Doctor Who* fandom are you, Damon and John Williams. And I haven't seen Damon and John Williams in years. What did you do to upset them?

**Me:** Come on, you know this. Who is *Doctor Who's* biggest fan?

**Sue:** Steven Moffat.

**Me:** Apart from him.

*Victor Kennedy starts bossing Elton's friends about.*

**Sue:** Is it Ian Levine?

**Me:** Give that woman a king-sized Aero!

**Sue:** But I like Ian Levine. He's a fascinating man. So why is this guy like Ian Levine?

**Me:** Because he sucks the joy out of everything.

**Sue:** Are you sure he isn't based on you, Neil?

*Elton inserts himself in Jackie Tyler's orbit so he can get closer to Rose.*

**Me:** Does this remind you of when we first met?

**Sue:** Not really. Elton is useful around the house. Look, he knows what a fuse is and everything.

*Jackie likes having Elton around.*

**Sue:** Yeah, he's the total opposite of you, Neil. Okay, he runs a silly blog, and yes, he's clearly got problems, but at least he knows how to locate the stopcock.

*Speaking of which, Jackie invites Elton to, er, splash out.*

**Sue:** (*Laughing*) NOT FOR KIDS!

*Before we know it, Elton is naked from the waist up.*

**Sue:** Nice six-pack... Have I mentioned that Elton is the total opposite of you, Neil?

*Jackie realises that Elton has been using her to get to Rose.*

**Sue:** It makes you think, this. They never had to deal with this in the old series. The Doctor's companions are basically missing persons at the end of the day.

**Me:** Have you noticed anything odd about this episode yet? We're about 30 minutes into it.

**Sue:** It's a lot funnier than usual, but apart from that, no, not really.

**Me:** And you call yourself a David Tennant fan?

**Sue:** Oh yeah... Where the fuck is he? Is he on holiday? Is he doing a William Hartnell this week?

**Me:** It's because they had to film a Christmas special – they filmed most of this episode without him so they could keep to the original schedule.

**Sue:** It works. I didn't even notice until you mentioned it. Of course, now that you *have* mentioned it, I'm really pissed off.

*Victor Kennedy reveals his true self.*

**Me:** This monster was designed by a *Blue Peter* viewer.

**Sue:** Don't be cruel, Neil.

**Me:** I'm not joking!

**Sue:** So, all the monster designers were working on the Christmas special as well?

**Me:** No, this was intentional. The prize for coming up with the best design was your monster appeared in an episode of *Doctor Who*.

**Sue:** They actually chose this on purpose? Knowing they'd have to use it? Are they mad?

**Me:** The *Blue Peter* viewer wasn't very happy about it, either. He said it should have been the size of a double-decker bus. Oh, and Sad Tony was robbed.

**Sue:** What?

**Me:** Never mind.

*The Abzorbaloff has consumed Elton's friends, and one of them is trapped in the worst possible place.*

**Sue:** Is this supposed to be Ian Levine talking out of his arse?

*The Abzorbaloff absorbs Ursula before chasing after Elton.*

**Sue:** Oh. My. God. You can see his pubic hair.

**Me:** That's his underpants.

**Sue:** I hope to God you're right, Neil. Christ, imagine if this thing was the size of a bus. Fuck's sake.

*The Abzorbaloff comes from Raxacoricofallapatorius' twin planet, Clom.*

**Me:** This is very silly.

**Sue:** (*Laughing*) Bloody funny, though.

*Ursula defeats the Abzorbaloff by squeezing herself, like a big, sentient spot.*

**Sue:** Can we apologise to Matt Hills, please? I am literally lost for words.

*The Doctor arrived at Elton's house when Elton was a little boy to defeat an alien shadow monster. Unfortunately, he arrived too late to save Elton's mother.*

**Sue:** Have you still got those tissues handy?

**Me:** Of course I have, I'm watching new episodes of *Doctor Who*.

**Sue:** So Elton really did need counselling for post-traumatic stress disorder, after all.

*But it's not all bad news: the Doctor saved Ursula. Sort of.*

**Sue:** Is Elton imagining this? This isn't really happening, is it? It can't be... Is he in hospital?

*The episode concludes with Elton admitting that he still has a love life of sorts.*

**Me and Sue:** Nooooooooooooooooo!

## **THE SCORE**

**Me:** Ten out of 10?

**Sue:** Let's not be too hasty.

**Me:** But it's a David Tennant episode of *Doctor Who*. It's got to be 10 out of 10, surely?

**Sue:** He was barely in it! Oh God, it's such a shame. Everything up until the moment Peter Kay started running around naked was absolutely brilliant. It was so funny, and quite moving in places. But then it fell apart at the end. It's as if Russell was up against a deadline and simply gave up.

**7/10**

**Me:** And that's it, our very last proper *Doctor Who* blog. Again. Well done, Sue.

**Sue:** And we finished with a man getting a blow job from a paving slab. Why do I get the feeling you did that on purpose, Neil?

# THE MIDDLEMAN

**Requested by:** Gareth Martland

**Sue:** What are we watching now?

**Me:** *The Middleman.*

**Sue:** Never heard of it.

**Me:** Me neither.

**Sue:** What does Wikipedia say?

**Me:** It says it's based on a comic book and it ran for one season in 2008.

**Sue:** What's it about?

**Me:** It's about 40 minutes.

**Sue:** What kind of show is it?

**Me:** I think it's a comedy spy thing. I honestly have no idea. Let's find out...

## THE CLOTHARIAN CONTAMINATION PROTOCOL

*Wendy and Tyler are buying a hot dog from a street vendor when a minor car accident spurns Tyler into saving a billionaire from becoming the victim of a road rage incident.*

**Sue:** Are these the regular characters, then?

**Me:** Don't ask me!

*The billionaire Manservant Neville (that's pronounced M'nservant Neville, by the way) is played by Mark Sheppard.*

**Me:** Not again!

**Sue:** He gets about, doesn't he?

**Me:** We should call this book *The Wife Versus The Sheppards*.

*The title sequence shows us what we can expect from The Middleman.*

**Sue:** It looks like it wants to be *The Avengers*.

*Wendy's flatmates are impressed when they discover her boyfriend saved the man who runs Fatboy Industries.*

**Me:** (Proudly) That reference to a pan galactic gargle blaster is from *The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*, love.

**Sue:** Is it?

**Me:** And that reference to an invisible touch was a reference to Genesis.

**Sue:** Yeah, I got that one, thanks.

**Me:** It reminds me of *Community*.

**Sue:** This isn't as funny as *Community*.

**Me:** Nothing is as funny as *Community* (especially *Community* season four), but the pop culture references are very similar.

*Wendy works for the Middleman, a quirky individual who appears to be an amalgam of the Doctor, Fox Mulder and Ben Browder from Farscape. It's a heady combination, frankly.*

**Sue:** So it's a comedy *X-Files*, then?

**Me:** Yeah, as if *Men in Black* wasn't enough.

*Wendy (aka Dubby) and the Middleman have been assigned with retrieving Voyager 2, which has mysteriously returned to Earth. The Middleman is worried that the probe has developed artificial intelligence and is returning to judge its makers.*

**Me:** (Smugly) That's a reference to *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*.

**Sue:** Is it? Can I play this game?

*It turns out she can play this game, because when NASA turn up they are led by somebody named Lethbridge-Stewart.*

**Sue:** Hey, that was a reference to the Brigadier!

**Me:** There you go. It's easy, isn't it?

*A few minutes later, there's a reference to Zygons.*

**Sue:** Zygons!

**Me:** Well done, Sue.

**Sue:** What do I win?

*They take V-ger's black box to the Middleman's secret base, oblivious to the fact that it's actually a bomb. There's a countdown to an inevitable explosion and everything.*

**Me:** The alien language on that bomb is from *Star Wars*.

**Sue:** Okay, I'm bored now.

*The bomb has been sent by the Clotharians, who our heroes have had to deal with before – they once sent five intergalactic dictators disguised as a boy band to destroy the world.*

**Sue:** That sounds like a good episode. Why didn't we watch that one?

**Me:** I think Gareth chose this one because of all the Zygon references.

**Sue:** Thanks, Gareth.

**Me:** Even though you only gave *Terror of the Zygons* seven out of 10.

**Sue:** Let it go, Neil.

*The Middleman's secret base is staffed by robots called Interrodroids.*

**Sue:** They look like Cybermen with no ears.

*The bomb goes off and Wendy and the Middleman are contaminated by an alien virus, which means they'll have to submit themselves to the Clotharian Contamination Protocol. It's at this point the Middleman explains the concept of a Code 47 to Wendy: before embarking on a mission, he records message for his companion, just in case he doesn't come back. There then follows a series of Code 47s that Wendy never got to see. "If you are seeing this, I was turned into a fish zombie and you had to shoot me in the head."*

**Sue:** Did all these things actually happen in the other episodes?

**Me:** I think so.

**Sue:** But they sound ridiculous. Fish zombies? Really?

**Me:** According to *Wikipedia*, there's an episode called 'The Flying Fish Zombification' so I'm going to go out on a limb and say it probably happened.

*The Middleman's receptionist, Ida – who is also a robot, by the way – has been compromised by the virus, which means the Middleman has to enact the Nakatomi protocol.*

**Me:** Do you get that reference, Sue?

**Sue:** No.

**Me:** Seriously?

**Sue:** Why would I lie about that?

**Me:** She just said, "Come to the coast, we'll get together, have a few laughs...". The key code that triggers the Nakatomi Protocol played Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy'. Oh, and they're currently making their way through the buildings ventilation system.

**Sue:** Is it *Alien*?

*Wendy complains that the building looks like it was created by a bunch of TV writers.*

**Me:** It's official: I have fallen in love with this programme.

*Wendy sums up their predicament: "It's like Die Hard in a building".*

**Sue:** Oh yeah! I get it now!

*There isn't that much more to say about The Middleman, mainly because we spend most of the episode laughing at it. And even though it does include a subplot we can barely grasp – Wendy's boyfriend goes for a job interview at Fatboy Industries – there are also plenty of references to things like the Treaty of PeriPerpugilliam, which is nice. But the best moment for me is when they contact the alien Clotharians, and even though they look human...*

**Sue:** Except for their silly hats...

*Even though they look like humans wearing silly hats (Wendy thinks their leader looks like Graham Chapman), they still call us "hairless apes". This made me laugh so much, I had to stop the episode while I recovered.*

**Sue:** Yippy-ki-yay motherfucker!

**Me:** Finally!

*The aliens have had enough of humanity polluting the universe with their competitive cooking shows, so they decide to exact their revenge by forcing Ida to detonate a nanobot bomb. So, the Middleman uses something called a baby-HEYDAR to shrink Wendy to the size of a nanobot, and then he shoots her up Ida's nose.*

**Sue:** It's like the film *Fantastic Voyage*.

**Me:** There's a caption on the screen that says, 'It's like the film *Fantastic Voyage*'.

**Sue:** Spoilsport. I really like these captions, though. I like how they explain what's going on, because I don't think I'd be able to follow the plot without them.

**Me:** Where's the reference to *The Invisible Enemy*? That's what I want to know.

*Trapped inside Ida's head, and surrounded by nanobots, Wendy records a heartfelt Code 47 where she admits that the Middleman is a father figure to her and she was proud to be his sidekick.*



**Sue:** That would have made me cry if I knew who these characters were.

*Wendy survives the ordeal – with a little help from the nanobots – but she tells the Middleman she still meant every word.*

**Sue:** Yeah, I'm sure that would have been a big deal if we'd watched every episode. What a pity.

### **THE SCORE**

**Sue:** I enjoyed that. We should have watched the first one, though. Why does he call her Dubby? Is he even human? And what the hell is a HEYDAR when it's at home?

**Me:** According to *Wikipedia*, it's a High Energy Yield Data Resource.

**Sue:** Oh, that makes perfect sense. Forget I asked.

**Me:** Well, I enjoyed it.

**Sue:** I did too. I would definitely watch more. Is it on *Netflix*? It should be on *Netflix*.

# HEAD

**Requested by:** Andy Miller

*Andy Miller edited the book we published with Faber & Faber, which is why I let him to pick a movie instead of a TV programme. But he didn't pick any old film – he picked a 1968 film starring The Monkees that was completely new to both of us. And you know how I said Mystery Science Theater 3000 was the hardest thing we've ever been asked to blog? Well Andy's just asked Scott to hold his beer...*

**Me:** Who was your favourite Monkee?

**Sue:** The British one, Davy Jones.

**Me:** Why?

**Sue:** Because I lived in the same street as his sister.

**Me:** I don't remember you telling me that. What was she like?

**Sue:** I don't know. I never met her.

**Me:** But you lived in the same street?

**Sue:** Yeah, although she'd already left by the time I moved in.

**Me:** This anecdote is getting worse by the second.

**Sue:** I lived next door to somebody who said hello to her once.

**Me:** So, based on the fact that Davy Jones' sister used to live in the same street as you, you're picking him as your favourite Monkee? That's the reason?

**Sue:** I didn't fancy him if that's what you mean. So, who's your favourite?

**Me:** I hate them all equally. Aren't they the 1960s version of Take That? However, if I had to pick I'd choose Micky Dolenz because he was partly responsible for *Metal Mickey*.

**Sue:** EH?

**Me:** Boogie boogie.

*HEAD (Andy says I have to capitalise it or the Monkee police will come and get me) starts on a new bridge that's about to be opened by some politicians. The situation is chaotic and frustratingly oblique; the sound is barely audible and most of the screen is taken up with the back of some bureaucrat's head. Sorry, HEAD.*

**Sue:** What the fuck is this? Are we watching the right film?

*The Monkees eventually burst through the crowd, but they aren't here to monkee around. Quite the opposite, in fact.*

**Sue:** Has Micky committed suicide?

*Micky's thrown himself off the bridge and landed HEADfirst in the water.*

**Sue:** They'll never identify his body after that. His HEAD would have been crushed like a watermelon.

*Micky is rescued by some mermaids.*

**Sue:** Micky was the Harry Styles of his day, you know.

**Me:** You mean they both had stupid hair?

**Sue:** I quite like this song, though.

**Me:** This doesn't sound like the Monkees to me. It sounds like early Pink Floyd.

**Sue:** They sound like The Beatles to me, but The Monkees *always* sound like The Beatles. And either you've put LSD in my tea again or Micky is tripping his bollocks off and this is a dream sequence.

*The film showcases a solarisation technique that looks old hat now but was cutting-edge back in 1968.*

**Me:** According to *Wikipedia* – so it must be true – Jack Nicholson wrote the screenplay to *HEAD* while he smoked enough marijuana to incapacitate a horse.

**Sue:** *The* Jack Nicholson?

**Me:** If any other Jack Nicholson had written this script, I'm pretty sure they would have told him to fuck off.

*There's a fabulous edit where the film cuts between Micky swimming underwater to him sitting behind a fish tank as an attractive woman snogs his face off.*

**Sue:** Oh yeah, he's definitely tripping.

*The woman snogs each Monkee in turn.*

**Sue:** What the hell are we watching, Neil?

**Me:** I'm no expert, Sue, but it looks like the beginning of a gang bang.

*The kissing competition ends in a draw and the screen is incrementally filled with tiny TV screens, each depicting a moment from the movie to come, as the Monkees sing about how there's no plot, and they're just a manufactured band who rejoice in never being free. It concludes with documentary footage of a Viet-Cong soldier being shot in the HEAD, which then cuts to a woman*

*screaming. Is she screaming in horror? No, she's waiting for the Monkees to take to the stage.*

**Me:** Wow.

**Sue:** Who was this film made for, exactly?

**Me:** That's a very good question. The anti-war imagery and psychedelic soundtrack means they must have been making it for a hippy audience, but the hippies would have avoided the Monkees like the plague. It would be like One Direction making an art house film about Iraq. Who'd pay to see that?

**Sue:** Harry Styles was great in *Dunkirk*.

**Me:** Bad example. Okay, imagine if The Bay City Rollers made a hard-hitting musical about Vietnam.

**Sue:** But wouldn't the Monkees' fans have seen this? Because documentary footage of people being shot in the head would have traumatised them for life.

**Me:** Yeah, this definitely isn't for kids.

**Sue:** I don't know who it's supposed to be for... And now they're trying to sound like The Doors, although Jim Morrison wouldn't have been seen dead in an Aran sweater.

**Me:** I hope Peter doesn't get his Tork out.

*The audience rush the stage and rip the band to pieces, but it's okay because the musicians have been replaced by mannequins.*

**Sue:** The direction is fabulous but I don't know what's going on.

**Me:** I think The Monkees hate their fans, which is fine by me because I've never had any time for them either.

*A channel surfing montage sequence (eat your heart out, Roger Waters) eventually focuses on Micky, who is lost in a desert and slowly dying of thirst. He stumbles upon an oasis, or a Coca-Cola vending machine to be exact, but the machine isn't working so Micky – whose real name is George Michael, according to God – blows the machine to smithereens with a tank that's been abandoned by a retreating Italian army. Is this making any sense?*

**Sue:** No.

*A jump-cut later and we're transported to a harem filled with nubile belly dancers. And I do mean filled.*

**Sue:** Okay, now I understand why this is Andy Miller's favourite film.

*The women dance suggestively as Micky enjoys a hookah pipe.*

**Sue:** I think Micky's smoked too much hashish and the whole film has been a dream.

**Me:** You said that earlier.

**Sue:** I know. It's a dream within a dream.

**Me:** So, is he dreaming now?

**Sue:** He's in a tent full of half-naked women, Neil. What do *you* think?

*We cut to the Wild West...*

**Sue:** Okay, I give up.

**Me:** This reminds me of Monty Python because I have absolutely no idea what to expect next.

**Sue:** It's taking the piss, you mean.

**Me:** I love it. This isn't what I was expecting at all. I thought this was going to be a kooky slapstick comedy.

**Sue:** That's exactly what it is.

**Me:** Well, yes, but there's a subversive edge to it. It's really dark.

**Sue:** When are they going to play one of their hits?

*Micky has had enough because everything is fake, including the arrows he's just been shot with.*

**Sue:** They're sending up Elvis.

**Me:** What?

**Sue:** They forced Elvis to make stupid films like these. This is The Monkees saying, "Fuck that shit, I'm not doing it any more".

**Me:** I must admit, this does feel like it's the band's suicide note. But what a way to go!

*Micky rips a hole in the set and when the camera pulls back we see more cameras filming a different scene with Davy Jones.*

**Me:** This is like the end of *Gangsters*.

**Sue:** Why, what happens at the end of *Gangsters*?

**Me:** This!

*The band are treated like pariahs on this film set. Even the canteen's waitress doesn't have anything good to say about them, calling the band, "God's gift to eight-year-olds" and Micky a poor man's Ringo Starr. And then the group find themselves in another movie/dream where Davy Jones plays a boxer who's supposed to throw a fight.*

**Sue:** The Monkees must have signed a really bad contract when they first started out. Yeah, that must be it.

*Davy hits the canvas but refuses to stay down, so Micky enters the ring and knocks out Davy, his opponent, a gangster and his moll.*

**Sue:** (*Appalled*) A Monkee just hit a woman! Did you see that, Neil?

*This fight spills over into the real world (at least I think it's the real world) and ends with Pete punching the waitress (who's really a man) in the face. Pete isn't very happy about this because it will tarnish his image as a clean-cut Monkee and the kids won't dig it. The director yells, "Cut!"*

**Sue:** Was postmodernism even a word back then? Did The Monkees invent postmodernism?

*Jack Nicholson and Dennis Hopper wander across the screen in a cameo that's so brief it's almost subliminal.*

**Me:** It's official – this is one of the best films I have ever seen.

**Sue:** You only like it because it's weird, Neil.

*After another musical interlude (where I mistake Micky Dolenz for Jefferson Airplane's Grace Slick) the action shifts to a factory.*

**Sue:** It's an Amazon fulfilment centre from hell.

**Me:** Is there any other kind?

*After being incarcerated in a black box, the band are forced to play flakes of dandruff in a shampoo commercial.*

**Sue:** I bet this is exactly the sort of thing they made them do back then. The film is one big "fuck you" to their management, isn't it? I totally get it now, although I'm surprised anyone let them make this, let alone release it. Oh, is that Dean Martin?

**Me:** No, it's Victor Mature.

**Sue:** Is he pretending to be Dean Martin?

*A vacuum cleaner sucks the band off Victor Mature's head. Well of course it does.*

**Me:** At least they've found a giant spliff in the Hoover bag.

**Sue:** I think that giant spliff is a metaphor for a giant spliff.

*Davy Jones performs a solo number called Daddy's Song and dances with Toni Basil, although we didn't know this at the time*

*because she wasn't dressed as a manic cheerleader. Maybe if she'd danced with Micky then the penny would have dropped.*

**Sue:** He sounds like David Bowie.

**Me:** Which is funny because David Jones had to change his name to David Bowie thanks to Davy Jones.

**Sue:** And now he's stolen his voice, too, the little bastard.

*We both agree that the editing in this scene is phenomenal.*

**Sue:** The musical numbers are the best bits for me because they almost make sense.

**Me:** Almost.

*A critic tells Davy he should stop working on his dance routines and concentrate on his music instead.*

**Sue:** Is that Alice Cooper?

**Me:** No, it's Frank Zappa.

**Sue:** I know the name but I've never listened to his music.

**Me:** His daughter is called Moon Unit – that's all you need to know about Frank Zappa.

**Sue:** I'm surprised there were enough drugs to go round in the 1960s.

*Davy finds a giant eye lurking behind a bathroom mirror.*

**Sue:** I bet David Lynch loves this film. I wonder if he gets annoyed when he can't work out what's going on.

*Peter Tork enters the bathroom, humming Strawberry Fields Forever...*

**Me:** Wow. Is it just me or is this film incredible?

**Sue:** It's just you. You and Andy Miller.

*And then a policeman starts dancing in the public toilet, decades before George Michael thought this would be a good idea. No, not that George Michael, the other one.*

**Sue:** Wow. Just when you think you've seen everything...

*I haven't even mentioned the bit with the Zulus.*

**Sue:** What is this film called again?

**Me:** *HEAD.*

**Sue:** They should have called it *HEADFUCK*. At least that way the parents would have known not to send their kids to see it.

*A surprise birthday party for Mike features a musical number called Do I Have To Do This All Over Again?*

**Sue:** Even this song is them complaining about having to do stupid things over and over again.

**Me:** You should be able to relate to it, then.

**Sue:** Oh, I definitely get it, but I feel like they're banging me over the head with it now.

**Me:** I love it.

**Sue:** I admit that this film has been very influential, though.

**Me:** Good.

**Sue:** Yeah, the Monkees invented dad dancing. I mean, look at the state of them...

*More oddness follows (it's impossible to list every single moment of madness in this film because we'd be here all day) until the Monkees find themselves in the presence of a wise Yogi from India. In a steam bath, obviously.*

**Sue:** Are they taking the piss out of George Harrison now? I think they are, you know.

*The band are returned to the box at the factory. Pete explains to the others that the theory of conceptual reality means the human mind is incapable of distinguishing between the real and the imaginary.*

**Sue:** Hey, they're finally explaining the plot!

*Davy kicks his way out of the box, and his pugilist skills are put to good use in a fight that wouldn't have looked out of place in an episode of Blake's 7. Unfortunately, The Monkees' journey through the film set results in them returning to the black box again, which is then dropped in the middle of a desert by a helicopter. Is this making any sense?*

**Sue:** No. How much longer is it going to go on for?

**Me:** Forever, I hope.

**Sue:** Fuck's sake...



*The band are chased by characters from the film, including the Coca-Cola vending machine and a giant-sized Victor Mature.*

**Sue:** Are they driving the buggy from *The Banana Splits*?

*And then the film loops back to the first scene on the bridge, and we realise The Monkees were being chased by vengeful fictional characters and product placement gone mad. And this time it isn't only Micky who plunges to his death – they all do.*

**Sue:** Mass suicide.

**Me:** Literally and figuratively.

*But the Monkees aren't dead – they're encased in an aquarium on the back of a lorry, which is then driven away as the credits roll. And if that doesn't make you want to watch HEAD, nothing will.*

## THE SCORE

**Me:** It's definitely 10 out of 10 from me.

**Sue:** Nobody cares, Neil.

**Me:** In fact, it's jumped straight into my top 10 films of all time.

**Sue:** I enjoyed it, and I appreciate what they were trying to do, but you'd never catch me watching it again.

## 7/10

**Sue:** Don't get me wrong, I'm pleased I saw it, but it was a bit too weird for me. I thought the direction was fantastic – and it was very brave...

**Me:** Suicidal.

**Sue:** And I liked most of the songs – even though they didn't play any of their hits – but it did my HEAD in after the first hour.

**Me:** I thought it was really funny, and clever, and inspiring and...

**Sue:** I'm not changing my score.

**Me:** I couldn't have cared less about The Monkees an hour ago, but now I want to know *everything*. I hope the album is on *Spotify*...

**Sue:** Off you pop, then, love. I'll be over here listening to Ed Sheeran.

**Me:** We can't finish a book with the words 'Ed Sheeran'. Say something else.

**Sue:** (*Sighing*) Just stick me in a fish bowl and drive off into the sunset, Neil.

**Me:** That'll do.



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