





/400 SUE BOOKS The Crafty Sod
The Wife in Space Volume 8

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## In memory of Martin Kay

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# FOREWORD BY UNA McCORMACK

I am not a true fan. I bailed during the Colin Baker era. I remember nothing about those years. All that I can glean from that dark time comes from piecing together clues from words such as 'hiatus', 'Grade', and 'distress'. In my defence, during the 1980s I was the only science fiction fan at a girls' convent school, and that, my friends, didn't bring many opportunities to sit around swapping Target novelisations and copies of *DWM* and conjecturing about missing episodes. I'm sure that at the boys' school (which lay across two playing fields with a narrow brook between, along both banks of which hormone-sweating teenagers would parade but, crucially, *could not touch*), there were no doubt several quiet, bookish, and sweet-natured boys who would happily have talked to me about *The Mark of the Rani*. But for the moment I was stuck in solitary confinement. With nuns.

Dimly, however, I worked out that *Doctor Who* was coming back, with a new Doctor no less, and I thought, "Oh, yeah. I liked that. Maybe I'll give it a go." Now, I'm not saying that *Time and the Rani* was the best re-introduction to the show (of course not, it's shit, which is not one of those 'controversial opinions' or 'alternative facts' that people have these days but simply true), but it was (bizarrely) enough to make me watch *Paradise Towers*. That, obviously, got me hooked, even if I was by no means equipped to nod wisely at the Ballard references (I'm still not) or form an opinion as to whether Richard Briers completely misses the tone of the story (he does). Early training in watching *Blake's 7* has made me very forgiving of production values and over-the-top performances, and pretty good at ignoring what's in front of me and working out what the writer was actually trying to do. I felt like I'd never seen anything like that on *Doctor Who* before. But I still didn't have anyone to talk to about it.

Great happiness thus prevailed when, in 1988, I escaped the clutches of Sister Jennifer and her hench-nuns and fled to the sunny uplands of the local tertiary college, where we could wear our own clothes and smoke fags outside with the teachers (I didn't, of course, I was a swot). I had a very nice time and made lots of very fun friends, some of whom were

– gasp – not lady-people. One day one of these new friends was talking about *Doctor Who*, and I found myself chattering away to him about how much I'd liked *Paradise Towers*. He loaned me the novelisation. That did the job. I was back on board, and I stayed there until the end, and beyond. And it's all because of the McCoy era.

Trotsky help me, comrades, but I love the McCoy era. I think it's mad, and bold, and creative, and funny, and it gets away with things you'd never get away with these days on the tellybox. (Yes, I know that's mostly because nobody was watching.) Its unrepentant leftie-ishness was obviously catnip to someone in their late teens who stomped around with statement badges on her lapel and said "Fuck Thatcher" a lot. But mostly, to my relatively uncomplicated eye, it all seemed so much more fun than ever before. Faster-paced, cleverer, fresher – and then there was Ace, who was, indeed, ace. What is *your* chief memory of being seventeen? Mine is standing in the living room, doing the ironing, watching *Ghost Light* and setting the iron aside out of sheer excitement (well, I didn't want to scorch anything). Wild times.

These days, when I watch these swift and quirky stories, I'm mesmerised by how much the writing is misunderstood by the designers, who clearly think that "sci-fi" is chiefly something to do with tinsel. And even though I can hear ringing across the decades the distant screams of Cartmel and Aaronovitch at the sight of *Battlefield*, and I sympathise with their historic struggle, the kitsch does contribute to the overall effect for me, as the writers' dark dreams and masterplans struggle to escape these bright shiny wrappings. And then when the production team work out that if they set things in the past, the designers won't *utterly fuck it up*, you get the cream of *Doctor Who*, the double whammy of *Ghost Light* and *The Curse of Fenric* (the best story, of all stories, until *Gridlock*).

Reading Neil and Sue, as they come to the end of the Pilgrimage, surpassing even Schapansky, is as much a delight as ever. The overlit sets, the full-on music, the rubbery Haemovore masks – they all deserve their kicking, but I am so glad that Sue sees in these weird and not-always-successful stories so much of what the writers were trying to do. The ambition, the humour, the desire to freshen up an old show and make it interesting and relevant again. And I think how lucky we have all been to take the Pilgrimage with two such funny, informed, sharp, and

#### FOREWORD BY UNA McCORMACK

affectionate people. All that girl in the convent school wanted, really, was the chance to chat with someone friendly about the things she loved, and that's something we all want, the chance to share our enthusiasms, complaints, in-jokes, and passion with people who understand, or are willing to listen. This whole quest – from blogs to books – has provided us all with that joy over and over. Thank you, guys.

And now let us clink champagne glasses, pop on the DVD of *The TV Movie with the Pertwee Logo* (or *Grace*, as we should now call it), and together let us face the Wilderness Years, and beyond...

**Una McCormack** Cambridge, February 2019

# INTRODUCTION BY GRAHAM KIBBLE-WHITE

There's three of us in this marriage, although I've never met the wife.

I have, however, met Neil Perryman. Twice. Our cumulative time spent together clocks in at two minutes. The first instance was when he'd travelled to London to take part in an authors' event at the Phoenix Artist Club on Charing Cross Road. There was Neil, there was Andy Miller (he once sent me a remarkably curt email, and I respected him all the more for it) and there was Jenny Colgan. A line-up of *Wife In Space* foreworders.

They read excerpts of their published works to a friendly room. And then there was a Q&A. It roved, immediately, into *Doctor Who* chat. I recall Jenny mentioning a TV story she'd like to novelise was *Moon*. The audience rustled. *Moon*? She continued, talking about the Doctor's meeting with Martha. There was a murmur. "*Smith and Jones*." She'd meant the story *Smith and Jones*, yet she continued to talk of *Moon*. The murmur became a muttering. "*Smith and Jones*". The room could not bear for this inaccuracy to stand.

Even my friend – and I *am* going to name him – Steve Berry joined in the litany. I don't think Andrew Cartmel partook, but only because he's not so hot on story titles.

As the event ended, I immediately barrelled over to Neil, shook his hand, said it was nice to meet him and left.

The next day, I bumped into him on Oxford Street. He needed directions to HMV before he caught the train home. I politely obliged, and then returned to my business.

I've spoken to Neil, I think, a total of 15 minutes on the phone. I called him on one occasion purely because it makes him panic.

Another was because I'd received a proof copy of Volume Three and he hadn't. Sue momentarily jumped onto the line, because, well, because Neil was panicking again. Panicking at my report that everything was fine (in the end, it wasn't, they'd used the wrong paper stock on the cover, but I was tired). And I think that's the only occasion where she and I have communicated directly. She was counselling me to lie to him, to say

### INTRODUCTION BY GRAHAM KIBBLE-WHITE

everything had gone wrong.

For this series of books, I've drawn Sue 32 times. Neil takes reference photos for me to work from. In the service of depicting the First, Third, Fourth and Fifth Doctor's regenerations, I've been in receipt of images taken while he's loomed over his wife, who's lying prone.

Of course, Neil and I have emailed hundreds of times. Often at cross-purposes.

It began in November 2014 when he asked if I'd proof-read his series of books, and it was from there I wormed my way in with him and Sue.

It's been fun. However, this is the end of our marriage, I think. We've reached The Seventh Doctor Years Itch. There was talk of us all starting over with *Star Trek*. But my heart's not really in it. Nor, I sense, is his. Or her's.

Two cumulative minutes with him, a short conversation with her – it's been a magical time, and I don't believe there'll be any acrimony as we part. Although, if I hear of Neil sending another man pictures of his wife, I will flip the fuck out.

**Graham Kibble-White** April 2019

# SEASON TWENTY-FOUR



This illustration funded by Nathan Cooke

# TIME AND THE RANI

BLOGGED: 12 February 2013

#### Part One

Sue: What the hell is that supposed to be?

A CGI TARDIS has been zapped by a CGI laser beam.

Sue: So what's Ian Levine done this time? This can't be real, can it?

A native looks on as the TARDIS is forced to land on a planet with a bright pink sky.

Sue: David Bowie doesn't look impressed.

And then everything kicks off when the Rani enters the grounded TARDIS.

Sue: I thought she was dead. And who gave her a key?

The Rani comes equipped with a hairy henchman.

**Sue**: The Master has really let himself go.

And then the Doctor regenerates and we are thrown into the title sequence.

Sue: There's far too much for me to take in.

I pause the DVD.

**Sue**: Right, so what the fuck just happened?

**Me**: The Sixth Doctor fell off his exercise bike and regenerated.

Sue: Fuck off! Come on, Neil, what really happened?

**Me**: Colin Baker was understandably very upset when the BBC fired him and so he refused to appear in a regeneration scene. Either that or he was

double-booked on *Crosswits* that day, I forget which. Anyway, that was

the best they could come up with at short notice.

Sue: Right, so that wasn't Colin Baker lying on the floor just then?

**Me**: No, that was Sylvester McCoy in a wig. **Sue**: Right... It's not a great start, is it?

Anyway, back to the title sequence...

**Sue**: I don't like the music very much. The notes are going up when they should be going down.

A silver-faced Sylvester McCoy looms out of the vortex.

Me: Do you like Sylvester McCoy's sex wink?

Sue: No!

Then...

Sue: Oh no. Pip and Jane Baker. Could this get any worse?

The Rani has kidnapped a famous scientist from Earth, although Sue isn't exactly impressed with her storage facilities.

**Sue**: That won't do Einstein's knees any good. Either she misread the plans or she's accidentally built a prison for dwarves.

The Seventh Doctor wakes up in the Rani's laboratory.

**Sue**: He reminds me of Mork from *Mork and Mindy* because he's a bit daft. Actually, this scene is a mess; if I'd seen this as a *Doctor Who* fan, I probably would have been very annoyed.

Me: Aren't you annoyed about it now?

Sue: No more than usual.

Actually, that isn't true; I've never seen her get this worked-up about the incidental music before.

### TIME AND THE RANI

Sue: Bring back Dudley Simpson! This is fucking terrible...

A Lakertyan named Ikona rescues Mel from the TARDIS, and then they encounter a female Lakertyan named Sarn, who runs off in the opposite direction and accidentally sets off one of the Rani's deadly bubble traps.

Sue: Hmm...

Me: Not impressed with the special effect?

**Sue**: It looks all right, I suppose, but why would you go to all that effort to kill somebody? Why not just blow it up on the ground? That's overkill.

Literally.

The Rani disguises herself as Melanie Bush so she can bamboozle the Doctor.

**Sue**: Are we seeing what the Doctor is seeing because he's been drugged, or is she actually pretending to be Bonnie Langford?

Me: It's the latter, incredibly.

**Sue**: Wow. It's a good job the Doctor wasn't travelling with Adric when she tried to pull this off. And she just happened to have a pair of pink leg warmers in her wardrobe? What are the chances of that?

It turns out that the Doctor and the Rani went to university together.

**Sue**: I see. So the Doctor did a PhD, and the Master did a Masters, which means a Rani must be Gallifrey's version of a Bachelor's degree. I suppose that makes sense.

When Ikona accidentally sets off one of the Rani's bubble traps, Mel manages to save him from certain death.

**Sue**: Yes, it is very pretty, but what's the point?

The Doctor examines the Rani's broken machinery.

**Sue**: When is he going to change out of those bloody clothes? That's what I'm looking forward to the most.

Me: Sylvester stays in Colin's costume for his first year.

Sue: WHAT?

Me: The costume designer missed their deadline. These things happen.

Sue: Fucking hell...

As Mel and Ikona evade the Rani's henchmen, Sue becomes fascinated with the Lakertyans' unique running style.

**Sue**: I bet they don't play rugby on this planet. They'd be bloody useless.

What's this planet called again?

Me: Lakertya.

Sue: Lakertya? They should have called it Nik Kershaw! Look at his hair!

The Doctor returns to the TARDIS so he can change out of his clown costume. Sue flings a cushion in my general direction (but her heart isn't really in it because she's happy to see the back of that bloody coat) as the Doctor takes a nostalgic trip through the contents of his wardrobe.

Sue: Put Patrick Troughton's clothes on!

The Doctor agrees to Sue's demands, however, lurking beneath the Second Doctor's fur coat is... er...

**Sue**: Oh well, it's an improvement, I suppose, but a bin bag would have been an improvement. It's a very Peter Davisony look, what with the hat and the bland jacket. And I like his trousers - I have some trousers like that - but the question marks on his pullover are a bit naff. He looks like the fucking Riddler.

Me: What do you think of Sylvester McCoy?

**Sue**: He sounds like he's drunk. I'm not sure if that's because he's having a hard time after his regeneration or Sylvester McCoy is actually drunk.

She's a lot less reserved when it comes to the Rani.

**Sue**: She's great. I haven't got a clue what she's doing, but she makes me laugh while she's doing it.

#### TIME AND THE RANI

The episode concludes with Mel encased in one of the Rani's traps.

**Sue**: At least she gets to go on a thrilling ride in a bubble before she dies. She should enjoy it while it lasts.

#### Part Two

Sue: I really don't like this title sequence very much. What are those silver

things supposed to be, anyway? Space rubbish?

Me: What about the new logo?

Sue: It reminds me of the New Adventures.

Me: I'm sorry, what did you say?

**Sue**: For five years, you made me drive to Forbidden Planet in Newcastle so I could buy them for you every bloody month. That logo reminds me of all that money you wasted over the years.

Mel is still trapped in the Rani's bubble of death.

**Sue**: Groupon do days out like this. Water Zorbing is very popular, you know.

The Rani is so exasperated by the Doctor's erratic behaviour, she actually turns to the camera and reveals her innermost thoughts.

**Sue**: It's turned into *House of Cards*. **Me**: I couldn't possibly comment.

Meanwhile, a hairy beast is tracking Mel and Ikona through a quarry...

**Sue**: It isn't a Yeti, is it? Has the Rani really teamed up with the Yeti? That would be mad. Oh, and I really, really hate the music. Have I mentioned that yet? It sounds like the sort of shit you listen to for fun, Neil.

When a Tetrap attacks Mel, her screams force two of our cats out of the room. Sue watches them escape with envious eyes.

Sue: This is fucking shit.

The Rani's citadel is nice, though.

Sue: Somebody's been watching too many James Bond films.

And then Wanda Ventham appears as a Lakertyan named Faroon.

Sue: Is that Pauline Collins?

Me: You always do this when Sherlock Holmes' mum turns up.

**Sue**: Oh, yes! I thought I recognised her voice. The make-up isn't doing her any favours, though. She's much too beautiful to be covered in all that

crap.

When Faroon discovers the remains of her dead daughter, she is overcome with emotion.

**Sue**: They've gone overboard with the fake tears here; it looks like she's been sprayed in the face with a hose.

Keff McCulloch tugs at our heartstrings.

**Sue**: This music is fucking dreadful! Isn't there an option on the DVD where you can turn it off?

And if she thinks that's bad, here's the Doctor playing some spoons...

**Sue**: What was the point of that, exactly? Are the spoons this Doctor's version of the recorder? Please tell me he doesn't get his spoons out every week because I don't think I could take it.

Sue suddenly notices the Tetrap's secret weapon...

Sue: He has eyes in the back of his head! Finally! His peripheral vision must be excellent!

### TIME AND THE RANI

Mel meets the Seventh Doctor for the first time in the Rani's lab. They suspect each other of being impostors, and it's only when Mel checks the Doctor's pulse that she finally believes him.

**Sue**: He could be the Master, you idiot.

Even the Doctor isn't impressed with his new persona.

**Sue**: McCoy is quite good when he plays it straight. If he tones down the comedy slapstick, he could be okay.

The Rani knocks up a sheet of orange-coloured plastic.

**Sue**: That's one hell of a bandsaw she's got there. I'd kill for a bandsaw like that.

The Doctor and the Rani install this material in her machine.

**Sue**: It sounds like they snapped it in half by accident. Oh well, just pretend it's okay, I'm sure it'll be fine.

The Rani dims the lighting in her lab and removes her fright wig.

**Sue**: I thought she was going to seduce the Doctor, what with the mood lighting and her letting down her hair like that. It was getting pretty steamy for a moment there. I wonder what kind of role she wanted him to play? It sounded pretty kinky to me.

But the Doctor has already legged it.

Sue: And now it's turned into a fucking pantomime again.

The episode concludes with the Doctor surrounded by Tetraps.

**Sue**: This is pretty bad, but Sylvester McCoy is getting better, and Kate O'Mara is fucking hilarious.

#### Part Three

Nicol decided to join us for the third episode.

Sue: What do you think of these titles, Nicol?

Nicol: It's very eighties... I'm glad I don't remember the eighties.

The episode recap includes the scene where the Doctor overpowers the Rani with his tiny scarf.

Sue: Why would you show that to us again? It's terrible!

Nicol: Wow. That was pretty bad.

The Doctor escapes from the Tetraps when they're distracted by another food source.

**Sue**: Is that supposed to be blood, or are they being tempted away with raspberry jam? Is the Rani running a doughnut factory?

**Nicol**: This pig/werewolf/bat thing would be a good love interest in the next *Twilight* film.

Meanwhile, back in the Rani's lab, a Lakertyan named Beyus accidentally trips down the stairs that lead to her workstation.

**Sue**: Are they having a competition to see who can fall down those steps the silliest way? And what is going on with the bloody music? It sounds like *Psycho*, but this is about as far from *Psycho* as it's possible to get.

A Tetrap assaults Mel with its massive tongue.

**Nicol**: I told you this was like *Twilight*.

Sue: She's planking!

Meanwhile, in the Lakertyan Centre of Leisure...

Sue: I love the giant disco ball on the ceiling.

## TIME AND THE RANI

The Doctor wants to investigate but Ikona won't let him interrupt the Lakertyans' pleasure time.

**Sue**: *Pleasure*? What pleasure? They're bored senseless! And I know exactly how they feel...

Nicol: They should have a ping-pong table at the very least.

Speaking of which...

**Sue**: Do these hairy things ever look you in the eye? This one looks like he's watching a tennis match.

The Rani unleashes her Disco Bees of Death.

**Sue**: Everything about this is awful. The script, the acting, the direction, the bees, the music. *Especially the music*. What an awful start for Sylvester McCoy. He must have been gutted.

Nicol: Is this his first story?

Sue: Yes.

Nicol: Oh dear...

**Sue**: Kate O'Mara is the only person worth watching. Whenever she isn't in a scene, I just want to look away.

The Doctor and Ikona keep a keen eye the Rani's HQ.

**Sue**: ARGH! This is the most inappropriate use of music in a television series EVER! And the way they faded it out too late - they stopped running *ages* ago! Seriously, the dubbing in this episode is a fucking joke.

**Nicol**: Calm down, Mam. **Sue**: I can't take any more.

**Nicol**: It sounds like the sort of music you'd hear on a SNES game. I think they've just entered Bowser's Castle.

The Doctor is rendered unconscious by a Tetrap's tongue.

**Sue**: He really needs to work on his planking skills.

The Doctor is placed in one of the Rani's containers.

Sue: He just about fits, which means Sylvester must be tiny.

And then we discover what the Rani has been up to all this time.

Sue: A giant brain... That's a bit silly, isn't it?

Me: Yeah, you'd never catch the new series doing that.

The episode concludes with the Doctor's intellect being fed to this giant, pulsating brain.

**Sue**: That wasn't a bad cliffhanger, I suppose, but I know I'm clutching at straws. I blame the music. I'm sorry, Neil, but I can't get over how inappropriate it is.

#### Part Four

Nicol didn't stick around for the final episode. I can't imagine why.

**Sue**: There are a lot of hairy monsters in this. It must have cost the BBC a fortune. What a waste of money. And why has the Rani left her Easter Eggs out in the sun to melt?

The Rani ends up trapped in one of her own cells.

Sue: Just kick it, love! Oh God, this is so bad...

Sue doesn't have very much to say from this point. Not unless you count tutting and sighing, that is. Oh, and how much she hates the incidental music; she won't stop banging on about that.

**Sue**: Buddy you're a boy make a big noise, playin' in the street gonna be a big man some day. You got mud on yo' face, you big disgrace, kickin' your can all over the place.

Me: What?

### TIME AND THE RANI

Sue: Listen... Boom-Boom-Tschsk. Boom-Boom-Tschsk. Boom-Boom-

Tschsk. We will... we will... **Me**: Okay, okay, I get it.

And then it's Mel's turn to fall over in the Rani's lab.

Sue: Those stairs are fucking lethal!

As we finally hit rock bottom...

**Sue**: I'm losing the will to live. I'd rather watch a black and white recon. I'm serious.

The brain starts counting down from 150...

**Sue**: This countdown is the only thing in the whole story that I can actually follow. What the fuck is Loyhargil when it's at home?

The Doctor shepherds the genii who were kidnapped by the Rani into his TARDIS.

**Sue**: Does the Doctor ever clean the TARDIS floor? Look how mucky it is...

The Rani is defeated by the Doctor (with some help from Beyus) but Sue tuned out a long time ago. Faroon, on the other hand, is deeply moved by Beyus' sacrifice.

**Sue**: Oh God. They're going to play the sad *EastEnders* theme.

The Doctor provides Ikona with an antidote to the Rani's Disco Bees of Death, but Ikona pours it away because he believes his people should meet their own challenges if they hope to survive.

Me: Ten minutes later, they're all killed by bees.

You can cut the sexual tension with a bandsaw as Mel and Ikona say goodbye.

**Sue**: Leave Mel on the planet. She could introduce red hair into their gene pool. You never know, it might suit them.

The episode concludes with the Doctor assuring Mel that he'll grow on her eventually.

Sue: I'm not holding my breath, mate.

#### The Score

Sue: That was irredeemable shit.

-1/10

No, that isn't a typo.

**Sue**: If it wasn't for Kate O'Mara, I would have marked it down even more. That was the worst *Doctor Who* story I've ever seen. And yes, that includes *The Toymaker* (sic).

**COMMENT**: "My youngest sister loved *Time and the Rani* when it was first transmitted. She was 18 months old. It was colourful and bright, and as fabulous for her as the *Teletubbies*. In contrast, I fucking hated it and still do." – Simon Harries

**NOTES**: Does anybody remember planking? No, me neither.

# **PARADISE TOWERS**

**BLOGGED: 16 February 2013** 

#### Part One

**Sue**: I don't think I'll ever get used to this title sequence. Why does the Doctor have a silver face? I just don't get it...

**Me**: They painted McCoy's face silver before they took the photograph, although they needn't have bothered because they could have done it in post-production.

Sue: I wish you hadn't told me that, because I hate it even more now.

A girl cowers next to a wall in a drab and dreary corridor as the incidental music kicks in.

Sue: Keffing hell! Not again!

The TARDIS materialises in the same corridor.

Sue: What a dump. I can smell the piss from here.

The Doctor and Mel decide to explore.

**Sue**: There's some nice camera movement in this scene. The direction is pretty good, actually.

As the Doctor and Mel discuss what to do next, a crossbow bolt slams into the wall behind them.

Sue: I could murder a pint of cider.

The Doctor and Mel are surrounded by the Red Kangs (who should never be confused with the Blue Kangs or the Yellow Kangs).

Sue: Are there any Khaki Kangs? I want to see the Khaki Kangs.

One of the Red Kangs introduces herself as Bin Liner. Another Kang is called Fire Escape.

**Sue**: Okay, I think I know what's going on here. This is basically *Mad Max* in a run-down council estate. I like the idea. It's got potential.

The Kangs perform a complicated welcoming ritual which the Doctor is then asked to repeat.

**Sue**: (Singing) Prince Charming! Prince Charming! Ridicule is nothing to be scared of...

The Red Kangs aren't very impressed with Mel.

Sue: For the first time in her life, Bonnie Langford's hair isn't red enough.

Meanwhile, in yet another dreary corridor, a teenage girl with blue hair is silently crouching in the dark.

Sue: Is she a Blue Kang?

Me: Nothing gets past you, love.

The Kang is trying to avoid a robotic Cleaner.

Sue: This is horrific.

Me: It's just a plastic robot, love. It isn't that scary.

Sue: I'm not talking about the robot. I'm talking about the fucking music!

Keffing hell!

The Kangs give the Doctor and Mel a potted history of Paradise Towers.

**Sue**: I like some of the ideas in this. It's just a shame it looks so cheap.

**Me**: It is a bit *Dramarama*. **Sue**: Meets Bananarama.

One of the Caretakers is terrified by a robot Cleaner.

#### PARADISE TOWERS

Sue: How could you possibly be scared of that?

In fact, it's so rubbish, the Caretaker has to help it to kill him.

Sue: Hang on, let me put my neck in your claw... There, that fits very

nicely, thanks... Good grief!

The Kangs have a motto: build high for happiness.

Sue: I'd rather get high for happiness, thanks.

Mel escapes from the Kangs and finds sanctuary in a flat which belongs to a pair of elderly ladies named Tilda and Tabby.

**Sue**: You didn't tell me The League of Gentlemen were in this.

As Tilda and Tabby make Mel feel at home, Sue drops an unexpected bombshell:

Sue: I love the subtext. Did she just say "We're the Lezzies?"

**Me**: *Rezzies*. As in residents. **Sue**: I'm not convinced.

In fact, Sue has a theory...

**Sue**: Okay, so in this tower block all the girls are lesbians and all the men are gay, right? So it will be the end of civilisation unless they sort out their differences and organise some kind of surrogacy programme. I'm right, aren't I?

A man barges into Tilda and Tabby's flat. His name is Pex.

**Sue**: What the hell? Who's he supposed to be? **Me**: He's Paradise Tower's version of Judge Dredd.

And then Sue gets her first look at the Chief Caretaker.

Sue: I'll get you, Butler!

Me: That was uncanny, Sue. But it's Richard Briers.

The episode ends with the Chief Architect blithely sentencing the Doctor to death.

**Sue**: That's one of the best cliffhangers I've ever seen in this programme. It's not very often that I get to laugh at the end of an episode. I'm loving this.

#### Part Two

The Doctor's execution is postponed when one of the Caretakers is unexpectedly killed.

**Sue**: This reminds me of something you made me watch quite recently. It was quite good, actually.

Me: Brazil?

**Sue**: That's it. I keep expecting Robert DeNiro to come crashing through a window.

Me: You can safely assume that that will never happen, love.

**Sue**: I really like it, until Pex or Bonnie Langford turn up, and then I can't take it seriously any more.

The Doctor is held prisoner in the Caretakers' HQ.

**Sue**: It's relentless, wall-to-wall music. Does this scene really need Sade's cover version of the *Doctor Who* theme all over it?

The Doctor turns the Caretakers' rule book against them.

**Sue**: I like Sylvester McCoy. He's actually playing the Doctor now. I don't know what he was doing in the last one, but this is much more like it. He reminds me of Patrick Troughton.

Pex tries to convince Mel that he's a finely-tuned fighting machine.

### PARADISE TOWERS

**Sue**: Why is there a mushroom tattooed on his neck? And why did they cast this guy in the first place? This part needed somebody like Bruce Willis, not Frank Spencer.

Meanwhile, back at Tilda and Tabby's flat...

**Sue**: Elderly lesbian cannibals. What a great spin-off that would have been.

And then...

**Sue**: Jesus! How many times can you murder the *Doctor Who* theme music in 25 minutes?

The Cleaners attack the Doctor.

**Sue**: Even the robots have limp wrists.

The Doctor manages to escape to the Red Kangs' HQ.

**Me**: Do you like the way the Doctor rolls his Rs?

Sue: I don't know. I'll pay more attention the next time I see him walking.

The Doctor shows the Kangs how to operate a fizzy drinks machine.

**Sue**: So instead of giving them the secret of fire, he's given them the secret of Lucozade?

The Chief Caretaker heads to the basement to check on his 'pet'.

**Sue**: Just when I thought it couldn't get any weirder, this happens.

Pex tries to convince the Blue Kangs that he really is brave, after all.

Sue: I keep expecting him to break into a song.

Meanwhile the Rezzies have placed Mel on their menu.

Sue: But there isn't an ounce of meat on her! You'd get more protein out of a rat

The Doctor decides to rile up the Red Kangs.

**Sue**: This is what happens when you give teenagers a sugar rush. Complete bedlam.

And the episode concludes with Mel on the verge of being spit-roasted.

Sue: Wow. That was grim. I'm still enjoying it, though.

#### Part Three

**Me**: Would you like to watch this episode with different incidental music?

Sue: You mean there's a choice?

Me: Yes.

Sue: You mean I had a choice and you didn't tell me? Of course I want to

listen to it. DO IT!

I switch audio tracks on the DVD.

Sue: It's exactly the same.

Me: They didn't change the title music.

Sue: Oh. So is Paradise Towers in Paradise City, you know, where the

grass is green and the girls are pretty?

Me: Is that a trick question?

Sue feels right at home with David Snell's alternate score.

Sue: It's very Dudley-esque, this.

It's the perfect accompaniment when Tilda threatens Mel with a carving knife.

# PARADISE TOWERS

Sue: NOT FOR KIDS!

Luckily for Mel, Tabby is dragged into the waste disposal chute by a robotic claw.

**Sue**: Wait a minute... How did she fit through that hole? **Me**: (*Changing the subject*) Do you prefer the new music? **Sue**: It's more farty than disco, so I'm not entirely sure.

When Mel shows Pex the plans to Paradise Towers, Sue draws parallels with another high-rise adventure from the late eighties.

**Sue**: "Yippee-kay-ay-motherfucker!" Or in his case, "Whoopsie-daisy-Betty!"

The Doctor interrogates the Chief Caretaker.

Sue: I like Sylvester McCoy. He's really good in this.

The Chief gives his Deputy another opportunity to cock things up.

Sue: If he worked for Darth Vader, he'd already be dead by now.

The Doctor passes the time watching a promotional video for Paradise Towers.

**Sue**: It's quite political, this. I'm sure social housing scandals were in the news back then. This isn't as daft as it looks.

The Chief Caretaker is investigating Tabby and Tilda's empty flat when he's interrupted by another Rezzie named Maddy.

**Sue**: Richard Briers is brilliant. He's funny and entertaining, but he still manages to frighten me at the same time.

Mel and Pex are trapped in a lift.

**Sue**: Whenever these two are together, the whole thing falls apart. These scenes are unbearable!

The Doctor thanks Fire Escape for her help.

Sue: I love their names. Is there a Kang called Condom Machine?

The Red Kangs join forces with the Blue Kangs.

Sue: It's the Purple Kangs!

When Mel and Pex reach the Tower's rooftop swimming pool, the Doctor's companion can't believe her eyes.

**Sue**: Yeah, it's rubbish, isn't it? I thought it would be a lot swisher than this. I've seen better swimming pools in a Travelodge.

Mel can't wait to enjoy a nice, relaxing swim.

**Sue**: With everything that's going on, she's actually going for a swim? For fuck's sake!

When the Chief Caretaker comes face to face with the evil Kroagnon, it looks like his time is up.

Sue: Oh no, I really liked him.

And then, as the episode ends on a rather lame cliffhanger...

Sue: Can we switch back to Keff's music, please?

Me: WHAT?

Sue: This music is too serious. The music should be wacky and silly for a

story like this. Keff's works better.

My wife never ceases to amaze me.

# PARADISE TOWERS

#### Part Four

Me: We've reached an extremely important milestone.

Sue: We have?

**Me**: We're about to beat Steven Schapansky! **Sue**: That's nice, dear... Who's Steve Schapansky?

**Me**: He's a Canadian podcaster from *Radio Free Skaro*. A couple of years ago, he ran a spin-off blog called *The Chronic Hysteresis*, where he watched and reviewed every single episode of *Doctor Who* - including the recons - until he gave up at *Paradise Towers* Part Three. Can you believe it? All that way and he chucked it in with only a handful of episodes left.

**Sue**: You must be joking.

**Me**: Okay, so he's currently interviewing my childhood heroes next to a swimming pool in Los Angeles, and yes, he just married the girl of his dreams on Valentine's Day at a *Doctor Who* convention. But is he happy? How can he sleep at night when he gave up at *Paradise Towers* Part Three? **Sue**: It's never too late. He could ask his new wife to join him.

Me: Hey, don't give him any ideas.

Part Four of Paradise Towers passes without comment until the Chief Caretaker returns as a possessed zombie.

**Sue**: Well, if you're going to go for it, you may as well *really* go for it. There's nothing subtle about this story, which is why Keff's music fits so well.

Pex has a sulk while Mel goes swimming.

Sue: Do you know what my biggest problem with Pex is?

Me: Where do you want me to begin?

Sue: He reminds me of someone I used to go out with. Before I met you,

I mean.

**Me**: I should bloody hope so.

Sue: He's the spitting double of him. It's freaking me out a bit.

Mel's refreshing swim is completely ruined by a homicidal pool cleaner.

**Sue**: What was the point of that? I'm starting to lose my patience with this now.

Mel introduces the Doctor to Pex.

Sue: (As Mel) He's even wetter than I am right now.

And then the Kangs join the impromptu pool party.

**Sue**: I bet this story ends with Pex re-populating the planet with the help of the Kangs. I don't know why he looks so miserable about it.

It's probably because the Kangs are teasing Pex something rotten.

**Sue**: Do you think the writer has ever met a real teenager? They sound like a bunch of nine-year-olds high on glucose.

But just when all hope seems lost...

**Sue**: Oh look, the Women's Institute have turned up to mobilise the local Neighbourhood Watch. That'll show 'em.

The Chief Caretaker/Kroagnon has taken up residence in Paradise Towers' control room.

**Sue**: They must have had some silver paint left over when they painted McCoy's face.

The Deputy reminds the Caretaker that there are certain situations where the rulebook can be overridden.

Sue: Yeah, like when your boss comes to work caked in silver make-up.

The Kangs and the Rezzies join forces at last.

Sue: It's a bit... you know.

# PARADISE TOWERS

Me: Yeah, it is a bit. Sorry.

The Rezzies attack a Cleaner with a crocheted tablecloth.

**Sue**: Okay, this is starting to go tits up, now. That robot would still be able to see them under that. And you could just walk up behind it and shoot it in the head anyway. The Daleks would piss themselves laughing if they ever saw this lot.

Pex sacrifices himself to stop Kroagnon and save the day, and the Kangs put aside their differences to mourn his passing.

Sue: (As Jim Bowen) Just look at what he could have won.

When the Doctor and Mel depart in the TARDIS, we learn that somebody painted PEX LIVES on an adjacent wall.

**Sue**: It must have been a right bugger to spray paint that in such a tiny gap. Why would anybody do that? Pick an easier wall!

#### The Score

**Sue**: It was one episode too long, and I think I enjoyed the concept a lot more than the execution, but at least they're trying to do something a bit different. McCoy is growing on me, but I'm beginning to lose patience with Bonnie Langford. She sets my teeth on edge.

# 6/10

Sue agreed to watch the behind the scenes documentary on the DVD with me. I wasn't entirely sure why she agreed until this happened:

Sue: So that's what my ex-boyfriend looks like now. That's interesting.

Aside from that, she spent most of her time agreeing with Andrew Cartmel.

**Sue**: Its shortcomings are down to lack of communication. If everybody had pulled their fingers out, it could have been an eight.

**COMMENT**: "More Farty Than Disco would be a great Barry White album title." - John Callaghan

**NOTES**: At the time of writing (May 2018) Steven Schapansky still hasn't completed his blog (<a href="http://radiofreeskaro.blogspot.co.uk">http://radiofreeskaro.blogspot.co.uk</a>), although he did get as far as as *Battlefield*, which is something, I suppose. He also runs a podcast with his wife called *Lazy Doctor Who*, which I'm sure is just a coincidence, and I look forward to the day they watch *Silver Nemesis* together.

# **DELTA AND THE BANNERMEN**

# BLOGGED: 21 February 2013

#### Part One

Sue: What an odd title.

The story begins with a gunfight.

**Sue**: This paintballing game is definitely breaking all the rules. This side are completely covered in green paint. They should be dead already!

**Me**: They're supposed to be green, Sue. They're aliens.

**Sue**: They look like those little green soldiers my brother Gary used to

play with when he was a boy. But bigger.

The other team in this battle have a very distinctive look, too.

Sue: What are those things on their backs?

**Me**: Banners. That's why they're called the Bannermen. **Sue**: Oh, I thought they were playing Capture the Flag.

Delta, last of the Chimerons, escapes by stealing one of the Bannermens' spaceships.

**Sue**: It's not too bad, this. It's quite exciting for what it is. It's just a shame about the music, but what can you do?

The TARDIS materialises at Tollport G715.

**Sue**: Is Mel dressed for a job interview? She's looking very smart today. Whatever it is, I hope she gets it.

The Doctor and Mel are greeted by the Tollmaster.

Sue: Eh? What? Is that Ken Dodd?

Me: Yep.
Sue: Fuck off!
Me: It is

Sue: But Ken Dodd isn't an actor!

Me: Well, that's not strictly true; he did quite a bit of Shakespeare before

this.

Sue: Did he? Me: No, Doddy.

Mel wants to hop on a bus that's heading for Disneyland.

**Sue**: Or she could just go in the TARDIS instead. Or is it broken again?

Meanwhile, in Wales, two CIA agents named Weismuller and Hawk are up to something or other.

Sue: If these two are really American, I'll eat my hat.

Me: Would you like some ketchup with that?

Sue: What? They're actually American? I thought they were sending it up!

Nostalgia Trips is the most notorious travel firm in the five galaxies.

**Sue**: Hang on a minute... I thought Time Lords were the only people who were allowed to travel in time. Shouldn't the Doctor be stopping this lot or something?

Gavrok vows to hunt Delta down.

Sue: I definitely recognise him, but I couldn't tell you who he is.

Me: It's Don Henderson.

Sue: He always plays hard bastards, doesn't he? I like his eyebrows.

Bonnie and Delta end up boarding the same bus, and it doesn't take very long before the 1950s karaoke begins in earnest.

Sue: Bonnie will be in her element this week. She can show off her singing

# **DELTA AND THE BANNERMEN**

and dancing skills instead of her screaming skills.

One of the passengers on this bus is a bounty hunter named Keillor.

Sue: Wasn't he in The Flying Pickets?

Me: No, it just looks like him.

The space bus hits an American satellite, which sends it wildly off course, so the Doctor uses the TARDIS' tractor beam to crash land outside a holiday camp in Wales.

**Sue**: So is this *Hi-de-Hi* meets *Doctor Who*?

Me: Pretty much.

Sue: Excellent. So is it a Pontins or a Butlins?

Me: I have no idea.

Sue: And you call yourself a fan?

**Me**: There isn't a documentary on the DVD so I have no idea. Sorry. **Sue**: It takes me back to all those holidays I spent in places just like this during my childhood. Butlins in Skegness was definitely the best.

*The Doctor examines the damage to the bus.* 

**Sue**: I love the idea of a time travelling bus. If you had to make the TARDIS anything other than a police box, it should be an old-fashioned bus.

A young woman named Ray arrives on a motorcycle.

Sue: ACE!

Ray takes off her helmet.

**Sue**: I wish Ace would hurry up. Maybe Mel could stay at Butlins; she could be the new entertainments manager.

Gavrok arrives at the tollport, looking for Delta.

**Sue**: Actually, Ken Dodd's not too bad in this, although his costume isn't doing him any favours. It looks like he's just walked off the set of a pantomime. It's ridiculous.

Me: It's a classic example of stunt casting.

Sue: Don't be so rude, Neil.

Me: Stunt, Sue. Stunt.

Sue: Oh.

Later, at the camp's 'Get To Know You' dance...

**Sue**: You don't see enough dancing in *Doctor Who*. It's a breath of fresh air, this.

Ray has the hots for Billy, but Billy isn't interested.

Sue: Maybe he's gay? Have you ever considered that?

The Doctor consoles Ray in the laundry room after Billy dedicates a song to Delta.

**Sue**: Aww, bless him. That was quite sweet. I don't know what Billy sees in that alien woman, though. She looks like she'd be hard work.

Meanwhile, Delta's sphere begins to open...

Sue: Why is Mel screaming? Nothing's actually happened yet.

A green face emerges from the cracked shell.

Sue: It looks like a green jelly baby.

The episode ends with the Doctor and Ray being threatened by an alien bounty hunter.

**Sue**: You know, I'm sure he was in the Flying Pickets... I really enjoyed that. That was fun.

# **DELTA AND THE BANNERMEN**

#### Part Two

This particular bounty hunter really loves his job.

**Me**: Incidentally, he *was* in The Flying Pickets. I was wrong about that vesterday.

**Sue**: Is it too late for me to do this with someone who actually knows stuff about *Doctor Who*?

When Billy sees Delta's baby for the first time, he doesn't bat an eyelid.

**Sue**: Wow. He's taking this very well. His first words should have been: "What the fuck is THAT? Sod this, I'm going off with the woman with the spanners."

Delta's baby is growing very quickly indeed.

**Sue**: Is that supposed to be the baby's skin, or is it dressed in a green babygrow? It's bloody weird, whatever it is.

With the Bannermen on their way, the Doctor is worried about the locals' safety.

Sue: It could be worse. It could be the Barrowmen.

Billy and Delta take a bike ride to the river.

**Sue**: Bloody hell, now the music sounds like something you'd hear on a game show. It couldn't be less appropriate if it tried.

It's at this point in the proceedings that Nicol decided to join us; my toes curled with embarrassment as she entered the room.

Nicol: (Pointing at Ray) Is she the new companion?

Sue: No, it just looks like her.

Nicol: That's a lucky escape. Her accent would have driven you mad.

**Sue**: Keffing hell! It's turned into *The Benny Hill Show*!

**Nicol**: What is this? Is this *Doctor Who*? What is that music? **Sue**: It's basically Hi-NRG Disco meets 1950's Rock n' Roll.

Me: It makes Jive Bunny sound like Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds.

Nostalgia Trips' bus driver is still preparing to leave Wales.

Sue: Is the driver played by Eamon Holmes' dad?

But just as the bus is about to depart, Gavrok's Bannermen blast it to smithereens.

**Sue**: I bet their travel insurance doesn't cover that.

The Bannermen stick their tongues out and Keff ramps it up to 11.

**Sue**: They've gone too far now. I was enjoying this to begin with, but the soundtrack is torturing me now. This could be so much better with some decent music.

Nicol: It's never going to be good, Mam, but it could be less bad.

When the Doctor confronts Gavrok, there's a lot of ham on display (both literally and figuratively), and Gavrok is determined to swallow it all.

**Sue**: This is making me feel sick. That's one of the most disturbing things I have ever seen in *Doctor Who*. Seriously, this is making me nauseous.

The Doctor lays down the law.

Sue: He's really good, isn't he?

It's official. Sue has fallen for Sylvester McCoy. And then the episode ends with the Doctor admitting that he may have bitten off more than he can chew.

Sue: He's really good but this is still going downhill fast.

# DELTA AND THE BANNERMEN

Me: It's circling disaster in a rapidly decaying orbit.

Nicol: It's shit.

#### Part Three

**Sue**: This sounds like an episode of *Pointless*. This is fucking quiz show music!

Meanwhile Weismuller and Hawk ("What's the point of these two, exactly?") are captured by the Bannermen and their necks are placed in an elaborate metal collar.

Sue: Kinky. And speaking of kinky, it's The Benny Hill Show theme again!

Weismuller and Hawk are eventually rescued by Ray.

**Sue**: You can't beat a girl with an Allen key and a set of spanners. That's the kind of companion you want.

The Doctor decides to go for a ride.

Sue: That shot was completely out of focus. It wasn't even close!

Meanwhile an elderly beekeeper named Goronwy is showing Delta and Billy his hives.

**Sue**: I feels like we are watching three different programmes at the same time. And none of them are any good.

Oh well, at least she isn't Bonnie Langford bouncing over a field in a motorcycle sidecar.

**Sue**: Her buttocks must be severely bruised - there's no suspension on that bike at all. You can tell she isn't very happy about it. No acting required.

The Doctor and Mel return to Goronwy's cottage.

**Sue**: It looks cheap. It doesn't look like a BBC drama production. It looks like a student video. There's no atmosphere at all.

Delta's daughter emits a high-pitched scream.

**Sue**: So she's like Carrie, then? I hope she doesn't start bleeding everywhere.

The Bannermen's ship lands in a nearby field.

**Sue**: I notice that the goats aren't bothered by the arrival of an alien spaceship, which is odd.

Billy escorts Delta and her daughter to safety before the Bannermen arrive.

**Sue**: He must have the serious horn for her to go to all this trouble. I just don't see what Delta's got that Ray hasn't. Except for an alien kid and a face that doesn't crack a smile, of course.

Gavrok and his Bannermen attack Goronwy's cottage, but the only casualty is a radio set.

**Sue**: What a shame. I really liked that radio.

Gavrok's men search the cottage, but the Doctor has set a trap for them.

**Sue**: That shelf must be possessed because it's actually throwing boxes at them! What the fuck?

Billy tells Delta that he wants to become a Chimeron.

**Sue**: (Singing) You're the one that I want. Ooh ooh ooh, honey!

And then Sue finally loses her patience.

Sue: It's as if someone has been given the keys to *Doctor Who* and they

# **DELTA AND THE BANNERMEN**

thought, I know, let's take it as far away from what *Doctor Who* is usually like, and see what happens. And what happens is basically shit.

When the Bannermen attack, the Doctor amplifies Delta's scream and turns it into a weapon.

**Sue**: Butlins wouldn't let them break the windows. What a shame.

The Chimeron's scream is too much for the Bannermen to endure.

Sue: This is what I look like when I'm listening to Keff McCulloch.

Gavrok stumbles into the sonic cone of doom, and the music sting that accompanies his death makes us both howl with laughter. And then the Doctor gives Weissmuller and Hawk their satellite back.

**Sue**: What was the fucking point of those two?

The radio plays the song 'Who's Sorry Now?'

**Sue**: He'll be sorry when he finds out she has a penis. All the women on her planet have a penis.

Goronwy gives the Doctor a jar of hibiscus blossom.

Me: I'm sure the old beekeeper is supposed to be a Time Lord.

Sue: Eh? Are you mad? He's just a bloke who like bees.

Me: I'm sure I read it somewhere. Maybe we missed something?

Sue: You fans need to give your heads a shake.

#### The Score

**Sue**: That was *Doctor Who* made for seven-year-old children with low attention spans. It's a shame, really, because I really liked the idea, and the first episode wasn't that bad, but it fell apart very quickly, and by the end it was getting on my tits. And that's why there isn't a documentary on the

DVD, Neil. No one wants to take responsibility for it.

# 2/10

**COMMENT**: "If Goronwy's royal jelly analogy is correct, the Chimeron 'special stuff' will transform Billy into another Queen. Not quite sure what that says." - Matt Sharp



#### Part One

**Sue:** Why is the TARDIS trapped in a bubble? I still don't understand this title sequence. Ooh, there's a dragon in this one... Is this going to be like *Game of Thrones*?

Welcome to Iceworld, where winter came and never left, and where a group of reprobates are being initiated into an army against their will. Luckily, they only cost 17 crowns each.

**Sue**: I hope they kept the receipt. Look at the state of them!

The TARDIS is also bound for Iceworld.

Sue: So the villain runs a supermarket? Like *Iceland*?

**Me**: Or *Beejams*, if anybody remembers them.

Sue: Well, it's not something you see every day, I'll give them that.

Our heroes take the weight off their feet in Iceworld's cafeteria.

Sue: Oh look, it's him.

**Me**: Who's him? **Sue**: Fuck knows.

It's Glitz.

Sue: Yes, him. I like him. Hang on a minute... is that... Ace?

Me: It might be.

**Sue**: Does this mean Mel is about to leave? Or die?

The last time Sue looked at me with that kind of anticipation in her eyes, we were on our honeymoon (we were in a Denny's and she'd just ordered

dessert).

**Sue**: This place is like the bar in *Star Wars*, if the bar in *Star Wars* was a crèche.

Ace becomes extremely animated when she overhears the customers talking about dragons and treasure.

**Sue**: Yeah, she's very Children's TV. Hmm... I'm not sure about her. This isn't what I was expecting at all. I thought Ace was supposed to be cool?

As the Doctor leaves the cafeteria, a hairy creature bites him on the hand.

Sue: That was the best part of the whole scene.

Me: What do you think of the incidental music so far?

Sue: It's a million times better. I didn't notice it until you asked, which is

how it should be. It's definitely not Keff, thank God.

Ace is arguing with one of her customers.

**Sue**: The acting is bloody terrible. Everybody in this scene is *horrendous*. I'm sorry, but they are.

Ace pours a glass of milkshake over her boss's head, although most of it misses him completely.

**Sue**: I bet they thought: "We should probably do another take, but it'll take ages to remount it, and he'll have to get changed, and we'll have to get the cleaners in, and... Oh, fuck it. That'll do".

Ace explains to Mel how she came to be on Iceworld.

Sue: Yeah, time storms are always whisking people away. Bloody time

storms. I mean, is that supposed to make any sense?

**Me**: Does it remind you of anything else?

**Sue**: Yes, *The Wizard of Oz*. That didn't make any sense, either.

# DRAGONFIRE

Ace has been stockpiling cans of Nitro-9.

**Sue**: So she's a terrorist? Does she turn Mel into a suicide bomber? Is that how she leaves?

The Doctor follows Glitz's treasure map.

Sue: So if this is *The Wizard of Oz*, is Glitz the Cowardly Lion?

Ace decides to blow up a door, even though it could kill or injure anyone who happens to be in the vicinity.

**Sue**: Oh, Christ. This is not what I was expecting at all. Is she like this all the time? Oh dear...

As Glitz and the Doctor explore Iceworld's caverns, Sue sighs.

**Sue**: This doesn't look great. The lighting isn't doing it any favours at all. It's so cheap!

Sylvester McCoy pretends to slip on some polystyrene snow.

**Sue**: Oh, for fuck's sake. That's just stupid.

Kane offers Ace a golden coin, but she refuses.

**Sue**: What a relief. Ace is actually quite good when the script isn't trying to make her sound like a twat. That was a great scene.

Ace and Mel escape from Kane, but they run straight into...

Sue: If that's the dragon, this programme is in serious trouble.

Meanwhile, the Doctor has inexplicably decided to abseil down a cliff face made from solid ice.

Sue: What the fuck is he doing?

The Doctor slips further and further down his umbrella until he has nowhere left to go.

Sue: This is fucking ridiculous.

And then the theme music kicks in.

Sue: Oh, fuck off!

**Me**: They wanted a literal cliffhanger. It's very postmodern.

**Sue**: It's a fucking joke! Why not finish with Ace being tempted by the coin - that was the only good thing in the episode. Even the rubber

monster would have been better than that crap.

#### Part Two

**Sue**: Are they trying to imply that the TARDIS is floating in a crystal ball? I don't get it. It's still not as bad as the silver face, though. Can we skip the titles from now on?

Me: No.

Mel screams the place down when she's confronted by the dragon.

**Sue**: I like how Ace doesn't scream. In fact, she's more bothered by Mel's screeching than she is by the monster. I can't wait for Mel to leave.

Meanwhile, the Doctor is still hanging around...

**Sue**: What a pointless waste of time. I can't believe I have to watch this again.

At least Sue likes Patricia Quinn.

**Sue**: Yeah, Melanie Griffith is excellent. (*singing*) Working 9 to 5, what a way to make a living...

# DRAGONFIRE

Me: Melanie Griffith wasn't in 9 to 5.

Sue: Yes, she was.

Me: No, she wasn't. You're thinking of Working Girl.

**Sue**: It's the same thing. Those were the hours she worked.

Meanwhile, on Iceworld...

**Sue**: So is this supposed to be an attack on capitalism, what with the villain running a big shopping centre and everything? I have to say, the premise is a bit mental, even for *Doctor Who*.

Glitz finds his way to a ledge directly below the Doctor and helps him down.

**Sue**: Fucking hell! It just demeans the Doctor. This is a new low for the character and the show.

Elsewhere on the planet, a sculptor is carving an ice statue of Kane's lost love, Xana.

Sue: She must have had a wonderful personality. That's all I'm saying.

When Mel and Ace find the Doctor's umbrella hanging uselessly below a walkway, they wonder how they can possibly get down there.

Sue: The same way Glitz did? Just a suggestion, you idiots.

When the Doctor tries to bamboozle a guard with some philosophy, the guard's response baffles the Doctor even more:

**Guard**: Tell me, what do you think of the assertion that the semiotic thickness of a performed text varies according to the redundancy of auxiliary performance codes?

We turn to each other and laugh.

Me: Does that ring any bells?

**Sue**: Yes, that's Media Studies talk. I vaguely remember writing an essay like that, once.

Me: The quote is lifted verbatim from an academic textbook about *Doctor* 

Who called *The Unfolding Text*. **Sue**: So what does it mean, then?

Me: You tell me.

Sue: Fuck knows. Something to do with semiotics.

Me: I think the production team were taking the piss, but the book

inspired a lot of Doctor Who fans to get into academia.

Sue: Were you one of them? Is that how you ended up teaching in a

university, because of that book?

**Me**: It is partly to blame. Incidentally, two years into the job, one of the book's authors, Manuel Alvarado, came to assess my teaching skills for a Quality Assurance Exercise. When it was all over, I told him that I admired the work he did on *Doctor Who*. And do you know what he said to me?

**Sue**: He said, "There's more to life than *Doctor Who*, Neil." You've told me this story a million times. He sounds like a very wise man.

We now return you to Iceworld...

**Sue**: The script isn't bad, I suppose. It's the sets and the lighting that let it down. It looks like it should be on CBBC at 4:30pm.

The Doctor and Glitz reach Glitz's ship, the Nosferatu.

Sue: What a dump. It makes the Millennium Falcon look like The Ritz.

Kane rewards his sculptor with the gift of death, because no one can look upon his work and live.

**Sue**: I'd be too embarrassed to live if I'd sculpted that. He should have shouted, "It's isn't finished yet!" as he died. That would have been funny.

Mel and Ace are pursued by Kane's ice zombies.

# DRAGONFIRE

Sue: Kane is definitely getting his 17 crowns worth out of them.

And then the dragon lumbers into view.

Sue: It looks nothing like a fucking dragon! I want my money back!

And when she sees the creature side-on...

**Sue**: It's a rip-off of *Alien*. It's exactly the same design. Why didn't anybody sue them?

Mel slips and hits her head on some metal stairs.

**Me**: She's the only person I know who can get concussion from banging her knees.

Sue: Fancy another take? No? That'll do? Are you sure? Okay.

Kracauer and Belazs decide to overthrow their supermarket overlord.

**Sue**: Melanie Griffith is excellent. She's the best thing in this story by a mile. If it wasn't for her, I probably would have tuned out by now.

Ace tells Mel that she didn't really fit in at home.

Sue: She makes Amy Pond look normal.

Ace tells Mel a secret: her real name is Dorothy.

**Sue**: So Mel must be the Scarecrow. It all makes sense now. And instead of ruby slippers, Ace has a pair of ruby tights. So is the Doctor the Tin Man? How does that work?

Our heroes are confronted by one of Glitz's zombified crewmates.

**Sue**: It should have been his best friend from that other story he was in. **Me**: Dibber.

Sue: Whatever. This scene might have meant something if it was him.

The dragon intervenes and leads our heroes to the Singing Trees.

**Sue**: To be fair, if you took the aliens from *Aliens*, and lit them like that, they'd probably look shit as well.

Kane tells Belazs that she can have the freedom she so desperately craves.

**Sue**: This has its moments - some of the guest stars are very good - I just wish it looked better. I've been in Santa's Grottos with more atmosphere than this.

But just when she thinks Belazs is free, Kane kills her.

**Sue**: I did not expect that! I really liked her, too. I'm upset now.

The dragon's biomechanical head opens up to reveal a crystal inside. According to the Doctor, this crystal is a source of intense optical energy.

Sue: We'll just have to take your word for that.

### Part Three

Sue: Is Dudley Simpson doing the music again?

Me: No, but this organ music is supposed to remind you of Dracula.

Sue: Only if Dracula managed an Aldi.

Kane's guards are worried that the dragon could emerge out of the shadows.

Sue: What fucking shadows?

Ace thinks this is mega naff.

Sue: You said it, love.

# DRAGONFIRE

A young girl in a dress accidentally wanders into the action.

**Sue**: Is she supposed to be Newt? She must be bloody freezing, the poor thing.

The guard's huge guns don't impress Sue very much.

**Sue**: They could at least pretend they were heavy. The bleeping thing is just another shameless *Alien* rip-off as well. I would have thought twice about putting this on *YouTube*, let alone BBC1.

The dragon saves the little girl by carrying her to safety.

**Me**: Unfortunately, he dribbled some acid onto her head and she died of her injuries later.

The little girl ends up running around Kane's lair.

**Sue**: This is fucking weird.

Kane destroys the shoppers who have evacuated to Glitz's ship.

Sue: What a bastard. He would have been a good Master.

Glitz isn't very happy about this turn of events.

**Sue**: He should be shouting KAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAANE!!!!!!!!

I made Sue watch The Wrath of Khan last week. I know, I'm sorry.

**Sue**: Mel will have to go. You can't have her and Ace living together in the TARDIS; it would drive the Doctor crazy.

The guards shoot the dragon to death.

Sue: They had over 3000 years to do that. What the hell were they doing

all that time? They should have spent less time running a supermarket and more time hunting dragons. They could have cooked it and put it in the burgers.

They cut the dragon's head off.

**Sue**: That was a bit gruesome. I don't think the kids would have liked that bit.

The dragon's head opens and the Doctor retrieves the Dragonfire.

Sue: I really wouldn't zoom in on that if I were you. Oh, too late.

The Dragonfire is the energy source that Kane has been searching for (extremely badly) for the last 3000 years.

**Sue**: Why was he locked up on a planet with the energy source on it? Why didn't they just take the energy source with them when they left him there? That's fucking stupid.

Kane takes Ace hostage and forces the Doctor to hand over the Dragonfire. When it powers up his console, a rotor rises into the air.

Sue: Hey! It's a TARDIS! Hang on a minute... Is he the Master?

The Doctor explains to Kane that his hopes for revenge have been thwarted by a quirk of time - his home planet was destroyed 2000 years ago.

**Sue**: And none of the shoppers ever bothered to mention this? Doesn't he read the papers?

So Kane melts his nose off to spite his face.

Sue: NOT FOR KIDS! It's bloody good, though...

Mel decides it's time she must be going.

# DRAGONFIRE

Sue: YES!

The Doctor reacts somewhat awkwardly.

The Doctor: That's right, yes, you're going. Been gone for ages. Already

gone, still here, just arrived, haven't even met you yet.

Sue: (Singing) I just haven't met you yet!

Mel elects to explore the universe in a flying supermarket with Glitz.

**Sue**: That's a spin-off I *don't* want to see.

Ace is about to leave as well when the Doctor makes her an offer she can't refuse: a quick trip around the 12 galaxies and then back to Perivale in time for tea.

Ace: ACE!

Sue: Oh, for fuck's sake...

The Doctor has three ground rules:

**The Doctor**: One, I'm in charge. **Ace**: Whatever you say, Professor.

**The Doctor**: Two, I'm not the Professor, I'm the Doctor.

Ace: Whatever you want.
The Doctor: And the third...
Sue: STOP SAYING ACE!

#### The Score

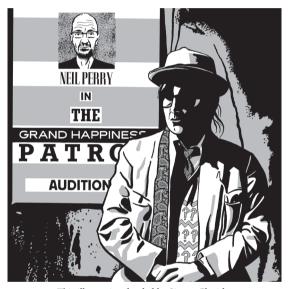
**Sue**: I struggled with that. It was really weird. It went from awful, to quite good, to terrible. Sometimes in the same scene. The script wasn't bad, but it looked so bloody cheap. The good points: guest acting wasn't bad, the music was an improvement and it was over quickly. I'm glad to see the back of Mel, too, but I'm not sure about Ace yet. I hope she tones it down.

# 3/10

**COMMENT**: "To paraphrase Morrissey, there's more to life than *Doctor Who*, you know. But not much more." - Frankymole

**NOTES:** Ah, the Horse meat scandal, back when the worst thing this country had to worry about was a bit of dodgy meat getting into the food chain. Happy days.

# SEASON TWENTY-FIVE SILVER BOLLOCKS



This illustration funded by Simon Claridge

# REMEMBRANCE OF THE DALEKS

BLOGGED: 28 February 2013

#### Part One

Doctor Who's 25th season begins with an atmospheric pre-titles sequence.

**Sue**: What the hell is this? This isn't *Doctor Who*.

And then the theme music kicks in.

Sue: Ooh, new music!

Me: No it isn't.

Sue: Oh yes it is. And it sounds great.

Me: It's exactly the same, Sue. The only difference is this is a 5.1 surround

sound mix. Consider it a treat.

The episode begins at a familiar location.

Sue: Coal Hill... Oh, it didn't give me enough time to read that sign

properly.

I rewind the DVD.

Sue: Okay, Coal Hill School, Shoreditch. Thanks.

Me: And?

Sue: And what?

The Doctor and Ace are walking down a suburban street. Ace is carrying a ghetto blaster on her shoulder.

**Sue**: I hated people who did that in the 1980s, the selfish fuckers. I wouldn't mind so much if the music was any good, but it never was. What a racket!

Ace can't stop calling the Doctor 'Professor'.

**Sue**: I thought she promised she wouldn't call him that again? I'd give her a written warning if I were him.

The Doctor sends Ace to the nearest cafe.

**Sue**: I think this is the place where they wait to get fired on *The Apprentice*.

Ace is joined by a young man named Mike.

Sue: Oh look, it's Captain Jack's cockney brother, Captain Mike.

Meanwhile a young girl plays hopscotch in Coal Hill School's playground...

Sue: I looked a bit like her when I was that age. But she has better hair.

This girl sings a spooky song.

Sue: Ooh, I like this. I think I'm going to enjoy this one.

The Doctor jumps into a van parked outside the school.

**Sue**: Hang on a minute. What year is this?

Me: 1963.

**Sue**: Is it, really? A caption would have been nice.

Ace's new friend isn't a captain, he's a sergeant.

Sue: It's UNIT!

**Me**: It isn't UNIT. UNIT didn't exist in 1963, for fuck's sake. How can you forget something like that? Has this experiment been a complete waste of

time?

Sue: But that's the young Brigadier, isn't it?

**Me**: No! Stop getting *Who* wrong!

# REMEMBRANCE OF THE DALEKS

#### I pause the DVD.

Me: Look, you missed three important references to *Doctor Who*'s past in

the first five minutes. You should know this stuff by now.

Sue: What have I missed?

Me: The date, the significance of the school, and the location we've just

arrived at. That's all.

Sue: Okay, so what's the school called again?

Me: Coal Hill.

Sue: That's the school where Susan used to go. Okay so where are we now?

#### I rewind the scene.

Sue: Trotters Yard.

Me: Totters Yard! Totters!

Sue: That's where we found the TARDIS in the very first episode... In

1963. Ah, I see... I probably should have got that.

Me: The typo probably didn't help.

**Sue**: There's a typo?

Me: They spelt Foreman wrong on the gates to the junkyard.

Sue: (Laughing) Idiots!

#### I press Play.

Sue: Okay, so that's the Brigadier, she's Barbara and he's Mike Yates. It's

quite clever, this.

Me: Think of them as the UNIT Babies, if it helps.

The Doctor becomes agitated when Group Captain Gilmore says he doesn't believe in death rays.

**Sue**: Don't take this the wrong way, Neil, but McCoy has a bit of Mr Bean about him.

And then we meet Allison Williams in the back of a van.

**Sue**: Is she supposed to be like Jo, only prettier? I bet you wouldn't complain if she was the next companion, eh, Neil?

Gilmore rallies his troops for a final assault on a shed.

**Sue**: The direction is excellent. I like the moving camera, and we're on location, too. This is how you make *Doctor Who*. This is much better than the last few weeks. It's as if they've suddenly remembered how to make proper television again. If only Steven from Canada had held on a little bit longer. I bet he would have enjoyed this.

**Me**: He's started up his blog again. He's currently halfway through *Delta* and the Bannermen.

**Sue**: Has he really? Good for him. I knew he could do it. Oh, wait. He won't beat us to the finish line, will he?

A soldier is unexpectedly killed by a death ray.

**Sue**: Ooh, that looked fabulous. Did a Dalek do that? **Me**: No, it was a Zygon. Of course it was a sodding Dalek!

**Sue**: Why does the Brigadier have his gun attached to some rope around his neck? Is he worried he might lose it? I've heard of soap-on-a-rope, but that is ridiculous.

Sue is impressed when a Dalek is taken out by some falling masonry.

Sue: Proper London bricks. Nice.

Me: Thanks for that, Sue.

The Doctor and Ace take the van back to the school. During the journey, the Doctor provides Ace with a potted history of the Daleks and why they are currently after the Hand of Omega.

**Sue**: Thals... Davros... Omega. I feel like I should be taking notes. Ooh, he's famous...

It's George Sewell as Ratcliffe. His men take what's left of the Dalek away on

# REMEMBRANCE OF THE DALEKS

a flatbed lorry.

**Sue**: They should tie that tarpaulin down with something. A strong gust of wind could blow that off.

The Doctor and Ace enter Coal Hill School and meet its Headmaster. Sadly, any Grange Hill references are totally wasted on Sue, although, to be fair, she does recognise Michael Sheard from various episodes of Doctor Who. Just don't ask her to name any of them.

**Sue**: Either he's listening to the cricket, or he's been taken over by the Daleks.

The Doctor and Ace explore an empty classroom.

**Sue**: This reminds me of my old school. Yeah, this takes me right back.

The Doctor points out some markings that have been left in the school playground. Ace refuses to believe that they could have been made by a spaceship, because someone in 1963 would have noticed.

**The Doctor**: Do you remember the Zygon gambit with the Loch Ness Monster? Or the Yeti in the Underground?

**Me**: Do *you* remember the Zygons and the Yeti in the Underground, Sue?

Sue: Of course I do.

Me: Thank God for that. This blog hasn't been a complete waste of time, after all.

Sue: Which ones were the Zygons again?

The Doctor left the Hand of Omega behind when he was last here in 1963.

**Sue**: I don't remember him leaving anything behind in the first episode, but I can barely remember the Zygons so what do I know. And if he did leave something behind, why has it taken him 25 years to come back for it? Is this the first time he's managed to park his TARDIS in the right place so he can pick it up again?

Ratcliffe is working for the Daleks.

**Sue**: He's working for Davros. I don't know why they're trying to hide him; it's so obviously him. I don't think much of his new voice, by the way.

The Doctor and Ace explore the school's cellar and find a transmat station. As the Doctor examines it, a Dalek begins to materialise.

**Sue**: Ooh, it's a white Dalek. That's a Colin Baker Dalek. That's interesting...

The Doctor destroys the Dalek before it can complete its journey. Unfortunately, he completely forgot about the transmat operator lurking nearby.

**Sue**: That Dalek took his sweet time getting there. He must have been on a tea break or something.

Ace makes a run for it but Mr Bronson has other ideas.

Sue: What a cunt!

Mr Bronson traps the Doctor in the cellar with the Dalek.

Sue: Fucking hell! It's flying up the stairs!

The theme music crashes in.

Sue: Now that's how you do a cliffhanger.

**Me**: Remembrance of the Daleks Part One got me back into Doctor Who. It was the first episode I saw in in four years. I watched it by accident, in a Halls of Residence TV common room. This episode - especially that cliffhanger - pulled me back in.

Sue: I can see why. It's really good.

**Me**: If I'd been a child prodigy, and I'd gone to university a year earlier, I would have walked in on *Time and the Rani* instead.

#### REMEMBRANCE OF THE DALEKS

Sue: And we wouldn't be sitting here now, doing this.

Me: And I would have no friends or any interests to speak of. Yeah, you

could say that 1988 was a pretty big year for me.

**Sue**: I gave birth to Nicol in 1988 so I think I win that one.

#### Part Two

Ace attacks Mr Bronson.

Sue: Right in the balls! Serves him bloody right.

Ace frees the Doctor from the cellar and the Dalek throws a dicky-fit behind the door.

**Sue**: Why doesn't it just blast its way through? A small child could kick that door in.

And then... BOOM!

Sue: What took it so long? What was it waiting for?

Me: Its cue.

The Doctor and Ace take delivery of a consignment of anti-tank rockets.

Sue: So any Tom, Dick or Harry can just walk up and take UNIT's

weapons away from them, then? It's that simple?

Me: For the last time, this isn't UNIT!

Sue: At least they made the Doctor sign for the rockets, so they aren't

completely mad, I suppose.

The mysterious school girl spies on the Doctor as this transaction take place.

Sue: I'm telling you, that's what I looked like when I was her age. Do you

think I was an ugly child?

Me: I refuse to get into this.

The Doctor visits a cafe for some light refreshments and a philosophical debate.

Me: Did you like that scene?

Sue: Yes, it was very nice. I like it when the Doctor drinks tea. Does this

cafe grow up to be the cafe in EastEnders? It's very similar.

The Doctor meets an undertaker.

Me: If I'm not mistaken, that actor is the first person to appear in both the

classic series and the new series. **Sue**: Really? Which part did he play?

Me: It was in Christopher Eccleston's season. The one set in Wales.

Sue: No shit, Sherlock. Also, do you remember when milk bottles looked

like that? **Me**: No.

Sue: Oh, thanks. I feel really old now.

The Doctor is finally reunited with the Hand of Omega.

Sue: It's a bloody big box for a hand.

Meanwhile Mike is on his way to an Association meeting...

Sue: So is he a communist or an alcoholic?

Meanwhile, his boss, Ratcliffe, is still hanging out with a very special Dalek.

Sue: It's obviously Davros, so why are they hiding him?

Mike is attacked by Mr Bronson in a cemetery.

Sue: Okay, the music has gone full-blown Keff now.

Mr Bronson accuses Mike of working for a renegade faction of the Daleks.

#### REMEMBRANCE OF THE DALEKS

**Sue**: So there are two types of Daleks? Am I supposed to know this? And which Dalek is which? Are the grey ones the renegades, or are the white ones with the gold bling the renegades? I should know this, shouldn't I? **Me**: I'm sure you'll figure it out eventually.

To be honest with you, I forgot myself for a second there, but I think I got away with it. Anyway, Mike Smith turns out to be a bit of a twat.

**Mike**: Sorry, Ace. Work to be done. Back at six. Have dinner ready. **Sue**: Go fuck yourself, sunshine.

The Doctor buries the Hand of Omega.

**Sue**: So if William Hartnell's Doctor had stuck around for a couple of weeks, would he be the one dealing with all this shit now?

Me: Possibly.

Sue: It doesn't bear thinking about. Everybody would be dead by now.

Back at the boarding house, Ace switches on the television, but it doesn't seem to work...

Sue: Whack it with your baseball bat, pet.

Me: Televisions took a long time to warm up back then. Don't you

remember that?

Sue: Do you want a cushion in the face or what?

Ace finds a sign on the window with 'No Coloureds' written on it. This elicits a sharp intake of breath from Sue.

**Sue**: She's staying in a house that's run by racists! That's what the Association is - it's the cockney branch of the Ku Klux Klan. I knew there was something fishy about Mike.

Me: Yes, he's working for the Daleks, remember?

Sue: Oh yes. The white ones, I bet.

We zoom in on the television set.

**Continuity Announcer**: This is BBC television. The time is quarter past five and Saturday viewing continues with an adventure in the new science fiction series, *Doc*-

Sue: Oh, very funny. He almost said *Doctor Who...* Hang on a minute,

how does that work?

Me: I think the programme is called *Doctor X* in the *Doctor Who* 

universe.

**Sue**: So in the Whoniverse... **Me**: Please don't use that word.

**Sue**: Is there a couple watching *Doctor X* and blogging about it?

Me: No, it got cancelled after 13 episodes.

The Doctor warns Gilmore not to underestimate the Daleks.

Sue: I'll tell you what, though, Neil - McCoy is bloody good in this.

When Ace returns to the school to retrieve her ghetto blaster, it accidentally picks up a Dalek transmission, so she re-tunes it.

Sue: You are listening to Drum Solo FM.

Ace gets out her baseball bat.

Sue: I like Ace. She's brave.

Ace sees a Dalek and scarpers.

**Sue**: But she isn't stupid, either. Mel would probably be crying in a corner by now.

The Dalek follows Ace back to the classroom and all hell breaks loose.

Sue: Bloody hell!

Ace throws herself through a window to escape the Dalek.

## REMEMBRANCE OF THE DALEKS

Sue: This is brilliant!

The episode ends with Ace surrounded by Daleks screaming, "Exterminate!"

Sue: Now that's proper Doctor Who.

#### Part Three

**Sue**: What are they waiting for, exactly? Why don't they just shoot her? Are they waiting for another Dalek to make the first move? "You shoot her first" ... "No, you shoot her first, I shot first last time." What's that all about, eh?

The Doctor disorientates the Daleks and the army manages to blow them sky-high.

**Sue**: Did they spend the whole budget on TNT? Not that I'm complaining or anything.

The Doctor peers into a Dalek casing and is shocked when a claw tries to throttle him (but not as shocked as Sue, who spat tea all over herself). Thankfully, Allison comes to the rescue with Ace's baseball bat.

**Sue**: Bloody hell! Calm down, love, it's dead already! She has some serious anger management issues, that one.

Meanwhile, in the Daleks' mothership...

**Sue**: Look at that set! It's fabulous. This is one of the best directed stories for a very long time. Look at that camera move! Lovely.

Ratcliffe heads back to the cemetery to locate the Hand of Omega.

**Sue**: Is he a friend of Adric? **Me**: Is that a euphemism?

**Sue**: No, he's wearing a blue badge, like Adric did. Is that another reference to the past?

The UNIT Babies enjoy some bacon sandwiches at the local cafe.

**Sue**: Rachel is basically Barbara crossed with the clever one that Jon Pertwee used to knock around with.

On the Dalek mothership, the Emperor Dalek finally decides to grace the bridge with its presence.

**Sue**: What the hell is *that*? That doesn't work at all. It's too friendly-looking. Where are its guns? It's about as threatening as those robots who used to sell mashed potato back in the seventies.

Me: It's based on the Emperor Dalek from the old comic strips.

Sue: Like I give a shit about that! It looks stupid.

The Doctor and Ace return to the school so they can keep an eye on Group Captain 'Chunky' Gilmore.

Sue: So why do they call him Chunky?

Me: He has a very large penis.

Sue: Oh.

The Doctor gives Ace a quick lesson in Gallifreyan history.

**Sue**: Ace has a *Blue Peter* badge. Did she get that for blowing shit up? And I love the way McCoy rolls his Rs. He's very authoritative when he does that.

Me: Don't you mean he's very authorrri... authorria... authorrrrn... oh, sod it. I can't do it.

When we return to Ratcliffe's building yard, Sue notices a problem.

**Sue**: Those breeze blocks don't look very 1963 to me. **Me**: Maybe the Daleks brought them over with them.

#### REMEMBRANCE OF THE DALEKS

**Sue**: And what about that moulded MDF door over there? That's a *huge* mistake.

Two Dalek factions are gearing up for war.

**Sue**: So which Daleks are the good Daleks? Which ones am I supposed to be rooting for?

In the Renegade Daleks' base, we finally discover the identity of the mysterious figure in the chair.

**Sue**: WHAT THE FUCK? I did not expect THAT! Bloody hell, I am genuinely shocked.

Ha! I enjoyed that.

**Sue**: So, is Davros in this story or not? Is he dead? I can't remember what happened to him the last time we saw him, but I'm pretty sure he didn't die. So where is he?

The Doctor leaves a calling card on the Daleks' time controller.

**Sue**: Is that his phone number?

Me: No, it says he's available for children's parties. In High Gallifreyan.

And then Keff lets rip.

Sue: (Singing) When the going gets tough, the tough get going...

**Me**: Yeah, you may want to place your hands over your ears for the next

few minutes.

**Sue**: Keff's spoiling it. The music wasn't that bad in the first two episodes, but he's definitely back on form now.

Mike accidentally reveals that he's a double agent.

**Sue**: Mike Yates was a bad bugger, too.

Me: Yes, the basic message of this story is: don't trust anybody called Mike

The Doctor watches helplessly as a Dalek shuttle lands in the school playground.

Sue: You know, that doesn't look that bad.

Its arrival blows the classroom's windows out.

**Sue**: Yes, this is definitely pretty good.

And if that wasn't enough damage for one episode, the Doctor decides to break the fourth wall.

Sue: They didn't need that bit at the end, but this is so good I can forgive

it almost anything. Me: Even Keff's music? Sue: Don't push it.

#### Part Four

**Sue**: Does the bloke with the funny name write any more *Doctor Who*?

Me: Yes.

Sue: Good. Was he a Doctor Who fan?

Me: Yes.

Sue: You can tell.

Coal Hill's science classroom is obliterated all over again when the shuttle

lands in the recap.

Sue: Ian won't be very happy when he gets back. He loved that Bunsen

burner.

Mike and Ace fall out because Mike hasn't been telling her the whole truth.

#### REMEMBRANCE OF THE DALEKS

**Sue**: I don't know why she's so upset. It's not as if they shagged or anything.

It turns out that Ratcliffe and his men are members of...

Sue: UKIP.

As rival Dalek factions duke it out in the street, the Imperials wheel out their Special Weapons Dalek.

Sue: What the ...?

BOOM!

**Sue**: Bloody hell, that nearly blew the speakers out! Hey, how does this Dalek see where it's going? And why does it look so familiar? **Me**: Well, there's a model of one on the bookshelf over there, and you met one in the Doctor Who Experience about a year ago, remember? **Sue**: Oh yeah. I remember that it didn't make any sense. It still doesn't.

BOOM! Two more Daleks bite the dust.

**Sue**: I love it. It got two for one, there.

The Doctor uses his umbrella to zip-line over to the Dalek shuttle.

Sue: Hey, that looks great.

The Doctor disengages the Dalek pilot before his friends join him.

**Sue**: That's not fair. I wanted to see them slide down that rope. What did they use instead of an umbrella?

Mike manages to escape from the soldier that's been assigned to guard him.

**Sue**: A proper fight for a change. That was nicely directed; I almost felt that punch.

The Doctor tells his companions to jump through a hatchway in the shuttle, and Allison is the first to take the plunge.

**Sue**: I think I just heard her ankles snap.

A battered and bruised soldier informs Group Captain Gilmore that Mike has escaped.

Sue: Hang on... isn't that Jerome from Robson and Jerome?

The Special Weapons Dalek makes short work of Ratcliffe's builder's yard.

**Sue**: You were only supposed to blow the bloody doors off! Wow. That has to be the best explosion in *Doctor Who*'s history. This is intense. Why don't they just make all the Daleks like this special one? They'd be unstoppable.

I think it's fair to say that Sue is enjoying Remembrance of the Daleks.

**Sue**: This is such a massive leap in quality from the last Dalek story we saw. I feel like I'm watching the new series. I can see why you came back to *Doctor Who* after watching this. I really can.

The Hand of Omega floats into the Daleks' shuttle.

**Sue**: Even that looks great, and it really shouldn't. The only person letting the side down is Keff. Everything else is great.

The Doctor rigs up a communication relay so he can broadcast to the Dalek mothership.

**Sue**: That is *very* Matt Smith. You know, you could show this story to normal people and they'd probably enjoy it.

The Emperor is none other than...

#### REMEMBRANCE OF THE DALEKS

Sue: DAVROS! I fucking knew it!

Me: No you didn't.

**Sue**: Yes, I did. You can't have a Dalek story without Davros in it. Everybody knows that. I should have known that's where he would be

hiding. I'm kicking myself now.

Davros has a jolly good rant.

**Sue**: It's great to see him back. I love it when he goes off on one.

The Doctor returns fire with a passionate speech about unlimited rice pudding.

Sue: Fucking brilliant.

The Doctor tricks Davros into using the Hand of Omega, which immediately destroys Skaro.

Sue: Shit. Did that just happen?

Me: Yes, the Doctor just committed genocide.

Sue: Fuck off! He can't do that!

The feedback from the supernova heads for the Dalek mothership.

Sue: Has the Doctor just started the Time War?

Me: Yes. Yes he has.

Hey, you can't prove that he didn't.

Sue: Excellent.

Davros makes it to his escape pod.

Sue: He'll be back. He's like the Master. You can't kill him.

Ace follows Mike back to the guest house, but the school girl kills him before

he can convince Ace that he's actually a nice racist, after all.

Sue: That was brilliantly directed.

The Doctor confronts the last remaining Dalek.

Sue: The Daleks don't handle bad news very well, do they?

The Dalek becomes so confused, it blows itself up.

Sue: I almost felt sorry for that Dalek. Does that make me a bad person?

With the Daleks gone, the girl is set free (which pleases Sue no end), and then we are reminded that Mike is still dead at the bottom of the stairs.

**Sue**: Good. I never liked him anyway.

The final scene sees everyone come together to pay their final respects to a racist.

**Sue**: Pretty nice funeral for a traitor. Mike should be lying in an unmarked grave, the tosser.

Ace isn't entirely convinced that blowing up a planet was the right thing to do.

**Sue**: Ace doesn't trust the Doctor, which is interesting. I don't blame her, though. He's a mass murderer!

#### The Score

**Sue**: I loved that. I'm still a bit shocked by the ending, but it feels like the show just reinvented itself again. The only thing that lets it down is the music. Apart from that, I really enjoyed it. It was quite deep in places, and it's one of the few stories I'd happily watch again, just for pleasure.

## REMEMBRANCE OF THE DALEKS

## 9/10

**COMMENT:** "It's implicated that when the Hand of Omega detonates Skaro's sun, it is way into the future, when the Thals (and possibly all other life bar the Daleks) have fled. And the Daleks had it coming anyway." - Sean Alexander

NOTES: Whatever happened to UKIP?

# \*\* THE HAPPINESS PATROL

BLOGGED: 3 March 2013

#### Part One

**Sue:** I'm really looking forward to this one now that *Doctor Who* is good again.

The Happiness Patrol begins in a dimly-lit street.

**Sue**: This sounds like the sort of music you'd hear in a Spaghetti Western.

Is it Keff?

Me: No, it isn't Keff.

Sue: I didn't think so. There's a melody.

A miserable woman is approached by a man named Silas P. He tells her about a secret place where she can wallow in her sadness.

**Sue**: Is he a Scientologist?

However, Silas P is actually an undercover Happiness Patrol agent and the poor woman is brutally murdered by a gang of women dressed in pink.

**Sue**: So on this planet they kill you if you're unhappy. Is that the basic

gist?

Me: Yes, that's about it.

Sue: If they employed that rule where I worked, the place would be a

fucking morgue.

The TARDIS materialises on Terra Alpha, an Earth colony with a very bad reputation. But Sue isn't interested in that.

Sue: The Doctor has very large feet for such a small man.

The colony is ruled by a woman named Helen A.

## THE HAPPINESS PATROL

Sue: She's famous. Like, you know, proper famous.

Me: What's her name, then?

Sue: Fuck knows. But she's very famous.

Me: It's Sheila Hancock.

Sue: Of course it is. She's very good. I bet getting her to appear in this was

a bit of a coup.

The Doctor and Ace run into a census taker named Trevor. Sue doesn't recognise John Normington under his bowler hat, more's the pity, but we do learn that the Doctor's nickname at college was Theta Sigma.

Sue: So what was the Master's nickname? I bet it was Beardy Bastard.

The Happiness Patrol converge on the Doctor's TARDIS.

Me: So what do you make of this lot?

Sue: It looks like the Pussycat Dolls are late for band practice.

The Happiness Patrol paint the TARDIS a bright shade of pink; a subtle homage to the cover of Target's Doctor Who and the Daleks novelisation, no doubt.

**Sue**: If they remade this story today, the planet would probably be run by Katie Price.

The Doctor and Ace demand to be arrested, and a member of the Happiness Patrol named Daisy K is only too happy to oblige because the Doctor is obviously a spy and Ace is clearly his accomplice.

**Sue**: That's a bit sexist. Why can't Ace be the spy and the Doctor be her accomplice? It's very backwards, this society.

Helen A walks in on her husband as he's watching a Routine Disappearance video.

Me: Does Helen A remind you of anyone?

Sue: Yes. Judi Dench.

Me: What?

**Sue**: She's like M. She just said that video was for her eyes only, and she's the head of the intelligence services. So she's M. Or in this case, A. **Me**: Okay, does she reminds you of anyone else? You know, from the

eighties.

Sue: Toyah Willcox? She was still going then, I think.

Me: NO! Someone more political than Toyah. A woman from the 1980s.

Come on, Sue, you can do this.

**Sue**: She's supposed to be Thatcher. I'm not completely stupid. And he's supposed to be Denis. It's pretty obvious, really, although I don't equate Thatcher with happiness - she was a miserable bitch.

The Doctor and Ace are sent to the waiting zone where they meet Helen A's ex-gag writer.

**Sue**: Did Kate Bush write this one? Because it's *very* weird.

Meanwhile a man with a frankly marvellous moustache faces the death penalty for daring to cry in public. The man who passes judgement on him - Joseph C - isn't very happy about this.

**Sue**: So why hasn't he been shot as well? That's a bit hypocritical, isn't it?

And then we cut to the Kandy Kitchen.

Sue: Oh my goodness.

Yes, it's the Kandy Man!

**Kandy Man**: What time do you call this? **Sue**: But... But... But it's the Bassett Man!

Me: Bertie to his friends.

Sue: Did Bassett's sponsor this episode of *Doctor Who*?

**Me**: No. In fact they weren't very happy about it.

Sue: I'm not surprised. Look at it!

## THE HAPPINESS PATROL

The condemned man is drowned in strawberry fondant.

**Sue**: It would have been less messy if they'd just shot him. Who's going to clean that mess up? And does this mean they're cannibals on this planet? Are they going to eat him now? I don't get this.

Helen A tends to her pet, Fifi.

**Sue**: That's a very small cage for an animal that size. And is the dog supposed to represent Carol Thatcher?

The Doctor and Ace steal a Happiness Patrol buggy.

Sue: It's running on a lawnmower engine. It's pathetic!

I try to take her mind off it by asking her about the story's set design.

**Sue**: It's quite atmospheric for a studio-based story. It looks cheap, but it's getting away with it. I wish they were outside, though. I think I was spoilt by *Remembrance of the Daleks*.

Ace is captured by the Happiness Patrol as the Doctor escapes in a buggy.

**Sue**: It would have been quicker to walk. Actually, it would have been quicker to hop.

Ace meets a Happiness Patrol member who is having second thoughts about her job. And no, she doesn't recognise Lesley Dunlop in a fright wig.

**Sue**: She looks like a member of Sigue Sigue Sputnik.

Me: Or We've Got A Fuzzbox And We're Gonna Use It. Remember them?

Sue: No.

Me: Don't worry, I don't think they remember them.

The Doctor runs into Silas P.

**Sue**: He looks like Tony Hancock, which is strange because Tony Hancock wouldn't have lasted five minutes on this planet.

The Happiness Patrol arrive in force.

**Sue**: There are theatre symbols on the front of their beach buggy. This implies that everything on this planet is one giant act. That's clever, I guess, but I'm struggling to get into it.

The Doctor is saved by a tourist named Earl.

**Sue**: Why would anybody want to visit this shit hole? It's not exactly Disneyland, is it?

The Doctor and Earl sneak into the Kandy Kitchen.

**Sue**: Bassett's must have hit the roof when they saw this. I'm sure the last thing they wanted to have linked to their liquorice is torture.

The Kandy Man can feel one of his moods coming on.

Sue: This is supposed to be funny, isn't it, Neil?

The episode ends with the Doctor and Earl in the Kandy Man's clutches.

**Sue**: Well, it's not as good as *Remembrance of the Daleks*, but I've seen worse. It's just a lot for me to take in.

#### Part Two

**Sue**: What the hell is *that*?

She's pointing at Terra Alpha's indigenous Pipe People.

**Sue**: There's too much going on in this story already without Yoda turning up!

## THE HAPPINESS PATROL

The Kandy Man prepares to kill the Doctor and Earl.

**Sue**: I'm surprised the second episode was allowed to go out. Didn't Bertie get his lawyers on the case after the first one?

The Kandy Man is a very tactile villain.

Sue: Did he just squeeze the Doctor's balls?

Me: No, it was just his knee.

Sue: Are you sure about that? I wouldn't put anything past this

programme at the moment.

Our heroes escape when the cybernetic villain's feet become stuck to a lemonade floor, and the Doctor departs with a delicious pun: "Sweet dreams."

**Sue**: If you go with this and embrace the madness, it's quite entertaining.

One of the Happiness Patrol tells Ace about the type of people they usually hunt down and kill: killjoys, depressives, manic reactives...

Sue: Smiths fans, in other words.

And then Sue makes an astute observation.

**Sue**: I'm sure Ace has two *Blue Peter* badges on her jacket. How is that even possible? No one is *that* good.

The Doctor and Earl contact the Pipe People.

**Sue**: Does this story really need orcs? It's confusing enough as it is.

Ace escapes from the waiting zone by pushing Priscilla P over.

**Sue**: They are definitely wearing the wrong type of heels for a death squad. They need pink combat boots.

Earl Sigma passes the time playing the Blues.

**Sue**: He's pretty good. He should do the incidental music for the rest of the series.

The Doctor, Earl and the Pipe People head for the pipes beneath Terra Alpha.

**Sue**: This looks great, and it can't have been easy to light. They're trying to make it as atmospheric as possible. I think I'm beginning to come round to this story.

The Doctor confronts Helen A.

**Sue**: It's a brilliant performance. Her head movements are exactly like Thatcher. They were very lucky to get her. I don't think it would have worked if they'd got Faith Brown in to do it.

The Doctor taunts Helen A as she prepares to initiate another Routine Disappearance.

Sue: I like this Doctor a lot. He's very proactive. He likes to get stuck in.

Helen A sends Fifi into the pipes, but Ace injures it with some Nitro 9.

**Sue**: I usually get upset when they harm pets in *Doctor Who*, but I couldn't give a shit about that one.

Meanwhile, the Kandy Man's handler, Gilbert M, is taking the absolute piss.

**Sue**: This is very funny. Fuck knows what *Doctor Who* fans must have thought of it, but I've decided to enjoy it.

The Doctor manages to talk a pair of snipers out of shooting him.

Sue: I could see Matt Smith doing something like that. That was excellent.

## THE HAPPINESS PATROL

Gilbert M and the Kandy Man are still bickering in the kitchen.

Sue: They're like an old married couple.

Me: Yeah, I can feel one of my moods coming on as well.

The Doctor blackmails the Kandy Man into safely diverting the fondant that has been sent to drown Ace and Susan Q, so only a pathetic splat of gunk emerges from the pipe.

Me: That used to be Noel Edmond's worst nightmare.

The Kandy Man isn't very happy when the Doctor sticks him to the floor with lemonade again.

Kandy Man: Gilbert! Gilbert! Gilbert!

**Sue**: As far as catchphrases go, it's not exactly "Exterminate!" is it? It is very funny, though.

Ace submits herself to the Happiness Patrol auditions at the Forum.

**Sue**: That bloke behind the counter is in a terrible mood. Why doesn't anybody shoot him? It's not very consistent, this.

**Me**: I think the point the story is trying to make is that the people in power are actually hypocrites.

**Sue**: Yeah, but for a planet where everyone is supposed to be happy, no one is smiling.

Me: Yes, but that's the point, isn't it?

**Sue**: They should have said miserable dialogue with false smiles on their faces. That would have been creepier.

The episode ends with the Doctor pondering Ace's forthcoming appearance on a lethal version of The X-Factor.

**Sue**: I really don't know what to make of this. I really want to like it, but there's something wrong with it.

#### Part Three

Helen A tends to her injured pet.

Sue: It looks fake. Turn down the lights!

As the Doctor takes to the stage and croons.

**Sue**: I'm sorry but Sylvester McCoy can't sing, and he definitely won't go through to Boot Camp sounding like that.

The Doctor instigates a spontaneous outbreak of happiness in the square.

**Sue**: Finally, we can see some happy people in a story set on a happy planet. It's only taken them three episodes.

The Happiness Patrol are extremely unhappy about this turn of events and are forced to turn on themselves.

**Sue**: Okay, right. I get it now. This should end like *Reservoir Dogs*. They are all unhappy so they should shoot each other.

**Me**: They can't all be Ms. Pink.

Meanwhile, down in the pipes...

**Sue**: I still don't understand what these fucking orcs have to do with anything.

Fifi's howls echo through the pipes.

**Sue**: Is Fifi really that much of a threat? It's only a fucking poodle! You could just kick it back down the pipe.

But when Sue finally sees Fifi in the pipes...

Sue: You know, if they'd lit it like this from the word go, I would have

## THE HAPPINESS PATROL

taken it a lot more seriously.

The animal is crushed by falling sugar.

**Sue**: I should feel sorry for it - because it isn't really its fault - but I hate Paris Hilton dogs.

The Kandy Man answers the phone.

Kandy Man: Kandy Man...

**Sue**: (*Laughing*) That is so funny. This shouldn't work but the person playing the Kandy Man is really selling it to me. It's his voice and attitude that make it seem real. This should be a disaster, but somehow it works.

Ace threatens the Kandy Man with a red-hot poker.

**Sue**: Stick him in his liquorice hole. I mean, look at it, it's basically a big target.

The Kandy Man escapes into the pipes.

Sue: I hope he gets his just desserts. Ha! Do you get it?

The Kandy Man is killed by his own confectionery.

Sue: Aww... I really liked him. What a shame.

Helen tries to flee the planet, but Gilbert M and Joseph C have already beaten her to it.

**Sue**: They are so gay. Still, if I were a man on this planet, I'd probably be gay as well.

Helen A makes a run for it.

Sue: It's very film noir, this.

**Me**: There's a rumour they were going to show some of this in black and white but they didn't have the guts to go through with it. **Sue**: Is it too late to turn the colour down on our TV?

Helen A finds the mortally wounded Fifi next to a manhole cover...

**Sue**: Aww, she really did love her pet. This is so sad. This is the saddest ending in *Doctor Who* ever.

It's official - the death of Fifi is much worse than loads of innocent Silurians getting wiped out.

Sue: I think I get it now. That was quite profound.

#### The Score

**Sue**: I enjoyed that, especially the last episode. I wasn't sure at first, but it won me over in the end. It wasn't perfect, but it was consistently entertaining and the guest cast were excellent. The Kandy Man was definitely the best thing in it, though.

# 7/10

**COMMENT**: "I had two *Blue Peter* badges when I was a kid. I won them on two different occasions for writing in with ideas. Maybe Ace did the same?" - Nick Mays

**NOTES**: Graeme Curry, the writer of *The Happiness Patrol*, was the only member of the production team to email me about the blog: "I pretty much agreed with every word, and I wrote the thing. I particularly liked the comments about the Doctor's getaway vehicle. I remember watching it in the studio at TV Centre and thinking that it wouldn't outstrip an ageing snail, let alone a bunch of (relatively) young actresses wearing dodgy wigs and too much make-up. Mind you, I think they travelled around in similarly sedate vehicles. It's all a bit reminiscent of that take-off

## THE HAPPINESS PATROL

of *Speed* in *Father Ted*, in which Dougal's milk float will blow up if it goes under 3mph..."

# SILVER NEMESIS BLOGGED: 11 March 2013

#### Part One

Me: This is it. This is the big one - the 25th anniversary story. This was a

big deal back in 1988.

Sue: Ooh, that does sound exciting.

Me: Hold onto your hat!

Silver Nemesis begins in Argentina.

**Sue**: It must be an anniversary special if they've got enough money to fly to Argentina.

Some words are flashing on a computer screen that belongs to a Nazi: Windsor, November 23rd, 1988.

**Sue**: Are the BNP holding a rally that day?

Meanwhile, in 1638, the Lady Peinforte and her trusty sidekick Richard are hunting for pigeon with a bow and arrow.

Sue: Is that Richard Branson doing a cameo?

While in current-day Argentina, a Nazi hunts parrots with his bow and arrow. Cos it's a metaphor, right?

Sue: He's famous.

I inform Sue that Anton Diffring only agreed to appear in Doctor Who because it meant he could watch the Wimbledon Finals at the same time. Sue now loves Anton Diffring to bits.

Meanwhile Lady Peinforte visits a mathematician.

#### SILVER NEMESIS

**Me**: This guy was offered the role of the Doctor 25 years ago, but he turned it down.

**Sue**: Isn't it a bit cruel to invite him back like this? It's like they're saying to

him, come and see what you would have won.

And then we cut to a Jazz Festival.

Sue: He's famous.

Me: (Under my breath) This should be good...

Sue: Is it Miles Davis? What? Don't look at me like that, Neil.

Me: (Sighing) It's Courtney Pine.

Sue: Of course it is. So was he a Doctor Who fan, then? Do they get him to

play the theme tune later?

The Doctor and Ace are suddenly shot at as they casually mind their own business.

Sue: (Sighing) Keffing hell, he's back.

Nicol's back too, and my toes curl involuntarily as she walks into the room.

**Nicol**: Ace is more like a *Blue Peter* presenter than a *Doctor Who* companion. I keep expecting her to bake a cake.

Sue: She's got two Blue Peter badges, Nicol. Two!

Nicol is unimpressed and walks out soon after, which means she misses Lady Peinforte and Richard's trip to the future.

Sue: So any fucker can travel in time now?

When they materialise in the middle of a busy restaurant in 1988, the tourists are only mildly perturbed.

Sue: No, please don't get up. This kind of shit happens all the time.

The Doctor parks the TARDIS in the basement of Windsor Castle.

**Sue**: Oh look, the Doctor's wearing a fez. Do you think Matt Smith is a fan of *Silver Nemesis*?

As the Nemesis comet crashes to Earth, Lady Peinforte throws a chair through the restaurant's glass door.

**Sue**: That was very funny. She can travel in time but she can't open a fucking door. Brilliant.

The Doctor and Ace travel back to 1638.

**Sue**: This is nice. I wish the whole thing was set here. Everything else looks cheap and flat. These shots are a little soft, but at least it's atmospheric.

Meanwhile, on The Bill...

**Sue**: I must say, this is very low-key for a 25th anniversary special. Apart from the date, I don't see what's so bloody special about it.

When the Doctor and Ace hop back to current-day Windsor Castle, they pass a group of tourists on a guided tour.

**Me**: These people are famous. **Sue**: They are? Like who, exactly?

Me: (Pointing) Well, there's Peter Moffat and Fiona Cumming...

Sue: You said famous.

Me: That guy in the hat is the Brigadier.

**Sue**: Fuck off! Wait... So the Doctor is standing behind the Brig and he doesn't even say hello? What's the point of that? What a waste of time!

Ace isn't all that keen on trespassing on royal property.

Sue: Why is Ace so timid all of a sudden? She's acting completely out of character.

#### SILVER NEMESIS

Our heroes almost bump into the Queen.

**Me**: Look, Sue, they got the Queen to appear in this. That's how big this episode was. She was a huge fan of *Doctor Who*, *you know*. I'm surprised you don't remember the fuss this caused at the time.

Sue isn't fooled for a second.

**Me**: They did ask Prince Edward to appear in it for real, though. **Sue**: And he turned it down? But I thought Prince Edward would do any old shit to get on TV in the 1980s?

The Nazis arrive at the crash site of a comet in a Bedford van.

Sue: Please play some Wagner. Anything is better than this racket!

The Doctor and Ace race to stop them.

Sue: Why isn't Ace carrying her bag of bombs with her? This isn't like her at all.

*Just as the Nazis are about to demonstrate the many ways they have of making her talk, Ace is saved by the unexpected arrival of a silver spaceship.* 

**Sue**: Oh, it's the Cybermen. I suppose I should have guessed. I tell you what, though. That was utter shit before they turned up. I'm almost interested, now. Almost.

#### Part Two

Sue: I'm not a fan of the Cybermen. Why didn't they use silver Daleks instead?

**Me**: We had the Daleks two stories ago. You only get rematches as quick as that in the new series.

**Sue**: (*Pointing at my bookshelf*) What about the Sontarans? They have silver spaceships.

Who is more evil - Cybermen or Nazis? There's only one way to find out!

**Sue**: This is a full-on 12-inch Keff McCulloch remix. I can't take much more of this.

Stuntmen are sent flying.

**Sue**: It's the 1970s all over again. But with really shit music and no atmosphere. Oh, is that a Granada Gia? My Dad had one of those...

Lady Peinforte kills a Cyberman with a gold-tipped arrow.

Sue: Did she know that the Cybermen don't like gold?

Me: No.

Sue: So she just happens to walk around with arrows made from gold?

She must be loaded!

Lady Peinforte and Richard stroll into town.

Sue: Why aren't people looking at them?

Me: It's Windsor. They probably think they're doing a historical re-

enactment or something.

Sue: Okay, fair enough. Hang on... That bloke in the blue trousers is

staring at them like they're mad.

Me: I think that might be the writer, Kevin Clarke.

**Sue**: He wrote it and he still doesn't how to react to it? Well, that's just great.

The Cybermen move their ship closer to the castle. You know, to save their legs.

**Sue**: I like the way they've made that tree blow in the wind. The ship still looks crap, though.

Lady Peinforte and Richard are accosted by two skinheads who want to relieve them of their money.

## SILVER NEMESIS

**Me**: (*As Richard*) Why not try a Virgin Money credit card with zero percent interest instead?

The skinheads don't come out of this encounter very well.

Sue: It looks like a sex game that's gone wrong.

Me: Is there any other kind?

The Doctor uses Ace's boombox to jam the Cybermen's signal.

**Sue**: He's using a jam session to jam them. Do you get it, Neil? Jam.

The Cybermen are literally dumbstruck.

Sue: Please start dancing. Please...

**Me**: (*As the Cyberleader*) What is this thing you call... Jazz?

**The Doctor**: Oh, I do love a jam session.

**Sue**: Told you! I could write this shit, you know.

The Doctor and Ace stumble across two half-naked skinheads who have been suspended from a tree. The skinheads blame their predicament on the social workers they tried to rob earlier.

**Sue**: But they look nothing like social workers! That doesn't make any sense!

Lady Peinforte decides to show Richard his gravestone and it turns out he died at the age of 51.

**Sue**: That was nice of her. Now he knows how long he's got. I bet that will come in handy when he's approaching his fifties. Yeah, thanks for that.

The Doctor asks Ace to blow up the Cybermen's ship.

Sue: She's his own personal terrorist. It's almost sweet.

The Cybermen do a deal with the Nazis, who had better not betray them because their weapons cannot harm them.

**Sue**: Except for the gold. You can always throw some gold at them. The fucking idiots.

The Cybermen betray the Nazis before they've finished clambering back into their Bedford van.

**Sue**: Pray they don't have enough time to pop to a jewellers first.

The Doctor tells Ace everything she needs to know about the Nemesis comet, mainly that he launched it into space and now it returns to Earth every 25 years, trailing havoc in its wake.

**Sue**: I don't buy this at all. Are they trying to say that the Doctor started both World Wars? They can't do that!

De Flores can't wait to get his hands on it because it will give him power over all existence. Obviously.

Me: (As De Flores) I vill make Boris Becker vin at Vimbledon!

The episode concludes when the Doctor reveals the Cyberfleet hiding in orbit above Earth.

**Sue**: Is the Doctor playing Keff at them now? Try some Cozy Powell instead. *He's good*.

Cue credits.

Sue: Well, that was shit.

#### Part Three

Sue: What's going on in this story? I've forgotten already.

#### SILVER NEMESIS

Me: We only saw it yesterday.

Sue: Exactly. It doesn't make any sense.

A Cyberfleet is currently in orbit around Earth.

Sue: It isn't very impressive, is it? It looks like a collection of spanners.

The incidental music abruptly stops when the Doctor flips a switch on Ace's boombox.

Sue: He's turned off Keff! My hero!

Ace admits that's she's a little bit frightened.

**Sue**: Did the writer know anything about Ace when he wrote this episode? Because this is fucking outrageous.

The Doctor and Ace run rings around the Cyberleader.

Sue: That was childish and pathetic. I think this is actually getting worse...

And then the castle blows up.

Sue: Even the models are shit. It's Silver Shit.

Meanwhile...

Sue: Oh look, Paul Young's gone hitchhiking.

Lady Peinforte and Richard cadge a lift from Dolores Gray.

Me: Forget the Queen, this is the story's big cameo moment.

Sue: What, Joan Rivers?

Me: No. Dolores Gray. You must have heard of her. She's Dolores Gray.

**Sue**: What are you going on about?

Me: You know. Delores Gray.

**Sue**: But I've never heard of her. **Me**: IT'S DOLORES GRAY!

The plot alternates between comedy car journey and the end of the world as we know it.

Sue: It's all over the place. Who directed this rubbish?

Ace takes on the Cybermen with some gold coins fired from a catapult - and wins!

Sue: Un-fucking-believable. They should have called this Silver Fuckwits.

Meanwhile, in the limousine...

Sue: What is that terrible noise?

Me: There isn't any incidental music in this scene, love.

Sue: I'm not talking about that. I think they've got some gravel stuck in

their wheel arch. It's doing my head in.

Ace is pursued by Cybermen.

**Sue**: The Cybermen aren't pointing their guns at her and yet they're almost hitting her. Their guns are breaking the laws of physics, Neil.

The Doctor wants to launch the Nemesis statue at the Cyberfleet.

**Sue**: This Doctor is always out to cause trouble, isn't he? He can be a nasty little bastard when he wants to be.

The Nazis turn up.

Sue: What was the point of them, exactly?

The Cyberleader shoots De Flores dead, but then spectacularly fails to shoot anybody else.

#### SILVER NEMESIS

**Sue**: What is he waiting for, exactly? He's the only one with a gun. Shoot them and take the bloody thing if you want it that badly.

Lady Peinforte threatens to spill the beans about the Doctor's past, but Sue and the Cybermen couldn't care less. And then the Doctor relents and gives the Cyberleader the silver bow he craves so much.

Sue: What the fuck?

So Lady Peinforte throws herself into the comet.

Sue: WHAT? WHY?

And it takes off.

Sue: A flying turd. Why am I'm not surprised?

Ace compliments the Doctor on his rocket.

**Sue**: Ace said that without moving her lips. And some of these shots are out of focus. It's amateur hour at the BBC.

Richard kills the Cyberleader.

**Sue**: Why doesn't he want to kill the Doctor instead? THIS MAKES NO SENSE!

Which means Richard is stranded in 1988.

**Sue**: So is he a companion now? He'd be okay if he shaved his beard off. He was one of the least-worst things in this.

Sadly, the Doctor takes Richard back to 1638 instead.

Sue: At least he's got his death to look forward to when he's 51. That's nice.

As Silver Nemesis wraps up, Ace realises that the Doctor played the very same trick with the Daleks.

**Sue**: Yeah, the plots are very similar now that you come to mention it. Have they completely run out of ideas? Why didn't they just show the one with the Daleks on the 25th anniversary instead? It doesn't make any sense.

Cue titles...

Sue: Silver Bollocks.

#### The Score

**Sue**: That was dreadful. There were two things that really pissed me off about it: 1) It was supposed to be the 25th anniversary special and therefore good, and 2) I thought they'd remembered how to make decent episodes of *Doctor Who* again. But now it's shit again! I'm really annoyed, actually.

She's so angry, she gives Silver Nemesis...

# 0/10

**Me**: Ouch. That will hurt McCoy's average score.

Sue: It isn't his fault. It's the shit they're making him do.

Sue didn't want to watch the documentary on the DVD. She didn't even want to watch the documentary that appeared on the original VHS release (the one with the sparkly green cover that stuck out like a sore thumb on everybody's shelves for years and has Gary Downie in it). However, she did let me show her the bit where Keff McCulloch shows off his organ.

**Sue**: His shirt is almost as loud as his music. He thinks he's Jan Hammer. I bet he isn't wearing any socks.

# SILVER NEMESIS

*Keff hammers out his rousing, yet strangely haunting theme to* Remembrance of the Daleks.

**Sue**: He actually looks like he's pleased with himself. Look, he's grinning as he plays it. Okay, THAT'S ENOUGH! TURN IT OFF!

COMMENT: "I still have no idea who Dolores Gray was." - Mark Taylor

# THE GREATEST SHOW IN THE GALAXY

BLOGGED: 15 March 2013

#### Part One

**Sue**: *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy*? They must be taking the piss after the last one.

Before we begin, Sue has never seen Lovejoy; she didn't watch EastEnders when Tricky Dicky was in it; she's never heard of Jessica Martin; and she's never sat through a single episode of Red Dwarf. Oh wait, that's not Danny John-Jules, is it? But most annoying of all, especially given her deep love of carpentry and home improvement, she doesn't remember the 'Do It All' adverts from the eighties.

**Sue**: Is this the first use of hip-hop in *Doctor Who*? I bet you like this. You love scratching, Neil.

Meanwhile in the TARDIS...

**Sue**: Is Ace wearing Tom Baker's scarf? I miss that scarf. You'd have thought they'd let Tom keep it though, wouldn't you?

Funnily enough, Mel's top from Paradise Towers doesn't provoke the same nostalgic reaction. Anyway, a robot delivering junk mail has managed to penetrate the TARDIS somehow.

**Sue**: Eh? How is that even possible? That's bollocks for a start!

The junk bot taunts Ace into visiting something called the Psychic Circus.

**Sue**: Ace is obviously scared of clowns. Anyone can see that. I don't blame her, though. Who in their right mind likes clowns?

# THE GREATEST SHOW IN THE GALAXY

On the planet Segonax, a young couple named Flowerchild and Bellboy are on the run.

Me: I had a massive crush on Dee Sadler when I was 19.

Sue: You do know that you're not supposed to tell your wife stuff like that,

don't you?

The couple are pursued by a clown driving a hearse.

Sue: (Singing) Ashes to Ashes, Funk to Funky...

The Doctor and Ace arrive on Segonax and head for the nearest concession stand.

Sue: He's famous.

Me: She.

Sue: Are you sure?

Me: It's Peggy Mount. You must know who Peggy Mount is.

Sue: Wasn't she the person they called when they couldn't get anyone

from the Carry On... films?

Flowerchild arrives at a painted bus on the outskirts of the circus.

Sue: Has a performance of Jesus Christ Superstar gone horribly wrong?

As the Doctor and Ace begin their long walk to the circus, they are almost run over by the hearse.

Sue: How the fuck did they not hear that car coming?

Me: I think the car is supposed to be silent.

Sue: That still doesn't explain why THEY DIDN'T SEE IT!

I change the subject before we can get bogged down in another one of her rants about shoddy peripheral vision in Doctor Who.

Me: I remember watching this episode in German, once.

Sue: Eh?

**Me**: Not long after I moved in with you, after you'd gone to bed, I found a German cable channel on your TV and they were playing this episode. **Sue**: You were waiting for the porn to come on, weren't you? That was on the Italian channel, you idiot. Wait, what am I saying - *this* was your porn, wasn't it? So that's what you were doing downstairs by yourself all those years - you were watching *Doctor Who* in German. Brilliant!

Nord the Vandal arrives at the Psychic Circus on his trike.

Sue: That doesn't look too bad at all. Where are we, exactly?

Me: Segonax.

Sue: No, I mean where are we really?

Me: Wait for the extras. There's an interesting story behind this location.

**Sue**: I was hoping for an interesting story in front of it as well.

The Doctor and Ace stumble across Captain Cook and Mags. Oh, I forgot to mention that Sue has no idea who TP McKenna is. Yes, I know, but what can you do?

**Sue**: He's a bit like the Doctor, and she's a bit like his companion.

Me: Interesting, isn't it?

**Sue**: Not really.

Ace and Mags accidentally activate a robot that's been buried under the sand.

**Sue**: Why hasn't Ace brought any Nitro whatsit with her? What if the Doctor wants her to blow shit up again?

Flowerchild is dead, which is a bit of a bummer.

Sue: She didn't last very long. Good.

The four explorers reach the painted bus, where they are immediately set upon by a robotic bus conductor.

# THE GREATEST SHOW IN THE GALAXY

Sue: This is a bit weird. Nicely directed, though.

The Doctor bamboozles the robot by asking for a there-and-back off-peak weekend break supersaver senior citizen bimonthly season ticket.

Sue: I love it when the Doctor does stuff like that.

And then the Doctor and Ace carefully plan their next move.

**Sue**: One thing I've noticed about these two is that they spend a lot of down time together. They sit down and talk things through. I really like that about their relationship.

Ace admits she is terrified.

**Sue**: That's not like Ace at all. Her character is all over the place.

The Whizzkid arrives on Segonax.

Sue: What the fuck is Adrian Mole doing here?

Me: Well spotted.

Sue: I was joking. Is it really Adrian Mole? Bloody hell, so it is...

Bellboy is thrown back into the ring.

**Sue**: If this is *Britain's Got Talent*, he just got three Xs.

The episode ends with the Doctor asking Ace if she wants to visit the circus or not.

**Sue**: What a weird cliffhanger. Actually, the whole thing is weird. It reminds me of *The League of Gentlemen*. I'm not sure if I like it or not. The location is very nice, though.

#### Part Two

As the Doctor and Ace enter the circus, a fortune-teller reveals a Tarot card - the Hanged Man.

**Sue**: People assume that card is bad, but it isn't. It could mean anything. I'm surprised they didn't go with the Death card; that's an even bigger cliché.

The fortune-teller is clearly trying to warn our heroes about something, but the Chief Clown intervenes.

**Sue**: You don't see them pull focus in *Doctor Who* very often. The director is definitely trying their best.

The Doctor and Ace take their seats in the darkness.

**Sue**: This place is a Health and Safety nightmare. I'm surprised they haven't been shut down already.

The Ringmaster introduces the next act.

Sue: I like the songs. You don't get enough singing in *Doctor Who*.

The Chief Clown wants to know how Ace came by Flowerchild's earring.

**Sue**: His performance is insane. He's completely over the top, but he's still freaking me out at the same time. I mean, look at him!

Captain Cook cons Nord into performing in the ring first.

**Me**: (*Singing*) How do Do It All do it what they do it for? Won't somebody tell? If only we knew it, how Do It All do it...

**Sue**: No. Doesn't ring a bell. Sorry.

A young man called Deadbeat pushes a broom round outside the cage.

#### THE GREATEST SHOW IN THE GALAXY

**Sue**: There are lots of interesting characters in this story. I don't know what the hell is going on but it's getting better, I suppose.

The next arrival at the circus is the Whizzkid. He's especially excited because he's their greatest fan.

**Sue**: Hang on a minute... Is this supposed to be about *Doctor Who*? Is the show trying to be meta?

Me: Yes.

**Sue**: So is the ringmaster John Nathan-Turner cracking his whip?

Nord's performance will be judged by a family audience.

**Sue**: Are they supposed to be the audience who score *Doctor Who*?

**Me**: The Appreciation Index? Yes.

**Sue**: This is *very* meta.

Nord's comedy routine goes down like a lead balloon, and he scores a big fat zero.

**Sue**: Oh dear. It's all gone a bit Silver Nemesis.

So Nord is killed.

Sue: This is years ahead of its time. It's like an episode of *Black Mirror*.

Whizzkid takes his seat in the audience.

**Sue**: This was basically you in 1988, isn't it, Neil? I'm glad I didn't know you back then, because you only looked *a bit* like that when I met you.

The Doctor is also scheduled to appear in this talent show. Mum hopes he's better than the last one.

Sue: I think that's a reference to Colin Baker.

The Chief Clown sends his robots after Ace.

**Sue**: Clowns are so much scarier than green plastic wobbly rubbish. I bet this scared a few kids for life.

Ace is captured and thrown into a workshop full of immobilised clowns.

**Sue**: That's really scary. I wouldn't want to be trapped in there with them. They are so gonna move.

Of course they do.

**Sue**: It's like the first episode of the new series, the one with Rose in the shop.

The Doctor and Mags journey beneath the circus and discover a gaping abyss.

**Sue**: That looks pretty good. Well done.

The Doctor drops a club into it and a large eye appears out of the mist.

Sue: And now it's turned into Big Brother.

Me: Everybody else says JR Tolkien, but whatever.

The episode concludes when Captain Cook catches up with the Doctor.

Sue: The cliffhangers are very weak. But I'm starting to get into it.

Me: You still haven't mentioned the incidental music yet.

**Sue**: It must be good, then. Actually, it sounds like the stuff you listen to all the time. Tangerine Dream electro bollocks. But as far as electro

bollocks goes, it's alright, I suppose.

#### Part Three

Sue: I've just realised who that woman is.

# THE GREATEST SHOW IN THE GALAXY

Me: Jessica Martin?

Sue: Yeah, she played Mary the punk in *EastEnders*.

Ace is threatened by robotic clowns.

Sue: This should have been the cliffhanger. This is very effective, even if it

does look like R2-D2 has gone a bit mental.

Me: C3PO.
Sue: Whatever.

So what does the audience think?

**Sue**: I don't think much of this. **Me**: Nothing's happening, is it?

Sue: Not that I can see. Nicol: Mum, Mum! Sue: What is it? Nicol: I'm bored.

Me: There's no point in going on about it, dear. We're all bored.

Sorry, I went a bit meta there for a second. It must be catching. Anyway, the Doctor pours scorn on the poster which describes the Psychic Circus as 'fun for all the family'.

Sue: Exactly. This is not for kids.

Ace and Bellboy are locked up together.

Sue: I like him. He reminds me of Jamie. A good Jamie, I mean.

Bellboy tells Ace that he built a giant robot with lasers for eyes, but it was abused and went wrong.

Sue: I bet it's a nightmare when people abuse your killer robot.

The Doctor runs into Deadbeat in a corridor made entirely from cloth.

Sue: It looks like they're going to a wedding.

Meanwhile Whizzkid reminisces about the good old days of the Psychic Circus, back when it was a lot better than it is now.

Sue: He is so right.

Me: The production team were taking the piss out the fans. You do get

that, don't you?

Sue: It's a bit silly having a go at the only people who are left watching

this. Still funny, though.

Although Captain Cook is Whizzkid's hero, the explorer treats the boy with utter contempt.

Sue: What a Benton.

The Chief Clown gives Bellboy a slap.

Sue: What a cunt.

Bellboy commits suicide by turning the clown robots on himself.

**Sue**: Eh? Why doesn't he just set them on the bad guy instead?

The Chief Clown looks worried, concerned and a little bit frightened. But on his way out of the door, his mask slips into place once more.

**Sue**: It's a great performance. He'd easily give the Joker a run for his money.

The Doctor urges Captain Cook and Mags to work together in order to escape.

**Sue**: Are they going to form a band?

The Ringmaster introduces them.

#### THE GREATEST SHOW IN THE GALAXY

**Ringmaster**: Now welcome, folks, to not one act but three, to the Greatest

Show in the Galaxy!

Sue: He wasn't given a lot of time to work on that rhyme, bless him.

But Captain Cook has other ideas and instead he forces Mags to transform into a wolf.

**Sue**: But it's just a sodding gobo! You can't turn somebody into a werewolf with a coloured light, can you? Because that would be mental.

The episode concludes with a close-up of the Doctor's terrified face as Mags goes all feral on his ass.

**Sue**: Finish on the scary werewolf, you idiots! Don't finish on Mr Bean! That's rubbish!

#### Part Four

The audience are thrilled by this latest turn of events.

Sue: They love the dog acts on Britain's Got Talent.

Meanwhile Ace and Deadbeat arrive at the hippy's bus.

Sue: So what part of Doctor Who does the bus conductor represent?

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

**Sue**: Maybe he's the bloke who sells all the merchandise?

The Doctor accuses Captain Cook of being a meddling fool and a crushing bore.

Sue: That was a subtle reference to Jon Pertwee, I think.

Mags kills Captain Cook.

Sue: Brilliant! That's what Jo Grant should have done when the Doctor

nicked her sandwiches.

Ace is accosted by the bus conductor. Deadbeat tells her to press the 'Request Stop' button.

Sue: Why don't you get off your arse and press it yourself? She's busy!

The Doctor opens a pathway which leads to the Dark Circus so he can confront the Gods of Rrrrrrrrragnarok. There's only one catch: if he stops entertaining them, he dies.

Sue: Or he gets cancelled. It's the same thing, really.

So the Doctor puts on a show.

**Sue**: Is Sylvester McCoy doing all these tricks himself? He's very clever if

he is.

Me: He used to make a living putting ferrets down his trousers.

**Sue**: Professionally or for pleasure?

Me: A bit of both, I think.

Sue: He's really good. I'd definitely put him through to the next round.

The Gods are not amused and they make it rain.

**Sue**: The Doctor is finally using his umbrella for what it was designed for, rather than using it to grab Ace's neck. I hate it when he does that.

The Doctor ends up hanging upside down.

Me: The Hanged Man. Remember?

**Sue**: Oh yeah. Very good. A bit literal, but good.

The Gods raise their stone hands.

**Sue**: For a minute there, I thought they were going to high-five each other.

Phew.

# THE GREATEST SHOW IN THE GALAXY

The Doctor throws a slab of metal into the air and it magically transforms into a sword.

**Sue**: It's Zelda! They'll be showering him in gold coins next.

The Gods bring Captain Cook back to life.

**Sue**: This must be a reference to that time they brought the Doctor back even though William Hartnell was dead.

The Doctor directs the Gods of Ragnarok's energy back at them.

**Sue**: This is exactly like Zelda. You know, at the end of that level when you have to beat the boss. Even the sound effects are exactly the same.

The Dark Circus begins to collapse in on itself.

**Sue**: It's like the end of Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, but with less singing.

The Doctor vacates the circus tent just before it explodes.

Sue: Wow! He didn't even flinch. I'm impressed.

Thankfully, there's still enough time for another scene with Peggy Mount.

Sue: They should have given her her own spin-off. She's brilliant.

Ace suspects that the Doctor isn't as innocent as he seems, and it was his show all along.

Sue: He's a crafty sod, isn't he? But I like him.

#### The Score

**Sue**: It took me a while to get into it, but I really liked the last episode. It was hovering around a six or a seven, but it picked up towards the end.

I can appreciate what they were trying to do - I bet it wasn't easy doing postmodernism for a family audience back in the 1980s. And some of the performances were great. There's something missing that I can't quite put my finger on, but I think it deserves...

# 8/10

The behind the scenes documentary on the DVD includes a brief shot of Doctor Who Magazine's reader's poll results for season 25.

**Sue**: That's outrageous! **Me**: What's wrong?

Sue: Keff McCulloch won the Best Music category! And Mark Ayres came

last! Who the fuck voted in this thing? Just Keff McCulloch?

It's not all bad news, though. At least Sue knows they filmed the story in Dorset, that Ian Reddington seems like a thoroughly nice bloke, and the producer pulled out all the stops to get the damn thing finished.

**Sue**: It's the first time I've heard anyone say anything positive about John Nathan-Turner.

**COMMENT**: "I'm astonished that a carpentry-loving, ITV-honed old girl such as Sue can't remember those dreadful Do-It-All adverts. They feature *EastEnders*' Big Ron for heaven's sake!" - Jami

# SEASON TWENTY-SIX WHAT IS GOING ON?



This illustration funded by Robert Crowder



#### Part One

**Sue**: This had better be good.

**Me**: What are you going to do if it isn't? You can't give up now. **Sue**: Wanna bet? I could still do a Scanapanasky, you know.

**Me**: Schapansky. **Sue**: Whatever.

Sue immediately latches on to the writer's name.

Sue: Aaronovitch.

Me: You almost pronounced that correctly. Well done.

Sue: I like him, don't I?

Me: Well, you liked Remembrance of the Daleks quite a lot, so yes.

Battlefield *begins in a garden centre*.

Sue: We're outside and everything looks fairly normal for a change.

Lovely.

A married couple are shopping for shrubbery.

Sue: Nice moving camera...

Me: And?

Sue: IT'S THE BLOODY BRIG!

**Me**: I can't believe it took you that long. **Sue**: Sorry, I was looking at the plants.

Alistair Gordon Lethbridge-Stewart is married and retired.

**Sue**: So is that his wife, then?

Me: Yes.

**Sue**: Is she the one who used to be his fancy woman?

Me: Er... yes.

Sue: Really? I was only joking. Naughty Brig. Anyway, does this mean

UNIT are finally coming back?

Just as Sue says this, we cut to a Range Rover.

Sue: UNIT!

UNIT's new Brigadier is a woman named Winifred Bambera.

**Sue**: She's a bit young, isn't she?

Me: You know you're getting old when UNIT's Brigadiers look like they're

straight out of college.

It must be said that Battlefield gets off to a cracking start.

Sue: It's a fabulous location, for a start. I think I'm going to like this one.

Meanwhile, in a crystal ball/light fitting, the sorcerer Morgaine is very pleased with herself.

Sue: Will there be any flying monkeys in this?

Me: Not quite. Wait and see.

Meanwhile, in the TARDIS...

Sue: They've turned the lights down low. That's nice.

The moody lighting means Sue fails to notice the wallpaper roundels, and I don't have the heart to point them out to her. I also forgot to tell her that this is the very last time she will see this version of the TARDIS interior. Although she will find out when she reads this blog entry. Sorry, love. Anyway, the Doctor slaps Ace's hand when she interferes with the controls.

Sue: If I was the Doctor, the first thing I'd do when I got a new companion

#### **BATTLEFIELD**

is I'd teach them how to fly the TARDIS. You'd never know when that might come in handy. Like, all the time.

After materialising the TARDIS in England in the near future, the Doctor and Ace flag down a Range Rover.

Sue: This isn't Mark Ayres, is it?

Me: No.

Sue: This is Keff, isn't it?

Me: Yes.

I really wanted her to say "shame", but she didn't. She put her head in her hands and wept instead.

Sue: At least the direction is good.

She's particularly impressed with the camera that has been mounted to the front of the Range Rover. She is, however, less than impressed with the strange objects currently heading towards Earth.

Sue: Who's throwing spoons at the planet?

Sue finally realises that the Doctor is wearing a different jacket.

**Sue**: I like it. I just wish he'd get rid of his question-mark jumper. Not only does it look completely stupid, it must stink by now.

A knight in shining armour emerges from a crater in the ground.

**Sue**: Is he on his way to a *Game of Thrones* convention?

Bambera is briefed on the Doctor in UNIT's mobile HQ.

**Sue**: How does she not know this already? How can she be the Brigadier without reading the Doctor's file first? I'm telling you, Neil, she's far too young for this job.

Bambera's version of Benton warns her that whenever the Doctor turns up, all hell breaks loose.

**Sue**: (*In her best Russian accent, which is dreadful by the way*) And all of my colleagues die horribly. It's a right pain in the arse, I can tell you.

The Brigadier is forced out of retirement.

**Sue**: Is this the Brigadier's house?

Me: Yes.

Sue: He's done very well for himself.

**Me**: The last time we saw him, he was living in a shed.

**Sue**: Doris must be minted, then. Or his military pension paid for it. **Me**: The United Nations probably paid him off. You know, to keep him

quiet.

Sue: Yeah, he knows where all the aliens are buried.

The spoons being hurled towards Earth turn out to be knights.

**Sue**: Okay, I'm confused. Who are these people and why are they fighting each other? And how am I supposed to tell them apart? They all look the same to me.

The knights come equipped with swords and laser guns.

**Sue**: Why would you fight someone with a sword if you could just shoot them in the face?

Me: Something to do with honour, probably.

**Sue**: So why carry guns at all? It makes no sense. What is going on?

Bambera is set upon by knights.

**Sue**: This looks and sounds like a corporate video for a historical reenactment society.

But it's not all had news

# **BATTLEFIELD**

**Sue**: Where is this hotel in real life? It's rather nice. I'd quite like to stay there.

*UNIT have sent a helicopter for the Brig.* 

**Sue**: Look at the size of his lawn! His pay-off must have been enormous because he's got a rock star's garden. And I'm disappointed that it wasn't Benton or Yates flying that helicopter, by the way.

Ace has made a new friend - Shou Yuing - and they retire to the beer garden to discuss terrorism. Or as Ace puts it: BOOM!

Sue: Fucking hell, it's turned into kid's TV again. That was rubbish.

A knight has been catapulted in the brewery. His name is Ancelyn.

Sue: Hmm... Dishy.

**Me**: You do know you aren't supposed to tell your husband stuff like that, don't you?

Ancelyn believes that the Doctor is none other than Merlin.

**Sue**: Right, so either the Doctor has a double, or he becomes Merlin in the future, or his memory is even worse than mine. So which one is it?

Me: Wait and see!

Bambera tries to apprehend the Doctor and Ace.

Bambera: You're all under arrest. You and your freaky friends.

Ace: Who are you calling freaky?

**Sue**: You wouldn't talk to somebody like that if they were pointing a machine gun at you. This reminds me of *Scooby* fucking *Doo*.

The episode concludes with the arrival of even more knights.

Sue: Oh well, at least the Brig is in it, the location is very nice and the

director is trying. I'm not sure about these bloody knights, though.

#### Part Two

When Bambera shoots at a knight named Mordred, the bullet bounces harmlessly off his armour.

Sue: Aim for his teeth. That will wipe the smug look off his face.

Mordred believes that the Doctor is Merlin as well.

**Sue**: Has the Doctor been appearing in other franchises or something?

Me: Are you familiar with the legend of King Arthur?

Sue: Not really. Everything I learned about King Arthur I learned from

prog rock and Monty Python.

The Brigadier is taking a ride in a helicopter when he asks the pilot if the new Brigadier is a good sort of chap.

**Sue**: Sexist pig! But I'll let him off because he's the Brig.

Meanwhile, Ancelyn flirts with Bambera...

Sue: He's like the blonde one in Game of Thrones.

Me: Jaime.

Sue: Yeah, but even better looking. Actually, there's a lot of eye candy in

this one. The bad knight is quite tasty too.

Me: Bring back Dee Sadler...

Ancelyn and Bambera begin wrestling on the grass.

**Sue**: That would never happen in a million years. Funny, though.

Mordred opens up a portal and Keff turns it up to 11.

Sue: This music is so inappropriate. It should be less dancey and more

# **BATTLEFIELD**

mystical. They should have got Rick Wakeman in to do it.

Morgaine is played by the one and only Jean Marsh.

Sue: Oh, she's excellent. She's the Upstairs, Downstairs lady.

I pause the DVD to probe Sue's memories of Jean Marsh's involvement with early Doctor Who, but I end up confusing her.

**Sue**: So the Brigadier is her brother?

Me: No, she shot her brother in a William Hartnell episode. He wasn't the

Brigadier back then.

**Sue**: So they aren't related then? **Me**: Please, forget I said anything.

The next day, the Brigadier is still stuck in a helicopter.

**Sue**: Where the hell were they flying him from? Los Angeles?

Me: They stopped in London overnight.

Sue: WHY?

Me: Maybe he has a weak bladder. How the hell should I know?

A man named Warmsly is overseeing the excavation at Carbury's archaeological dig.

Sue: It's Rob Shearman meets Tony Robinson.

The Doctor finds a carving which tells them to dig in a specific location. The carving is written in the Doctor's handwriting. Sue doesn't bat an eyelid at this.

Meanwhile the Brigadier is still in a fucking helicopter...

Sue: What is this? Treasure Hunt?

Me: It's the little known spin-off Challenge Alistair.

Morgaine decides it's time she made her presence felt.

**Sue**: I love her costume. And the direction is really good; lots of tight, dramatic close-ups.

Morgaine attacks the Brigadier's helicopter with what can only be described as magic.

**Sue**: That looked great. What an impressive stunt.

The helicopter crashes, and as the Brigadier flings himself away from the explosion, he desperately covers up his bald patch with his hat. Sue thinks this is endearing.

**Sue**: The script is very good. It has just the right balance of humour and excitement. I really like Ben Aaronaranovitch (sic).

Lavel, the helicopter pilot, has injured her leg.

**Sue**: She's very attractive for a helicopter pilot. Actually, it's a very

attractive cast all round. **Me**: What? Even him?

I'm pointing at Warmsly, who's currently quoting Tennyson to anyone who'll listen.

**Sue**: Has he been taken over by the bad guys? Has he turned evil? *What is going on*?

The Doctor and Ace enter a tunnel which has been buried underground.

**Sue**: That's lovely pipe work. *Doctor Who* was really good at making circular tunnels during this period of the show.

Having said that, the interior disappoints.

Sue: It looks like a bloody fun fair ride.

#### BATTLEFIELD

The Doctor and Ace eventually enter an ancient spacecraft.

**Sue**: This is more like it. Nice crane shot, too. Yes, this is *very* good indeed

Ace removes a sword from a stone plinth and the Doctor chastises her for disturbing something.

**Sue**: I think screaming at her might disturb something else. Keep your bloody voice down!

The ship's automated defence system traps Ace in a water tank and then it attacks the Doctor with a CGI snake. Cue credits.

**Sue**: Great cliffhanger. The snake was terrible, but the thought of Ace drowning is very disturbing.

As soon as this episode finished, I showed Sue the Water Tank feature on the DVD. Her eyes glazed over during the first couple of minutes, but when she realised that things were about to go dangerously pear shaped, she was gripped.

Sue: It turns out that Sylvester McCoy was a hero in real life, too.

#### Part Three

**Sue**: They've left the crack in the tank in shot. Oh well, they had to make the most out of almost killing her, I suppose.

Ace is propelled out of the tank and eventually emerges from Lake Vortigen with Excalibur clasped in her hand.

Sue: That was clever. Corny, but clever.

When the Brigadier rescues the Doctor, he doesn't seem bothered that his old friend has changed his appearance once again.

**Sue**: He's seen it all before. Nothing fazes the Brig. He doesn't need to read a file to know what's what. He never should have retired in the first place.

Morgaine arrives at the hotel and proceeds to confuse Sue by a) killing a helicopter pilot and b) healing a blind woman. In the same scene.

Elizabeth: I can see. Patrick, I can see!

**Sue**: (as Elizabeth) Oh Christ, you really are butt-ugly, Patrick. I thought he was kidding. Shit.

Ancelyn and Bambera enjoy their own mini-adventure in a 2CV, and you can cut the sexual tension with a broadsword, and when they get involved in a firefight, Sue sings-along (ironically) to Keff's incidental music. I say ironically because by the time she reaches the final sting, I think she's really, really angry.

Knight: Magnificent!

Sue: You need to get out more, love.

A UNIT soldier orders Elizabeth out of the hotel.

Me: She's been on the phone to her solicitors. Her husband told her that

he looked like Robert Redford.

**Sue**: He's not *that* bad; it's just that he's in an episode with lots of really

attractive men.

Me: For fuck's sake, Sue! I am still here, you know.

The Doctor stares Warmsly and Patrick into submission.

Sue: Did he just hypnotise them?

Me: Pretty much.

**Sue**: So the Doctor is becoming more like the Master? I'm not sure how I feel about that. It also begs the question - why hasn't he done this a million times before? Like every single time he's been arrested for

something he hasn't done?

Me: Maybe he's been practising in his room.

#### **BATTLEFIELD**

Sue: It's lazy scriptwriting, that's what it is.

The Brigadier has a present for the Doctor.

**Sue**: I never liked Bessie. It's a toff's car. It won't suit him; this Doctor would be better off in a Morris Minor.

Ace also takes the piss out of the Doctor's car, until Bessie leaves at such tremendous speed, it leaves burning tyre tracks in its wake.

**Sue**: There was no need for that. It's childish. This doesn't feel like proper *Doctor Who* to me. It feels like a cheap knock-off.

Back at the pub, Ace draws a chalk circle around herself and Shou Yuing.

Sue: Draw it closer to the bar. You might get thirsty.

They huddle together on the cold stone floor.

**Sue**: She should have drawn that circle around the sofa. She didn't think this through.

A battle rages outside. At one point, a UNIT solider fires a rocket that manages to take out a knight and one of his colleagues at the same time.

**Sue**: Oops! You know, they did this sort of thing so much better in the 1970s.

Mordred and Ancelyn prepare to fight to the death.

**Sue**: They had excellent dental care back in King Arthur's time. Lovely teeth, the pair of them.

The Doctor places himself between the knights.

Sue: That was a bit over the top. He sounds like he did when he was trying

to stop Ace from drowning. I think it's gone to his head.

The episode ends with Morgaine summoning the beast known as the Destroyer.

**Sue**: That looks really good, actually. Funny colour for a monster, though. Shouldn't it be green?

#### **Part Four**

The Doctor threatens to decapitate Mordred with his umbrella, but Mordred calls his bluff because he knows Merlin won't kill anyone.

Sue: He blows planets up now. I'd watch out if I were you.

Morgaine sacrifices her son for the greater bad.

Sue: Well I didn't expect that! What a bitch!

The battle continues to rage on a misty field.

**Sue**: More mist! More mist! That way we won't be able to see how naff these fight scenes are. The director can handle the big speeches and character moments, but he can't direct action to save his life.

The Doctor would rather give Excalibur to Morgaine than lose Ace.

**Sue**: He really cares about her. It's a different relationship to what we've seen before. It's definitely more caring.

The Doctor enters an interstitial vortex and Ace follows him, despite being told to stay put.

Ace: Geronimo!

**Sue**: That's interesting. Ace wore a fez the other week. I think she must have had a big impact on the Doctor because he can't stop copying her

# **BATTLEFIELD**

when he turns into Matt Smith.

The Brigadier shoots the Destroyer.

**Sue**: The Brigadier hasn't learned anything, has he? He just barges in and starts shooting everything. The Doctor's had no influence on him whatsoever.

The Destroyer throws the Brigadier out of a window, which appals the Doctor.

**Sue**: And I suppose shooting that thing without so much as a warning was okay? That's a bit hypocritical, isn't it?

*The Destroyer is let loose.* 

**Sue**: I have to be honest with you, I haven't got the faintest idea what's going on any more. I'm totally lost.

The Destroyer wants to devour our world.

Sue: How long will that take, exactly? He's going to need a very large plate.

The Doctor prepares to face the beast with a gun that's been loaded with silver bullets, but the Brigadier knocks him out so he can do the job himself.

**Sue**: There was no need for that. I'm sure the Doctor would have agreed if he'd asked him. That's the Brig's job, isn't it? To do the Doctor's dirty work for him.

The Brigadier tells the Destroyer to leave his world.

Sue: You go, Brig!

The Brigadier does the best he can. And his best is pretty good, actually, because the Destroyer is, er, destroyed. For a moment it looks like the Brig

could be dead too, but don't worry about it, he's fine.

**Sue**: Good. I mean, why would you want to kill the Brig? That would be stupid.

The Brig can't wait to get back to his wife, Doris.

**The Doctor**: So she caught you in the end.

Sue: I think his first wife caught him having an affair and kicked him out.

The Doctor discovers a note he left for himself in the future/past.

**Sue**: That's the sort of thing the new series would do. This Doctor is very crafty.

And it isn't over yet...

**Sue**: This would be so much better without any music or fight scenes. Unfortunately, that's all there is to it.

The Doctor manages to talk Morgaine out of launching a nuclear missile.

Sue: What a great speech. I really liked that. It felt like he meant it.

The story is neatly wrapped up at the Brigadier's mansion.

Sue: This is very sweet.

Me: Are you joking? It's a sitcom ending!

Sue: Yeah, the incidental music is very sitcom, but at least it's appropriate

for a change.

#### The Score

**Sue**: I didn't like that very much. It was very slow. The only decent things about it were the Brig and the witch. The director couldn't handle the action scenes, and I didn't understand the plot at all. You know, ever since

#### **BATTLEFIELD**

we saw that one with the Daleks, I thought *Doctor Who* was going to be good again. But it isn't, is it? It's all over the fucking place. I was hoping we would finish this blog on a high.

**Me**: Go on, say it. **Sue**: Shame

4/10

**COMMENT**: "By comparing me to a character in the sublime *Battlefield*, Sue has made me very happy. Oh. Hang on." - Rob Shearman

**NOTES**: Sue enjoyed the Water Tank feature on the DVD so much, she started showing it to her students when she covered Health and Safety protocols in her TV Studio classes at university. So this wasn't a complete waste of time, after all.

# SHOST LIGHT BLOGGED: 24 March 2013

#### Part One

Ghost Light begins in a Victorian house, where Mrs Pritchard is serving dinner with a copy of The Times.

Sue: This has a new series feel to it. It's scary and a bit weird.

Weird it may be, but Gabriel Chase does have its advantages.

Sue: Look at all that lovely panelling. Where did they film this?

**Me**: Television Centre.

Sue: No way! Are you sure?

The TARDIS materialises in the attic. Sue criticises the Doctor for parking his TARDIS with its door facing a wall, a split second before Ace does the very same thing.

**Sue**: Ace is looking very feminine this week. And they must have been somewhere warm recently because she's got a tan.

Gabriel Chase is full of stuffed animals.

**Sue**: I bet the monsters turn out to be stuffed animals and the Doctor is attacked by an emu. Am I right?

The Doctor and Ace stumble across an insane big game hunter, and when the Doctor measures how radioactive the poor fellow is, Redvers complains about the damn tsetse flies.

Sue: I don't get that.

Oh dear. If she doesn't get that reference, Ghost Light doesn't stand a

# **GHOST LIGHT**

chance.

Meanwhile, down in the cellar, a Neanderthal named Nimrod is checking on a strange creature in a cell.

Sue: I'm confused.

Me: Really?

Sue: What's Gollum doing in the basement? And who's he? And him?

What is going on? Is this supposed to make sense?

Me: Just go with it, love.

Sue: I think I'll concentrate on the set design. It's gorgeous. Are you sure

this wasn't filmed in a real house?

The Doctor and Ace are introduced to Reverend Matthews in the drawing room.

Sue: It's a Victorian Noddy Holder.

They are joined by Josiah Smith. Josiah is so cool, he wears sunglasses at night.

**Sue**: They are Victorian rock stars. That's it, isn't it? That's why these don't get on. He's David Bowie and he's Noddy Holder.

When all hell breaks loose upstairs, Mrs Pritchard drags Ace away by her hair

Sue: Ooh, what a bitch!

Sue notices that Mrs Pritchard is played by a famous actress. When I mention Sylvia Sims, she tells me that the name rings a bell. A very tiny bell. A very tiny bell that's been muted.

**Sue**: I haven't got the faintest idea what's going on, but I want to find out. It's very intriguing and it's very atmospheric. And wood. There's lots and lots of wood.

When she's not staring at the wood, she's chuckling at the script. Sadly, this means that this particular blog entry has been a nightmare to write up. It also demonstrates why we won't be blogging the new series any time soon. For example:

Josiah: I hope you have a taste for calves' brains, Doctor.

**Sue**: That was a good line.

Matthews: Infernal telephonic machines...

**Sue**: That was very funny.

The Doctor: I know a nice little restaurant in the Khyber Pass.

Sue: Ha! Brilliant!

Ace isn't thrilled when she learns that Gabriel Chase is in Perivale.

Sue: So what? Perivale can't be that bad, can it? It isn't Croydon for a start.

The Doctor has taken Ace back to a haunted house which she visited in her youth.

Sue: Hang on a minute... Should the Doctor really be doing this?

The Doctor tells her that we all have a universe of our own terrors to face.

**Sue**: That was definitely their best scene together. It's feels like I'm watching a proper drama again. This isn't kid's TV any more. And Ace looks good in a tux.

Ace decides to make a run for it.

**Sue**: Why doesn't Ace run back to the TARDIS and lock herself in? Why is she taking a lift down to the cellar? Why would she do that? Having said that, this is bloody exciting.

Ace finds herself in a stone spaceship, where she is threatened by a menagerie of monsters dressed in dinner suits.

# **GHOST LIGHT**

Sue: Ace won't scream. She definitely won't scream. Not Ace. She won't.

Cue credits.

Sue: Told you.

And then Sue sighed.

**Sue**: I haven't got a clue what that was about but I really enjoyed it. The script is very funny, the acting is very good, the direction is great, the lighting is perfect and the sets are wonderful (if they really are sets). In fact, it was all going so well until those daft monsters turned up.

#### **Part Two**

**Sue**: I don't mind Sylvester winking at me any more. I still can't stand this version of the theme music, though.

Nimrod keeps the monstrous husks at bay with a lantern.

Sue: Okay, this is getting a bit weird now.

The creature known as Control begins freaking out.

**Sue**: I can't understand a single word that thing is saying. Is it important? **Me**: Not even Mark Ayres can mix the dialogue so it makes sense.

When the Doctor and Josiah arrive in the cellar, Josiah suddenly gains the upper hand.

Josiah: You're so smug and self-satisfied, Doctor.

Sue: Is it the Master?

I pause the DVD.

Me: Seriously? Is that the best you've got? We're ten minutes into Part Two

and you've hardly said a word.

**Sue**: That's because I'm really enjoying it. Having said that, if I wasn't enjoying it, I wouldn't be able to get a word in edgeways. It's moving very fast.

It's true. Unless I stop the DVD after every line of dialogue, getting anything coherent out of Sue is practically impossible. For example, I'm looking at the notes I made for this episode, but I can't for the life of me work out what she's actually referring to. It could be anything. Sorry.

**Sue**: I'm really confused. **Sue**: What does it all mean?

Sue: Eh?

Sue: Okay, this is fucking mad.

Sue: Yes, that's very funny but... WHAT THE FUCK?

Ah, the last one was definitely her reaction to Reverend Matthews turning into an ape.

**Sue**: I'm lost but I've decided to go with it anyway. I can't fault the performances, or the direction, and even if it doesn't make any sense, it's still very entertaining. I can't wait to find out what it's all about.

A little later, not long after Detective Mackenzie is found asleep in a drawer, Sue decides she has it all worked out. I pause the DVD so she can explain it to me.

Sue: Right, I've got it. It's just like that Bruce Willis movie.

Me: What, Die Hard?

Sue: No, the one where the little boy sees dead people and Bruce Willis is

dead the whole time.

Oh shut up, the film is almost 20 years old.

**Sue**: I think that's what's happening here. They're all dead, but they *think* they're alive. It's like purgatory or something like that.

# **GHOST LIGHT**

**Me**: Some people have described watching *Ghost Light* as purgatory so you could be onto something.

When Ace changes into something more comfortable, the Doctor definitely approves.

**Sue**: It was nice of him to notice for a change. Doctors don't normally do that. They have a very special bond, these two.

**Me**: Yeah, it was very sweet of him to trick her into visiting the one place she never wanted to come back to. He's lovely.

**Sue**: It's like he's testing her. You can definitely see Ace's influence on Rose and Amy Pond. I think I'm probably more used to this kind of companion.

Nimrod has a flashback to a time when the ice floods swamped the pasture lands and he herded mammoths sunwards to find new grazing.

Mackenzie: Tricky things, mammoths.

**Sue**: What a great line.

The Doctor: It's very, very old. Perhaps even older.

**Sue**: What a great line. **Ace**: Where's Nimrod?

**The Doctor**: Gone to see a man about a god.

Sue: That was a great line.

You get the general idea.

**Sue**: Okay, I've definitely got it, now. This isn't a real house. It's a time travelling zoo. They're travelling backwards in time - that's why all the dead animals are coming back to life, and that's why the ghosts think they exist even though they don't. It's not that difficult when you put your mind to it.

Control is up to something in the cellar.

Sue: Actually, maybe I'm wrong. I can't get my head around this at all.

Me: Stop guessing, then.

When Ace and Inspector Mackenzie investigate the attic, they find inanimate versions of Mrs Pritchard and Gwendoline hidden under some sheets

Sue: Oh... I get it. They're robots!

Me: Stop guessing!

They also uncover a display cabinet containing a Homo Victorianus Ineptus.

Sue: Eh? But... but... why? Eh?

Josiah emerges from behind a screen...

Sue: EH?

And the episode ends with a burst of Light.

Sue: Okay, I give up. This doesn't make any sense at all. It's bloody good,

though.

### Part Three

Let there be Light!

Sue: Oh look, it's Kosh.

It seems that Sue can remember episodes of Babylon 5 from 20 years ago but she can't remember episodes of Doctor Who from last week.

**Sue**: It's Kosh meets Liberace. Look at him stretching his fingers. He can't wait to play the piano again.

The Doctor disperses Light by gurning at it.

# **GHOST LIGHT**

**Sue**: I really liked that. I really believed the Doctor was in serious trouble there.

Sweet Jesus! I'm a McCoy fan and even I can't watch that scene.

**Sue**: This Light person must be very powerful. The Doctor looks very worried. That isn't like him at all.

Meanwhile, Control begins to evolve into...

Sue: Is it Petula Clark?

And then Ace has a flashback to 1983. Yes, 1983. Not 1978 or 1977 or 1984. It's 1983. Please, I beg you, this blog isn't an excuse for you to discuss your pet theories about UNIT dating, or even Heartbeat dating, which is fucking niche, even for me. Okay Thanks. Sorry. Where were we? Oh, yes, Ace is having a flashback to 1983...

Sue: Did they drop acid in her tea?

And when the flashback is over...

**Sue**: That was excellent. Proper drama for a change. **Me**: It's proper drama if you've just taken some LSD!

Josiah wants to assassinate Queen Victoria.

**Sue**: EH? Where the hell did that come from? Isn't this confusing enough already? What the actual fuck?

Light has dismantled a maid to see how it worked.

Sue: (Grimacing) Okay, so I guess they're not robots, then.

Control finally evolves into a Victorian ladylike.

**Sue**: It's *My Fair Lady* meets *The Breakfast Club*.

Sue sits slack-jawed throughout dinner. Which is good, I guess. In fact, the next time she has anything interesting to say is when Ace almost gets her head blown off.

Sue: Shit! I really thought they'd killed Ace!

Nimrod, Control and Redvers depart for pastures new, along with their devolving mascot, Josiah (Sue doesn't think the premise has enough legs to go to a series). Sadly, Light can't handle the stress and disappears in a clap of thunder.

**Sue**: He was very good. I like the way he started off sounding like Tinkerbell, but then he got angrier and angrier as it went on. I can't criticise the acting at all.

Cue credits.

Sue: That was fucking mental. I'm sorry but I don't know what else to say.

At least she said it with a smile.

Me: Any questions?

Sue: Well...

Me: On second thoughts, give it a score first. Then we'll discuss the bits

you don't understand.

Sue: It would be a lot quicker if we discussed the bits I did understand.

### The Score

Sue: I can't believe I'm going to say this, but it should have been four parts. It was a bit rushed at the end, and that's probably why it doesn't make a lot of sense. However, I did get the general gist of it, and it really drew me in. The problem was the script - there was far too much going on - but it was very clever at the same time. Yes, it was an odd one. But I

# **GHOST LIGHT**

liked it.

# 8/10

Sue: Is that too high?

Me: Not at all. It's probably my favourite *Doctor Who* story. It's definitely

in my top three. There, I've said it

Sue: You didn't act like it was your favourite story.

Me: I didn't want to influence you.

Sue: I can't give it a 10. Sorry. I would if it made sense.

Me: That's fine. I'm happy with the eight.

Sue: I'd watch it again because I bet it makes more sense the second time.

I reach for the remote.

**Sue**: Not now, you idiot. In about 10 years time.

We compromise and watch the behind the scenes documentary on the DVD instead. Andrew Cartmel tries to explain the plot. And fails.

**Sue**: At the end of the day, I'm not that bothered. It's like *Lost* - it doesn't make any sense but I enjoyed the ride. Let's just leave it at that.

**COMMENT:** "[Let's] not turn the [comment section] into a gladiatorial arena over whether the backgrounds on the back of Weetabix packets were canon, or whether the Janis Thorn was a metaphor for Hinchcliffe's attitude to Friedmanite economics..." - Polarity Reversed

# THE CURSE OF FENRIC

BLOGGED: 5 April 2013

Choosing which version of The Curse of Fenric to watch was left to the blog's readers to decide. However, the poll results were split right down the middle, with 51% urging us to stick to the broadcast version and 49% telling us to watch the Special Edition instead (you know, the one that actually makes sense). So in the end, I let Sue decide...

Sue: Which one is the shortest?Me: The broadcast version.

Sue: That one, then.

#### Part One

Sue: The Curse of Fenric - a proper Doctor Who title for a change. Have we

had Ian Briggs before?

Me: Yes, he wrote Dragonfire.

Sue: Oh fuck.

Something mysterious is lurking beneath the waves...

**Sue**: That monster is a bit wooden.

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

Sue: I've seen better. Is this a sequel to the one with the Loch Ness

Monster?

I can't tell if she's joking or not.

**Sue**: I'm sure I've heard you listening to this incidental music before. You are such a geek.

The TARDIS materialises in Northumbria during the Second World War.

# THE CURSE OF FENRIC

**Sue**: I love the Doctor's duffle coat. I've got a coat like that, except mine is bright orange.

The Doctor and Ace are immediately surrounded by armed soldiers, although these troops are easily bamboozled.

Sue: What a bunch of morons. Is this a UNIT training camp?

A Russian task force decides to make things easier for the viewers back at home by promising to speak English from this point on.

**Sue:** Thank God for that. The subtitles looked like Teletext.

The Doctor and Ace are introduced to Dr Judson (who reminds Sue of Mark Heap from Friday Night Dinner for some inexplicable reason), and the Doctor forges his credentials on a nearby typewriter.

**Sue**: What a faff on. No wonder he invents psychic paper. So is this supposed to be Bletchley Park, then?

Me: It is very similar.

Sue: Good. I like the historicals.

A Russian soldier is attacked by something on the beach.

Sue: Where's his fucking gun?

Meanwhile, not too far away, outside St. Jude's church...

**Sue**: Oh it's *him...* Hang on a minute... What the hell is *he* doing in *Doctor Who*?

Once she gets over the initial shock, and realises that Nicholas Parsons can act, she calms down a bit.

**Sue**: Nicolas Parsons has the look of a silver-haired Patrick McGoohan in this.

That's not something you hear every day.

**Sue**: Millington doesn't sound like a very German name to me. And why is he wearing a British Naval uniform? Everything is a bit fucked up here, if you ask me.

The Doctor and Ace follow Judson as he attempts to decipher some ancient carvings in a crypt.

Sue: It's very nicely lit, this. Is this in a TV studio?

Me: No, it's all on location.

Sue: I thought so. This is so much more believable. Why didn't they make

all of them like this? It's irritating.

*The Doctor and Ace examine the gravestones in the parish cemetery.* 

Sue: Millington's name is on that gravestone. I bet that's significant.

Me: You know, I'd never noticed that before.

Meanwhile, two evacuees named Jean and Phyllis aren't very happy when Miss Hardaker won't let them go swimming at Maidens' Point, mainly because she can hear the terrible lost cries of girls who went to that place with evil in their hearts.

**Sue**: You can hear them screaming out their orgasms for miles around. It's enough to put you off your dinner.

The Doctor and Reverend Wainwright discuss the Viking inscriptions.

**Sue**: He's surprisingly good, actually. I didn't know he could act. I thought he only did game shows. I mean, he's *really* good.

Finally, The Curse of Fenric begins to work its magic, and Sue shuts up for a bit and chews her nails instead.

Sue: It's really good, this.

# THE CURSE OF FENRIC

Phyllis and Jean find a strange object on the beach which feels "all funny and tingly".

**Sue**: One of the harlots left their vibrator behind. The beach is littered with them.

A Russian solider is relieved when he isn't forced to shoot Phyllis and Jean in the face.

Sue: I bet this turns into Letter to Brezhnev.

The Doctor and Ace encounter Kathleen Dudman and her baby, Audrey.

**Sue**: That's Ace's mum. **Me**: Don't be ridiculous.

**Sue**: It's like *Back to the Future*, but with Nazis.

Me: Well, there aren't any Nazis in this either, but yeah.

The episode ends as the Russians capture the Doctor and Ace on the beach.

**Sue**: I'm sorry I'm not saying very much, but I'm enjoying it too much. That cliffhanger was a bit shit, though.

#### Part Two

**Sue**: Isn't it weird that you can't hear the soldiers creeping up on them until they're less than one foot away? How did they sneak up on Ace and the Doctor on all that shingle?

Deep beneath the water, a corpse suddenly opens its eyes.

**Sue**: Scary Matthew Broderick zombie. You know, that would have been a much better cliffhanger.

**Me**: This is why some people wanted us to watch the Special Edition. The broadcast version was hacked to bits and scenes were rearranged to fit the running time. I think the original intention was to end Part One with the

corpse opening its eyes.

Sue: Is it too late to watch the Special Edition?

Me: Yes.

Mr Judson and Mrs Crane are busy bickering in the crypt.

Sue: These two are hilarious. I could watch them all day.

Meanwhile Phyllis and Jean are busy flirting with the British Army.

Sue: What a pair of slappers. I feel sorry for that old lady, now.

And then Sue identifies a problem:

Sue: This story is moving too fast. Some of the scenes are over in a flash.

Even the new series doesn't move as fast as this does.

Me: Is it as fast as the second-hand on a watch?

**Sue**: What are you banging on about now?

Reverend Wainwright is practising a sermon back at the church.

**Wainwright**: When I became a man, I put away childish things. Now abideth faith, hope, love. These three. And the greatest of these is... **Sue**: If you know the answer, you could win this week's star prize!

The Doctor and Ace are introduced to Millington's fountain of death.

**Sue**: Is he mining swarfega? He's like the Brigadier's older, nastier brother, isn't he?

Millington wants the Russians to steal the Ultima code-breaking machine so they can detonate a bomb in the Kremlin the moment it translates a particular word. And that word is 'love'.

Sue: I tell you what, Neil - it's bloody good, this.

# THE CURSE OF FENRIC

Jean and Phyllis decide to go swimming at Maidens' Point, where the water is surprisingly warm.

Sue: I bet it fucking isn't. If it was, they'd take their fucking clothes off.

An eerie mist begins to roll in...

Sue: This reminds me of *The Mist*.

**Me**: You mean *The Fog.* **Sue**: Yes, that's the one.

Commander Millington wants all the chess sets on the base destroyed.

**Sue**: There have been a lot of references to chess in *Doctor Who* recently. What's that all about, then?

Kathleen asks the Doctor if he has a family of his own. He tells her he doesn't know and Kathleen assumes he must be referring to the war.

Sue: Yeah. Bloody Time War.

Jean and Phyllis, who have been transformed into vampiric creatures, entice a Russian solider into the water.

**Sue**: This isn't for kids. The monsters are bad enough without them ramming sexual innuendoes down our throats.

Phyllis and Jean test Wainwright's faith, and it turns out he stopped believing in God when the British started dropping bombs on the Germans.

**Sue**: This is pretty heavy stuff. I have to say, the script is very good. And Nicholas Parsons can come back any time he likes.

Strange creatures begin to emerge from the sea...

Sue: It's definitely turned into *The Fog*, now. This must be the cliffhanger.

And... cut.

But no, the episode ends with yet another close-up of Sylvester McCoy's slightly perturbed face.

Sue: What a stupid place to end it.

Me: I knew we should have watched the Special Edition.

### Part Three

Wainwright warns the Doctor about the local legends surrounding his church, including Count Dracula.

**Sue**: Dracula came ashore at Whitby, mate. This looks nothing like

Whitby. Is he having a laugh?

Me: Our very first date was in Whitby, practically 20 years ago to the day.

Do you remember?

Sue: Yes, I do. I still have the bite marks.

The Haemovores converge on the Russian troops.

**Sue**: Is this a magic beach which lets you sneak up on people without them hearing you? Because that's the only explanation I can come up with. Also, they can't be vampires because this is broad daylight. They're sea monsters.

Ace used to think she'd never get married, but now she's not so sure.

**Sue**: Eh? Where the hell did that come from? I'm telling you now, love, the Doctor isn't interested in you like that.

The soldiers take on the advancing Haemovores.

**Sue**: They're more like zombies than vampires. Just shoot them in the sodding head.

### THE CURSE OF FENRIC

Ace heads for the top of St. Jude's church, which she then immediately descends again with the help of a rope ladder she's been carrying around with her the whole time.

Sue: That's handy.

**Me**: She did say that she wanted to go rock climbing. **Sue**: Who goes rock climbing with a fucking ladder?

And speaking of ladders...

Sue: I just saw Ace's suspenders.Me: I've never noticed that before.Sue: Of course you haven't, Neil.

Ace grapples with a Haemovore.

**Sue**: Oh dear. I just saw some flesh under the mask. That's a shame. They should have gone for a proper zombie look instead of lumpy rubber. It would have been even scarier.

The Russians open fire on the creatures.

Sue: How many more times? Shoot them in the fucking head!

The Doctor keeps the Haemovores at bay with a little faith.

Me: Did you notice what he was saying under his breath?

Of course she didn't. So I rewind the scene.

**Sue**: No, sorry, I still haven't got a clue.

Me: He's reciting the names of his companions.

Sue: How the hell was I supposed to notice that? That's ridiculous.

It's obvious Ace and Sorin are attracted to each other.

**Sue**: I told you it was *Letter to Brezhnev*. It's a bit out of the blue, but I don't blame her. Is this Ace's last story? It is, isn't it? You can tell.

The Doctor tells Sorin that having faith in practically anything can defeat the Haemovores.

Sue: Would playing George Michael work?

Millington places Sorin under arrest.

**Sue**: Is it just me or does this bloke always sound drunk to you? Is he supposed to be pissed?

When the battle breaks out, Sue finally notices the incidental music.

**Sue**: The stings in the action sequences are a bit Keffy. The music in the emotional scenes is really good, though.

Speaking of which...

Me: Dudman's a dead man.

Sue: I still think that's Ace's grandmother.

The Doctor tells Ace that they are up against evil before the dawn of time. In fact, Fenric isn't even its real name.

Sue: Could it be the Great Intelligence?

Me: What did you just say?

**Sue**: You know. From the new series. Isn't it the same thing? **Me**: I hadn't considered that before. You could be onto something.

Ace seduces a soldier so the Doctor can sneak into the barracks.

**Sue**: First she's the Doctor's own personal terrorist, and now he's pimping her out!

### THE CURSE OF FENRIC

Wainwright confronts Phyllis and Jean, but his faith isn't strong enough to hold them back.

**Sue**: Not. For. Kids. I am looking forward to seeing Nicholas Parsons playing a zombie in the next episode, though.

The chains of Fenric have been shattered and Ace points at Commander Millington.

Sue: I knew it! He's a bloody weirdo!

But they are both wrong. Fenric has inhabited another body. Cue credits.

Me: Go on, then, say it.

Sue: Is it the Great Intelligence?

### Part Four (ish)

Sue wanted to know more about the Special Edition between episodes. Specifically, she wanted to know if it makes more sense than the original (she's beginning to struggle with the plot). So it was at this point that I decided to say "To hell with it!" and I stuck the Special Edition in the PS3 and cued it up to where the original recap would have been. Which means we have failed to satisfy anyone who voted in our poll. Result!

Anyway, the Doctor, Ace and Sorin are facing a firing squad, but Russian troops come to their rescue.

**Sue**: I find it interesting that the Doctor isn't siding with the British. I like that. And we didn't like the Russians very much in the 1980s, did we?

Me: No, apart from Sting.

Sue: So it was probably quite brave back then.

Judson/Fenric asks Jean and Phyllis where the Ancient One is.

**Sue**: Who's the Ancient One when he's at home? Have I missed something important?

Two marines shoot at Phyllis and Jean but they keep on coming.

**Sue**: Aim for the head! Kids would have been terrified of this. This is proper scary *Doctor Who*.

The base is battered by a freak storm.

**Sue**: I like the rain. It adds atmosphere.

Thank God we're watching the regraded version, because the original looks ridiculous.

Sue: What did you say?

Me: Sorry, did I say that out loud?

She even likes the fight scenes.

**Sue**: This is much better than those knights pissing about the other week. The direction is much better. It's quite exciting, this.

Judson isn't very impressed with Commander Millington.

**Judson**: I can see you've never been handicapped by great intelligence.

Sue: See! Great Intelligence. How can you not know it's the Great

Intelligence, Neil. He just said it!

Me: To be fair, I'm not sure if that line is in the broadcast version.

**Sue**: I don't care. He just said it.

The Ancient One meets Judson.

Sue: It looks okay, I suppose. His mouth is a bit wonky, though. He looks like he's had a stroke.

The Doctor and Ace head to Millington's office to retrieve the last surviving chess set, but it's been rigged to explode.

# THE CURSE OF FENRIC

**Sue:** Wow! Best explosion on *Doctor Who* ever. McCoy nearly took out the camera with his umbrella.

Ace and Sorin only have eyes for each other.

**Sue**: Get a room! She is so leaving at the end of this. It's so obvious. She could do a lot worse, though.

Sorin is confronted by Haemovores.

Jean: You don't have the emblem this time.

Sue: USE THE ONE ON YOUR HAT, YOU IDIOT! Oh, he didn't need it after all

The Doctor sets up the chess set.

**Sue**: That table would look great if you sanded it down and used some Briwax on it. Trust me, it would look magnificent.

Ace confides in Kathleen.

**Ace**: I don't like dark buildings. There was one in Perivale, an old, empty house full of noises. Evil. Things I didn't understand.

Sue: Is she still upset about the other week?

**Me**: I think the plan was to show this one before *Ghost Light*. This would have led in to it, I think.

**Sue**: This makes it look like she's still fucked up over it and the Doctor has messed with her head.

And then, as Kathleen escapes with her baby...

Sue: She's your mum, she's your mum, she's your mum...

Sue notices that Judson/Fenric/The Great Intelligence is blinking quite a lot.

**Sue**: He's having a terrible time with those contact lenses, the poor sod.

Phyllis and Jean are no longer required and the Ancient One turns them to dust.

**Sue**: Not. For. Kids. Excellent effect, though. Even though I don't have a clue how he did that.

The British and Russians decide to work together.

**Sue**: I think those two will make a lovely couple. Seriously, this is *Letter to Brezhnev* meets *Night of the Living Dead*.

The Doctor tells the Ancient One some home truths.

**Sue**: Honestly, that is one hell of a wonky mouth.

When Ace works out what the winning chess move is, she rushes off to tell someone.

**Sue**: She isn't going to tell the bad guy, is she? Because that would be completely stupid.

However, Fenric/The Great Intelligence controls more than one pawn in this game - Sorin.

**Sue**: Looks like the honeymoon is definitely off.

It turns out that Kathleen's baby is - wait for it - Ace's mum. Who saw that coming?

**Sue**: It's very timey-wimey, this. It's so much like the new series, I keep expecting David Tennant to walk in.

My notes from this point on consist of:

Sue: Ohhhh...
Sue: Ahhhh...

# THE CURSE OF FENRIC

Sue: Eh?

She doesn't really understand what the hell just happened, but she didn't half enjoy it. Ace is upset, I'm upset that Ace is upset, Mark Ayres almost makes me cry, and Sue doesn't pipe up again until the Doctor tells Ace to go for a swim.

**Sue**: I don't get that at all. She'll catch her death. That's borderline irresponsible, but given the things the Doctor has made her do recently, it's the least of his crimes.

### The Score

**Sue**: My only problem is it didn't make any sense. It felt disjointed, and the plot was a bit of a mess, but - and it's a big but - I enjoyed it. It was exciting. It reminded me of the new series; I mean, you've even got a companion who turns out to be a trap set by the Great Intelligence. The Moff's series is basically a sequel to this story, but without the endless references to chess. Anyway, I really enjoyed it. It looks like we're going to end on a high, after all.

# 8/10

Me: I bet the Special Edition would have scored a 10.

Sue: Tough.

**COMMENT:** "As someone who was indeed a kid when this was first broadcast, I can confirm that it felt like the greatest thing on TV EVER at the time." - Matt Bartley

**NOTES:** I can't believe I overturned the results of a democratic poll because I didn't like what it had to say. Still, it was only advisory.

# SURVIVAL BLOGGED: 8 April 2013

#### Part One

For the very last time - and for one episode only - we are joined by Nicol and Gary.

**Sue**: *Survival is* a funny title considering it's the last one.

**Nicol**: Did they know it was the last one when they were making it? **Me**: They suspected as much. The programme was living on borrowed time.

Nicol is too busy laughing at an animatronic cat to listen to me. Gary sighs deeply as he folds his arms a little tighter.

**Me**: I don't know what you're laughing at, Nicol. I remember when you were obsessed with *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*, and their fake cat wasn't much better.

Nicol: You leave Salem out of this.

Sue: Ooh, a crane shot. I'm loving this already.

Nicol: The opening scene reminds me of the new series. That's where the

theme music should go - just after the man disappears.

Sue: The last few stories have reminded me of the new series a lot. Oh

look, a Renault 5; I had one of those.

Some children are playing football in a park.

Sue: This is very eerie. It reminds me of one of those Public Safety films

from the seventies.

Me: Never talk to strange cats. Yes, I remember it well.

Meanwhile, in a tent...

Nicol: Is it the Master?

# **SURVIVAL**

Sue: Hey, that's my line!

The Doctor has brought Ace to Perivale so she can catch up with her mates, and she begins searching for them at her local youth club.

Me: Look, Sue. It's boy band training.

Gary likes this scene. A lot.

**Nicol**: Did people really look like that in the eighties?

Me: Yes. I wouldn't leave the house without my backwards-facing baseball

cap on.

Nicol: I'm glad I was still a baby when people dressed like this.

Thankfully, I don't remember it at all.

A self-defence instructor named Patterson tells Ace that a handful of teenagers have recently gone missing from Perivale, including her. Sadly, the suspense is shattered by the howls of derision aimed at the fake cat, and then the Doctor goes shopping.

Sue: Ooh, it's him. And him.

Gary: It's them.

**Sue**: Yes, wait, don't tell me... I know this... Penn and Teller.

I'm laughing so hard, I have to pause the DVD.

**Gary**: It's The Management. **Me**: It's Hale and Pace!

Sue: Same thing.

Hale and Pace advise the Doctor on the best variety of cat food to buy.

**Sue**: Our cats would turn their noses up at those brands. Oh, I like the way the Doctor listened to that lump of cheese. That was a very Doctorish thing to do.

Gary sighs.

Sue: I really like the direction, too. It's really good, this.

However, she soon changes her mind when Hale (or is it Pace?) finds a cat dead in their stockroom.

Sue and Nicol: Noooooooo!

Sue: Turn it off! I don't want to watch this. That was horrible!

Gary chuckles to himself.

Sue: The Doctor reminds me of Sherlock Holmes. He knows exactly

what's going on.

**Gary**: I'm glad somebody does. **Sue**: Is the music by Mark? **Me**: No, it's Dominic Glynn.

Sue: I love it. This is the best music we've had in ages. Sorry, Mark.

The Doctor struggles to open a tin of cat food.

Sue: He needs the sonic back. He needs to buy himself a new one.

Gary: At least the weather is nice.

Sue: Yeah, you don't get summers like this any more.

The Doctor ends up feeding all the cats in Perivale.

**Sue**: This is me, every single night, feeding the feral cats.

Meanwhile Ace is chilling out in the local playground when she's suddenly confronted by a large cat riding a horse.

Sue: I've heard of dogging in the park but this is ridiculous.

Nicol: Is that supposed to be a cheetah?

Me: Yes.

**Nicol**: Why does the fastest animal in the world need a horse?

# **SURVIVAL**

Sue: Because it looks good.

Nicol: That's it - hide in the climbing frame. It can't possibly get you there.

Me: It's playing with its food, Nicol. It's a cat.

Nicol: Okay, I'll give you that.

Ace makes a run for it.

Sue: Look at this! This is amazing!

Ace is transported to an alien planet.

**Sue**: I did not expect that! I love it.

Ace is still pursued by the cat on the horse.

Sue: Ace is very fit, isn't she?

I say nothing.

Nicol: Ace is just another typical victim.

Sue: You couldn't be further from the truth, Nicol. You won't catch Ace

screaming; she'll probably try to blow up that cat instead.

But it's not all good news...

**Sue**: The cat person could be scarier. It's too fluffy. I want to give it a big cuddle.

Nicol: But that's what you say about real cheetahs, Mam.

Sue: True.

Ace finally finds her missing school friends.

Sue: This is basically Lost, but with cats.

Nicol: It makes about as much sense as Lost. It reminds me of an amateur

production of the musical Cats.

Me: Did you see the poster advertising Cats in the youth club?

**Nicol**: Sorry, I was probably checking my phone. And is it really such a good idea to draw your attention to that? I keep expecting them to break into song.

Luckily, Sue has more important things to worry about:

**Sue**: Do you remember those patterned concrete blocks you used to get in the eighties? They were very popular, weren't they? I fucking hated them.

The Doctor and Patterson are also transported to the Planet of the Cheetahs.

Sue: There's a Wild West vibe to this. I really like it.

The Doctor is herded towards a tent, and seated inside this tent is...

Sue: I knew it!

Nicol: Mam! You liar!

Gary shakes his head.

Sue: Well, I loved it.

Nicol: I liked the cats. The real ones, I mean.

Gary: The weather was very nice.Me: Is that all you have to say, Gary?Gary: What a rubbish way to end a series.

Me: That was just the first episode - there are two episodes left!

Gary and Nicol: Right, I'm off, then.

### Part Two

Sue: Not for cats!

She's referring to the kittens who are eating a dead horse. Come on, we've all done it.

Sue: Why haven't they eaten the Master? Is it because he's supplying them

# **SURVIVAL**

with catnip?

Ace quickly galvanises her mates into a band of plucky rebels.

**Sue**: You go, girl! You can tell that this story is written by a woman. The script is bloody excellent.

The Doctor and Patterson escape on horseback.

**Sue**: The landscape looks wonderful. They've tried this sort of thing before, but this time it's actually believable. I think they've finally cracked it. Bit late now, though.

The Doctor refers to the cats as feline vultures.

Sue: Aww, bless 'em.

The Master gives one of the kitlings a cuddle.

Sue: At least the Master is a cat person. He can't be all bad, then.

Have I mentioned that Sue really likes the incidental music?

Sue: It's Edge of Darkness meets Miami Vice. But it works.

The kitlings' next victim is a milkman.

**Sue**: Cats love milk. They should transport the milk float to the planet while they're at it.

The Cheetah People attack.

Sue: This is a bit naff. I hope this doesn't go downhill.

**Me**: What? The horse?

Sue: No, the story! It was going so well, but now it's silly.

The Cheetah People start fighting each other.

**Sue**: I get enough of this at home. Jack and Rose are always at each other's throats. You just have to distract them with something shiny.

Ace's friend, Midge, kills a Cheetah Person by plunging a sharp tusk into the poor thing's stomach.

Sue: NOOOOOOO! That was horrible!

It turns out that the Master is trapped on this planet.

Sue: So he fucked up again, did he? Why am I not surprised?

The Master's feral grin emphasises the trouble he's in.

**Sue**: That's his best Ricky Gervais impersonation yet.

The Master howls at the moon.

Sue: Ooh, what a gay day!

Ace decides to help a wounded Cheetah Person. She even lets it drink from her hands.

**Me**: I can't watch this scene without thinking of George Galloway and Rula Lenska.

The episode ends with Ace beginning to turn feral.

**Sue**: A brilliant cliffhanger. It's very good, this. It's just a shame about the giant cats. Everything else is spot on.

Me: Do you want to watch the last episode now?

**Sue**: I do and I don't. Part of me doesn't want this to end. I don't mean this particular story - the whole thing. I feel a bit sad about it, actually. Stop grinning at me, Neil.

# **SURVIVAL**

It's almost the end, but the moment has been prepared for - I've had a bottle of champagne chilling in the fridge all day.

I've lost count of the number of times I've dreamt about this particular milestone. There were moments, usually in the middle of a Troughton recon, or a Pertwee six-parter, where I'd imagine what it would feel like to reach this point. But now that we're finally here, I have mixed feelings about it. Anyway, I take the champagne out of the fridge and I pop the cork just as the title sequence explodes on screen.

**Sue**: Are you sure? What if there's a power cut in the middle of this? **Me**: Then I'll buy another bottle.

**Sue**: You don't have to get me drunk, you know. It's too late for me to back out now.

#### Part Three

**Sue**: If Ace sacrifices herself at the end to save the Doctor's life, I will cry, Neil.

Ace bonds with a Cheetah.

**Sue**: Ooh, slow-mo in *Doctor Who*. You don't get that very often. It feels so modern. You wouldn't think this was 25 years old.

Back on the planet of the Cheetah People, Karra is drinking from a pool. Ace is surprised by this because cats hate water.

**Sue**: Well that's complete bollocks. Our cats *love* water. Especially running water

Karra: I'm not a cat. I'm Karra.

Sue: Why haven't we got a cat called Karra? I'm disappointed in you, Neil.

The Master is in total control of poor Midge.

**Sue**: He's the Master's bitch, especially with that collar on. The make-up is excellent, though. All the cats should have looked like this.

An infected Ace transports her friends back to Earth.

**Sue**: Right outside the TARDIS. That's interesting. Everything revolves around Ace, doesn't it? She's definitely the first of the new companions.

Ace is happy to leave.

Sue: It can't be over, can it? I haven't finished my first glass yet.

Of course not, the Master is killing cats on a council estate and the Doctor has to stop him.

**Sue**: Oh look, somebody dropped strawberry jam on a soft toy. Even I can't get upset about *that*.

The dead cat belonged to a little girl.

Me: She's famous - in the loosest possible sense of the word - but you'll

never recognise her.

Sue: I bet I will. Pause the DVD.

Sue mulls it over.

Sue: Yes, she was definitely in EastEnders.

Me: No she wasn't.

Sue: Oh, that is disappointing. OK, is she a pop star? Is it Billie Piper?

**Me**: No. Look, you won't get it. It's Adele Silva. **Sue**: Who's Adele Silva when she's at home?

I grab the laptop and perform a quick image search. Unfortunately, what I end up with is a page filled with thumbnails of Adele Silva wearing skimpy lingerie.

Sue: Oh, so that's how you know her.

Midge arrives at the youth club, looking for young men.

# **SURVIVAL**

Sue: He wants to manage the band.

Midge turns the boy band against Patterson, who is still suffering from shock

Sue: Did Midge hypnotise all those boys, or do they just fancy him?

The Master struggles to control his baser instincts.

Sue: The special effect that makes his eyes go on and off is brilliant.

Ace is confronted by Midge's gang on Horsenden Hill.

**Sue**: Death by Musical Theatre company. Nasty.

As the Master looks on

**Sue**: I have to say, this has to be one of his weirder plans. I haven't got a clue what he's trying to achieve here.

The Doctor and Midge race towards each other on a pair of motorcycles. And when they collide, the explosion is both impressive and improbable at the same time.

**Sue**: EH? No one could have survived that! Were the bikes carrying nuclear warheads? Hang on... He's not going to regenerate, is he?

Karra confronts the Master but gets a tusk in the stomach for her trouble. Her death squeak is very touching.

Sue: Boo! Me: Top up? Sue: Yes, please.

Thankfully, the Doctor is still alive.

**Sue**: He should have landed *behind* the sofa. That would have been

funnier.

Me: That implies that it was supposed to be funny to begin with.

Sue: OK, it would have been funny, then. This is just... silly. And I fucking

hate fly-tippers.

The Master and the Doctor face each other in the street.

Sue: This actually feels like it's meant to be the final episode. It feels epic.

It feels even more epic when they end up fighting in the middle of a fire pit. The Doctor raises a skull above his head and prepares to smash the Master's face in.

Sue: No! Don't do it! He isn't worth it!

The Doctor regains control and is transported back to Earth.

**The Doctor**: If we fight like animals, we'll die like animals!

Me: What did you make of that?

Sue: The first time he said it, it was excellent. The second time he said it,

he was asking for trouble.

The Doctor returns for Ace and they walk off into the sunset together.

Sue: Oh, he almost slipped over.

Cue credits.

Sue: You owe me big time.

I punch the air.

Sue: I know you are going to kill me for saying this, but the speech at the

end sounded like it was cobbled together at the last-minute.

Me: I really like it. It's optimistic.

# **SURVIVAL**

**Sue**: I can see why you were upset about *Doctor Who* finishing at this point. Just when it was getting good again. It also explains why you were still banging on about it when I met you. I'll never be a fan, but they shouldn't have stopped it there.

#### The Score

**Sue**: If we'd opened the champagne earlier, I might have given it a 10, but I'm only a little bit tipsy, so...

# 9/10

Sue: Does this mean we can get divorced now?

**Me**: Well, we still have a little way to go yet. We've still got *The TV Movie* for a start, and before that I want to show you a couple of things that will give you a taste of the Interregnum.

**Sue**: I thought *The TV Movie* didn't count.

Me: We've been through this before. Of course it counts.

Sue: But I thought Russell T Davies said...

**Me**: Yes, there's a character in *Queer as Folk* who claims that Paul McGann doesn't count. That doesn't make it a fact. Paul McGann definitely counts.

**Sue**: Well, I've come this far, I suppose. **Me**: Come on, Sue, we've got work to do!

**COMMENT:** "If this blog update had arrived a little earlier, or I'd taken a different bus home from where I was, I could have read it while travelling through Perivale. Very near Horsenden Hill in fact. But it wasn't to be." - CJJC

**NOTES**: When we blogged *Survival* in 2013, we were responsible for three wild cats who lived in a makeshift shelter that Sue had built for them. We called them Blake, Avon and Cally. There were originally five of them but Vila ran away and Servalan had to be put down. Several years later, as I edit this book, we are responsible for eight wild cats: Avon, Cally, Trimdon, Emily, Matilda, Mildred, Max and Fang (who I am now

going to call Karra). This is in addition to the six cats who live in the house with us - Captain Jack, Rose, Tegan, Margot, Jones and Monty. Blake vanished inexplicably. Oh, and despite what Sue says, you should never give cats milk - it plays havoc with their tummies.

# ? THE McCOY YEARS

BLOGGED: 13 April 2013

The blog's readers were given an opportunity to quiz Sue about this phase of her journey...

Chris Cassell: Which Kangs are best?

Sue: Purple Kangs are best.

David Lancaster: If you could ask Sylvester McCoy to roll the 'r' in any

word, which word would you choose? **Sue**: Rolls-Royce. That's one word, isn't it?

**Richard Lyth**: If Ace was your daughter, what advice would you give her? **Sue**: Ace wouldn't listen to her mother, so whatever I told her would be a complete waste of time.

**Scott Fenton**: If you could trap Keff McCulloch in a room, how would you punish him?

**Sue**: I'd make him listen to his own music on a loop. Then again, he'd probably like that...

**Nick Mellish**: Melanie Bush: crap scripts or just crap? **Sue**: Just crap. Although she never did get a good story.

**Tansy Rayner Roberts**: If you could knit the perfect jumper for McCoy, what would the pattern be?

**Sue**: I wouldn't bother with a pattern, I'd keep it plain. They should have toned everything down a bit. And I'm not a very good knitter.

**Encyclops**: If Neil were to pick up one of the Seventh Doctor's habits, which would you prefer: a penchant for puns, a tendency to ruthlessly manipulate your emotions to achieve his secret goals, or a talent for playing the spoons?

**Sue**: He's already pretty good at the first two, so I'll have to say the last one so he can complete the set.

**Me**: Lots of people asked this one, including Craig Williams, Simon Hart, Chris Bryant and Hector Roddan: How should Ace have left the series? **Sue**: She should have made peace with her mum. Then she should have moved back in with her, finished her A-levels, and got a proper job. Or would that be too boring?

**Me**: What about the idea that Ace would have moved to Gallifrey to train to be a Time Lord. Good idea?

Sue: No. She'd get blown up in the Time War.

**Me**: Lots of people asked a variation on the following question, including Liam Hutchinson and Russell Watson: Were the BBC right to cancel the series in 1989?

**Sue**: Yes and no. It was definitely getting better when they stopped it, but if no one cared enough to do it justice, they had to give it a rest.

**Lewis Christian**: You said the end of *Survival* felt tacked on and cobbled together. Given the same circumstances, what would you have done to end the series? A different speech? A montage? An extra scene with McCoy's Doctor?

Sue: Fuck knows. A helpline number, perhaps?

Cliff Chapman: Why do so many people hate this period of *Doctor Who*? Sue: I didn't know they did. Oh, I don't know... Was it because JN-T couldn't be arsed with it? Or maybe it was because the show was cancelled when McCoy was the Doctor. Is that it? Do they blame him? That would be silly because he's a really good actor.

**Me**: A few people - including James P Quick and Patrick Sanders - want to know what you would have done if you'd taken over as the producer for a 27th season.

Sue: I'd have set it outdoors and I'd have got that Ben

Aaronaraonronivitch (sic) to be the script editor. And then I would have made it consistently good.

Me: Are there any monsters you'd bring back?

Sue: Yes, the Kandy Man.

Bryan Simcott: It's 1990 and McCoy wants to leave. Who do you cast as

the 8th Doctor?

Sue: Paul McGann, I suppose.

Me: Apart from him.

Sue: Ian Richardson. He could do it like William Hartnell. Although he

might play it as a Tory.

Erik Pollitt: If you were the 7th Doctor's companion, what fears would

the manipulative bastard make you face?

**Sue**: My fear of beach balls. I am terrified of beach balls. **Andre Tessier**: Was making the Doctor darker a good thing?

# THE McCOY YEARS

**Sue**: Yes, it was good to give him a bit of depth, even if he was a sneaky bastard.

**Me**: You seemed to forgive McCoy for what he did to Ace, but you hated Jon Pertwee when he wasn't very nice to Jo Grant. Why was that?

**Sue**: Because McCoy's Doctor was doing it for the greater good, whereas Pertwee's Doctor was just interested in himself. Like that time with the sandwiches. There was no excuse for that. What the Doctor did to Ace he did for a good reason.

Sean Alexander: Given the chance, would you have rather watched Alan

Bradley getting hit by a tram? **Sue**: Who's Alan Bradley?

This is the point where I usually ask Sue to sum up this particular Doctor in three words, but this time I'll leave it to:

**Celia Weston**: Since Mr. McCoy was Doctor number seven, how would you summarise his time on the programme in seven words? **Sue**: Crafty, deep, lonely, silly, mysterious, short and quirky.

# **EXTRAS**

## IS THE EYE OF HARMONY MAKING IT RAIN CHICKENS?



This illustration funded by Joe McIntyre

Me: It's 1993.

Sue: A very special year.

**Me**: Yes, it's *Doctor Who*'s 30th anniversary. **Sue**: It was the year you met me, you idiot!

**Me**: Forget about that - this is *Doctor Who*'s 30th anniversary!

**Sue**: So what am I watching tonight? And why have you been so nice to

me today?

So I tell her about the parallel universe where BBC Enterprises made a multi-Doctor special called The Dark Dimension, and even though it wasn't very good, it was still miles better than what we ended up with in this universe

#### Part One

We begin in Crinkley Bottom.

Sue: Good old Noel Edmonds. Thank God he hasn't been arrested for

anything yet.

Me: Yeah, not even Noel's House Party.

Noel has a visitor.

**Sue**: Jon Pertwee looks well. Did this go out live?

Me: Yes.

Sue: You can tell.

**The Doctor**: (to Noel) I've seen you in the year 2010. You're still on

television.

Sue: You're doing a game show called Deal or No Deal. It's a bit shit but

the grannies seem to like it.

*The Doctor and Noel introduce the Doctor's latest adventure.* 

**Sue**: Oh, so this isn't the actual thing yet? **Me**: No, this is just the introduction.

Sue: Oh thank God for that. I was wondering how they could possibly

string this out for 15 minutes.

Noel Edmonds: And remember, you can influence the outcome.

Sue: It's 3D and it's interactive? This is years ahead of its time. Have we got

any 3D glasses?

Me: No.

Sue: Would you like me to get you some?

Me: No.

Dimensions in Time begins in the Rani's TARDIS, and while Sue immediately recognises the Rani, she doesn't know who Cyrian is.

Sue: He looks like one of Duran Duran's Wild Boys.

**Me**: It's Kiefer Sutherland. **Sue**: Is it? Bloody hell, so it is...

**Me**: They wanted Sir Ian McKellen but they had to settle for a young Kiefer Sutherland instead. Well, it's the 30th anniversary so they pulled

out all the stops.

Sue: The Rani has carpeted her TARDIS. That's nice.

The disembodied heads of the first two Doctors are floating around in space.

**Sue**: Has the Rani decapitated the Doctors? What a bitch!

Cue titles.

Sue: They got Orbital to do the music. Which is nice.

Me: They didn't get Orbital to do the fucking music. Now have a drink for

getting it wrong.

Have I mentioned that we're watching Dimensions in Time with a bottle of Jack Daniels for company?

**Sue**: It's a bit speedy. And the music is quite fast, too.

## **DIMENSIONS IN TIME**

The Fourth Doctor has a warning for us all.

Sue: Don't worry, Tom. All you have to do is sit in a sound booth, you

lazy bastard. Still, at least he actually turned up this time.

The Fourth Doctor: Two of my earlier selves have already been snared in

her vicious trap. The grumpy one and the flautist.

Sue: Flautist? He played the recorder! Even I know that.

The Fourth Doctor seems to be in great pain.

Sue: Tom's IBS is kicking in.

The Seventh Doctor and Ace arrive at the Cutty Sark in 1973.

**Sue**: About time too. He's the proper Doctor at this point, not Tom "I can't be arsed" Baker.

Suddenly there's a flash of light and Ace finds herself in the East End of London with the Sixth Doctor, which you have to admit is quite a lot for Sue to process even without...

Sue: Gita and Sanjay from EastEnders!

There's another flash of light and the Sixth Doctor and Ace are suddenly replaced by the Third Doctor and...

**Sue**: That's Bonnie Langford. I probably should have got that wrong on purpose because I need a drink whenever Bonnie is on.

The Third Doctor doesn't know where he is.

The Third Doctor: Excuse me, my good woman, but what year ith thith?

Sue: Is that Pauline Fowler? I don't remember her looking like that.

The Third Doctor: MADAM, WHAT YEAR ITH THITH?

Sue: He needs some new dentures.

Pauline, Kathy and Me: TWO FAUSAND AND FIRTEEN!

**Sue**: Hang on, they should be dead. Pauline and Kathy died years ago. This doesn't make any sense!

And then Sue has two more famous faces to contend with...

**Sue**: Okay, that's Sarah Jane Smith and... fucking hell! What's happened to Sharon? She looks a right clip.

Sue downs another drink without having to be told.

Sue: I hope Adric comes back. I miss Adric.

Maybe it's the drink, but she's become very nostalgic all of a sudden.

**Sue**: It's fascinating to see Albert Square twenty years ago. I can see how everything has changed. I'm really enjoying this. It takes me right back.

*The Fifth Doctor is joined by two companions.* 

Sue: Okay, that's Peri and the other one is... Don't tell me... I know this...

Oh I give up. Who is she?

Me: It's Nyssa. Now have another drink.

Sue: Since when did Nyssa start working in a bank? Hey! It's Fat Pat! This

special is packed with dead people.

And it isn't just dead people...

Sue: Hey! That dog is supposed to be dead!

No, she's not talking about Roly, she's pointing at Fifi the Stigorax.

**Sue**: I like the direction.

Me: Right, I definitely need a drink.

**Sue**: The camera movement is lovely. I haven't got a clue what's going on, though. Can nobody see these *things*, or do they think there's a *Doctor* 

Who convention in the Vic?

## **DIMENSIONS IN TIME**

Part One concludes with the Rani triumphant.

The Rani: You're all going on a long journey.

Me: How long?

The Rani: A very long journey.

We return to Crinkley Bottom...

**Sue**: Sylvester McCoy should be doing these bits, not Jon Pertwee.

Sue casts her vote for Mandy, and then we both have another stiff drink.

Sue: It isn't very good, is it? If I were you, I would have been worried at

this point.

 $\mathbf{Me}$ : I can laugh about it now, but at the time it felt like a dagger to the

heart.

Sue: So you didn't watch Part Two, then?

Me: Of course I bloody did. And so are you. Nice try, though.

#### Part Two

We begin with a quick recap.

The Rani: You're all going on a long journey.

Sue: How long?

**The Rani**: A very long journey.

Me: You are definitely getting the hang of this now.

Mandy comes to the rescue.

Sue: Big Ron must have been gutted. I wonder if he had any lines?

The Third Doctor is joined by Liz Shaw.

Me: Who's that?

Sue: Erm...

The Third Doctor: No Liz, you mustn't.

Sue: Liz.

Me: Too late. Drink up.

Suddenly, a yellow roadster comes hurtling into the square.

Sue: It's Betsy. Oh no, that isn't Benton driving her, is it? No, it's the other

one. The one you can't trust.

Mike drives the Third Doctor away.

Sue: Keffing hell. Give me the whole bottle.

The Doctor is taken to a waiting helicopter.

**Sue**: So that's where all the money went. Oh, it's the Brig. Yay!

Me: This is the only time the Sixth Doctor and the Brigadier meet on

television.

Sue: It was hardly worth it, was it? And I always feel a bit sad when I see

the Brigadier.

Two giant babies are prowling Walford when they discover a Time Lady taking a dump in their garage.

Romana: Have you seen the Doctor?

Phil Mitchell: Doctor Legg is the only doctor round here, love.

Romana: Doctor who?

Sue: I bet Steven Moffat loves Dimensions in Time. Not only is it timey-

wimey, it's got his favourite joke in it too.

Sue is almost pissed now. In fact, you could say she's pickled like a gherkin in a jar. Oh, please yourselves.

Victoria: Who was that terrible woman?

Sue: Yes, who is that terrible woman? That one, there.

Me: If you don't know her name, you know what you have to do.

## **DIMENSIONS IN TIME**

She almost gets the next one right.

Sue: Pocahontas.

Me: Close. It's Leela. But that was an easy mistake to make so you don't

have to drink anything.

Sue: Wanna bet?

The Seventh Doctor is joined by...

Sue: K9!

**Me**: Yes, but which version? **Sue**: Oh, do fuck off, Neil.

The Seventh Doctor overloads the Rani's computer and the enhanced power pulls her TARDIS into the time tunnel.

Sue: Does anybody understand this? Sober, I mean.

Me: No.

Sue: It's a shambles. The BBC should have lost the rights to Doctor Who

when this went out.

And then it's all over.

**Sue**: I didn't think it was that bad. It was just a bit of fun. But you must have found it really painful to watch back then. Oh well, *Doctor Who* came back in the end. Everything worked out fine. And it could have been worse. It could have been *Eldorado*.

Me: What mark are you going to give it?

Sue: Does it count?

Me: No.

**Sue**: Well there's your answer.

But I can't leave it there. That would be cruel. Plus Sue is half-cut and it would be a shame to stop now.

Me: Okay, so two days after they broadcast that abomination, BBC1

screened a documentary about Doctor Who.

Sue: That's nice, dear.

Me: But I can't find a copy.

Sue: Oh, that's a shame. Stick Game of Thrones on instead.

Me: But I've got a copy of the extended version, which was released on

VHS the following year. **Sue**: So is it 1994 now?

Me: Yes.

Sue: Well in that case, the honeymoon period is definitely over.

**COMMENT:** "Dimensions In Time made me want to die." - Fluebrand Heltran

**NOTES**: No, it isn't Kiefer Sutherland. I did know that really, but thanks to everyone who wrote in to tell me. And yes, Kathy Beale wasn't really dead, after all. Which means *Dimensions in Time* is semi-canonical at the very least.

# MORE THAN 30 YEARS IN THE TARDIS

BLOGGED: 23 April 2013

A working knowledge of this documentary is essential if you want to follow this blog. And even then it might be tricky.

Jon Pertwee: I had a great belief that it was much more frightening to stay

on Earth. That all the threats should come to Earth.

Sue: I don't usually agree with Jon Pertwee but he's dead right.

Toyah: I really enjoyed the tantalising fear and I really believed what I was

watching.

Sue: Is that Toyah Willcox's voice?

Me: Yes.

**Sue**: Just checking. This Jack Daniels is *very* strong.

The pre-titles sequence features a re-enactment of the Auton invasion of Ealing Broadway.

**Sue**: From *Terror of the Autons*. Are you impressed that I know that? **Me**: It's *Spearhead from Space*, actually. But yes, I'm still impressed.

**Sue**: It's very nicely done. You can tell that some effort has gone into this. **Nicholas Courtney**: The Doctor can only regenerate 12 times. Then it really is the end.

**Sue**: What will they do after that? Will *Doctor Who* have to finish? They'd better make sure the last two Doctors last as long as possible.

Toyah: Four episodes into the new Doctor Who, I'd forgotten who

William Hartnell was.

Sue: You and me both, love.

**The First Doctor**: Oh, so you're my replacements - a dandy and a clown.

Sue: A scruffy drunk and a Tory.

Patrick Troughton: The way I made it serious was by making him a bit of

a clown to start with.

Sue: I didn't realise that Patrick Troughton was so posh. Pour me another

drink.

**Lowri Turner**: Clothes are obviously very important to *Doctor Who*. I

don't know where he gets them from. Somewhere in space.

**Sue**: I bet you fancied her, whoever she is.

Me: I did not!

**Sue**: She's like that other posh bird you fancy. You know, the one who married the one from *Peep Show*. Pour me another one, you bastard.

**Eric Saward**: He was very much James Bond.

Sue: I definitely would have shagged Eric back in the day.

**Me**: That's definitely your last drink.

**Frazer Hines**: It's such a sad thing that the BBC doesn't have in its

archives *Doctor Who* from day one.

**Sue**: Yes, it is fucking sad. I still had to sit through them, though, didn't I? **Ian Levine**: If I'd been a day later, we would have lost the very first Dalek story.

**Sue**: I love Ian Levine. He's my hero.

Me: Right, you can't have anything alcoholic to drink for another year.

**Sue**: Ooh look, it's Valerie Singleton. **Me**: No it isn't, it's Carole Anne Ford.

Anne Diamond: The question we asked was: Who created the Daleks?

Sue: Davros. Even I know that.

Nick Owen: And the answer is Terry Nation.

Sue: Terry fucking Nation!

Jon Pertwee: Are you sure that Terry Nation invented the Daleks?

Sue: See!

**Alan Whicker**: Now television offers its rewards... **Sue**: Terry fucking Nation in his big fucking house...

Ray Cusick: And I never saw Terry again.

Sue: Poor Raymond. Do you think he still feels bitter about it?

Me: He died recently. I think his last words were "Terry fucking Nation".

Jon Pertwee: Answer: Davros.

Sue: See!

Jon Pertwee: The inventor of the Daleks was Terry Nation!

Anne and Nick: Yay!

**Sue**: Oh, fuck off. Actually, Jon Pertwee really impressed me, there. He made a point of telling them that Ray was ripped-off. I bloody love him

## MORE THAN 30 YEARS IN THE TARDIS

for that.

**Ben Aaronovitch**: It wasn't as if it was a concealed subtext in the story. It was right there out in the open.

**Sue**: I love Ben. I bet he's a really nice bloke. I'd love to go for a pint with Ben.

Toyah: It was wonderfully perverse. It was red PVC.

**Sue**: I had one of those Dalek suits. Or maybe it was Gary's? Either way, we weren't impressed with it. It stank. It was a shit Christmas present.

The Peter Cushing movies are also given some coverage.

**Sue**: I remember when you made me watch that bloody film on my own, you bastard (see *Volume One*). It was rubbish. Apart from Bernard, of course. I loved Bernard.

#### **End of Part One**

**Sue**: I remember those Ice Lollies. I probably chucked my cards in the bin, though.

Meanwhile, on Pebble Mill at One...

**Sue**: I loved *Pebble Mill at One*. I watched it every day when I came home from school for my dinner. I never missed an episode. I probably saw this one.

A Cyberman approaches a window pane.

Sue: I bet he knocks it over.

The Cyberman knocks it over.

Sue: I knew it! I knew I bloody knew it!

I don't have the heart to tell her that she probably saw it on one of the several thousand DVD extras I've made her watch over the last two years.

**Toyah**: I have to say I remember the Cybermen because I thought they were particularly sexy. Because they were so masculine. And there they were in these fetish suits...

Sue: Too much information, Toyah. But I know what you mean.

Terrance Dicks: The colour for monsters is Gween.

Sue: Whose idea was it to get Terrance to talk about wobots and gween

things? Whoever it was, they were taking the piss.

Mike Gatting: It was really quite frightening.

**Sue**: What's Mike Gatting got to do with *Doctor Who*?

Me: Fuck knows.

Gerry Anderson: But the real tragedy of my life is that my son Jamie is...

Sue: Gay.

Gerry Anderson: ...a Doctor Who fan.

Sue: Same thing.

Elisabeth Sladen: There's a whole new audience. It's so exciting.

Sue: Aww, her daughter is wearing her costume from Dimensions in Time.

That's sweet.

Valerie Singleton: I should think that Doctor Who is in quite a lot of

trouble in his next adventure.

Sue: The War Machines were fucking useless.

Nicholas Courtney: Three companions have met untimely deaths on

their travels through time and space.

**Sue**: Those two don't count. Only Adric counts.

Me: Well, he was a mathematician.

**Sue**: Aww, it's the Brig. Twice in one night. I'm a lucky girl. **The Brigadier**: Brigadier now. I've gone up in the world.

Sue: He was so bloody handsome back then.

We are treated to an exciting UNIT montage. However, when Benton does that thing with his fingers from The Mind of Evil...

Sue: YOU KILLED IT!

Ken Livingstone: The programme has reflected changes in society...

Me: You like Ken, don't you?

Sue: I do, but I bet I don't like him as much as you like her arse.

## MORE THAN 30 YEARS IN THE TARDIS

She's pointing at Zoe's bum, as seen in The Mind Robber.

Mary Whitehouse: It's almost as if they were a bit... dumb.

Sue: She's right. Some of it definitely wasn't for kids.

Mary Whitehouse: The image was left in the mind of the child for a

whole week.

Sue: She did have a point. If only she wasn't so fucking scary herself.

Meanwhile Sylvester McCoy and Sophie Aldred are lost in a local Laser Ouest.

Sue: I don't remember this episode at all.

#### **End of Part Two**

Romana: Ask it how to handle a woman.

**Sue**: They were *definitely* shagging at this point.

**Douglas Adams**: The moment you have anything in the script that's clearly meant to be funny in some way, everybody thinks we can do silly voices and silly walks and so on.

**Sue**: I definitely would have shagged Douglas Adams. **Me**: Right, so that's Douglas, Eric and Ben. Anybody else?

Sue: I don't want to shag Ben. I just think he'd be good company in a pub.

I'm not *that* easy.

The next caption troubles her.

Sue: Pakistani Dalek Sketch... This is going to be racist, isn't it?

Pakistani Dalek: Put it in the curry!

**Sue**: That was terrible. There was no need for that. It was racist *and* anti-

dog.

John Nathan-Turner: We decided on a cricketing motif.

**Sue**: I'd definitely shag Peter Davison, even if I didn't have all this whisky inside me.

**Mike Gatting**: If a series was on in the winter and I was on tour, I'd get the wife to tape it for me.

Me: Ah, that's why Mike Gatting is in it! Of course! The cricket

connection.

**Sue**: So why is Toyah Willcox in it? **Me**: I don't know. It's a mystery.

Sue adores the ending where the little boy enters the TARDIS.

**Sue**: This is sweet. He's a very Bonny lad.

Me: Seeing the inside of the TARDIS through a doorway like that was a

big deal in 1993.

Sue: You were easily pleased back then, Neil. It's good, though. I really like

the music.

And then the Brigadier is kidnapped by an Auton.

Sue: Ooh, that was very good.

And then Sue sits through Jon Pertwee's 'I Am The Doctor' with an increasingly incredulous look on her face before Frazer Hines and Deborah Watling are captured by the Daleks.

**The Daleks**: We shall return! We shall return! We shall return! **Sue**: They did as well. So there was a happy ending, after all.

The Fourth Doctor: It's good, isn't it?

Sue: Yes, that was very good. Well done. They'll have their work cut out

doing a better job than that for the 50th anniversary. **Me**: Anything else to add before I carry you upstairs?

Sue: Yes, I am very, very drunk.

**COMMENT**: "May I suggest that Neil and Sue redo the whole experiment, but drunk this time?" - John G

**NOTES:** Nicholas Courtney's reference to 12 regenerations made me laugh while I was editing this book in 2019. If only we knew back then that the Doctor was capable of regenerating several hundred times, and that the 11th Doctor is actually the 12th (or 13th, if you count the meta-

## MORE THAN 30 YEARS IN THE TARDIS

crisis Doctor). Either way, the last two showrunners have broken this documentary.

Sue doesn't like Ken Livingstone very much any more.

The BBC did do a better job than this for the 50th anniversary.

Sue never drank alcohol again.

## THE TV MOVIE

BLOGGED: 8 May 2013

We have, of course, drezzzzed for the occasion. Sue is wearing her Pip and Jane T-shirt, and I'm wearing a bath robe with the collar turned up.

Sue: Before we start, does this definitely count?

Me: For the last time, Sue, yes, it counts!

Sue: What's it called, then?

Me: It doesn't have a title. It's just The TV Movie.

Sue: Really? That's the best they could come up with? The TV Movie?

What kind of title is that?

We are told that the Master was put on trial on the planet Skaro...

Sue: Ooh, is it the Master?

The renegade Time Lord is placed in an extermination chamber...

Sue: That's a shit Dalek.

**Me**: That isn't a Dalek, Sue. It's the Master.

Sue: Can we start this again, please? I'm lost already. It's moving so fast, I

can't take it all in.

I rewind the prologue.

Sue: But he looks nothing like the bloody Master!

**Me**: And they sound nothing like the Daleks. Get your priorities straight,

woman!

Cue titles.

Sue: Ooh, I like this. It's epic. I bet you must have loved this.

The Seventh Doctor checks that the Master is safely under lock and key in

#### THE TV MOVIE

his TARDIS.

**Sue**: I like his suit. He should have dressed like that from the very beginning. So where's Ace?

The Doctor has redecorated. Sue likes it.

**Sue**: Nice TARDIS. It reminds me of that wooden one he used to have, except that this one is massive. I love the wooden floors.

The Doctor relaxes with a good book and a bowl of jelly babies.

**Sue**: He's mellowed a bit. We never usually see the Doctor with his feet up. He's usually running around like an idiot.

Suddenly, all hell breaks loose and the Doctor ends up running around like an idiot.

Sue: The direction is fantastic. We could be watching the new series.

The Master has escaped.

**Sue**: But I thought he was dead? Unless that was a trap, of course. The Doctor probably should have seen that coming. Maybe he's mellowed out a little too much.

The TARDIS is forced to land in San Francisco in 1999 and the Doctor immediately walks into a hail of bullets.

**Sue**: What? He can't die like that. That's rubbish! How did he survive this long?

Something leaks out of the TARDIS keyhole onto the floor.

Sue: So the Master's a puddle, now?

Me: Yes.

Sue: How?

Me: I don't bloody know!

Sue: Well you should bloody know. Being a puddle is definitely a new low

for the Master.

The Doctor is examined at the local hospital.

**Sue**: Typical. You wait ages for a Doctor to get his shirt off and it ends up being Sylvester McCov.

Meanwhile the puddle-Master finds its way into a paramedic's jacket.

**Sue**: That's way too big for him. He needs to find a sock.

There's confusion in the hospital regarding the number of hearts the Doctor has.

**Sue**: Use a fucking stethoscope, you morons!

Grace Holloway is the cardiologist on call that night, but as she prepares to operate on him, the Doctor suddenly wakes up. She tries to calm him down by telling him she only wants to listen to his heart.

Sue: With a fucking scalpel?

Grace's actions end up killing the Doctor.

**Sue**: Come on then, regenerate! What are you waiting for? I'll tell you what, though. That was bloody exciting.

It turns out that the Master is actually a translucent cobra.

Sue: How?

Me: For the last time, I don't know!

The Master rams himself down a paramedic's throat.

#### THE TV MOVIE

Sue: Not for kids. Or many adults, probably.

As the Master steals a new body, the Doctor simultaneously regenerates.

**Sue**: The *Frankenstein* stuff is very clever. You *must* have loved this, Neil. It's brilliant

The Eighth Doctor takes his first breath.

**Sue**: He'll be chuffed to bits when he finds out he looks like Paul McGann. Just you wait until he finds a mirror. He won't be able to tear himself away.

*The Doctor kicks down the mortuary door.* 

**Me**: They should have put an 8 on that door. I've never really forgiven them for that.

*The Doctor wanders the hospital in search of his identity.* 

Sue: This is beautifully shot. It's very modern.

The Doctor finds himself in a disused wing of the hospital.

Sue: Has this hospital been hit by a bomb? Have we missed a scene?

The Doctor finds an inordinately long multi-coloured scarf in a locker.

Sue: What are the chances of *that*?

**Me**: Somebody must be going to a fancy dress party as the Fourth Doctor. It's the only plausible explanation.

The Master murders the poor paramedic's wife.

**Sue**: So he doesn't hypnotise people any more? Has he stopped pissing about and actually means business this time?

Grace falls out with her boss.

**Sue**: Grace has a serious pen fetish, you know.

Grace resigns rather than cover up the Doctor's mysterious death and sudden disappearance.

Sue: I like Grace. She's got morals. I also like the worktops in this hospital.

They are very Farrow & Ball. **Me**: Don't ever change, love.

The Master arrives at the hospital in search of his arch-nemesis.

**Sue**: And now it's turned into *The Terminator*. This isn't really the Master's style, though, is it? I'm not sure how I feel about this.

The Doctor convinces Grace that he's the same man she killed the night before, and she agrees to take him home with her. Yes, I know.

Sue: Now this is more like it! Paul McGann with his shirt off...

Me: What do you think of him so far.

Sue: Hmm... What? Sorry, I was distracted by his chest.

Me: I think that answers my question.

Chang Lee finds the Master lurking in the Doctor's TARDIS.

**Sue**: What I like about this TARDIS is that it's really huge, but at the same time it's still really cosy. I don't know why he didn't keep it like this. Maybe it was a bugger to keep clean.

The Master convinces Chang Lee to help him defeat the Doctor.

**Sue**: He can never do anything on his own. He always has to team-up with somebody. I bet he'll be betrayed at the end. He's an idiot.

When the Doctor and Grace go for a walk, the Doctor suddenly remembers

#### THE TV MOVIE

Gallifrey. Oh, and his shoes fit perfectly.

**Sue**: He's great, isn't he?

The Master uses the Doctor's supply of gold dust to sweeten his deal with Chang Lee.

Sue: Is that in case he runs into any Cybermen?

Me: You complete and utter fan.

Sue: Shut up.

The Master escorts Chang Lee to the TARDIS cloister room, which now contains the Eye of Harmony.

**Sue**: We saw the Eye of Harmony the other week in the new series. And it didn't look anything like that.

When the Eye of Harmony opens, the Doctor remembers who he is and kisses Grace.

Me: There was a time when this kiss was controversial.

Sue: Why? It wasn't a sexy kiss.

The Doctor goes back for seconds.

Sue: Okay, now that was a sexy kiss.

Sue's not bothered, though.

**Sue**: He does it all the time now. I wonder if he'll keep doing it if he ever regenerates into an ugly actor.

The Eye of Harmony shows a projection of the Doctor's seventh incarnation.

**Sue**: They should have shown all the Doctors. That was a wasted opportunity.

Me: Seriously, you've gone full-blown fan, Sue.

The Eye projects an image of the new Doctor and Chang Lee can't believe how young he is.

Sue: You ain't seen nothing yet, mate!

And then the Master drops a bombshell: the Doctor is half-human.

Sue: Eh? Since when?

I pause the DVD.

Me: What do you make of that, then?

Sue: It makes sense, I suppose.

Me: WHAT?

**Sue**: Well, for a start he's obsessed with Earth. He can't keep away from the place. Why isn't he saving Mars every week? There has to be a reason

for it and that's as good a reason as any.

Me: I take it all back, you're not really a fan after all.

**Sue**: Maybe that's why he left Gallifrey. Maybe all his friends were picking on him for being half-human and he got fed up with it and buggered off?

Grace decides to do a runner.

Sue: He can't be that good a kisser, then.

But the Doctor has some very grave news: by midnight tonight, the planet will be pulled inside out.

Sue: I really like Grace's chairs.

The Doctor, Grace, the Master and Chang Lee all end up in the same ambulance together. Don't ask. Anyway, the driving conditions are pretty foul.

#### THE TV MOVIE

Sue: Is the Eye of Harmony making it rain chickens?

The Doctor threatens to shoot himself unless a traffic cop hands over his motorcycle.

**Sue**: Paul McGann is very good, isn't he? He should have been given a series. It doesn't seem fair.

Despite my best efforts, I can't help but sing-a-long to the incidental music.

**Sue**: There's a Keffishness to it, with all those der-der-der stings, but it sounds all right with a proper orchestra. This is what Keff would have sounded like if he'd been given some money.

And then Sue says this:

**Sue**: I don't think non-fans would have enjoyed this. It's too wrapped up in the past to appeal to a new audience. I bet the fans loved it, though.

**Me**: Do you like it? **Sue**: Yes. It's great.

The Doctor and Grace arrive at the Institute of Technological Advancement and Research.

**Me**: What I don't understand is why the Doctor needs a beryllium atomic clock in the first place.

**Sue**: He needs it to fix his TARDIS. He told us that at the very beginning. Do keep up, Neil.

The Doctor backs up the Master's claim about his parentage when he admits that he's half-human on his mother's side.

Sue: Yeah, it makes a lot of sense to me.

The Doctor and Grace steal the clock before abseiling down the building with a fire hose.

**Sue**: I'd have been well chuffed if I was a fan and I saw this in 1996. This is just as good as the new series. Hey, maybe we could do the new series, after all?

Me: Don't you start.

A police motorcycle accidentally ends up in the TARDIS.

Sue: Ha! That was brilliant.

And that's why we won't be doing the new series.

**Sue**: Ooh, it's the cloister bell. That can't be good.

*Grace doesn't mention that the TARDIS is bigger on the inside.* 

**Sue**: I love Grace. She's the perfect companion. She's funny, she's clever and she has impeccable taste in chairs.

The TARDIS ceiling doubles as a planetarium.

Sue: Fucking hell. I bet Matt Smith is well jealous of that.

The Doctor has a plan: he'll divert the power from the Eye of Harmony into the time rotor.

Me: Are you following this?

Sue: No.

Me: Do you care?

Sue: No.

Grace, who is now possessed by the Master's sputum of evil, knocks the Doctor out.

**Sue**: Naughty Daphne. She suits those eyes, though. It's a good look for her.

#### THE TV MOVIE

The Master changes into some Gallifreyan robes.

Me: How camp is that!

Sue: You say that like the Master has never been camp before!

Meanwhile, Earth is partying like it's 1999...

**Sue**: Nobody has mentioned the millennium bug. How weird is that? The Master should have been responsible for the millennium bug, so when nothing happened, we could have thanked the Doctor. That would have been a much better story.

The Master chews the scenery.

Me: You must admit that he's a bit over the top.

Sue: And John Simm wasn't? Give your head a shake, lad.

The Master kills Chang Lee in a fit of pique.

Sue: Oh no! I liked him. He was a likeable Adric.

Me: Likeable? He was working for the Master, he stole the Doctor's things,

and he tried to shoot some poor sod in the first five minutes!

Sue: He's still more likeable than Adric.

The Master returns Grace to normality with a kiss.

Sue: Blimey, they're all at it now.

As the Master steals the Doctor's remaining lives, Grace attempts to turn the TARDIS into an alarm clock.

Me: Come on, Sue. What's a temporal orbit?

Sue: It's probably a place where time stands still so you can make things

better. Something like that.

Me: I can't tell if you are taking the piss or not.

Sue: I'm barely following what's going on, but it is very exciting.

*The Master is sucked into the Eye of Harmony.* 

Sue: Are you sure the Master wasn't a pole dancer in a previous life?

The Doctor places the corpses of Grace and Chang Lee on the TARDIS floor and the time machine brings them back to life.

**Sue**: Is the TARDIS letting them regenerate? It looks like the same fairy dust from the new series.

**Me**: Yes, but if the TARDIS can bring the Doctor's dead friends back to life, doesn't that beg the obvious question?

**Sue**: Oh yeah. Maybe the TARDIS hated Adric, as well. Or maybe you can only do this in a temporal orbit.

**Me**: Actually, that does make sense. Thanks. It's only taken me 17 years to work that out.

The TARDIS travels back to San Francisco on New Year's Eve.

Sue: If that's Stanley Park in Vancouver, I've played golf there.

The Doctor asks Grace to come with him, but she turns him down.

Sue: What? Is she mad? Go with him!

The Doctor returns to his TARDIS.

**Sue**: She'll run in after him. She has to!

The TARDIS dematerialises.

**Sue**: What has she got to look forward to, exactly? A flat with no furniture and no job, that's what!

Me: To be fair, Brian did leave her some very nice chairs.

The Doctor and his TARDIS fly off into the vortex for a series of new adventures (coming soon from Big Finish).

#### THE TV MOVIE

Sue: Nice.

Cue credits.

Me: So, do you think Paul McGann counts?

Sue: Of course he fucking counts. Why wouldn't he?

#### The Score

**Sue**: I really enjoyed that. The plot wasn't very good, and the casual viewer wouldn't have known (or cared) what was going on half the time - but what a great way to finish. Paul McGann should have been given a full series. He would have been wonderful.

## 9/10

Me: What should they have called it instead of *The TV Movie*?

Sue: Grace.

Me: Come here and give us a kiss.

I switch off the TV.

Me: It's over. We're free.

Sue: Are we? Me: Yes.

Sue: What shall we do?

Me: Dunno.

**COMMENT:** "Sue, if the divorce is ever finalised, marry me. That is one of the most sensible reviews of the *The TV Movie* I've ever read." - Darryl Gillikin

**NOTES**: What we did next was *Blake's 7*, and you can read all about that in *Adventures with the Wife and Blake* Volumes 1 and 2

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# THE WILDERNESS YEARS BLOGGED: 11-12 May 2019

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Approximately six years later...

**Me**: Okay, so where were we? Oh, yes, here's a fun fact for you: I was the first person to use the term 'Wilderness Years' on the internet to describe the period when *Doctor Who* wasn't on television. You know, when a great darkness fell upon the land.

Sue: Right...

**Me**: I said it in a newsgroup post in 1997; I was talking about how the books had kept the *Doctor Who* flame alive before Paul McGann came along, and how they'd have to do it all over again now that he'd buggered off.

Sue: Right...

Me: I believe that somebody used the term in a fanzine in New Zealand

first, but I wouldn't have known that at the time.

Sue: Right...

Me: I actually prefer the term 'Interregnum', which Mark Gatiss used to

describe it, but there you go.

This is the weekend where I subjected Sue to a number of non-canonical spin-offs that she hadn't seen yet (see Volume 2 for Downtime, Volume 6 for The Airzone Solution and Volume 7 for several Stranger videos), as well as a couple of aborted attempts to relaunch the series, which ultimately came to nothing.

#### **Search Out Science**

**Sue**: You can't just throw me into this without telling me what I'm watching first, Neil. What the hell is this? Why is the Doctor fucking about on a giant bottle top? Is this one of those *Children in Need* things? **Me**: No, it's an edition of a school's TV programme; I believe it was part of a science module.

Sue: So at this point, the only audience Doctor Who had left were

## THE WILDERNESS YEARS

schoolkids who were being forced to watch it, otherwise they'd get detention or fail their exams?

**Me**: I think the BBC had already fired Sylvester McCoy and Sophie Aldred when they made this programme, so it must have been nice for them to go out like this.

The Doctor is the host of a game show called The Ultimate Challenge. He is joined by Ace, K9 and Cedric.

Sue: Who the fuck is Cedric?

Cedric is a humanoid alien from the planet Quirk, who has a penchant for silver Lycra and an electronically-treated voice that is almost as grating as his personality.

Sue: Why is Ace stuck up a tree?

Me: I have no idea. But this was a busman's holiday for Sophie; she came

from a children's TV background.

**Sue**: You can tell. She isn't playing Ace, though. She looks the part, but that definitely isn't Ace.

**Me**: She was probably the only person there who thought this would look

good on her CV.

K9 is in the TARDIS. Honest, he is.

Sue: That isn't the TARDIS! It's a gallery in a TV studio!

To be fair to them, they do stick a panel of roundels on the wall behind him later (and they turn the lights down really low), but you have to wonder why they even bothered in the first place.

Sue: Who broadcast this?

Me: The BBC.

Sue: For fuck's sake...

There then follows a series of challenges set by the Doctor - as he

inexplicably balances on a giant floating bottle top in space - which Ace and Cedric compete to answer down on Earth.

Me: We can stop now if you like, I think we've got the general idea.

**Sue**: No, we might learn something.

Ace visits a radio telescope to explain how stars work.

**Me**: (*As Ace*) Look, Professor! This is where you once hurtled to your death!

K9 teaches us about colour temperatures - and almost explodes in the process - but that's nothing compared to being forced to hunt for Smarties in the street, as Ace yells encouragement at him that borders on hysteria and the theme to K9 and Company plays in the background. I shit you not. If you've never seen this before, I envy you, I really do.

**Sue**: I thought I had a handle on how the solar system worked before I saw this, but now I'm not so sure.

The game show ends with a trick question and an ice cream. Trust me, I'm making it sound a lot more exciting than it is.

**Sue**: I don't think the kids would have enjoyed that very much. It was confusing, badly directed, and very patronising. And why did they break it up with those stupid bloody adverts which made no sense? No, I'm sure the kids must have dreaded this programme when the teacher wheeled a TV into the classroom.

Me: And they wouldn't have known who K9 was, either.

Sue: They just didn't think it through.

**Me**: There are some fans who claim that *Doctor Who* actually ran for 27 years, and not 26 as most people assume, because this was broadcast in 1990 and McCoy and Sophie Aldred are both in character, therefore it actually happened canonically, so to speak.

Sue: Is it too late for these people to seek professional help?

Me: There's even a short story that attempts to explain this programme

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and connect it to Dimensions in Time, which also never happened.

Sue: For fuck's sake...

**Me**: Although it would explain how K9 came to be travelling with McCoy's Doctor, because that has been bugging me for years.

**Sue**: So who the fuck is Cedric, then?

Me: Maybe we could pitch that to Big Finish later. But first...

#### Shakedown

**Sue**: Oh no! Not bloody *Shakedown*! **Me**: You actually remember it?

Sue: Do you really want to know what I remember about Shakedown?

Me: Is it that the Sontarans look a bit odd?

Sue: No, it's that you were a massive dickhead when it came out.

Me: I was? But the Sontarans aren't that bad...

Sue: It was a Saturday, and I remember it like it was yesterday. You had just moved in with me and I was working three jobs at the time; I think you were unemployed. Anyway, it was a Saturday morning and you suggested that we go to Newcastle for the day. You claimed it was so we could spend some quality time together while my parents had Nicol for the day. I told you I was too tired to drive anywhere because I was working three jobs at the time.

Me: You already said that.

**Sue**: And when I refused, you went into one of your sulks. I thought it was a bit odd at the time, until I worked out that you didn't want to spend any time with me at all, you just wanted me to give you a lift to Newcastle so you could go to Forbidden Planet and buy fucking *Shakedown*, even though you couldn't afford it. Wasn't it something stupid like 20 quid? You were probably hoping I'd pay for it with the money I got from the three jobs I was working at the time.

**Me**: Actually, it's all coming back to me now. **Sue**: Do you remember what happened next?

**Me**: Erm...

Sue: While you were sulking in our bedroom, I drove to Newcastle and

bought it for you.

Me: Oh yes, so you did.

Sue: And then, to make matters worse, you made me watch it with you.

Me: Did you enjoy it?

**Sue**: No, I fucking didn't! This should have been a clue to our future relationship. I should have got out then when I had the chance.

I spend the first few minutes of Shakedown testing Sue's ability to recognise actors who have appeared in other things I've made her watch, beginning with two pilots on a spaceship.

Sue: Her face rings a bell.

Me: I hope so because we named a cat after her.

**Sue**: We named a cat after this actress? **Me**: No, the character she used to play.

**Sue**: Oh yeah, it's Cally.

Me: And that's Davros next to her, but I wouldn't expect you to get that.

She fares a little better with the ship's passengers.

Sue: I definitely know who these two are. That's Travis...

Me: Which one?

**Sue**: The man, obviously. **Me**: No, I meant which Travis?

**Sue**: Oh, the funny one. And that's Servalan. **Me**: It's Susan from *Doctor Who*, actually.

Sue: Fucking hell!

At least she recognises Sophie Aldred, although she's convinced her boyfriend is played by a young George Osborne before he went into politics. He isn't.

**Sue**: Where the hell are we, anyway? This place looks like a mess.

Me: Well, that's probably because it is a mess. You know, the mess deck on

a ship. **Sue**: Eh?

Me: They filmed this on HMS Belfast.

Sue: Right, so they thought to themselves, we need a spaceship, so let's get

the ship part and we'll worry about the space part later. Right...

## THE WILDERNESS YEARS

We discover that this spaceship uses solar sails to race through space, and that the crew uses virtual reality technology to operate them.

Sue: What the fuck is going on?

In a nutshell, it looks like Brian Croucher is attempting to mime Duran Duran's video for 'Rio'.

**Sue**: How is he actually doing anything here? Do they have any idea how bloody stupid this looks?

The fun and games come to a halt when the ship is boarded by the Sontarans. And you have to admit they do look a bit funny.

Sue: They look okay to me.

**Me**: Sontarans are supposed to be clones, and this lot don't look anything like the Sontarans in *Doctor Who*. But it's probably a copyright thing. **Sue**: Maybe they clone more than one Sontaran? You know, to be efficient. So this lot were cloned from a Sontaran who was suffering from jaundice. **Me**: You know, that actually makes sense.

The Sontarans are searching for their mortal enemy - the Rutans.

Me: Do you remember the Rutans, Sue?

Sue: No, should I?

Me: Giant ball of snot in a lighthouse.

Sue: Oh yes, of course.

Me: I can remember being really excited about *Shakedown* at the time,

because I honestly believed it was the future of *Doctor Who*. **Sue**: Really? I would have been depressed, if I were you.

**Me**: I liked the idea of it being made by the fans, for the fans, because the BBC had abandoned it. I liked the idea of it being a niche thing funded directly via VHS sales in specialist shops.

Sue: Even though you needed somebody to drive you to that specialist

shop. And lend you the money to buy it.

Me: I didn't say it was perfect.

Shakedown was written by Terrance Dicks, and in many ways it works as a Greatest Hits package. And even though they can't mention the Doctor by name, the characters can at least allude to him.

**Sue**: The Dentist! Unless the Doctor performed dental surgery on him when those two met, that doesn't make any sense at all. Surely you can't copyright the word doctor, can you? Just say you met a doctor, for heaven's sake.

At least this Dentist knew how to deal with the Sontarans.

Sue: You just smack 'em on the back of the head. Everybody knows that.

Shakedown's biggest problem is Lieutenant Vorn. Or at least he is for me. As far as Sue's concerned, he's the absolute highlight.

**Sue**: Every time he opens his mouth, he kills all the drama they've built up. He's hilarious.

**Me**: I can't tell if he's supposed to be this bad on purpose or they just ran out of money.

The Rutan proceeds to eliminate the ship's crew so it can disguise itself using their bodies as a template. There's only one tiny flaw with its plan...

**Sue**: It isn't much of a disguise when you know the original person is dead because you've just seen their corpse. And then you make the original look like they've just discovered Goth music and don't know how to apply make-up properly. It's a dead giveaway, that.

The plot takes several twists and turns. One minute the Sontarans seem to be working with the humans, and then the humans appear to be helping the Rutan.

**Sue**: The direction is pretty good, although I'm not convinced that a space yacht would look like a battleship on the inside, but it's nicely lit and it doesn't hang about too much.

### THE WILDERNESS YEARS

When the Rutan (disguised as Michael Wisher) kills a Sontaran, it looks for all the world like he's going to snog him first.

**Sue**: There's a lot of sexual imagery in this story. Everybody keeps banging on about pair-bonding, and that thick Sontaran was obsessed with Ace's tits.

The Sontarans and the Rutan are both killed, which serves them bloody right, frankly.

**Sue**: I enjoyed that. It's definitely the best fan-made thing we've seen so far. It helps that they had proper actors in it, of course, but they really went for it and it held my attention. The special effects were really good too, especially for the time. The music was excellent, too.

Me: That was Mark Ayres, with a little help from Jerry Goldsmith.

**Sue**: If they'd shot it somewhere other than a boat, I think I would have mistaken it for real television.

**Me**: I'm surprised at how well *Shakedown* stands up today. It's certainly more watchable than most of Season 24, that's for sure.

Sue: Yeah, it was pretty good, although it wasn't worth sulking over.

### Do You Have A Licence To Save This Planet?

It's day two of our journey into the Wilderness Years...

**Sue**: What the fuck is this supposed to be?

We are watching an animated character with a bright red hat and a handlebar moustache to die for.

**Sue**: It isn't like this the whole way through, is it? I don't think I could bear to watch a bloody cartoon. Especially one that looks like it was animated in the 1970s.

I make a mental note that Sue isn't in the mood to watch any bloody cartoons.

Me: Don't you recognise who it's supposed to be?

Sue: He looks like a Beefeater.

Me: It's Rassilon!

The Exposition of Rassilon is interrupted by the unexpected delivery of the Toasters of Rassilon, which makes me laugh like a drain.

**Sue**: Why the fuck are you laughing, Neil? Is it because this is so bad it's actually good? Is that it?

Rassilon calls on the Doctor for help, but the Doctor is busy, which means he'll have to call upon the Foot Doctor instead.

**Sue**: Why don't they call him the Chiropodist?

Me: Bless you.

That joke will never get old. And it's a good job too, because they will repeat it 17,000 times over the next 30 minutes. Anyway, this incarnation of the Foot Doctor is played by Sylvester McCoy.

Sue: He's underplaying it as usual, I see.

As the Foot Doctor travels the universe in his transdimensional washing machine, he is being monitored by his arch-enemies...

Sue: Oh, it's the Cybermen.

Me: Don't be ridiculous, they don't own the rights to the Cybermen.

These are the Cyberons.

**Sue**: EH? But they look like Cybermen whose heads have been trapped in

a sliding door. Or a vice.

**Me**: This video is a commentary on the BBC cracking down on unlicensed fan films, even though they couldn't be arsed to make the bloody programme themselves, the bastards.

**Sue**: To be fair to the BBC, I've seen a lot of these fan films and you can see their point of view. I mean, look a it!

Me: I know you are going to find this hard to believe, but this was one of

### THE WILDERNESS YEARS

the main texts I used when I wrote my MA dissertation about fandom.

**Sue**: (*Laughing*) I wouldn't tell anybody that if I were you, Neil.

**Me**: (*Hurt*) It was very valuable work.

A Sontaran spaceship arrives in a suburban street.

Sue: Oh no, not them again. The Sontarans will do anything for money.

A Sontaran tries to claim somebody's garden in the name of the mighty Sontaran Empire, but an Auton got there first.

**Sue**: So how come the Autons and the Sontarans looks like Autons and Sontarans, but the Cybermen look fucking ridiculous?

**Me**: It's because the Cybermen have better lawyers.

A couple named Jeff and Gloria don't realise that they live next door to the Cyberons. Because they are fucking morons, obviously.

Sue: Okay, so this is what happens if you turn *Doctor Who* into a sitcom.

Me: No, that was Season 24.

Sue: I quite like it. I don't know what the hell I'm watching here, but at

least it isn't taking itself too seriously.

Me: Too seriously? It isn't taking itself seriously at all!

The script is consistently funny, especially the subtle in-jokes which sail over Sue's head. Well, most of them did, anyway.

**Sue**: The Sontaran is taking the piss out of the potato head joke. He must be referring to *Shakedown*, because they did that.

**Me**: When we blogged *The Time Warrior*, you bypassed the whole potato thing and went straight for "heads that look like giant poos".

**Sue**: Shit heads. **Me**: Exactly.

The Foot Doctor meets the Salesman, who immediately breaks the fourth wall.

Sue: Okay, it's all gone a bit meta now.

Me: This is back in 2001 when being meta wasn't as meta as it is now.

Sue: Right...

The Salesman just happens to be peddling all the narrative clichés required for a successful episode of Doctor Who.

Sue: Remind me again why the BBC weren't keen on these videos...

The Autons launch an attack and the Foot Doctor fights back with his spoons. Yes, spoons. At which point Sue becomes very philosophical indeed:

**Sue**: Why am I watching this, Neil? And why are people interested in me watching this? I don't understand it, I really don't. I barely understood it when we watched proper *Doctor Who*, but this is just ridiculous.

While the Autons and the Cyberons stage an impromptu performance of West Side Story, the Sontaran reports his failure to take over the planet to his Group Marshall.

**Me**: This is absolutely brilliant. "Have you tried shouting? That usually works." It's funny because it's true, Sue.

A Cyberon and an Auton engage in some very noisy sex.

Sue: I can't believe I'm watching this.

Me: Remind me never to show you any Zygon porn.

Sue: What!?

The Foot Doctor is captured by the Licensor.

Sue: Is it...

Me: The Master?

Sue: I was going to say Laurence Llewellyn Bowen.

The Foot Doctor defeats the Licensor by pointing out they are currently



### THE WILDERNESS YEARS

standing on an unlicensed Earth (even though the villain promised to regenerate the Foot Doctor into David Hasselhoff).

**Me**: There was actually a time when we thought David Hasselhoff could be the next Doctor. Imagine that, Sue.

**Sue**: Ironically, there are probably quite a lot of idiots out there who would be more than happy to have David Hasselhoff as the Doctor right now. Because he has a penis.

After an impressive cameo by a CGI Kyrnoid (at least I think it was a Kyrnoid - it's probably a Plantoid to avoid any copyright issues), the Foot Doctor regenerates into...

**Sue**: Please tell me he regenerates into David Hasselhoff.

He can't regenerate because "the other two are at a convention in Barbados, the bastards", which gets a huge laugh from Sue.

**Me**: Comedy gold.

Sue: Yes, it's very funny, but it should have finished 10 minutes ago.

The Foot Doctor and the Salesman walk off into the sunset together. Cue credits.

**Sue**: Oh look, Rupert Booth played one of the Autons. Why don't we watch that Rupert Booth fan video you were in? Now, *that* would be funny.

### **Death Comes to Time**

Neil: Does the title Death Comes To Time mean anything to you, Sue?

Sue: Take a wild guess.

**Me**: What about the name Dan Freedman? **Sue**: Vaguely. Doesn't he owe you money?

Long story short: I got to know Nev Fountain - who was the script editor

for Death Comes To Time - after I launched a website which showcased/ stole the telephone calls made by Jon Culshaw pretending to be Tom Baker for BBC Radio 4's Dead Ringers. To make up for not crediting Nev on that website I offered to make a website for him, and when Dan Freedman wanted a website too, he came to me because Nev told him I was cheap (i.e. free).

**Me**: The funniest thing about *Death Comes To Time* is that the writer was this guy called Colin Meek, and when Nev was editing it, he'd send these really harsh notes to Dan telling him the script was shit, so Dan could then moderate this feedback and tell Colin. It was only after they recorded the pilot episode that Nev discovered that Colin and Dan *were the same person*.

Sue: Awkward. Why the fuck would he do that?

**Me**: No idea. I just know that Dan would ring me up late at night when I was working on his website to tell me that *Doctor Who* was definitely coming back, and that he was the guy who was going to do it.

Sue: Not Colin, then?

Me: No, Colin was an idiot.

Death Comes To Time begins with a pretentious voiceover.

Sue: Okay, so what the hell am I watching now?

Me: Don't you recognise this actor's voice? Come on, Sue, he's been in

EastEnders and everything.

She eventually identifies Dr Legg (aka Leonard Fenton), probably because he recently made a triumphant return to the programme.

Sue: So how long is this?

Me: About nine hours, I think. Or maybe it just feels like nine hours...

We are introduced to two warring factions: General Tannis is played by John Sessions and Admiral Mettna is played by Jacqueline Pearce. Sue recognises Jacqueline immediately.

### THE WILDERNESS YEARS

**Sue**: This is the sort of thing I'd expect Servalan to turn up in. I'm surprised at John Sessions, but he does sound like he's enjoying himself.

General Tannis destroys a city in a particularly cruel manner.

**Sue**: What a bastard. I don't know what this has got to do with *Doctor Who*, though.

And that's when Sylvester McCoy's Doctor turns up.

Sue: So this is before he regenerates into Paul McGann, then.

Me: Erm...

Sue: And who's that guy he's travelling with?

Me: That's Antimony. He's played by Kevin Eldon.

Sue: Who?

Me: FUCKING NODDY!

Sue: What?

Me: Don't worry about it.

Sue: I don't understand what this is. It's barely animated, for a start. It's

just the same drawing over and over again.

Me: The production values are pretty good when it comes to the audio,

though. I like the classical music.

**Sue**: I think it's more distracting with the images, to be honest. It's so boring seeing the same drawings all the time, like this was an afterthought

or something.

Me: This would have been cutting-edge for the internet in 2001.

Sue: Perhaps. But now it just looks cheap.

The Doctor is summoned to a meeting with another Time Lord.

**Sue**: What the hell is Paul McGann doing in this? **Me**: That isn't Paul McGann; it just looks like him.

Sue: Oh yes, it's Stephen Fry. Well, I did not expect that.

Stephen Fry plays the Minster of Chance.

Sue: What the fuck does that mean? Has he got a gambling problem?

Unfortunately, it's practically impossible to hear what the Doctor and the Minister are saying to each other thanks to the torrential rainfall.

**Sue**: They are overdoing this rain. I bet they had a faulty mic - maybe it was crackling or something- so Dan had to slap some rain effects on top of it. It's sending me to sleep.

I think Sue has had more than enough so we skip to the end of Death Comes To Time, where the Doctor is killed and doesn't regenerate.

**Sue**: You can't do that. We've already seen him turn into Paul McGann! **Me**: Maybe he survived this but didn't tell anybody, and then he got himself killed and turned into Paul McGann. I don't fucking know! **Sue**: So Dan Freedman basically broke *Doctor Who*. Is that what you're trying to say?

**Me**: Pretty much. For a while, anyway.

**Sue**: I mean, why would you do that? It's stupid. And why were the BBC okay with this?

**Me**: I think Dan Freedman is still making stuff based on the Ministry of Chance character today.

**Sue**: It sounds like he's just using *Doctor Who* to sell his own stuff. So he isn't completely stupid.

### Scream of the Shalka

Sue: Not another cartoon!

I am sorely testing Sue's patience now.

Sue: So what the fuck am I watching now?

**Me**: Okay, it's 2003 and this was the future of *Doctor Who*. For about a

fortnight.

I explain to her that the wind was taken out of this project's sails when

### THE WILDERNESS YEARS

we discovered that Russell T Davies was bringing Doctor Who back to television a couple of months before this was released.

**Sue**: At least they've got the mouths to move this time. It's a big improvement on the last one. So was this version of *Doctor Who* aimed

more at younger children, then?

Me: What makes you say that?

Sue: Well, it's a cartoon for a start.

Me: So?

Sue: So it's obviously made for kids, stupid.

The Doctor is played by Richard E Grant.

**Sue**: He looks like Nick Cave. **Me**: He looks like a vampire.

Sue: So where does Richard E Grant's Doctor fit in the scheme of things?

Is he before or after Paul McGann? I can't keep up any more.

Me: He doesn't count.

Sue: Why not?

**Me**: Because that would mean we'd have an extra Doctor that nobody ever talked about between McGann and Eccleston, and that would be stupid, obviously.

The TARDIS has arrived in the village of Lannet in Lancashire in 2003 and the Doctor immediately ends up in a pub.

**Sue**: They've managed to get a lot of character into this, even though the animation is still quite basic. Yeah, I like it. It looks old-fashioned, but it works.

As the Doctor tries to fathom why this village is so quiet, he encounters a homeless woman, and when he offers to give her some money, he can't remember whether the UK uses euros or not.

Me: Well, Paul Cornell got that completely wrong.

Sue: Unless we are forced to adopt the euro when we rejoin the EU in 20

years time. Don't be so pessimistic, Neil.

The Doctor's investigations lead him to the flat of the pub's barmaid. Alison tells him that the village is under siege from a mysterious force living underground, and how her friend who made too much noise was mysteriously compelled to smother herself in lava until her hands dropped off.

Sue: Bloody hell! This is not for kids!

**Me**: But it's a cartoon, Sue. **Sue**: That just makes it worse.

The episode concludes with the Doctor confronted by the Shalka.

Sue: It's quite good, this. Put the next one on.

Me: I haven't got it.

Sue: What do you mean, you haven't got it?

**Me**: I never got around to buying it on DVD. Because it doesn't count. And I can only find the first episode online. It's a shame, really, because in the next episode we find out that the Doctor is travelling with a robot

version of the Master, who's played by Derek Jacobi.

Sue: You're just making it up now.

Me: So there you go, Sue. That's what we had to go through as Doctor

Who fans during the Wilderness Years.

Sue: It just makes me want to watch proper Doctor Who again.

Me: Excellent. Job done, then.

## THE NIGHT OF THE DOCTOR

**BLOGGED: 18 May 2019** 

Sue: So what have you got for me tonight?

**Me**: Well, the good news is it only lasts for six minutes.

Sue: And that's your idea of good news, is it?

The action begins on a spaceship in trouble.

Sue: Aren't you going to tell me what I'm watching first? I mean, what the

hell is this?

Things are looking bad for the ship's pilot, Cass, when the Doctor suddenly turns up to save the day.

**Sue**: Bloody hell, it's Paul McGann! **Me**: You don't remember this, do you?

Sue: No. Should I?

The Doctor tries to save Cass from her impending doom.

**Sue**: He's very swashbuckling, like a sexy pirate.

Me: Do you like his new haircut?

Sue: Oh yes, definitely. But I don't understand this at all. He looks older,

somehow.

Me: That's because he is older, Sue.

**Sue**: But the Doctor doesn't usually age that much between regenerations. **Me**: You've clearly forgotten about Matt Smith, then. Anyway, this Doctor could have been around for hundreds of years for all we know, and that

why he looks 17 years older here. Because it's all relative, isn't it?

Sue: It's bloody confusing is what it is.

Unfortunately, Cass would rather die than travel with the Doctor.

Sue: And I thought Tegan liked to moan.

**Me**: She doesn't trust him because we're in the middle of the Time War. **Sue**: So the Time War lasts less than six minutes? That doesn't seem fair. **Me**: It just feels like six minutes, that's why they call it the Time War.

The ship crash lands on the planet Karn. Which is convenient to put it mildly.

Me: Do you remember this lot?

Sue: Yes, vaguely. They're lesbians, aren't they?

**Me**: Yes, that's right, Sue. **Sue**: The Sisters of Karn.

Me: That's almost correct. I'm impressed.

The Sisterhood of Karn tells the Doctor that he is already dead.

Sue: Is he going to regenerate? Like, right now?

Me: Yes. So who does he regenerate into?

Sue: Is this a trick question? It's Christopher Eccleston, isn't it?

Me: You don't remember this at all, do you?

Sue: No.

The Sisterhood of Karn gives the Doctor the opportunity to choose what kind of Doctor he'll be during this time of war. He could be wise, or strong, or...

Sue: A lady? Me: Too soon.

Sue talks over the bit where the Doctor recites the names of his Big Finish companions, and that's probably for the best.

Sue: Hang on a minute, this doesn't seem fair at all.

**Me**: If *The TV Movie* was a one-night stand, this is just a quick fumble.

The Doctor regenerates...

### THE NIGHT OF THE DOCTOR

Sue: What the fuck? It's Bilbo Baggins!

Me: (Sighing) It's John Hurt.

Sue: Oh yeah, now that you've said it, and if I squint really hard, it's John

Hurt.

Me: Don't you remember when John Hurt was in Doctor Who? It was only

five years ago.

Sue: Yeah, I do, but he's not actually a real Doctor, is he?

She's pointing at the on-screen credit that refers to him as the War Doctor.

Me: Please, don't get me started.

Sue: So what was the point of all that? It doesn't seem very fair to drag Paul McGann back for six minutes, just to kill him off again. Why the

fuck did he agree to that?

**Me**: It's because Christopher Eccleston refused to appear in the 50th anniversary episode, and Steven Moffat had to come up with a Doctor we didn't know about for his story to make any sense, so this explains the missing link, as it were.

**Sue**: So it was all done just to appease the fans? Because I don't think anybody else cared.

Me: I bet Paul McGann's agent did.

Sue: We should definitely blog the next one. I remember it being pretty

good.

Me: We already have.

Sue: We have?

**Me**: Yes, for *The Guardian*. Don't you remember? **Sue**: (*Laughing*) Oh God, yes! What a disaster!

**NOTES**: In October 2013, Faber & Faber took us to lunch to celebrate the launch of our book, and most of the meal was spent discussing how we could promote it in the mainstream press. And that's when somebody had the bright idea of us live-blogging the 50th anniversary episode of *Doctor Who* for *The Guardian* (I think it was Sue, but she denies it).

The colour must have drained out of my face because I distinctly remember being assured that nobody actually did these things live, and they always saw the programme days in advance. It would be fine, they

said, leave it with us. So I agreed, believing it would never happen in a million years. Besides, I'd booked tickets to see the anniversary special on the big screen in 3D, and I wasn't going to miss that for the world.

A few days later, *The Guardian* contacted me to tell me it was on. There was only one problem: the BBC wouldn't let anyone have an advance copy of *The Day of the Doctor* and we would have to do it completely live. But hey, how hard could it be?

I didn't sleep for a week, and almost pulled out twice, but after reluctantly giving our cinema tickets away, Sue and I headed to London on November 23rd to give it our best shot.

When we arrived at *The Guardian*'s offices it was already getting late and the place was practically deserted. The staff member who had been assigned to look after us immediately let it be known that she had no interest in *Doctor Who* and she'd cancelled a night out to do this (Sue thinks she had tickets to see Biffy Clyro, while I could have sworn it was Hootie and the Blowfish, but whatever, it isn't important).

She took us to a huge room full of desktop computers. At one end of the room was the PC we had been assigned to blog on, while at the other end of the room was a TV suspended from the ceiling that you could just make out if I squinted really hard. In fact, the television was so far away, there was a noticeable sound delay. And then, for reasons that I still don't quite understand, I was told that this was the TV I'd be watching it on.

But that wasn't all. To make sure we didn't accidentally libel anybody on the night, everything we said had to be typed by me first, then checked by her and then uploaded to the blog. So, it's arguably the most important episode of *Doctor Who* ever broadcast and I had to comment on it, ask my wife about it, type it out, have it edited, re-checked and then uploaded. It was bloody terrifying, and I still can't watch *The Day of the Doctor* without breaking out in a cold sweat. So I've finally got something in common with Steven Moffat.

The Day of the Doctor moves like the clappers. There's an awful lot going on, what with a brand new Doctor turning up, several old Doctors turning up, a Time War and a fake Rose to keep track of, not to mention Zygons, UNIT, Gallifrey and Tom bloody Baker. Trying to keep pace with all the plot twists and revelations would have been difficult at the best of times, but trying to do it half a mile away from a TV whilst trying

### THE NIGHT OF THE DOCTOR

to think of interesting things to say about it to an audience of people who couldn't wait to tell you that you were wrong, was one of the most stressful nights of my life.

I missed at least a third of the episode because I was too busy typing. Sue did her best to let me know what was going on, but she was even more confused than usual. It wasn't our finest hour, that's for sure. Still better than Guernsey, though. Here's a "highlight":

**Sue**: I loved the way they got out of blowing up Gallifrey. I never liked that. The Doctor shouldn't blow up planets.

Me: I don't care if it made sense or not. Tom Baker was in it!

Sue: Stop crying and pull yourself together, man!

Ironically, the person we were originally going to see *The Day of the Doctor* with, Simon Harries, was immediately interviewed by the BBC as he exited the cinema. Just think, if we'd gone to that screening and crashed his vox pop instead, we may have reached a much bigger audience.

The blog is still online here: <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2013/nov/23/doctor-who-the-day-of-the-doctor-live-blog">https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2013/nov/23/doctor-who-the-day-of-the-doctor-live-blog</a>

# THE FIVE(ISH) DOCTORS REBOOT

**BLOGGED: 18 May 2019** 

So a funny thing happened on the way to The Guardian...

Me: You are partially responsible for this, Sue.

Sue: Thank God it's good, then.

As we headed to the train station on Saturday, November 23rd to blog The Day of the Doctor, Peter Davison was on Radio 2 plugging his contribution to the 50th anniversary celebrations. And when he was asked what provoked him to make this short film which depicts him desperately trying to take part in the special, he said a woman at a convention asked him why he wasn't in it, and that inspired him to gatecrash the production instead.

**Me**: I'm convinced that was you, at the Dimensions convention in November 2012, Sue. The dates match and I've got you on tape asking him what his first words in the special were; he became really depressed when he admitted that he hadn't been asked yet.

**Sue**: Yes, you made me ask him because you were too scared to do it yourself. I think I upset him.

**Me**: Thank God you didn't upset anybody else that convention.

Peter's film begins with a short prologue, and Sue doesn't recognise Sean Pertwee until I tell her he's the guy responsible for the voiceovers on MasterChef: The Professionals. However, she does clock Oliva Coleman straight away.

Sue: Bloody hell. How did Peter Davison afford her?

Even Oliva admits that she's in bloody everything.

Me: Whatever happened to Olivia Coleman?

### THE FIVE(ISH) DOCTORS REBOOT

The film mainly deals with Peter Davison coming to terms with the fact that he hasn't been asked to appear in the 50th anniversary special.

**Sue**: And he was in such a good mood before I turned up.

As Peter signs autographs at a convention, a blonde woman wearing glasses and a Tom Baker T-shirt comes up to him and asks him if he's going to be featured in the 50th anniversary special.

**Sue**: Is that supposed to be me?

Me: Possibly.

Sue: Because I wouldn't be seen dead in a Tom Baker T-shirt.

As Peter breaks the news to his children that he isn't going to be in the 50th anniversary special, Sue is only interested in one thing:

Sue: Where's his wife?

Peter dreams of gloriously returning to Doctor Who, until a very familiar face brings him back to reality. Well, I say familiar...

Sue: Is that his wife?

Me: No! Heaven's sake, woman, it's Tegan!

Sue: Oh my God, so it is...

Meanwhile, Colin Baker is at home, reading a fanzine.

Sue: It's a pity he isn't reading the Tachyon TV fanzine that got you into

trouble that time.

Me: I think Colin shredded his copy.

Meanwhile, Steven Moffat is haunted by a Caves of Androzani-style dream sequence, which also happens to feature my favourite moment in the film.

**Sue**: Who the hell is that supposed to be? And why are you laughing, Neil? I don't get it.

**Me**: It's Adric! I bloody love that bit.

**Sue**: Play it again. **Me**: With pleasure...

Matthew Waterhouse's visage pops out of a swirling sea of faces (Sue recognises K9) and excitedly exclaims, "It's me, isn't it?" before popping out of existence. I'm probably not doing this justice, but it's fucking fantastic.

Sue: That was never Adric... God, I feel so old now.

Colin, Peter and Sylvester McCoy (who have now joined forces) decide to call Tom Baker, just in case he can pull some strings and get them in the special.

**Sue**: I love how they are all completely shit-scared of him.

We cut to some very familiar footage. So familiar, in fact, Sue manages to correctly identify where it's from! So this experiment wasn't a total waste of time, after all.

**Sue**: Oh God, yes. It's from *Shada*. It's the one they never finished. **Me**: They've finished it several times since this was made, but who's counting?

Colin tries to force his family into watching one of his episodes of Doctor Who.

Sue: Now this is definitely a reference to me. You lock the doors, too, Neil.

If Olivia Coleman was out of Peter Davison's league, then get a load of Peter Jackson and Ian McKellen!

**Sue**: This is brilliant. You know, I think this was probably the best thing to come out of the 50th anniversary. The writing is brilliant, because it feels real somehow, even though it's completely bloody mad.

### THE FIVE(ISH) DOCTORS REBOOT

Peter Davison convinces his fellow actors to picket the BBC.

**Sue**: I could probably watch a whole series of Colin and Sylvester sitting around all day, bitching at each other.

The scene where John Barrowman is outed as a straight bloke with a wife and kids results in Sue laughing so much, she ends up crying. This is swiftly followed by John driving the ex-Doctors to Cardiff, singing show tunes all the way, which we both agree is probably the funniest thing we've seen since Brexit. And if that wasn't joyous enough, David Tennant turns up.

**Sue**: I'd forgotten that my third husband was related to Peter Davison. That must be how he got Olivia Coleman to do this, as a favour to David. It all makes sense now.

The ex-Doctors successfully sneak into the studio and then, well, the film turns into a slapstick farce.

**Sue**: So they got Ian McKellen and Olivia Coleman but they couldn't afford a decent actor to play the security guard? Okay... And why is Frank Skinner operating a Dalek?

**Me**: Forget that, why is one of Patrick Troughton's sons operating a Dalek? **Sue**: I don't think this is supposed to make sense, Neil. You just have to go with it.

Peter, Colin and Sylvester manage to finagle their way into three Daleks.

Me: What do you think of these new Daleks, Sue?

**Sue**: I'd be slightly worried about them getting through doors with their fat backsides, but apart from that, they're fine. Why are you rolling your eyes, Neil?

The film concludes with Russell T Davies trying to talk his way into Peter's film, suggesting that he could become a Time Lord with lasers for eyes and the catchphrase, "Quel dommage, Davros!"

Sue: Russell T is such a legend. Look at him! Mad as a box of frogs.

And then there's an epilogue, where it turns out that Peter, Colin and Sylvester were in The Day of the Doctor, after all. Sort of. Probably. Maybe.

Sue: Yeah, that was very clever. I really enjoyed that. I remember enjoying

it at the time, and I'm glad I possibly had something to do with it.

Me: And that's the last thing you have to watch for this book.

Sue: Really? Quel dommage.

But it isn't over yet...

Sue: What do you mean it isn't over yet? For fuck's sake, Neil!

Me: I promise you, this is it. The final end.

Sue: If I had a pound for every time you've said that, I'd treat myself to a

new drill.

I asked Twitter to suggest their favourite McGann and McCoy audio adventures for Sue to listen to, but there was really only one contender to wrap up this experiment (and if you've never heard it before there are massive spoilers ahead)...

### Master

Sue: Is it the Master? Me: Are you serious?

Sue: She just referred to him as the Master! Of course I'm being serious.

It's true, the story does begin with a servant named Jade escorting two visitors to her master's study.

Me: She's referring to the master of the house, Sue. I think this is like

Upstairs, Downstairs, but in space.

Sue: What's it called?

Me: I'm not telling; it's a spoiler.

**Sue**: It's *Return of the Master*, isn't it? That smug look on your face... **Me**: Okay, yes, it's called *Master* by Joseph Lidster. Happy now?

**Sue**: Not really, no.

We stop talking over the dialogue and agree to convene for a chat between cliffhangers instead.

Sue: Why do I feel like I've heard this before?

Me: Well...

Sue: Because I remember when the Master couldn't remember who he

was and he turned into John Simm. It's the same thing, isn't it?

Me: This was released in 2003 so it's entirely possible that Russell T Davies

was influenced by this story when he brought the Master back.

**Sue**: It's exactly the same. How could he be stupid enough to let it happen

to him twice?

Me: He's the Master.

Sue: Good point, well made.

With a little bit of prompting, Sue vaguely remembers this incarnation of the Master from The Keeper of Traken.

Sue: But this isn't Sylvester McCoy's Master. He's Tom Baker's Master. So

how come he's meeting him in the wrong order?

Me: Time travel?

Sue: But they've never done that before.Me: They did it with River Song all the time.Sue: Big Finish definitely have a lot to answer for.

The second episode, which basically involves the Doctor and the Master debating the nature of good and evil, is spellbinding.

Me: Bloody hell, that was brilliant.

**Sue**: Do you think the writer used as many words beginning with 'r' as he could so Sylvester McCoy could go to town on them?

She seems to be enjoying it, though.

**Sue**: I like the way they've framed this as a story within a story. It reassures me that it's okay to be as confused about this as the person the Doctor is telling this to. And I have no idea who he's supposed to be telling it to, which only makes this more confusing. Actually, forget I said anything.

### **BIG FINISH**

In the third episode, the Doctor tells us how he was a childhood friend of the Master, and how one day the Master turned on another child who was bullying them and killed him.

**Sue**: Right, so if you kill someone in self-defence, you become a heartless murderer in the future. That's depressing, and a little bit unfair, don't you think?

The Master (who believes he is a doctor called John Smith) is trying to stop the spirits in the house from turning him back into a monster. At the same time, Philip Madoc is chewing the scenery as a second-rate Jack the Ripper (trust me, it's a hell of a lot better than I've just described it).

**Sue**: If the house is turning him back into the Master, why doesn't he just put it up for sale and move?

The final episode reveals that the Doctor did a deal with Death that allowed the Master to live a happy and contented life for 10 years before the Doctor has to kill him (spoiler: he doesn't).

Sue: (Rolling her eyes) So this was all down to the Doctor, then?

**Me**: If you thought he was a crafty sod on television, this incarnation of

the Doctor was a borderline sociopath in other media.

**Sue**: Another thing that annoys me is that the Master is clearly the Doctor's brother, so why don't they just say that? Why are they skirting around it?

Oh, and it wasn't the Master who killed that bully on Gallifrey. It was the Doctor.

**Sue**: So did that really happen? **Me**: What do you mean?

Sue: Do fans believe that actually happened?

Me: What do you mean by that? And why are you pulling that face?

Sue: What face?

Me: The face that says you've just stepped in some dog shit.

Sue: I don't believe it happened. The Doctor wouldn't have murdered a

child like that. I don't believe it. **Me**: Maybe Death was lying.

Sue: The Doctor seemed to believe her. Oh, I don't know what to think.

Does this count as proper *Doctor Who*?

Me: Yes.

**Sue**: So the next time I watch *Doctor Who*, I'll know she killed a small boy and covered it up. Whose idea was it for me to listen to this story? Why

have you ruined *Doctor Who* for me?

Me: Blame Twitter. So what score would you give it?

Sue: I can't give it a score. If I give it a score, I would be admitting that it

really happened.

Me: You looked like you were enjoying it.

**Sue**: I was. It was very well done. The performances were excellent and the story was interesting, but it was too bloody long. It could have been 40 minutes shorter, like when they did it on the telly. And the so-called twist irritated me.

Me: And that's it. We've finished.

Sue: What, again?

Me: Well, this is a bit anti-climatic, isn't it?

Sue: Just a bit.

## **SUE'S SCORES**

Time and the Rani: *Irredeemable shit.* -1/10 Paradise Towers: *McCoy is growing on me.* 6/10

**Delta and the Bannermen:** Made for seven year-olds. 2/10

**Dragonfire:** Cheap. 3/10

Remembrance of the Daleks: The show just reinvented itself. 9/10

**The Happiness Patrol:** *Profound.* 7/10

**Silver Nemesis:** *Dreadful.* 0/10

The Greatest Show in the Galaxy: I'm impressed. 8/10

Battlefield: All over the place. 4/10 Ghost Light: An odd one. 8/10 The Curse of Fenric: Exciting. 8/10

 $\textbf{Survival:} \ \textit{They shouldn't have stopped it there. } 9/10$ 

**The TV Movie:** A great way to finish. 9/10

## **AFTERWORD**

Graham Kibble-White produced 36 illustrations for these books, and we posed for every single one of them. You see, Graham's biggest flaw as an illustrator, according to him at least, is that he can't draw anything from his imagination, which means everything has to be photographed first. And that's how I ended up balancing on my torso on the back of an armchair for the Extras illustration in Volume 6, and why I couldn't walk properly for a month afterwards. That time I posed as Jamie in a kilt for Volume 2? I'm sporting a bath towel. Colin Baker strangling me in Volume 7? I'm being throttled by Sue's brother, Gary.

I'm sure Graham would have included me in every illustration if he could, and despite me repeatedly putting my foot down, he occasionally got his own way, which is why you can see me cosplaying as Susan Foreman, Polly (twice), Sarah Jane Smith, Romana, Bonnie Langford (not Mel), Ace and Grace. And I actually paid him for the privilege.

For the record, my favourite illustration is the one he drew for Season 14. I think Graham caught my wife perfectly considering she had a paper bag on her head.

Graham also typeset the first seven volumes, and we have him to thank for the paperbacks' distinctive look, from the cute icons and the subtle typography jokes, to the font choices which have been known to trigger people on *Twitter*. In fact our entire marketing strategy has solely been down to him.

Graham and I only fell out once during the making of these books, over the spelling of Tescos, and while it's true we have only met twice (for a total of two minutes), I can't begin to imagine what it would have been like doing this without him.

And it's been one hell of a journey. Releasing the first volume in 2015 felt like giving birth (although Sue reckons this is "fucking bollocks"). Either way, the amount of time and energy I spent researching how to self-publish these volumes far exceeded anything I did for that PhD I started and never finished, that's for sure. I agonised endlessly over every decision, from the choice of paper stock, to the width of the gutter margins and the heft of the book mailers. I fixated on these details so

much that one day I developed an eye strain so bad, I thought the page numbers were disappearing, and Sue had to convince me that I wasn't going blind, I was simply going mad.

Incidentally, between you and me, I'm not entirely happy with the lamination on the first book, and I'd reprint it given half the chance.

The second volume was so disastrous, I almost pulled the plug on the whole project. For those of you who missed it, a fair proportion of the initial print run was cursed with faulty binding, so when you opened the book, the first few pages fell out. Unfortunately, I didn't realise this until I'd shipped more than a hundred books across the globe (including one copy to a nuclear powered submarine). To be fair to the printers, they did reprint the book at no extra cost... but they used the wrong cover, which was fun. I think there are currently several thousand copies swirling around on *eBay*, and there's a video of me on *YouTube* burning the books I couldn't sell. Happy times.

Anyway, I switched printers for Volume 3 and it's been plain sailing ever since, so if you ever fancy publishing yourself please give 4Edge a call, because they really are brilliant (ask for Dave), and all the errors since then have been entirely of our own making. Which brings me nicely to... SEASON 22.

If you are reading the ebooks, you may not be aware that the paperback version of Volume 7 includes two Season 22s. It's not as egregious as leaving out an entire season like some *Doctor Who* reference books I could mention, but this 40-point typo almost sent me over the edge, and Sue and Graham had to talk me down before I recalled the whole print run and bankrupted myself. I just hope that the free postcard included in this volume goes some way to making up for it.

Aside from these minor hiccups, publishing these books has been one of the most rewarding and satisfying experiences of my life (right up there with climbing Mount Kilimanjaro and bringing up Nicol), and I have loads of people to thank for making it such an enjoyable ride. I've already mentioned Graham, but there's also everyone who contributed a foreword - Rob Shearman, Toby Hadoke, Paul Cornell, David Quantick, Mr Andy Miller, Jenny T Colgan, Simon Guerrier and Una McCormack - plus Jack Kibble-White and Sean Alexander, who gave me tireless support and advice which went far beyond the books. I'd also like to thank Daniel

### **AFTERWORD**

Blythe for coming up with the name Sue Me Books, and Andrew Orton for his fabulous covers, which exceeded my wildest expectations, and you must admit they do look bloody impressive on a shelf.

I'd also like to express my gratitude to John Callaghan for helping me make this project a multimedia experience (several volumes were accompanied by digital music EPs and this book has been released with a CD). I love John's work and he deserves a huge audience. In fact, of all the things I've managed to achieve with this series of books, I think commissioning John to write *It's The End*, *But*... is what I'll end up being most proud of.

But most of all, I want to thank you. Each and every one of these books was published thanks to crowdfunding, and I couldn't have asked for a better group of people to support us. I honestly thought that if the first book sold 400 copies, the next one would sell 350, the one after that 300 and so on, until this volume would end up with a print run of approximately 50 units. But thanks to you lot it didn't turn out like that, and I want to thank each and every one of you for sticking with us over the last four years. Your support has been humbling, and we never once took it for granted. I especially want to thank everyone who backed a reward tier which included one of Graham's illustrations - you made it possible for me to pose as Polly (twice) - and I'm not exaggerating when I say that every single time we reached a funding target (sometimes within the first 24 hours of a campaign), I wept tears of joy. (and relief). I'm serious. We couldn't have done this without you.

I'm happy to report that we have fulfilled almost all of our commitments to this project (even if some of them ended up being very late indeed). In fact, the only thing we haven't been able to undertake yet is the *Kickstarter* stretch goal to recreate *K9 and Company's* title sequence; I think this was another one of Graham's bright ideas. Anyway, we were all set to do it when Sue broke her ankle playing tennis. And then real life got in the way until the guy from BBC Gloucester stopped emailing us about it. But I swear that Sue *will* sip Chardonnay in Cirencester one day, even though sourcing a fully-functioning Austin Metro cabriolet is turning out to be lot harder than sourcing a fully-functioning K9.

Of course I can't finish without thanking Sue for continuing to put up with all this nonsense - for more than eight years now - but I wrote a

book about her for Faber & Faber, which is still in print, so grab a copy of that for the full story on how amazing she is, and how lucky I am. Please don't let the lukewarm review in *Doctor Who Magazine* put you off.

And you can't deny that I've put her through a lot. Again. There's all those illustrations she had to pose for ("Okay, love, now lie back and pretend that Adric is hovering over you..."), but they pale in comparison to the time I got her to cook Jon Pertwee's poached egg salad recipe, from the fabled *Doctor Who Cookbook*, for a video featuring inexplicable cameos from John Challis and Ianto from *Torchwood*. Just... don't ask. And if that wasn't bad enough, I made her watch Colin Baker's *Stranger* videos, and surely I deserve a special place in hell for that.

I just asked her what the worst part of publishing these books has been for her, expecting her to tell me it was the time I made her watch *The Rules of Luton*, but she claims it was when the printers delivered *The Scruffy Drunk* and the lorry decimated our shrubbery as it backed out of the drive. The plants never recovered, apparently.

So that's it, then. We've blogged every episode of classic *Doctor Who* (including the ones that don't exist any more), several fan videos, the odd Big Finish audio (and I do mean odd), *Blake's 7*, *Sapphire and Steel*, and a lot more besides. Sue even watched an episode of *The Brothers*. So yes, I think she's suffered enough.

**Sue**: So is that it, then? Is it finally over?

**Me**: I guess so. I wanted to do *Star Trek*, but Graham says his heart isn't in it.

**Sue**: Fuck *Star Trek*. And how come you asked Graham before you mentioned this to me?

**Me**: We even had the perfect title for it - *Adventures with the Wife in Space: The Final Frontier*. I bought a Janice Rand costume and everything, because you know what Graham is like.

**Sue**: You and Graham should move in together so he can draw you all day, like his French girls. I bet they all fall for his lack of imagination excuse, too.

**Me**: You really liked *Star Trek: Discovery*. It would only take us ten years to get around to that if we watched everything in production order. **Sue**: Here's an idea for a book, Neil - Adventures with the Ex-Wife in

### **AFTERWORD**

*Space.* Do you think Faber & Faber would be interested in the story of our divorce?

Me: We could always publish it ourselves... Ouch! What was that for?

So there you have it. The end of an era. And just like David Tennant, I don't want to go.

**Neil Perryman** Hartlepool, July 2019

## **NEXT TIME**

