



The Court Jester
The Wife in Space Volume 7

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This book is dedicated to Patrick Sanders

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## FOREWORD by SIMON GUERRIER

### Thursday, 15 March 1984

My first thought is "good." Janet Ellis on *Blue Peter* has just introduced Colin Baker as the new *Doctor Who*. My family don't buy newspapers and no one's said anything at school, so I'm pretty sure this is the first time I learn that Peter Davison is leaving. I've still not forgiven him for replacing Tom Baker.

### Friday, 16 March 1984

The poisonous bat poo the Doctor touched three weeks ago finally kills him. My elder brother and sister join me and my younger brother to watch Part Four of *The Caves of Androzani*. I think it's the first time they – now serious, grown-up teenagers – have watched since *The Five Doctors*. They tell us, as always, that *Doctor Who* used to be much scarier than this sorry nonsense. I'm certain they're right and can't wait for this story to finish so we can get on to the new Doctor as he's sure to make everything better. I mean, a boy at school insists Colin is Tom Baker's brother.

### Thursday. 22 March 1984

The Sixth Doctor era proper begins with Part One of *The Twin Dilemma*. It's a very intelligent story – it must be, as I'm not always sure what's happening or what the Doctor is talking about. It's not exactly a scary story, but the Doctor attacking poor Peri and then later hiding behind her for safety means we're not sure what to make of him. "Look how clever they're being," I'd tell my siblings if they asked my opinion. But they don't.

### Saturday, 5 January 1985

A boring shopping trip to Southampton turns out to be a brilliant trick by my parents, and me and my younger brother are really off to see the stars of *Doctor Who* in the pantomime *Cinderella*. Colin Baker runs on to the stage pushing a shopping trolley with a *Doctor Who* number plate on it, to the most deafening cheer from the audience. People really love

his Doctor! My parents' ingenious plan is to see the matinee performance so that we can be home in time for the first episode of the new series of *Doctor Who* on TV. But we get caught in traffic because of a football match, so I miss Part One of *Attack of the Cybermen*. There is much weeping.

### Saturday, 12 January 1985

I sit entirely baffled by what's happening in Part Two of *Attack of the Cybermen*, certain it would all make sense if only I'd seen Part One. (I don't get to see Part One until 1993, and am still not entirely sure what's happening.)

### Saturday, 26 January 1985

Part Two of *Vengeance on Varos* gives me nightmares. I'm really creeped out by the monstrous Sil and the story is full of horrid details, but what really gets me is when the Doctor rescues Peri from being turned into a bird. She looks human but the Doctor has to keep repeating her name to re-imprint her identity. The thought I can't shake is that she might be permanently changed, a monster on the inside...

### Saturday, 16 February 1985

ITV shows *The A-Team* at the same time as *Doctor Who*. After some discussion with my brother and a friend who doesn't have a telly so is often round to watch ours, we agree to video Part One of *The Two Doctors* and watch *The A-Team* live. I distinctly remember the logic involved: *Doctor Who* is the one we'll want to watch more than once. It's not as slick, the fights aren't as good, and it's not so loved by our schoolmates but there's more to each episode. Good thinking, eight year-old me.

### Saturday, 9 March 1985

I completely love Part One of *Timelash*. At school the next week, I insist to a friend that of course bumbling Herbert will be the new companion.

### Saturday, 23 March 1985

The scariest moment ever seen in *Doctor Who* – at least, I think so now.

### FOREWORD BY SIMON GUERRIER

Natasha finds her father, who's being turned into a Dalek and begs her to shoot him. The writing, performance, effects and music are all perfectly horrible. These days, I show a clip of this in talks I give on *Doctor Who* – just to see the audience squirm. After one talk, the parents of a keen young fan make a point of apologising to me for having told their daughter that *Doctor Who* wasn't very good in the 1980s.

### Saturday, 30 March 1985

We're still watching *The A-Team* live and videoing *Doctor Who*, each week recording over the previous episode on the one tape we're allowed to use. Part Two of *Revelation of the Daleks* is the final episode of this year's series so doesn't get taped over the following week. My younger brother's interest in *Doctor Who* is waning but my three year-old brother Tom watches that tape again and again for weeks. A moment in that episode haunts me each time I see it, even now. As the Doctor runs down a corridor on his way to battle the Daleks, he thinks he hears Peri being exterminated. There's a moment of horror, of pain, on his face, and then he rallies himself and runs on. No words, just how Colin Baker plays it, so perfectly the Doctor.

### Sometime in April 1985

It's all my pocket money, but I spend the vast sum of £1 on the  $100^{\text{th}}$  issue of *The Doctor Who Magazine*. It's a massive disappointment, lacking the weird wonder and excitement the TV series kindles in me. Instead, the magazine is full of lengthy, dense articles about the minutiae of the programme's past. I cannot fathom why anyone would find this of interest. I don't buy DWM again for five years.

### **Summer 1985, Winter 1985, Spring 1986**

Then there's a gap. It came as a complete surprise to me, many years later, to learn that *Doctor Who* had been on hiatus for 18 months, that there'd been criticism of the violence in the programme, that it was even discussed on the news. At the time, I don't spare the absence a thought – of course *Doctor Who* will be on again at some point. I don't know there'd been a new *Doctor Who* story, *Slipback*, on the radio until it's released on

cassette years later. But I've begun producing my own *Doctor Who* stories in which my brothers are horribly killed by various monsters.

### Tuesday, 24 June 1986

I'm pretty sure I get the novelisation of *Timelash* for my 10th birthday. The TV version is my favourite of the Sixth Doctor's stories to date, and I read the book over and over. One big appeal is the references to the Third Doctor who, thanks to the Target books I've been picking up secondhand and from the library, is my all-time favourite Doctor. But the story also really grabs me, and I spend the summer leaping over the garden sprinkler to be banished back in time.

### Saturday, 6 September 1986

Doctor Who returns in an adventure called *The Trial of a Time Lord*. I'm especially pleased because we had a school trip to the "ancient" farm at Butser Hill used as a location. But otherwise the first four episodes seem to leave little impression. My memories of the *Doctor Who* I watched in the 1980s are usually vivid, but when I see Part One of *Trial* again on video years later, I'm amazed to discover I can't recall any of what happens next. Perhaps *Doctor Who* wasn't affecting me as deeply as it once did – no longer the terrifying experience I couldn't bear to miss. Or perhaps these first episodes of the story were completely blotted out of my memory by the ones that followed.

### Saturday, 4 October 1986

I am properly terrified by the return of Sil from last year's *Vengeance on Varos*. This section of the Doctor's trial is the last time *Doctor Who* ever really scares me. Part of the reason I've stuck with the series all these years on is the morbid hope it will scare me like that again.

### Saturday, 1 November 1986

Bonnie Langford makes her début as Mel. My wife tells me now this is when she made the decision to stop watching *Doctor Who*, which means she still doesn't know the outcome of the Doctor's trial. (Don't tell her.)

### FOREWORD BY SIMON GUERRIER

### Saturday, 6 December 1986

The final episode of *The Trial of a Time Lord* – and of the year's *Doctor Who*.

### Saturday, 13 December 1986

I sit through hours of programmes on BBC1 before the dismal truth sets in that one 14-episode story is all we're getting.

### Thursday, 18 December 1986

Colin Baker, in his *Doctor Who* costume but not quite in character, appears as a team captain on the *Tomorrow's World* Christmas special. I take this as irrefutable evidence he's busy filming the new series which must surely start on TV early in the new year. I can't wait!

### Monday, 2 March 1987

Janet Ellis on *Blue Peter* has news about the next series of *Doctor Who* – and chats to her mate Sylvester McCoy who is going to be the new Doctor. I am flabbergasted. Sylvester McCoy is from children's programmes!

### Monday, 7 September 1987

The unceremonious end of the Sixth Doctor, who dies by falling over in the TARDIS before the opening titles of *Time and the Rani* Part One. I sharply recall my embarrassment at how silly the rest of the episode is, sure *Doctor Who* has lost its way. I've also just started secondary school, and realise that *Doctor Who* is no longer a programme to be fiercely discussed in the playground over the next week. I mention this to a friend who's gone to a different secondary school and he's astonished. "Are you still watching *Doctor Who*?"

But I am. It becomes a guilty pleasure. I know – because people keep telling me – that *Doctor Who* is not as good as it used to be. It was once something *everybody* watched but now I know hardly anyone who'll admit to having seen the latest episodes.

Today, I know there were problems behind the scenes of the programme: disagreements between those making it, a lack of interest

high up at the BBC, a dozen other things. I avidly read – and contribute to – articles in *DWM* poring over exactly what was to blame. But I also know it was as much to do with the age me and my friends were at the time, and the other pressures and interests affecting us. They simply outgrew this children's programme while I couldn't let it go.

The upshot is that the Sixth Doctor's era marks a fundamental change in my relationship to *Doctor Who*. Whatever anyone else thinks of this period of the show – and Neil and Sue are about to share their own strong opinions on it – it holds a special place in my heart.

Because at the start of Colin Baker's time as the Doctor, the programme was something I shared with pretty much everyone I knew. By the end, it was mine.

### Simon Guerrier

April 2017

### INTRODUCTION

This book is four months late. I'd love to tell you that the hiatus was a clever metatextual joke that has nothing to do with my incompetence, so I will. Thankfully, I've been persuaded to stay for the final volume which will a) be published on time and b) include a half-decent introduction for a change. It will also be funnier, less violent and read by fewer people.

Until then, I invite you to revisit a much simpler time, when people still watched *I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here!*, Brexit was a just mischievous twinkle in Nigel Farage's eye, and I took my wife to Varos, Necros and that thing that looks like a giant lemon squeezer in space.

Having said that, a good portion of this book was written as Ant McPartlin checked into rehab, Brexit tore this country apart, and Sue watched Colin Baker climb into bed with Nicola Bryant. But hey, you can't have everything.

**Neil Perryman** January 2018

### SEASON TWENTY-ONE FUCKING RIDICULOUS



This illustration funded by Ian Hopkins

### **BLOGGED: 15 November 2012**

Thanks to a serendipitous twist of fate, Colin Baker just happened to be a contestant on the latest series of the ITV reality show I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here! which began a few days before we started this phase of the blog. Up until this point, aside from a guest role in Arc of Infinity (see Volume 6), Colin was just some actor who shouted at me at a convention. Anyway, this is what Sue thought of him after his first three days in the jungle.

**Sue**: He's really nice. I want to give him a big cuddle. And I bet he's secretly pleased his team isn't winning any food, because he says he wants to lose some weight, and we all know why he wants to do that, beyond living longer, of course. He wants to be in the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary special.

### Part One

Sue: New titles!

Me: Yes, Peter Davison's face didn't fit when Colin took over.

**Sue**: It's very *Top of the Pops*. And Colin seems friendly in these. Tom looked miserable in his. *The Twin Dilemma*... I bet you'd like a dilemma like that, wouldn't you, Neil? Which Cheeky Girl would you choose to

sleep with?

Me: Cheeky Girl? What year is this? 2003?

The Twin Dilemma begins with two boys playing together in a futuristic home.

**Sue**: We've landed on the planet of the bowl-cuts. I still feel bad about cutting my friend Tucker's hair like that. No wonder she wouldn't speak to me for years.

The titular twins, Romulus and Remus, are playing a game that manages to

combine both backgammon and chess. Hey, it's the future!

**Sue**: Is *Doctor Who* trying to appeal to its core audience at this point? You know, by setting this in a chess club for geeks.

The twins' father, Sylvest, berates them for being rude to their mother.

Sue: They need to spend an afternoon on the naughty step.

Sylvest expects more from a pair of mathematical geniuses.

**Sue**: So they're a pair of Adrics? Ha! They make Matthew Waterhouse look like Daniel Craig!

Meanwhile the Sixth Doctor is still getting used to his new body.

**Sue**: I really like this. This is a quick, no-nonsense regeneration. The Doctor usually spends an episode in bed, or he acts really weird for ages. There's no mucking about here.

Sue likes the new Doctor's features almost as much as he does.

**Sue**: Colin's quite handsome, actually. His face has a lot of character. That was the trouble with Peter – he was too pretty to be *that* interesting.

The Doctor enters the TARDIS' wardrobe room on the verge of a nervous breakdown.

**Sue**: It's a very good performance. Colin's really going for it, and his laugh is *very* creepy.

The Doctor reaches for a coat of many colours.

Me and Sue: Noooooooooooo!

Back on the Planet of the Bowl-Cuts, an elderly man named Edgeworth appears out of thin air and convinces the twins to leave with him.

**Sue**: So a creepy old man with white hair is kidnapping young children... If only it wasn't happening for real in the studio next door.

The Sixth Doctor's new look definitely makes an immediate impression.

Sue: It clashes a bit.

**Me**: A bit? A bit?... *A BIT!*?

A brooch completes the Doctor's new look.

**Sue**: At least he likes cats, which means he's okay in my book. It's just a shame he's stuck in that bloody costume. Colin would have looked wonderful in a black suit.

Peri has changed her outfit too.

**Sue**: That's almost as bad. Still, anything would seem good next to Colin right now. He looks like a court jester.

This particular jester tries to choke his companion to death.

**Sue**: This is definitely not for kids! **Me**: What do you make of it?

**Sue**: It's a mission statement, I suppose. This is the programme saying, "He's not Peter Davison any more". In fact, he's probably as far from Peter

Davison as it's possible to get. It's a brave thing to do, actually.

**Me**: He's trying to kill Peri!

Sue: He's poorly.

Me: Oh, that's alright, then!

Meanwhile, elsewhere...

**Sue**: Is this the local St John's Ambulance Brigade?

No, it's the Star Cops Special Incident room and Sylvest is reporting the twins' abduction to Lieutenant Hugo Lang.

**Sue**: I wonder how many injuries this lot have suffered wearing those oversized badges of theirs. I bet you could do yourself some serious damage with the pointy end. Or maybe they double as weapons when they arrest people?

The Doctor is still behaving very strangely indeed.

Sue: He needs to find his safe room.

Me: The Zero Room?

Sue: Yes, that's it. Just pop him in a cupboard for a couple of hours. I'm

sure he'll be fine.

I think Sue is enjoying the Doctor's latest mental breakdown.

Sue: The only thing that lets this down is the direction. It's flat and over-

lit.

Me: So who directed it?

Sue: I don't know... Peter Moffat?

It's official: Sue's Director Detector™ now operates at both ends of the spectrum. Oh, and she isn't impressed with the Jacondans, either.

**Sue**: Crap Klingons, that's what they are. That one looks like he should be in the chorus line for a Broadway production of *The Lion King*. They're rubbish!

Fabian of the Special Incident Room loses contact with Hugo's ship, so she asks Elena to find out what happened.

Sue: Poor Elena. I bet she gets all the shit jobs.

The Doctor wants to atone for his sins by becoming a hermit. He'll find a cave to live in and Peri can tend to his needs.

Sue: In your dreams, mate.

This Doctor is clearly unhinged.

**Sue**: I know what's going on here – Colin has decided to play it like Tom Baker. The problem is, Tom is naturally bonkers whereas Colin is trying much too hard to be wacky. But it's early days and I'm sure he'll settle down eventually.

It seems the planet Jaconda is under the thrall of the Mestor.

Sue: Oh dear. This week's villain is the Hungry Caterpillar.

She giggles as the camera moves in for a better look.

**Sue**: They've lit this thing as if to say, "Look at this! Look how brilliant our monster is!" when they should be hiding it in the shadows and apologising.

The Doctor and Peri arrive on Titan 3, but before they can find a nice cave to cuddle in, they stumble upon Hugo's crashed spaceship instead.

Sue: That's quite impressive, actually.

Peri wants to leave and the Doctor berates her for being such a heartless bitch.

Sue: And now he's trying to be William Hartnell.

They carry the unconscious Hugo back to the TARDIS, but as the Doctor and Peri bicker over his body, the cop wakes up and reaches for his gun.

Sue: It's Reservoir Dogs. With a clown.

The episode ends with an extreme close-up of the Doctor's face.

**Sue**: He needs to work on his scared face. That was his "all the sandwiches in the green room have gone" face.

Roll credits.

**Sue**: That wasn't too bad, I suppose. It's certainly different. Stick the next one on.

#### Part Two

The Doctor is still acting up.

Sue: He's channeling Jon Pertwee now by being a massive cock.

Sue doesn't understand why Peri hasn't handed in her notice yet.

**Sue**: She must be gutted. Even travelling with the Master would be better than this.

The Doctor asks Peri to identify something odd on the TARDIS scanner.

Peri: A bump.

The Doctor: A bump? A BUMP?

Sue: How he said those lines without staring at her cleavage, I'll never

know.

Meanwhile Edgeworth examines the twins' latest handiwork.

**Sue**: (as Edgeworth) Well done, boys! These new bathroom tile designs are superb!

It becomes clear that the twins are terrified of Mestor. In fact Romulus (or is it Remus?) has never been more frightened in his life.

**Sue**: You need to get out more, son.

I think it's fair to say Sue hasn't warmed to the twins.

**Sue**: So whose idea was it to give short-tongued kids the names Romulus and Remus, anyway? It's cruel.

The Doctor and Peri are exploring a tunnel on Titan 3 when the Time Lord suddenly chickens out and runs away.

**Sue**: They are pushing this a bit too far now. I'm starting to go off him. He needs to get a grip.

The Doctor and Peri are captured by the Jacondans and taken to Edgeworth's lab. The Doctor immediately recognises the professor's technology.

Sue: Yes, it's an ancient arcade machine that's been covered in tin foil.

Edgeworth is actually an old friend of the Doctor's named Azmael.

Sue: You know, I bet Colin Baker would have been brilliant on Jackanory.

Hugo wakes up on the TARDIS and retrieves his gun.

Sue: It's a socket from a screwdriver set!

Hugo enters the TARDIS wardrobe.

**Sue**: Of all the rooms he could walk into, he had to walk into that one. What a coincidence. Hang on a minute... What is he doing? Is he changing his clothes? Because he's a little bit dirty? How many cops would

do that?! That's ridiculous!

Hugo's new look goes down as well as you'd expect.

**Sue**: Is there a competition in this episode to see who can wear the stupidest clothes? That is insane. Even if he was taking part in the World Disco Dancing Championships, that costume would be insane.

Hugo admires himself in a mirror.

**Me**: (As *Hugo*) You talkin' to *me*? Then who the hell else are you talkin' to? You talkin' to me? Well, I'm the only one here...

Hugo tries to find the exit.

Sue: Trust me, mate, you really don't want to go out dressed like that.

Meanwhile the Doctor decides to send Peri 10 seconds back in time. That way she'll end up back on the TARDIS before a bomb can go off.

**Sue**: That makes no fucking sense at all. They've been here for more than 10 seconds. That's rubbish!

The base explodes before the Doctor can return to the TARDIS and the episode ends with Peri in tears.

**Sue**: That is not a good look for Nicola.

Cue credits.

**Sue**: It's started to go downhill now. Some of the ideas are okay, but the direction is appalling. And it's so cheap, too. *The Caves of Androzano* has spoiled us.

**Me**: Androzani. **Sue**: Whatever.

### Part Three

*The Doctor eventually returns to his TARDIS – 10 seconds into the future.* 

**Sue**: Eh? But if that's true, why doesn't another version of him appear 10 seconds later? Like, er... *now*?

But it isn't all bad news. Sue fancies Kevin McNally something rotten.

**Sue**: He's very easy on the eye, but he'll have to ditch that costume if he's a proper companion. The good news is he knows how to find the TARDIS wardrobe so it shouldn't take him long.

Mestor is a nasty piece of work, according to Sue. And by that she means its design is terrible.

**Sue**: He's boss-eyed and I can't understand a bloody word he's saying. But apart from that, it's brilliant.

When the Doctor realises that Jaconda has been invaded by giant gastropods, he retires to the TARDIS to have a think about it.

**Sue**: That's the most sensible thing I've ever seen the Doctor do. If he were Tom or Peter, he would have swanned off into danger by now.

And then Sue sighs.

**Sue**: I don't have a clue what's going on any more. And what does the title mean, exactly? Is it that you don't know which twin you want to murder first? Is that the dilemma?

Me: You're struggling with this one, aren't you?

**Sue**: It's badly directed, it's badly acted, it's badly designed, it's badly lit, it's badly directed – have I said that already? – and the music is crap. But apart from that, it's fine. Actually, the only decent thing about this story is the dialogue. The Doctor has some good lines in this.

We discover the gastropods are half-human, half-slug.

**Sue**: Somebody must have been *really* desperate for that to happen.

Me: I don't want to think about it.

Sue: Are they sure it's half-slug? It looks half-owl to me.

Hugo's feet become stuck in the gastropod's slime trail.

Sue: Take your boot off, you idiot!

Hugo decides to burn his way out with a laser beam instead.

**Sue**: For the love of God, just take your fucking boot off!

Azmael and Mestor meet to discuss their plans.

**Sue**: That guy is walking behind the slug, so why isn't he stuck to the floor as well? This isn't very consistent.

When the Doctor reaches Azmael's laboratory, he immediately vaults over a table and attacks his old friend.

**Sue**: It's turned into a pantomime. I don't like anyone in this story. This old guy is probably the nicest character in the whole thing, and he's threatening to kill children.

It's at this point that our daughter Nicol walks into the room.

Nicol: Ooh, it's Colin Baker.

Sue: I wouldn't hang around if I were you, Nic. This is painful. Escape

now, while you still can.

Nicol legs it just as the episode reaches its conclusion and the Doctor is told that Peri must die.

**Sue**: Colin still needs to work on his scared face. It looks like he's just remembered he's left the gas on.

The credits roll.

**Sue**: I'm not enjoying this at all. There's no atmosphere, the plot isn't involving me at all, and everybody is TOO FUCKING LOUD!

### **Part Four**

*Mestor has decided he wants to keep Peri around indefinitely.* 

**Sue**: Just what this show needs – another sex pest. The universe isn't very nice to Peri, is it?

Oh, and he wants to realign the orbits of a couple of planets as well.

**Sue**: Brian Cox would have a field day with this bollocks!

But Azmael has overlooked something: if his plan succeeds he'll cause an enormous explosion.

Sue: How did he not realise this before? That's just plain stupid!

So Mestor breaks into the Doctor's TARDIS.

**Sue**: Even when they remember to lock the doors, anyone can still walk into the bloody TARDIS these days. Even a fucking slug!

Azmael tells the Doctor he can't regenerate any more.

**Sue**: Eh? So he's a Time Lord? Was I supposed to know that? They kept that quiet! I mean, was there a point to that?

The Doctor kills Mestor with acid

Sue: Did he just chuck some salt at him?

And then Azmael dies in the Doctor's arms.

Sue: Oh, just get on with it! Die!

**Me**: This is supposed to be moving. Don't you care?

Sue: He was threatening to kill small children half an hour ago, so guess

what? No, I don't fucking care.

Azmael croaks his last breath.

Sue: Fucking ridiculous.

As the story limps to its flaccid conclusion, Hugo suddenly decides to stay on Jaconda.

**Sue**: Has he gone mad? Let's see: I can travel through time and space with a fit bird and a crazy clown, or I can live on a shit hole with a bunch of cretins and no food. For fuck's sake!

The Doctor promises to take the twins home in his TARDIS.

**Sue**: If these two idiots are in the next story, I will give up. Seriously, Neil, I won't be able to carry on with this any more.

Anyway, this new guy is the Doctor, whether Peri likes it or not.

**Sue**: That was directed at the fans, wasn't it? I bet that was JN-T saying that. I blame JN-T, you know. He hasn't got a clue. When does he leave?

Me: Eventually.

### The Score

**Sue**: That was rubbish. I liked the first episode a lot, but then it went downhill from there. I blame the director. And JN-T. And the costume

designer. Was she smoking crack? Crack was very big in the 1980s.

Me: What about Colin?

Sue: It's far too early to tell. He's very loud, though. And I'm not just

talking about his coat.

### 2/10

Later that night...

Sue: I want to change my score. I've been thinking about it a lot.

Me: You have? Do you think that's wise?

Sue: I was too lenient. I want to mark it again. No, I have to mark it again:

### 1/10

**Sue**: It annoyed me. What were they thinking, starting a new Doctor with a load of crap like that? It's not right.

**NOTES**: I turned the blog's comments off for Colin's first two stories. I don't remember why and my therapist has advised me not to investigate the matter any further.

Colin Baker's contribution to the  $50^{\rm th}$  anniversary is analysed in painstaking detail in Volume 8.

### SEASON TWENTY-TWO IT'S SUMMER SEASON AT GREAT YARMOUTH



This illustration funded by Pete White

# \*\* ATTACK OF THE CYBERMEN

#### **BLOGGED: 20 November 2012**

At least Colin Baker continues to impress in one TV show...

**Sue**: He's lovely. In fact, he's my tip to win. He doesn't have a bad word to say about anyone. And he's the perfect gentleman, always comforting everyone around him.

But watching I'm A Celebrity... comes at a price. Ant and Dec have revealed to Sue the Sixth Doctor will encounter Daleks, Cybermen and Sontarans during his adventures. Even worse, a trivia question set during a mini-trial went something like this: Colin Baker played Doctor Who for how many episodes?

Sue: Thirty-two!

Me: How the hell did you know that?

Sue: Well, you told me once that Colin was only in eight stories, and eight

multiplied by four is 32.

**Me**: You're right, there are eight stories, and Colin does play the Doctor in 32 episodes (if you count *The Caves of Androzani*), but in the season we're

about to watch, the episodes are double-length.

**Sue**: So they're 50 minutes long?

Me: Yes, and the programme is back on Saturdays as well.

**Sue**: So it's proper *Doctor Who* again? **Me**: Yes, Sue, it's proper *Doctor Who* again.

#### Part One

Sue: Ooh, Cybermen. And they haven't tried to hide them this time. So

who's Paula Moore? **Me**: I'll explain later.

Sue: The last time a woman wrote for *Doctor Who*, it was excellent.

Attack of the Cybermen begins in a sewer.

Sue: Hey, John Cleese is in *Doctor Who* again. That's nice.

Unfortunately, the John Cleese lookalike doesn't make it past the opening scene.

Sue: It's very atmospheric. Yes, this is a very good start indeed.

Meanwhile the Doctor is fiddling with something in his TARDIS.

**Sue**: Has anyone ever tried watching Colin Baker's stories in black and white? I'm trying to get past his coat, Neil, but it isn't easy. And the *Play School* music isn't exactly helping.

Peri's costume also raises an eyebrow.

**Sue**: Is there a gym on the TARDIS? Aerobics was very popular in the 1980s, so she just about gets away with it. And I bet you're not complaining.

The action shifts to contemporary Earth and a Euston Film already in progress.

**Sue**: Hey, it's Gangster Man. Is he playing the same part as last time?

Me: Yes, it's Maurice Colbourne and he's still playing Lytton.

**Sue**: Good. Ooh! It's him, the referee from *Kes*! He's brilliant in that. What

about the guy in the front passenger seat? Is he famous?

**Me**: That's Terry Molloy. He's in *The Archers*. **Sue**: What about the other one in the back?

Me: Fuck knows.

The TARDIS has materialised next to Halley's comet in 1985.

Sue: I can still remember when that was a big deal. People thought

#### ATTACK OF THE CYBERMEN

the world was going to end. A bit like this year, in fact. I bet you were terrified, Neil. You always fall for crap like that.

And then she has a sudden change of heart when it comes to Malcolm Clarke's music, and before she knows it she's happily humming along to the ever-so-jaunty 'Lytton's Gang' theme.

**Sue**: I love a good heist film. I wish they wouldn't keep cutting back to the TARDIS. Give me some more heist action!

Peri isn't exactly thrilled to be in such close proximity to a comet.

**Sue**: I used to think Tegan was the whiniest companion on *Doctor Who*, but Peri is in a different league.

The fake policemen from Resurrection of the Daleks are back on the beat again.

**Sue**: That's risky after what happened last time. It's almost as if the producer wants to court controversy.

Sue's opinion of Colin's Doctor is almost as unpredictable as his persona.

**Sue**: He'd be a lot better if he just calmed his face down a bit. He has overactive eyebrows.

At least she has some nice things to say about Attack of the Cybermen's direction.

Sue: So who directed this? It's very good.

**Me**: Matthew Robinson. You liked his direction for *Resurrection of the Daleks*, too. Actually, I didn't realise until somebody mentioned it on the blog that he's Tom Robinson's brother.

Sue (Singing) 2-4-6-8-Exterminate!

Me: Too late now.

Sue: You see the comments do come in handy sometimes. You should

turn them back on again.

**Me**: I'm still thinking about it.

The TARDIS materialises in a junkyard in Totter's Lane.

**Sue**: Why are they playing the *Steptoe and Son* theme? And is this supposed to be a reference to the first episode?

But before I can get into that...

**Sue**: Hey, Peri actually remembered to shut the door behind her! Miracles really do happen!

The chameleon circuit turns the TARDIS into an ornate dresser.

**Sue:** Wouldn't it be funny if, when they came back, the TARDIS had been sold at an auction?

The Doctor is still acting very erratically.

**Sue**: Why doesn't he just make himself a zero cupboard? Is he going to be unstable forever? I thought they'd be over this by now.

The Doctor and Peri race down a cobbled alleyway.

**Sue**: Peri isn't wearing the right shoes for this. And this is her *fourth* story. Is she completely stupid?

The chameleon circuit transforms the TARDIS into a pipe organ.

**Sue**: He could play his theme tune on that as he fights his enemies.

Then the Doctor almost falls into a hole.

#### ATTACK OF THE CYBERMEN

Sue: That was a bit Chuckle Brothers.

The Doctor fights a bent copper in the sewer while Peri overpowers another one with some dust from a brick.

Sue: You go, girl!

*The Doctor eventually knocks his policeman out (off-screen).* 

**Sue**: Colin's a bit handy. Peter Davison would have surrendered or run away.

Sue really seems to be enjoying this episode's sewer scenes.

**Sue**: The sets are very good, and so is the lighting. Even the script comes alive when we're down here.

Sue is thrilled when the Cybermen finally appear. She even sings their clangclang-clang theme tune. Or was that just me?

**Sue**: This is great. There's a grittiness to this that I really like. It's a huge step up from last time

The Cyber Leader interrogates Lytton.

**Sue**: The Cyberman in charge has a great voice. It's just a shame that the one standing next to him sounds so ridiculous.

The Cyber Controller is based on the planet Telos.

Sue: We've been to Telos before, haven't we? That definitely rings a bell.

Me: That's where The Tomb of the Cybermen took place.

Sue: Was that the racist one?

Me: Yes.

Sue: That's the only thing I remember about it.

Now that we've arrived an alien planet, Sue's patience begins to wear a bit thin.

**Sue**: I'm totally lost, now. There's a lot going on all at once. I like these two, though.

She's talking about Lytton and Griffiths.

**Sue**: I could watch them all day.

Meanwhile two prisoners have escaped from the Cybermen's clutches on Telos.

Sue: What's Peter Gabriel doing in this?

While deep beneath the surface of Telos, the Cyber Controller plots and schemes.

**Sue**: Hang on a minute... Isn't that Michael Kilgarriff, the actor who played the original Cyber Controller in 1967's *The Tomb of the Cybermen*?

No, of course she didn't say that. No one has ever said that.

Me: Fans call him the Fat Controller.

Sue: See Colin, you can come back if you put on a few pounds.

The Doctor and Peri encounter Terry Molloy in the sewers and it isn't long before the undercover cop finds himself on the wrong end of the Doctor's latest gadget – a sonic lance.

**Sue**: Just get a new sonic screwdriver. You can't replace it with something that does exactly the same thing and call it something else! That's daft!

The Doctor instructs Peri to shoot the cop in cold blood.

#### ATTACK OF THE CYBERMEN

**Sue**: This Doctor doesn't fuck about. Is he always this violent?

But then the Doctor suddenly changes his mind and proceeds to eulogise about Lytton instead.

Me: Do you remember all those amazing scenes featuring Lytton and the

Doctor in *Resurrection of the Daleks*?

Sue: Er... Yes?

Me: No you don't. They glance at each for a couple of seconds and that's it.

**Sue**: But he sounds like he's describing his archenemy.

Me: I know. Maybe the script editor didn't notice Paula's mistake.

Back on Telos, Peter Gabriel attacks a Cyberman with a metal pipe.

**Sue**: (Singing) Jeux sans frontiers...

He manages to take the Cyberman's head off.

Sue: These Cybermen are shit!

Peter Gabriel is over the moon with his severed Cyber head.

**Sue**: That's going straight on *eBay*.

Meanwhile a black Cyberman patrols the sewers on Earth...

**Sue**: Is this to stop this story being racist?

The Doctor disables it by ramming his sonic lance into its chest.

**Sue**: Seriously, Neil, is this Doctor really a homicidal maniac? I don't think I like it very much.

She's beginning to struggle with the plot, too.

**Sue**: There's a lot going on, but not a lot is actually happening. Does that make any sense?

The Doctor, Peri and Russell are in for a shock when they step inside the TARDIS.

**Sue**: How the fuck did a Cyberman get in there? Can't you lock a pipe organ?

In fact, the TARDIS is crawling with Cybermen.

Sue: That's just taking the piss!

A Cyberman fells Russell with a single blow to the neck.

Sue: Oh no! I really liked him.

And then the episode ends with Peri sentenced to Cyber death.

**Sue**: Nice cliffhanger. That wasn't too bad. You know, I think I prefer the longer format. Yes, that was a very good start.

#### Part Two

Sue notices something terribly important during the recap.

**Sue**: The stunt man playing the exploding Cyberman looks genuinely surprised. I think something went wrong with that. It looked great, though.

Lytton and the Doctor reminisce about old times.

Sue: You don't even know each other!

As the TARDIS travels to Telos, Peri and Griffiths wish they knew where

#### ATTACK OF THE CYBERMEN

that was.

Sue: Yeah, Telos where Telos is!

The Cybermen are on Telos because their home planet, Mondas, was destroyed.

Sue: The Doctor blew it up, didn't he? I think I remember that.

Me: Wow. Really?

**Sue**: I can't remember which one he did it in, but I think it might have been a William Hartnell. It was a very long time ago. Anyway, it just goes to show the Doctor has always been a homicidal maniac.

The Cybermen were driving Mondas around the galaxy like a car at the time.

**Sue**: Why is everybody obsessed with moving planets around on this programme? Why not build a Death Star instead? I'm sure it would be a lot easier.

The Cyber Controller has to deal with a batch of rogue Cybermen running amok on his base.

**Sue**: I can't understand a single word he's saying because his voice is too muffled. They should have stuck with the guy with the booming voice, he was very good. And why has this one got a funny-shaped head? Is it because he's really brainy, or did something go wrong with his mould?

Then we meet the indigenous life forms on Telos: the Cryons.

**Sue**: They're rubbish. Women with moustaches? That is not a good look. They're a cross between a Lindt Easter Egg container and a Christmas tree decoration. And do we really need another alien race in this story? This is confusing enough as it is.

I tell her that two famous performers are hidden beneath the Cryon masks.

Sue: How am I supposed to recognise them? I don't bloody know... Una

Stubbs?

Me: You'll never get it so I'll put you out of your misery. One of them -

the one with the Doctor right now - is Faith Brown.

Sue: Faith Brown the comedian? The one who did all the Maggie Thatcher

impersonations?

Me: Yes.

Sue: But that's mad!

Me: And another Cryon is played by Sarah Greene from Saturday

Superstore.

Sue: The one who married Mike Smith and crashed a helicopter?

Me: Yes.

Sue: That's even madder.

Me: I know.

Sue: And what was the bloody point? You can't see them, SO WHY

BOTHER?

Peter Gabriel has a dark secret - he's half-Cyberman.

**Sue**: That's a nice twist. No wonder he's so angry all the time. I wonder what else they replaced...

The Cryons introduce themselves to Peri.

**Sue**: Are they called Cryons because they keep bursting into tears?

The Cryons have a bad case of wandering hands.

**Sue**: They keep invading Peri's personal space. I'd have given them a slap by now.

Unfortunately, Malcolm Clarke's contribution to the programme still manages to baffle Sue.

#### ATTACK OF THE CYBERMEN

**Sue**: I can't get a handle on the music at all. One minute it's great, the next it's atrocious. It's all over the place. Just like this script.

The Cybermen lock the Doctor and Flast in a room packed with high explosives. They don't bother to search the Doctor, though. The idiots.

**Sue**: They deserve everything they get.

Lytton and Griffiths climb a ladder that leads to Cyber Control.

**Sue**: That's easily the wobbliest set in *Doctor Who* so far.

But when a Cyberman's hand appears out of nowhere to grab Lytton's ankle, Sue actually gasps.

**Sue**: That really shocked me. The direction is excellent. It's completely wasted on this story, though.

The Doctor sets a Cyberman on fire, which Sue adores, and then he leaves Flast to detonate the explosives with his sonic lance.

Sue: Yay! Let's all root for the suicide bomber!

Meanwhile the Cyber Controller interrogates Lytton.

**Sue**: Gangster Man is the best thing in this rubbish by a mile. He should definitely... OH MY GOD!

The Cybermen crush Lytton's hands to a bloody pulp.

Sue: NOT FOR KIDS!

Meanwhile the Doctor tinkers with the head of an immobilised Cyberman.

Sue: Shouldn't it be more organic inside? This makes them look like

robots, and even I know the Cybermen aren't robots. The Doctor should have opened up the back of its head instead. That was silly.

The Cybermen interrogate Flast.

**Sue**: This show is really sadistic all of a sudden. You'd never get away with that today.

The Cryons engage the Cybermen.

**Sue**: Why doesn't the heat in this corridor kill all the Cryons?

The Doctor is about to do a runner when Peri convinces him to save Lytton instead

**Sue**: Oh, the TARDIS is a police box again. Thank God for that. I hope he stops pratting around with it, he was only making it worse.

Sue feels sorry for Lytton, but the Doctor can't save him and all hell breaks loose in Cyber Control.

Sue: This isn't Doctor Who. This is a Sam Peckinpah movie!

And then everything blows up.

**Sue**: That was pretty good, even if it is trying to be like *The A-Team*.

The story concludes with the Doctor chastising himself for misjudging Lytton so badly.

**Sue**: He shouldn't be so hard on himself. He hardly knew him! If Lytton hadn't been so smug, and he'd told the Doctor what he was up to, none of that would have happened.

#### ATTACK OF THE CYBERMEN

#### The Score

**Sue**: That was all over the place. The direction was pretty good but there were too many plots. Colin was good, though. I like the way they're doing something radically different with his Doctor. The first part was better, but it went downhill when the Cryons turned up. You didn't need them.

### 6/10

Sue agreed to watch the DVD's making of documentary with me, mainly so she could figure out who Paula Moore was.

**Sue**: I don't know why anybody would want to claim responsibility for that story. The script was the worst thing about it. If I were Eric Saward, I'd happily blame Ian Levine.

**NOTES**: Of course the world didn't end in 2012, just like it didn't end in 1999, and I have therefore promised Sue that I will stop stocking up on bottled water and tinned soup for the foreseeable future. Just as soon as this thing between Donald Trump and North Korea dies down.

## **\*: VENGEANCE ON VAROS**

**BLOGGED: 23 November 2012** 

Even though he dances like a Pussycat Doll with a urinary tract infection, Colin Baker has still captured Sue's heart.

**Sue**: He hasn't put a foot wrong. He's lovely. A real gent. Not like Eric fucking Bristow.

**Me**: Were you worried that Colin would be voted out of the Spiridon jungle first?

**Sue**: Not a chance. He's still my tip to win. My only concern is that he isn't doing enough to engage the rest of the nation. And was that a *Doctor Who* reference you made just then? Because if it was, I didn't get it.

#### Part One

**Sue**: So who's Philip Martin when he's at home?

Me: Bloody hell, woman! He wrote Gangsters, one of the greatest

television shows ever made!

**Sue**: *Gangsters*? Again? Why is everybody obsessed with *Gangsters* all of a sudden? It's *Gangsters* this, *Gangsters* that. Enough of the bloody *Gangsters* already!

Vengeance on Varos begins with a topless man chained to a wall.

**Me**: Stop drooling and name the actor, love.

Sue: I don't care. But if I stare at him long enough, maybe it will come to

me.

**Me**: His dad is very famous. **Sue**: Is his dad fit as well?

Me: He's Sean Connery's son, Jason. He finds fame and fortune in ITV's

Robin of Sherwood shortly after this.

**Sue**: Oh yes. I remember him, now. He was a bit of a heartthrob, wasn't he? He was very popular when I made my living driving up and down the motorway selling posters in the mid-1980s. I probably made a canny commission off of his face.

#### **VENGEANCE ON VAROS**

Jason Connery is playing a Varosian rebel named Jondar who finds himself on the wrong end of a laser beam.

**Sue**: It's a very bleak start. It's getting to be a habit.

Two Varosians named Etta and Arak watch Jondar being tortured on a TV screen in the comfort (if that's the right word) of their living room.

**Sue**: (*Laughing*) Who do these two remind you of?

**Me**: Yes, I know. And I bet I have even less hair than Stephen Yardley by the time this is over.

Meanwhile in the TARDIS...

**Sue**: Peri's been for another session in the TARDIS gym by the look of it. Has she got different versions of the same costume in every colour of the rainbow? And have you noticed how her top is practically see-through this week?

**Me**: No, I've never noticed that before. Honest.

Back on Varos, the planet's Governor is busy negotiating a complicated trade deal with a reptilian creature named Sil.

**Sue**: Oh, it's Martin Thingy. He's been in *Doctor Who* before, hasn't he? **Me**: It's Martin Jarvis. Yes, he was a giant moth in *The Web Planet*. Do you remember that one?

Sue: It's one of the few I do remember. I am trying to forget it, though.

Sil fascinates Sue.

**Sue**: Is that a special effect or is he really that small? Is it done with mirrors?

Varos runs a profitable sideline in recorded executions, and Sil can't wait to see them.

**Sue**: He's a creepy little fucker. But I like him.

From this point on, you can take it as read that Sue giggles each and every time Sil does or says anything. The louder Sil gets, the louder Sue giggles. It helps take the edge off all the bleakness, I suppose. Anyway, the Governor is put to a public vote and he loses.

**Sue**: I want to see Nick Clegg in a chair like that. Actually, their leader has a very Cleggy look about him, don't you think?

Arak is convinced the Governor will die this time.

**Sue**: They can't kill an actor that good this quickly. And the punishment is a bit extreme. He was only trying to secure a better trade deal for his planet. It's not as if he was caught fiddling his expenses, or changing his mind about tuition fees, or something terrible like that. Give him a break.

Even though she adores Sil, Sue does identify a potential problem:

**Sue**: I've said it before and I'll say it again; any villain who needs to be carried everywhere is going to be useless when it comes to a fight. If you have to rely on other people, you're basically fucked. I like the way he comes with his own swimming pool, though.

A Varosian named Bax wants to execute Jondar in order to take the public's mind off the fact their Governor doesn't have The X-Factor any more.

**Sue**: This is well ahead of its time. Where there many reality shows around back then?

Me: I don't know. Does Game For A Laugh count?

Meanwhile the Doctor and Peri are still languishing in the TARDIS.

**Sue**: Are these two going to do anything this week? At least William Hartnell had the decency to take a holiday when he had nothing to

#### **VENGEANCE ON VAROS**

contribute.

Peri finds the TARDIS' instruction manual.

**Sue**: Is that like a Haynes manual? He should have got that out years ago.

The TARDIS has run out of Zeiton-7.

**Sue**: Why doesn't the TARDIS have a fuel gauge? Why didn't she warn the Doctor before this happened? Even my car does that. Oh well, at least they have to go to Varos now. I thought they'd never get moving.

Varos' chief scientist, Quillam, hides his features behind a half-mask.

Sue: (Singing) "The Phantom of the Opera is here, in my very cheap set..."

*Iondar* is sentenced to death.

**Sue**: He certainly didn't inherit any acting talent from his dad. He's dreadful.

When the Doctor and Peri arrive just in time to save him, Jondar helpfully lends a foot.

**Sue**: At least he can kick people in the face like his dad.

The Governor monitors these events from his control room.

**Sue**: This is nicely lit. But it has to be, I suppose. They obviously haven't got a big enough set to go round. This is like a stage play. A very cheap stage play. It's basically rep.

Maybe all the money went on the Varosian transport system.

Sue: And I thought smart cars were stupid. I'm surprised they don't come

with a set of golf clubs in the back. And why even bother? They could walk faster than that!

Jondar wants to know why the Doctor saved his life. The Doctor explains that it's because he's the first person they've encountered who hasn't tried to murder them.

**Sue**: That's because he was tied up! For all you know, he could be this planet's most notorious serial killer and you've just let him go.

Electric go-karts pursue our heroes.

**Sue**: I'd love to see them do a three-point turn in that corridor.

Etta and Arak watch as the action unfurls on their television screen.

**Sue**: So, do people on this planet get their kicks from watching others suffer? That would never happen today, would it?

**Me**: Not without a premium rate phone line it wouldn't.

Etta likes the one in the funny clothes.

**Sue**: This is very postmodern all of a sudden. Wait a minute... Is that really supposed to be me? Is this where you got the idea for the blog? *Is it?* 

I wrestle Sue for control of our cushions.

**Sue**: The direction is a bit crap. The script is excellent, but the director hasn't got a bloody clue. This is the opposite problem to last week. One of these days they'll actually get it right. You could definitely re-make this today and it would probably look amazing.

Our heroes are suddenly confronted by a giant fly, which Peri immediately identifies as a creature from her very worst imaginings.

#### **VENGEANCE ON VAROS**

**Sue**: That's the worst thing Peri can imagine? A fly? *Really?* 

And then our heroes encounter some green lights and Jondar practically wets himself.

**Sue**: Did Sean Connery pull some favours at the BBC to get his son this gig? Because he can't have passed the audition.

*The Doctor recognises the lights for what they really are: lights.* 

**Sue**: That's cheap. Even by *Doctor Who*'s standards, that's cheap. This is basically a haunted house, when what you really want to see is a homicidal version of *Wipeout*.

A go-kart veers straight for the Time Lord.

Me: Put your helmet on, we'll be reaching speeds of three!

A guard named Maldak captures Peri and slaps her face.

Sue: Hey! There was no need for that!

And then the Governor of Varos faces the public vote again.

**Sue**: Who'd put themselves up for a job like this? It's crap. Unless it's endless hookers and cocaine on your days off.

The Doctor collapses alone in a corridor, apparently dying of thirst.

Sue: This could be Colin Baker on ITV any day now.

*The Governor tells the vision mixer to cut the transmission.* 

**Sue**: I loved that cliffhanger. That was very clever. And Colin Baker took his coat off, which was nice.

#### Part Two

Etta and Arak are glued to the latest episode of I'm A Varosian... Get Me Out of Here!

Sue: This is very bleak, Neil. In fact, I think they're drinking their own urine.

They watch the Doctor avoid a quick dip in an acid bath.

**Sue**: That's very James Bond. Have they got a room full of piranhas next door?

The Doctor 'accidentally' knocks a guard into the acid bath, and then he 'accidentally' ensures that his colleague falls in after him.

Sue: This isn't for kids. What's got into everybody all of a sudden?Me: Should we blame the Doctor for those senseless deaths?Sue: No. It was just an accident. But he didn't show any remorse. That's

my problem with it.

**Me**: Do you think the programme is having its cake and eating it by criticising violence and showing too much of it at the same time? **Sue**: That's a bit deep, isn't it? You're not writing one of your academic essays now, you know. I don't mind it personally. I just don't think it's appropriate for young children, that's all.

Quillam closes in on the Doctor's location, but the Time Lord has disguised himself with one of the henchman's masks.

**Sue**: Wait. You didn't recognise him from his coat? How many people are wandering around this place dressed as a fucking clown?

Quillam's disfigurement remains a source of fascination for Sue.

Sue: How did he injure himself? Did he wash his face in some acid by

#### **VENGEANCE ON VAROS**

mistake? I bet that's easily done when you live on a shit-hole like this.

Quillam leads the Doctor away at gunpoint.

**Sue**: How many times each day do you think the Doctor wishes he still had K9?

*Elsewhere on Varos, Etta and Arak are enjoying their favourite prime time TV show* – Old Men Wrestling In Nappies.

**Sue**: This is way ahead of its time. It's basically *YouTube* now.

The Doctor is led away to the gallows.

**Sue**: I wish this didn't look so cheap. This would be an iconic scene if it didn't seem so flimsy. It's the script that saves it.

Sil eagerly anticipates the Doctor's execution.

**Sue**: He's horrible,but I think I love him. He's a great character. I definitely won't forget him in a hurry.

The Governor believes the Doctor is telling the truth.

**Sue**: Colin is really good in this. I didn't think I'd like him that much, but I do. He's totally committed to the part.

If things weren't bad enough already, Peri is transmogrified.

**Sue**: If this thing is supposed to turn you into what you fear the most, then Peri must be terrified of chickens. She should have pretended she was frightened of Raquel Welch.

Me: Nice topical reference, love.

The Doctor struggles to find a solution to the problem.

**Sue**: Just reverse the polarity! Don't tell me you've forgotten how to reverse the polarity.

He waves a gun around instead.

**Sue**: Well, it's not the first time he's done it, and it probably won't be the last.

The Doctor blasts the machine's controls.

Sue: This incarnation certainly doesn't fuck around. I like that about him.

Peri is rescued in the nick of time.

**Sue**: Her back must be killing her – she was strapped to a sheet of corrugated iron roofing.

The Doctor decides to steal a go-kart.

**Sue**: I've just noticed their little cars have giant K9 ears on top of them. **Me**: That's two K9 references in one night. What is wrong with you? **Sue**: I don't know why he's bothering to steal the car anyway. A brisk jog would do the job.

Etta and Arak bicker over the events unfolding on-screen.

**Sue**: This is you and me on a good day. It's uncanny, actually.

The Governor pleads with Maldak to spare Peri's life.

**Sue**: Has Martin Jarvis got a crush on Peri? In fact, is there anyone in the universe who hasn't got a crush on Peri? Is this why the Doctor drags her around with him – so she can beguile all the bad guys?

The Doctor, Jondar and Areta enter a green mist.

#### **VENGEANCE ON VAROS**

**Sue**: They're very happy all of a sudden. They must have found their way back to the green room.

As the Governor delivers an imploring speech to the nation, Arak presses her wife's 'No' button without her permission.

Sue: Smack him in the face with a cushion!

And then the Governor has a sudden change of heart.

Sue: He really is Nick Clegg. It's too late, Nick, you are so dead.

But Maldak comes good and frees the Governor and Peri.

**Sue**: Now he just needs to apologise for slapping her earlier.

Meanwhile the Doctor, Jondar and Areta are enticed by visions of themselves.

**Sue**: If I saw a ghost of myself, I'd run a mile. It should be something more tempting, like a plate of sandwiches. Or Adric.

And then two elderly men wearing nappies, which isn't something I get to write every day, intercept our heroes.

**Sue**: That's the most disturbing image in the whole of *Doctor Who*. That is completely fucked up!

Quillam pursues the Time Lord's party into a garden comprised of poisonous vines. He wants to hear them scream until he's deaf with pleasure.

Sue: What time did this go out again?

Me: 5:20pm.

Sue: That's mental.

Thankfully, a series of fortuitous coincidences results in Varos gaining the upper hand in the trade negotiations.

Sue: That was a bit convenient. Did I miss something?

And the episode concludes with Etta and Arak facing up to the fact that there's nothing left to watch.

**Sue**: This will be us in a couple of months' time. **Me**: I'm sure we'll look a lot happier than that.

#### The Score

**Sue**: I really enjoyed that. It was a nice change of pace. The direction was poor, but some of the performances were very good – especially the Governor, Sil and the married couple. The script was excellent, and Colin was great, too.

### 8/10

Sue: Don't you think it's time you turned the comments back on, Neil?

Me: No.

**Sue**: You have to make the site interactive otherwise what's the point? Don't worry, I can take it. They can call me whatever they like. I don't care, as long as they don't call me a fan.

**COMMENT**: "I am a little disappointed that despite this being the 150<sup>th</sup> update, Nicol hasn't made a cake, or some marsh minnows at the very least, to celebrate the fact. Has she no sense of occasion any more?" – Gavin Noble

**NOTES**: As I edit this book five years on, I currently have less hair than Stephen Yardley. Other things that have changed since we blogged this episode include Nick Clegg losing his parliamentary seat. So it's not all bad news, then.

#### **VENGEANCE ON VAROS**

Incredibly, I failed to point out that we blogged *Vengeance on Varos* on *Doctor Who*'s 49th anniversary. Thank God I didn't switch the comments back on.

# \*\* THE MARK OF THE RANI BLOGGED: 26 November 2012

Just before we tackled The Mark of the Rani, there were some surprises in store for us in the Australian jungle. The first shock arrived on Friday when it became clear that Colin Baker couldn't wait to leave the programme. The second bombshell landed on Saturday evening when Sue saw Colin topless for the first – and hopefully last – time. If this wasn't disturbing enough, Colin was in the bottom two when it came to public votes. Where was fandom when he needed them? I bet they didn't buy 'Doctor in Distress' either.

**Sue**: I'm not surprised. I mean, he's done bugger-all, really. But he's 69 years old, so what do you expect? He did extremely well to get this far.

Colin's fate would be determined at a Bush Tucker Trial where his opponent would be Eric Bristow.

Sue: Fuck you, Bristow!

Colin and Eric had to pick a female assistant to help them: Eric chose Colin's best friend, Rosemary Shrager (the swine), so Colin was left with Charlie Brooks, which resulted in the most exciting Doctor Who/EastEnders crossover since Dimensions in Time.

The contestants had to stick their hands in a series of holes full of snakes, spiders, and other assorted critters, and at one point, Colin was savaged by a Macra (which Ian Levine will probably edit into something non-canonical later).

Colin's only hope was the short-tempered chef Rosemary Shrager, because whereas Charlie did her very best for Colin, Rosemary made a right pig's ear of Eric's chances. Or was that their dinner the night before? Either way, she was hopeless.

Sadly, Eric wiped the floor with Colin.

Colin's fatal mistake was that he took up too much time searching for the

#### THE MARK OF THE RANI

stars that would have resulted in meals for the camp, whereas Eric ignored these in favour of the stars he needed to survive. The git.

**Sue**: Colin sacrificed himself for the good of the camp. He went out a hero.

Meanwhile on Doctor Who ...

#### Part One

**Sue**: Pip and Jane Baker?

Me: They're *Doctor Who*'s first – and last – husband and wife writing

team.

**Sue**: I bet she comes up with all the ideas and he just writes them down.

The story begins with some miners emerging from a pit.

**Sue**: It's outside and it's on film, which is good. Yes, there's a fucking mine in it, but at least it's a proper mine for a change. Yes, I think I'm going to enjoy this.

As the miners return to their pit village, Sue sings Dvorak's New World Symphony.

**Sue**: Where is this? Is it Yorkshire? **Me**: Try a bit closer to home.

Sue: Durham?

**Me**: It's supposed to be Killingworth, although they shot it in Telford, I

think.

Sue: Oh, I know Killingworth, it's north of Newcastle. Hang on a minute,

those accents aren't right at all.

Sue is a north-east lass, which means this could get rough.

Sue: I couldn't give a shit because I'm not a proper Geordie. I'd be really

upset if I was, though. Why-aye!

The miners converge on the local bath house.

**Sue**: We had a clothes horse like that. It reminds me of the time the debt man came round and my mam hid behind it. I would have been seven or eight years old at the time, and I had to open the door and tell this strange guy that my mam had gone to the shops. And he said, "Tell her to take her feet with her next time". It was so embarrassing.

Me: Why-aye, it were reet grim oop north, like, pet.

Sue: Stop it.

The miners are suddenly overcome by noxious fumes.

**Sue**: Someone is interfering with miners. That can't be good.

Meanwhile the Doctor and Peri are travelling to Kew Gardens in the TARDIS when they are rudely diverted by a time distortion.

**Sue**: This isn't a great look for Peri. I don't like her hair for a start. No, she doesn't suit her hair up at all. The dress isn't exactly flattering, either.

Ha! If she thinks that dress is bad!

**Sue**: Is the Doctor wearing a different cat brooch on his coat this week? **Me**: I've told you before, Sue, stop looking at his coat. You'll go blind.

The TARDIS materialises in Killingworth, thanks to the time distortion. Sue, on the other hand, is more concerned with Peri's distorted sense of fashion.

**Sue**: What the hell is she wearing now? Is she trying to be even more garish than the Doctor? Wow. I bet the dads weren't happy with this after the last couple of costumes. Oh look, she's wearing the wrong shoes again. Will she go back inside the TARDIS and change them? No? I thought not.

#### THE MARK OF THE RANI

Peri struggles to keep up with the Doctor as he traipses through the mud.

Sue: I have no sympathy for her whatsoever.

They pass a field with a scarecrow standing in it.

**Sue**: This is where you might end up when you stop playing the Doctor, Colin

The Doctor and Peri encounter the miners from the bath house, who have suddenly become very surly indeed.

**Sue**: They sound like they're from Ashington rather than Killingworth. The further north you go, the more they tend to roll their r's. This sounds like someone from Yorkshire trying to speak Scottish.

Me: Not genuine, then?

**Sue**: Let's put it this way, Colin Baker is the only person using their real accent in this scene.

Hey, you'll never believe who's just strolled into town...

**Sue**: He looks like the Master a bit... Hey, it is the fucking Master! What's he doing back?

Me: He disguised himself as a scarecrow. Can you believe it?

Sue: No, I bloody don't.

Some of the best minds in the country – including Michael Faraday and Humphry Davy – have converged on Killingworth for an important conference.

**Sue**: So the Master is mucking about with the Industrial Revolution for no readily apparent reason. Okay...

A 'vicious' dog menaces the Doctor and Peri.

**Sue**: Colin is more of a cat person, but he needn't worry because that dog is as soft as muck. You can tell by its eyes. It might have a bark on it, but it would probably lick you to death before it bit you.

*The dog growls at the Doctor.* 

**Sue**: I think dogs are supposed to be colour blind, but the Doctor's coat is still confusing the hell out it, the poor thing.

The Master uses his Tissue Compression Eliminator to shrink and kill the creature.

Sue: Right, that's a mark off the final score. There was no need for that!

Me: He killed a man as well.

**Sue**: I'm not bothered about him. Would you show the Master zapping an innocent baby in a cot? It's the same thing as far as I'm concerned.

The renegade enlists the help of three burly miners, including a man named Jack Ward. Sue is too busy laughing at their accents to follow what they're saying.

**Sue**: Young Michael Palin on the left is definitely the worst. Is he having a laugh? "Where is he, dost tha' know?" Pathetic!

The miners attack the Doctor and he ends up dangling above a pit.

**Sue**: The one who's gently tapping the chain with the shovel, what do you think he's trying to achieve there? This is really badly directed.

Me: It's directed by a woman.

Sue: Is it? Oh.

Lord Ravensworth manages to save the Doctor in the nick of time.

Sue: He's famous.

Me: Did you watch Bergerac when it was on?

#### THE MARK OF THE RANI

**Sue**: Is it set in France? **Me**: That'll be a no, then.

Ravensworth describes all the trouble he's been having with the working class oiks recently. They keep going berserk and changing their personalities.

**Sue**: He could be describing the Doctor, there.

Meanwhile the Master comes face to face with the Rani.

Sue: Oh, it's her. She's famous, too.

Me: It's Kate O'Mara.

**Sue**: Oh yeah, I definitely know her face. What's she best known for? **Me**: *Dynasty*. But she hasn't done that yet. At this point she was probably best known for a soap opera set on a cross-channel ferry called *Triangle*.

Sue: Doesn't ring a bell.

**Me**: Lucky you. She was also Colin Baker's rival in *The Brothers*. Colin

Baker was in The Brothers, you know.

The Rani doesn't suffer fools gladly, which means the Master is in all sorts of trouble.

Sue: She's very good. She's a strong and independent character. I like her.

Luke Ward tells the Doctor that his 'favver' hasn't been right in the head ever since he took a bath.

**Sue**: (*Pointing at Luke*) Look at the size of his packet! Blimey, those trousers are tight. Even Terry Wogan would have drawn the line at trousers as tight as that.

The Doctor suddenly decides to mock Peri's accent.

**Sue**: She isn't French, you know! The Doctor should have told Peri to speak with an English accent this week so she could blend in with her

surroundings. That way Nicola could have had a week off from that stupid voice.

The Doctor disguises himself as a dirty miner.

Sue: This is a much better look for Colin. Quick! Burn his coat!

When he slaps some mud on his face, I feel duty-bound to inform my wife that Colin accidentally covered himself in dog shit.

**Sue**: I hope it was the same dog the Master killed.

The Rani mocks the Master's habit of coming up with badly thought-out plans.

**Sue**: It is okay if I side with her, isn't it?

The Doctor follows the miners into the bathhouse and is promptly overcome by the Rani's gas.

**Sue**: She should re-open this place as a steam room. It would be a lot less conspicuous for a start.

We learn that the Time Lords exiled the Rani from Gallifrey.

**Sue**: Gallifrey breeds its fair share of nutters, doesn't it? Didn't they realise that exiling her would result in a mess like this? Are they completely stupid?

Peri is surprised to see the Master again, mainly because she thought he was dead.

Sue: So did I!

The Master gets Jack Ward and his surly mates to drop the Doctor's TARDIS

#### THE MARK OF THE RANI

down a mineshaft.

**Sue**: Who cares? The TARDIS is indestructible. It's not as if they've thrown it into a volcano or anything.

**Me**: No. You definitely wouldn't be able to come back from something like that. Not without a bloody good explanation.

When Peri pushes the Doctor's stretcher away, it begins to roll down a hill.

**Sue**: My brother did that to me when I was in my pram, once. He was jealous of me, I think. I almost died, but he changed his mind at the last moment and he caught me before I hit traffic.

The Doctor hurtles down the hill on the stretcher.

**Sue**: It's turned into *Last of the Summer Wine*.

And then she bursts into laughter as the Doctor heads straight for the mineshaft. Cue credits.

Sue: That's was pretty good considering the Master's in it.

#### **Part Two**

The Doctor is rescued by a famous figure from history.

**Sue**: I didn't know George Stephenson was Welsh. I thought he came from Wylam.

Me: I never knew you were an expert on George Stephenson!

The Master turns Luke to the dark side with the help of some maggots.

**Sue**: Why doesn't the Master just hypnotise him? He's never had to feed worms to people to control them before now. That's a bit crap, isn't it?

The Rani dispenses with her slaves.

Sue: Poor Josh. He was my favourite character.

The Master notices a mark on Josh's neck: the mark of the Rani.

Sue: Yes, I know. We get it, thanks.

Sue sighs deeply.

**Sue**: The sets are wonderful, and the location is very nice, but there's something missing. I can't put my finger on it but this is doing nothing for me. I'm bored.

At least she perks up when the Doctor enters the Rani's TARDIS.

**Sue**: Now this is what I call a TARDIS! The Doctor must be insanely jealous. I love the big spiny thing in the middle. It's much nicer than the phallic thing that thrusts up and down in the Doctor's TARDIS. It looks like she might have had some help from the Daleks when she designed it, though, because there are bumps all over it. Oh, she's got a cocktail cabinet over there in the corner. That's cosy.

The Rani enters her ship with the Master in tow.

**Sue**: Imagine what it would be like if these two got it together and had children.

The Master hopes to steal the results of the Rani's experiments so he can take over the universe.

**Sue**: The Master is so incompetent he has to hijack other villain's plans now? Oh, and how is he still alive?

When the Doctor leaves the Rani's TARDIS, he points in one direction and

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departs in the other.

Sue: Hey, that's Peter Davison's gimmick! Get your own gimmick!

The Doctor returns to the village and examines Jack Ward.

Sue: He looks like Arthur Fowler after he stole the Christmas club money.

*The Doctor deduces that the miners have been robbed of the power of sleep.* 

**Sue**: Just show them this story. That will sort them out. I'm definitely feeling drowsy.

Charlie Hungerford offers the Doctor his gun, but the Time Lord refuses.

**Sue**: He's changed his tune. Maybe he really is making an effort to change his ways.

Instead the Doctor threatens the Master with his own Tissue Compression Eliminator.

Sue: Well, that didn't take him very long. I knew he wouldn't change.

Meanwhile, down in the dell, Luke accidentally sets off one of the Rani's mines.

**Sue**: That was a lovely explosion, but the continuity is a joke. There wasn't a tree in the shot before he was blown up.

A few seconds later, the penny drops.

**Me**: And you thought the actor playing Luke was wooden before. **Sue**: Who designs a mine that turns people into trees? Who wakes up one morning and thinks, I know what I'll do, I'll create a mine that turns people into fucking trees! What would be the fucking point?

Luke manages to save Peri from succumbing to a similar fate, even though he's currently a... you know... tree.

**Sue**: Oh. My. God. I've heard of tree hugging but this is ridiculous. This has turned into a pantomime now. A weird pantomime set in a forest, made by students.

Meanwhile the Master and the Rani are embroiled in an argument about morality.

Sue: Oh, for God's sake, get a room!

The Doctor entrusts Peri to take care of the Rani and the Master.

**Sue**: Is he taking the piss? Peri against two Time Lords? How long do you think she'll last?

A few minutes later Peri is overcome by fairy dust.

Sue: What a surprise. Peri is being written as a complete idiot.

The Doctor is captured by some angry miners who tie him to a pole and carry him back to the dell. However, one of them steps on a mine and... Oops!

**Sue**: That is the stupidest thing I have ever seen in *Doctor Who*.

The Doctor escapes from the minefield with the aid of a stick.

**Sue**: What does wood turn into if he touches a mine with it? Will he end up holding a severed arm?

The Rani and the Master escape in her TARDIS, but the Doctor has sabotaged it and they end up hurtling towards the most primitive reaches of the cosmos.

#### THE MARK OF THE RANI

Sue: They'll be fine once the Master agrees that the Rani is the one

wearing the trousers in that relationship.

Me: And very nice trousers they are, too.

Sue: Leave the fashion comments to me, love.

Not only has the Doctor fiddled with the Rani's brakes, her ornamental dinosaur foetuses are coming to life as well.

**Sue**: Why did she decorate her TARDIS with dinosaur babies in the first place? Whatever happened to some nice pot plants?

As the Doctor and Peri prepare to leave, Lord Ravensworth wants to know what he and his companion get up to that strange box of theirs.

The Doctor: Argue, mainly.

Sue: That was the best line in the whole story.

The TARDIS dematerialises and the credits roll.

**Sue**: I bet we never find out how they escaped from those dinosaurs. They just will.

# The Score

Sue: What a mess. Why was the Master even in that? The Rani would have been much better off on her own. The Master got in the way. There were too many characters and none of them seemed to connect to anything. What was George Stephenson's role in that story, exactly? What was the actual point of him? Yes, it looked nice – the location was lovely – but the direction was flat and the script was appalling. I still like Colin, though.

Me: So what mark are you going to give it?

**Sue**: Let's see... One mark off for the dead dog, one mark off for the Master, one mark off for the direction and another mark off for the accents. A mark off for completely wasting George Stephenson, and

another mark off for the bloody trees. Where does that leave us?

Me: Four out of 10.

Sue: Knock another mark off for being boring.

# 3/10

**Sue**: We've watched four Colin Baker stories now. I can't believe we're halfway through his Doctor already. This is so easy!

**COMMENT**: "Soppy old sod that I am, I've found it weirdly emotional watching Colin Baker on *I'm A Celeb*... I've missed having this guy around since he was dealt that injustice 25 years ago. The chance to get reacquainted with him has been a pleasure, and it's been gratifying to witness the growing consensus of what a Top Bloke he is (Holly Willoughby said she loved him so much she wanted to cry – which is a bit weird, but probably worth a line on his résumé)." – Paul Kirkley

**NOTES**: Eric Bristow had a *Twitter* meltdown in 2016 that resulted in his spectacular fall from grace. He now regularly comes bottom in most respectable Favourite Darts Player polls, and he's even stopped giving interviews to *Darts World Magazine*.

# BLOGGED: 30 November 2012

I wanted Nicol to watch at least one Colin Baker episode with us and The Two Doctors felt like the safest bet. It's a story about vegetarianism (Nicol has been meat-free for a year) and it's set in an exotic location (she likes Spain). Plus, if she didn't agree to watch it with us, I'd delete this week's episode of Homeland from the PVR.

Sue: (Pointing at the DVD menu) Hang on a minute, if this three episodes that means...

Nicol: It's only three episodes? That's short.

Sue: Don't get your hopes up, Nic. These episodes are 45-minutes long.

Nicol: WHAT?

#### Part One

**Sue**: Only two Doctors? We had five Doctors last time. Were there cutbacks at the BBC again?

**Nicol**: Does the Doctor regenerate? Is that why there's two of them? **Sue**: I bet he teams up with one of the old ones. I bet I know which one it will be as well. Let me guess... I bet it's...

Oh dear, too late.

Sue: It's Patrick Troughton!

Nicol: This is black and white. I'm not watching this if it's black and white.

**Sue**: Hang on a minute, something isn't right here.

Nicol: I know. I was expecting Colin Baker.

Sue: He's old. This Doctor shouldn't have grey hair. This doesn't make any

sense at all.

**Me**: I'll explain later. **Sue**: Explain now.

Me: I can't. It will take too long and Nicol will fall into a coma. I'll tell you

when the episode's finished.

**Sue**: Anyway, it's great to see him again. I've missed him so much. I don't even care that this is three parts any more.

The Second Doctor and Jamie are heading for the space station Chimera, where some of the most brilliant scientists in the universe have assembled to work on a special project.

**Sue**: I met Patrick's son recently. **Me**: Yes, I know. I was there.

Sue: He was lovely. Just like his dad. He was the best thing about that

bloody convention.

When the TARDIS materialises in the station's kitchen, the Doctor and Jamie are immediately set upon by the chef – Shockeye o' the Quauncing Grig.

Sue: It's Gordon Ramsay in one of his better moods.

The Doctor demands to see Dastari, the station's Head of Projects.

Sue: So has Colin got the week off? Not that I'm complaining.

We are introduced to a female Androgum named Chessene.

**Sue**: Is she famous? She looks famous.

Me: That's Servalan.

Sue: Who? Nicol: Who?

Me: It isn't important.

Sue: Will you explain anything to me today?

Dastari has genetically augmented Chessene's brain, and she is now a genius.

**Sue**: So he's basically a plastic surgeon for the brain? I'd think I'd still prefer some Botox, thanks very much.

Dastari's boasts are silenced when some spherical objects are detected rapidly approaching the station.

Sue: Sontarans!

Nicol: How do you know that?

Sue points at the Character Options Sontaran Scout Ship that's currently gathering dust on our sideboard.

**Sue**: I was with Neil in Forbidden Planet when he bought it. It looks like a mini-Epcot centre. You can't even fit the Sontaran inside it. Can you believe it? It's a rip off.

Nicol: At least I know what Sontarans are.

**Sue**: We like the Sontarans. They're not all bad. Some of them are quite nice, actually.

Before we can find out, we cut to the Sixth Doctor fishing for gumblejacks.

Sue: There you go, Nicol. That's the Sixth Doctor.

Nicol: You can't really miss him in that coat.

The Doctor reels in "a whopper".

**Sue**: If Nicol weren't here, I would have said something rude then.

Nicol: Mother!

The Doctor catches a tiny fish and immediately throws it back.

Nicol: It's too late now! You've already killed it!

Back on the space station, the Second Doctor admonishes Dastari for experimenting with time travel technology.

**Sue**: Since when did Patrick Troughton work for the Time Lords? I don't remember him doing that. In fact, wasn't he running away from them most of the time?

Me: I'll explain later.

Nicol: Tell her now. She won't stop going about it if you don't tell her now.

I pause the DVD so I can explain season 6B to her while Nicol checks her Facebook profile.

**Sue**: I wish I hadn't asked now. So which fan with too much time on his hands came up with that lousy idea? Although it does explain his grey hair, I suppose. It still doesn't feel right, though. Does this mean I have to watch this 6B whatsit?

Me: No. Well, apart from this story, of course.

**Sue**: Oh, that's alright, then. You had me worried there for a second. As much as I like Patrick Troughton, I don't want to start going backwards.

The Second Doctor is very upset with Dastari.

**Sue**: This is what I miss from the other Doctors: passion. Tom Baker had it, sometimes, but no one does it quite like Troughton.

The Doctor criticises Jamie for having a "mongrel accent".

**Nicol**: Blimey. What do you think he'd he say about our accents? **Sue**: Don't worry, Nic, they took the piss out of the north-east in the last story.

The Sontarans storm the space station and the Second Doctor is held at gunpoint. Or, if you're Sue, a magic wand threatens him.

Sue: Abracadabra!

The Sixth Doctor, on the other hand, also feels like he's just been put to death.

**Sue**: So all the other Doctors must have experienced the exact same thing, yes? I hope it didn't happen to them in the middle of an adventure. That would have been awkward. At least this Doctor was just larking about.

Peri urges the Doctor to see a doctor, but when they arrive on space station Chimera to consult Dastari ("What are the chances?"), the place is completely deserted.

**Nicol**: Is it just me or have the production values gone up since last time? It doesn't look as cheap.

Sue: It does look quite good, doesn't it? The lighting is very atmospheric.

Me: It's directed by Peter Moffat. You hate Peter Moffat, Sue.

Sue: This isn't that bad, though. Maybe he's making an extra-special effort.

The Doctor can detect the stench of death, which doesn't exactly put Peri's mind at rest.

Nicol: He doesn't seem to care for Peri at all.

Sue: I know what you mean. He's horrible to her sometimes, but she still

keeps going back to him, like an abused girlfriend.

Nicol: He hardly looks at her. There's no connection between them at all.

Sue: I know, Nic. It's very sad.

The odd couple are halted in their tracks by an automated computer system that reacts to their presence by turning up the heat.

Sue: If we're really lucky, Colin will take his coat off.

Nicol: Just as long as he keeps his shirt on.

Sue: Peri can't strip off, though. She's got nowhere left to go.

**Nicol**: Did you dress like Peri in the 1980s, Mam? **Sue**: Oh yes, Peri is quite fashionable in this one.

And then, just like that, we're in Spain.

Sue: They haven't really gone to Spain, have they? ... Oh wow, they've

actually gone to Spain! Is this another one of JN-T's jollies?

Shockeye can't wait to taste human meat.

**Nicol**: He reminds me of Fat Bastard from *Austin Powers*.

The Sixth Doctor and Peri find a corpse in the space station's galley, but the Doctor is too busy to care about dead Androgums.

Nicol: Does he ever show any compassion? Why does Peri travel with him?

**Sue**: I don't know. It's a bit like marrying someone for money, I suppose. She gets to see the universe but she has to put up with him at the same time.

*The Doctor and Peri enter the space station's infrastructure.* 

**Nicol**: This looks like a level from *The Crystal Maze*.

Regular readers will know that Nicol is obsessed with The Crystal Maze.

Nicol: I don't like this Doctor very much. He's horrible!

Me: He's got no hearts.

The Doctor disarms the computer's defence system.

Nicol: If he gets this right, he wins a crystal.

Meanwhile, in sunny Spain...

**Sue**: Seeing a Sontaran sunning himself on a veranda doesn't feel right. He'll burn his head.

The Sontarans are working with Chessene and Shockeye.

**Sue**: I have to say, these Sontarans look a bit cheap to me. No, they don't look right at all. They look plasticky.

Meanwhile a British lepidopterist named Oscar Botcherby is hunting for moths in the Andalucian countryside, with his Spanish girlfriend Anita.

Sue: See, Nicol. Marrying for money.

While back on the space station, the computer overpowers the Sixth Doctor with gas and the Time Lord collapses onto some cables.

Sue: That wasn't a great cliffhanger. It wasn't even a good Colinhanger.

The credits roll.

**Sue**: That was okay, I guess. The script is very good – but of course it is, it's Robert Holmes – and I like the location a lot. What do you think, Nicol? .... Nicol?

**Me**: She's asleep. Still, look on the bright side – at least we don't have to watch *Homeland* tonight.

#### Part Two

Nicol didn't join us for Part Two. I can't imagine why. Anyway, the Doctor recovers from his gassing in Part One only to find Jamie McCrimmon living rough in the station's infrastructure.

**Sue**: Why was Jamie growling like a wolf just then? Has he got a nasty chest infection?

The Doctor tries to work out the logic behind the Second Doctor dying and him living on. Peri certainly doesn't understand it.

Sue: Neither do I, love. Neither do I.

Jamie describes what happened when the Sontarans turned up.

Sue: I can't believe he left out the part where they look like potatoes.

**Me**: They probably had their helmets on.

Sue: You have to spoil everything.

The Doctor leaves Iamie to hide in a service duct.

Sue: He doesn't care about any of his companions. Even the old ones.

Meanwhile, in Spain, Oscar and Anita think they've witnessed a plane crash, although Oscar doesn't want to search for any survivors because he isn't a well man.

**Sue**: Ah, so that's why she's going out with him. She's waiting for him to have a massive heart attack.

Back on the space station, Peri stands in front of a mirror and mocks her appearance.

**Sue**: Don't be too hard on yourself. Remember what you were wearing last week.

Peri leaves the Doctor alone to contemplate the end of the universe but it isn't long before he is suddenly confronted by the image of his companion in great pain. The Doctor watches in horror as Peri's image is replaced by Dastari's, and then the Second Doctor's, and then, finally, his own.

Sue: Are they trapped in a test tube of time?

Peri has to watch herself being tortured. She practically begs the Doctor to turn the projection off.

Sue: Your top isn't that bad. Honestly, it isn't.

Luckily for them, the Sontarans forgot to turn their animator off when they left the station.

Sue: Fucking idiots.

As the Sixth Doctor puts himself in a trance so he can contact his previous self, Jamie confesses to Peri that her Doctor is worse than his.

**Sue**: All the Doctors are worse than yours, Jamie. You just have to get on with it.

When the Second Doctor regains consciousness in the hacienda's cellar, he immediately calls out for Jamie.

**Sue**: See, the first thing he thinks of his of his companion. That's because he's a good Doctor.

Shockeye complains about the amount of bone and gristle on the old lady who used to live in the hacienda.

Sue: I love this character. What's he called again?

Me: Shockeye.

**Sue**: Is that supposed to be like 'Och Aye'? His ginger eyebrows do make him look Scottish. And he is wearing a kilt.

Shockeye munches on a rat.

Sue: That was disgusting, but I still can't take my eyes off him.

And then the Doctor is incredibly rude to Peri once again.

Sue: Just speak to her like a friend. Just once. Please.

Stike, Group Marshal of the Ninth Sontaran attack group, makes a big entrance.

**Sue**: He's too tall to be a proper Sontaran. They don't look right to me. This one has a lopsided face. They look like the sort of thing a fan would make in his shed.

The Sixth Doctor's TARDIS materialises in Spain.

**Sue**: Yes! He's actually taken his coat off! Having said that, his waistcoat is almost as bad. God help us if he ever goes to Hawaii.

The Second Doctor realises that Dastari is the bad guy.

Sue: I bet he killed the radio star as well.

Dastari regrets the fact that the Time Lords sent this particular Doctor as their emissary, because he has a certain regard for him.

Sue: He was hoping for Jon Pertwee. He can't stand that one.

Stike slaps the Second Doctor.

Sue: I've gone right off the Sontarans now.

Peri arrives at the hacienda and knocks on the door.

Sue: Do you know what this door needs?

Me: A huge pair of knockers?

Sue: (Sighing) Typical bloke... Actually, I was going to say the exact same

thing, you bastard.

Shockeye can't believe his luck when he spies Peri standing on his doorstep.

Sue: Hey, there's a queue, mate!

Dastari attempts to isolate the Second Doctor's symbiotic nuclei.

**Sue**: For a machine that's supposed to be high-tech, you'd think it'd be a lot quieter.

The Sixth Doctor thanks Anita for her time and she responds by kissing him on the cheek. Jamie is gutted when he doesn't receive the same treatment.

**Sue**: She must be into DILFs. Having said that, Jamie's no spring chicken himself

The Sixth Doctor and Jamie enter the old icehouse.

**Sue**: The direction isn't that bad. The lighting is okay, I suppose, although we could do with some close-ups. But this is definitely Peter Moffat's best one so far.

Shockeye doesn't want to eat a Sontaran because he thinks they'll be tough and flavourless.

**Sue**: Hey, you never know, they might taste of potato. Try mashing its head in.

The Sixth Doctor discovers a Kartz-Reimer time machine in the hacienda's cellar.

**Sue**: How on Earth is a Sontaran supposed to fit inside that thing? Jimmy Krankie would struggle to get into that. They haven't thought this through.

Peri escapes from the hacienda before she can become the Dish of the Day. But Shockeye won't take no for an answer and he pursues her into the countryside.

**Sue**: They should play a Spanish arrangement of *The Benny Hill Show* theme over this bit.

Peri stumbles and the episode concludes with the Androgum leaning over her with hunger in his eyes.

Sue: Do you think he's a leg or a breast man?

The credits roll.

Sue: I'm really enjoying this. I'm actually looking forward to the next one.

#### Part Three

Peri is manhandled by Shockeye.

Sue: Sexual abuse before the watershed? Dear, oh dear...

Shockeye wishes Peri was a boy.

Sue: But...? Actually, I don't want to know.

Stike threatens to kill Jamie if the Sixth Doctor doesn't agree to prime the time cabinet for him.

**Sue**: The thing is, this Doctor *would* let a companion die for the greater good without batting an eyelid. And besides, it's only Jamie.

Jamie sticks his dirk into Stike's leg.

**Sue**: First of all, what kind of armour is he wearing if a tiny knife can get through it? And secondly, why are these Sontarans so stupid? Are they supposed to be the comic relief?

Shockeye is about to butcher Peri when Chessene rudely interrupts him.

**Sue**: And still the Doctor is nowhere to be seen. His companion would be dead by now if it wasn't for her.

Stike retreats outside to plan his next move.

Sue: They could do with a gardener. They've really let the place go.

Chessene persuades Dastari to transform the Second Doctor into an Androgum, using Shockeye's genes as a template, whether Shockeye likes it or not.

**Sue**: Either those straps are supposed to be made of toffee, and their technology is entirely food-based, or he's really, really strong.

The Second Doctor is now an Androgum, and all he can think about is food.

**Sue**: Troughton is fabulous in this. It's a brilliant performance.

Chessene betrays Stike by dropping a grenade on his head.

**Sue**: It's only a Catherine Wheel, you wimp. Why are Sontarans afraid of fireworks?

Shockeye and the Androgumised Doctor head into town for a quick snack.

**Sue**: Now this is a spin-off I'd watch. They could travel Europe sampling delicacies together. It's got BBC2 written all over it.

Stike miraculously survived Chessene's gas grenade, although he does look a little worse for wear.

Sue: Has he been hiding in the lettuce?

The Second Doctor and Shockeye arrive in Seville.

**Sue**: Finally! I thought we'd never get to see the place. What took them so long?

The Sixth Doctor can feel the effects of the Androgum inheritance catching up with him.

**Sue**: Right, so are all the other Doctors having a bad case of the munchies right now?

An injured Stike staggers into the Kartz-Reimer machine.

**Sue**: He's basically put himself in a microwave. What an idiot. I almost feel sorry for him.

Meanwhile the Second Doctor fancies a nice hors d'oeuvre.

**Sue**: All this talking about food is making me hungry.

Me: Do you fancy a pasty?

Sue: Ooh, that would be lovely.

Seville appears to be deserted.

**Sue**: They must have filmed this at dawn on a Sunday. The locals are all in bed

The Second Doctor tells Shockeye that he knows a really good place just around the corner.

Sue: But it won't be open yet. It's 6am.

Dastari is searching the city for the Doctor when a mad woman standing on a balcony distracts him.

Sue: Wherefore art thou, Buggles?

Me: I think she's got the horn for Trevor Horn.

Meanwhile Stike staggers into his own ship.

Sue: JUST DIE ALREADY!

The ship explodes.

**Sue**: They'll have to get the builders in now. And they should get a gardener while they're at it. The grounds are an overgrown mess.

The Second Doctor and Shockeye arrive at Oscar and Anita's restaurant.

**Sue**: What are the chances of *that*?

At which point the Sixth Doctor decides to take his fondness for cats a little too far.

**Sue**: If he so much as picks up a cat, there'll be trouble. Besides, there was no meat on the poor thing, anyway.

When Oscar presents his guests with the bill, Shockeye offers to pay with a twenty narg note.

**Sue**: How many zonks do you get to the narg?

Unfortunately, the only tip Oscar gets that night is attached to a knife.

**Sue**: He didn't just... He can't have... Did he? Oh my God, he has! That was shocking. I didn't think that would happen in a million years. We were watching a comedy a minute ago!

Oscar doesn't exactly rush his death scene.

Sue: Well, that managed to be shocking and ridiculous at the same time.

Oscar's girlfriend is left to pick up the pieces.

Sue: Don't worry, love. You're quids in now. Or pesetas. Whatever.

Shockeye returns to the hacienda and finds what's left of Stike's leg marinating in a nice lettuce jus.

**Sue**: They are just taking the piss out of the Sontarans, now. This could have been a tight two-parter if it wasn't for them. Idiots.

Peri is placed inside the Kartz-Reimer machine.

**Sue**: (*Singing*) Mr and Mrs... Be nice to each other...

Shockeye is still hungry, and even though he wants to eat a Jack, a Jamie will have to do.

Sue: Why is he obsessed with eating men?

**Me**: Maybe he likes sweetmeat.

The Doctors are manacled together in the cellar. Thankfully, Dastari leaves the keys on a nearby table.

Sue: Stupid Buggles.

Jamie can be heard screaming upstairs.

Sue: Oh no. Cock ballotine must be on the menu tonight.

Shockeye wounds the Sixth Doctor as he makes a run for it.

Sue: I can't believe he left Jamie behind to die.

Chessene laps up the Doctor's trail of blood as Dastari looks away in disgust.

**Sue**: That was an excellent scene. There are some really interesting ideas in this, even if it is a bit of a mess.

Shockeye pursues the wounded Time Lord into the countryside, where the

Doctor discovers Oscar's moth hunting equipment.

**Sue**: Is Oscar the patron saint of coincidences or something?

When the Doctor attacks Shockeye, Sue doesn't bat an eyelid.

Me: You do realise that the Doctor is killing him, don't you?

Sue: WHAT? You must be joking!

As the Doctor says, he got his just 'desserts'.

Sue: I don't know how I feel about that. This is very dark.

The Doctor returns to the hacienda and tells his companions not to worry about Shockeye any more because he's been mothballed.

**Sue**: Two quips is definitely pushing it. He'll be writing songs about it next.

After the Time Lords bid each other farewell, the Sixth Doctor and Peri head for the exit.

Peri: After you.

The Doctor: No, after you.

Sue: Even when he's trying to be polite, he still sounds like a massive cunt.

#### The Score

**Sue**: It's a tricky one to mark. There's a lot wrong with it. The Sontarans were a complete waste of time. Spain was wasted, too; they could have shot it anywhere. I'm still not convinced that making the Doctor a horrible person to be around is very wise, either. But I loved having Patrick Troughton back and Shockeye was great fun. The script was very funny, too. It could have been a lot shorter, and the direction could have been a lot better, but I still enjoyed it.

# 7/10

Now then, now then, now then... It's time for A Fix With Sontarans! Sorry about that.

Sue: Why are you making me watch this? This is wrong!

Me: I know.

Sue: I mean, what the fuck is Tegan doing with Colin Baker?

Sue wants to mother Gareth Jenkins.

**Sue**: Bless him. Do you think he wanted Daleks and Cybermen instead of Sontarans? He doesn't look very happy about it. Oh dear, he's looking down the camera lens even more than Tom Baker did.

Me: He's probably searching for the exit.

The mini-episode concludes with one of the biggest 'not for kids' moments on the blog so far.

**Tegan**: It's monstrous! **The Doctor**: It's revolting!

It's Jimmy Savile.

Sue: Switch it off! I can't watch this. I mean it, Neil. Switch it off!

She scowls at me as I get up to eject the DVD.

Sue: That was horrible. Why did you make me watch that? Is Gareth

okay?

Me: Yes, he's fine.

**Sue**: I bet it must be really difficult for him to talk about. I feel sorry for him. And if that wasn't bad enough, he had to meet Jimmy Savile as well.

**COMMENT**: "I adore that Gareth Jenkins is head of Save the Children.

The Doctor would be proud." - Rob

**NOTES**: Nicol has applied to be a contestant on the new series of *The Crystal Maze*. She just doesn't know it yet.



#### Part One

Sue: Glen McCoy. Any relation to Sylvester?

Me: No. He wrote two episodes of Angels - which were seminal, by the

way - but he's probably best known for his crisps.

Sue: Really? Me: No.

Timelash begins on the TARDIS.

**Sue**: I don't believe it. Peri is actually wearing something sensible for a change.

The Doctor and Peri are bickering about where to go next.

**Sue**: He just pushed her! Remember when the Doctor and his companions used to have chemistry? This relationship is actually getting worse.

The Doctor is in a terrible mood.

**Sue**: His perm has relaxed a bit, it's just a pity you can't say the same about the rest of him.

The Doctor wants to visit the constellation of Andromeda.

**Sue**: Peri stares at the Doctor like she's madly in love with him, even though he's treating her like absolute shit. This is an abusive relationship.

Meanwhile, on the planet Karfel, some rebels are revolting.

#### **TIMELASH**

Sue: I know! Let's stage the musical right here!

**Me**: Yes, it is a bit *Les Mis*.

Sue: It must be a rehearsal, because they haven't put the sets up yet.

The TARDIS is rapidly approaching a swirly thing.

**Sue**: Has the Doctor tuned the scanner to *Top of the Pops* by mistake?

It's a Kontron tunnel and Peri wants to know if it's in any way similar to the time tunnels used by the Daleks.

**Sue**: When did Peri meet the Daleks? I don't remember that.

Me: Neither did Eric Saward and he fucking wrote this!

The Doctor becomes increasingly hyperactive.

**Sue**: Why is he so horrible to Peri? And why does she put up with it? This is so depressing.

Meanwhile, on the planet Karfel...

Sue: Is this planet infested with bees?

A rebel is made to face a mysterious creature called the Borad.

**Sue**: So it's definitely not you-know-who, then? Only he just used the word master, and every time they try to hide a baddie like this, it usually turns out to be him.

Meanwhile Karfel's council discusses the fate of the rebellious Les Mis cast members.

**Sue**: Their costumes are filthy. They obviously haven't invented Persil Automatic on this planet yet.

A rebel is thrown into the Timelash.

Me: Tonight, Matthew, I'm going to be Midge Ure!

Two men meet in a power vault to sow the seeds of discontent.

**Sue**: Have they sneaked into the stationery cupboard? This is so cheap. I hope the script is decent, Neil, because this looks like shit.

Oh dear

Sue: So is he the mailman?

Me: No, he's the Maylin. He's in charge. Sort of.

Sue: Oh, for a moment there I thought it was his job to deliver the post on

this planet.

The director has opted to reveal the Borad slowly, which means we have to make do with shots of his appendages for now.

Sue: Did he trap his hand in a door?

And then Sue actually finds something to like about Timelash.

**Sue**: I like the blue robot. I especially like its voice. It's as if someone took a life-size model of Data from *Star Trek* and they painted it whilst tripping on acid.

The Borad ages the Maylin to death for talking to a rebel.

**Sue**: That was a nice effect, but why did he kill him? He didn't agree to go along with the rebel's plan, so that seems a bit harsh.

Back on the TARDIS, the Doctor and Peri navigate the Kontron tunnel with the aid of some 'seat belts'.

# **TIMELASH**

Sue: If he keeps wobbling like that, he might actually lose some weight.

Meanwhile a man named Tekker becomes Karfel's new Maylin.

Me: That's Avon.

Sue: Is it really? We named one of the wild cats after Avon.

Me: Yeah, it's a shame he turned out to be a girl.

You definitely couldn't accuse Paul Darrow of underplaying the part.

Sue: Oh my God. Is he always like this?

We discover that this isn't the Doctor's first visit to Karfel.

**Sue**: Am I supposed to remember that? Because this isn't ringing any

bells.

**Me**: Don't worry about it.

Sue: I wasn't.

Peri is warned not to sniff any of Karfel's plants because they tend to squirt acid at anyone who admires them.

**Sue**: And they grow them *BECAUSE*?

Karfel's enemies are the Bandrils, and their ambassador has an important announcement to make.

**Sue**: Is he the man from the chair? The one we didn't see properly earlier, I mean.

Me: No.

Sue: In that case, I'm really confused.

A beekeeper is sent to find Peri.

Sue: What are those hats supposed to protect them from, exactly?

Me: Hay fever, probably.

Tekker asks the Doctor to retrieve an amulet that a woman named Vena took with her into the Timelash.

Sue: Paul is desperately trying to upstage Colin, here.

**Me**: This is Paul Darrow's revenge for an appearance Colin made in *Blake's 7*. Colin is still removing parts of the set from his teeth.

Sue: Paul Darrow is definitely trying to make Colin laugh. He isn't even

trying to hide it.

Peri is menaced by a beekeeper brandishing a metal collar.

**Sue**: Is he going to measure her bra size with that thing?

Peri escapes from the android.

**Sue**: I bet that robot is a dancer in real life. There's a certain elegance to him

**Me**: I think he ended up on *The Hitman and Her*, but I could be mistaken. **Sue**: He could have made a killing outside Piccadilly Circus. Hey, he just sang the theme to *Close Encounters*!

Peri wanders into an underground cave and accidentally disturbs a Morlox.

**Sue**: A cheap set and an even cheaper monster. The money has definitely run out this season.

As the Morlox advances on her, Peri screams the place down.

Sue: This isn't her finest hour. Just jump over it, woman!

Peri is rescued by two rebels named Sezon and Katz ("Hang on a minute – wasn't she killed half an hour ago?"), and when they show her a locket, Peri instantly recognises the woman pictured inside it.

#### **TIMELASH**

Sue: How the fuck does she know Jo Grant?

Me: The Doctor must have gone through all his old photo albums with

her one night.

**Sue**: I told you it was an abusive relationship.

Meanwhile, in the highlands of Scotland in the year 1885...

**Sue**: I like this guy. He's sweet.

Sue thoroughly enjoys the scenes in Herbert's cottage. In fact, she doesn't have a bad word to say until the Doctor refuses to let Herbert travel in the TARDIS with him.

**Sue**: Peter Davison would have taken him like a shot. Then again, Peter Davison would have taken any old fucker with him.

Herbert sneaks on board the ship anyway.

**Sue**: For the last time, LOCK THE FUCKING DOOR! And why is Herbert wearing a suit that's two sizes too big for him? Did they recast his role at the last-minute or something?

Vena and Herbert ("The new Nyssa and Adric") are just settling in when the time corridor buffets the TARDIS.

Sue: Is this time tunnel powered by helium?

The Doctor returns to Karfel, but Tekker has a surprise waiting in store for him.

**Sue**: They should leave the Timelash on all the time, the lighting is so much better.

The episode concludes with the Doctor being shepherded towards the Timelash.

**Sue**: I haven't got a clue what's going on any more. Thank heavens for Paul Darrow. Just imagine how boring this would be without him.

Sue wants to watch the second instalment immediately.

**Sue**: Let's get it over with. I don't want this hanging over me all day tomorrow. My life is stressful enough as it is.

#### Part Two

The Doctor overpowers the android with a mirror he stole from Herbert.

**Me**: (*Singing*) Here comes the mirror man...

Sue: Why would anyone program a robot to be afraid of its own

reflection? Where's the practical application in that?

*The Borad monitors these events from the comfort of his inner sanctum.* 

Sue: Why is he sitting on a massive poker chip?

The Doctor decides to abseil down the Timelash.

**Sue**: That reminds me, we have to bring the Christmas decorations down from the loft later.

Sue can barely believe her eyes.

**Sue**: Oh look, it's Christmas at the local sports centre climbing wall. If my students dressed a TV studio like that, I'd probably fail them.

The Doctor falls further into the Timelash.

Sue: I'm a celebrity, get me out of here!

More people are sent into the Timelash to retrieve the Doctor.

#### **TIMELASH**

**Sue**: This is turning into a saga now. What a bunch of idiots.

The Doctor eventually recovers a Kontron crystal.

**Sue**: That will look lovely on top of the tree.

Meanwhile Peri has been chained to a pole by her neck.

Sue: One for the dads, I guess.

And the Borad still lurks in the shadows.

Sue: This had better be good, Neil. They are really dragging this out now.

It becomes abundantly clear that the Borad doesn't tolerate infidelity.

**Sue**: Oh dear, has his boyfriend been shagging about behind his back again?

The Doctor experiments with the Kontron crystal while his allies barricade the doors

Sue: He doesn't seem to care about Peri's whereabouts or safety at all.

And then the Doctor slips forwards in time. It's all a bit weird, frankly.

Sue: He's hitting his cues late. Did they actually rehearse this?

Me: It's funny you should say that. I think they were too busy doing panto

and appearing at conventions to give it their full attention.

Sue: This scene is so bad, I almost believe you.

The Doctor has slipped 10 seconds into the future.

**Sue**: I wish I could slip 30 minutes into the future...

The Doctor wants to use this time-slip against his enemies, but Herbert isn't convinced.

Sue: But you saw it work! He just showed it you! What more do you want?

When Tekker's men blast a wall, a painting of Jon Pertwee emerges from beneath the crumbling plaster.

**Sue**: No wonder they boarded it up. Who'd want to look at that all day?

The Doctor storms off to find the Borad.

Sue: Not Peri, then?

The Doctor asks Herbert to keep an eye out for her.

**Sue**: So he's entrusting a complete stranger to save his companion because he clearly can't be bothered to do it himself? Er... okay.

When the Doctor confronts the Borad, it turns out they've met before.

Sue: I definitely don't remember this. What score did I give it?

Me: You didn't give it a score because you haven't seen it. No one has seen

it. It wasn't made.

Sue: Well, that's a bit stupid, isn't it?

We finally see the Borad's face.

**Sue**: Hey, that's very good. Actually, this is the best thing in the whole story. When he asked the Doctor to come closer, I thought they were pushing their luck. But it still looks amazing.

Tekker doesn't like the sound of the Borad's plans and he finally decides to stand up to him. Sadly, he does this while standing in front of a chair that can age a person to death, the plonker.

# **TIMELASH**

Sue: What a shame. Paul Darrow was completely wasted in that role.

The Borad has chained Peri up so he can turn her into his sex slave.

**Sue**: You'd think he want to spend at least one night with her before he disfigured her.

As a Morlox approaches Peri, some mustakozene gas 'excites' the beast.

Sue: What the fuck am I watching, Neil?

Thankfully, the Borad is defeated when the Doctor reflects his time ray back on him.

Borad: You've tricked me!

The Doctor: You tricked yourself!

**Sue**: Yeah, but you still pointed it at him. Stop making excuses.

*Unfortunately, the Doctor still has a war to avert.* 

**Sue**: Oh, does he have to? I couldn't give a toss about this lot. Let them die.

The Doctor returns to his TARDIS to deal with the Bandrils' missile, but he ends up bickering with Peri instead.

**Sue**: What is going on? Has the director left the building?

The Doctor forcibly removes Peri from his time machine.

**Sue**: Unbelievable... This is painful to watch. Why hasn't this finished yet?

The Doctor materialises his TARDIS directly in the path of the Bandrils' missile, not that Sue is worried in the slightest, because I'm pretty sure she wouldn't have yawned if she was. And then, when that's all over, Karfel

appoints a new Maylin.

Sue: So is he in charge now?

Me: Yes.

Sue: When did they have enough time to hold an election? This planet

isn't very democratic, is it?

The new Maylin invites the Bandrils down to the planet for a chat.

Sue: Yeah, invite the people who just tried to destroy you round for coffee.

Why not?

But it's not over yet! The Borad has a clone!

**Sue**: How convenient. They didn't even bother to hint at that. That's just lazy.

The Borad threatens to pluck Peri's eyes out as Jon Pertwee looks on from a hole in the wall. The Doctor retaliates by mocking the Borad's looks.

Sue: This isn't right. Matt Smith's Doctor would see the beauty in

everything. This is awfully shallow. **Me**: Would you shag the Borad?

Sue: Fuck off!

The Borad is pushed into the Timelash. But don't worry – he'll have somewhere nice to swim for the next thousand years.

Sue: Are they saying what I think they're saying?

Me: I think so.

**Sue**: So he's just going to swim around in Loch Ness for a thousand years? He won't come ashore at any point? You know, *because he has legs*. I mean,

what the fuck?!

Herbert wants to stay on Karfel.

#### MALE SHIT

**Sue**: WHY? Have you seen the place? It's a dump!

But the Doctor knows better and he shows Peri a card with Herbert's name printed on it.

Sue: I suppose that's clever, but I'm past caring at this point.

Me: It explains all the references to The Time Machine, War of the Worlds,

The Invisible Man, and The Island of Doctor Moreau.

**Sue**: So HG Wells managed to string that story out over several books?

And I thought this was padded.

#### The Score

**Sue**: Wow. That was terrible. Yes, the Borad was excellent – probably some of the best make-up I've seen in the series – and Paul Darrow was hilarious; I could watch him all day. I even liked the blue androids. But as for the rest of it – the script, the direction, the special effects, some of the performances – it was horrendous. But I blame the script most of all.

# 2/10

**Me**: Fans like to call this story something else. It's an anagram of the title.

Sue stares at the DVD cover, and then, after giving it plenty of thought, she declares:

**Sue**: Male shit. **Me**: Close enough.

Sue didn't need to be persuaded to watch the making-of documentary, mainly because she wanted to hear everybody's excuses. Unfortunately, because I didn't bother to check beforehand (if you think I'm going to watch The Making of Timelash twice, you can think again), it included a massive spoiler.

**Sue**: Ooh, it's the Daleks next! The Daleks *and* Graeme Harper! I can hardly wait.

Because Terry Molloy narrated the documentary, they had to mention Revelation of the Daleks every four minutes for it to make any sense.

**Sue**: Ooh, it's got one of *The Champions* in it. That was my favourite TV show when I was a girl. Why haven't we got a box set of that, Neil?

Despite this, the documentary was definitely worth persevering with.

**Sue**: Now I know why it turned out so badly. Glen McCoy must have been eight years old when he wrote it, because he looks like he's 35 today. What were they doing letting an eight-year-old write for *Doctor Who*?

She doesn't half love Paul Darrow, though.

Sue: It's a shame he didn't play the Doctor. He'd have been great.

**COMMENT:** "The Champions does have one or two stand-out performances: in the episode with Jeremy Brett, the late great Roger Delgado plays the gloriously-named Colonel Tuat. And yes, it is pronounced twat." – Frankymole

**NOTES**: The wife's complicated relationship with Paul Darrow is covered in excruciating detail in this project's sequel *Adventures with the Wife and Blake*, which you can find at www.thewifeandblake.com

Speaking of which, Avon is still alive. The wild cat, that is. Sadly, all the other wild cats that we named after characters from *Blake's 7* either died or ran away. I'm not saying this has any bearing whatsoever on the finale to the TV programme, but it does make you think, doesn't it?



BLOGGED: 10 December 2012

#### Part One

This story begins on the snowy wastes of Necros.

**Sue**: I see Peri is wearing sensible clothes again. I bet a million dads all switched off at once.

Peri clambers across a frozen wasteland in order to reach a nearby pond.

**Sue**: What the fuck is she doing? Are the toilets backed up on the TARDIS and she has to relieve herself outside?

When the Doctor joins his companion he is wearing a bright blue cloak (blue being the colour of mourning on the planet Necros).

**Sue**: What the hell is *that*?

Me: I thought you'd like it. It hides his coat.

Sue: It's not as loud, I suppose, but it's still yelling at me. He looks like he's

going to a fancy dress party dressed as a jester.

When Peri complains that her blue coat is much too tight for her, the Doctor tells her she eats too much.

**Sue**: Hark at chubby chops over there. What a cheek!

The action shifts to Tranquil Repose, where a funeral is being arranged.

**Sue**: This is a nice set. It's very Art Nouveau. Nice camera movement, too. And the guy who's in charge of things is *very* famous. I recognise his voice.

**Me**: That's Clive Swift. He's a lovely bloke and one of *Doctor Who*'s finest ambassadors.

A young couple tiptoe across the screen. They are Natasha and Grigory, and they are seriously tooled up for a visit to a funeral parlour.

**Sue**: Their theme music is a bit weird. It's a cross between *The Professionals* and *Teletubbies*.

Meanwhile a snarling mutant menaces the Doctor and Peri.

**Sue**: Oh no. Even though the Doctor has taken off his cloak, he still hasn't scared it off.

The Doctor tries to hypnotise the deformed mutant, but he only succeeds in making it angrier.

Me: You won't believe who they almost got to play this part.

**Sue**: Michael Caine? **Me**: Think bigger. **Sue**: Brian Blessed?

Me: Bigger as in more famous.

Sue: Laurence Olivier?

Me: Yes!

Sue: Fuck off! I was only joking!

When the mutant grabs the Doctor by his throat, Peri whacks him over the head with a branch.

**Sue**: I don't think I can imagine Laurence Olivier appearing in a zombie film. This is very intense for its time slot. It's basically *Tea-Time of the Dead*.

And then...

#### REVELATION OF THE DALEKS

Sue: What the fuck?

Yes, it's Tranquil Repose's resident DJ.

**Me**: Do you recognise him? **Sue**: Is it Ozzy Osbourne?

Apropos of nothing, a white Dalek glides down a corridor.

**Sue**: What a crap entrance! I like the new colour scheme, though. If Apple ever made Daleks, that's what they'd look like.

Peri tries to come to terms with the fact that she's accidentally killed a man to death.

**Sue**: Don't blame yourself, love. You only tapped him on the shoulder. He must have been suffering from a pre-existing condition to die from that.

The Mutant seems quite pleased to be put out of its misery.

**Sue**: Tell me why Olivier didn't do this again, Neil.

The Mutant claims he acted in self-defence. If only the Doctor hadn't tried to hypnotise him!

**Sue**: WHAT? Why didn't you just say, "Hello!" when you first wandered onto the scene? You can speak, can't you?

Anyway, Davros has definitely slimmed down since Sue last saw him.

**Sue**: I thought he was supposed to be dead? And what's he going in that thing? Where's the rest of him gone?

Sue is finding it hard to process all the revelations in Revelation of the Daleks.

**Sue**: I'm very confused; there's a lot to take in. I'm a bit lost to be honest. How did Davros end up here, exactly?

Davros contacts a glamorous factory owner named Kara.

**Sue**: *More* new characters? Are they on the same planet? Does this all come together eventually?

Kara's secretary, Vogel, is a past master at the double entry.

Sue: Yeah, I bet he is!

Davros is only interested in one thing, and that thing is money.

**Sue**: So Davros wants cash? Is it because he's running a funeral home now and he's got bills to pay? I can't imagine Davros hiring an accountant to make sure his payroll is up to date. It's all a bit weird, this.

The Doctor and Peri continue their long slog to Tranquil Repose.

**Sue**: The Doctor is hardly in this story. I'm not sure how I feel about that. William Hartnell did more than this when he was on holiday.

The Doctor and Peri clamber over a wall, but Peri accidentally steps on something "precious" in the process.

Sue: Cock innuendoes? Really? At this time of night?

The Doctor jumps off the wall and Peri is left to fend for herself.

**Sue**: The Doctor obviously doesn't give a shit about her. I bet a single day doesn't go by when she doesn't wish he was still Peter Davison.

Deep in the catacombs, Natasha and Grigory discover a Dalek made entirely from glass.

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**Sue**: So Davros is sticking all the frozen bodies into Daleks? Is that it? It makes sense, I suppose. I see he's decided to bling-up the Daleks as well. You can practically see your face in that one.

Sue finally recognises Alexis Sayle as the DJ. Now if only she could understand a word he was saying...

Sue: Warriors, come out to play!

**Me**: You know, I've never picked up on that reference before now. Well done.

**Sue**: This is what would have happened to Chris Moyles if he'd stayed in hospital radio.

The head in the glass Dalek belongs to Natasha's dad, Arthur Stengos. He begs his daughter to kill him before the Dalek side of his nature takes control.

Sue: What a fantastic scene. Proper grim, but really good.

Kara has employed an assassin to eliminate Davros.

Sue: It's Champions man!

Orcini is accompanied by his squire, Bostock.

**Sue**: Is that his Baldrick? Is he a sex slave? It looks like he's wearing a collar.

The Doctor and Peri still haven't reached Tranquil Repose yet.

**Sue**: He's parked several miles away from the entrance. I know he wants to lose some weight but this is ridiculous.

Davros follows the Doctor's progress on a monitor screen. He cackles uncontrollably at what he sees.

**Sue**: Is he laughing at the Doctor's clothes?

Davros decides to promote Tasambeker, a put-upon employee of Tranquil Repose, to the role of personal assistant.

**Sue**: The giant W on her head isn't a great look for her. Actually, I don't know what a good look for her would be.

Me: A paper bag?

The Doctor and Peri finally reach Tranquil Repose. Yay!

**Sue**: This episode will be over by the time they get involved.

A Dalek glides past them and Peri freaks out. If only she knew what it was...

**Sue**: She was a bloody expert on them last week!

The Doctor is horrified when he finds a statue of himself in the Garden of Fond Memories.

Sue: Of all the Doctors to erect a statue to, they actually picked this one...

The statue has convinced the Doctor that he will die during his current incarnation.

**Sue**: Hey, it might be a monument to how bloody wonderful you are. Don't be so pessimistic.

The Doctor believes that the gravestone must be genuine because of how much it must have cost.

**Sue**: It can't have cost *that* much. It's rubbish. It's got a bloody great crack in it for a start. Hang on, is it supposed to be moving like that?

The episode concludes with the Doctor being crushed to death by his own

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enormous face.

Sue: It's only polystyrene! What a bloody awful cliffhanger.

The credits roll.

**Sue:** I'm not sure how I feel about this. The direction is very good, and some of the acting is excellent, but the Doctor hasn't done anything yet, and I don't have a bloody clue what's going on. The music is too loud as well. I'm not enjoying this one as much as I thought I would.

#### Part Two

The Doctor may have been crushed to death, but at least Jobel is on hand to comfort Peri.

**Sue**: She must be used to this by now. She'd probably be more concerned if the first person she met *didn't* come on to her.

The Doctor emerges from the rubble, unharmed but covered in blood – all part of an elaborate theatrical effect.

Sue: If by elaborate you mean completely stupid, yes.

Jobel and the Doctor don't hit it off.

**Sue**: He's known the Doctor for less than 10 seconds and he's hurling insults at him. The PR at this place is atrocious.

The Doctor and Peri reach Tranquil Repose's reception area. It's only taken them 48 minutes.

**Sue**: Hang on a minute... They're not wearing the colour blue any more. Where's their so-called respect now, eh?

Meanwhile Orcini is advancing on Davros' lair.

Sue: I love his performance. He has such a lovely voice. He'd have been a

good Doctor, I think.

**Me**: William Gaunt will always be a grumpy sitcom dad to me.

Sue: Really? He'll always be a Champion to me.

Orcini obliterates a Dalek with a volley of bastic bullets.

Sue: Plus he doesn't fuck about.

Elsewhere on Necros, Peri is introduced to the DJ.

**Sue**: Why have they smeared Vaseline over the camera lens? What's that

all about?

The DJ wants to know if that's Peri's real accent.

Sue: Oh dear. This is a bit awkward...

Meanwhile Davros seduces Tasambeker. No, not like that.

**Sue**: She's a terrible actress. Absolutely appalling. Why didn't they hire Pauline Quirke instead?

The Daleks have come to take the duplicitous Kara away, and Vogel is powerless to stop them.

**Sue**: He made a mountain out of his death scene. One minute this is gritty and realistic, the next it's summer season at Great Yarmouth.

When Davros offers to turn Tasambeker into a Dalek, she readily agrees.

**Sue**: You never know, her acting might improve.

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Tasambeker tries to warn Jobel about Davros' plans, but he spurns her advances once again.

**Sue**: It's a good part ruined. Seriously, this could have been wonderful with a decent actress in the role. What a shame.

Tasambeker stabs Jobel and he keels over.

Sue: Was his wig supposed to fall off like that?

Me: Yes, they did it on purpose.

Sue: It's a nice touch. He was a vain tosser. You know, there are moments

of brilliance in this.

When Orcini and Bostock reach Davros' lair, they pepper it with bastic bullets.

**Sue**: Davros is definitely dead. There's no way back from that. His head is all scrunched up!

But no! His head was just a decoy!

Sue: Eh?

The mercenaries fight back but Orcini loses a leg in the process.

**Sue**: Davros can fly! He really has been busy, hasn't he? Do you think he started to make a full-size dummy of himself but he got bored when he finished the head?

The DJ plans on using music against the Daleks.

**Sue**: This is the sort of shit music you listen to, Neil. Is he going to bore the Daleks into submission?

Kara tells Orcini that the beacon she gave to him was actually a bomb. So

Orcini repays her with a skewer to the heart.

Sue: Good Lord! This is vicious!

The DJ defeats the Daleks with concentrated sound waves. However, the DJ celebrates too soon and he is exterminated before he can take any further requests.

Sue: Eejit.

The Doctor is escorted to Dayros' lair.

**Sue**: I like the strategically placed ferns in this dungeon. They really brighten the place up.

The Doctor and Davros come face to face once again.

**Sue**: Davros is great, although there's one thing I still don't understand.

Me: What's that?

Sue: Why has Davros lured the Doctor here? Was he bored? Does he want

someone to stop him? What?

**Me**: Erm...

As luck would have it, Orcini's squire isn't as dead as we first thought.

Sue: Come on, Baldrick, blow his head off!

Bostock blows Davros' hand off instead.

**Sue**: Why didn't he aim for his head? It's bigger! Oh my, are those Davros' fingers on the floor? It's a bit full-on, this.

A henchman tells Davros that he's called for backup.

Sue: Even this bloke with the beard has done more to sort things out than

#### REVELATION OF THE DALEKS

the Doctor. I mean, why is the Doctor even in this story?

As Davros is arrested by some old-skool Daleks and taken away to stand trial on Skaro, the Doctor grabs a machine gun and blasts a Dalek that's been left behind.

Sue: Finally! The Doctor actually did something!

The Dalek's vision is impaired and it cannot see.

Sue: And the Weeping Angel in the corner looks on in embarrassment.

Orcini sacrifices himself because it's the honourable thing to do.

**Sue**: He's going to die cuddling his best friend. Aww, bless him. That's a real hero's death, that is.

But Davros gets away in the nick of time.

Sue: Oh, for fuck's sake! His death was pointless!

The explosion rocks Tranquil Repose.

Sue: Hey, that looked pretty good.

When things calm down, Peri asks the Doctor to take her somewhere fun. Somewhere beginning with B...

Sue: Barcelona!

#### The Score

**Sue**: That was a game of two halves; there were moments of excellence and moments of stupidity. But the thing that really annoyed me is the Doctor did bugger all. He was just a bystander. If he hadn't turned up,

that would have turned out exactly the same way. So what was the point? *Champions* man saved it for me. He was the real hero. And Davros was good, too. The direction was okay, but the sound mix was so bad I couldn't understand half of what was being said. I'm very disappointed. I don't know what that was, but it wasn't *Doctor Who*.

## 4/10

Later that night I subjected Sue to a compilation of news stories that covered the 1985 hiatus announcement. I know. I'm crazy, right?

**Sue Lawley**: The *Doctor Who Appreciation Society* is up in arms. They've called the decision "horrifying and staggering".

**Sue**: Horrifying? That's a bit extreme, pet. No one died. I can't believe this actually made the news.

Me: Do you think the BBC was right to rest the show?

**Sue**: Not really. If they weren't happy with it, they should have got another producer in.

And then I tested our marriage – and the experiment – to the max by showing her the video to the protest single Doctor in Distress.

**Sue**: I listened to the radio a lot in 1985 – I spent half my time driving up and down the A1 selling posters – but I don't remember hearing that.

**Me**: So, what did you think of it?

Sue: I'll have to watch it again. There was too much naffness for me to

take in all at once. I thought it was a spoof at first.

**Me**: You actually want to see it again?

Sue: Yes, let's see who I can recognise this time.

There now follows some time-coded comments from Sue. You'll have to find the video on YouTube yourself because it keeps being taken down (by Hans Zimmer, probably).

Sue: (00:24) That's Bobby G from Bucks Fizz, after the accident. He

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doesn't look too well, bless him. Is Cheryl there? People used to say I looked like Cheryl from Bucks Fizz.

Sue: (00:32) I have no idea who she is. Is she one of the Human League?

Me: It's Hazell Dean.

Sue: Wasn't she already a has-been by this point?

Sue: (00:39) That's Justin Haywood. We're going to see him tomorrow

night.

Me: He's not doing the War of the Worlds live tour any more.

Sue: Oh yeah, it's Gary Barlow now, isn't it?

**Me**: (*After pausing the DVD*) He's not doing it, either.

**Sue**: Who is doing it, then?

Me: Marti Pellow.

Sue: You didn't tell me that when you bought the fucking tickets! Sue:

(00:48) No, sorry, not a clue.

Sue: (01:11) Pepsi from Pepsi and Shirley? I don't fucking know!

Sue: (01:16) That's Colin Baker. Oh dear...

Sue: (01:25) I don't know who that is but they can't sing for toffee.

Sue: (01:35) Nik Kershaw?

Sue: (01:41) Is that Faith Brown?

Me: Yes. They couldn't get the real Tina Turner.

**Sue**: (01:49) The bloke from ABC?

Sue: (01:49) Sorry, I don't know who that is.

**Me**: That's Hazell Dean! I told you that less than two minutes ago! **Sue**: Hazell Dean again? Have they run out of celebrities already? **Sue**: (01:56) A woman from *Man About the House*! Er... why?

Sue: (02:01) Is it the lead singer from Imagination?

Me: I think he's a member of Tight Fit. Or Hot Gossip. I forget which.

Sue: And you call yourself a fan?

Sue: (02:33) That's David Van Day from Dollar. He's really going for it.

Didn't he try to take over Bucks Fizz after this?

Sue: (02:41) I have no idea but somebody is holding a gun to her head.

Sue: (02:50) Is it the Master? Oh my God. What is he doing?

**Sue**: (03:02) The woman from Ace of Base? How am I supposed to know? **Sue**: (03:17) The Brig isn't singing, I notice. He's no fool. And Bobby G looks depressed. (*Pointing*) Is that man in the dark glasses a Bunnyman?

Sue: (03:29) Colin's trying to hide his face. He's ashamed, probably. And

who can fucking blame him?

She declines the offer of a third listen.

Sue: So did that thing actually help?

Me: Not really. It still came back 18 months later. Sue: So does this mean I'll get some time off as well?

Me: Yes, about 18 hours.

COMMENT: "I worked with Clive Swift for a while, and I can confirm that he's every inch the lovely bloke that Neil indicates, and would be a wonderful ambassador for everything he might turn his affable generous

hand to." - Rob Shearman

# SEASON TWENTY-THREE IF THE SHOW IS GUILTY, DOES IT GET A NEW PRODUCER?



This illustration funded by Joe McIntyre

## \*THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS ONE TO FOUR

BLOGGED: 12 December 2012

Before we tackle Doctor Who's longest story, I have a confession to make.

**Sue**: So is this Colin's last story or not?

Me: Yes, it is. But...
Sue: But what?

Me: It's 14 episodes long.

Crash zoom on Sue's face.

Sue: HOW MANY EPISODES?!

Me: Calm down. The episodes are only 25-minutes again.

**Sue**: I don't care how bloody long they are, how am I supposed to remember what happens over the course of 14 episodes? How can they possibly sustain a story for that amount of time? That 10-part Patrick

Troughton was pushing it, and I love Patrick Troughton.

Me: We've done a 12-part William Hartnell as well.

Sue: Have we? I must have blocked that out.

Me: Are you ready?

Sue: As ready as I can be for a 14-part Doctor Who. This had better be

good, Neil.

#### Part One

**Sue**: They've changed the theme music again... It's horrible. The dum-dedums are alright, I suppose, but the rest of it sounds like it was done on a cheap Casio keyboard.

Her mood changes soon enough, though.

Sue: Fourteen episodes of Robert Holmes. Okay, I can live with that.

And then...

Sue: Wow!

The camera sweeps across a space station.

**Sue**: Are we watching the right version, Neil? This isn't one of those CGI things where the fans have tarted it up a bit? Am I actually allowed to watch this?

Me: Yes, this is what it looked like in 1986.

Sue: Wow! This is what Doctor Who looks like now!

The TARDIS is caught by a tractor beam and pulled towards the station.

**Sue**: If this first shot is anything to go by, the next 14 episodes are going to be fantastic.

The Doctor finds himself in a darkened courtroom where a mysterious figure in black sits with his back to us.

Sue: It's not, is it?

Me: Don't be silly. A dinosaur ate him, remember?

No, it's the Valeyard.

Sue: Oh, it's that man from Crossroads again.

Me: It isn't Ronald Allen - it's Michael Jayston. Like that's going to help

you.

**Sue**: He looks very familiar.

Me: In the television version of Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy, he played the

same role that Benedict Cumberbatch played in the movie. **Sue**: So he's the 1980s Benedict Cumberbatch, then? Okay.

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS ONE TO FOUR

A phalanx of Time Lords take their seats in the courtroom.

**Sue**: Oh look, it's her. The OXO lady.

Me: It's Lynda Bellingham. She played James Herriot's wife in All

Creatures Great and Small.

Sue: That's right. She took on the part after his wife regenerated.

Me: Yes, when a cow sat on her.

The Valeyard's inquiry into the Doctor's actions begins on the planet Ravalox.

**Sue**: Peri's jacket is a bit *Hi-Di-Hi*, but bold colours and stripes were all the rage back then, so you can't really blame her for that. My hair was exactly the same as hers back then as well, except mine was blonde. I've destroyed all the photos.

The Doctor and Peri are hiking through a damp forest.

Me: Do you notice anything different about this?

Sue: Yes, they're shooting it on video. Is it Betacam SP?

Me: I'll find out for you. How do you feel about them using video on

location?

**Sue**: It was very misty when they shot this, so it's very forgiving at the moment. It's always going to look flatter than film, but at least we won't get that jarring effect when they switch between indoors and outdoors any more. Besides, I like video. I learnt my trade on it so I can't really complain.

Two intergalactic wideboys monitor the Doctor's progress.

**Sue**: Oh, it's him. He's been in *everything*. I like his sideburns. You could probably get away with sideburns like that today. I could get the clippers if you like, Neil.

**Me**: No, thanks.

Sabalom Glitz tells his partner, Dibber, that he suffers from a deep-rooted maladjustment brought on by an infantile inability to come to terms with the more pertinent, concrete aspects of life.

Sue: Good old Robert Holmes. This is what we want!

The Doctor and Peri uncover an entrance to a hidden passageway.

**Sue**: I bet you like the music, Neil. This sounds like Tangerine Dream techno bollocks to me.

*The Doctor and Peri discover a strangely familiar staircase.* 

**Sue**: I bet this is King's Cross tube station.

Our heroes haven't stumbled into King's Cross station, but Marble Arch is damn close (as long as the Victoria and Central lines are still working).

**Sue**: It's pretty good, this. Very *Planet of the Apes*. I definitely want to know more.

Peri is understandably upset when she realises that they've landed on a post-apocalyptic Earth.

**Sue**: This is a lovely performance from Nicola. Very believable.

And then, back in the courtroom, we are treated to our very first objection.

Sue: I like this. Actually, I like this a lot. Is it going to be like this all the

way through?

Me: Yes.
Sue: Excellent.

The Doctor would rather watch the edited highlights.

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS ONE TO FOUR

**Sue**: Yes, please! Not really. I'm enjoying this one, but I can never resist a cheap gag.

Back on Ravalox, the Doctor tries to put things into perspective for his companion.

**Sue**: That was a lovely scene. More of that, please.

Me: Have you noticed anything different about their relationship?

**Sue**: Yes, he's listening to her for a change. He actually seems to care about her. It took him long enough. It should have been like this from day one!

Katryca, Queen of the Wild Boys, rules the surface of Earth/Ravalox.

**Sue**: It's one of the *Carry On* women, isn't it? Don't ask me which one. It's the one who isn't Barbara Windsor.

Me: It's Joan Sims.

**Sue**: I hope she doesn't send this up too much.

The security guards in Marb Station answer to a man named Merdeen.

**Sue**: Oh it's him. You know, he was in the French one. He kept hitting things.

Me: Duggan.

Sue: That's the one. I love Duggan. The guest cast is very good this week.

The Doctor enters Marb Station, but when he innocently inspects a flask of water, he's suddenly set upon by group of angry men.

**Sue**: Were they all working as a Formula One pit crew when the fireball hit?

As the Doctor regains consciousness a short time later, he finds himself chained to a pole. That's because water is so scarce in Marb Station, the penalty for stealing it is death.

Sue: I bet it must stink down there.

He is taunted by Balazar, the reader of the sacred books. These books include Moby Dick, The Water Babies, and, most mysterious of all, UK Habitats of the Canadian Goose by HM Stationery Office.

**Sue**: Brilliant. How can people think *Revelation of the Daleks* is better than this? It's beyond me...

The Doctor will be stoned to death for his crimes against water.

Sue: Run away! There's a corridor right behind you!

The Doctor uses his umbrella to deflect the missiles, but it's not enough to save him.

Sue: Ouch! That must have hurt.

We cut back to the courtroom where the Doctor brags about his trick with the umbrella.

**Sue**: I don't know what he's so pleased about. He got a rock in the face! He should spend the next 13 episodes with a black eye.

The Valeyard suddenly wants to change the rules of the game. This is no longer an inquiry into the Doctor's activities – it is now a trial!

**Sue**: Because *The Inquiry of a Time Lord* would be a rubbish title.

The camera zooms in on the Doctor's face.

**Sue**: What a silly cliffhanger. They should have finished it on the stoning. Aside from that, not a bad start.

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS ONE TO FOUR

#### Part Two

**Sue**: The new theme music isn't growing on me. It isn't meaty enough for my liking.

A robot known as the Immortal One rules Marb Station.

Sue: I'm guessing his head doubles up as a radar dish, yes?

Merdeen's men arrive to break up the stoning.

**Sue**: They're taking time out from their busy paintballing schedule to do this.

Peri is captured and brought before Queen Katryca, who promises to provide her with some excellent husbands.

**Sue**: That sounds like my kind of village. Although knowing Peri's luck, all her husbands will turn out to be sex pests.

The only people who can enter the Immortal's castle are young men who have passed the selection process.

Sue: Young men? That's very specific. A bit too specific if you ask me.

*The L1 robot is released into Marb Station.* 

**Sue**: Another Dalek knock-off. We haven't had one of those for a while. It's rubbish.

Sue finally catches the Immortal's name. Well, sort of.

Sue: Jethro? What kind of name is that for a robot?

The Inquisitor decides she's heard enough.

**Sue**: She's very posh, but I'm definitely on her side. I love these court scenes.

The Doctor is introduced to Drathro and his boys.

**Sue**: This programme is obsessed with autistic twins all of a sudden. What's that all about?

The Doctor does a runner and Drathro is forced to send the L1 robot after him.

**Sue**: They had to speed up the video when it turned that corner. I bet it took over 10 minutes for it to perform that three-point turn in real life.

The inhabitants of Marb Station don't realise it's safe for them to return to the surface.

**Sue**: Hang on a minute... They've done this plot before. It was ages ago, but I definitely remember it.

**Me**: You're probably thinking of *The Enemy of the World*. There are some similarities, I guess.

**Sue**: I think I preferred it the first time.

Merdeen allows his people to escape to the surface when Drathro isn't looking.

**Sue**: Maybe he's a descendant of the original Duggan? That would make sense.

Glitz and Dibber extricate themselves from Katryca's clutches.

**Sue**: A fat Han Solo and his shaved Chewbacca decide to get out of Dodge.

Dibber lobs a bomb at the Black Light Converter.

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS ONE TO FOUR

**Sue**: That was crap. I want to see more special effects like the one we had in the first episode.

Before they know it, it's rush hour on the Underground's escalator.

**The Doctor**: I really think this could be the end.

Sue: Yes, it's the end of the episode. Don't oversell it, mate.

#### Part Three

**Sue**: I still don't like the music very much.

**Me**: Okay, thanks, Sue. We get it.

Balazar recognises Katryca's right-hand man, Broken Tooth.

Sue: Also known as Man on Jeremy Kyle Man.

There's another interruption back in the courtroom, and this time it's the Inquisitor's turn to object.

**Sue**: (*In her best posh voice*) Yes, one would prefer it if this was more for the kids, wouldn't one.

**Me**: Do you think the programme is commenting on itself? You know, all the criticisms about it being too violent.

Sue: Does this mean the programme is on trial as well?

**Me**: Pretty much.

Sue: If the show is guilty, does it get a new producer?

The L1 robot kidnaps the Doctor.

Sue: Aww, he just wants to give him a big hug.

And then there's another interruption so they can explain to the audience how the Matrix is capable of recording scenes where the Doctor isn't actually present.

**Sue**: I wasn't bothered about it until they mentioned it. I won't stop thinking about it now.

Katryca's Wild Boys attack the L1 robot.

Sue: The Matrix needs a better director and editor.

Glitz tells Dibber to break out the heavy weapons.

**Sue**: I half-expected him to pat him on his arse when he sent him on his way.

It becomes clear that the court's video evidence has been tampered with, and that portions of it are missing.

**Sue**: I really like this. This means I won't feel bad when I can't follow the plot. I'll just assume it's been edited out by the Time Lords. I bet it's one big conspiracy.

The episode ends with Merdeen firing a crossbow in the Doctor's general direction.

**Sue**: That wasn't great. They should have ended it on a big close-up of Colin's face.

Oh, the irony!

#### Part Four

When the story resumes, we learn that Merdeen didn't shoot the Doctor after all. No, he shot some other bloke instead, although he instantly regrets it.

Sue: He didn't get a chance to tell him he was his long-lost brother.

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS ONE TO FOUR

Merdeen takes his helmet off as an act of respect.

**Sue**: Is his hat made from gaffer tape? Poor Duggan. He looks like Gary Numan.

And then Marb Station is invaded by the...

**Sue**: Wild boys! Wild boys! Wild boys! **Me**: Don't forget their Wild Mum!

Drathro kills Katryca and Broken Tooth by bursting their blood vessels.

**Sue**: OXO mum will be furious. I'm surprised she didn't intervene at this point.

It's left to the Doctor to object to the Valeyard's tactics.

**Sue**: That was a good speech. A bit loud, but good. Have I told you yet that I really like these courtroom scenes?

Me: Yes, several times.

**Sue**: The prosecutor is very good. He has an amazing voice. He'd be a great Doctor.

**Me**: Do you think it's a good idea to frame the entire season within a trial? **Sue**: Yes, it implies that something more interesting is going on in the background, which is good because the stuff on this planet isn't all that great.

A portion of Glitz's dialogue has been bleeped out.

Sue: Did he just swear?

The Doctor demands to see the sequence again. According to Glitz, the Sleepers found a way to access something that has been classified.

Sue: It must be the Matrix. What else could it be? You don't have to be a

Time Lord to work that out.

Glitz and Dibber have armed themselves to the teeth.

**Sue**: They should swap guns. He should hold the red gun because that way it would match his shoulder pads.

The Doctor tries to reason with Drathro.

**Sue**: The ideas in this are great, it's just looks a bit cheap. Colin's having a good episode, though.

Glitz and Dibber offer to replenish Drathro's supply of Black Light back at their ship.

**Sue**: I could watch a whole series with these two in it. Please tell me there's a spin-off.

Drathro agrees to leave with the mercenaries, but not before he grabs his box of secrets.

**Me**: There you go, Sue. That's what they shot this on: One-inch videotape. Drathro is going to run off with the rushes.

Drathro doesn't make it as far as the escalator, and the Doctor manages to contain the Black Light explosion before it can take half the universe with it.

**Sue**: Is that it? But there are still 10 episodes left. What are they going to do now? And we still don't know why the Earth is in the wrong place. Is that what the next 10 episodes are all about? That could be interesting, I suppose.

And that concludes the Valeyard's opening statement.

Sue: Eh? But the Doctor's done much worse than that. I'm sure we've seen

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS ONE TO FOUR

him commit genocide before. That was nothing!

But there's a lot more evidence to come.

**Sue**: They should run an old one. He's still the same person. Stick a Troughton on instead!

#### The Score

**Me**: What score are you going to give it?

Sue: I can't give it a score because it hasn't finished yet.

Me: Just assess what you've seen so far. We'll work out the average at the

end.

**Sue**: It's sort of finished, I suppose. Okay, it started off well but it ran out of steam. I loved the two mercenaries, and I hope they're in the next 10 episodes, but Peri did sod all, which is a shame. However, it was nice to see the Doctor getting stuck in again. The bits I enjoyed the most were the trial scenes. I love a good story arc. The rest of it didn't do anything for me. We've seen it all before.

### 6/10

**COMMENT**: "I once stood very near to the granddaughter of the man who operated Drathro. True story." – Steve O'Brien

## THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS FIVE TO EIGHT

BLOGGED: 17 December 2012

#### Part Five

Sue: They should recap every episode. It's really helpful. Hey, what

happened to Robert Holmes?

**Me**: It's Philip Martin's turn to take over for a bit. **Sue**: The *Gangsters* man? That's okay. He's pretty good.

The episode reconvenes in the Time Lords' space station.

**Sue**: We're going to keep seeing this model shot, aren't we? They're definitely getting their money's worth out of it. You can't blame them, though. It looks great.

The Doctor and the Valeyard are clearly jostling for the Inquisitor's affections.

**Sue**: They both want to shag her in her chambers. It's written all over their faces.

The next portion of the trial takes place on the planet Thoros Beta.

**Sue**: (*Singing*) Ashes to ashes, funk to funky, we know Major Tom's a junkie...

And once she's got that out of her system:

**Sue**: It's an interesting special effect. They are definitely pushing the boat out. Speaking of which, park the TARDIS closer to the beach next time,

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS FIVE TO EIGHT

you idiot! Hang on a minute... Is it just me or are they using the wrong door on the TARDIS? I thought they always opened the door on the right, but now they're suddenly opening the door on the left. That can't be right, can it?

Me: Remind me to introduce you to Gallifrey Base when this is all over.

The Doctor and Peri, acting on information given to them by a "dirty old Warlord", have arrived on Thoros Beta in search of gunrunners.

**Sue**: Peri never gets a break. It's as if her life is one big sexual harassment case.

As the Doctor and Peri stroll across the alien beach, Sue begins to have second thoughts about the paintbox effect.

**Sue**: The fringing is even worse than some 1970s CSO I've seen. I bet this is what an LSD trip looks like. I hope the whole thing isn't like this. I don't think my eyes could take it.

But it's not all bad news.

**Sue**: I'm just happy to see the Doctor and Peri smiling and being mates with each other. I'm so glad the last story wasn't just a one-off.

The Doctor and Peri find a cave, but once inside, a homicidal creature called the Raak immediately attacks them.

**Sue**: That was completely out of the blue. Thank God the director isn't showing very much of this thing. Clever director.

The Doctor accidentally kills the creature, but the Valeyard isn't interested in his excuses.

**Sue**: He's done much worse than that, mate. He's shot plenty of things on purpose before, so why not show them that instead?

Meanwhile, on an operating table somewhere...

Sue: Oh, it's him. Brian Whatsit...

Me: GORDON'S ALIVE! Sue: Brian Gordon.

Me: For fuck's sake, Susan, it's Brian Blessed!

Sue: Of course it is. Sorry, it's been a long day. Some of us have real jobs,

you know.

The Doctor and Peri have to employ the skedaddle technique to escape Thoros Beta's security forces.

**Sue**: Running away like that makes you look guilty. You do know that, don't you?

During their escape, the Doctor and Peri encounter a man with the face of a dog.

**Sue**: The makeup is fabulous, especially the teeth. I hope the actor didn't get lockjaw trying to keep them in.

Thankfully, this dog's bark is a lot worse than its bite.

**Sue**: Aww... He's cute. Take him with you. He could be a scarier version of K9. But as soon as he starts humping Peri's leg, he's out.

The Doctor promises to return for the unfortunate beast later.

**Sue**: If he were a werecat, the Doctor wouldn't have left him like that. It is okay to love dogs *and* cats, you know.

The Doctor and Peri briefly get a glimpse of Sil, the Mentor from Vengeance on Varos.

Sue: Oh, I like him. He's funny.

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS FIVE TO EIGHT

Peri can't believe the Doctor has brought her to a sex pest's doorstep again, and this time she wants out.

**Sue**: Is Peri going to leave? It's never a good sign when companions start banging on about going home at the beginning of an episode.

The Valeyard asks the court to consider a damning statistic: the Doctor's companions are placed in danger twice as much as the Doctor is.

**Sue**: Is that all? I'd have put it closer to five times as often, especially if you include being lusted after by sex pests.

Sil is worried about King Yrcanos' condition, and a fellow Mentor named Kiv shares his concerns.

**Sue**: Are they sleeping in the same bed? It looks to me like they're topping and tailing. And who's playing the alien on the right? His voice is very familiar.

**Me**: It's Mike from *The Young Ones*. He comes back as a Sontaran in the new series.

Sue: And who's she? Her face rings a bell.

Me: That's Albie Parsons. She was in Gangsters.

**Sue**: Of course she was. Why am I not surprised? Still, it's good to see speaking parts for black actors for a change. You don't see enough of that in *Doctor Who*, even in the 1980s. Plus, it helps take my mind off all the black slaves in the background. I mean, what's that all about?

Detected by Sil, the Doctor is apprehended and forced to wear a helmet that messes with your brain. The episode then concludes with the Time Lord screaming in agony.

Me: You're not saying very much, Sue.

**Sue**: There isn't very much to say. It's alright – I've seen worse – but it isn't half taking its time.

#### **Part Six**

The Doctor's screams are so loud, he wakes up King Yrcanos, who's strapped to the operating table beside him. The Warlord breaks free and trashes the place.

Sue: Brian Blessed throws like a girl!

Yrcanos storms off in a huff, but not before he puts his helmet back on.

Sue: Is that a fireman's helmet?

Me: I think it's supposed to show that he's an alien version of a samurai

warrior.

**Sue**: Well he's never going to be a fucking ninja, is he?

Yrcanos is committed to fighting back against the Mentors.

Sue: Is Brian still alive in real life?

Me: Yes, BRIAN'S ALIVE!

**Sue**: Then why isn't he in *Game of Thrones*? **Me**: What do you think of his performance?

Sue: He's Brian Blessed. How can you not love Brian Blessed?

The Doctor slumps against a wall.

**Sue**: He looks like a ventriloquist's dummy sitting there like that. Still, if Brian is doing all the talking, it's probably best if you just sit it out.

Back in the courtroom, the Doctor claims that he can't remember these events.

**Sue**: Of course you don't remember them – your brain has been fucked with. We saw that less than five minutes ago. Are the Time Lords supposed to be thick?

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS FIVE TO EIGHT

Kiv is suffering from severe headaches and he's employed a mad scientist named Crozier to fix him.

**Sue**: Kiv is very funny.

Me: Did you watch The Young Ones?

Sue: Yes, but I thought it was silly. I didn't get it. In fact, I barely

remember the one called Mike. Was he the short one?

Me: How did you guess?

**Sue**: I'll tell you what, though – I really like this story's design. The structure of this place is very believable. The metalwork is especially

beautiful.

The Doctor shouts, "Weapons!" at the top of his voice.

**Sue**: I can't believe Colin is actually trying to compete with Brian. The sound department must have had a nightmare. God, can you imagine it?

The Doctor betrays Peri and Yrcanos in order to save his own skin.

**Sue**: I can't tell if he's making it up or not. You can actually believe it with this Doctor – he's been a cunt before.

Yrcanos learns his best friend has been turned into a dog.

Sue: What kind of name is Dorf for a pet?

Me: No, his squire has been turned into a dog, you idiot!

Sue: I'll idiot you in a minute. How am I supposed to know? Brian's

making up half these words as he goes along!

And then Sue says something that takes my breath away: she actually praises Ron Jones' direction.

**Sue**: Don't look at me like that, Neil. It is nicely directed. The lighting is superb.

Peri volunteers to be a slave.

**Sue**: I bet she's accidentally joined a harem. That wouldn't surprise me.

Yrcanos adds THE DOCTOR! to the list of people he wants to kill.

**Sue**: It's impossible for me not to root for him.

**Me**: It has been suggested that Brian would have been a good Doctor. **Sue**: Really? He'd have been, er... interesting. He could pick Daleks up and toss them aside, which would be different, I suppose.

Peri is forced to serve drinks to the bad guys. As Sue points out, it could have been a lot worse.

**Sue**: She looks like she's playing the princess in *Aladdin*. You know how they were always putting on pantomimes when they made *Doctor Who* back then? Well, did they share the costumes with the panto company to save money?

Peri is taken to the Sea of Sorrows and chained to some rocks so that her 'friend' can interrogate her more thoroughly.

Sue: Has the Doctor really turned to the dark side? I'm confused.

Me: Don't worry, so was Colin Baker.

The Doctor is intercepted by Yrcanos on his way back to the Mentors.

Sue: Go on, Brian, kill him!

#### Part Seven

Sue: I've just thought of something...

I can't wait to hear Sue's theory about how the Matrix works...

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS FIVE TO EIGHT

**Sue**: There can't be any wind on Gallifrey. If there were, they never would have invented a head dress like that.

It's business as usual as we reach the halfway point of the trial. And by that I Brian Blessed has turned everything up to 11.

**Sue**: Didn't anyone have the nerve to tell Brian to tone it down a tiny bit? Then again, it is Brian Blessed, so what did they expect?

When Dorf whimpers, Peri thinks he sounds hungry.

**Sue**: He does have a name, you know. A really stupid name, yes, but he can understand every word you're saying. Stop talking about him as if he's stupid.

Despite Peri's treatment of Dorf, he's still very much taken with her.

**Sue**: He wants her to tickle his belly. Still, you could probably say that about every man Peri meets.

Yrcanos and Dorf compete for Peri's affections.

**Sue**: Does she really think standing between them while she thrusts her breasts out like that is a wise move? Are you sure the Matrix can't lie? Because that was fucking mental!

Sil gives the Doctor a simple lesson in economics.

**Sue**: He's great. Even his tongue is green; that's how into this part he is.

He's got an amazingly fast tongue. **Me**: He'd be a great trumpeter.

Sue: Among other things.

Alphan rebels attack Peri, Yrcanos and Dorf.

**Sue**: They've been captured by a Peruvian pan pipe band. You couldn't move for pan pipe bands in the 1980s. It was horrible.

Meanwhile Kiv has a cardiac arrest and Crozier is forced to perform CPR on him.

**Sue**: I love the way he decided to finish his cup of tea before he saved Kiv's life. That was very funny. It's all a bit weird, this, but it's very entertaining.

Kiv's new body has been stabilised, but he still requires another operation.

**Sue**: Why can't he just stay in that body? What's wrong with it, exactly? Is it because he's beige?

As they make their way through the caves, the lead pan piper, Tuza, keeps tripping over the bodies of his friends. At one point he even stumbles over Verne.

Sue: Who the fuck is Verne?

Back in the courtroom, the Doctor objects.

Sue: He wants to know who Verne is.

The Doctor refuses to take responsibility for Verne's death. Poor Verne.

**Sue**: The courtroom scenes are starting to get on my tits now. I don't mind them when they shed new light on things, but that last one was just padding.

It's taken her seven episodes to realise this, which must be a new record for Sue. Anyway, Yrcanos, Dorf, Tuza and Peri are all shot by Frax.

Sue: Peri isn't dead. They can't kill Peri.

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS FIVE TO EIGHT

Back in the courtroom, the Doctor objects once again. Crash zoom on Colin's face and roll credits.

**Sue**: What a stupid cliffhanger. You finish with Peri laying on the floor, you idiots!

#### Part Eight

Peri isn't really dead of course.

**Inquisitor**: Then what was the point of showing that last sequence? **Sue**: It's called a cliffhanger, ma'am. We have to have one every 25 minutes. It's the law.

Frax wants his keep his prisoners alive so the Mentors can experiment on them.

**Sue**: The only thing that lets this story down is the costumes. He looks like he's come dressed as Buttons. Are you sure they haven't done a deal with a pantomime company?

Peri can't wait to return to Earth.

**Sue**: Oh dear. There she goes again. She'll be off soon, I bet. I hope she makes it home. I won't be very happy if she has to settle down with a sex pest.

Peri tries to explain to Yrcanos what love is.

**Sue**: It's exactly the same feeling you have for your dog, only less intense.

Yrcanos can't wait to reach the afterlife, mainly so he can start fighting again.

**Sue**: That was very funny. What a lovely scene.

The Doctor examines Tuza, who has been placed in an implantation cubicle.

**Sue**: I hope they can implant some acting talent into him. He's terrible.

The Doctor is still acting suspiciously.

Sue: So is he good or bad or what?

Me: I don't know.

**Sue**: What do you mean, you don't know?

Crozier decides to transfer Kiv's brain into Peri's body.

**Sue**: Do you think Kiv will be okay with the compulsory sex change? He should probably check, just to be on the safe side.

Yrcanos ushers a guard back into his cell.

**Sue**: I love the doors in this story.

**Me**: Colin found the invoice for that door lying around on the set. He took great pleasure in telling Nicola that it cost more money than she did.

Sue: It was worth it, it's a bloody good door.

Yrcanos vows to save his bride-to-be.

Sue: To be fair, he's definitely the nicest sex pest so far.

The Doctor and Yrcanos return to the Induction Centre.

**Sue**: I love this set. It's as if they got their hands on Pink Floyd's lighting

rig.

Dorf is put down.

Sue: Aww... He's gone to doggy heaven.

Me: Woofnik!

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS FIVE TO EIGHT

Peri is lying on an operating table with a helmet attached to her head. Even more importantly, she's as bald as a coot.

**Sue**: No way! **Me**: Yes way!

Sue: So Peri's bald now? That's a brave thing to do. Sinead O'Connor isn't

trendy for ages.

The Doctor is on his way to save Peri from a fate worse than death when the TARDIS suddenly appears in a corridor. So of course he walks into it hackwards

Sue: What the...?

This is where the Doctor was taken out of time to stand trial. And then the Time Lords trap Yrcanos in a time bubble so they can weaponise him.

**Sue**: The fucking hypocrites! They've put the Doctor on trial for less than this! Unbelievable!

Peri/Kiv admires his /her new body. It has legs, toes, a neck – everything!

**Sue**: Wait until you see your new breasts. All your Christmases have come at once, mate.

Crozier welcomes Kiv to his/her new body.

**Sue**: That was Nicola's best performance so far. Absolutely brilliant, and very scary.

The Time Lord's decide to let Yrcanos off his leash.

**Sue**: I'm sure it'll be fine. They'll change Peri back again. The Time Lords can fix this.

Yrcanos fires his weapon.

Sue: No way!

The Valeyard blames the Doctor for Peri's death because he abandoned her.

**Sue**: No he didn't – you kidnapped him! He would have saved her if you hadn't stuck your big oar in.

The credits roll

**Sue**: Wow. That was harsh. Not only did the Doctor fail to save her, he was a cunt to her in her last story as well.

#### The Score

**Sue**: Well, I definitely didn't expect *that*. It's a fantastic way to go, though. I mean, that was even better than Adric. I was going to give it seven out of 10 – mainly because I love the green fella and Brian Blessed – but the shock ending bumps it up to an eight.

# 8/10

Sue: If you could put anyone's brain in my body, who would you choose?

Me: Andrew Pixley.

Sue: I don't know who that is.

Me: My point exactly. But seriously, love, I wouldn't change a thing.

**COMMENT:** "I rather like this one. It's so gaudy and so dark, it's like watching the *Blue Peter* Christmas Panto with a fever of 103." – Amanda-Lynne Case

# THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS NINE TO TWELVE

BLOGGED: 20 December 2012

#### **Part Nine**

A visibly upset Doctor prepares to mount his defence.

Sue: I can't believe they killed Peri. The bastards!

The Doctor's evidence takes places in the future and revolves around the intergalactic liner Hyperion III.

Sue: That's a nice shape for a spaceship. Very curvy.

One of the final passengers to check-in is Professor Lasky.

Sue: Oh, it's a Bond girl. One of the really famous ones.

Me: So famous you can't remember her name.

An elderly gentleman named Kimber thinks he recognises one of the passengers, even though the man strenuously denies it.

**Me**: Do you recognise the man with the beard from *Brookside*?

**Sue**: Look, I don't care who he is, he can't act for toffee.

The bearded man heads for the liner's cargo hold.

**Sue**: I like the camera movement a lot, and I love a nice two-tiered set, although I reckon they're still welding it together if their costumes are anything to go by.

Meanwhile the Doctor and his faithful companion Melanie Bush are working up a sweat on the TARDIS.

**Sue**: EH? WHAT? Who the hell is that? And how did she get in the TARDIS? Have I missed something? Is the Matrix lying again?

I pause the DVD.

**Me**: When the Doctor said his evidence was from the future, he was talking about his own future. This hasn't happened to him yet.

**Sue**: But that doesn't make any sense. If he has a future, it means he must get off at the end of his trial. So this is a huge spoiler.

**Me**: This is from a possible future where he wins the trial. Probably. Try not to think about it too much.

**Sue**: So is this like River Song, then? We don't see their first meeting until much later on? Is that it? Is this where the Moff got the idea?

**Me**: Wait and see. Oh, and one more thing before we carry on: you do know who that actress is, don't you?

**Sue**: Of course I do. It's Bonnie Langford. I hated her when she was a child star. All that bloody screaming. I can't say I'm thrilled about her now, either, but I'm willing to give her a go.

A man named Edwardes is monitoring the ship's communications array when Janet the stewardess ("No, Sue, I don't think it's a metatextual thing") brings him some coffee.

Me: You can cut the sexual tension with a knife.

**Sue**: Forget that, I can't believe she put his coffee down next to that expensive equipment. If I caught my students with drinks in the edit suites, I'd fail them on the spot. It's a Health and Safety nightmare.

Back on the TARDIS, the Doctor swears that too much carrot juice can turn your vision red.

Sue: You really begin to notice the extra weight when he takes his coat off.

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS NINE TO TWELVE

I bet they had to let it out between stories.

Commodore Travers wants to know who attacked Edwardes in the communications room.

**Sue**: (*Laughing*) In the future we won't hide our shoulder pads under our clothes, we'll stick 'em on top!

Travers thinks it was an inside job.

**Sue**: He reminds me of an elderly Pierce Brosnan. He even sounds like an elderly Pierce Brosnan. Seriously, this is what Pierce Brosnan will look like when he's totally had it.

It turns out that the Sixth Doctor and Commodore Travers are old friends.

**Sue**: Another person he's already met and I know nothing about. It's annoying.

Mel insists that they were responding to a Mayday call.

**Sue**: I like Mel. I thought she'd turn out to be a simpering mess but she looks like she can take care of herself, which is amazing really because there's nothing on her. She's a woman trapped in a girl's body.

The ship's hydroponic centre is home to several man-sized pods.

**Sue**: So this is going to be *Alien* on a cruise liner, is it? That could work, I suppose.

A Mogarian takes some silver seeds from a jar.

**Sue**: Are they the coins for the electricity meter? **Me**: No, Daft Punk are DJ-ing in the ballroom later.

Sue: Very funny. I like their masks. They are quite scary. They remind me

of the aliens from Babylon 5.

**Me**: You're thinking of the Gaim, named after Neil Gaiman, who now writes for *Doctor Who*. It's a small universe.

Mel cajoles the Doctor into investigating the mystery that's currently unfolding on the liner.

**Sue**: Mel is very proactive, she can't wait to get stuck in. I'm just worried that she could be anorexic. I've seen more fat on Lena Zavaroni. She seems to have a nice relationship with the Doctor, though, which makes for a change. Yeah, I like her.

Mel visits the gym.

**Sue**: Ah, now this explains everything. She's a health nut. Aerobics was massive in the 1980s. Olivia Newton-John, the Green Goddess, the other one...

Professor Lasky is already crunching her abs when Mel arrives to lose what little fat she has left.

**Sue**: What the hell is she listening to? The Bontempi Workout? What a racket!

We are told the ship's security officer, Rudge, is due to retire immediately after this voyage.

Sue: He is so dead.

The Doctor decides to take a non-provocative stroll around the deck.

**Sue**: Spoilsport. I wanted to see him take a provocative stroll around the deck.

After a member of the crew is murdered, the Commodore helpfully points

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS NINE TO TWELVE

out that whenever the Doctor appears, the corpses soon start piling up.

**Sue**: He does have a point. Why didn't the Doctor just show the court that scene from *Genesis of the Daleks* where he didn't know if he had the right to kill all the Daleks or not? That would have swung it for him. Because this isn't doing him any favours at all.

A scientist named Bruchner tells Professor Lasky he's concerned about their isolation room's security measures.

Sue: Bruce Grobbelaar has really let himself go.

Meanwhile the Doctor ponders his next move.

**Sue**: This doesn't make any sense. If he's seen his own future in the Matrix, why doesn't he remember who the killer is? Surely he's seen this before? Oh, this is making my head hurt.

Mel wants to visit the hydroponic centre, but when Edwardes gives her a guided tour, he is electrocuted and all hell breaks loose.

Sue: Nice cliffhanger.

**Me**: I'm pretty sure Bonnie's scream is in the same key as the theme

music.

Sue: Yeah, it's in the key of AAAAAAAAHHHHHHHH!

And then, as the credits roll...

**Sue**: I enjoyed that. I really like Bonnie Langford's character. Don't look at me like that, Neil.

#### Part Ten

The Valeyard blames the Doctor for putting Mel in harm's way.

**Sue**: She's an adult. The Doctor can't be held responsible for everything she does. Should he go to the toilet with her, just in case she falls into the bowl and drowns? She is small enough, after all.

The Hyperion's crew suspects Mel of killing Edwardes.

**Sue**: Have you seen the size of her? She'd have her work cut out killing a fly.

The Doctor shows Professor Lasky a handful of seeds he found in a wrecked cabin. She accuses him of stealing them.

**Sue**: She reminds me of that deaf woman from that *Fawlty Towers* episode. She's very annoying.

The Doctor swallows one of the seeds.

**Sue**: Was that really such a good idea? He might end up with an alien plant bursting through his stomach. I know he wants to be a vegetarian, but even so.

Two Mogarians are playing a computer game in the Hyperion's passenger lounge.

**Sue**: We had that exact same game. Do you remember it, Neil? Ours was on a flat tabletop. You must remember it, Neil. You went mental when you found out I'd sold it to the rag and bone man.

Mel stops the Doctor from snacking on a biscuit.

Sue: He is so under her thumb. I love it!

The Mogarians demand to know why Travers has suddenly changed the liner's course.

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS NINE TO TWELVE

**Sue**: His light doesn't come on when he talks, which means his batteries must be dead. Didn't anybody on the production team notice that at the time?

The Doctor did. We know this because he spends the next five minutes explaining to us how the Mogarian couldn't possibly be a real Mogarian because his light didn't work.

**Sue**: Wow. They really dragged that out. If Sherlock did it like that, every episode would be six hours long. And how smug was the Doctor just then?

Mel and the Doctor discuss their next move.

**Sue**: Actors with permed hair shouldn't be allowed anywhere near Chromakey. There should be a law against it.

The Doctor compares Mel to an elephant.

**Sue**: Unbelievable... This is very badly written, Neil. It's a shame really, because the premise is okay.

Sue glimpses a Vervoid hiding in a ventilator shaft.

**Sue**: Is that a flower? Wait a minute, the bad guy is *a flower*?

Me: (As Peter Gabriel) A FLOWER?

Kimber is killed in his own bathroom, just as Janet arrives with some light refreshments.

Sue: She's brought him his bubbly milk.

The Vervoid turns on the shower to distract her.

**Sue**: Either that flower is very clever and it's trying to keep Janet away, or

it's dying of thirst and it's going to water itself.

The Doctor and Mel break into the Hyperion's isolation room – every cruise liner should have one – and they discover a woman in a coffin with unnatural growths all over her face.

**Sue**: The make-up is excellent. It's pretty good, this. It's basically *Alien* meets Agatha Christie meets *The Love Boat*. I'm really enjoying it. It's the best part of the trial so far.

#### Part Eleven

The trial scenes are beginning to bore Sue senseless.

**Sue**: That interruption was completely pointless. Pointless, I tell you!

Mel eavesdrops on Rudge and Janet.

**Sue**: She's the world's tiniest detective. Peri would usually stumble into trouble but Bonnie actively seeks it out. I like that about her.

When a security guard investigates a rattling ventilator grill, Sue gets her first proper look at a Vervoid.

**Sue**: There's something really disturbing about its face... I can't quite put my finger on it.

Give it time.

**Sue**: Is it just me or are they a bit... you know... rude?

As she mulls that over, Sue suddenly feels bad for Janet.

**Sue**: Is she the only waitress on the whole ship? She must be run off her feet. When does she get a break?

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS NINE TO TWELVE

Bruchner and Lasky debate the ethics of their obscene experiment.

Sue: (Laughing) Well, it's definitely obscene! What were you thinking?

Bruchner goes apeshit and attacks Lasky. And then the Vervoids take care of Bruchner

**Sue**: I can't tell which sexual organ they remind me of the most. Plants can be hermaphrodites, so that makes sense, I suppose. It's just a shame their voices are so naff. They would be really scary if they just kept their mouths shut. You never see the aliens in *Aliens* chatting amongst themselves, do you?

Lasky warns the Doctor that Bruchner has gone insane.

Sue: She's quite good.

Me: Quite good? She's Honor Blackman!

**Sue**: Yeah, she's alright. **Me**: She's Honor Blackman!

Sue: She's playing the part well, I suppose.

Me: I know! It's Honor Blackman!

Bruchner steers the ship towards a black hole.

Sue: Nice cliffhanger.

But it isn't the cliffhanger – the Doctor has to explain to everybody what's happening first: they're heading for the Black Hole of Tartarus.

Sue: The Black Hole of Tartarus... Isn't that a Russian prostitute?

#### Part Twelve

**Sue**: This version of the theme music is really doing my head in now. It's this bit here – the bit where the title comes in – that I hate the most. It

sounds like This Is Your Life.

The liner is buffeted by the black hole's gravity well.

Sue: This has turned into a really dry version of *The Poseidon Adventure*.

The Vervoids let off a stink bomb off on the bridge, which overcomes Bruchner but doesn't help anybody else. However, don't worry...

Sue: Daft Punk will save the day.

And then, just when we think it's all over, Rudge pulls a gun on everybody else.

Sue: I'm sure he's holding an upside down multi-angle screwdriver.

Rudge and the Mogarians hi-jack the ship.

**Sue**: Are they the ones controlling the plants?

Me: No. Sue: Eh?

Rudge is hi-jacking the Hyperion III for the money.

**Sue**: Well, I didn't expect that. I thought he'd end up being killed doing something really heroic on his last day at work. I bet his pension is really shit. That would explain why he didn't take early retirement.

The Mogarians are overpowered when some liquid is thrown into their faces.

Sue: What kind of helmets are those? Useless!

Rudge throws a tantrum and runs off.

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS NINE TO TWELVE

**Sue**: That hi-jacking was a complete waste of time. He was fucking hopeless.

Rudge runs into a Vervoid and is immediately killed.

Sue: He's definitely on gardening leave now.

The Doctor pulls a gun on another scientist named Doland.

**Me**: I'm surprised the Valeyard hasn't interrupted this to criticise the Doctor for picking up another weapon.

Sue: He probably thinks he's going to put some shelves up with it.

Doland wants to use the Vervoids as slave labour.

**Sue**: Oh, I thought they were going to cure world hunger by making huge salads out of them.

When Lasky tries to reason with her creations, they kill her.

**Sue**: Am I bothered? Not really. **Me**: But it's Honor Blackman! **Sue**: She was completely wasted.

The Vervoids try to enter the passenger lounge but Janet manages to keep them at bay.

**Sue**: They had better give her a raise after this.

Travers plunges the Hyperion into darkness and the emergency lighting bathes the ship in an eerie red glow.

Sue: This isn't exactly helping. It only makes the Vervoids look ruder.

The Doctor defeats the Vervoids with vionesium, a substance that

accelerates their life cycle.

Sue: So they're not perennials, then?

The Doctor is very upset about this.

**Sue**: He does have this nasty habit of killing things. He should turn over a new leaf. New leaf. Do you get it, Neil?

The Doctor and Mel bid farewell to Travers and Janet, the only two crew members left alive, which should make for an interesting journey home.

**Sue**: Mel's a bit too confident if you ask me. She's a little bit cocky. That could be annoying after a while.

Back in the courtroom, the Valeyard seizes the opportunity to charge the Doctor with genocide.

**Sue**: The Doctor walked straight into that one. Of all the adventures to show in your defence, why pick one with a massive body count?

#### The Score

**Sue**: There were too many plots going on in that final episode, but I still enjoyed it. I liked the design of the ship, the direction wasn't too bad, and it kept me guessing all the way through. Some of the dialogue was a bit cheesy, and the acting was all over the place, but I liked the premise and Mel was great.

## 7/10

**Sue**: If there's one criticism I have with the trial so far, it's the Doctor's decision to show that story in his defence. He should have shown clips from his past adventures. He should have presented us with a compilation of his best bits, especially all those times he's saved the universe, not to

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS NINE TO TWELVE

mention Gallifrey.

**Me**: You want *The Trial of a Time Lord* to be a clip show?

**Sue**: Not all of it, but some of it, yes. It would show the audience how brilliant *Doctor Who* was and how brilliant it could be again. They really

missed a trick, there.

**COMMENT**: "Never in my life did I think I'd ever see Lena Zavaroni name-checked in a *Doctor Who* review." – Paul Greaves



BLOGGED: 21 December 2012

#### Part Thirteen

Sue: Yes! Robert Holmes is back. Thank God for that.

*The Doctor wants to know who's been tampering with the Matrix.* 

Sue: It's the Valeyard! It's obvious!

Two capsules arrive on the Time Lords' space station. One of them contains Sahalom Glitz.

Sue: Excellent.

The other contains Melanie Bush.

**Sue**: So, is his best mate dead, then? I liked him... You know, I don't understand this at all. How did they get here, exactly? And how can Bonnie be here now if she hasn't met the Doctor yet? And is Glitz staring at her like that because he can't work out whether she's a boy or a girl?

The Master is responsible for Glitz and Mel's presence in court.

Sue: I fucking knew it!

**Me**: Really? You never said anything.

Sue: I didn't want you to take the piss out of me. But I knew it had to be

him. It's always him.

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS THIRTEEN TO FOURTEEN

The Valeyard wants to adjourn the trial.

**Sue**: There's something fishy going on here. I bet the Valeyard is the Doctor's brother or something stupid like that.

When it emerges that the High Council interfered with planet Earth in order to protect their sordid secrets, the Doctor doesn't hold back.

**Sue**: That was a fabulous speech. That's probably Colin's finest moment in the series so far

And then the Master drops a bombshell.

**Sue**: EH? What did he just say?

The Master explains that the Valeyard is an amalgamation of the darker sides of the Doctor's nature, somewhere between his twelfth and final incarnations.

**Sue**: Wait, I'm sorry, WHAT? Stop the DVD, Neil. You'll have to explain this to me.

I refuse to comply because there's simply no point; I don't understand it either.

Me: Good twist?
Sue: Fucking mental.

The Doctor suddenly finds himself in a Victorian courtyard.

Sue: Nice set.

Me: They're on location, Sue.

Sue: Are they really? At night? Oh yeah, so they are... I'm impressed.

The Valeyard has the Doctor over a barrel. Literally.

**Sue**: It's proper *Doctor Who*, this: scary and unpredictable.

*Glitz follows the Doctor to the Fantasy Factory.* 

Sue: That sounds a bit rude. I hope it isn't a Victorian brothel.

But before the pair can enter the establishment, Glitz is inconveniently harpooned.

Sue: NOOOOO!

Meanwhile, back in the courtroom, the Master has a few more beans left to spill. Or to paraphrase Brian Blessed: "PERI'S ALIVE!"

**Sue**: WHAT THE FUCK? Peri married Brian Blessed? Is that a joke? Is the Master taking the piss? Sorry, but I don't believe that for one second.

Glitz survives the incident with the harpoon and he enters the Fantasy Factory with the Doctor.

**Sue**: Oh, it's Eddie Yeats. A posh Eddie Yeats. That makes my head hurt even more than the stuff with the Valeyard. Which I still don't get by the way.

The Valeyard is playing with the Doctor. He wants to humiliate him first.

Sue: How do you humiliate a man who wears a coat like that?

The Doctor signs his remaining lives over to JJ Chambers.

**Sue**: He'll regret that when they force him to regenerate later. What an idiot. Why would he sign his lives away like that? That makes no sense at all.

The Doctor enters a waiting room that leads to a windswept beach.

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS THIRTEEN TO FOURTEEN

**Sue**: He finally made it to Blackpool.

Grabbing hands emerge from the sand to ensnare the Doctor.

**Sue**: Just when you thought it was safe to go to the beach, generations of children are completely traumatised. It's good, though. A proper, scary cliffhanger for a change.

The credits roll.

**Sue**: Wow. There was a lot to take in. It looked great but I don't get the Valeyard thing at all. Is he the Doctor or not?

#### Part Fourteen

**Sue**: I'm really looking forward to this one. Regenerations are always exciting. It's a shame, though. Colin is leaving just as I'm getting used to him. I don't understand why he... WHAT THE FUCK?

The words 'Pip and Jane Baker' have just appeared in the title sequence.

Sue: Where's Robert Holmes gone?

Me: I'll explain later.

*Glitz races to save the Doctor.* 

**Sue**: If Bonnie was his companion at this point, the Doctor wouldn't stand a bloody chance. She'd get pulled into the... Oh, it turns out he was rubbish, too. Is that it, then? Does Sylvester McCoy take over now?

The Sixth Doctor is still alive, but if the Valeyard has his way he won't be around much longer.

**Sue**: This sounds like *Jekyll and Hyde* to me. But I thought the Master was supposed to be the Doctor's dark side? We don't need another dark side

running about the place.

The Doctor and Glitz are rescued by the Master.

**Sue**: The Master doesn't want any competition. It's his job to be the evil side of the Doctor. Everybody knows that. I actually like the Master in this story. He has a decent motive for a change, and he isn't trying to take over the world or anything stupid like that.

The Master places the Doctor in a catatonic trance.

**Sue**: The Master is simultaneously flashing all the colours of the Doctor's coat directly into the his eyes. So now he knows how we feel.

The Master's TARDIS, which is disguised as a statue of Queen Victoria, materialises in the courtyard.

Sue: How cool is that? Why can't the Doctor's TARDIS do that?

Me: Do you really want to get rid of the police box?

Sue: No.

Me: Well then.

The Valeyard hurls some exploding quills at the Master and Glitz.

**Sue**: This is a bit of a mind-fuck. Thank heavens we didn't get 14 episodes like this. My brain would have melted.

Mel suddenly appears in the Matrix and persuades the Doctor to follow her.

**Sue**: She's an illusion, you fool. She can't possibly be the real thing because she isn't over-acting.

The Doctor follows Mel into the courtroom.

Sue: See, it's just an illusion.

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS THIRTEEN TO FOURTEEN

Me: (Singing) Ooh, Ooh, Ooh, Ooh, Ah-ahh.

The Doctor accepts the court's guilty verdict.

**Sue**: Can he still regenerate if this is just an illusion? It's a bit tense, this.

The real courtroom watches this fabrication unfold on the screen above them

**Sue**: It's really good, this. Pip and Jane are doing more than okay.

The Doctor is led away on a horse and cart to be executed.

**Sue**: Children singing nursery rhymes always freaks me out. I would have been a terrible primary school teacher. I honestly don't think the Doctor is going to get out of this one. I think Bonnie's too late.

But Mel intervenes and the illusion is shattered.

**Sue**: Colin is very good in this story. He's pulling out all the stops for his last episode, bless him.

The Master and Glitz decide to make a deal.

Sue: Why didn't they get their own series? I'd have watched it.

The Doctor hopes to draw the Valeyard out.

**Sue**: They should just switch off the Matrix. Or put the Time Lord version of Norton Anti-virus on it, or they could defrag the hard drive. There must be easier ways to deal with him than this.

The Doctor and Mel explore Popplewick's office.

**Sue**: This would be really difficult to follow if you hadn't seen the Matrix.

Me: The Deadly Assassin, you mean?

Sue: No, the Keanu Reeves film. It makes a lot more sense if you've seen

that.

The Doctor unmasks Popplewick. He was the Valeyard all the time.

**Sue**: That was an excellent effect, but it makes no fucking sense at all. If he really is the Valeyard, why doesn't he just vanish like he did earlier?

When Mel finds a megabyte modem, Sue laughs out loud.

Sue: To be fair, that would have been pretty fast in 1986.

The Master's meddling has brought chaos to Gallifrey.

**Sue**: Is this where the Time War starts? It is, isn't it? *This is really it!* This is why we aren't on Gallifrey itself – the planet is going to explode!

Or as the Valeyard so eloquently puts it: there's nothing you can do to prevent the catharsis of spurious morality.

Sue: Who actually talks like that? What does that even mean?

The screen in the courtroom explodes.

**Sue**: The Doctor's too late! I didn't expect that!

The Valeyard accuses the Doctor of triggering a ray phase shift.

Sue: I don't understand a fucking word of this.

Whatever a ray phase shift is, it puts the mockers on the Valeyard's plans, and the Doctor returns to the courtroom victorious.

**Sue**: See! They're all dead... Oh, they were only having a nap. Sorry, my

#### THE TRIAL OF A TIME LORD: PARTS THIRTEEN TO FOURTEEN

mistake.

All charges against the Doctor are dismissed.

**Sue**: So what happened to the Master? Am I missing something important? This can't be over yet.

The Inquisitor has more good news for the Doctor: Peri is alive and well and living as a warrior queen with King Yrcanos.

**Sue**: (*Throwing a cushion at the television*) What load of bollocks. For fuck's sake!

The Doctor and Mel depart in the TARDIS, arguing about carrot juice.

Sue: How is that even possible?

Me: Yes, I know. Mel is a walking paradox.

Sue: Does she go on to create a hole in time? Does she explode? Will she

make him regenerate? Is it a trap? This can't be over yet.

We return to the courtroom

Sue: Here we go...

The Keeper of the Matrix is none other than...

Sue: Oh, it's the Valeyard. That is disappointing. But...

Cue credits.

Sue: I thought that was Colin's last story? You lied to me again!

She reaches for a cushion.

Me: I didn't lie.

Sue: EH?

#### The Score

**Sue**: There are plenty of problems with it. It didn't make any sense for a start! That twist with the Valeyard sounded good, but *what does it actually mean*? The ending didn't warrant 14 weeks of build-up. It looked great, though, and the acting was excellent. I want to like it a lot more than I do, but I feel cheated.

## 5/10

If you treat the Trial season as one story, Sue's scores average out at 6.71 out of 10. So, if we're rounding up, the Trial scores seven out of 10. Fancy that.

**COMMENT**: "A megabyte modem is still fast. The average UK broadband customer has a 10Mbps download speed, which works out to 1.25MBps, or just slightly faster than a megabyte." – Mike Zeidler

# **THE COLIN BAKER YEARS**

#### BLOGGED: 21 December 2012

Me: Okay, Sue, so you've seen Trials and Tribulations...

Sue: Good documentary. Bit sad, though.

**Me**: Anyway, you are now well versed in what happened to Colin Baker, which brings us nicely to the first question, which was asked by many, including Sarah Hadley and Dave Sanders:

**Jonathan Morris**: Five minutes after the last episode of *The Trial Of A Time Lord*, you have been made the new producer of *Doctor Who*. What do you do?

Sue: Can I keep Colin? I'd give him one more season but I'd change his costume. The first episode would see him burning it on a bonfire. He wouldn't meet Bonnie Langford until the last episode, at which point the Doctor would suddenly realise that he's been in the Matrix all this time and he's still on trial. I'd do it all on location and I'd get Led Zeppelin to do a version of the theme tune. I'd keep the episodes short, and I'd get a really fit companion for the dads. One that gets on with the Doctor and is happy to be there. I'd put Graeme Harper on a retainer and I'd ask Gangster Man (Philip Martin) to be my script editor. How's that for starters?

**Jonathan Baldwin**: What do you see as the lost potential with Colin's Doctor (if any) and who, or what, was to blame?

**Sue**: He wasn't given a chance to be a proper Doctor. I blame JN-T and Eric Saward. They were just as bad as each other. They should have left before Colin started in my opinion. The scripts weren't good enough and the directors were too safe. He didn't stand a chance.

**Me**: We received a few variations on the next question, including submissions from Hector Roddan and James P Quick; the P stands for Patrick, apparently.

Sue: A likely story.

**Me**: Anyway, here's the short version:

John Callaghan: How would you kill off the Sixth Doctor?

**Sue**: I'd bring the Valeyard back and I'd start the Time War. Colin would regenerate when he blows up Gallifrey. Blowing up Gallifrey is just the

sort of thing he'd do. Actually, maybe he'd regenerate to stop the Valeyard taking over his body. That could work, too.

**Me**: Paul Shields and Scott Willison both want to know: did seeing Colin on *I'm a Celebrity...* colour your opinion of his Doctor?

Sue: No.

**Me**: Quite a few people asked this one, including Peter Nolan and Jessica Howard:

**JJ Chambers**: Which stories would you have chosen for the prosecution and the defence in *The Trial of a Time Lord*?

**Sue**: *Genesis of the Daleks* for the defence, obviously. For the prosecution, I'd probably choose the one where Adric died. The Doctor fucked that right up.

**Matt Bartley**: Colin Baker's interpretation of the Doctor was smug, arrogant, cruel, cowardly, insensitive and dickish, and this makes him intrinsically more interesting than Peter Davison's wet lettuce leaf approach. True or false?

**Sue**: False. No, true. No, wait... False. Oh, I don't know. Peter Davison isn't a wet lettuce. Will that do?

**Paul McElvaney**: Who would be the perfect companion for the Sixth Doctor?

**Sue**: Glitz. He *was* the perfect companion for the Sixth Doctor. We saw it. **Me**: Lots of variations on the next question (far too many to mention) but they all boil down to this:

**Andy Stacey**: If Sue had been the costume designer during this era, what kind of outfit would she have created for the Sixth Doctor?

Sue: A James Bond tuxedo. He would have looked great in a tux.

**BloodyMarquis**: What is it like to know that the BBC was airing *Edge of Darkness* around the same time as *The Trial of a Time Lord*?

Sue: It makes me want to watch Edge of Darkness again.

**Nick Myles**: If you had to trade Neil in for one of the various sex pests who lusted after Peri, which one would you choose?

Sue: Brian Blessed. I'd have to stock up on aspirin, though.

**Jarad Higgins**: If you'd overseen *Doctor in Distress*, who would have sung the song?

**Sue**: I liked Paul Young, but that wasn't really his sort of thing.

#### THE COLIN BAKER YEARS

Me: It's no one's sort of thing!

Sue: Okay, him, then. And Boy George, Marilyn, and Cheryl from Bucks

Fizz.

Mike Zeidler: Should Colin have kept the beard he grew during the

show's rest period?

Sue: Yes.

**Ian Ferguson**: What was your worst crime against fashion in the 1980s? **Sue**: How long have you got? Probably my flat canvas yellow boots, my blue leg warmers and my blue and white stripped dungarees. I was seriously into braces.

**Adam S Leslie**: Apart from the obvious signifiers (theme tune, TARDIS, Daleks, etc.) do you think *Doctor Who* is recognisably the same show it was when you first started watching it?

**Sue**: Yes, of course it is. It goes out of its way to remind me sometimes. **Paul Roche**: Would you be willing to listen to Colin's work with Big Finish to get a broader prospective of the Sixth Doctor?

Sue: No.

**Jane Wilson**: If you could break the Trial into four segments, what would you call the stories?

I have to act out the stories in front of her before she offers the following suggestions:

Sue: Ravalox, Mind Swap, Genocide of the Killer Plants, and The Matrix.Me: I've got a rude question from Steve O'Brien that I can't print...Sue: Between Tom Baker and Patrick Troughton, Steve. Somewhere near

the top.

**Mark Faulkner**: As there are 12 days of Christmas and 12 Doctors (including Peter Cushing), which gifts would your true love bring to each Doctor?

**Sue**: If I could get one present between all of them, I'd get one of those fire escape doors, the sort you find in hotels. You know, the ones that close and lock automatically. I'd get him one of those for his TARDIS.

**Me**: That's nice, but what if you had to give him 12 different gifts, one for each incarnation?

**Sue**: Okay... First Doctor: a sonic screwdriver; Second: a jacket that actually fits him; Third: a luncheon voucher; Fourth: a nice hand-turned pen; Fifth: a big kiss; Sixth: a new perm; Seventh: Fuck knows; Eighth: no idea; Ninth: a framed picture of Rose; Tenth: a weekend in Barcelona (with me); Eleventh: a big jar of jelly beans. You know, one of those jars from TK Maxx. The really big ones.

**Me**: Whatever you say. Push the boat out. What about Peter Cushing? **Sue**: Nothing. He doesn't count.

I sigh.

**Sue:** Don't look at me like that. This is really difficult. It would be like me asking you what you'd buy Michael Bublé's bass player for Christmas.

Me: Music lessons.

**Sue**: I could get my Bublé CDs out if you like. Would you like that? No, I didn't think so.

Me: Before we go, can you sum up Colin Baker's Doctor in three words?

Sue: Unpredictable, loud and unfortunate.

Me: Are you looking forward to Sylvester McCoy?

**Sue**: Yes! Although I'm looking forward to Ace more. I really like the look

of her jacket.

# EXTRAS YOU FINALLY BROKE ME





BLOGGED: 8 October 2017

Confession time: I've never seen any of The Stranger videos before now. Yes, I bought Shakedown and Downtime on VHS, and I even dabbled in the PROBE spin-offs for a while (see Volume 8), but I've never once felt the urge to experience Colin Baker's trailblazing foray into straight-to-video fan films. Maybe it was because I was unemployed when they originally came out in the early 1990s and I couldn't afford them, or maybe it's because there were limits to my madness. Whatever the reason, it means I'm going to be just as bewildered as Sue throughout this section of the book. I've also sourced the episodes from the internet, and they look like they could be fifthgeneration at best. So, with that in mind, let me take you into the murky world of the Stranger and Miss Brown, which has absolutely nothing to do with Doctor Who. Honest.

Sue: So, what am I watching now?

Me: Well, back in 1991 there was this guy called Bill Baggs...

Sue: Any relation to Bilbo?

Me: No. Anyway, he decided to make a fan film...

**Sue**: Oh no! This isn't *Shakedown*, is it? I remember you made me watch that not long after we met. In fact, you made me buy it from Forbidden

Planet for you. It was fucking dreadful.

**Me**: No, this isn't *Shakedown*. **Sue**: Thank Christ for that.

Me: We're watching Shakedown for the next book. No, this is Summoned

by Shadows, the first in a series of fan films which...

Sue: I'm basically watching somebody's home movie. Okay, let's get this

over with.

It's probably worth reiterating that Sue was working in short-form video production during the early 1990s, so she's acutely aware of the format's challenges and limitations.

**Sue**: This looks like utter shit.

Me: Hey, I've seen some of the videos you made in 1991, remember?

**Sue**: What's that supposed to mean?

Me: It means you should cut it some slack. This was probably shot on

SVHS.

**Sue**: Hey, there's nothing super about this, Neil. But okay, I'll try.

The story begins with a spaceship orbiting a pink planet.

**Sue**: The VHS tape is struggling to cope with that colour.

Me: Yeah, it's bleeding.

Sue: It's bleeding awful, you mean.

Me: I thought you said you'd give it a chance.

Sue: I can't. The music is terrible.

Me: I think it's supposed to be a homage to Keff McCulloch, so of course

it's terrible.

A young couple embrace in what appears to be an overcrowded student common room (the scene is framed between a convenient gap in a banister).

**Sue**: Either Bilbo Baggins thinks he's being really arty here, or there wasn't enough room to set-up the camera and he had to do it in the hall.

And then we cut to Colin Baker squatting in a tent.

Sue: Is that who I think it is?

Me: We're watching this for a book about Colin Baker, so go on, have a

guess.

Sue: Colin Baker appeared in a fan film? Me: He appeared in loads of them.

**Sue**: But *why?* Didn't he have anything better to do with his time?

#### THE STRANGER: SUMMONED BY SHADOWS

Me: I think Crosswits was on a break.

Sue: And is that Peri with him? What the hell is this, Neil? Is this

supposed to be *Doctor Who*?

**Me**: Haven't you noticed that Nicola Bryant is using her real accent? **Sue**: Right... So is this a documentary about what happened to Colin Baker after he was sacked from *Doctor Who*? He ended up in a tent?

Meanwhile, an illusionist performs some conjuring tricks for a group of easily-impressed teenagers...

**Me**: The magician is portrayed by Michael Wisher. He's the guy who originally played Davros.

Sue: Is it really? I never would have guessed that.

Me: That's why I told you.

Sue: Were these actors actually paid for being in this? Or were they doing

it out of the goodness of their hearts?

Me: I have no idea.

Sue: I still can't believe people actually spent money on this.

**Me**: We were desperate. If *Doctor Who* was our heroin, then this was our

methadone.

Sue: You'd have to be high to pay for this rubbish.

One of the teenagers is hypnotised by the illusionist and she runs away with him, despite her boyfriend's silent protestations. Then we cut to <del>Peri</del> Miss Brown wandering around some sand dunes, eating sandwiches.

**Sue**: Life was tough for ex-companions in the 1990s.

But then, as if by magic, she suddenly finds herself entering the grounds of a luxurious mansion.

**Me**: And you may find yourself outside a beautiful house, and you may ask yourself, well, how did I get here?

A man wearing a white dinner jacket and sunglasses is entertaining his

affluent guests.

Me: Actually, I think this is the guy who played the original Davros. You

can tell by his voice.

Sue: Are you absolutely sure it isn't Michael Barrymore?

Me: [Comment redacted following advice from our lawyers].

The distraught boyfriend, whose girlfriend was kidnapped by the creepy magician earlier, seeks help from the village elder.

**Me**: Hang on a minute... *This* is the guy who played the original Davros. Now I'm really confused...

**Sue**: You're confused? I haven't got a fucking clue what's going on. I don't even know what planet we're supposed to be on. And is the boyfriend miming the plot at this point because they can't afford a boom mic and they daren't risk trying to pick up his dialogue?

Me: I think he's deaf, Sue.

Sue: I wish I was. This music is fucking terrible!

The boyfriend braves the sand dunes in search of the <del>Doctor</del> Stranger.

Sue: Well, that killed five minutes.

The Stranger isn't exactly thrilled to see him.

**Sue**: At least he got rid of that fucking coat. Now he's dressed like Worzel Gummidge. Which is actually an improvement, believe it or not. I'm not sure about his beanie, though. He looks like Phil Mitchell from *EastEnders*.

The mute boyfriend tries to enlist the Stranger's help.

Sue: He's like Skippy the bush kangaroo.

And then Sue asks a very important question:

#### THE STRANGER: SUMMONED BY SHADOWS

Sue: Was Colin Baker still the Doctor when they made this?

**Me**: No, it was just after the BBC cancelled the series. After Sylvester

McCoy.

**Sue**: So why isn't Sylvester McCoy in this? Didn't Bilbo have his phone number? Was Sylvester jealous when he found out? Because this implies that Colin Baker didn't regenerate.

Me: He isn't necessarily playing the Doctor.

**Sue**: Of course he bloody is. Just because he looks like a tramp, it doesn't mean he isn't playing the same part the same way. Of course he's playing the bloody Doctor! Just look at him!

The Stranger and the mute boyfriend bond over a campfire.

**Sue**: This isn't a very flattering camera angle for Colin. He looks like a baby with really small hands.

As the boyfriend sleeps, the Stranger dramatically paces across the sands dunes.

**Sue**: And now it's turned into an Anton Corbijn video. Except this music sounds like it's by a shit Steve Hillage.

Me: Otherwise known as Steve Hillage.

The Stranger finally agrees to help the distraught youth. However, he is immediately shot by the illusionist and transported to a hooded villain's lair.

Me: Aren't you going to ask me if that's the Master?

**Sue**: How would you know if it was? Nobody calls anyone by their names in this thing. I don't know who anybody is, where they're from, where we are; nothing. He could be anyone. Actually, he looks like a monk. Is it the Monk?

**Me**: Yeah, let's go with that. However, he does sound exactly like the guy who originally played Davros.

Sue: What? Another one?

This is an actual plot point – the villain has splintered himself across several characters in an attempt to subjugate the entire planet.

**Sue**: I bet they only had enough money for one decent actor, and they made sure they got their money's worth.

The villain convinces the Stranger to fix his faulty transporter as Miss Brown plots her escape from the dinner party from hell.

**Sue**: Who thought it was a good idea to start playing a kazoo at this point?

Then we finally get a good look at the villain's face. In fact, his close-up seems to go on for several hours.

Sue: He's got a mud pack on. Big deal!

Three different elements of the villain (the illusionist, the village elder and the creepy Michael Barrymore) coalesce into a single being, which the Stranger then has to arm wrestle.

Me: That's a reference to Genesis of the Daleks, love.

Sue: You're confusing me with somebody who cares, Neil.

The villain uses the transporter, but his ship explodes and he ends up melting to death. Don't ask me why. I have no idea.

**Sue**: I bet the Doctor wired up the machine so it would do that to him. It's just the sort of thing he'd do.

Oh, but she's wrong. He didn't wire it up to do anything except work properly. And he isn't the Doctor, either (I think). Anyway, after normality is restored, Miss Brown agrees to be the Stranger's companion again, as long as he agrees to stop being a miserable bastard.

#### THE STRANGER: SUMMONED BY SHADOWS

**Sue**: There isn't enough room in that tent for two, you know. Unless it's bigger on the inside.

The film concludes with another moody back-lit shot of our heroes traversing sand dunes.

**Me**: (*Singing*) Enjoy the silence...

Sue: I wish I could. This music is making me lose the will to live.

Cue credits.

Sue: I hope you don't expect me to give that a score, Neil, because it's unscorable. How am I supposed to compare that to proper telly?

Me: Well, it's a lot more ambitious than the stuff you were making back

then.

**Sue**: Yeah, but I didn't have Colin Baker's phone number, did I? How many of these fan films are there, exactly?

Me: A few. I've got a spreadsheet around here, somewhere...

**Sue**: Look, I think it's great that fans were passionate enough to keep making *Doctor Who* when nobody cared. I drove you all the way to Gateshead so you could be in a fan film once, remember? There's no shame in it.

Me: Thanks.

Sue: I just didn't like it. It was difficult to watch.

Me: Maybe they get better once they get into the swing of it.

Sue: Something tells me we're going to find out.

# THE STRANGER: MORE THAN A MESSIAH

BLOGGED: 11 October 2017

**Sue**: Oh look, they've blown the entire budget on a speedboat.

On an alien planet with a mint green sky (which plays havoc with the video tracking) a middle-aged couple watch two young men waterskiing on a lake.

Me: Do you know who that is?

**Sue**: (*Squinting*) Is it Sylvester McCoy? It looks like it could be Sylvester McCoy but the resolution is so bad it could be anybody. He sounds like Sylvester McCoy...

Me: It's Peter Miles. He was in Genesis of the Daleks.

**Sue**: Not again! Why don't they just remake *Genesis of the fucking Daleks* and be done with it?

The water-skier suddenly disappears beneath the waves, and then the driver of the boat is also pulled in, in what is clearly meant to be a homage to Jaws and Friday the 13th, but which looks like a corporate video that's gone horribly wrong.

**Sue**: This is almost as bad as the time you made me watch *Slightly Unwashed Harry*.

She's talking about a spoof film I made in 1992 with my best friend Jon, where he played a cop on the edge who didn't care about rules, regulations or personal hygiene.

**Sue**: You know, the one where you drove around Coventry in a Bedford van, smashing into cardboard boxes to a John Carpenter soundtrack. It was shit. I don't think I've ever told you that before, Neil, but it was really,

#### THE STRANGER: MORE THAN A MESSIAH

really shit. In fact, it was so shit, it makes this look half-decent. That's how shit it was.

Before I can protest, the action cuts to a windswept beach where the Stranger is enjoying a nice snooze while an irritated Miss Brown crouches beside him.

**Sue**: They spent so much money on the speedboat, they could only afford one deckchair for this scene. Peri's knees must be killing her. And who sunbathes in a force 10 gale?

**Me**: I can't tell if it's supposed to highlight the character's alien qualities, or the weather forecasters simply got it wrong.

The middle-aged couple retire to a holiday chalet where they are constantly menaced by men who look like apes. If you squint really hard.

**Sue**: Just so you know, this is definitely the worst thing you have ever made me watch. Neil.

Me: So far. Sue: What?

Me: I don't understand how they thought they had the budget to pull off

*Planet of the Apes* in Center Parcs. What were they thinking? **Sue**: Especially when they spent all the money on a speedboat.

Miss Brown finds the speedboat driver washed-up on the beach, so she escorts him back to his chalet, which he describes as paradise.

**Sue**: Paradise? Is he having a laugh? What kind of holiday park is this anyway? I'd love to see the brochure: 'If the sharks don't kill you, the apes will. Good luck!'

Meanwhile, Bunny (aka Peter Miles) is off hunting for apes when a mysterious girl confronts him in the woods.

Me: It's Ace.

Sue: No, it isn't. It's shit.

**Me**: No, *that's* Ace. Well, it's Sophie Aldred, but you know what I mean. **Sue**: So, is Sylvester McCoy in this one? Are they going to team up? I'm

almost excited.

Meanwhile, in what is described on-screen as a huge spaceport...

**Sue**: It looks like somebody's bedroom, and that woman on the computer came to work in her pyjamas.

The spaceport is unceremoniously wiped off the face of the planet.

**Sue**: That's a shame. She was my favourite character.

And then the moment we've all been waiting for: Sophie Aldred and Colin Baker together at last!

Sue: Well, this doesn't feel right at all...

Meanwhile Miss Brown and the speedboat guy (I think his name is Nic) stumble across an ape in the woods. However, before they can reason with it, Bunny shoots Nic by mistake. Thankfully, everything's okay because Bunny apologies.

Sue: Who wrote this shit?

Me: The guy on the floor who's just been shot. He's the writer, Nigel Fairs.

I checked on Wikipedia earlier.

Sue: Well, at least he had the decency to kill himself off.

The Stranger wakes up in a cave and the mysterious girl tells him she can see flames in his eyes.

**Sue**: Oh, I get it now. He's putting off his regeneration. All the Doctors do that these days. He doesn't want to go.

#### THE STRANGER: MORE THAN A MESSIAH

Incredibly, Nic is still alive, because the shotgun shell merely grazed his forehead.

**Sue**: Which is amazing when you consider he had his back to him when he was shot. The bullet that killed JFK makes more sense than... EH? WHAT THE FUCK?

Sophie Aldred and Colin Baker are stark naked from the waist up. It's implied they are naked from the waist down, too, which makes Colin hovering behind Sophie especially, erm, memorable.

Sue: (Laughing) Oh my God...

Me: Make it stop!

If that wasn't bad enough, the mysterious girl can't stop banging on about the Stranger's beauty.

**Sue**: This is getting silly, now.

Back at the holiday park, Bunny's wife, Charlotte, wants to know if Miss Brown's friend is a doctor or not.

Me: Can you see what they did there, Sue?

Sue: Yes.

Me: She wanted to know if he was a doctor.

Sue: Yes.

Me: Because they can't call him the Doctor, so they made a joke about it.

Sue: Okay, you can fuck off now, Neil.

The Stranger admits that he's never fallen in love before.

**Sue**: Just you wait until River Song, mate. You'll soon make up for lost time. In fact, you'll be at it for *years*.

The mysterious girl... (I wish she had a proper name, every time I write

'mysterious girl' I get a Peter Andre earworm. You've probably got one now. Sorry.) is determined to make the Stranger move in with her. However, the Stranger has important work to do.

Sue: What, like sitting on your arse in a deckchair all day?

But the mysterious girl (Ooh, I want to get close to you...) won't take no for an answer and she traps the Stranger in her cave.

**Sue**: It's as if they filmed this wide shot but ran out of time when it came to the close-ups.

However, when Bunny begins shooting the apes...

**Sue**: They must be up in the trees, cos he's aiming that gun really high.

...the mysterious girl (Move your body next to mine) can feel their pain. And that's why she allows the Stranger to see the world through her eyes.

**Sue**: It looks like a public information film about the dangers of dropping litter in the countryside.

The Stranger takes off his coat and gives it to the girl. However, when we cut to a close-up, the Stranger and the girl are both wearing coats.

**Sue**: So they can afford a speedboat but they can't afford a PA to keep track of continuity. That was shocking, Neil.

The girl takes on Miss Brown's form in an attempt to persuade her new boyfriend to stay, at which point the Stranger launches into an impassioned speech regarding human emotions.

**Sue**: This definitely sounds like *Doctor Who* to me. This is pretty good, actually. And you can't honestly say he isn't playing the Doctor here, unless Colin Baker plays everything like this...

#### THE STRANGER: MORE THAN A MESSIAH

Driven insane by jealously, the mysterious girl causes the real Miss Brown to be attacked by a tree. I mean, what are the chances of that, given Peri's track record with trees? Thankfully, Bunny saves the day. Until he ties her up and starts calling her 'girlie', that is.

Me: He's just having a mid-life crisis, bless him.

Sue: Speaking of which...

Oh look, Nicola Bryant is resting her head in Colin Baker's lap. I'd like to say this is the least disturbing thing Sue will witness for this book, but I can't.

**Sue**: I'm guessing this must have been like a corporate video for the proper actors. A hundred quid cash-in-hand with a cooked breakfast thrown in.

**Me**: It was either this or another video promoting the Milk Marketing Board.

Bunny rounds up the holidaymakers and forces them to vacate the chalet.

Sue: Their *Trip Advisor* review should be interesting.

Spurned by the Stranger, the mysterious girl threatens to take her own life. She is interrupted by Bunny, who has forced Nic and Miss Brown to carry a wounded ape to her lair. And all because he suspects she's a spy from a rival company who wants to steal his revolutionary town planning ideas. No, I am not making this up.

Me: I haven't got a clue what's going on any more.

**Sue**: Oh, it's quite simple, really. She's basically the planet's spirit, or something new-agey like that – there's lots of religion thrown into this, as well – and these tourists are dropping too much litter, or something like that, and she's had enough of them. I think that's pretty close.

Bunny shoots the mysterious girl dead.

**Sue**: He didn't even apologise this time.

The girl's corpse disappears, which triggers an earthquake. Brilliantly, Bunny is killed in the ensuing rock fall.

**Sue**: Why has his wife decided to stay behind and die with him? I thought she knew he was an utter prick. That makes no sense at all.

As the planet tears itself apart, the Stranger stubbornly refuses to leave.

**Sue**: Oh, so *now* he wants to stay! Typical bloke.

The planet is completely destroyed but our heroes emerge unscathed on a beach.

**Me**: I'm sorry, but what the fuck just happened? Where the hell are we? How did they get off that planet? Which planet is this, anyway? It looks exactly the same as the last one. I don't get it...

**Sue**: They must have jumped in the TARDIS when we weren't looking. It'll be around somewhere.

**Me**: It's because they don't have the rights to the TARDIS.

**Sue**: But that doesn't make sense. The TARDIS can look like anything it wants when it's working properly. It doesn't have to be a police box. It could be anything.

Me: Like a rock. You can't copyright a rock.

**Sue**: Or his coat. Yeah, his TARDIS is disguised as a coat. That's why there were two coats on the beach – his real coat and his TARDIS coat. Yeah, that makes total sense.

**Me**: A wearable TARDIS is a brilliant idea, actually – if it hasn't been done before in a Big Finish audio adventure.

**Sue**: Yeah, cos that'll work on the radio. Get me Colin Baker's phone number!

Cue credits.

#### THE STRANGER: MORE THAN A MESSIAH

**Sue**: I still can't believe that people actually bought that and were still happy about it. Yes, my videos were a bit ropey back in the 1990s, but at least I never sold them to anyone.

**Me**: Third time lucky? **Sue**: Oh, go on then.

## THE STRANGER: IN MEMORY ALONE

BLOGGED: 14 October 2017

**Sue**: Can't we watch something else Colin Baker's been in? There must be

loads to choose from.

**Me**: Well, not a lot of people know this, but he was in a series called *The Brothers*...

Sue: Let's watch that instead.

**Me**: We can't. It's a drama about lorry drivers. It most definitely isn't a drama about a mysterious stranger who travels through time and space, bumping into actors who were in *Genesis of the Daleks*. It's a no-brainer.

Sorry.

Sue: You will be.

In Memory Alone kicks off with a lengthy pre-title sequence involving someone (or something) trying (and failing) to control a spaceship.

Sue: I hope I wasn't supposed to understand any of that...

Whatever it is, it's about to crash into a bright pink planet. Cue titles.

Me: Nicholas Briggs wrote this one. Do you know who Nicholas Briggs is,

Sue?

**Sue**: Yes, he does the voices on *Doctor Who*.

Me: The voices for what?

Sue: Everything.

An object streaks across the sky before crashing next to what appears to be an old-fashioned railway station.

Sue: This reminds me of Sapphire and Steel.

#### THE STRANGER: IN MEMORY ALONE

Me: You don't say.

Whatever it is that's crashed, it's forced to search for an alternative power source in the station. And then a floating wastepaper bin drifts past the camera.

**Me**: Is that the same robot? I'm confused already.

 $\pmb{Sue} ext{:} \ No, it's a completely different robot. The first robot had hands. Do$ 

try to pay attention, Neil.

**Me**: But you can't have one robot in the shadows and then another robot in the next scene – in the same location! – and expect me to differentiate between the two robots. It's absurd.

**Sue**: (Sighing) Only if you aren't paying attention.

A mannequin dummy on the station platform is suddenly replaced by a bewildered Nicola Bryant.

**Sue**: Okay, is it the Autons?

The station sign suggests we're in Rothley.

Sue: At least we know this is definitely set on Earth.

Me: How do we know that?

Sue: Well, the sky isn't bright green for a start, and there's a poster on the

wall for Cadbury's cocoa.

Me: But we saw that thing crash into a pink planet that looked nothing

like Earth.

Sue: Look, there's a poster over there for Saltburn-on-the-Sea. That's just

down the road from us. They do a lovely fish and chips.

Meanwhile, on a steam train thundering through the countryside, another mannequin miraculously transforms into Colin Baker.

**Sue**: Yeah, it's definitely the Autons. I'm surprised they got the rights.

**Me**: Like that would ever happen. (*See Volume 8 – Ed*)

Nicholas Briggs turns up at Rothley station in a business suit and bowler hat (although his tie could do with a little work).

**Sue**: This couldn't be more *Sapphire and Steel* if it tried.

**Me**: Do you recognise this guy?

Sue: No. Should I?

Me: You don't recognise his voice?

Sue: Is it the same guy who played Adrian Mole?

Me: It's Nick Briggs!

Sue: How the hell am I supposed to know that? He's usually behind the

scenes, you idiot.

Me: Hang on a minute. I've just noticed that it's night-time at the station

and daylight on the train. Maybe that's a clue...

Sue: Or maybe Bilbo has never heard of continuity. He can't even keep

track of his coats.

The Stranger (because it's probably him) and Miss Brown (because it's probably her) can't remember who they are.

**Sue**: Just another way to avoid calling them the Doctor and Peri, I suppose.

The Stranger sabotages the train's electronics, which makes it phase in and out of reality.

**Sue**: He could have just pulled the chain that forces it to make an emergency stop. I must say, though, I like Colin Baker in a nice suit. He's quite a good actor, really. He has a Bill Clinton vibe to him.

The train arrives at the station. However, something goes wrong when Nick Briggs tries to board it, and it disappears into thin air.

Sue: Er, why is Nicholas Briggs wearing lipstick?

Me: Is that really the only question you have at this point? Because I

haven't got a fucking clue what's going on.

#### THE STRANGER: IN MEMORY ALONE

Sue: Even Sapphire and Steel made more sense than this.

The Stranger and Miss Brown are drawn to a mysterious locked room beneath the station

Sue: Is it just me, or is there lots of sexual tension in this scene?

Me: Yes, Colin really does have the hots for that door.

Nicholas Briggs attacks the Stranger with his umbrella.

**Sue**: This is basically *Doctor Who* meets *Sapphire and Steel* meets *The Avengers*.

The Stranger realises Nick Briggs is actually playing a hologram.

**Me**: With a dash of *Red Dwarf* thrown in for good measure.

Sue: At least you've never made me watch Red Dwarf.

Me: Hey, I'm not that cruel.

Sue: Not that cruel? This is the THIRD one of these you've made me sit in

front of! I can only take so much.

The hologram knocks the Stranger out with his umbrella handle.

**Sue**: That looked like it really hurt. In fact, given how cheap this thing is, I bet you it did hurt. They obviously can't afford a stuntman.

Meanwhile, Miss Brown is forced to deal with an out of control security robot.

**Sue**: Why does this thing sound like K9 all of a sudden? Is Nick Briggs doing all the voices? I bet he is, you know.

The hologram begins to gawp uncontrollably, as if it's trying to force out its words, but can't.

**Sue**: To be fair, that was pretty scary. Nicholas Briggs should be in a Kraftwerk tribute band. There aren't that many people who can pull off the 'robotic businessman in bright red lipstick' look, you know.

The mysterious locked room is finally opened...

Sue: Is that a Cyberman? A really shit Cyberman?

No, it's a spacesuit.

Sue: I don't even care anymore.

Me: This reminds me of *The Impossible Astronaut*. You know, the one with

the Silence.

**Sue**: I don't remember that one.

Me: That'll be the Silence.

When the Stranger takes a closer look at the suit, it grips his arm and refuses to let go. Miss Brown pleads with the hologram to release him, but he's too busy dreaming about spacemen to care.

Me: (Singing) I lost my heart to a starship trooper...

**Sue**: What the fuck?

The suit's helmet opens to reveal the burnt-out remains of the real Nick Briggs.

**Sue**: They don't have to linger on it like this. Okay, we get it, you spent ages on the make-up, but come on, give us a break. Oh, it's dribbling blood now.

The astronaut's face begins to shrivel and die, like a punctured balloon made from meat.

Sue: Was there really any need for that?

#### THE STRANGER: IN MEMORY ALONE

Another emergency hologram (Nick Briggs in some fetching overalls) explains that the suit's occupant loved visiting this railway station, and because it was his last thought before he died, that's where he ended up. I think. I had to watch it six times to write that, and I'm still not entirely sure.

Sue: I'm just going to pretend that Colin and Nicola are playing Sapphire

and Steel in this one.

Me: They just tried to explain why the emergency hologram looks like

Nick Briggs. It's because...

**Sue**: They didn't have any money!

The suit's defence shield is reactivated and it goes on the rampage.

**Sue**: It waves its arms around like the Zingbot on American *Big Brother*. **Me**: Approximately three people reading this book will get that reference,

Sue.

Sue: So what? ZING!

The Stranger realises a sentient nerve center is required to create a zeroreturn, which will send everybody back to their proper places.

Sue: Fuck's sake!

**Me**: (*Laughing*) I know! How the hell did he work that out?

Sue: I feel like we've just skipped 10 minutes. Not that I'm complaining.

The Stranger relives the entire story via a flashback – which is torturous enough – but then a familiar noise inspires him to concentrate even more.

Sue: So they do have a TARDIS. Listen, can you hear it?

**Me**: The cheeky bastards...

The suit tries to stop him.

Sue: And now it's spitting raspberry sauce all over him!

When the Stranger forces the simulator to initiate a zero-return, and a youthful Nick Briggs stares beatifically back at us from inside his massive helmet, we both succumb to hysterical laughter.

**Me**: I can't believe Colin hasn't tried to lick that raspberry sauce off his face yet.

**Sue**: Don't be mean, Neil. He's obviously doing this as a favour to his friends

**Me**: Either that or they're blackmailing him.

As everything is returned to its rightful place, a voiceover (go on, have a guess) tells us how the zero-return function is triggered and what happens when it is. It's basically a shameless attempt to explain what happened during the last five minutes as the credits begin to roll.

**Sue**: I don't know what else to say. You finally broke me. **Me**: Don't you admire them, though? Just a little bit?

**Sue**: For what? *That?* 

**Me**: For keeping *Doctor Who* alive when the BBC couldn't care less. **Sue**: I suppose that's true. If they had cared, they would have sued Bilbo

Baggins for copyright infringement.

**Me**: Can't you appreciate the effort they went to? It was 25 years ago, you know.

**Sue**: I don't care. Look, some of the performances were okay, I suppose. Even the direction was fine, on the whole. I didn't even mind the shoddy special effects. It's the scripts that were the main problem. They were far too ambitious for the money and technology they had at their disposal, and they were just pretentious nonsense, really. I don't think there was a single funny line in any of them. Where's all the fun gone?

Me: Maybe they really nail it in the fourth one...

Sue: Look, can't we watch something where Colin isn't pretending to be

Doctor Who for a change?

Me: Yeah, sure...

# THE AIRZONE SOLUTION BLOGGED: 15 October 2017

I bought The Airzone Solution on VHS cassette when it first came out in 1993, not long after I moved in with Sue.

**Sue**: You made me drive to Forbidden Planet after work so I could buy it for you. That and that stupid magazine you liked. What was it called? *Dreamweaver*.

Me: Dreamwatch.

Sue: Whatever. I should have taken it as a sign. And why are we watching

another home movie?

**Me**: Don't worry, this one has nothing to do with *Doctor Who*.

**Sue**: I'll be the judge of that.

The Airzone Solution begins with a van trying to find a parking space.

Sue: Ooh, this is exciting.

The van drops off a dead body, and then we cut to Jon Pertwee, who is watching a hard-hitting documentary about pollution that has been put together by his friend Peter Davison. (I think this will be a lot easier to follow if I use their real names.)

**Sue**: Oh look, it's the Pompous Twat (*sic*) and the Fit One. No wonder you

made me buy this. You must have been like a pig in shit.

**Me**: It gets even better – that guy on the TV is played by Davros. **Sue**: Not again! When was the last time he had proper job?

The Airzone Solution takes place in the near future, where pollution is out of control and people wear masks to protect themselves from the environment.

**Me**: Yeah, it's pretty bad, but at least they don't have to deal with Brexit. **Sue**: Is the over-exposed video supposed to represent smog, or is it *YouTube*'s fault?

Me: I could always get the VHS player out of the loft.

**Sue**: I'm sure it's supposed to represent smog. That's pretty clever, actually.

You can't see a bloody thing.

Colin Baker plays an eccentric weatherman who doesn't think twice about using a garish multicoloured jumper as a prop during his latest forecast.

Sue: Is that a joke about his stupid coat?

**Me**: It's playing havoc with the chromakey, so yeah, probably. Oh look, Nicholas Briggs is playing the studio director...

Unfortunately, before my wife can pass comment on Nick's mighty beard, she's distracted by another familiar face.

Sue: It's the Crafty Sod! This is turning into *The Seven Doctors*.

Me: Except there's only four of them.

Sylvester McCoy meets a woman behind some bins. They exchange a stuffed envelope and a mouthful of saliva.

Sue: Wasn't she in Doctor Who?

Me: No.

Sue: Are you sure she wasn't one of Peter Davison's companions?

Me: I suppose she does look a bit like Nyssa, if you squint.

Sue: Who? Me: Nyssa. Sue: What?

Me: Never mind.

Sylvester also has a starring role in Peter's documentary.

**Sue**: Was this production sponsored by Gourmet crisps? Because that definitely looks like product placement to me. Peter is practically holding the packet up to the camera.

#### THE AIRZONE SOLUTION

The doorbell rings.

Sue: That'll be Tom Baker.

Unfortunately, it's only Sylvester McCoy. Peter asks him how his mole is.

**Sue**: It's fine. He's having it removed next week.

Me: Not that kind of mole, Sue.

When Sylvester urges the journalist to curtail his investigations into a company called Airzone, Peter becomes very agitated indeed.

**Sue**: You can tell that Peter is really into this. He's giving it everything he's

got. Which is quite a lot, to be fair.

Me: I don't know about you, but I'm finding this a lot easier to watch than

all the other fan videos we've seen.

**Sue**: Oh, it's a massive step-up from the last one. I think it's because they realised that making alien planets and killer robots for 20 quid was a bit of a stretch, whereas this would have been pretty easy to shoot.

Me: As long as you had all the ex-Doctors' telephone numbers.

Sue: Not necessarily. They could have hired some proper actors instead.

Me: I BEG YOUR PARDON?

**Sue**: Sorry, that came out wrong. What I meant is they could have hired some actors who *weren't* in *Doctor Who*. You know, for a change.

Me: But then I wouldn't have bought this in 1993.

Sue: You say that like it's a bad thing, Neil.

Peter sneaks into Airzone's HQ in order to steal some classified information.

Me: Does this remind you of anything else?

Sue: Yes, it's a blatant rip-off of Edge of Darkness. Even the music sounds

like Edge of Darkness.

Me: Only if Eric Clapton fell asleep on a keyboard.

As Peter is chased through the building by Airzone's security guards, Nicola

Bryant is sexually assaulted by Colin Baker in a TV studio corridor.

**Sue**: You wouldn't get away with aggressive bum-pinching like that now. Unless there's a subplot about sexual harassment in the workplace in this film, which I very much doubt. The sad thing is, I bet no one batted an eyelid back then.

**Me**: Oh, *Doctor Who* fans cared all right. A Doctor just pinched a companion's arse! It was probably one of the most disturbing things we'd ever witnessed.

Sue: You are joking, I hope.

Me: Yeah, if only we knew what was coming.

During his escape, Peter discovers Sylvester's mole, Rachel, who has been hooked up to some sinister-looking machines. He manages to rescue her, but is sadly gassed to death in the process.

Sue: YOU CAN'T KILL PETER DAVISON!

Colin Baker is visibly affected by this twist, even though he couldn't possibly know (or care) that a documentary filmmaker has just been murdered several miles away. In fact he takes this news so badly, he faints.

**Sue**: I know how he feels. Peter isn't really dead, is he?

The next time we see Colin Baker he's in bed with Nicola Bryant, which means the sexual harassment we saw earlier was just a prelude to some really hot sex. We're not entirely sure if this makes the bum pinching scene okay or not, but let's face it, we've gone way beyond that now.

Me: NOOOOOOO!

I had to look away. I know it sounds ridiculous but it made me feel uncomfortable, like I was watching my parents in bed together. So, I watched Sue instead, who spent the entire scene with a slightly bemused, but thoroughly entertained expression on her face.

#### THE AIRZONE SOLUTION

Me: Has it finished yet? Can I look now?

Sue: Not yet. Oh my...

Me: Now?

Sue: God no... Okay, it's over.

I turn back just in time to witness Nicola Bryant and Colin Baker chewing each other's faces off.

Me: SUE!

**Sue**: (*Laughing*) What's wrong? It's sweet.

One of Airzone's nefarious representatives is played by Alan Cumming.

Me: Do you recognise him? He became quite famous after this.

**Sue**: Yes, I do. He was in that thing set on a plane. What was it called?

Come Fly With Me.

**Me**: Pretty close. It was called *The High Life* and it was about air stewards.

**Sue**: Yeah, he was one of the Avengers, too. **Me**: X-Men, actually, but close enough.

Sue: Blue guy with a tail? He was pretty good. So, was this video his big

break, then?

Me: I'm going to go out on a limb and say no.

Airzone's representatives meet the Minister for the Environment, aka Davros.

Sue: He looks like John Major.

Me: That was probably intentional; he was our prime minster when this

was made.

Sue: Happy days.

Me: I know, and I fucking hated John Major!

When Colin gets out of the shower (thanks for that Bill), he is subjected to a

supernatural visitation.

**Sue**: So is Peter Davison a ghost now? **Me**: What does that remind you of?

**Sue**: *Ghost*.

Me: Apart from that. Sue: The Sixth Sense. Me: Apart from that. Sue: Edge of Darkness. Me: We have a winner.

Peter's ghost convinces Colin to investigate the Airzone conspiracy on his behalf, which results in Colin having a nervous breakdown on live TV.

**Sue**: I'm not being funny, Neil, but this is almost bordering on broadcast quality. I feel like we're watching proper telly for a change.

Colin and Nicola cuddle up on their sofa as I clamber behind mine.

Sue: Oh, don't be silly, Neil.

Me: It makes me feel funny. I can't explain it.

Sue: You know, I think this is probably the best thing I've ever seen Colin

Baker in.

Me: What, this scene?

Sue: No, the whole thing. It's the first time I've seen him play a character

that isn't based on Doctor Who. **Me**: Not counting Maxil, you mean.

Sue: Eh?

Me: It doesn't matter. Go on.

**Sue**: I'm just saying he's really good in this. And Nicola is really good in this, too. I'm enjoying it. The only thing that lets it down is that it's too

much like Edge of Darkness.

Me: At least we haven't seen a dildo yet.

Back in Airzone's offices, the baddies are definitely up to no good.

#### THE AIRZONE SOLUTION

Sue: I can hear a really bad humming noise in this scene.

Me: Ah, that'll be the dildo.

Colin and Nicola break into Peter's house and stumble across his documentary. As they watch it, Jon Pertwee loiters outside the house in a fedora.

Me: At least Tom Baker's hat agreed to take part.

They are interrupted by a recalcitrant man in a black suit who has been sent to remove Airzone's property from Peter's house.

Me: That's Gary Russell.

Sue: Is that supposed to mean something to me?

I tell her everything she needs to know about Gary Russell – The Famous Five, Big Finish, Doctor Who Magazine... Everything.

**Sue**: He must be really important, then. **Me**: Not really. This is the only scene he's in.

**Sue**: Oh, thank God for that. For a successful child actor, he's very wooden. Perhaps his acting talent dropped the same time as his balls.

When Colin returns to the newsroom, Nick Briggs chastises him for losing his shit on live TV.

**Sue**: He just said the weatherman was the most important person on their news channel, while at the same time insisting they were totally committed to proper journalism. Make your bloody mind up.

**Me**: Nick wrote this story as well.

Sue: Aww, bless him. I really like Nick. He's funny in this.

Colin and Sylvester discuss their next move.

**Sue**: This is probably the best thing I've seen Sylvester McCoy in, as well.

**Me**: Steady on, love, I haven't shown you any *TISWAS* yet.

Peter's ghost urges Colin and Sylvester to work together. And if he can't convince them, maybe Jon Pertwee can.

**Sue**: I have no idea what he has to do with any of this. **Me**: Don't worry, I'm pretty sure Bill Baggs didn't either.

When Sylvester and Colin attempt to smuggle Rachel away in a car, they are pursued by some heavies in a van.

**Sue**: It's turned into one of your videos, Neil. I bet they crash into some empty cardboard boxes any minute now.

Me: Okay, you can stop that now, Sue.

Rachel is abducted by the bad guys and Colin and Sylvester are left to pick up the pieces.

**Sue**: Bloody amateurs. I would have shot them both in the head. Why would you leave any witnesses?

Colin returns home to Nicola.

Me: I still don't get it. Maybe he laughed her into bed.

Sue: Not this again. But yes, it's entirely possible that he laughed her into

bed. After all, we've all done it.

Me: Why are you looking at me like that?

Nicola falls out with Colin because he hasn't been paying attention to her (he failed to realise that she's stressed out about an upcoming interview with the minister for the environment).

Me: Thank God for that.

Sue: Is the minister really important, then?

Me: No, I mean thank God she's angry with him. It means there won't be

#### THE AIRZONE SOLUTION

another sex scene.

The next day, Colin tries to convince Nicola to give him access to the minister as he munches on a bag of crisps.

**Me**: What is it with *The Airzone Solution* and crisps?

Sue: It's because Colin Baker is slowly turning into Peter Davison and he's

picking up his habits.

Me: WHAT?

**Sue**: Yeah, I know, it's usually the other way around, but this time Colin is turning into Peter, because he's been possessed by him. Why else would

he have a special bond? That's why he's scoffing all those crisps. **Me**: I'm pretty sure it's because Colin Baker really likes his crisps.

**Sue**: Hey, you started this.

Later, in a jam-packed hall...

**Sue**: Wow. Look at all these extras... They must have spent a bomb on this scene.

Me: Or maybe they just gatecrashed a conference.

An evil Airzone representative takes to the stage, her features magnified by a giant video screen above her head.

**Sue**: That settles it – they must have paid these people to sit through her speech, and that can't have been cheap. I'm impressed. This actually looks like a proper TV show.

Colin Baker strides towards the podium.

**Sue**: It's like that Apple advert from 1984. He's going to smash the video screen to bits with his shoe or something.

Colin puts a gun to the woman's head instead.

**Sue**: If it turns out they've been fiddling their taxes, he's going to look really stupid.

With Sylvester's help, Rachel enters the auditorium and spills the beans. She explains that Airzone have no intention of reducing the world's pollution, and instead they have been genetically modifying humans so they can breathe in the toxins. At which point she reveals that she has her own set of gills.

**Sue**: Good luck selling that to the public, love.

The delegates are appalled by Airzone's actions and the bad guys slope away with their tails between their legs.

**Sue**: Yeah, just walk away. Don't worry about it, you won't be arrested for this. Better luck next time. Bye!

At least Jon Pertwee is pleased. Cue credits.

**Me:** What did Jon Pertwee have to do with any of that, exactly? It's as if he accidentally stumbled into a fan video by mistake.

Sue: They should have given him Gary Russell's part.

**Me**: And I still don't understand how Peter Davison helped them figure it all out when he was a ghost.

**Sue**: You didn't have a problem with it in *Edge of Darkness*, and I don't remember them explaining their ghost either.

**Me**: At least your crisps theory didn't pan out. That's something, I suppose.

**Sue**: Well, I enjoyed it. It was pretty good for what it was – a low-budget *Edge of Darkness* rip-off with some decent actors and its heart in the right place. Bill Baggs is a pretty good director – he keeps getting better and better – and you have to admire them for having a go and making a success of it. I mean, you bought loads of them so they must have been doing something right.

## THE BROTHERS

### BLOGGED: 26 January 2018

**Sue**: I thought you said we weren't going to watch any programmes about articulated lorries. You told me it wasn't sci-fi enough.

**Me**: Look, it's either an episode of this or an episode of *Crosswits* (which I don't have). Because, if we don't watch this, the paperback version of the book won't be wide enough to fit the Sue Me Books logo on it.

Sue: Just make the logo slightly smaller, then.

**Me**: And go into hiding for the rest of our lives? Are you insane?

Sue: So, you're telling me that we're literally padding out the book with a

chapter on lorry drivers. Is that what you're saying?

**Me**: It's technically a drama about the complexities of running a large transcontinental haulage firm, but yes.

Sue: Wow. I'm hooked already.

**Me**: So, there's this family called the Hammonds, and when the father dies he leaves his haulage company to his three sons...

Sue: Spoilers.

**Me**: We're not watching the first episode, Sue. We're watching an episode from the seventh series.

Sue: Why are we doing that? That's stupid.

**Me**: Because Colin Baker doesn't turn up until the last few seasons, and according to *Wikipedia*, this episode highlights the unpleasant side of his character.

Sue: Spoilers.

Me: Colin plays the show's villain – he's the character you love to hate.

**Sue**: So he's the bad brother, then. **Me**: No, he isn't one of the brothers.

Sue: Oh, for fuck's sake.

**Me**: It's basically *Dallas* with lorries. It was extremely popular, you know, especially in Holland. The cast even recorded an album called *Christmas with the Hammonds* which reached Number 22 in the Dutch charts in December 1976...

Sue: Okay, stop padding this out and play the bloody thing.

#### **Arrival and Departures**

Sue: What a twat.

This is Sue's initial assessment of Paul Merroney as he gives his new secretary a hard time.

**Sue**: So was this Colin's biggest role before he was Doctor Who? **Me**: Yes. In fact, I'm sure he was a household name because of *The Brothers* 

**Sue**: Maybe so, but I still can't understand why anyone would think he'd be a good Doctor based on this. He's horrible! They should have picked

him to play the Master instead. I just don't get it.

Me: It's because he was really funny at a wedding reception. Don't you

remember? We watched a documentary about it.

Sue: You say that like it makes sense.

The Hammond's matriarch is played by Jean Anderson.

Sue: She must be the Miss Ellie character, then.

Me: This was years before Dallas.

Sue: And Colin Baker must be playing JR.

Me: Okay, if it helps.

Sue: It does, Neil, because I haven't got a clue what's going on or who any

of these people are.

**Me**: Half the fun will be trying to work it out. **Sue**: You have a very strange idea of fun.

One of the brothers' wives is played by a very famous actress.

Me: Who's that, Sue? She was in Doctor Who as well.

Sue: Oh yes, it's whatshername. Don't tell me, I know this... She was one

of the companions - Mary Tamm.

Me: No, it isn't Mary Tamm, although she does look a bit like her in this

scene. Try again.

#### THE BROTHERS

**Sue**: Oh yes, she was in that programme about ships.

Me: Go on.

Sue: The Onedin Line.

**Me**: Okay, I give up. It's Kate O'Mara and she was in *Triangle*, the soap opera about a cross channel ferry. But in *Doctor Who*, she was the Rani,

remember?

**Sue**: I do now that you mention it. She was as camp as Christmas. She also reminds me of Joan Collins. Is she an alcoholic in this? I bet she is, you know.

There's a scene involving a disgruntled truck driver, who Sue is convinced is played by Billy Bremner (he isn't), and then we are alerted to some high drama when the camera crash zooms into somebody's face.

**Me**: Wow, the director actually thought a conversation about boardroom politics warranted a crash zoom.

**Sue**: I bet they track and zoom into people when they run out of tea bags. That's how exciting this is.

Sue struggles to make sense of the logistical issues involving overtime directives

**Sue**: Are you sure we can't go back and watch this from the beginning? **Me**: I don't think there's that much call for a *Brothers* blog-a-long, Sue. **Sue**: We don't have to blog it, you idiot. We could watch it for pleasure.

Me: What? The Brothers? For pleasure? Are you joking?

**Sue**: It's the only way I'll ever give a shit about any of these characters. I mean, who cares? I've only just met them. She's old and ill; he's young and horrible; he's middle-aged and repressed; he played football for Leeds United; and she has very nice hair. Apart from that, I haven't got a clue what's going on.

Paul Merroney can't stop being mean to his secretary.

Me: What surprises me the most about Colin's performance in this is that

it's very similar to the way he plays the Doctor.

Sue: As an unlikeable twat, you mean?

Me: Well, yeah.

**Sue**: Don't get me wrong, Neil, he's very good, but I wouldn't have cast him as Doctor Who in a million years. It would be like casting the guy who plays Ian Beale. He's a good actor, but it wouldn't make any sense.

Two of the eponymous brothers argue about whose turn it is to look after their ailing mother, who is currently in bed with the flu.

Sue: I bet they row like this every episode. You can tell they've done this a million times before. Is the brother with the moustache married to Kate O'Mara?

Me: I think so.

Sue: Wow, he's certainly punching above his weight. He must be as rich as

Eddie Stobart for that to make any sense.

Paul Merroney's wife is played by Liza Goddard.

Sue: What was she famous for?

**Me**: Er... Give Us A Clue.

Sue: I don't know. That's why I'm asking you, Neil.

Me: No, I mean she was probably most famous for being a contestant on

Give Us A Clue. Oh, and she married Colin Baker in real life.

Sue: Were they shagging each other at this point?

**Me**: I have no idea.

Sue: They definitely were. You can tell.

**Me**: They divorced 18 months later. In fact there's a rumour, which was started by Colin, I think, that he was sacked from *Doctor Who* because Michael Grade was dating Liza Goddard at the time. And that's why the Director General had it in for him, and it wasn't because he thought he was a terrible actor, after all.

**Sue**: Really? Tell me more. This is a lot much more exciting than *The Brothers*.

#### THE BROTHERS

And then, exactly 20 minutes into the episode, Colin Baker mentions the Daleks. I shit you not.

**Sue**: Oh, so that's why you picked this episode.

**Me**: I swear I had no idea! **Sue**: Of course you didn't.

Seriously, though, that was one hell of a weird coincidence. Almost as weird as the moment when one of the characters describes Alpen muesli as a luxurious delicacy from Switzerland. However, the main thrust of the episode is the revelation that Paul Merroney would rather do some business deals in Istanbul (where women dress like Daleks) than attend his own father's funeral.

**Sue**: Is that it? I thought he was going to kill a lorry driver, or have an affair, or smuggle loads of hashish out of Istanbul. You know, something like that. That's disappointing.

Paul's wife tries to explain his abhorrent behaviour to her best friend.

Sue: She's so posh, she peeled her apple before she ate it.

The brothers don't know what to do about Paul.

**Sue**: These meetings are really dull. I want to see Colin Baker smoking a hookah pipe in Istanbul.

The episode ends on a cliffhanger: Paul's mother has unexpectedly turned up at Kings Cross station because Paul's new secretary really is an incompetent idiot, after all.

**Sue**: Can we watch the next one? **Me**: Is that meant to be a joke?

Sue: No, I'm getting into this now. I want to know how he gets on with his

mum.

Keep your eyes peeled for Adventures with the Wife in the Back of a Lorry coming to a remainder bin near you soon...

Me: I think that's enough *The Brothers* for one lifetime, Sue.

Sue: And you've dragged this book out long enough.

**Me**: Er, not quite...

## **BIG FINISH** BLOGGED: 28 January 2018

We couldn't possibly say goodbye to the Sixth Doctor without listening to one of his audio adventures first, and when I asked Doctor Who fans on Twitter to nominate the story they thought Sue should listen to, the overwhelming winner was Slipback. I'm kidding. The winner was a Big Finish play written by Gareth Roberts and Clayton Hickman...

#### The One Doctor

Because you can't really discuss an audio drama in real time and still follow the plot, I decided to repeat the technique we used when we blogged The Auntie Matter (see Volume 5), which meant we would both listen to The One Doctor in our own time before sitting down to talk about it. Anyway, as luck would have it, Sue had to transport a cat that we've been fostering to his new home this weekend, and the journey was just long enough to provide her with the perfect excuse to soak up the drama in one sitting, just as long as she didn't listen to Newcastle versus Chelsea in the fourth round of the FA Cup instead.

Me: So how much of it did you actually listen to?

**Sue**: All of it, of course. I've been sat outside in the car listening to the

last five minutes. Didn't you notice? Me: Oh, well that's a good sign.

Sue: I loved it. I listened to it when I realised Newcastle were going to get

hammered.

**Me**: So you enjoyed it, then?

Sue: I didn't think I would. I thought it would be a chore, so I was

pleasantly surprised. What did you think of it?

Me: I, er, didn't listen to it. **Sue**: Oh Neil, you promised!

Me: I started to listen to it, but then my mind began to wander and before I knew it I was unblocking the sink. And I didn't think you'd listen to it

either so I gave up.

Sue: Well how the fuck is this supposed to work, then?

Me: Why don't you tell me what happened, and whether you liked it or

not, and I'll see if I can make any sense of it.

Sue: Okay...

Warning: there are lots of spoilers for The One Doctor from this point on (unless she made the whole thing up, which is entirely possible because it sounds completely crazy).

Sue: Okay, before we begin – it was Christopher Biggins, wasn't it? I didn't

imagine that, did I?

Me: No, it's definitely Christopher Biggins.

Sue: Oh thank God for that. And was Paddy McGuinness in it?

Me: I don't think so...

**Sue**: Oh, it sounded like Paddy McGuinness was playing the giant jelly,

but I'm getting ahead of myself.

Me: Okay, so try to boil the plot down for me.

**Sue**: Well it's definitely a funny one. And I mean that in a good way. There's this alien planet – don't ask me what it's called – and it's about to be attacked by this giant cylinder, okay?

Me: Okay.

**Sue**: This giant cylinder thing threatens to destroy the planet if they don't give it three treasures, and that's where the Doctor comes in, only there's a twist.

Me: He's actually Christopher Biggins.

**Sue**: Oh, you knew. Anyway, he's just pretending to be the Doctor because he's basically a conman, and he has a companion called Sally-Anne – can you see what they did there? His TARDIS – or STARDIS – can you see what they did there? – looks like a portaloo, and get this – it's actually smaller on the inside than it is on the outside. It's very funny.

Me: I bet. So, they have to retrieve these treasures...

Sue: That's right. The first treasure is this set of infinite shelves – which really made me laugh – they are basically stuck in Ikea for a couple of episodes, which doesn't sound that bad to me. And then the real Doctor

#### **BIG FINISH**

ends up in this gameshow, which is basically *The Weakest Link*, so he can get this thing called the Mentos, which knows everything and can never be eliminated from the game. I think Anne Robinson might be in it.

Which is weird because I'm sure she's been in Doctor Who before.

**Me**: According to *Wikipedia*, that part was played by Rob Shearman's wife, Iane Goddard.

Sue: Are you sure? Because it definitely sounded like Anne Robinson to

me.

Me: Wikipedia never lies. Anyway, safari so goodie.

Sue: What?

Me: Never mind.

Sue: The third and final treasure was definitely the best. There's this giant

jelly thing, right?

Me: Right.

**Sue**: And he's been waiting millions of years for somebody to deliver this entertainment system to him, because he's really lonely, and the Doctor asks him to turn off this force-field so he can grab this diamond, but he won't leave his house just in case he misses the delivery slot. (*Laughing*)

Can you guess what happens next?

**Me**: He misses the delivery?

Sue: (Laughing) It was hilarious. You should listen to it, Neil. It's great.

Me: What happens at the end?

**Sue**: Well, it turns out the whole thing was a trick, and the cylinder just wanted to make sure it captured the real Doctor, which is why it set them those tasks, but the fake Doctor takes the credit and they grab him instead.

Me: Christopher Biggins dies, then?

Sue: No, he's just captured. The Doctor says he'll rescue him eventually,

but who knows when he'll get around to it. Is there a sequel?

Me: I don't think so.

**Sue**: There should be a sequel. **Me**: Anything else I should know?

Sue: Yes, Colin Baker snogs Sally-Anne.

Me: He does what?

Sue: He does it to convince the bad guys that he isn't the real Doctor,

#### THE COURT JESTER: THE WIFE IN SPACE

which doesn't make that much sense when you think about it, because the Doctor snogs *loads* of people.

**Me**: This was made before *Doctor Who* came back on television. That sort of thing was still frowned upon.

Sue: Oh, that explains it, then.

Me: Anything else?

**Sue**: Yes, the robots from the Smash adverts are in it. You know, the ones that can't stop laughing. And the theme music goes a bit funny in the third episode – don't ask me why. I think that's about it.

**Me**: So, it gets a thumbs-up?

Sue: Definitely. You should listen to it. You'd love it.

Me: What was Colin like?

**Sue**: He's canny good. It's easily his best *Doctor Who* story. **Me**: Did it help that you didn't have to look at his coat?

**Sue**: Not really. You can't help but imagine him wearing it while you listen to it. The really big difference for me is that he had a decent script for a change.

Me: And what about Bonnie?

**Sue**: She was great, too. She's very funny. But everybody was great. The script was very funny and inventive and I could definitely see it working on television.

**Me**: It almost did. Do you remember the Christmas special with David Morrissey?

Sue: Well, it was a bit Christmassy...

**Me**: No, he played a fake Doctor in that. It isn't the same plot exactly, but it is a remarkably similar idea.

Sue: Oh, this was a lot better than that.

**Me**: And if you're right about Anne Robinson (*I checked later and it's definitely Jane Goddard*) then that must have influenced Russell T Davies, too.

**Sue**: They should just make the bloody thing and be done with it. It'd be great, especially with a female Doctor, because the fake Doctor would act like one of those fans who can't accept the fact that she's a woman now. You know, like a right twat.

#### **BIG FINISH**

#### The Score

**Me**: Are you happy to give it a score, what with it being proper *Doctor* 

Who and everything? **Sue**: I don't see why not.

#### 10/10

Me: Wow. Are you absolutely sure about that?Sue: Of course I am. Why wouldn't I be?Me: Blimey. I may have to listen to it now.Sue: Oh, and the cat's fine. Thanks for asking.

#### THE COURT JESTER: THE WIFE IN SPACE

## **SUE'S SCORES**

The Twin Dilemma: Rubbish. 1/10

Attack of the Cybermen: Blame Ian Levine. 6/10 Vengeance on Varos: A nice change of pace. 8/10

Mark of the Rani: *Boring*. 3/10 The Two Doctors: *Very funny*. 7/10

Timelash: Horrendous. 2/10

**Revelation of the Daleks:** Pointless, 4/10

The Trial of a Time Lord: Parts One to Four: Seen it all before. 6/10

The Trial of a Time Lord: Parts Five to Eight: Harsh. 8/10

The Trial of a Time Lord: Parts Nine to Twelve: It kept me guessing. 7/10 The Trial of a Time Lord: Parts Thirteen to Fourteen: I feel cheated. 5/10

#### **NEXT TIME**

DALEKS
CATS
BERTIE BASSETT
and SNOGGING!

in

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